

Pekka Ervast

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT  
OR  
THE KEY TO CHRISTIANITY









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*AN INTERPRETATION BY*  
PEKKA ERVAST

*Authorised Translation*



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## FOREWORD

THE Sermon on the Mount is the brightest pearl of world literature.

Thus we think as Christians in noble pride, and we are not mistaken in our estimation.

But if it were said that the Sermon on the Mount is an exposition of Christian faith, and a standard and criterion of true Christianity, then we should, as good Christians, look inquiringly at the speaker, and after a moment we should affirm with a condescending little nod, Oh yes, of course. . . .

But if it were added that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus himself explains to us what Christianity is, and how a Christian should live his life upon earth, what commandments he should keep, and how he should worship and serve God — hen we should, indeed, toss our head, advising our good counsellor first to read his catechism, his confession of faith, and his decalogue, before coming to teach us Christians what Christianity is.

Under these circumstances, what else could

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I do but translate anew from the original text those chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew, called the Sermon on the Mount, emphasising by the aid of commentaries and explanations the purpose and meaning of the words of Jesus? When quite a young man I became aware of the extraordinary and unique importance of the Sermon on the Mount, and all my life long I have noticed, to my inexpressible astonishment, how deeply ignorant we Christians are of the true contents of the Sermon on the Mount.

Out of love for the good tidings of Jesus, I felt impelled to write this little book.

For my text-book I have used *Hē kainē Diathēkē*, Text with critical apparatus (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1914). Along with the Greek text I also have used the Old Latin translation of Jerome, *Novum Testamentum latine interprete Hieronymo*. Edidit C. Tischendorf (Lipsiae: Avenarius & Mendelssohn, MDCCCL). For the sake of comparison, I have also kept on my desk the New Testament in Italian, French, German, Swedish, and Finnish. For my English Testament I have used the revised University translation of A.D. 1881. I have followed as faithfully as possible the English translation, altering only some words here and

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there. The alterations I have carefully explained in the commentaries.

”Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Thus speaketh Jesus at the end of his Sermon on the Mount.

As Christians we have, for the most part, been content to call Jesus our Lord, Master and Saviour, forgetting to do the will of our heavenly Father. Whatever we think of the kingdom of heaven, we surely cannot claim to be worthy of it. According to the words of Jesus, we are forced to remain outside of it. If it is the same as the life after death, we cannot possibly be partakers of it. If it is the same as realising the kingdom of God upon earth — as we are accustomed to pray in the Lord’s prayer — then we have neglected realising it: we have not entered into the kingdom of heaven.

However, the Church-father Augustine, one of the greatest pillars of our faith, dreamed so beautifully and so nobly of that *ecclesia*, that church which was to be the *Civitas Dei*, or the kingdom of God upon earth. Nay, he even added that courageous saying, the church *is* the kingdom of God. But in the light of history we are — fifteen hundred years later,

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while heartily acknowledging all the great merits  
of the Christian Church — constrained to exclaim:  
If only this were so!

But what is not, may still be.

P. E.

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# I

## INTRODUCTION

Matt. v. 1. Seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him.

2. And opening his mouth, he taught them, saying:

— DID Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, speak to his disciples or to the multitudes? The gospels inform us that he made a difference between esoteric or secret and exoteric or public teaching; one was meant for the disciples, the other for the people, as Jesus himself said to the disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables." It has been asserted that the Sermon on the Mount is a decidedly esoteric teaching. This is proved by the introductory words telling how Jesus went up into the mountain, thus separating himself from the multitudes, and was followed by his disciples, who gathered themselves around him. Also it has been pointed out that "into the mountain" signifies "on the altitudes of spirit," where he could not be

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followed by the multitudes. What do you think?

— It is no use seeking allegorical interpretations ere the plain meaning is apprehended. We had better keep in mind the realistic form of the story, and then we might, at first sight, come to the conclusion that the actual words of the sermon uphold the so-called esoteric claim. Jesus could not indeed say to anybody but his own disciples: "Blessed are you, when they persecute you for my sake," or "Ye are the salt of the earth," etc. It seems to be clearly indicated that Jesus in his sermon addresses himself to his own followers only.

— Then you are of the opinion that the Sermon on the Mount belongs to the esoteric teachings of Jesus?

— No; on the contrary, I must deny the esoteric claim.

— Why, indeed?

— Does it not strike you that this long and beautiful discourse — if it was meant only for the disciples — was held in the presence of a large gathering? Jesus would have been rather unbrotherly, I think, if he had spoken in a low voice to his nearest followers, when there were a great many eager listeners all about him.

— Verily, that is a point of view I never

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thought of. Reviewing the situation, it seems rather absurd to suppose that Jesus would have neglected the people so indifferently.

— He did not. This is proved by the concluding words of the story: "And it came to pass, when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching." They simply could not have been astonished, if they had not heard what Jesus was telling them. Thus it was necessary for Jesus to speak in a loud and distinguished voice. He had gone up into the mountain in order better to see his audience, and the disciples gathered themselves around him, because it was their natural privilege. Their mood so sympathetic, so eager to catch the words of the Master, was to the sacred fire of the speaker like sacrificial fuel whence he gained a surplus of power and strength for his teachings.

— Thus we come to the conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount belonged to the exoteric, public teachings of Jesus. But if so, how do you explain the contradiction between the words and their meaning?

— The Sermon on the Mount is not exoteric either. The seeming contradiction vanishes into nothingness before the fact that the Sermon on the Mount is neither esoteric nor exoteric but rather both: it is addressed as well to the

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disciples as to the public. The Sermon has its own position in the story of the gospel.

— Please explain your meaning.

— I mean to say that the writer of "the gospel according to Matthew," who for his "Sermon on the Mount" gathered together different elements, collected "sayings of the Lord" (logia) from many sources, uniting them into one lengthy discourse, did this with a definite purpose in view.

— You seem to think, if I am not mistaken, that Jesus did not deliver this Sermon on the Mount at all?

— Assuredly Jesus did deliver many "sermons on the mount" in his days, but as they were not written down by shorthand, we are in no position to know anything about them. The Sermon on the Mount of Matthew is a collection of pithy sayings, not a lecture or an address of the usual type.

— Does not the Sermon on the Mount, then, give us a true conception of the manner in which Jesus spoke and taught?

— Most certainly it gives us a true conception of the matter and spirit of the teachings of Jesus, although not of the actual form thereof.

— Why not, please?

— Because I don't think any living man would

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utter only proverbial sayings in a lengthy discourse. I rather believe Jesus did not give lectures, but only uttered pithy words on suitable occasions. The gospels at least have not preserved other public sermons of his than his allegorical stories — and it is self-evident that he did not relate all these allegories at one time. That is why the Sermon on the Mount is a discourse containing the teachings of Jesus given on different occasions, and collected with a definite purpose in view — which circumstance does not lessen the fact that this artistically and philosophically perfect, this wonderfully magnificent Sermon on the Mount occupies the first place in world literature.

— For what purpose was it collected and edited by the writer of the gospel?

— In order to stand as a sign-post between the old and the new age. In ancient days the most profound and vital teachings were addressed only to the esotericists, *i.e.* to those who having sought came to ask and showed themselves ripe. But now, in this new dispensation, the most profound spiritual mysteries are revealed to all; the way of salvation is open to all. But not everyone listens to the call. Only those listen who have ears to hear. That is why Matthew allows the Sermon on the Mount to be heard by all — and

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the multitudes are astonished. But although Jesus addresses himself to each and everyone, all people do not understand him nor follow him. And thus it happens that his words and teachings remain with those who become his disciples. In other words, anybody out of the multitudes may become an esotericist, but everybody does not. Now I should like to ask you, what the Sermon on the Mount really is?

— I don't quite understand what you have in mind.

— Then let me tell you. The Sermon on the Mount is a short exposition of the Christian faith. No Christian can possibly evade the Sermon on the Mount. It is the standard by which he ought to measure everything, and at the same time it is his judge. People have played with the idea of Christianity. They have quarrelled and made wars over the Christian teachings. They have built their states upon a Christian basis. They have, during centuries upon centuries, constructed thousands of Christian churches — and they have forgotten one single thing only, *viz.* to discover what Christianity really is.

— And what do you say that Christianity is?

— Christianity is to accept and assimilate the vital philosophy of Jesus Christ, and to be a

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Christian is to follow Jesus. The fundamental teachings of the Christian faith are fully explained in the Sermon on the Mount, and this Sermon on the Mount is the measure of the Christianity of every Christian.

— You said that the Sermon on the Mount stood as a sign-post between two ages, containing the pith and marrow of the Christian faith. Thus you make of the appearance of Christ a turning-point in human history, thereby acquiescing in the often intolerant belief of the Christian churches.

— I certainly do believe that the mission of Christ was to inaugurate a new age, but I do not subscribe to any intolerance. Jesus Christ inaugurated a new period in the life and evolution of humanity, but not in the manner the churches-presume. The churches teach that Jesus, by his death, atoned for the sins of all humanity, but this is a mere theological question having nothing to do with the proper teachings of Jesus, such as those given in the Sermon on the Mount. Pray let us pass by the theological questions and fix our minds on the facts.

— Was not Christ, then, the son of God?

— That also is a theological question, in the way you put it. If I answer in the affirmative, you will think of the ecclesiastical idea of God

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descending upon earth in his own person. If I answer in the negative, you will suppose my opinion to be that Jesus was an ordinary mortal being — a religious genius, of course — but a visionary who was so sanctified in his own and other people's imagination, that he dared to call himself the son of God.

— Who and what was he, then?

— In any case he was a human being.

— That may be, but how could he inaugurate a new age in the history and evolution of mankind, if he was only a man?

— He was not "only " a man. God dwelt in him. He was God's son. But he was not the "only" son of God nor "God's son" in a supernatural significance. He was "the first among many brethren," for he realised *in actu* what we all are *in potentia*, in our possibilities. Himself he said that we also shall be called sons of God (compare the seventh beatitude). He knew God, the spirit of life and existence, in a deeper way than any of us, deeper than anyone before him. Let it not be forgotten that there had been prophets before Christ, prophets not only amongst the Jews, but among all nations. All these prophets had revealed to men the depths of God, each according to the powers and lights of his own spirit. But they had all addressed them-

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selves to their contemporaries or to their own nation or to a distinct group of men; the unifying and common traits of their teachings were always the most abstract and difficult to comprehend. Gautama the Buddha rose high above national and temporary confines, his sermon was addressed to all men, but he looked upon the pain of existence from so pessimistic a viewpoint that his teaching was more suitable for the passive Oriental than for men endowed with the active Western temperament. That is the reason why Jesus Christ inaugurated a new age for the whole of humanity. He brought with him a new faith, a new ethical basis of existence never heard of before. He revealed in a new way the essence of God. He preached and taught of the heavenly Father, the Spirit of life, who is goodness, love and mercy, but whose kingdom is not of this world. The visible universe is swayed by so-called evil in all its manifestations of hate, persecution, suffering, unhappiness, sickness, pain, etc. In the kingdom of the Father, however, "the will of God " is ever being fulfilled, for that kingdom is ruled by love and beatitude, joy, happiness, peace, and harmony. All prophets were spiritually born from on high, from the kingdom of God, but before Christ none had been able to bring that

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kingdom on earth in the same simple, catholic, and deeply human manner as Jesus, who thus came to occupy a distinct position. His eye looked farther, his heart felt more like a human heart, and his words depicted the kingdom of the spirit more popularly than any prophet before him. With him there began a new ethical age for humanity.

— I like your saying that the prophets were born from the kingdom of spirit. You mean to say that there are two "kingdoms," that of spirit and that of matter?

— Yes, and Jesus called them the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Mammon.

— Do we human beings belong to both?

— By our birthright we belong to both, although, for the most part, we content ourselves with the kingdom of Mammon or matter.

— But the prophets liberated themselves from the chains of matter and recognised themselves as children of the kingdom of spirit?

— Just so.

— And Jesus Christ was the greatest among the prophets, the most experienced and powerful? Now it seems to me I am beginning to understand wherein lay his sonship of God. Was he not a member of the kingdom of spirit, reaching a helping hand to his brethren wandering in the

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darkness of matter or Mammon, and calling them to take part in their birthright? Now I see why this is not a theological question. It is a plain fact, a reality to be touched almost with the hands. Jesus taught it, and without this background we understand neither him nor his teaching.

— Yes, that was his teaching and his life. Now we may proceed to our study of the Sermon proper.

## II

### THE PORTALS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Matt. v. 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
5. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.
7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
10. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

— You have divided the Sermon on the Mount into chapters in your own way — according to the subject-matter, I suppose — and I do not want to quarrel with you over that. But I should like to know why you have chosen as a title for the eight beatitudes, ” The portals of the kingdom of heaven.”

— The Sermon on the Mount depicts life in the kingdom of the spirit or heaven, so it is quite natural that at the beginning of the text were put some short phrases indicating clearly and concisely for whom the door shall open and what

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awaits them beyond the door. These beatitudes were to be learnt by heart!

— Meanwhile, permit me to put a little question. It is, perhaps, by the way, but if you will kindly answer it, it will dispel all doubts and misunderstandings. I take it for granted that the kingdom of heaven is not the same as the life after death?

— Your question is not at all out of the way. You guess the truth and understand it, but misconceptions as to this question are so general that we shall surely profit by stating directly, that the kingdom of heaven is not the same as the *post-mortem* life. If a man dies in the darkness of mammon, his life after death shall pass away outside of the kingdom of heaven, just as it was spent on earth.

— Is he thus lost?

— In a way, but not for ever. Had not the mediaeval clergy in their councils anathematised the doctrine of reincarnation, our Christians of to-day would know that the spirit of man will be reborn upon earth; it returns to this vale of sorrow time after time, until man chooses the life of the kingdom of heaven or spirit, thus educating himself to become a spiritual being, who no longer will be the slave of mammon and death.

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— I have heard of this doctrine of reincarnation, which is a common belief in the Orient. Do you mean to say it is a true doctrine?

— Certainly — but we may pass it over this time as a theological or rather scientific question. The main point just now is to understand that the kingdom of heaven is not the after-death life, but a spiritual condition in eternity outside of time. It looms behind us now as after death, with the only distinction that "now is the accepted time," as we are told in the New Testament. Now the choice is to be made. "Walk while ye have the light."

— I think I understand this.

— Well, now please notice the first word of the beatitudes, for it describes the life of the kingdom of heaven, telling us what the aspirant has to look for in the future. This word is "blessed." What is the meaning of that word?

— Blessed, it seems to me, is one who lives in eternal peace and happiness.

— Just so, and without any theological flavour. The beatitude is not to be conceived as a metaphysical condition to be experienced after leaving the body. The beautiful English word "blessed" is indeed much more appropriate than "happy." The Latin text has *beati*, and the European translations accordingly *beati*, *selig*, *saliga*,

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*autuaita*, etc.; only in the French language there is no equivalent word, so the French translation has *heureux*, which means "happy." The original Greek text uses the word *makarioi*, which clearly indicates that the author wanted to speak of an abundant heavenly happiness, or else he would have written *euthykēs* or *eidaimōn*. *Makar* or *makarios* was called a man whose happiness was as great and of the same quality as the happiness of the gods, for the beatitude of the gods was described by the word *makar*. The same word was also used with regard to those deceased who had gained access to the islands of the blessed and become like the gods. Thus it is not to be wondered at that the Christians have confused the conception of the kingdom of heaven with the idea of the after-death life, and it behoves us to understand perfectly that the kingdom of the spirit is open to all "living " men as well as to those among the deceased who have tasted it during their lifetime. On the other hand, as all dead men lead a very happy life in their "heavens " before rebirth, it was necessary to emphasise that the life of the kingdom of heaven or spirit did not only surpass the highest possible bliss from an earthly point of view, but also the highest "heavenly " happiness that men after death were able to enjoy. All this has been very

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well represented by the words *makarioi*, *beati*, *blessed*, etc., and at the same time this forms the positive ethical basis of the teaching of Jesus. Do you see the difference between this teaching and that of the Buddha?

— There is a clear difference. The Buddhist teaching of *nirvana* lays stress on the extinction of pain and suffering and is rather of a negative character, but Jesus, speaking distinctly of a blissful happiness, is forcefully positive in his teaching.

— Yes, there can hardly be any other purpose in existence. As eternal being can have no "purpose" in time, the reasonable purpose of being must be inherent in its own essence, *i.e.* of the nature of eternal bliss — or, if you prefer it, of an ever increasing, broadening and deepening happiness. By the way, do you think unchangeableness or idleness could be blissful?

— No, no, although people often think eternal life is unchanging.

— That is, of course, an awful misconception. Happiness and bliss are to be found only in work, good and beneficent work — alternating with rest — and as no work is possible without difficulties and hindrances, not even suffering is alien to bliss. There may be pain and suffering, but it is gloriously overcome by happiness. Now

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I think we have realised that, behind the portals, the happy and blissful life of the kingdom of heaven awaits the aspirant.

— Yet you have not so far explained the term "door" or "portals."

— A door bars out those who are unauthorised, and opens only to those who are allowed to enter. The portals of the kingdom of heaven or spirit designate those who are able to seek entrance. This definition is given in the beatitudes.

— In other words, those who may aspire to the kingdom of heaven are the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourners, the righteous, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness?

— Just so, and now we shall inquire more particularly into these conditions. First I beg to remark that the eight beatitudes are divided into four pairs: the first and the last belong together, the second and the seventh, the third and the sixth, the fourth and the fifth. Think of them as pearls on a string; if you lift up the string right in the middle, the pearls or beatitudes belonging one to another will be placed side by side, and the whole device will, indeed, form a strait gate. You will soon see, that this is no arbitrary method.

— An interesting discovery.      And by reason

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of that you have changed the order of the second and third beatitudes. I have just observed that in your text " the meek" and " those who mourn " are placed in another order than in the (Finnish) Bible.

— Ah, did you observe that? Well, had I done it arbitrarily, then you could justly say that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew did not himself think of the verses in pairs nor of the portals formed by them. But listen, and I shall tell you how the matter stands. I had seen, in my meditations, that the beatitudes divide themselves into pairs, so that — according to the usual order — the second and the sixth, the third and the seventh, belonged together. But as this arrangement did not seem to be logical or consistent, I asked myself whether the beatitudes were always in the same order in all texts. I began to search and made a happy find. In the fourth-century Latin translation of Hieronymus, considered as the second original text, edited A.D. 1850 by Prof. C. Tischendorf and copied after the best and oldest manuscript (the so-called *codex amiatinus*), the order of the beatitudes was the right one ! This shows that my " discovery " was not totally imaginary.

— Rather remarkable.

— Yes, it is an important fact, as you shall see

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when we begin to study the beatitudes. Let us proceed in order. The first beatitude reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and the last, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These belong together — also formally, because the sequel is the same in both. Observe the present tense of the predicament in both sequels; there is no question of a promise as in the other beatitudes (e.g. "will inherit"), only of a simple statement of fact, "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." This first pair of verses is thus established as the very foundation of conditions; after fulfilling these you will be able to take up the other beatitudes. Now, as to the word "righteousness," I would point out that it is not to be mistaken for "pious-ness" or "purity of life" or something like that. The only possible synonym would perhaps be "uprightness." In the Greek original the word is *dikaiosynē*, in the Latin text *iustitia*. The European translations are correct: *giustizia*, *justice*, *Gerechtigkeit*, *rättfärdighet*, etc. The root of the word *dikaiosynē* is *dikē*, "justice" (the goddess of justice), and that of *iustitia* is *ius*, which likewise means "justice." As "righteousness" is derived from "right," it also means being right or just. Now the first beatitude reads in Greek:

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*makarioi hoi ptōkhoi tō pneumati* and in Latin: *beati pauperes spiritu*. This is correctly translated: "Blessed (are) the poor in spirit." Who are "poor in spirit," pray?

— People sometimes think that the less intelligent, the spiritually unripe, the stupid are "poor in spirit," but is it really so? I never understood why the mentally deficient should be citizens in the kingdom of heaven as such.

— And they are not, at least not by reason of their intellectual insufficiency, for the kingdom of heaven does not exclude the intelligent, gifted and wise people as such.

— That's what I have always supposed. You see, I had construed for myself an interpretation of my own: "those who *feel* poor in spirit and ardently long for spirit."

— That is a beautiful interpretation, and the text may be thus translated. The dative form *to pneumati* may as a definition refer to the word *hoi ptokhoi*, thus expressing where the poverty is felt or what one is in need of. The word *ptokhos* means originally "a beggar," and *hoi ptokhoi to pneumati* may be translated "those who are beggars in spirit," or better still, "those who beg for spirit," for everybody may feel poor and wanting in spirit and spiritual things, *i.e.* spiritual knowledge and life, and if in his need "begs"

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for spirit, he may rightly be called "blessed," because the "heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," as Jesus himself says.

— However, mine is not the correct interpretation, is it?

— No, or I should say, only incidentally so. The main interpretation is of another kind. You see, there is a parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke. In the sixth chapter it is told of Jesus, that " he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." The word "in spirit" is wanting. In the original text, we find *hoi ptōkhoi* without the additional *tō pneumatī*. Thus the question is of poverty, simple material, earthly poverty. "Blessed are the poor."

— But it seems to me this is a very bad interpretation. Are then all the beggars and the poor blessed, do they belong to the kingdom of heaven just by reason of their poverty?

— That is the literal translation.

— But Luke could not possibly have remembered the accurate words of Jesus — he undoubtedly omitted the missing word.

— I do not think so. On the contrary, the meaning and purpose of Jesus is clearly indicated by the parallel beatitude, " Blessed are they who

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are persecuted for righteousness' sake." The poor and the righteous. You must not forget that. Only those are blessed who are poor and at the same time righteous. Who are they? Beggars who are thieves? Poor people who envy the rich? Socialists who scream about the wrongs of society? Communists who in revolution " divide equally " and become magnates themselves? Misers and niggards who always think they are poor? Do you suppose Jesus had these people in mind? Never, for he knew men. In his opinion, these are the rich, for their heart is centred on the things of this world. In speaking of the poor, Jesus has in mind those who are righteous and just, whose hearts are free from the bondage of mammon, and who do not imagine that they " possess " anything, but are like stewards to whose care common property has been entrusted. "Poverty," in the language of Jesus, has a psychological meaning. It does not mean misery, want, or distress, which often tends to awaken evil desires, but it is the heart's voluntary giving up of earthly riches and possessions, and its untiring hope and prayer that there might be plenty of all good things for everybody, and that economic life might be regulated on a basis of love and brotherhood. "Poor," therefore, is he who does not want

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anything for himself nor think of himself, however rich he may be from a worldly standpoint. The first Christians tried to solve this problem by having in common all earthly possessions.

— By practically realising the Communist or Bolshevik principle?

— Not at all, because the community of Jerusalem was free, *i.e.* no one was forced to enter it. Whoever aspired to become a member brought his goods and possessions spontaneously to the feet of the apostles. Pray observe, to the feet of the apostles. The community died out when there were no more apostles. The undertaking itself was artificial. A thing depending, in reality, on the heart and conscience of men cannot be established by law. The community of Jerusalem prospered as long as it was inspired by the powerful spirit and example of the apostles. But man must learn to be "poor" in all conditions of life. And knowing what poverty means, we understand that a man, poor in the right way, is everywhere happy and blessed. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew wished to emphasise this idea by adding the word *tō pneumati*, in spirit. He wanted to define more closely the word *makarioi*, blessed. Thus, blessed are those who are poor in spirit. This is indeed the standard of poverty according to Jesus. If we

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are poor in the right way, we are blessed, happy and peaceful in spirit. And if anybody, in his relation to the material world, feels happy in spirit, because he is the master of mammon and free from its bondage, he is indeed "poor."

— Is he invariably economically well situated?

— In asking this you clearly do not understand the situation. Here there is no question of outer things. A "poor" man may economically be in the position of a beggar. Prophets and apostles used to occupy that position. Jesus Christ himself in the first place. And Buddha likewise. Perhaps everyone upon awakening renounces his earthly goods, if such there be. The life of the spirit always begins with poverty of heart, and this renunciation assumes the form of an outer, symbolic act. The stress, however, is not to be laid on these outer, but on inner things. Of this the man poor in heart soon becomes aware. Therefore, he is not frightened if Fate places him in charge of possessions — were not the apostles, for instance, charged with the management of the property of the poor community of Jerusalem? Thus also he takes charge of his possessions in the spirit of the apostles.

— Now I understand. This indeed throws light on the beatitudes.

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— Yes, now you see that in order to enter the kingdom of heaven the aspirant must be poor. But being poor he is already in the kingdom. The first condition is fulfilled. And it is an absolute condition. Only after this is it possible to handle the others.

— I am very eager to learn something about the following beatitudes.

— The second pair reads, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." As you are aware, here again there is something common in both sequels, "inherit" and "sons."

— The old version had "children of God."

— That would not alter the meaning in question, but it is a wrong translation. The original text has *hyios*, the Latin text *fili*; the French translation reads *fils*, but the Italian softens it to *figliuoli*, and the others speak of *Kinder Gottes*, *Guds barn*, *Jumalan lapset*, which is Luther's translation. But there is no need to conceal the truth. The Greek word *hyios* does not mean anything but "son." The wrong translation was caused by the prejudice that Jesus alone was "the son of God." However, the gospel by its own words testifies to the remarkable truth that the "meek and peacemakers" are such wonder-

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ful men that they shall be called "sons of God." Thus they are raised to the level of Jesus.

— But is not that exaggerated? In order to avoid this the translators probably used the humbler word "children."

— What reason is there for us to "fix up" the gospel text? I think we had better try and understand it.

— Now, how do you explain the passage in question?

— Everything depends upon our understanding correctly the words "meek" and "peacemakers." Then that which astonishes us at first, will become intelligible. In the Greek text the word "meek" reads *praeis*, and in the *versio vulgata* it reads *mites*. Now *praeis* does not signify "soft" or "easily surrendering," that is a negative quality. *Praeis* describes those who, by temperament, are tender, quiet and kind, which are positive qualities. The French translation has the appropriate word *doux*, while the other European translations make use of the somewhat vague words *mansueti*, *sanftmütigen*, *saktmodiga*, *sävyisät*, etc. A quiet and forbearing person can be firm and unflinching, and, in any case, the beatitude speaks of those who are positively and actively forbearing, quiet, sympathetic, those who understand others and forgive them their trespasses,

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without being timorous or faint-hearted or limp in any way.

— But did not Jesus himself tell us to "turn the other cheek —"?

— And do you really suppose he would urge us to cowardice? Then you do not understand the teaching of Christ. But we shall return to this later on.

— I beg your pardon. My interruption was totally uncalled for. I believe I am now quite clear about the meaning of the word *præis*.

— Let us then consider the second word "peacemakers." The Greek text has *eirēnopoioi*, the Latin *pacifici*. The Italian testament translates literally *pacifici* (like the English peacemakers

and the Finnish *rauhantekijät*), the German *friedfertigen*, the Swedish *fridsamma*, but the French text has *ceux qui procurent la paix*, which is the best version. You see, here again, there is a difference between passivity and activity. Saying "peacemakers" we usually accentuate the word "peace" without asking how peace has been procured. But the beatitude begs us to think of both parts of the noun separately, not only of the peace itself, but also of its making.

— Does this correspond to the original Greek text?

— It corresponds not only to the spirit of the

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text, but also to the right understanding of the word *eirēnopoioi*. *Eirēne* is "peace," and first and foremost that "peace" on earth that the angels sang about at the birth of Jesus. *Poioi* is derived from the word *poiein*, which is a very positive word, meaning "to procure, to bring about, to build, to create." From the same root comes the word *poiēsis* — poetry! In everyday speech *eirēnopoios* often meant "one who tranquillises or has a soothing or reassuring effect," but its original significance was much more powerful, "one who procures or creates peace."

— Are you not somewhat pedantic with your many-sided translations?

— Not in the least, if you are able to see my point of view. Remember that the beatitude speaks of those who make peace on earth.

— Armies and generals?

— Generals may bring about peace after having triumphed over the enemy, but then the peace comes as a natural sequence by itself. Jesus does not speak of such a peace.

— And hardly was the Bible passage ever understood in that way. The peacemakers are thus those who make peace by reconciling parties that are at variance — judges, for instance?

— In a way. To meddle in other people's business is seldom right and proper, but to

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pronounce a "judgment," when people appeal to one's impartial sense of justice, is to act both naturally and humanly. However, the beatitude has not this in view in the first instance.

— What then?

— Peacemakers are those whose life and labour tend to establish peace on earth, who work for the kingdom of God, longing for the time prophesied when there will be peace on earth.

— This is a little vague. Do not wars prepare that time? All heroes slain on the field of glory believe that they have served the cause of peace.

— They do so in a way, as everything evil will be finally turned into good. But Jesus in speaking of peacemaking does not mean war.

— He said, however, "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

— Or, as Luke renders it, "but rather division," for the text shows clearly that Jesus is not speaking of war, as the words immediately following run thus, "For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." There is no question of war, only of difference of opinion on spiritual things. The follower of Jesus

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stirring up ill feeling in his own family calls forth criticism and persecution: as a disciple he does not quarrel, but this "compassionate steadfastness" arouses the indignation of others — for a time. It is a passing phenomenon shortly to be superseded by a peace more real than that of former times. By peacemakers Jesus, in his beatitude, does not mean those who take to the sword, but those who by righteous means work for the establishment of peace.

— By what means?

— The means are defined in the parallel beatitude, "the meek" or the forbearing. According to Jesus, peacemakers are those who through the meek and quiet power of spirit and speech, life and example, work for the happiness of humanity. Those whose mind is filled with thoughts of peace work by word and act for the cause of peace. Violence or force, tangible or intellectual, is not in harmony with their rules. This is so important, so specific an "imitation of Christ," that peacemakers are called "sons of God" (in the kingdom of heaven). And in order to make it clear that their work is not in vain, although it would seem, from a human point of view, as if they did not bring about anything fruitful, Jesus promises them that they who, being really meek, resort not to wrong and violent

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means, will ultimately "inherit the earth." Thus they will triumph at last. The world will finally acknowledge that peace and happiness are not to be procured by any other means. The world will ultimately transfer all power to them.

— Do you mean to say that the "meek peacemakers" ultimately will become leaders and kings of nations?

— At least symbolically. If, at that time, there are still kings and leaders, as you say, then of course the most wise, forbearing and peaceful people will be put in places of honour.

— Yours are broad views indeed. You dig out wonderful things from the Bible passages.

— But no artificial things, pray. I do not put into the words anything that is not there already.

— I agree that your explanations are natural and seemingly true, but surely they are astonishing and unheard of.

— People have not thought of them. Or perhaps they have. I am not much acquainted with so-called religious literature.

— I do not think Christians in general make such discoveries. They keep to the "gospel truth" in the way it was taught them.

— Still there may be individual believers who have guessed what it is all about. But let us drop this question and turn our attention to

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the following pair of beatitudes. It runs: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," and "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Take note again, please, of the similarity of the sequels, "they shall be comforted," and "they shall see God." The greatest comfort for a human being is certainly to see God, for then he will perceive the reason of his own affliction at the same time that his sorrow will vanish. Those who have experience know this.

— I was on the point of saying that only the experienced know it.

— Yes, but it can be understood by anybody who has not got a wrong conception of God, *i.e.* who does not worship idols in his mind. Remember that God is the spirit of life, the consciousness of being. To our reason God is the truth. Think of the power of truth. Whatever the matter in question, truth is always better than doubt or lack of knowledge. I do not speak of people who don't believe they can "stand the truth," who prefer living in a "fool's paradise" rather than to look truth in the face. They get their reward. They are fascinated by falsehood. But now we are speaking of reason. Reason and truth are correlative. Reason desires truth. Reason enjoys truth. A reasonable and thinking

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being never fears truth. Truth is his highest purpose, his joy, his comfort. But God is much more than truth in this instance. God is spirit and life. In case of illness, for instance, if we know the truth, *i.e.* what disease it is, we are not thereby relieved — only if the remedy were concealed in the knowledge of truth would we be restored to health by the knowledge itself. So the matter is with God. God as truth is at the same time life, health, happiness, peace, beatitude, etc. ” To see God ” is not seeing a scientific or philosophical truth. To see God is to be a participant of God’s truth, God’s life, spirit and blessedness. Who sees God is a part of God, is born from above, heaven-born. He is already a member of the kingdom of heaven, he is already called a son of God. Nobody can see the Father, but the Son.

— That is a unique experience, never to be comprehended by the ordinary man.

— It is taught by Jesus.

— But seldom, I think, do those who mourn get such heavenly experiences.

— I am thankful to you for calling our attention to this point. In the beatitude there is no question of ordinary earthly sorrows and griefs. The beatitudes are to be taken side by side. The question is only of those mourners whose

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heart is pure. Both the Greek *pentountēs* and the Latin *qui lugent* mean those mourners who grieve over the loss of some dead friend or relation. Close at hand, indeed, was the very human interpretation that Jesus wanted to comfort those who had lost by death some dear relative or friend. Accordingly, the Italian translation has *chi fanno cordoglio*, the French *qui sont dans l'affliction*, the German *die da Leid tragen*, just as the English has "they that mourn"—all thinking of "heartache." Only the Swedish and Finnish translations make use of a word not so clearly indicating "heartache," viz. *de bedrövade*, *murheelliset*, which means only "those who are sad." This translation I find more appropriate.

—I do not understand you. Such a translation is a free one, for the original text speaks of grief caused by the death of someone. Besides, I do not understand what connection there is between sorrow and purity of heart. Grief Over the loss of a dear relative is often rather egotistic.

—That is just it. The beatitude cannot possibly speak of such a sorrow. That is why the vague word "sad" would be better.

—Even so I do not understand.

—You will understand directly, when I tell you that the beatitude speaks of the grief or sadness which is characteristic of and

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follows upon purity of heart.

— Please explain.

— In the Greek original "pure of heart" reads *hoi katharoi tō kardia*, and in Latin *mun-do corde*. The Greek *katharos* means "clean (from dirt)," "empty," also "morally blameless, pure"; *mundus* likewise means "clean, neat," and also "decent, refined (as to manners)." Both words make one think both of a purity not yet defiled and of a purity from which all filth has been removed. As to purity of heart, it may be natural with some, and they must needs preserve that purity; with others, it may be the result of a purifying self-education. From immemorial time the Greek word *katharsis*, "purification, reconciliation" was used of the expiatory sacrifice imposed by religion on a criminal, and at the time of the Mysteries, of that purification of soul and body indispensable to the aspirant, before partaking of the so-called Lesser Mysteries. I remember the stanza of Buddha condensing his teachings into various aphorisms for his followers,

*Sabba pâpassa akaranam.*  
*Kusalassa upasampada,*  
*Sa chitta parîyô dapanam —*  
*Etam Buddhânusâsanam.*

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*i.e.* "abstaining from bad deeds, bringing forth good deeds, purifying one's mind — that is the everlasting rule of all Buddhas." Buddha expressly speaks of the purification of heart as a positive and active transaction, and there is no reason for us to suppose that Jesus meant only those, children and undepraved youths, for instance, whose hearts are still pure by nature. Surely he also thought of those whose hearts had become pure by spontaneous self-training. But tell me, please, what is purity of heart?

— Is it not, then, a mind sincere and free from sensualism?

— Well, Jesus defines it by telling us of the evils that may issue from the heart, "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Free from these faults and vices is the heart that is pure.

— But whose heart is pure, if evil thoughts even are reckoned to pollute it?

— That is the question. Jesus begins his list by naming evil thoughts, because they drive out the purity from most people's hearts. Meanwhile, what else can we presume but that Jesus meant to say that even an unclean heart might be purified?

— Is there really any hope of such a thing?

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Does not the constant and unremitting experience of men teach us that it is impossible to get free from one's inherent sinfulness and impurity without the aid of a saviour to effect reconciliation with God?

— An artificial, and I should like to add, a hysterical reconciliation with a creditor is needful only in case the debtor wishes to be free from his debt without trouble or work. Who so performs his duties quietly and untiringly, leads a life in undisturbed harmony with his master.

— You mean to say —?

— That man, if he wishes to become sanctified and pure of heart suddenly, after having been wicked and impure in every way, will surely be disappointed in the end, although God's grace may have been abundant at the hour of conversion.

— What is he to do?

— He must continue to cleanse his heart every day, unremittingly, until vileness no longer contaminates it.

— But how can this be brought about?

— The method is indicated in the words of the Buddha, *sa chitta parîyô dapanam*, "purifying one's own mind," *i.e.* by constantly and unceasingly purifying, guarding and controlling one's thoughts. Man himself, his very ego, is sur-

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rounded by his thoughts, that is why he can learn to elect, to regulate and concentrate them. It is no easy task — it is like training a wild animal, but for him who perseveres it is possible. Why should we be willing to throw on another's shoulders what we ourselves are able to perform? We are able to purify our thoughts. And having built out of our heart a temple, where no impurity can dwell, the "grace of God" will surely take its seat there.

— And upon this purification there follow the sorrow and sadness of which you have spoken?

— Yes, but there is no whimpering lamentation, only a silent sadness caused by the loneliness that befalls a heart that becomes purified and dead to the world. The grief spoken of in the beatitude is that feeling of emptiness which is the result of the death of the egotistic personality. It is a melancholy sadness which in itself is its own mysterious consolation, whose apotheosis is the "seeing of God."

— These things seem almost "supernatural" to me, but I think I understand what you are aiming at, and I see that there is logic in the system.

— Thus we have explained and interpreted the third pair of beatitudes. There remains the fourth, to which we now will turn our attention.

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It reads, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," and "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Let us not forget that righteousness does not mean religious piousness, for *dikaioynē* in the text clearly points out, that we must long for "righteousness," *i.e.* that rightmindedness which desires justice on earth — not justice only for oneself, but for all. This desire of the mind and spirit "will be filled," *i.e.* such a mind will clearly understand what "justice" means as well from the earthly as from the heavenly standpoint. The intellect of a man thirsting after rightmindedness will become transfigured. But his thirst for justice must not be fantastic nor caused by hate. In that case the reason will be enlightened only partially, and the sense of justice will lead to anarchy and deeds of violence. Jesus had this in view when he said in the parallel beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful." The thirst for justice is helpful and blissful only if permeated and upheld by mercifulness, clemency and sympathy — yea, animated and inspired by love. The word "merciful" is in the Greek text *elēmonēs*, in the Latin *miseriordes*; both words allude to those whose hearts are full of pity and sympathy. What justice would there be on

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earth without love? How could we create and realise justice without being full of understanding, pity, sympathy and forgiveness one to another? No God in the kingdom of heaven can possibly show mercy to him who is not merciful to his brothers in the visible world. The purpose of these beatitudes is to show that the disciple whose heart is kind and loving really becomes enlightened in spirit, partaking of divine mercy when thirsting himself after justice.

— I was sitting here thinking that the beatitudes are rather high-flying ethical rules that the multitudes could not put into practice, but then I remembered what you told me, namely, that these are rules for the followers of Jesus, for his disciples, the true Christians, and not in the least for fools.

— The beatitudes describe the members of the kingdom of heaven, explaining on what conditions membership in the invisible kingdom of the spirit is to be purchased — but they are expressly preached unto all people. The good tidings belong to all; whosoever will can accept them.

— Truly, everything is voluntary.

### III

## ADMONITIONS FOR THOSE WHO ENTER THE KINGDOM

Matt. v. II. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets, those which were before you.

13. Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

14. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

15. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house.

16. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

— As you said, everything is based on free will. The life of spirit cannot be lived by anyone not wishing it. So much the more as spiritual life invariably is accompanied by sufferings and obstacles, difficulties and persecutions. Jesus makes this clear directly in the sequel, at the same time telling his disciples to rejoice, as the same obloquy always was heaped upon the prophets.

— I am aware that you have added the word "those" in verse 12. Have you done so with a purpose?

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— Yes. The Greek words *tons prophetas tous pro hymon* mean, as far as I understand, that Jesus places his disciples on the same level with the prophets. It is as if he had said, " Before you were the prophets; now you are; and as many of you as are willing to follow me, are all prophets; for I speak openly that which was concealed, and now the kingdom of heaven and the state of a prophet is open to all." In all other points the translation is correct. However, there are two points that I want to call your attention to. Jesus says, " Ye are the salt of the earth," but "the light of the world." The Greek for "of the earth " is *tēs gēs*, for "of the world " *tou kosmou*. What is the purpose of this? What does it mean, to begin with, that the followers of Jesus, the aspirants to the kingdom of heaven, are called "the salt of the earth "?

— They ought to be morally better men than others, so that by their example other people are influenced.

— That is the usual interpretation, but the words of the gospel are not so vague; they have their distinct significance. I suppose you have heard of the " Attic salt "?

— If I am not mistaken, "Attic salt " means a subtle irony.

— Yes, and the word "salt" in the proverb

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is an instance of ready wit. You will remember that the Latin *sal*, "salt," used in the gospel, has the express meaning of "intelligence, ready wit." *Vos estis sal terrae* means in English, "You are the intelligence of the earth." The word *to halas* in the Greek text means only "salt," but the plural form *hales* was used of witty and trenchant sayings. On the other hand, the verb *mōranthē* — undoubtedly chosen purposely — is rather far-fetched to express that the salt loses its savour, for this word *mōranthē* means "becomes insipid." Thus, "if the salt has become insipid, wherewith shall it be salted anew?" I was on the point of using this word in the text. The German translation has rightly, *wenn das Salz dumm wird*. However, Jesus undoubtedly had in mind a definite fact. "You are the intelligence of the earth," he says, and "the earth" is of course this visible, physical world, in opposition to "the world" (*kosmos, mundus*) which embraces both the visible and invisible worlds (except the kingdom of heaven). In the outer, lower world the disciples of Jesus represent the real reason and intellect; like the salt they ought to influence the other intelligences, their human brothers, in an enlightening, inspiring, revivifying way. Far from the followers of Jesus being "simple," "kind," but "insipid" or "stupid," they are, on the

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contrary, the most reasonable and acutely intelligent amongst men. But their intelligence does not stultify or kill other people's intellect; it is no noisy fireworks, it animates, it cuts to the quick, it lends power and savour to the soul's nourishment; it is the uniting link between the higher and the lower self; it brings heaven on earth, light into darkness. And when it is said, "You are the light of the world," the fact is revealed that the whole being of the disciple — not only his intellect, but his entire spiritual knowledge and experience — shines, as well in the corporeal as in the psychic (invisible) world, with a light that makes it possible for the denizens of the heavenly kingdom to know one another.

— This sounds mysterious.

— Yes, it is a "dark saying" (*aporrēta*). The experts will understand. The same "light" shines before men in the deeds and works of the disciples, so that people begin to inquire by what philosophy of life and by what ethical basis the disciples were inspired. That is meant by the sequel, "and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The word *doksasōsin*, "glorify," means in its origin "that they may think, criticise and understand." Men are not helped by mere enthusiasm and praise, there must be, along with it, curiosity, desire for knowledge, thought and understanding.

## IV

### THE NEW ETHICS OF JESUS

Matt. v. 17. Think not that I came to destroy the Law (or the prophets): I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

18. Amen, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law, till all forms be experienced.

19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the following small commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

— IN the seventeenth verse you have written the word "Law " with a capital L and put in brackets the adjoining words, " or the prophets." This seems to me rather arbitrary.

— As you please. My intention was to make clear the purpose of the words. As to capitals, you probably know they are very little used in the printed Greek gospel text: very seldom at the beginning of a sentence, only in names and accentuated words in the midst of a sentence; manuscripts from the Middle Ages are of two kinds: the more recent ones are written throughout with small letters, the older and oldest ones

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throughout with capitals; the use of capitals and small letters is thus arbitrary and not founded on any originally sanctified manner of writing; in translation we cannot avoid differing even from the printed Greek text and following the Latin, which uses capitals in the same manner as modern languages. It is true enough that in the printed Greek and Latin texts the word "Law" (*ton nomon* and *legem*) is written in small letters, but here, if anywhere, it would have been to the point to use a capital.

— Is it so important?

— Yes, for on it depends the right understanding of all that follows. What do you think Jesus meant by the word "law"?

— Isn't it self-evident? "The law or the prophets"— those words indicate that he was speaking of the law of Moses.

— But if Jesus were speaking of the law of Moses, how could he pretend that heaven and earth would pass away before the least tittle of the law? Jesus knew full well that the law of Moses regulated in detail the everyday life of the Jews, and he himself often went in opposition to the law, for instance, as to ablutions, hallowing the sabbath, etc. And surely he well knew that other nations had other codes of law with different rules and regulations! Or else we

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make of Jesus an uneducated and unlearned fanatic.

— I never happened to think of that. It is a bad dilemma indeed. But what if Jesus, by the word "law," meant only the so-called decalogue or "the ten commandments of God"?

— But amongst them there is just the commandment to hallow the sabbath ! And why should Jesus have added the words "or the prophets"?

— Now I no longer follow you. I am rather anxious to know how you will explain it.

— The Greek word *nomos* signifies without doubt a "man-made law," but Jesus, who spoke in Aramaic, was sure to use a word equivalent to the Hebrew *tora*. The Jews, by the term *tora*, certainly designated their whole code of laws, in the beginning the Pentateuch or the five books of Moses, later on both the books of Moses and the prophets; by the *tora*, however, was understood not the man-made laws, but the Law instituted by God. *Tora* was a holy term meaning first of all the moral law prevailing from the beginning of things, in nature and in life, and becoming known to men first through oracles and then through the prophets. Jesus was evidently speaking of this divine law, adding the words "or the

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prophets ” in order to point out that the prophets — Moses amongst others — proclaimed and interpreted this divine law. The law is itself with God, but the prophets as mediators have made it known to men, and thus the prophets, from a human point of view, have constructed the law. Thus it may be said, ”the law or the prophets,” meaning, ” the divine law,” or in other words, ” the prophets who have proclaimed it.” Only from this point of view are we in a position to understand the words of Jesus. Not the least ”tittle ” of the divine law will indeed pass away so long as earth and heaven are in existence, because it is just that law which animates and sustains them. And likewise all forms of life, *i.e.* all the forms of the divine law of life proclaimed by the prophets in their respective religions, shall certainly be experienced, ere the divine law will empty itself or the least jot of it pass away. And therefore Jesus did not come to destroy the divine law, but to fulfil it, *i.e.* to give it a new interpretation. Have I succeeded in presenting my idea to you?

— I must confess you have enlightened the whole question in a most natural way, and I am rather inclined to believe that you have invented the right explanation.

— There was no need of ” inventing ” any-

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thing. You have only to read your text thoughtfully.

— In the following verse you have changed the word "these" into "the following." Isn't that rather a free translation?

— By no means, for in all languages the word "this" refers to something present or just coming, not to something behind or bygone. I translate "of the following" for clearness' sake. It was impossible for Jesus to refer to the commandments and rules of all the prophets, so much the more as he spoke of them only at second hand. He spoke of the divine law proclaimed by the prophets differently at different times and in different nations. Now, as he himself also was a prophet — did he not tell his followers that they were like unto the prophets? — he evidently proclaimed the divine law of life in his own way. And he calls their attention to this proclamation of his own, saying he would give them some commandments of his own not heard of heretofore: these commandments are dedicated to those who live in the kingdom of heaven. "If you keep all my commandments, it is verily good; but if you think that breaking one of them is of no consequence, you immediately lessen your right of membership in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus does not, with any

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kind of punishment or banishment, threaten those who do not keep his commandments; he only makes them understand that the breaking of them is to their own detriment as spiritual beings. And he does not speak only of "keeping." He speaks expressly also of "teaching." This, indeed, shows how deeply he felt the importance of the new commandments. They would open a new practical way of life to his followers besides giving them a new philosophy. They were not only moral commandments — they were rather moral viewpoints, and, therefore, it was exceedingly important and necessary to inculcate and teach them in an intelligent and reasonable way. Through them, a new age was to begin in the history not only of individuals, but also of nations and humanity in general. In his closing words Jesus once more advises his followers to see to it that their respect for the divine law — their *dikaiosynē* or righteousness — be indeed much,

much greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, who content themselves with fulfilling the many paragraphs of the written law. The commandments of the kingdom of heaven were to be engraved upon the hearts of the disciples.

— Now, which are these new commandments of Jesus that you think so revolutionising?

## THE NEW ETHICS OF JESUS

— We shall see presently. Side by side with his own comments Jesus points out the old ones, thus showing us in a glaring light how great a difference there is between his new teaching and the old Jewish philosophy of life.

## V

### THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Matt. v. 21. You have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, for whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.

22. But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the sanhedrin; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the gehenna of fire.

23. If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,

24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and coming thence thou offerest thy gift.

25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

26. Amen, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing.

— I DO not quite see where, in the text, is to be found the first commandment you speak of. Surely Jesus does not annul the prohibition to kill, given by Moses?

— Of course not. Non-killing is natural to him who fulfils the first commandment of Jesus, which is, in short, "Do not be angry."

— A rather remarkable and interesting rule of life, very difficult to follow. Do you think the meaning really is that this maxim should be followed always and everywhere?

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— Whosoever wishes to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and enter into the kingdom of heaven must absolutely keep this commandment constantly in mind and ever try to follow it. He may fall, but he must never deny the commandment or explain it away as being of no consequence.

— If so, we Christians seem not to have known that commandment, for even in our theology, we talk of the holy wrath, which seems to us very righteous indeed.

— Nor do I credit Christendom with having known these commandments. Christendom is still living in the "old dispensation," keeping strictly to the ten commandments of Moses, although evidently even these have become too strong for people to follow. For if nations as well as individuals were to observe the commandment of Moses, "Thou shalt not kill," what would become of the Christian wars? It goes without saying that the commandments of Jesus are still less known and understood by Christendom. The commandments of Jesus are given as free exhortations: if you want to be Christians, do as I command; if you do not want to, nobody will force you into obedience. You are to choose freely between the bliss of heaven and the pains caused by your earthly passions.

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— Now, if the first commandment is, Thou shalt not be angry, what might Jesus have in view with reference to those manifold penalties said by him to be earned by the offender? Shall we as Christians bear witness against people every time we see them lose their temper without their having brought about anything really evil?

— By no means. These things were spoken by way of comparison, as Leo Tolstoy very appropriately remarked. Jesus speaks of the three degrees of anger: (1) "Who is angry with his brother," *i.e.* who becomes angry with him in his heart; (2) "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca," *i.e.* who gives expression to his anger by contemptuous words and deeds; (3) "Whoever shall say, Thou fool," *i.e.* who by shouting and screaming behaves like a madman himself. In the first degree, a Christian who becomes angry in his heart is as guilty as was, in former times, a murderer brought into court. In the second degree, a Christian who gives way to his anger in words is as guilty as, for example, a blasphemer, whose offence, with the Jews, was considered to be of the greatest, and who therefore was judged by the Sanhedrin or high council of Jerusalem. In the third degree, a Christian giving way to his rage is as guilty as those who were burnt by the fire in the Valley of Hinnom — or perhaps,

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from another point of view, as guilty as they who are in need of purification by the fire of unspeakable mental agonies. I do not believe any thinking people could possibly understand the words of Jesus otherwise than by way of these comparisons. Jesus, indeed, does not counsel us to sue anybody at law! On the contrary, he counsels us to avoid being prosecuted ourselves by quickly agreeing with our adversary. And further on in the Sermon on the Mount he says, "If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." This clearly indicates the moral standpoint of Jesus.

— But why does Jesus, who once said that God was to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, speak of altars and gifts in the subsequent verses?

— By examining his words we are sure to find his real meaning. Did you observe that I had translated the 24th verse in the following way, "and coming thence thou offerest thy gift"? The usual version is, "and come then and offer thy gift." The Greek text has *kai tote elthōn profere to dōron sou*, which is in English, "and coming thence offer thy gift." *Profere* is the imperative form, but evidently an error in writing of the copyist; it should be the second person of the present indicative tense, *profereis*, "thou

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offerest," so as the Latin text of the *Versio vulgata* has it, *et tunc veniens offers munus tuum*. *Offers* does not mean "offer" but "thou offerest." The Latin text has preserved the right meaning, for Jesus wishes to state that reconciliation with an adversary is a genuine gift, and the only one asked for by God. God has no need of burnt offerings. "Coming from thy adversary after having agreed with him, thou indeed offerest to God what thou hadst to offer, thy own quarrelsome and cold heart." The seemingly affirmative speech about altars and gifts is thereby shown to be a criticism characterising the external gift as rather childish.

— One more question, please. The following verses seem to indicate that Jesus was afraid of judges, officers of law, and prisons, although he previously had said that they were blessed who were persecuted. How is that to be understood?

— Do you not see the difference? Blessed are his followers when persecuted for their own righteousness, but here the question is of strife and of quarrel — of the disciple's own error or fault — and being brought into court or put into prison for the sake of one's own failings, instead of furthering the work of the kingdom of heaven hinders its progress or retards it. The disciples shall walk about preaching the good message of

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the kingdom; they are the salt of the earth and their light shall shine, but being brought into prison would put their light under a bushel.

— That is true enough, but was there any reason to suppose that the disciples would fall out with worldly people? And that they would quarrel about debts and possessions? Jesus, in the last verse, is represented as stating almost threateningly that nobody will get out of prison before paying the last farthing. I certainly do not understand this.

— Generally men are weak and imperfect when seeking entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and accordingly inclined to fall into the snares of Mammon, but that was not the case with the nearest disciples of Jesus. They had left all and followed him. The Master is possibly speaking of future times and future followers. However, I see your point of view, for the words, "thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the last farthing," seem to involve a menace, if we do not presume that Jesus was so deeply convinced of the righteousness of the worldly court of law that he was simply stating a fact. What is your opinion?

— I am inclined to doubt that Jesus had such a robust faith in the worldly court of law! The whole of his teaching and spirit seems to me to be

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something of a moral revolt against the wrongs of the human society — at least a liberation from its bonds, if I have caught the meaning of your explanations — so that I am sorry to say these words of Jesus ring in my ears with a menacing sound. Am I wrong?

— I understand you perfectly, and now you must allow me, in passing, to interpret these verses from quite another point of view — from such a point of view that this last verse will no longer sound like a menace but quietly state a fact in life.

— I am rather curious.

— This is, as I said, only in passing, for it will carry us into theological questions, teachings and dogmas, which ought to be, but not always are, imprinted on our minds with the same immediateness as moral conceptions. However, I myself am fully convinced that Jesus had in mind just the thing I am going to mention. He says, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, etc." Now I beg to ask you, what is the meaning of the words, "whilst thou art with him in the way"?

— Of course it means, "while you still are alive," for if the adversary dies, how will it then be possible to agree?

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— But do you not see that then also disappears the very possibility of being delivered to the judge, etc.? If the adversary of the disciple dies, then there is no danger of a lawsuit, and if the disciple himself dies, then no worldly court of law can reach him. The riddle may be formally solved by supposing that from the text of Matthew was omitted the explanatory clause preserved in the Gospel of Luke (XII. 58), where it is said, "For as thou art going with thine adversary before the magistrate, on the way give diligence to be quit of him; lest haply he hale thee unto the judge, and the judge shall deliver thee to the officer, and the officer shall cast thee into prison." Then there follows, also with Luke, the same final sentence that sounds like a menace, "I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the very last mite."

— In this way, truly, the "being in the way" derives a plain and simple interpretation, but, nevertheless, it leaves the impression that Jesus had a mighty faith in worldly righteousness.

— And if what he said was spoken caustically? If his meaning was like this, "Agree with thine adversary by all means, for thou wilt never win thy suit before the law. In any case, the worldly court will decide that thou shalt pay."

— This sounds rather bitter, although, perhaps,

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who knows? But if I understood you aright, you promised to solve the riddle in quite another fashion?

— Yes, in my opinion the verses have another, deeper meaning. The sentence, "whiles thou art with him in the way," or "thou art going with thine adversary before the magistrate" should be translated just as you proposed a while ago, *viz.* "while you still are alive," or "while you still are on the way to the prince (of life and death)" (the Latin text has, *cum vadis . . . ad principem*). Now let us read anew the 25th verse in a simple and natural way. It runs, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou yet art with him in the way; lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge, etc." What else is the plain, logical meaning of that sentence but, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art with him in the way, for if thou diest he shall deliver thee to the judge, etc." Do you see?

— Yes, that is plain logic. In that case, however, the words of Jesus remain senseless.

— No doubt, if we keep to the text of Matthew, supposing that Jesus had in view only earthly conditions. But why should we not try to understand what other things Jesus possibly had in mind? Let us turn our attention in quite another

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direction. Tell me, please, is there not a life-long adversary for every man, Christian as well as pagan, disciple as well as ordinary man? An adversary, moreover, with whom it is good to agree while yet alive?

— What do you mean? Ah, I see — man often quarrels with himself, when he cannot or will not or does not think it suitable to gratify his passions and caprices. Thus he has an adversary within himself.

— Yes, but do you think Jesus meant to say that man should quickly gratify his desires?

— Of course not. Rather the other way. But what are you aiming at?

— You are on the right track, but does not man possess any other self with whom he may conflict?

— Why, to be sure, he has got his better self, his conscience, with which he easily comes into conflict.

— Quite so. Man's conscience, and we may often add, his enlightened reason and his human heart, is that higher self whose voice he does not always obey, thereby coming into conflict with it. This is his lifelong adversary. It is good to agree quickly with one's higher self and to do it while still alive, for after death the everyday personality will be abandoned by the higher self.

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In other words, man loses his conscience in death, if he has not made it his own during life, so that it has become his own ego, so to say. Reason and conscience are the light of our higher self. Therefore Jesus says, in the Gospel of John, "Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light." These are metaphysical things, but ignorant man should be able to feel their truth in his spirit. Dying man comes into darkness indeed, for then his higher self, his conscience, delivers him to the judge, and the judge delivers him to the officer, and he is put into prison — and verily he shall not come out of the prison before being purified from all neglects and sins and vices.

— You refer to the dogma of purgatory. The Catholic Church is thus right?

— Preaching this dogma of purgatory the Catholic Church has preserved the original Christian teaching in better memory than has the Protestant Church, for undoubtedly the gospels proclaim an intermediate state after death called by them *hades* or *sheol* or purgatory. And I see something else still in those words of Jesus about the prison. I see in them an allusion

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to the law of rebirth. For, as to our coming into conflict with our conscience, how does it happen in most cases? Surely in our dealings with other people. We are cold and heartless, proud and brusque, envious and malicious, wrongdoers and neglectful as to our duties, false and lying — there is no end to the list of our multifarious sins. And they all burden our conscience. Our conscience urgently demands certain things; it calls upon us to change our mind, to ask forgiveness and reconciliation, to purify and renew our habits of life. But we neglect all this. We prefer to be in conflict with our conscience rather than to humble ourselves before men. And the consequence? Our bad deeds and neglected duties are written in the book of life — for future atonement. And where shall this atonement take place? In that same visible life where the offences have been committed. The prison into which we are cast is just this corporeal life, and we shall not indeed be free from the necessity of reincarnation until we have paid our last debt. Over and over again man must be reborn on earth.

— In truth, the doctrine of reincarnation is an interesting teaching. And, moreover, it is lucid and natural if we think of life as a school, an educational institute for the welfare of man. But what do you mean by saying that everything is to

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be atoned in this same life where the offences have been committed? Must we make amends to everybody we have sinned against? We do not, however, remember having lived before, we don't know against whom we have sinned nor who is our debtor — and does it go without saying that we are all reborn at the same time?

— A pertinent remark. There is, indeed, no need for us to think of the atonement in so literal a way. We are reborn rather indifferently, at various places and times, each according to his own karma or destiny, and there are few amongst us tied one to another by such strong bonds of love or hate that they go to the school of life, so to say, hand-in-hand. To them we are in a position personally to make amends for past wrongs and neglects — and also to make new debts — but generally, I suppose, the law of life works somewhat like this: as much suffering as we have caused to living beings, as much joy and happiness are we bound to create. That is our atonement, and it will liberate us step by step from the necessity of rebirth.

— But what will become of the atonement of Jesus taught by our Christian Church, if man himself is his own redeemer?

— It will remain where it belongs, in the imagination of ignorant and inexperienced men.

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— But why does not Christianity teach reincarnation?

— You mean "churchianity." Permit me to answer by the following historical fact. In A.D. 553 the synod of Constantinople, convened by the Emperor Justinian, condemned the doctrine of reincarnation as a dangerous heresy, "whosoever teaches the pre-existence of the soul and the strange belief therefrom derived that the soul returns on earth, he shall be damned ! " The belief in an exterior saviour had little by little gained ground in the Church, but as there were many and various Christian sects (the Mother Church being one of them) and many different doctrines, the largest and dominant sect or Church had to define and confirm, step by step, its own view of life, its dogmas and traditions.

— The history of the Church is indeed astonishing, but whence did all these many dogmas and traditions originate? Who invented them?

— Nobody can be directly accused of having wilfully invented or falsified a dogma, because by the synods only a more definite form was given to views already prevailing. Ignorance pure and simple is the original source of unreasonable and senseless doctrines. Every dogma was derived from a truth misunderstood and misrepresented.

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— Indeed? Then the doctrine of the atoning death of Jesus was a truth misunderstood?

— Absolutely. The gospels speak plainly of the son sent to the world by a loving father, and of the belief in him as the only possible salvation for men, while the epistles, etc., speak as plainly of a crucified saviour; thus we are made aware how the Church dogmas originated from these teachings, comprehending at the same time that the words of the New Testament convey a teaching veiling the truth and misrepresented entirely by the dogma of vicarious atonement. But let us not digress from our subject. During the first centuries the doctrine of reincarnation was accepted by various Christian sects, only later to be condemned as heretical by the dominant sect. This only as an historical explanation. In order to assimilate the ethical philosophy of the Sermon on the Mount, it is not at all necessary to believe in different metaphysical or theological doctrines. That is why this explanation of mine has been made in passing, and we may again return to the commandments of Jesus.

## VI

### THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Matt. v. 27. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

28. But I say unto you, that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath dishonoured her already in his heart.

29. If thy eye causeth thee to stumble pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into gehenna.

30. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body go into gehenna.

31. It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.

32. But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, maketh her an adulteress besides being himself guilty of fornication: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

— I AM aware that you have changed the translated text considerably, in this second commandment, in saying "hath dishonoured her already in his heart." Is not the text of verse 28 the same as that of verse 27 in the original text? Anyhow you have left unchanged the phrase in verse 27, "commit adultery."

— The phrase is the same, but why should we translate it in the same way everywhere, since it has several meanings in the original language?

— Is that so? Please explain.

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— The Greek text uses the word *moikhaō* and the Latin, *moechor*, which both signify "commit adultery." The Latin word has only this meaning, which shows that the translator of the *Versio vulgata* did not understand the purpose of the original text. The Greek word *moikhaō*, on the other hand, does not mean only "commit adultery," but also in general "seduce a woman — married or single — into sexual intercourse." Now it goes without saying that Jesus, in the second commandment as well as in the first one, wanted to inculcate some new ethical precept differing entirely from the old one. In the commandment of Moses it was said, "thou shalt not commit adultery." Jesus goes to the gist of the matter. In the adultery he only sees the consequence of a sexually loose life in general. Therefore his commandment aims at immorality *per se*. And where does immorality dwell? It dwells in our thoughts and imaginations — in the heart, out of which "cometh forth . . . adulteries, fornications, etc." Thus not only he who commits adultery, is guilty, but also he who looks on a married woman "to lust after her."

— That I understand, and agree with it fully, but it does not yet explain why you have translated "hath dishonoured" in the second sentence.

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Perhaps this word is more to the point, but does it not lessen the crime somehow?

— Take note, please, that this commandment of Jesus does not speak only of adultery. Else he would have given his commandment only to married men, saying to the single ones, not lusting after married women you are free to look upon young girls and unmarried women to lust after them. Do you think Jesus would have said anything like that?

— No, by no means. Although it is natural for a young man to look at a young woman with a critical eye, he knows perfectly well in his conscience that imagining a closer relation with her would be an act of impurity.

— Or in other words, would oblige him to marry her. Now the commandment of Jesus undoubtedly refers to all men, whether married or single, who wish to follow in his footsteps, and therefore its literal form is to the point. If Jesus had had in mind only married women he would not have used a word meaning "woman" in general. The Greek word *gynē* signified "woman" both married and unmarried. The same general meaning has the Latin word *mulier* used by the *Versio vulgata* just at this place. The commandment of Jesus reads thus in a few words, "Thou shalt not be impure in thy thoughts, for

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if thou lookest on a woman lusting after her thou hast already dishonoured her in thy heart." *Mutatis mutandis*, this of course applies to women as well as to men. And as unmarried persons cannot commit adultery one with another, it is clear that we here must use another word in our translation, for instance "dishonour," which can be said both of married and unmarried people.

— I believe you are right as to the intentions of Jesus. Still there are passages in the text that need explanation. The verses 29 and 30, for instance, seem to me to be very difficult to comprehend. As you know, they have caused, *e.g.* in Russia in modern times, as well as earlier in the history of Christianity, deliberate mutilations of the body — and that could hardly have been the intention of Jesus? Notwithstanding, these verses seem to condemn as sinful all life of the senses, all art, all beauty — and thus they have been interpreted by the fanatics, puritans and pietists of all times. What do you say of them?

— Unless the copyists and improvers of the text have added these verses, if they really are to be found in the original writings — in the texts known to us they are of course — then, indeed, at least the former sentence, literally translated, is devoid of sense. It speaks of the lust of the eyes, and undoubtedly man may be led into temptation

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through his eye, but do you really suppose the lust to dwell only in one eye, more especially the right one, as the original texts have it in contradiction to parallel passages? And do you think all would be well if only one eye were cut out? It surely is impossible to realise this precept literally. I fear no one ever followed it. But if there is an evidently senseless counsel in one of the verses, it seems to me both verses are to be understood figuratively.

— That also is my opinion, and, I think, the opinion of everybody else, but many people understood the eye and the hand only to symbolise other members of the body, and acted accordingly. What, then, do you mean by "figuratively"?

— I mean that these counsels refer to psychic and not to bodily matters, in the first place. Remember they were said to the disciples, those followers of the Master who wanted to be Christians and enter into the kingdom of heaven.

— I see. And —?

— We cannot possibly understand such counsels without viewing them in the light of the life of the heavenly kingdom in general. And how are we to describe this life? Tell me, please, do you believe that fanatics, heartless puritans, severe ascetics, orthodox people who condemn others,

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self-righteous revivalists, etc. — do you really believe that they belong to the kingdom of heaven proclaimed by Jesus?

— I am not sure that I know. Perhaps not— so far as they are burdened with the aforementioned qualities.

— Can you not plainly tell what is the keynote of life in the kingdom of heaven?

— I beg your pardon, the verses we have just read have confounded and disturbed my mind to such a degree that I do not know what to answer.

— Forget those unlucky verses, assuming that some wretched falsifier has put them into the text for his own devilish pleasure —

— Devilish they are indeed.

— Well, leave them in peace. Now I wish to remind you of a well-known matter in connection with the life of the heavenly kingdom. You remember Jesus saying that none will enter into the kingdom of heaven if he be not like a child, and in another place, that in the kingdom of heaven people are living like angels which neither marry nor are given in marriage? And you remember the words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel of St. John, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled," and again, "If ye shall ask

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anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled"? And I suppose you remember the words of Paul, written to the Romans, "For the kingdom of God ... is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"? We may thus state in a few words, that the follower of Jesus is full of childlike joy and innocence, angelic ecstasy and peace of conscience. Children and angels may be known by the following: their senses cause them unremitting pleasure; they are neither gloomy ascetics nor downcast believers, for they enjoy immeasurably everything beautiful, great and noble; the world to them is full of unforeseen glories, life full of joyous surprises; but all their joy is pure, innocent, holy, for they know nothing of the seductions and difficulties of sexual life. This same life the disciple is striving for, he who seeks the kingdom of heaven.

— But is that life possible for man to reach?

— I shall answer you with the words of Jesus, "with men this is impossible, but all things are possible with God."

— How do you mean? You said a while ago that man had no need of an exterior saviour, as his redeemer lies within himself!

— And now, do I contradict myself?

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— You say, it is impossible with man, but possible with God.

— I was citing the words of Jesus. But where is the contradiction? Do not get entangled by the false meaning of the words, but think of their right meaning. Now, undoubtedly, you remembered only the old, usual and false conception of God. But do not forget what the word "God" signifies with Jesus.

— God is spirit —

— Yes, and where does God dwell and "reign"?

— In his own kingdom, the kingdom of heaven —

— Yes, and where is this kingdom of heaven?

— Everywhere, in the invisible world —

— And as Jesus himself said, "it is within you," thus "within us." The kingdom of heaven is within ourselves, in our spirit, and consequently God also is within us, although only known by those who live in him. But there is yet another definition of God, most illuminating and conclusive. It was given by Jesus, and John put it tersely in three words.

— What definition?

— It runs, "God is love."

— Ah, that is a well-known saying!

— Well, let us be consistent in our reasoning.

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Since God dwells in the kingdom of heaven in our heart, and since God is love, consequently the divine saviour dwelling in our spirit is Love, which is man's greatest and highest, deepest and innermost — yea, only true ethical power. Love alone carries us above our sexuality, love alone liberates us from our desires and passions, love alone makes us children and like unto angels.

— Love. But, nevertheless, thinking of the alluring power of our sexual being —

— Do not think of it. Think not of our human weakness. Jesus counselled us to remember that it is possible only with God.

— With God, thus with love —

— Yes, with love, but of course God or love is unable to act in opposition to our belief. It is for us to have faith in love, then love in us shall gain the victory.

— But the first temptation drives out all love, I mean this heavenly love, for temptation awakens in us the fire of earthly love.

— Therefore we ought to grow and develop in our faith and confidence in love. We cannot be perfect in a moment. Life is a way. And the way is there to be walked upon. Love does not take birth in us out of emptiness. Love is infinite. Love is God. Love is spirit and consciousness. Not a blind force like earthly love,

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but the essence of wisdom. We need only open ourselves in spirit for divine love to pour down upon us. Love is the sun, and our soul is a flower opening its bud to the life and the light of the sun. Do you not see there is nothing hopeless in this?

— I begin to understand. If there were faith —

— Faith comes. And now you will perhaps understand what Jesus had in mind, if he really gave the counsels that have caused offence. They were not counsels really. They were rather explanations and excuses on behalf of others. The meaning of his words was something like this: Love is a pearl so precious and wonderful, that if the heart of the disciple is overflowing with heavenly love he is entitled to cast away some human gift or ability, however precious in itself, that would hinder him in his endeavours, causing him to stumble on his way to perfection; such qualities, for instance, might be ascribed to learnedness and high position — comparable to the eye — or to some artistic and creative work — comparable to the right hand. These conditions might become a burden — not a temptation — to one who has devoted himself wholly to love. He wishes to serve directly by being the simplest, lowest and humblest of all. He wishes to go out

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amongst the people in order to live in a brotherly way with all. Love in him is so great that he cannot but die. This is rather a rare occurrence, and therefore the word of Jesus is like an apology — he understands those who are unhappy in their happiness and who necessarily must break something in themselves.

— That may be beautiful, but it seems to me to be far away from the question of sex, and at any rate the second commandment speaks of the sexual life.

— And at the same time of love. My interpretation, if remote from the subject of sex, is so much the more closely related to love.

— Perhaps, but it occurred to me that if Jesus explainingly apologised on behalf of some unhappy people, why should we disregard the possibility that he meant to apologise also on behalf of those who for the sake of the heavenly kingdom have done violence to themselves, as is said in another gospel passage, if I am not mistaken?

— Yes, I have considered the question, and I am bound to confess that, in a measure, I understand the position of the Church father Origen, who for the sake of his great spiritual work believed himself entitled to free himself by his own hand from the temptations of sex. I do not believe, however, that Jesus had this in mind,

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simply because man shall not estrange himself from life nor bury his talents in the ground. Our temptations give us strength when overcome. Without temptations we could not educate our character. The school of life is built on temptations.

— That is the view of modern humanity, and if Jesus had that in mind, then we are indeed forced to invent an interpretation like yours, of the verses 29 and 30, or else reject them entirely as falsifications of the text.

— We could also fancy that they have a deeper, more mysterious meaning. I have a notion of something like that, but am not in a position to speak of it at present. I think we had better pay no more attention to these verses. Instead, let us proceed. There follows now in the text a passage where Jesus addresses himself exclusively to married people, having previously spoken to all men indiscriminately.

— In the last verse I am aware that you have considerably altered the old translation. The words "saving for the cause of fornication" read with you, " besides being himself guilty of fornication." How is this to be understood? Does not Jesus allow divorce at all? It was not forbidden according to the law of Moses.

— The followers and disciples of Jesus are of

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course forbidden to divorce. Remember always he is not speaking to "worldlings," but to those who desire to be Christians, following him in their endeavours to enter the kingdom of heaven.

— Why is it unnatural for them to part? If one of the consorts is "worldly-minded" and wishes to be divorced?

— That is another matter. It goes without saying that the disciple is against divorce as a matter of principle, but if his (or her) consort is unhappy, praying and pressing for divorce, then he will act according to his conscience. For himself there is no mental unhappiness. He endeavours to live in harmony with men, and his life companion is given him as a schoolmate with whom, first of all, he has got to learn to live in harmony and love. Thus he is not in need of divorce. Should he voluntarily part with his consort he would commit a double sin. First, his parting would show that he had cast his eye on another, thus making himself guilty of fornication; in the second place, his parting would perhaps cause his consort to long after another mate, or, in other words, to commit adultery. As a matter of principle Jesus is absolutely on the side of monogamy. The main point for us is to see clearly what it is all about; the solution in different cases lies more or less with the con-

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science, as the disciple is decidedly a man of conscience.

— In this manner the words of Jesus become logical and intelligible, but how comes it that the old translation was so faulty? According to that version, divorce was permissible if one of the consorts had made himself guilty of adultery.

— The clause in question in the original text is difficult to translate. Probably it is a later interpretation. In any case, the whole sentence falls short of its logic, and the purpose of Jesus becomes non-existent, if we do not translate the clause in question as Leo Tolstoy did and as we have done here. The clause runs in Greek, *parektos logos porneias*. The word *parektos* means "besides, except," *porneia* "fornication," and *logos* "reason, cause." Thus, literally, "except cause of fornication," which shows that the translation of the intermediate clause depends upon the word in the main clause to which it is correlated. If we take it as a definition of the object of the relative clause (his wife), then we get the old illogical version; but if we correlate it with the subject, that is the word "everyone," and with the whole of the relative clause defining that subject — which seems to me to be grammatically more correct — then we must make a new translation. Now listen, please, to the

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

whole sentence literally translated, " everyone that putteth away his wife, except cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress." You see the riddle? Decide for yourself which translation is natural and more in harmony with the spirit of the commandment, the old or the new. Both have been revised by the aid of common sense and reason. The Latin version has, *excepta fornicationis causa*, which, at first sight, seems to uphold the old translation, but upon closer scrutiny will prove to be equivocal.

## VII

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Matt. v. 33. Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.

34. But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35. Nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king;

36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black;

37. But let your speech be, Yea, yea, nay, nay. And whatever is more than these, has its origin in deceit.

— IN the translation of this third commandment I am not aware of any changes, but in the last sentence of verse 37 there is "has its origin in deceit" instead of "is of the evil one" as found in the old version.

— That alteration is of a formal nature. In the original text the words *ek tou ponērou estin* mean

"has its origin in evil" or "in the evil one," for *ponēros* is "evil." But as the word *ponēros* was used as the opposite of *chrēstos*, which means "good, honest, sincere, truthful, reliable," it is more consistent, in this place, to translate "in insincerity, falseness, deceit," while speaking of words and addresses.

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

—Now, what do you think of this third commandment of Jesus? Does he forbid all taking of oaths?

—The words are plain. Thus was it understood by the "Quakers" and other "sects" endeavouring to follow Jesus. What else could the words "swear not at all" mean?

—But the whole of our Christian society is built on oaths, oaths of offices, military oaths, etc.

—Jesus does not speak of "the whole of society." He addresses himself to those who wish to follow him. Why do you suppose the first Christians were persecuted in the Roman empire? Do you think it was because they believed in a crucified God? The Roman government was very tolerant; in that great empire there were side by side religions and cults of the most varying kind. A new cult would not have disturbed the peace of the state. The first Christians were persecuted because they were all true Christians who endeavoured to follow Jesus, realising on earth the life of the kingdom of heaven. They were pursued and persecuted as dangerous to the welfare of the state, because they refused to take oath to the banner of Rome, the so-called *sacramentum* or banner oath, refusing, in other words, to do war service and swear alle-

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giance to the emperor. They were persecuted because they realised in practical life this new unheard-of belief which threatened to upset the order of the civilised world to its very foundations.

— This is wonderful indeed, but at the same time wonderfully illuminating. Now I am gaining an entirely new and interesting view of the first Christians. I do not say that I understand or approve of their principles in every detail, but they seem to be a most interesting phenomenon in human history. However, speaking of the third commandment from the point of view of principle, I really do not understand why Jesus forbids the swearing of oaths. Is not oath-taking a formal matter?

— Not altogether. Who, as a witness before the court, takes an oath to speak the truth may laugh at it as an empty formality — in any case he will speak what he is bound to speak. But an official, a priest, a physician, a soldier, who in taking his oath pledges himself to obey, in his official doings, certain rules and regulations, cannot be indifferent with regard to his oath. The more honest and conscientious he is as a man, the more real and perturbing his oath is to him.

— But his oath concerns matters that he would fulfil anyhow. Therefore it is formal.

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— True, indeed, with regard to people who neither are Christians nor know anything about following Jesus. They are not often led into conflicts. Yet sometimes. A priest who, having lost his belief in eternal hell and damnation and other Church dogmas, had instead accepted the teaching of reincarnation, would have been happy to tell others of the light he had found, but, bound by his ordination oath, dared not do so. He would have lost his ministry — and, as he himself said, "How am I to provide for my family, unskilled as I am in any other profession?"

— And from such conflicts Jesus wants to free his followers?

— Why not, although I think the commandment as such starts from quite another point.

— Which point?

— As a spiritual being man is independent and free; he ought not, with regard to his future, to pledge his allegiance to another person, but always to keep his conscience free and pure. Thus Jesus advised his disciples, the aspirants to the kingdom of heaven.

— Cannot man promise anything — not even to himself?

— A spontaneous, joyful promise, always taking into account obstacles that may eventually hinder

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the fulfilling of his promise, is natural among men. The more reliable a man is, the more conscientiously does he fulfil his promise. A man should be taken at his word. But a promise is not an oath. By taking an oath a man gives up his freedom, surrendering the control over himself to another person. A promise is what Jesus meant by the words, "But let your speech be, Yea, yea, Nay, nay. And whatever is more than these has its origin in deceit."

— You have not said anything yet of man making promises to himself.

— Why shouldn't he? His own conscience must decide that matter. In any event, every promise should be made to that Higher Self which never asks for anything against itself, *i.e.* contrary to conscience. All our good resolutions are promises. But it is our duty to keep our resolutions, or else our forfeited vows will pave for us the way to hell. If man does not learn to be "faithful in small things," life cannot trust him with greater duties. The non-Christian life with its oaths and promises is like a school for worldly men; there they will learn to keep their word and fulfil their duties. When man becomes a Christian and sets about following the Master, life for him turns into a school where he will learn to keep holy his silent vows, his own firm reso-

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lutions and promises, at the same time learning to fulfil even greater and higher divine duties.

— Do you think the third commandment refers only to taking oaths? It seems to me as if there were, in the closing words, some veiled advice as to speaking in general.

— So it seems to me. We misuse our tongue in a measure not to be told of. We speak evil and still more often vain things. Jesus says in another passage that we have to answer for every vain word. He did not like empty talk or idle prattle, because it degraded man. The faculty of speech was given to man so that he "should bear witness unto the truth," as Jesus said of himself. And the power of being silent is the first requisite for him who proclaims the truth. He who cannot keep silent at the right moment is unable to speak the truth at other times. Honesty does not imply that we should have everything we know always on the tip of the tongue. Truth-speakers, great poets, for instance, are chary with their words in everyday life. And so Jesus advises his disciples to speak little, but in earnest.

## VIII

### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Matt. v. 38. Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

39. But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;

40. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;

41. And whoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.

42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

VII. I. Judge not, that ye be not judged;

2. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.

3. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thy own eye?

4. And how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye?

5. Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

— Now we are coming to the fourth commandment, which I once heard you calling the cornerstone of the teaching of Christ, the fourth commandment in which Jesus forbids the resisting of him that is evil. Although Christians never speak about the five commandments of Jesus, everybody knows well his saying, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the

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other also," and everybody considers it a most poetic and exaggerated exhortation to that "Christian humility" which nobody of course condescends to realise in his everyday life. Now you seem to think this is a really vital and positive commandment given by Jesus.

— It is not "my opinion," for in that case you, for instance, could have another opinion. It is the plain teaching of the gospel. The five commandments of Jesus are easily to be found; by each new commandment he annuls an old one, and that is why each commandment is preceded by the words, "You have heard that it was said (to the men of old times) . . . but I say unto you."

— Perhaps you will kindly explain to me what this fourth commandment of Jesus really purports to be. I never personally admired hypocrisy or Pharisaical humility which turns the left cheek to him that smites on the right one. I have always presumed that God — whoever he be — was likely to prefer the honest man who deals a good blow to him that dare strike, to the self-righteous weakling who, subserviently bowing, silently accepts the insult.

— Anyway our sound moral instinct gives preference to the *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche* ever eager to draw his sword in the defence of

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honour, his own or that of others; he is indeed many times preferable to the monk or Jesuit affecting humility and piousness. But remember, there is no question, in this place, of those matters. The world is not only entitled, it is obliged to follow those ethical ideals which it feels in brain and heart to be the highest. The commandments of Jesus, on the other hand, are for those who, tired of the ways of the world, aspire to the life of the heavenly kingdom. For them the commandments of Jesus are not unnatural or contrary to nature, to them those commandments unveil their own inner and higher human nature. Therefore even they, the disciples, should stumble into the way of the world, at a weak moment, rather than keep like Pharisees to the letter of the commandment; and in any case they should fall and confess their fault rather than deny the commandment of Jesus. You ask what this commandment is. It could be clad also in the following words: The law of Moses is an expression of the idea of revenge, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," but Jesus says to his followers, You shall never avenge, whether individually or in common; you shall never judge one another, for only he may judge who himself is without sin. — I see you have placed here some verses

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

taken from the seventh chapter. I suppose you have done so for the sake of the context? You mean to say, if I understand you aright, that Jesus is opposed to the whole system of courts? But what would become of society, if it ceased to bear the sword of justice?

— Why speak of such follies? That would happen in earnest only if society were a Christian society, following Jesus, but how would this be possible without its members following in the footsteps of the Master? The reference here is to the followers of Christ. They abstain from applying to earthly justice —” if any would take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also, so that he shall not go to law with thee,”— they will not sit in judgment, they will neither avenge nor punish.

— But what if society really were a Christian society?

— In that case I think we should try, from childhood up, to educate ourselves, ever learning ”to cast out the beam out of our own eye” before taking notice of ”the mote in our brother’s eye.”

— But what should our attitude be to those brothers who really have criminal propensities?

— A loving attitude. Our love would have a purifying, our example a morally uplifting influ-

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ence, and of course we should teach them, enlightening their reason, ere the evil tendencies would gain the upper hand.

— That is also the aim of our modern societies. Everywhere people are seeking a new watchword as to the handling of criminals, and generally they believe this watchword to be education.

— That is worth mentioning. But love, not justice alone, is the effective remedy in education. The main thing for us to understand is that Jesus laid the foundations of a new age. He and his followers accepted a new philosophy of life including, among other things, a new attitude towards evil. The highest ethical ideal conceived of by men before him, was justice, plain, cold, frightening justice. Love, meekness, mercy and forgiveness were rare and often considered a sign of weakness. An honest man avenged himself, sought justice, claimed punishment. Jesus changed all this. He brought the kingdom of heaven down upon earth. He unveiled the highest morality to his followers. He showed that love was the law of life in the kingdom of heaven. There mercy and forgiveness reigned supreme, not the lust for vengeance nor the claim to justice. Verily, a revolutionary change in the conception of right and wrong, good and evil! Very few were able to see the point of the new

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philosophy. Only the disciples of Jesus, step by step — not the world at all. Anyway the new ideas have penetrated the world, and although we are living to-day in a society where the old, non-Christian order still prevails, public opinion has changed in many directions. Personal vengeance is not allowed, and, as you said, even belief in the right of common or social revenge is vacillating. Although in a way we are surrounded by the same "pagan " world as were Jesus and his followers, at present much larger multitudes are ready to receive with eager minds the " good tidings of the kingdom." It is almost as if the whole of Christendom were expecting some new teaching, some new rules of life, now, since the world-war and bolshevism have awakened all men out of their sweet pagan sleep, clearly to see on what shaking ground the old ideas of justice had been built. For all that, we cannot of course expect any new outstanding changes in our social order, until people, individually awaken, change their attitude to life and become consciously "christianised." Revolutions, violent changes and compulsory reforms have their origin with the father of deceit, as Jesus said. The renaissance of Christendom is possible only if ever more people, the world over, individually begin to follow Jesus, proclaiming his

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teaching. The question to-day is the same as it was in the first days of Christianity, only with the difference that the general atmosphere to-day is brighter and more enlightened than it was nineteen centuries ago.

## IX

### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Matt. v. 43. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you,

45. That ye may become sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.

46. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?

47. And if ye show friendliness to your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the common people the same?

48. Ye thus will become perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

— THIS fifth commandment seems to me the commandment of love *par preference*. But does not Jesus go into extremes in advising us to love our enemies? If anybody is hating me and doing me no end of harm, damage and evil, how can I love him? That would be the very height of hypocrisy !

— Jesus said, Pray for them that persecute you. That we at least are able to do, if we cannot yet love.

— But Jesus said expressly, Love your enemies.

— Yes, but he says so in opposition to the old commandment, "Love thy neighbour,"

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adding for clearness' sake, "and hate thine enemy."

— Why "adding"?

— Because, you see, there is no such old commandment as "hate thine enemy."

— Isn't there really?

— Not literally. But the spirit of the old commandment is truthfully enough expressed by the words Jesus added.

— Now I do not understand.

— You will see it directly. In adding the words "hate thine enemy" Jesus emphasised the meaning of the old rule cited by him, "love thy neighbour," in order to be able to show how wrong it was in the light of his new commandment. Evidently his new commandment, "love thine enemies," does not include an invitation to hate one's neighbours, but just as the first commandment, "be not angry," excludes "killing," so this fifth commandment, "love thine enemies," presupposes that instead of hating our neighbours we love them. The question turns round the two words, "neighbours" and "enemies." Who are our neighbours, who our enemies? The answer to these questions is plain enough: "neighbour" means belonging to the same tribe or nation, or inhabiting the same country — a countryman; while "enemy," on the other hand,

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means belonging to a different tribe or nation, or inhabiting a foreign country — a foreigner. Think of the Jewish history of the old dispensation, think of the thundering Jehovah ever angry with foreign nations, ever inciting his own chosen people to war, now with the Philistines, now with the Midianites, now with some other "enemies." Love of strangers was entirely out of the question, there was no talk but of hate and of vengeance. Only neighbours and countrymen could be loved. In view of this, the words added by Jesus were very appropriate, descriptive and explanatory of things. In his new commandment Jesus stood up in opposition to this old-world order.

— This new commandment is thus qualified by its international or political tendency?

— Exactly. According to the teaching of Jesus, they who desire to live the life of the kingdom of heaven do not see a stranger in any man. All men are brothers without distinction of race, colour or nationality, and all men are to be loved. The borders between the nations fall down and all nations form one big family: the humanity of the planet Tellus. Expressing tersely what Jesus taught in his fifth commandment, we should say that he forbids war. With reference to this commandment, as well as to the others, we are, however, bound to point out that

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there is no actual political purpose involved. It does not say, Now, all people, lay down your arms! It says, Now, all men individually, get enlightened, become Christians, follow me! A nation is Christian if the members of that nation are Christian. A nation can follow Jesus in its daily life if its members do so. The individual man must realise that war is contrary to the philosophy of Jesus, contrary to conscience and the highest ethical conception, contrary to the divine order of life. The individual man must abandon arms, abstain from war, forsake all violence.

— So you think Jesus despised soldiers?

— Nothing of the kind would occur to me. It would not be like him to despise any man. Jesus was sure to know as well as we do to-day, that amongst military men are to be found some of the most chivalrous, honest and beautiful characters. They are men like all else, and often better men. Of that there is no doubt. The point at issue is merely that individual men should awaken, officers and soldiers as well as other men. And in accepting the new philosophy of life one should be entirely sincere. There ought to be no artificiality, no hesitation. Truth makes man free. Seeing the truth, man will be full of joy, elation, bliss. The life of the kingdom of heaven will

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perhaps cause external difficulties, but it will surely bring inner peace and happiness. The fifth commandment, like the preceding ones, concerns individual men and their work. When more and more people, in different places, begin following Christ and spreading the light, then at last will come the time for the nations to be "christianised." Have we not already taken a big step forward? During the world war there were thousands of men in different countries who refused to bear the sword because they wanted to walk in the footsteps of Christ. And now, after the world war, there are peace movements in all countries trying to teach people how insane all warfare is. And although the following of Christ is a matter for individual men, it is not out of the way to think of a league of Christian nations pledging themselves to settle mutual conflicts peaceably, and to abstain from declaring war one against another. Is it too fantastic to suppose the international intelligence to be so far enlightened?

— Let us hope not. But I notice that, in verse 47 you have changed the word "pagans" into "common people."

— Yes, the Greek word *ethnikoi* and the Latin *ethnici* do not mean "pagans." They mean "men of the common people," and by that word

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Jesus designated those who did not know of the good tidings of the kingdom, being everyday men of a worldly turn of mind. I suppose the translators had that in mind, although the word "pagans" at present carries quite another meaning, reminding the reader of African negroes, Australian aborigines, etc., and leaving him under the impression that he himself is a "Christian" by birth, the truth, of course, being that we all belong to the *ethnikoi* or common people, until we really become Christians, inasmuch as following Jesus is no matter of geography.

— In the last verse you use the future tense, "You will be perfect," instead of the old imperative form, "Be ye perfect."

— *Esesthe* in the Greek text is a future form, although, in most languages, it has an imperative significance besides. The Latin text has *estate*, "may ye be." However, it seems to me Jesus had in mind a direct statement: living the life of the heavenly kingdom in fulfilment of his commandments we shall eventually become perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. I see in it a promise or a prophecy rather than a commandment. At the same time it refers to all the commandments, crowning them, so to say, with the glory of attainment.

## X

### GOOD WORKS AND FASTING

Matt. vi. I. Take heed that you do not your righteous deeds before men, to be seen of them; else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven.

2. When therefore thou showest thy sympathy in deeds, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Amen, I say unto you, they shall receive no reward.

3. But when thou doest a good work, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4. That thy good works may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

16. Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. Amen, I say unto you, They shall receive no reward.

17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face;

18. That thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee.

— IN the following verses the question is constantly about rewards and recompenses. Has Jesus really meant something, or are his words wholly allegorical? I confess that thinking of rewards and recompenses in connection with the spiritual life is rather repellent. But why do you translate, "They shall receive no reward," which is quite the reverse of the old translation, "They have received their reward"?

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This translation of yours only enhances the thought of reward.

— The original Greek words *apekhousin ton misthon autōn* convey a double meaning. They may indeed be translated, "they receive their reward," but the verb *apekhō* really means, "keep aloof, hinder," and never anything else. Therefore it does not seem wrong, in this connection, to take the word *apekhō* in its ordinary significance, all the more so as it presents with greater emphasis what Jesus had in mind, though, on the other hand, the old translation also does not directly confuse his meaning.

— I should be glad to hear what "Jesus had in mind," as you say, because the word "reward" in this connection seems to me to be very strange indeed.

— That Jesus was thinking of no outer rewards you will realise at once. But that he had in mind something which properly could be designated as "reward," is also plain. This "reward" is partly something inherent in the nature of things, partly something unexpected, something surprisingly superabundant. What might that be? What else but that peace of conscience, that joyousness and inner bliss, which in time follows upon the recognised position in the invisible kingdom of heaven? Keeping in mind

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these "karmic" results — as an Oriental would say — of our good deeds and endeavours, we do not wonder at all that Jesus spoke about "rewards." Could you indeed imagine a greater boon, a greater heavenly recompense, a greater token of divine grace than the right of citizenship in the world of the spirit — immortality and eternal life? Again, using the other translation, we are aware that Jesus was speaking of rewards with the express purpose of pointing out to his disciples that in the kingdom of heaven no one was striving after any kind of compensation. Ponder his words a little. He advises his followers in so many words that they should not, like unto hypocrites, contemplate any reward for their good works — for in that case they, like the hypocrites, would get their reward ! And that reward would consist of outer honours and triumphs. But when the disciples strive not after anything for themselves, not even remembering their own selves, then " the heavenly Father shall recompense them "— and what this implies, I have just explained.

— Now I see, and I realise that hypocrites forfeit their heavenly reward. But I am likewise aware of two other divergent phrases in your translation. In the first verse you say, "do not your righteous deeds," and in the second,

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”showest thy sympathy in deeds.” The corresponding clauses of the old translation read, ”do your righteousness,” and ”doest alms,” and I think these latter sound very simple and clear. — That may be, since you are used to them. But the Greek text of the first verse says, *ten dikaiosynēn hymōn mē poiein*, and the second, *poiēs elēmosynēn*; the Latin text has, *ne iustitiam vestram faciatis*, and, *facies elemosynam*. Now it is a noticeable fact that in some Greek manuscripts the words of the first verse run, *tēn elēmosynēn hymōn me poiein* (”do not your alms”). Accordingly Luther wrote in his German translation, *habt acht auf eure Almosen, dass ihr die nicht gebt* and so forth. And the old English translation said, ”take heed that ye do not your alms,” etc. The Roman Catholic translations, on the other hand, have followed the text of the *versio vulgata*, which is now considered more correct. In any case the meaning remains rather unchanged. But the right understanding of the text depends on the word *elēmosynēn*, usually translated ”alms,” especially if we follow those MSS. which have the same word in both verses. It seems to me rather suggestive that the *versio vulgata* solves the problem by translating the Greek word *elēmosynēn* with the Latin *elemosynam*, which is no classic Latin word at all. If Hieronymus in translating had felt

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convinced that *elēmosynē* meant "alms," why did he not use the Latin word *stips*, for instance? His use of a word which, although in itself of Greek origin, evidently was commonly used by the Christians of the Middle Ages, clearly indicates that the artificial Latin word *elemosyna* had, so to say, a technical significance of its own. And this technical meaning was of course implied in the Greek word *elēmosynē*. Now, seeking the meaning of *elēmosynē*, we learn that it signified alms or gifts to the poor only at second hand. Its original meaning was "pity, sympathy." In Latin this is *miseriordia*, but as the word *miseriordia* was used principally to designate the pity or mercy of God, it is evident that the Church appropriated the new word *elemosyna* to indicate the pity or sympathy of men. Thus in these verses, at least in the second, the question is of that sympathy and pity men are able to show one to another. And Jesus does not speak only of the feeling of sympathy, for the text reads, *poiēs elēmosynēn*, *i.e.* "doest sympathy" or "showest thy sympathy in deeds." This is a much broader conception than "doest alms," for the giving of alms may happen by way of habit or purpose, in other words, without human feeling. But the word *elēmosynē* includes feeling above all. The disciple feels pity, sympathy, love, and therefore

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he helps. The mere feeling would be still-born if it did not crystallise into an act; but as an actual deed it is alive. On the other hand, the mere act without feeling would be artificial and hypocritical. It seems to me to be of the greatest importance that we should understand this passage correctly, for in our Christendom there is not only a good deal of philanthropy for the sake of "the glory of men," but also much cold and heartless giving of alms.

— I see, and I find your interpretation very conclusive indeed. But following the later and more correct reading of the first verse, why do you translate, "do not your righteous deeds"?

— Because "do your righteousness" is somewhat vague. We easily confound "righteousness" with "piousness," drawing up its contours according to our fancy. But Jesus does not speak of anything vague or uncertain. He speaks to his disciples of his five commandments, and the new philosophy of life included in them. He speaks of the new "righteousness," the new "justice" (*iustitia* of the Latin text) or law. We also could translate, "do not your lawful deeds." I have explained previously the etymology of the Greek word *dikaioσynē*, and in this place it means technically "obeying the new law of life," so that the clause, "Take heed that ye do not your

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obeying the new law of life," means simply, "Take heed that ye do not your (according to the new life) lawful deeds," *i.e.* "Do not fulfil my commandments in order to gain notoriety in the eyes of men. Let not such be your motive, for it would signify that you have not understood me at all. The new life opens to him only who seeks it for its own sake. My commandments are neither of an external nor of a formal nature, and it lies with you, as my disciples, to see that they never lose their real meaning."

— But if so, why does Jesus speak of fasting? The Catholic Church has made of it an outer formalism and habit.

— And thereby it has lost its ethical meaning and power. Jesus speaks of fasting because it is a natural matter with every man living a spiritual life. Nor does "fasting" mean being without food merely. The Greek word *nēsteyō*, besides meaning ordinary fasting, has a general significance of "renouncing, abstaining from something." Thus Jesus advises his disciples in the following manner: "Abstaining from something, do not make much of it. Renouncing, let nobody have an idea of it." However, we had better leave the word "fasting" unchanged, as it is an excellent symbol of asceticism in general, and as it was used by Jesus with just that purpose in view.

## XI

### PRAYER

Matt. vi. 5. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the street, that they may be seen of men. Amen, I say unto you, They shall receive no reward.

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

7. And in praying use not vain repetitions as do the men in the street: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9. After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

10. Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

As in heaven so on earth.

11. Give us this day our transcendental bread.

12. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

— In the chapter on prayer I am not aware of any particular differences between your translation and the old one. There is only one striking point. You speak of "our transcendental bread," and we are, however, used from immemorial times to pray for

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"our daily bread." Why this remarkable translation?

— It is the only reasonable translation. A little later in the same chapter of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus directly forbids his followers to be anxious concerning meat and drink and raiment. Why do you think he should advise the same followers, in this instance, to pray for daily bread, and to pray to God or the heavenly Father, who, according to the words of Jesus, knoweth what they are in need of, before they even ask him?

— Does not the original text, then, say so?

— The Greek text runs, *ton arton hēmōn epiousion dos hēmin sēmeron*. The term *epiousion* has been rendered by the word "daily" in all European translations: *cotidiano*, *quotidien*, *täglich*, *daglig*, *jokapäiväinen*. The spirit of the prayer has thus been disregarded by all. However, strange to say, the Latin *versio vulgata* did translate the word appropriately. There the prayer reads, *panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*, "our bread transcendental give us to-day." The Greek word *epiousios* does not mean "for the coming day," but being derived from the word *ousia*, which means "matter, essence, substance," must be rendered "being after, beside, or over matter," or consequently,

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”supersensible, transcendental,” in Latin *super-substantialis*.

— What, then, is this ”transcendental bread ”?

— It is of course the food of the spirit. Jesus says in another place: No man liveth by bread alone.

— And thus it is this nourishment of the spirit that we should pray to God for?

— Do not take it too superficially. God is no being outside of ourselves. God is the heavenly Father. The heaven is within our spirit. In praying we address ourselves to our inner Father, saying to him: Speak to us this day thy ever living words.

— Why did not Jesus express himself thus plainly?

— I suppose, because a concrete symbol will leave a deeper impression on the mind, suggesting closer inspection whenever its true meaning is forgotten. Jesus was a lover of poetical language.

— If so, what is prayer?

— It is a silent hour of devotion when we are alone — at least in the chamber of our own heart. It is in the interest of the spiritual not the material life. In prayer we have intercourse with our Father in heaven, speaking to him as to a close friend, asking for his spiritual help and having

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absolute confidence in his love. Jesus advises us to observe every morning such a solitary hour of meditation — hence the word "this day" in his prayer.<sup>1</sup> In this connection I also wish to point out a fact rather neglected by our Christendom, although they have built upon it an entire theological system. It concerns the teaching of Jesus as to the forgiveness of sins. The Church has constructed out of it a very intricate dogma with all due sacraments and magic ceremonials, notwithstanding the fact that the teaching of Jesus is so utterly plain and simple: our heavenly Father forgives us, if we forgive each other, but if we do not forgive one another, neither does our heavenly Father forgive us. What would become of us Christians and our courts of justice, if we should follow Jesus in truth? Happily Jesus is speaking only to those who wish to be Christians, who wish to follow in the footsteps of the Master, who wish to become his disciples.

— And what about the forgiveness of our Father in heaven?

— That in any case is not a juridical question. No man can possibly evade the results of his work

<sup>1</sup> The writer has further explained and interpreted the Lord's Prayer in his book *Jeesuksen salakoulu* (The Esoteric School of Jesus).

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but by being forgiven by his brothers. As to the forgiveness of the Father, that is a spiritual matter. And it must be experienced.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question is further elucidated in the aforementioned work, "The Esoteric School of Jesus."

## XII

### THE TREASURES

Matt. vi. 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal.

20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

21. For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

— IN these verses there are no alterations in your translation. But tell me, please, what are these heavenly treasures? Usually people probably understand them to mean the "just and right faith in God's grace," if, indeed, they are considered to be aught but high-sounding phrases.

— What Jesus says is never empty talk. His words are lightnings of spirit and thunderings of truth. The heavenly treasures that Jesus exhorts his disciples to lay up are no mean and valueless things; they are not to be had gratis, they are to be paid for, just as we pay for earthly things. Heavenly treasures are all those loving, encouraging, trusting and blessing thoughts and feelings that other men bestow upon us. How are we able to buy such things? By our own loving

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kindness, helpfulness and friendliness — by our own good deeds. And why are the blessings of other people such treasures, why are they so valuable? It is because they, little by little, are building up and moulding that divine resurrection body of ours spoken of by Paul and destined to become our eternal clothing. This is wisdom secret and profound, unintelligible to materialists, but understood by those who know their own spirit. The law of life is expressed by the words of Jesus.

## XIII

### THE LIGHT OF THE BODY

Matt. vi. 22. The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be sincere, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness !

— You say "sincere " instead of " single." Was the old " single " a wrong translation?

— No, both translations are equally correct. The Greek word *haplous* means "single," and so does the Latin word *simplex* of the *Vulgate*. But the Greek *haplous* also means "sincere, true," and in this instance the question is not of the bodily eye primarily. The eye of the body which is at the same time the light of the body is that which we call reason. The Greek word *ofthalmos*, meaning "eye " and used in the text, is derived from the verb *horaō*, which signifies not only "seeing," but also " seeing by the aid of one's intelligence or reason." Jesus of course speaks of this eye of the reason — which is a mode of expression often used in our own time — and what is the singleness of the eye of reason but its

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honesty, its sincerity, its love of truth? If the reason, thought, intelligence that is in us be sincere, accepting the new philosophy of life of Jesus, then our whole body shall be full of light. But if the light within us, if our intelligence be darkness — how great is then the power of "darkness," that is, of our mere corporeal and animal self?

## XIV

### GOD AND MAMMON

Matt. vi. 24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Do not concentrate your attention upon your soul, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet upon your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the soul more than the food, and the body than the raiment?

26. Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?

27. And which of you by meditating can add one cubit unto his stature?

28. And why do ye concentrate your thoughts upon raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.

29. Yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31. Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32. For after all these things do the multitudes seek, Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33. But seek ye first the kingdom, and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

34. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the trouble thereof.

— Now we are approaching the subject of the notorious "mammon." What is it exactly? The merciless god of opulence?

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— *Mamōnas*, as it is written in the Greek text, is a Syrian word left untranslated in the gospel, because there was no sufficiently characteristic equivalent in the Greek or any other European language. It is generally said to represent riches and the god of opulence, but if so, why did not the Greek translators use the word *Ploutos* or *Ploutōn*? This god of opulence had originally reigned over the underworld and the inner riches of the earth, but it evidently did not match the word *mamōnas*, as the Greek translators avoided it. Mammon has thus a particular significance which we cannot escape noticing, if we but give a moment's consideration to the words of Jesus. Now then, does Jesus ever mention the word riches in verses 24-34?

— He does not!

— And notwithstanding this fact we Christians have without exception misunderstood his words in this direction. But never mind. None but the disciples and immediate followers of Jesus are ever able to comprehend his words in the profundity of their wisdom. For the real meaning of his words is astonishing.

— Yes, I suppose so, for, taken literally, he almost seems to advise carelessness, nay, idleness. He expressly speaks of the birds of the heaven which are being fed by the Father, and he adds,

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"Are not ye men of much more value than they?" Thus, how should not the heavenly Father take care also of our food and clothing! This is indeed astonishing.

— Nevertheless, it is true, with the sole difference that this law of life as unveiled by Jesus concerns none at all but he who really wishes to follow Jesus and does the will of the heavenly Father.

— You mean to say —?

— That mammon, in the mouth of Jesus, is not the god of opulence, but of mortal and transient personal life. Whoever wants to devote himself wholly to the service of the heavenly kingdom, following the Master in all things as his apostle, and as a prophet of truth, will become liberated from those material cares which are the lot and destiny of every man on earth — but, remember, only on that condition. Ordinary people ("the Gentiles," as the old translation puts it) always concentrate their thoughts on their livelihood, their daily bread and everything pertaining thereto; they cannot avoid it, because it is the law of their existence. In any case, however, all men try to get rid of this necessity. How alluring is earthly wealth promising freedom from care! yet rich people know that wealth and possession bring their own worries, so that, as men, the rich

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are not happier than the poor. There is no other liberation from anxiety and care than *metanoia*, that "conversion" of which Jesus speaks, and which consists in a spontaneous turning of the mind to eternal things. In the beginning, this meditation cannot fill up all the time of the aspirant who is bound by his earthly duties. But step by step, the ardour and longing of the aspirant being intense and strong, there will be left ever more and more time for him to use in heavenly meditations, his earthly duties falling away correspondingly. In the end, he is in a position to devote himself entirely to the service of truth, entering into that superhuman realm of nature where man is free from cares, and where in very truth he is no more permitted to be anxious about the material life. I have spoken of "thinking" and "meditating," but it goes without saying that thinking of eternal things, far from being speculation or day-dreaming, is an intense concentration of the mind upon them, which concentration always goes hand-in-hand with living the new life in strict accordance with the five commandments of Jesus. Therefore, instead of the old word "anxiousness" I have translated "meditation" and "concentration of attention," which better follow the original text, at least in spirit. The Greek word *merimnaō*

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does not mean only "I am anxious," but "I am lost in thought, I trouble my head." Nor does the *versio vulgata* translate *sollicitus sum*, "I am anxious," at every turn, but it also says *cogito*, "I think."

— Why do you say in verse 25, "Do not concentrate your attention upon your soul, what ye shall eat, etc.?" The old translation, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, etc.," seems so much more self-evident. We really eat to maintain our life, not our soul.

— The original text reads, *mē merimnāte tē psykhē hymōn ti fagēte* etc. *Psykhē* means "soul," but not the immortal soul, although often so used in modern languages, but the living personal soul, and often only the "life-spirit." The *Vulgate* has translated *anima*, which is the equivalent of *psykhē*. Jesus says, Be not anxious for the life of your personal soul, *i.e.* for being alive on earth (only) for the sake of your own personal soul. There is made here an ingenious difference between the body and the life of the personal soul, or else it had been said, Be not anxious for your body, what it shall eat, etc. Jesus went deeper deliberately: the desire of life does not dwell in the dense body, but in the sentient soul.

— But if the disciples themselves stop thinking

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of their livelihood, who shall take care of them?

— They will be provided for by their apostolic work — speaking from a worldly standpoint — or by their heavenly Father, as Jesus puts it. Now the apostolic work is not at all to the liking of people in general, they mostly consider apostles to be of very little use indeed: notwithstanding this the Father "feeds " them, sometimes by the aid of other men, sometimes in another way — in our time of well-ordered economics probably by some kind of monetary proceeds from their spiritual work — provided there happen to be apostles and prophets nowadays. The main point is not how the livelihood is being ordered, the main point lies with the psychological standpoint of the disciple: to be unconcerned with his "pecuniary situation." I am well aware that, in our practical days, this is a dark saying, easily and deliberately to be misunderstood. However, there is included in it a new and higher practice which I think every true genius will gladly admit. Remember the words of Jesus that nobody can enter the kingdom of heaven who is not like unto a child. If we want to follow the Master, we must become children. A characteristic feature of the child is, that he is unable to take care of his own existence.

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That matter is in the charge of his own people, and out of this charge there arises, in natural conditions, the greatest happiness and joy of the parents.

## XV

### SEEK, AND YE SHALL FIND

Matt. vii. 6. Give not up the sanctuary unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.

7. Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

8. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

9. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10. Or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent?

11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him !

— IT always seemed to me that the exhortation of Jesus to "seek " was a particularly high and ethical advice. Did he not advise us to seek truth, God, the kingdom of heaven?

— Certainly he did, and if we Christians had read our testament, we should have understood that nobody can be a Christian who has not become so by seeking and knocking. All men seek their earthly livelihood, but Jesus expressly states, that whoever will become his disciple must first seek the kingdom of heaven. For a rational being, for a man in his senses it is even absurd to

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exist on earth (or elsewhere) without knowing the truth, without knowing and understanding the "why" of existence. Jesus speaks to such men, and his "revaluation of all values" (*Umwertung aller Werte*) has given light, comfort, courage, and peace of conscience to many a truth-seeker. "Faith" is not belief in a dogma, but belief or confidence (*pistis*) in the power of truth, an inner conviction that "he that seeketh findeth." This is the belief in God taught by Jesus, and he himself as a great finder and knower is able to demonstrate that the heavenly Father listens to the prayer of the seeker. How should the Father give stones of dogmas and doctrines to man asking for the spiritual bread of Wisdom? Be convinced, says the Master, that when you ask the Father for the holy spirit of truth and love you verily shall receive that spirit.

— But why is the sixth verse, "Give not up the sanctuary unto the dogs," etc., included in these exhortations to seek, and why have you altered the old translation, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs"?

— That verse is seemingly detached from the surrounding text, but on closer consideration we shall find that it is well in harmony with it. The kingdom of truth is to be found only by seeking; on no other condition does the Father open the

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portals or reveal himself. Now if a man having found the truth lives in the kingdom of God he is subject to the same law: he is not to open the door of the kingdom to anybody who does not knock, he is not to cast the pearls of knowledge before men that feel thoroughly at home in their own impurity, and he is not to admit to the sanctuary of initiation such men as hang around cringing with selfish desires, but a moment later are ready to bark and bite. Many prophets have erred thus, although it is not to be counted against them, as the mistake was made out of the goodness of their heart. Moreover, the Greek word *to hagion* in the sentence of the original text, *nē dōte to hagion tois kysin,* "do not give that which is holy unto the dogs," means "the holy of holies of a temple," "the sanctuary," being of course at the same time the neuter gender of the adjective *hagios*. *Versio vulgata* translates: *nolite dare sanctum canibus*, but the Latin *sanctum* also means "sanctuary." Most European translators have said, "that which is holy": *non date do che è santo a' cani, ne donnez point ce qui est saint aux chiens*, given *icke hundarna det heligt är, älkää antako koirille pyhää*, but Luther gave the correct translation, *Ihr sollt das Heiligtum nicht den Hunden geben*.

## XVI

### FALSE PROPHETS

Matt. vii. 12. All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

16. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

20. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

— WHY have you moved verse 12 to the side of verse 15, placing it under the heading of "false prophets"?

— For the sake of the association of ideas. The act of seeking has no immediate connection with that ancient rule so ably expressed by Confucius in his time, "Whatever you would that men should do unto you, even so do you unto them." But it has a very immediate mental connection with the sentence concerning the false prophets, which connection is distinctly pointed out by the closing words, "For this is the law and the prophets." When the disciple has clearly under-

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stood the meaning of "the law and the prophets," he is able to beware, that is, to criticise and shun, the company of false prophets.

—Jesus says that false prophets shall be known by their fruits — is not that a sufficient criticism?

—Undoubtedly, but tell me, please, by what fruits?

—Probably by their own life, its immorality, etc.

—Do you think so? Jesus expressly states, that "false prophets come to you in sheep's clothing." A sheep can hardly be taken as the prototype of immorality or evil in general. I am sure that false prophets usually bewitch their victims by their moral superiority. Immoral and evil characters would hardly gain any large following, seeing that few real and sincere truth-seekers would ever be dazzled by the charms of immorality and evil-doing.

—But who, then, are the false prophets? And how can the morally superior possibly be false prophets?

—Let us first inquire into the significance of the word prophet. The Greek word *profētēs* means "soothsayer, interpreter of oracles, proclaimed divinely inspired seer or knower." "False prophets" reads in the original text, *pseudoprofētēs*, which literally means "pseudo-

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prophet, false interpreter, falsely inspired seer, lying augur." There is no secondary sense suggestive of immorality added to the Greek word. It means simply a proclaimer of false doctrines or false prophecies. Perhaps the false prophet himself is not always conscious of his wrong teaching. Perhaps he thinks he "sees " quite right. But Jesus says, By their fruits ye shall know them. By what fruits? Now you understand: by their false prophecies and teachings, by their false visions and fancied knowledge.

— But this way we shall fall once again into the dreadful gulf of orthodoxy ! That is just the explanation of the churches. For if we do not adhere to some definite "orthodox teaching," how shall we be able to know which teaching is wrong?

— That is just why Jesus has given us his standard of truth. And that standard or high criterion is of a moral nature, just as your instinct, like that of all men, is telling you. That morality, however, has nothing to do with the personal life of the prophet, only with his teaching. This is shown by Jesus quoting the ancient ethical rule. Is the teaching of the prophet, in all its details and consequences, in conformity with the law of life and the message

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of all true prophets? If so, then it is right — if not, the teaching is wrong. The prophetic message of Jesus is the nearest and highest one; it reveals to us the heart and conscience of man in its most deep and beautiful purity. Thus, if any prophetic teaching is not consistent with, for instance, the five commandments of Jesus, it reveals itself as false and wrong. It does not reach the moral height unveiled by Jesus in his words, his personality, and his life. And why should we recede in time? Why should things long since passed by be prophetically re-proclaimed? A prophet should be ahead of, not behind, the times. His message should either be ethically consistent with the teaching of Jesus, or surpass it. And in no case whatsoever should he diverge from the immemorial rule that to others should be done only that which he would have others do to himself. If a prophet, for instance, defends warfare, as it was natural to do in bygone times, he must be willing to receive in his own person all the cruelty brought about by war. For this reason Jesus declares that false prophets, although unconsciously, are inwardly ravening wolves. They bring destruction along with them. Their teaching, dazzling at first by its brightness, secretly poisons in the long run. — Why have you omitted the verse, "Every

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tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire ”?

— Because it is not logically necessary, containing as it does a new thought. I am sure it has been added to the text afterwards. Some copyist of the Middle Ages happened to think of hell, and decided benevolently, that that place was rather suitable for false prophets. We had better omit the verse altogether, for it can easily instigate to evil — and has done so.

## XVII

### THE STRAIT WAY

Matt. vii. 13. Enter ye in by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to death, and many be they that enter in thereby;

14. But narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it.

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Master, Master, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22. Many will say to me (in that day), Master, Master, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works?

23. And then I will confess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that did not follow my law.

24. Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock.

25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; but it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock.

26. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.

27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall thereof.

— Now you have again been pleased to transpose some verses from one place to another.

— Do not speak thus; it is no whim of mine. Do you not see the logic of it? At the end of his Sermon on the Mount Jesus wishes to impress upon his followers the right understanding of the

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kingdom of heaven in its relation to the visible world. Although the kingdom of heaven is not separated from the world of mammon, whether locally or temporally, for, according to the words of Jesus, it lies within ourselves as human beings — nevertheless, entering the kingdom of heaven is not as easy as stepping through the door from one room into another in this kingdom of the world. Notwithstanding its nearness, the kingdom of heaven is, by its own essential qualifications, so far above our everyday consciousness that it is like treading a long way, before it is possible to reach the gate of the kingdom. This way is called by Jesus "the strait road," *tethlimmenē hē hodos*, in Latin *arta via*. And by what is the strait way distinguished? That is clearly set forth in verses 21-27. The strait road is the way of living works, not of any faith. They that content themselves by calling Jesus their Master (Lord) do not walk upon the narrow path. The strait road is not the way of public worship, saintly performances, holy prayers and sacraments. Only he does walk on the strait way who fulfils the will of the Father, that is, lives in strict observance of the commandments of Jesus. "Depart from me, ye that did not follow my law."

— Here you once more use a translation of

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your own: Ye that did not follow my law. The old translation reads, Ye that work iniquity.

— The original text runs, *hoi ergatsomenoi tēn anomian*, in Latin *qui operamini iniquitatem*. Rendered literally into English that is, as the old translation has it, Ye that work iniquity or lawlessness. Now, who work iniquity, who are lawless, but they that do not follow the law? And of which law is here the question? Evidently not of the law of Moses, which had passed its day and grown "old," but of the law of life proclaimed by Jesus and revealed by him in his five commandments. The commandments of Jesus were now the highest expression of the law, hence disobeying them was breaking the law of life.

— What do the words "in that day" mean in the verse, Many will say to me, etc. Does Jesus speak of the hour of death?

— You will observe that I have put those words in parentheses. They are evidently a later interpolation. Some copyist at his convent desk thought of the kingdom of heaven as an after-death state, and added the words with good intent. In the parallel verses of the Gospel of Luke no such matter is mentioned (Luke vi. 43-49). The words "in that day" confound the meaning of the sentence entirely, if we remember what Jesus meant by the kingdom of

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heaven. In this verse Jesus expressly warns his followers against using their so-called psychic powers: do not perform mighty works by the aid of occult forces thinking that thereby your spiritual growth will be furthered; the occult powers have their own realm in the world of the soul, but they do not rise into the kingdom of the spirit. Jesus does not speak of the after-death, but of the eternal, spiritual life of the kingdom of heaven or God, and therefore the words "in that day" are entirely without foundation.

— They are few indeed who walk upon the strait way! Most people will have to content themselves with the broad way that leadeth to destruction — but now I find that you translate "to death." Why such a translation, please?

— For the sake of the logical train of reasoning, "Death" is the opposite of "life." The words *eis tēn apoleian* of the Greek text, and *ad perditionem* of the Latin version, certainly mean "to destruction," but as this word reminds one of the theological "perdition" I have changed it to "death." Still, if you wish to retain the word "destruction," you should at least clearly understand what is meant by "destruction" or "perdition." And you cannot do so without taking into account the possibility of reincarnation of which we spoke some time ago. Eternal life is

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with the spirit, but before the psychic, personal ego of man in self-forgetfulness unites with the spirit, it is absolutely necessary for the human spirit to be born over and over again into the psychic and corporeal world, until at last in some future incarnation the personal ego brought forth by the spirit will become so spiritually minded that he shall step on the strait way, overcome by an inextinguishable longing for the home of his Father. The strait and narrow road alone leads to eternal life. Walking on the broad way leads to personal death and rebirth.

— Thus all men walk on the broad way, except those few who step on the strait path?

— No, not all, but as Jesus said, "many," *polloi, multi*.

— How is that? What path, then, are the great masses treading?

— No path at all — but of course the number of those that step on the broad way is daily increasing.

— Now I fail to understand. This is something quite new. Do we not usually think with pity — perhaps even with scorn — of those who walk on the "broad way to eternal perdition"?

— We have been taught to think a great many foolish thoughts, but that does not change the facts of life nor the teachings of Jesus, does it?

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— What is the teaching of Jesus on this point? I am not yet perfectly aware of it.

— All men that, swamped by the hustle and bustle of this world, lead a butterfly existence without thought of anything but everyday joys and sorrows, live their life without entering any "way." They are not yet awake enough to become "seekers." Only those who begin to seek and knock are treading the "way." But as long as their seeking tends to remain within the folds of their intelligence or their psychic ego, as long as they, in other words, are occupied with speculating and philosophising, studying and selecting — or as long as they believe in dogmatic theology, identify themselves with some church or sect and worship God by chanting and preaching — so long do they still walk on the "broad way," leading to death and rebirth. Only when their seeking begins to gravitate towards the spiritual life and its ideal ethical values, only then will they turn off from the broad way and enter upon the narrow path, following fixedly and concentratedly in the footsteps of their Master.

— Men are thus divided into three classes?

— Yes. Using the terms of Jesus they are called (1) *ethnikoi*, everyday people ("pagans"), (2) *polloi*, many, and (3) *oligoi*, few. Many are

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”called,” but few are ”chosen.” As you will remember, Paul (for instance, I Thess. v. 23) divides man into three principal parts, body (*to soma*), soul (*he psykḗ*), and spirit (*to pneuma*). Now *ethnikoi*, ” the pagans ” or everyday people, are those whose consciousness centres in their body — they are corporeal men, *sōmatikoi*, the walkers on the broad way are the many, *hoi polloi*, whose consciousness centres in the life of their personal soul — they are psychic men, *psykhikoi*; again, the walkers on the strait way are those few, *hoi oligoi*, whose consciousness feels at home with the spirit — they are spiritual men, *pneumatikoi*.

## XVIII

### CLOSING WORDS

Matt. vii. 28. And it came to pass, when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching:

29. For he taught them as one having knowledge and not as their scribes.

— THE closing words are beautiful and well chosen. They leave their mark on the whole Sermon on the Mount: "the multitudes were astonished at his teaching." I also feel astonished, for now only has it dawned upon me what a remarkable significance this sermon possesses. Such a speech could not indeed have been delivered by a mere "scribe." He must have had "knowledge" of what he was speaking — or is your translation free? The old translation had "authority."

— It is quite the same, for authority means "power given by knowledge"; I only wanted to emphasise the knowledge side. The original Greek text has *eksousian*, the Latin *potestatem*. *Potestas* means "power," but *eksousia* is "cunning, ability, power." Thus the Vulgate made the first mistake, and was followed by Luther, who

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translated *gewaltig*, " mightily "; and accordingly the Swedish Bible had *väldeligen* and the Finnish *valtavasti*. But the Italian, French and English Testament adopted the correct translation: *come avendo autorità, comme ayant autorité*, as one having authority. Still we must not forget that the power in question is not arbitrarily given. It is backed by the spiritual knowledge of him who has authority. Jesus was endowed with the power given him by the heavenly Father, but it had been given him as a natural "reward " or consequence belonging to the position which he, in the course of his earthly lives, had gained for himself in the kingdom of heaven. He had attained to knowledge, and power follows upon knowledge. This knowledge and this power are the mark of the true prophet, this authority it is that raises him so high above all " scribes."

## WHICH SHALL YOU CHOOSE?

### THE COMMANDMENTS OF MOSES

In the fifth chapter of the fifth book of Moses are given those ten commandments which the Christian Churches have accepted under the title of "the ten commandments of God," or the decalogue, and which in Christendom are taught to all men, nay, even to children, in accordance with the text of the so-called Catechism.

But why have the Churches omitted the second commandment, and divided the tenth in two?

The reader may decide for himself.

According to the *Versio Vulgata* the commandments read as follows:

#### I

I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

#### 2

Thou shalt not make thee any graven or any other image of them that are in heaven above,

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

or in the earth beneath, or in the waters beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor worship them: for I am the Lord thy God; a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto many thousand generations of them that love me and keep my commandments.

### 3

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for he that taketh his name in vain will not be left unpunished.

### 4

Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the day of sabbath, that is, the day of rest of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. Remember that thou too wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord

WHICH SHALL YOU CHOOSE?

thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm. Therefore he commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

5

Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

6

Thou shalt not kill.

7

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

8

Thou shalt not steal.

9

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

10

Thou shalt not desire thy neighbour's wife. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, his field, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his ass, or anything that is thy neighbour's.

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Deut. v. 22: "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me."

The Lord God who wrote his commandments in tables of stone, was an exterior God, the thundering Lord of the old dispensation and the old covenant. He called himself jealous, menacing with revenge and punishment those who did not keep his commandments. He was the God of law.

He was not the God of love, he was not the heavenly Father, of whom Jesus taught.

Why does Christendom continue to worship him?

## THE COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS

The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with these words, " God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." This shows that it was already during the first Christian times, clearly understood that a new age was dawning, a new covenant was made between God and man, a new God was proclaimed as it were.

The old God was outside of man. His voice issued thundering from far-away heavens, heard and understood only by the prophets who were able to interpret his will to men.

The new God dwelt in the heavens of spirit, and these heavens were concealed in the spirit of man. Thus the voice of God sounded in the spirit of every man, and every man upon hearing the message of Jesus knew in his own consciousness what was the will of God.

The old God spoke through the mouth of the prophets, but Jesus was so perfectly penetrated

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by the spirit of the heavenly Father, that he became the Son of God, in whom God was perfectly manifested.

The old God resorted to menace and punishments in order to bring men into obeisance, but the Father of Jesus left it to every man's own decision whether he was willing to follow the inner voice, or not.

The old commandments everybody heard with his ears, and understood them. The new commandments nobody understood merely upon hearing them, unless he, wearied to death with mammon, was seeking the new life.

The old commandments mostly concerned the natural life, and they were kept by everyone who did not wish to be a criminal.

The new commandments belonged to the spiritual life, and they could not be kept by anybody in whom the spiritual life had not dawned.

But for those who, in the great longing of their soul, had reached the portals of the spiritual life, Jesus Christ became the way, the truth, and the life. His rules and advices grew for them into the bread of life, and they longed to follow his commandments in all things.

These are "the five commandments of the heavenly Father," proclaimed by Jesus:

THE COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS

1

Be not angry.

2

Be pure even in thy thoughts.

3

Swear not.

4

Resist not evil.

5

War not, but love all men.

The individual man cannot keep these commandments unless a new life begins for him. Little by little his condition will alter.

If all Christians would begin to follow the commandments of Jesus, life on earth would be utterly changed. The kingdom of heaven would descend upon earth amongst men, and a new age would indeed begin for humanity. The lost paradise would be regained.

But when will that day dawn? It will not dawn, until the children of men shall learn about the kingdom of God, about the Eden of happiness and bliss, about the path leading to its portals,

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and about the keys, given by Jesus wherewith the portals may be opened.

The kingdom of heaven will not come by itself, spontaneously. It will remain in the worlds of the spirit above, until men will pray for it to descend upon earth. And prayer is not empty talk, but the longing of the soul for the great heights, and the silent meditation of the spirit. Nor does prayer empty itself in thoughts; it realises itself in works, getting purified into new enthusiasm by the holy fire of truth.

He who prays follows the Master. He who does the will of the Father, he prays indeed.











