



**The Yoga of Jesus:
Teachings of Esoteric Christianity**

Mauri Lehtovirta

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Translated from Finnish into English by
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Edited by
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Preface to the English Edition

The Yoga of Jesus was published in Finnish in spring 2009. The text and title were already finished in January 2009 when I heard that there is a book compiled from Paramahansa Yogananda's writings having the same name in English. I didn't know at the time that we would translate the book into English for interested readers in the United States and elsewhere. The present work and Yogananda's book have only in common that they both comment on the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. It is interesting to note how close the interpretations coming from different traditions can be, as well as how sacred books can be opened with various keys, so to speak. It is also important to remember what Pekka Ervast (1875–1934), a Finnish Theosophist and expert on esoteric Christianity, advised: readers should delve into the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and find the interpretation that is closest to them. Ervast has been, and still is, an important spiritual teacher in Finland. He was an author who had deep insights into the meaning of Jesus's sayings. With great heart and wisdom, Ervast familiarized himself with the spiritual practices contained in the Sermon on the Mount; he probably was the first one in the world to talk about the changes that take place in those who follow Jesus's five commandments in their lives.

For the last thirty-five years, I have lived as an active truth seeker. I started to understand the deeper aspects of Christianity after I had a strong transformative experience thirty years ago. I have delivered lectures and written a great deal about it, and many times I've been asked whether I am planning to write another book. I have answered that I have no such plans: the system of spiritual development described in this book is enough for the rest of my life.

Following the path taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is so demanding in practice that I'm quite certain that my lifetime is not enough to reach the goal. Seeking for truth, talking about spiritual matters, lecturing, and artistic performances in the form of music and songs have been important ways to make spiritual knowledge and insights available to others. However, truth will begin to reveal itself only after we start applying it in everyday life, among people, as we make esoteric Christianity a touchstone of our lives.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Antti Savinainen and Richard Smoley for their diligent efforts to translate and edit *The Yoga of Jesus*, which has no doubt been a demanding process. Moreover, I wish to thank the Kulmakoulu Foundation, which has provided financial support for this project. It is my deepest hope that the teachings of *The Yoga of Jesus* will provide the reader's heart and mind with strength, joy, and light. I believe, and I know personally, that these teachings have the power to do so.

Mauri Lehtovirta

Helsinki

February 19, 2020

Introduction

I have titled this book *The Yoga of Jesus*. The title might give rise to wondering, even objections. Hence some justification is in order. Was Jesus familiar with the yoga tradition in the East? Did he study it at some point in his life? Isn't it daring to claim that he would have practiced yoga or that he would have had taught some kind of spiritual system?

Even today there are sources indicating that Jesus might have been in contact with spiritual schools and teachers outside of Palestine and Judea, that is, in Egypt, Persia, even India, during his "lost years," about which the Bible remains silent.*

It is highly likely that Jesus studied the ancient tradition of yoga and its philosophy during his earthly life. Furthermore, it is clear that he built his own teachings about the spiritual path on the ethics and spiritual knowledge that were available in the Middle East, Egypt, Persia, and India. This was the very foundation on which the yoga philosophy and ethics of that time were based. Yoga, an ancient tradition combining physical practices with spiritual aspirations, evolved in India thousands of years before Jesus was born. As a word, it means *union* or *connection*. The word is etymologically related to the Latin verb *jungere*, which means *to join*.

At present most of the yoga traditions adopted here in the West offer posture (asana) and breathing exercises. They chiefly aim at

* Swami Abhedananda, *Journey to Kashmir and Tibet* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1987); Pekka Ervast, *The Foundational Questions in Christosophia* [title translated from the Finnish; not available in English] (Imatra: Finnish Rosy Cross, 1940); Nicolas Notovitch, *The Unknown Life of Jesus* (Self-published, 1894); Gopala Das Venu, *The Secret Life of Jesus* [title translated from the Finnish; not available in English], (Järvenpää, Finland: Self-published, 2006); Paramahansa Yogananda, *The Second Coming of Christ* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 2004).

physical flexibility as well as calming and silencing the mind. The ultimate purpose of yoga is complete control of body and mind, and, through this, union with the highest consciousness, *samadhi*, and finally, escape from the wheel of reincarnation.

What is the meaning of the yoga of Jesus as I refer to it in this book? I mean the maxims of life Jesus gave us—his ethical teachings. Jesus provides us with these in his speeches and parables as well as in the exemplary actions of his life. The core of his teachings is summarized in the Sermon of the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew; it is codified in the beatitudes, the five commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and other supplementary guidelines for life, all of which are given here.

Up to now the notion of the yoga of Jesus has been used principally by the Theosophical movement, which has investigated the common origin and similarities of various religions and spiritual systems for over a hundred years. I have long been inspired by the idea of Jesus's ministry as a yoga, which could open a new perspective on the spiritual dialogue between the East and the West (which, we are told, never meet). The idea of Jesus's teaching as a yoga can create many methods of integration. It can inspire comparisons between different spiritual traditions, recognizing their similarities and common objectives.

On the one hand, it is possible to consider the Sermon on the Mount as a mere speech; after all, it is a sermon delivered by Jesus.* What kind of yoga could that be? On the other hand, isn't a sermon meant to be studied, practiced, and followed in life? If one goes into the words and beyond them, one can certainly see similarities and common objectives between the core of yoga and the teachings of Jesus. The latter clearly correlate with the yogic notions of *yama* and *niyama*, which form the basis of the code of ethics in yoga. In turn, if we take a look at the Lord's Prayer, we notice that it is a meditative and mantralike practice of yoga. When it is taken from the realm of ideas into everyday life, it can become the yoga of

* *Editors' note.* Contemporary New Testament scholarship generally holds that this was never a sermon actually delivered by Jesus at a specific time, but rather a compilation of his sayings made by the evangelist.

action: karma yoga. In this way it is possible to work on practicing forgiveness.

Pekka Ervast stated over hundred years ago: “Meditation is based on knowledge that a human being has been endowed with a spiritual tool allowing him to rule the worlds; this tool makes it possible to place oneself in the correct state. This peculiar occult tool is thought, and its proper use is meditation or prayer.”* In the philosophy of yoga, meditation is quieting the mind. One is placed in the “correct state” in the Lord’s Prayer; it is in the state in which the mind can be quieted.

Usually spiritual traditions do not distinguish between thoughts and actions, but when spiritual aspiration is put into practice, one is sooner or later bound to face the fact that a thought is also an act. In the yoga of Jesus, the traditional yogic asanas can be equated with spiritual asanas, that is, attitudes. In Finnish, even the terms (*asana* in Sanskrit and *asento* in Finnish) are almost the same. The core aim in both traditions is the control of the mind. Union is another common aim: both ways of yoga look for contact with the higher consciousness, the higher self, or God, depending on one’s conceptual framework. Jesus uses the expression *the kingdom of heaven* or *the kingdom of God*. He has a saying referring to what was stated above: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21, King James Version). The yoga of Jesus, like other kinds, opens up the contact with the divine that is hidden in every human being.

The ideas of reincarnation and karma are deeply embedded in traditional yoga philosophy. To put it briefly, human beings are born in this school of life, the school of good and evil, again and again in order to learn and gradually become perfect. Individuals can exercise their free will and choose whether they develop quickly or slowly toward their grand aim. The law of karma is like a law of nature: it is based on a chain of inevitable cause and effect. A universal law of justice and love, it ensures that all human beings must answer for their actions sooner or later. A good act will be followed by a good effect. The same holds true with evil acts, which

* Pekka Ervast, *St. Paul and His Christendom* (1923). Not available in English.

will be followed by lessons taught by suffering, either in this incarnation or in one to come. We reap what we sow.

The ideas of reincarnation and karma have become familiar to ever increasing groups of spiritual seekers in many countries over the past decades. There have been voices among the priests in our Lutheran church (the dominant church in Finland) suggesting that everyone will go to heaven after death. Actually, this idea has always been valid, as it is clear that Jesus knew about the law of reincarnation. There are also some references to reincarnation in Jesus's sayings in the Bible, although they were downplayed if not suppressed in later centuries.

I wish to examine the teachings of Jesus, his yoga, in the context of reincarnation and karma. The crucial point is how Jesus teaches us to live. The Lutheran church has always stressed Jesus's redemptive death, atonement for sins, and his role as a savior rather than his teachings. In addition, it has regarded salvific faith as the key to eternal life in heaven. From the perspective of karma and reincarnation, this kind of salvation is not the final destination, since it is very rare that a person would become perfect within one lifetime. Hence it is not reasonable to think that God would condemn people to eternal damnation for failing to place their faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is very hard to believe in a God who would inflict upon people he created the extremely cruel punishment of eternal hell.

Jesus showed an exemplary model of the human being in his life and teachings, which continuously emphasize people's responsibility for their own lives. He reminds us, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Clearly Jesus is not talking about heaven in the afterlife. Instead, he is talking about the ethical path of the New Covenant, which leads the follower into Christ consciousness, the inner knowing of Christ. That is the kingdom of heaven to which Jesus so often refers in his teachings and parables and which has come closer to us through his life and work. It is the invisible kingdom, which is hidden in our hearts. This perspective is worth gaining in the twenty-

first century. Indeed all of Jesus's followers, Christians and those who are interested in what he really said, would do well to direct all their will and faith toward the hidden kingdom in our hearts.

Growing as a human being is intimately tied into taking responsibility for one's life. The aim of the yoga of Jesus does not lie in personal salvation; instead it is in learning to grow in wisdom and brotherly love, whereby we all serve each other. The question of the New Covenant is how we can strive ethically to bring about the kingdom of heaven here on earth. This would make our development toward true humanity through reincarnation less difficult.

The yoga of Jesus provides us with keys and directions for spiritual aspiration, in which no effort goes to waste. The incentives of this yoga include a new kind of vision, growing spiritual strength, the opportunity for an ever growing consciousness, and enlightenment. Jesus was the first example—the first of our brothers to finish this school and show us the perfection a human being can attain in this earthly school.

Jesus's guidelines, his five commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, are not familiar to many, since the Christian church has not given much emphasis to their Master's maxims. For some reason, it prefers to teach the Law of Moses—the Ten Commandments—even though Jesus says he has not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Jesus's instructions are different from the old commandments: they are more intimate. Jesus's maxims are not based on the Law: following them is voluntary. If you try to follow them, there will be certain results.

Jesus complemented his commandments with the beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer as well as with other ethical instructions found in the Sermon on the Mount. They are organically connected, and they complement each other. It makes no sense to codify them into a single canonical system of dogmas. The interpretations of these maxims only become valid if we personally think, feel, will, and live up to them in our everyday lives. This is not easy, but it is essential to start trying, to take the path. They are challenging and rewarding for those who practice them, as true spiritual exercises always are. Jesus himself promises that all who ask shall receive,

the seeker will find, and the door will be opened for the one who knocks.

The five chapters in *The Yoga of Jesus* are essays, treatises, and reflections in which I consider the meaning of the core teachings of the Sermon on the Mount for myself and all of us with the help of spiritual teachers who are important to me.* The chapters are more like openings for individual reflection and understanding by the reader rather than instructional advice as such.

The first chapter, “God Loves a Cheerful Giver,” which can be regarded as a follow-up to the introduction, discusses the logic of the teachings of Jesus, in which he considers the basic needs of our life and being. That logic accompanied Jesus throughout his whole life and teachings. It was surprisingly radical and revolutionary in his own time, and still is.

I have entitled the second chapter “The Happiness I Give Away.” It addresses the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus defines the keys to enduring happiness. Do we understand these proclamations? Are we able to interpret them?

The third chapter, entitled “The Sermon of the Mount and the Five Commandments of Freedom,” deals with the “new” maxims in five sections, each of which opens up new spiritual abilities or transcendental senses for their practitioner.

The fourth chapter is called “The Lord’s Prayer and the Power of Meditation.” It is divided into six long sections, which concentrate, sentence by sentence, on the prayer meditation given to us by Jesus.

The fifth chapter, “The Inexhaustible Wisdom of the Sermon on the Mount,” assembles some central definitions and instructions given by Jesus in addition to the beatitudes, the five commandments, and the Lord’s Prayer.

* *Editors’ note.* The cited passages from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) are for the most part not referenced in the text in order to enhance the flow of the book. However, references for all other Bible verses have been provided. All biblical quotations have been taken from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise noted.

Acknowledgments

I do not wish to provide a detailed list of those who should be thanked. Everyone who has helped to publish this book and worked for its dissemination deserves great thanks. I almost dare to say that our Father in heaven, who sees all, will reward him or her.

Mauri Lehtovirta

Helsinki

October 18, 2007

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God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Each generation is baffled by Jesus's actions and teachings, which do not follow common customs or conventions. It is possible to notice echoes from the martial arts in his thinking: the opponent's strength is shifted or shown to be a weakness, and traditional ways of reacting are replaced with new and surprising ones. Similarly, followers of the yoga of Jesus must rethink the basis for their actions and strategies.

Our everyday language has an abundance of old sayings and aphorisms. We cannot always be sure of their origins, and we seldom pause to think about their deeper meaning. "God loves a cheerful giver" is a saying I heard when I was a young boy. We used to playfully say that it was a motto for prostitutes. Many decades later, I decided to search for the origin of this idea. I recognized that it comes from the Bible (2 Corinthians 9:7). If one realizes this, one soon observes that it contains truths that are as big as life itself. A cheerful giver is a highly developed person who has the right relationship to his or her fellow human beings, life, and the whole of reality.

The Gatherer

When we look back at history, we notice that human beings and communities lived for thousands of years in gathering economies. People gather, first, food and other necessities of life, and then, little by little, land and property, things and goods. This way, they provide for their own safety. They plan and build complex systems to make sure that nobody can steal their goods, property, or land.

The gatherer economy appears to be alive and well today: we still use its approach to create safety for ourselves. What has been gained must somehow be protected. Each human being, family, tribe, and state has its own systems of attack, defense, and security. We build our own safety, and that of those who are close to us, around the goods and property that we have amassed. The greater the accumulated property, the more security, defense, and insurance policies we must assemble to protect it.

The most important question in a life that is built on security of goods appears to be, “What else could I get for myself?” This question also seems to define our relationship to nature, other human beings, and God—and to life itself. Both for communities and individuals, safety based on ownership has long been established by law. Deeply ingrained statutes and norms support and protect this process of accumulation, both individually and communally.

By contrast, spiritual awakenings, great prophets, and the founders of religions have always tried to show that this attitude of accumulation is unsustainable. After the prophet has gone away, however, his voice is weakened, and his powerful teaching starts to dim and become institutionalized. Gradually the mentality of material security starts to flourish again, and the “I want it, and I want it now” philosophy reigns.

Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet born in Judea two thousand years ago, attempted to demolish the way of life based on the security of goods. His whole life’s work was consistently directed against its philosophy, and his teachings call us to abandon its customs and habits.

Give and You Shall Receive

So far, Jesus Christ has been the purest manifestation of God’s eternal image of the ideal human being. In Theosophy, this ideal image is called the Cosmic or Mystic Christ. Jesus Christ was a master who was perfectly able to exemplify in his teachings and life the central feature of the Cosmic Christ, that is, love. The logic of Jesus’s teaching and action is that of love. When one remembers

that the most accurate characterization of love is based on giving, one understands why Jesus so vehemently opposed the prevailing “What could I have for myself?” type of thinking.

The principles of cheerful giving and relinquishing—which do not come by coercion—are constantly present throughout Jesus’s teaching. His life as a whole is a great lesson of love. When we examine the texts that tell us about Jesus, we notice that he constantly reverses the demands and expectations of having into giving. In Jesus’s language, giving means letting go, abandoning the old way of life, forgiving, relinquishing, and many similar things. When love is extended to the utmost, we come to the ultimate sacrifice: giving one’s own life.

I may wonder what Jesus’s statement to the rich man means to me: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21). In short, “Let go of all your belongings. Let go of your old life, which leads nowhere, and follow me. I am the truth and the life. You cannot serve two masters, God and mammon.” Jesus’s urging is unconditional: either or! Moths will eat belongings, but not even the devil can touch the spirit. Is this just a story told in the Bible, or does it speak to me in any way?

I suppose that many, like me, will remember the following statement from their childhood: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25). I remember thinking, “It’s so hard for rich people!” But where do we draw the line between the rich and the poor? Jesus means that everyone is rich who is attached to his or her possessions, no matter how much or how little money one has. Giving up money and property, that is mammon, is a call for a voluntary poverty. It is the poetry of a simple life. At the same time, it calls for a serious and demanding resolve.

Probably the one who was most successful in this endeavor was Francis of Assisi, God’s poor holy man. It is interesting to note that the Roman Catholic church, with its abundant luxury and wealth, elevated him as a saint. Holy simplicity is a term often associated with Francis, but it does not mean simplicity in thought; instead

it means the spiritual state which grows out of renouncing and cheerful giving. A better translation would be “holy poverty.” Today Francis is seeing a new renaissance as ecophilosophers and the ecological movement have taken him as their patron saint.

Compulsive hanging on to property starts to weaken when a person starts to seek for truth in life and understands the meaning of brotherhood. He realizes that the natural order of things means that if I have too much, someone else has too little. Brotherhood among people is an occult fact, although it can be seen everywhere. It can reveal itself to a truth seeker in the first words of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus recommends that we pray as follows: “Our Father, who art in heaven.” We are children of the same father, which makes us brothers and sisters.

Is this kind of brotherhood just a distant dream? Does it exist anywhere in the world? Some people equate the socialist economic system with the early Christian community, in which people handed over their wealth for the common use. But the community of the early Christians was voluntary, based on faith in the blessing of cheerful giving, while state socialism is based on an involuntary confiscation of property. Pekka Ervast reminds us that Jesus’s teachings are meant for individual human beings who wish to follow Jesus Christ. Of course, people can form communities, but no one can be forced to be a member.

The Power of Giving Away

Giving up property is part of Jesus’s yoga. Gradually one starts to realize that it is possible to give up other forms of control in life as well. When we follow the logic of the yoga of Jesus, we learn to give up our dependency on belongings and mammon as well as other external forms of security. We start to see that external position or rights are not that important anymore.

Many people say that this insight is impossible—and this is the message that the church always seems to offer to the masses. Indeed, it does appear to be impossible until one has seen it from within. We have been told that what is impossible with man is

possible with God. Jesus's followers, along with those of other prophets, are on their way to finding the God who makes the impossible possible. This God will be found in every person's core consciousness. Jesus did not say in vain that the kingdom of God is within you. When the individual is allowed to experience the presence of the higher self, that is, the mystical Christ, what previously seemed impossible turns out to be a logical necessity.

Clearly no one will voluntarily give up their means of managing the world, such as property, unless they believe, or know, that they will achieve even a more sovereign way of managing the world through different means. "God loves a cheerful giver" means that joy comes from the experience of a new spiritual resource one has started to find within; this experience is the basis for knowledge, which is reached through faith. This new spiritual resource is related to a new consciousness. (Invisible means of managing the world are discussed in Pekka Ervast's book *The Divine Seed*.) The individual will receive this new resource by following the path of purification and Jesus's commandments. It is about spiritual capacity, spiritual strength, and the growing potential to perceive human auras and thoughts, possess healing power, and so on. These sublime energies can be received by letting go of all that is binding and unnecessary.

This phase enables us to realize that by giving up safety, ceasing to pursue external positions, and dropping the demands of our rights, we actually don't give up anything important. Instead we will receive a new kind of safety, a new position, and new rights. Let us consider these three ideas one by one.

We can begin to see that no external means of controlling life can permanently help us. Sooner or later we realize that we must start seeking for another path. This new safety is born out of the realization that the old security system does not work: it is based on mammon—transient, shrinking, and vanishing property in a world of capitalistic competition. This is destroyed by moth and vermin and threatened by thieves and speculators. In addition, wealth to which one tightly clings is prone to arouse envy and fear. It does not build communality or brotherhood in the world.

The notions of old and new safety are relevant when we consider the security precautions some set up to protect their property and families. People build fences and walls around themselves, which prevent them from seeing poverty and agony outside their own secure prisons. Soldiers and police protect them from the bitterness and hatred generated by a selfish way of life. This kind of seeking for safety deprives people of all opportunities to act as cheerful givers. It effectively kills spirituality.

When speaking of military systems of security, I might point out that only a human being of infinite stupidity could invent a security system based on the so-called balance of terror. In this type of security, people and nations stand against one another, aiming rifles, missiles, and atomic bombs. In this scenario, safety means that either party is too terrified to do the first launch. This was the type of safety we had when missiles were located in Eastern Europe in the 1980s.

The new kind of safety is based on giving up all the aforementioned things. This is possible if a person starts to understand that no real safety—collective or individual—can be built on such fearful deterrents.

Furthermore, the truth seeker starts to understand that there is no end to constant getting and wanting. Safety and inner peace cannot be based on property or status. In the yoga of Jesus, the new safety is about turning the other cheek, letting go, and giving up. A person who starts on this path will take faith-based chances which constitute a test: is inner certainty achieved, does fear go away, do new means of inner control appear? On this path of brotherhood, the individual doesn't attempt to shield himself from suffering, which is an essential part of life and our teacher. The person on the path of brotherhood will gradually grow in happiness. He will not have a shirt; he has given it away, and yet he feels safe. No one envies him, because he has given everything to those who envied him.

The basis of safety is brotherly love—the willingness to work with the weak, sick, and poor. Following this path is based on the map Jesus gives us in his yoga when he advises us to pray: “Thy will

be done.” God feeds the birds of the air; why not the human being, God’s own image? When we give up clinging to external safety and start to follow our Master, we will find a new course for life, along with a certainty and meaning we never had before.

This is not an easy road. If it were, we would have gone much further in understanding other nations and realizing brotherhood. However, it will slowly win more support.

A general sense of meaning and the discovery of inner resources gradually cause fear to cease. This fear cannot be contained by any material system of security, but when we start to grow in righteousness and live life right, we have no need to fear life, other human beings, or for that matter death.

The lust for power over people is corrupting. When we give up clinging to power and status, we take a step towards greater love. The insight that is the basis for cheerful giving is crystallized in Jesus’s statement, “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). He also reminds us: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

The will to power in human emotional life is based on a combination of ambition and seeking for safety. But it is difficult to see how power as such would create safety: this is not supported by experience. Jesus prompts us to free ourselves from the pride that comes with power and status by praying: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” The evil Jesus is referring to is, according to Pekka Ervast, pride. Pride keeps brotherhood from becoming a reality in this world. It can be a temptation even for seekers who are spiritually advanced. We should grow in love. Love doesn’t look down on other people.

The person who has this knowledge in her spirit becomes aware of the invisible reality behind this material illusion and understands that external positions or titles have no real meaning. They are traps into which we step in our self-righteousness. They divide us into different classes, castes, and so on, and hence impede the realization of brotherhood. The cheerful giver doesn’t hang on to power; she voluntarily rejects it or uses it responsibly, as a gift

requiring love. Furthermore, she is ready to give it away at any moment, if need be.

As the cheerful giver leaves behind the safety of wealth and property and the traps of earthly power, she starts thinking how she could give up her rights, ceasing to demand them. She has come to know the law of cause and effect, which is known as karma. This cosmic law acts as a channel for justice in every case, in this or in future incarnations. We do not have to avenge the wrongs we have suffered: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth belongs to the Old Covenant. Truth seekers entrust their safety to the eternal God. They have no need to worry about how justice will be served, having found that Jesus's promise is true: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). They know that not a single hair of one's head falls to the ground without the knowledge of his heavenly Father. We don't often get to see how justice is served here and now, which may severely test our faith, but we have also been told that "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

When the truth seeker enters on the path of the yoga of Jesus, he will ask whether he needs to take any care about his rights at all. He eventually concludes that he can learn to calmly face any event and believe that justice will eventually happen. Seeing the Lord's Prayer in a new light, he will start to cherish the following verse: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Debt often keeps us in its grip. It could be about material things, such as reimbursement of money, but it can also mean favors we expect, or even a debt in love. I will discuss the logic of forgiveness more thoroughly later, but I can point out for now that the one who is waiting for the debtor to pay his debt, requesting atonement and compensation, is paradoxically the one who feels the greatest burden of the debt. If we understand this and are able to change our demand of compensation into giving—which in this case is forgiveness—we will free ourselves and the person in debt as well. At the same time our higher self will forgive our karmic debt, releasing us from old bondages. This is one way of fulfilling karma. It is the path of liberation. God loves a cheerful forgiver.

When we cease demanding justice for ourselves and seeking payment of debts, asking nothing for ourselves but just giving, we start to be free from the vicious circle of revenge depicted in the rule of “an eye for an eye.” This requires that we be ready to give up our request for compensation. Seeking revenge and calling for one’s rights can imprison one; one cannot let go of the thought of being compensated. This is part of the burden of accumulated hatred which people carry on from one generation to another, often loading it onto their children as well. And yet joy and relief will follow upon giving up, giving away, and forgiving.

I have briefly discussed how truth seekers can give up property, safety, status, and rights. They learn how to give their burdens away and step lightly into the realm of spirit. This looks easy on paper. It certainly isn’t, but it is not impossible either.

These thoughts may serve as a stimulus for personal meditation. The path is individual, and it cannot be taken by another. The most important thing is to listen to oneself. After that, everyone who steadfastly pursues his or her ideals, regardless of failures, will experience an inner change as well as exterior changes.

The Beauty of a Cheerful Giver

Let me return to the playful thought of a cheerful giver in the context of sexuality: it is indeed possible to think about St. Paul’s saying from this point of view as well. In fact, I believe that this saying is especially valid about our sex life. It seems that sexual culture in our time has become so distorted that a person either has to be completely pure and innocent or has gone through a long path of purification and knows how to approach sexuality as a cheerful matter.

Each person undergoes many phases of sexual development. As I see it, one should not condemn or cast moral judgment on one’s own sexuality, let alone that of others. Jesus provides us with a very clear piece of advice: “Judge not; resist not evil.” As long as we participate in sexual relationships, let us do so with a pure mind and preferably with joy.

Life teaches personal responsibility in these matters. Everyone who has thought about the true nature of love and its relation to sexuality knows this. At the same time, when a person becomes aware of the liabilities involved in sexual matters, she will become responsible for her sexual behavior; she can no longer act without responsibility. When she becomes convinced that the essence of love is giving, she starts to pay more and more attention to what she could give and how she could serve those she loves. This way, the lust or pleasure element of sex (i.e., what I could have) loses its grip little by little. Love becomes deeper and is spiritualized. The joy of one who gives is always purer and truer when it is clear that she does not look for her own good in relationships.

The Long Path of Growth

We as humankind are here to grow from childlike people to adults. A child needs to be given to, whereas an adult has the capacity to give. We learn to give to help someone else, or we give up an addiction. Learning this is an object of our life, as it has been of our past lives. Growth is about change: when we grow, we must give up what we were before. Suffering and pain originate from failing to realize that this is a good thing. When we understand that this is how life works, we cease arguing and resisting, and we can find the joy that comes from understanding and right action. Euripides says that “he who skillfully agrees with what is necessary can also fulfill a divine task.”

At first someone may give up through coercion, but eventually, through karmic suffering, they will understand, joyfully giving up everything they have and almost everything they are. Only the inner qualities of character will remain, bringing positive karma to serve as a resource for our next incarnation. The meaning of this is measured by an internal scale, which we begin to see only gradually.

We give away our different life stages by outgrowing them. Childhood is the first life stage and, in a sense, the only one we don't outgrow; instead we are nurtured out of it. Many researchers

think that childhood, or more precisely a childlike mind, is something valuable that we should preserve. We do not give away our childhood with joy. Indeed, adults have fashioned many cunning and clever ways of inducing children to make the transition into adulthood.

Youth is the next life stage. We are living in a time in which people tend to cling to youth. This tendency, however fashionable, is a sign of regression or stagnation. Many spiritual people I know, both old and young, face the present and future with enormous enthusiasm and definitely don't want to return to their uncertain and shallow youth.

As in nature, life is born, blossoms, and withers away. This happens to all of us time after time. Why is it hard for us to accept this order of nature? Could it be that there is an immortal spark within us, a source of everlasting youth, vitality, and life force? Deep down inside, we know that this is true. From this perspective, we can understand the yearning for external youth and vitality.

When we investigate Jesus's teachings and the philosophy of the cheerful giver, we start to understand that we are here to serve and love one another. This is a beginning of the path that does not end with death but leads to a new life. We are not here to be fixated on this maya, illusion, still less on the props and scenery of life, which waste away like ash in an urn. Studying the doctrine of reincarnation helps us to realize that in the future we will meet the people close to us and continue our practice of love.

We seem to especially keen on clinging to our own creations, especially our children. The cheerful giver remembers Kahlil Gibran's magnificent text: "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself." You cannot live their lives, "not even in your dreams." Sent forth your children like living arrows, and "let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness."

Life after life, we learn to give away more easily, more right-mindedly, more gladly. Eventually we learn how to give up our own life. When this is done consciously and voluntarily, it is a sacrifice. An individual can give up his life in different ways: with

bitterness, disappointed, in a war, or as a political martyr. I believe that many people on the spiritual path have gone through sacrificial deaths in previous lives. Only the Great Life can tell what the inner meaning of this kind of death is. However, if a person can give his life for truth and love with joy, he has redeemed God's love.

One who sacrifices himself gives his life for a greater cause. In this case, it is a crowning end to life. But it is equally important that we learn to live in love and mutual brotherhood. When we learn this—knowing not just how to die but how to live for one another in every single day—we will live a life that can be called paradise or the millennium.

The Happiness I Give Away

As twenty-first century people, we are living in a new age of responsibility with respect to values. We have more freedom, but at the same time we have a more difficult situation in that we ourselves have to decide the values we wish to follow in life.

For most people, the ultimate aims of life are harmony, peace, and happiness. The yoga of Jesus is a method in which happiness is not directly pursued. Instead, it grows as a consequence of the yoga, little by little, incalculably and unexpectedly.

At present there seems to be a great deal of research and discussion in society about the nature of happiness. From time to time, it surfaces into the public domain. Some years ago, I heard a discussion on the radio about personal happiness in Finland. The percentage of happy people was surprisingly high: over 70 percent. This figure made me think. The experience of happiness is both subjective and relative; it is also related to age. I can imagine adults living in a city: their moods vary between relative satisfaction, neutral emotion, and anxiety. They may have fleeting and sporadic moments of joy and interpret these feelings as happiness. One may question whether the research has really measured happiness or just contentment with one's current situation in life. Have the people who answered the questionnaire reflected deeply upon their feelings?

I think that the outcome of the research would be quite different if people were asked how to become happy in their lives, how to achieve a permanent state of happiness, or whether it is even possible to achieve happiness. Most people would probably answer that in order to be happy, they require peaceful living conditions,

financial security, a high position in society, a balanced family, talented children, as well as health for themselves and for their loved ones.

When we look at such a list, we soon notice that the happiness that is built on these requirements appears to be uncertain. Financial security could collapse. What if friends betray me or die? What if I'm fired for one reason or another? What if my children are not talented, or not talented enough to my liking? What if I or my loved ones get sick, are injured, or even die? It happens. What if a war, famine, or some other catastrophe takes place? This kind of happiness is on shaky ground indeed.

What, then, is happiness, really? Is it earned, or is it adventitious? Is it such that we cannot control it or guarantee happy conditions for ourselves? Is happiness an internal emotion caused by the pleasure center, a passing euphoria, like falling in and out of love? Should we pursue happiness in the first place? Is it a gift from destiny, God, or grace? What is the logic of happiness?

I titled this chapter after an old song that seems to reveal that happiness has more to do with giving than having. I thought that there was wisdom in the song's title, although it isn't evident in the lyrics. The song is just an old piece of dance music filled with yearning for past moments of happiness, as this kind of song tends to be.

On a closer analysis, the seemingly paradoxical connection between happiness and giving proves to be a profound theme. It is connected with the struggle for existence, with the meaning of life itself, and, through this, to major issues such as suffering, forgiveness, love, freedom, and truth.

We seldom realize that in his most important speech, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ has provided us with the instructions on how to achieve happiness. This is what the beatitudes are all about. Jesus here is referring to a high state of happiness:

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

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The beatitudes are not simple or easy to understand. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to try to interpret them correctly. Each sentence, both individually and as part of the whole, is well worth meditating upon with both the spirit and the intuition. The wise teach us that holy texts can be opened with many keys. They advise us to read them with our hearts, not just with our reason, which can be easily caught up in words and small details.

In 1925, Pekka Ervast compiled and commented on a version of the Sermon on the Mount.* The book discusses Jesus's great speech in an interesting and insightful way. Ervast underscores that we should penetrate the spirit of these teachings.

This is the chief aim of this book: to reach the true meaning of Jesus's teachings as closely as possible. I have undertaken this project with the help of wise interpreters (such as Ervast, Paul Brunton, and Deepak Chopra) and by my own reasoning. I have also attempted to uncover the help the beatitudes could offer for our life in the contemporary world. In addition, each of us should find our own internal interpretation, which resonates within ourselves right now and encourages us to test their usefulness in practice. This prolonged practice takes us to the state in which our minds "are opened to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45), as it says in the Bible. I have no hesitation in stating that this can still happen today.

* Pekka Ervast, *The Sermon on the Mount or the Key to the Christianity* (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1933).

Nowhere in the beatitudes does Jesus say what one must have to be happy or blessed. Rather it becomes clear that many of them state, implicitly or explicitly, what one *doesn't* need, what one should give up or give away, to be happy. Jesus focuses on the nature we should have, the attitude towards life we should possess, in order to be happy. Each beatitude stresses some feature, ethical attitude, or value.

The crucial difference is between having and being. Jesus seems to be telling us that there is no point in pursuing happiness by obtaining external things. Happiness does not adhere to anything in life that is susceptible to change. This truth is reinforced by other passages in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy." The treasures, these prerequisites of happiness, are more like correct attitudes, which manifest themselves in the way we face life situations and treat other people. Indeed they reveal our spiritual nature. They can serve as helping factors in our lives, and we can affect how they evolve within us.

Both Ervast and Brunton have provided their own interpretations of the beatitudes. They group them differently. Ervast calls the beatitudes "the gate of kingdom of heaven." In his view, the first and the last proclamation belong together; both have the same ending. He also connects the second and the seventh, and the third and the sixth proclamations, while changing the order of the second and the third. Brunton, on the other hand, connects the first and second proclamations. Nevertheless, they end up with very similar ideas; for example, they interpret the beatitude about the poor in spirit in the same way.

The Poor in Spirit

We have been put here on earth to solve the riddle of matter, that is, the riddle of physical existence. The quintessential symbol of matter in this earthly life was originally gold; nowadays it is usually money. When Jesus speaks of spiritual poverty, he refers to our

relationship to possessions and money. As long as we are bound to money, we are neither free nor happy. We need to ponder upon how we could change our relationship with money and property. We must become poor in spirit so that what we own does not bind us in any way. Actually, it doesn't matter whether we are poor or rich. What is important is our internal attitude towards money and mammon.

It is true, of course, that Jesus said to the rich man: "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But the point here is not a mere external renunciation or a generous deed. In a way, Jesus asks, "Are you ready to let go all your possessions, to which you have grown so attached and upon which you have based your psychological safety, and choose truth and freedom instead, even if it can cause you pain?" This is what Brunton asks: Do you want to choose the way of service? Are you ready to abandon all that is external? Are you ready to choose truth and eternal life even if you don't know how it will happen?

The question reflects our faith in life. Is it possible for a human being to let go of a haven built on money and possessions? Can one free oneself from the addiction of money? Ervast clarifies this question in the following way: "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 on outer things. Of this the man poor in heart soon becomes aware. Therefore he is not frightened if Fate places him in charge of possessions. . . . he takes charge of the possessions in the spirit of the apostles."

Paul Brunton agrees: "We need simplicity, but not asceticism. External gestures of giving up worldly possessions are impractical in the West, and are not really necessary." He adds later on: "An outward gesture, such as becoming a monk or a nun, or such as giving all your wealth to the poor, is not what Jesus meant."*

* Paul Brunton, *The Inner Reality: Jesus, Krishna, and the Way of Awakening* (Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books, 2016)

The ecophilosopher Henryk Skolimowski expresses a similar sentiment: “Elegant frugality is a precondition of inner beauty.”* The person who has reached the state of being poor in spirit has taken an important step towards inner liberation. It becomes visible to us as inner beauty.

Ervast states that there are three plagues on earth which we have to overcome: poverty, ignorance, and disease.** The person who is poor in spirit has assumed a new attitude towards money and possessions. Money does not bind her, nor has she attached herself to it. Money passes through her hands, and she can guide its flow, but her sense of safety is not shaken even if she has no money at all. She has placed her confidence in the highest power, tested it, and found that it lasts. God is above market fluctuations and devaluations.

Deepak Chopra speaks about the same matter in his book *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. He frames the sixth law as the Law of Detachment. It says that in order to have anything in the physical world, we must give up our attachment to it. According to Chopra, we do not have to give up our intentions or desires; all we need to do is to give up attachment to the result. Chopra goes on to justify his interesting claim: “Anything you want can be acquired through detachment, because detachment is based on the unquestioning belief in the power of your true Self. Attachment, on the other hand, is based on fear and insecurity.” We look for security as long as we do not know our true self. Chopra adds: “The source of wealth, of abundance, or of anything in the physical world is the Self; it is the consciousness who knows how to fulfill every need. Everything else is a symbol: cars, bank notes, clothes, airplanes. Symbols are transitory; they come and go. Chasing symbols is like settling for the map instead of the territory. It creates anxiety; it ends up making you feel hollow and empty inside, because you exchange your Self for the symbols of your Self.”***

* Henryk Skolimowski, *A Sacred Place to Dwell: Living with Reverence upon the Earth* (Rockport, Mass.: Element, 1993)

** Pekka Ervast, *Astral Schools*. (2d ed. Helsinki: Rosicrucian Literary Society of Finland, 1979 [1929]), 12.

*** Deepak Chopra, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams* (Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 1994), 29.

The Upanishads pose a similar challenge: “If people paid as much attention to Brahman (the highest consciousness) as we do to money, who would not be liberated?”

Jesus Christ is a savior who came to liberate us. He shows us the path from poverty, sickness, and ignorance to bliss and happiness. Paradoxically, when Jesus frees us from poverty, he also frees us from money—more precisely, from clinging on to money, the symbol of matter. How can one become free, then? Perhaps the most important sentence in the Sermon on the Mount is the following: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Finding this kingdom of heaven within will provide the strength needed to change one’s heart. The security system created by money and mammon is a fence surrounded by fear; this is where we seek refuge when we don’t believe in any other kind of safety. It can be argued that money can buy temporary security, but it doesn’t guarantee any lasting security, and true happiness doesn’t reside in a safe-deposit box. Happiness is always related to freedom.

Someone who becomes poor in the spirit has started to get in touch with their inner resources. This can be achieved by working, asking, doing, and practicing Jesus’s way of life, the yoga of Jesus. Each of us has these resources within. They constitute the spiritual capacity, wisdom, and energy we will find in our inner self, the Christ within all of us. Jesus promises this to all who seek the path. He enigmatically says, “I am the way” (John 14:6). That way leads also to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus doesn’t say that we *will have* the kingdom of heaven: he says that we *have* the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is not referring to the future. The kingdom is already here.

Ervast does not comment much on the final beatitude—“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness”—but he does refer to the voluntary poverty practiced by the early Christians and the power it bestowed upon them. Keeping this in mind, one can consider the last beatitude as a supplement to the first: let go of your bondage to money and fear not, although society and people will persecute you because of it. Righteousness is a condition for happiness. The world always seeks for happiness using

faulty means, and it does not behave well toward those who don't want to be on its foolish treadmill.

Brunton, commenting on the same issue, reminds us: "Jesus warned his Apostles that they could expect trouble. Always when an apostle or a prophet emerges, it awakens also the resistance by dark and aggressive forces. This is the law of polarity in the world. These forces will find dark and ignorant people who may help to nullify unselfish actions by the enlightened."

The Mystery of Grief

In his second beatitude Jesus says: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Brunton connects this beatitude to the first, and he sees them as a unity: he views mourning and renouncing mammon as related. This renunciation can occur either with the will (which is, as is well known, hard to do) or without it. A person is stripped down and notices that "he has lost all his possessions, close relatives, home, furniture, everything. Only few have the matured wisdom, understanding, and courage to bear the harsh truth that the world is just a camp site," says Brunton. Understanding that renunciation is inevitable causes mourning, but this mourning is valuable.

Ervast, on the other hand, connects the second beatitude with the sixth: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Nevertheless, the spirit of his interpretation is the same as Brunton's. According to Ervast, purity of heart is not merely a matter of sexual purity: it has to do with the larger scope of the emotional life, such as freedom from envy, revenge, and bitterness. In other words, the second beatitude refers directly to all five of Jesus's commandments, which are practiced in the path of purification: calmness of mind, purity of heart, speaking the truth, nonresistance to evil, and the greatest commandment: love. Similarly, it points toward the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors." It is evident that our heart has not been purified as long as we are unable to forgive those who have trespassed against us. According to Ervast, purification of the heart is followed by "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.'"

The pure heart is born out of renunciation—dying to the world. Those who are pure of heart have renounced their earthly attitudes, which are like armor. Anger, aggressiveness, insulting, lying, and concealment—all these armaments are a refuge from the battering and violence of the world, and they are built upon a central emotion: fear. Fear lives in a heart that is not pure. When everyone is afraid, all must take cover in the armor of offense, revenge, anger, and violence; no one dares to show how they really feel. By and large, we are living today in this stalemate. Jesus came to unravel this situation almost two thousand years ago, but his lesson has not struck home very rapidly.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" is often interpreted, without much thought, as meaning that worrying about injustice, suffering, and catastrophes in the world somehow makes a person happier. Worrying is a part of everyday life for most people who try to comprehend the world. They usually grieve about the state of the world, which they combine with a combative attitude toward many kinds of evil, abuse, and disaster.

This kind of worrier has not yet woken up to the true meaning and nature of suffering. Indeed, understanding the nature of suffering is part of comprehending the meaning of evil and acknowledging its necessary role in the evolution of the visible world. Worrying also signals distress about the state of the world; one asks why this is the case and why God allows it to happen. This is a justified question, but satisfactory and consoling answers require pondering. This calls for both patience and faith in life.

When we examine this issue from the point of view of humanity's wise sages, we get the unanimous answer that everything in the world is in order. This surprising and difficult answer originates from the idea that suffering and evil are an inseparable part

of the dualistic, polar nature of the world. Suffering is our teacher. It is closely connected with reincarnation and karma. According to the law of cause and effect, we always create suffering when we, individually or collectively, break the law of life. Suffering begins to weaken when we find the right relationship to reality and evil and when we stop fearing suffering and death, which is nothing but a transition to another level of consciousness. It may be that suffering does not end when we leave the world but changes its form in our consciousness. We come back to the world time after time to learn not to resist evil and to love all created beings. It is our human calling to grow with this understanding. Pain may well be intensified by increasing knowledge, but when knowledge changes into wisdom, the pain eases up.

What about God's responsibility? God does not interfere with our actions. We have been given both free will and responsibility—the opportunity to choose in the school of good and evil. Life invites all of us to become wiser. Each of us has an opportunity to perceive good and evil as our teachers. When we try, we will be helped to see. The Great Life helps everyone who strives to go forward toward wisdom, compassion, love, and freedom.

In the fourth beatitude, Jesus promises that the righteous—that is, those who have set their minds on the right path—will have happy days. The righteous are not worried anymore, although they perform loving service in the world. The righteous are the people who have begun to see the world not only as a school of painful endeavor but also as the best of all possible worlds, which, through our efforts, can become a happy place. The righteous begin to see that good and evil are related to each other and entail each other and also see the unity behind the antitheses of visible life. We have come from the unity and we will return to it, enriched by all of our experiences after this great wave of evolution is over. The laws of karma and reincarnation ensure that justice is always strictly maintained in this dualistic world of polarities. The righteous, who understand that the whole universe is balanced in this way sees that suffering also has its role in evolution, and there is no need to

worry. Naturally, suffering can and must be alleviated and those who suffer must be helped, but this is another matter.

I am aware that as a philosophy of wisdom, this kind of thinking is not very appealing in our time, because there is no quick payoff available, and everyone is in a rush. But life is not a supermarket in which one can buy instant consolation, love, wisdom, or salvation. Of course, one can try to obtain all this. There are instant merchants in the spiritual domain as well, but *instant* in the context of truly important things means that the commodities soon become scarce. We are not in a hurry. We have all the time we want to learn these things. With each new incarnation, we are given new opportunities to learn the lesson of life. Few people learn it within one life.

Many people reject the idea of reincarnation, saying that they do not wish to come here again. Yet how many of us are prepared to take steps so that we won't have to come back?

In regard to the saying that those who mourn will find comfort, could Jesus mean that one can worry after all, that one is not supposed to worry about worrying? Perhaps worrying is a good thing. This could be a paradox in Jesus's teachings. Worry can drive a logical person to action, to take responsibility, which makes it possible for reality to unfold. But we can go through various reform movements only to realize that we must start from ourselves: we must put things right first in our own lives. Incomplete people cannot build a complete world.

Perhaps there is a long way to go to the state of mind in which one can truly live in the knowledge that everything is in order. The person who attains that consciousness is righteous and, most likely, much happier than her brother who continues to worry.

These thoughts arose in my mind when I pondered the happiness in mourning. It is a sign that there can be many interpretations. They also may vary depending on where one stands in one's spiritual path, and what one needs at that point. Everyone is free to look for an interpretation that best suits their advancement. However, if one practices honest thinking, there can be no great harm.

Happiness of the Peacemaker

Ervast connects the following beatitudes as the third pair: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.” Indeed the meek and the peacemakers seem to belong together. They have learned Jesus’s first commandment in practice: “Do not get angry with your brother.” Furthermore, the interpretation of these beatitudes is intimately connected to Jesus’s fourth commandment: “Do not resist evil.”

The meek and the peacemakers are called happy, meaning that they have mastered the art of forgiving. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for the strength to forgive when he says, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In this way the person builds inner harmony, gentleness, and peace. From this perspective, the third pair of beatitudes appears as ethically clear and binding.

When we look at how the world has treated the meek and the peacemakers, we can’t help wondering if they could possibly be happy. On the other hand, they have learned how to live without anger and fear. This alone fulfills one condition for happiness. Moreover, it is possible to imagine what the world would be like if all of us concentrated on learning how to avoid getting angry; this would teach us how to build inner peace.

World history tells us about amazing people who have practiced kindness and created peace around themselves. The old legends are filled with these heroes—the righteous, who know how to repay evil with good. These are the ones who have thrown themselves in front of spears and guns, as happened in India’s struggle for independence, led by Mahatma Gandhi. They are heroes, martyrs, the blessed, who shall eventually inherit the earth and who will be called the sons of God. Gandhi was helped by the conviction that we will reincarnate again on earth and that death is just a gate to a new state of reality. After purification and rest, we have a chance to continue our righteous endeavors.

Happiness is not just a reward waiting for us in the future. I recall a TV interview about a Polish family man who had decided to burn himself alive in a great festival in the Warsaw stadium in order to oppose the communist regime. After he had made his decision, he traveled to the stadium by train. He said that his mind was filled with great peace and happiness. Another example could be my friend Pertti, who as a young man decided to refuse to serve in the army. He told me that while he was travelling to military headquarters, he felt very brave, as if he had been inflated to the size of a house. Only the person who has undertaken an exceptional act can tell what it feels like.

Happiness is a subjective state of mind. Although it can be externally perceived and to some extent transmitted to other people, it cannot be fully fathomed. It must be brought about by one's own thinking and actions.

The peacemakers and the meek have learned how to deal with the conditions of life without forcing them in any way. There is no need to do anything, and nothing is worth doing by force. Deepak Chopra talks about this attitude in his book as the Law of Least Effort, with examples taken from the Indian tradition. He says, "This is the principle of least action, of no resistance. . . . If you observe nature at work, you will see that least effort is expended. Grass doesn't try to grow, it just grows." The principle is "Do less and accomplish more." Ultimately, the aim is to achieve the state in which nothing is done, yet everything is accomplished. Chopra quotes Carlos Castaneda: "Most of our energy goes into upholding our importance. . . . If we were capable of losing some of that importance, two extraordinary things would happen to us: One, we would free our energy from trying to maintain the illusory idea of our grandeur; and two, we would provide ourselves with enough energy to catch a glimpse of the actual grandeur of the universe."

Chopra divides the Law of Least Effort into three components, which seem to be useful in evaluating these particular beatitudes. Chopra speaks first of acceptance, which is a path to understanding that everything is in order. He notes that acceptance simply means deciding that

“Today I will accept people, situations, circumstances, and events as they occur.” This means I will know that this moment is as it should be, because the whole universe is as it should be. This moment—the one you’re experiencing right now—is the culmination of all the moments you have experienced in the past. This moment is as it is because the entire universe is as it is.

When you struggle against this moment, you’re actually struggling against the entire universe. Instead you can make the decision that today you will not struggle against the whole universe by struggling against this moment. This means that your acceptance of this moment is total and complete. You accept things as they are, not as you wish they were in this moment. This is important to understand. You can wish for things in the future to be different, but in this moment, you have to accept things as they are.

When you feel frustrated or upset by a person or a situation, remember that you are not reacting to the person or the situation, but to your feelings about the person or the situation. These are your feelings, and your feelings are not someone else’s fault. When you recognize and understand this completely, you are ready to take responsibility for how you feel and to change it. And if you can accept things as they are, you are ready to take responsibility for your situation and for all the events you see as problems.

This leads to the second component of the Law of Least Effort: responsibility. Chopra asks: “What does responsibility mean?” and answers:

Responsibility means not blaming anyone or anything for your situation, including yourself. Having accepted this circumstance, this event, this problem, responsibility then means the ability to have a creative response to the situation as it is now. All problems contain the seeds of opportunity, and this awareness allows you to take the moment and transform it to a better situation or thing. Once you do this, every

so-called upsetting situation will become an opportunity for the creation of something new and beautiful, and every so-called tormentor or tyrant will become your teacher. Reality is an interpretation. And if you choose to interpret reality in this way, you will have many teachers around you, and many opportunities to evolve.

Chopra then continues to the third component of the Law of Least Effort, which is defenselessness.

[It] means that your awareness is established in defenselessness, and you have relinquished the need to convince or persuade others of your point of view. If you observe people around you, you'll see that they spend ninety-nine percent of their time defending their points of view. If you just relinquish the need to defend your point of view, you will, in that relinquishment, gain access to enormous amounts of energy that have been previously wasted. . . . If you embrace the present and become one with it, and merge with it, you will experience a fire, a glow, a sparkle of ecstasy throbbing in every living sentient being. As you begin to experience this exultation of spirit in everything that is alive, as you become intimate with it, joy will be born within you, and you will drop the terrible burdens and encumbrances of defensiveness, resentment, and hurtfulness. Only then will you become light-hearted, carefree, joyous, and free*.

Righteousness and Mercy

Ervast's interpretation of the beatitudes places them in pairs, in a new order, and refers to the arc formed by them as the gate of the kingdom. The last two "pearls" of this gate are the proclamations that are centermost, that is, the fourth and the fifth beatitudes: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled," and "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy." I have already discussed this righteousness—or, as Ervast translated it—"the thought of righteousness and mercy."

* Chopra, *Seven Spiritual Laws*, 21–22.

The righteous can elevate their minds to the point where they conclude that everything is in order in the world. This cannot mean simply leaving everything and doing nothing. Ervast places mercy alongside righteousness. Mercy—today we might speak of compassion or pity, helping a suffering neighbor—has the consequence, says Jesus, that one will be shown mercy in turn. A similar idea is expressed in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." As the saying goes, the world you get is the world you give away. Mercy is about forgiving, loving service, and deeds of love in everyday life. This beatitude, together with Jesus's fifth commandment (the commandment of love), provides us with the key to happiness on earth.

There is an enormous amount of suffering on earth, and we have no certainty of avoiding it, even if we have created vast systems to prevent ourselves from seeing it. It is a tall order to put an end to suffering, but we can change our attitude towards it. This does not mean indifference. It is loving work, done with compassion and mercy. Such an attitude teaches us to see how suffering could be brought to an end in the world. The reasons for our suffering are our own deeds—our own cynicism, indifference, selfishness, and cruelty. God does not want us to suffer in pain. God and his Son teach us how to deal with it so that it might no longer be with us and we could have a kingdom of heaven here on earth. If we can be merciful, mercy will come back to us when we are suffering. I believe that mercy and compassion can offset old karma. Loving service always brings a blessing both to the person who receives the service and to the person giving it.

Ervast refers to the close connection between mercy, compassion, and love when he asks, "What justice would there be on earth without love? How could we realize justice without being full of understanding, pity, sympathy, and forgiveness for one another?"

Moreover, can we put mercy before justice in our own lives? This is the righteousness that truth seekers must bring to the world. We can start small and enlarge the circle of mercy and compassion with our strength. It is a great and wonderful challenge in life to move from suffering to happiness.

Both the beatitude concerning mercy and the first beatitude, concerning the poor in spirit, suggest that happiness is created by creating happiness for other people. Our own comfort or pleasure is no longer our first concern. We start by bringing small crumbs of happiness into the midst of suffering. Condolence, understanding, and helping are themselves a medicine. They bring consolation. They also contribute to our own happiness, which extends even to our postmortem life. The wise say that your personal heaven is created by the thoughts of people who love you.

Mercy and forgiveness are accompanied by a new kind of humility, which helps one to be free from the need for revenge. When pondering on mercy, it is advisable to think about the situation in which Jesus lived. At that time, life was much harsher and crueler. Revenge has long roots in history, and it extends to our time. It has upheld cohesion among tribes and nationalities, but at the same time it has had a demoralizing effect.

The Secret of Happiness

In addition to the beatitudes, there is one more condition for happiness, which is linked to the question of the meaning of life. Happiness is clearly related to the questions, why do I live, and what is the meaning of my life? I must somehow see that there is some sense in my own life as well as in life as a whole. Happiness in this sense is bound to the meaningfulness of my work. Of course, this is not just about paid work; it entails my dharma, that is, my mission in life, my purpose on earth.

Happiness can ultimately lie in finding meaning and seeing how everything fits together, even momentarily. Happiness or bliss, in the sense that Jesus meant, is a dynamic state of harmony in which the meaningfulness of life is present in every changing moment. It *is* the present moment, as Deepak Chopra says. Another meaning for the word *present* is *gift*. It often seems that finding meaning in life in itself constitutes a foundation for carrying on. But Jesus's beatitudes take us even further: they promise us bliss.

Finally, let me return to the title of this chapter: the happiness that I have given away. Is it only when I learn to give away something important to me, when I learn to renounce, to give away even my own happiness, that I start creating conditions for my own happiness? Is this what Great Life teaches us? Yes. It teaches us love as it teaches us to give. The crucial point is to give up our convenience, one could almost say to give up happiness. It is about giving up the following:

- Superficial satisfactions from goods, wealth, and the related false sense of power and pride.
- Complacency and a self-centered attitude.
- Being overly talkative.
- Pursuing easy solutions and easy pleasures.
- The constant need to be right.
- Self-indulgence.
- The lust for revenge and retribution.

Happiness is a secret mystery, which can be oriented, not toward rewards or personal happiness, but toward seeking for the right things: clearer understanding, surrender, serving others, divine wisdom.

I will finish this chapter with a poem written by my son Eero for his mother when he was about six years old:

When the leaves of the fall come down
And things are not so good
You will look for something new
You must look for something new!
Life is the secret of happiness.

3

The Sermon of the Mount and the Five Commandments of Freedom

It is surprising to encounter Jesus's five commandments if one has only been aware of the Ten Commandments of Moses. When meeting seekers on a new spiritual path, my experience is that they do not want to have "those commandments" again. The old way of dictating truths from above is still fresh in their memory.

Naturally, everyone is free to search for truth as they see fit. Truth is one, but there are many paths to truth, as the saying goes. It is a paradox of the spiritual path that the way to freedom passes through voluntary discipline.

Like any true yoga, the yoga of Jesus aims at liberation. This is indicated in his epithet "Savior." Let us look at his statement: "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). What is the truth, then? Jesus himself provides an ambiguous answer: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). I cannot think that Jesus means that his teachings are irrelevant in pursuing liberation. Nor can I understand that mere faith in his death and resurrection will save us. It is inconceivable that this kind of belief—holding a certain proposition as true—could decide the eternal destiny of a human being. We who believe in him and follow him are required to do something as well. Jesus didn't give his teachings to no avail; he demands something from those who follow him. It is our task to grow and go forward in the path of wisdom through the five commandments. The truth value of Jesus's sayings and promises are tested in the exercises prescribed by his yoga: does he speak the truth, and does the truth really set us free?

Let us reflect upon what prevents us from being free and upon what we should be free of. As I have already mentioned, in his book *Astral Schools* Ervast defined three great problems from which we should learn to liberate ourselves in this earthly school: poverty, ignorance, and sickness.

Avoid Anger

Jesus says in his first commandment: “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” Ervast has crystallized this teaching into this form: do not get angry.

Getting angry or losing one’s temper is usually a quick burst of emotion, a rapid reaction to what someone does or says. In many cases this burst discharges the energy in us, and when we observe it, we notice that the energy was just waiting for the discharge. If we observe ourselves in a state of anger, we start to see how its mechanism works. We begin to identify the reasons, or roots, of why we lose our temper.

Usually these reasons stem from ignorance and lack of wisdom. We are unable to penetrate deeply enough to the reasons that cause us to lose our temper. Nor are we able to think of the consequences of our anger when we are immersed in it. Sometimes the anger and resentment can linger within us even after a bout of losing our temper, acting as a seed for hatred on which we dwell for a long time. We are then caught in an emotional trap. Hatred is a long-term form of anger. The Swedish-Finnish poet Elmer Diktonius has said that a person can never understand what he hates, as understanding is always underpinned by love.

There is a well-known saying that rage is blind. Blindness and lack of understanding are often synonymous in Jesus’s sayings. When we give in to anger, we drive ourselves onto a path that seems

to have only one way of proceeding: violent reaction. By contrast, learning how to be calm is a step towards measured and reasoned reaction and communication. Developing consciousness and understanding helps us see the roots of anger and work them out for ourselves. This work begins with the practice of remaining calm.

Talking about avoiding anger sometimes raises a question posed by people who have read their Bible. It is related to a story in which Jesus—apparently in anger—drives moneychangers and vendors away from the Temple. A common question is: “Why did Jesus get angry in that situation?”

If we are practicing the yoga of Jesus, we must read the Bible in a meditative way, not as a fairy tale or a textbook on history; we must try to penetrate beyond the words and find a more profound wisdom. Jesus presented his teachings in the form of parables, partly because it is easier to remember a teaching when it is given as a story. Could it be that this scene from Jesus’s life would also be allegorical, thus leaving room for different interpretations?

It is possible to open holy scriptures using many keys. Paul tells us that our body is the temple of Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:10). The yoga of Jesus aims at bringing discipline, at a moment of exaltation, to the experience that the Christ is within us. At that point the Christ has entered the temple of our own spirit, and the unholy features within us vanish. In that light, we clearly see what in us doesn’t belong to the temple.

Jesus performed a powerful symbolic act in cleansing the temple. When the Christ enters our temple, the truth enters at the same time. It lights our consciousness with the light of love, which is also an uncompromising light of truth. Truth is a unity. The selfish pleasures of life have no part in the temple in which the truth prevails. The temple is a holy place, and there can be no commerce in it.

I cannot think that the Christ within us would get angry with our lower passions or misplaced thoughts (represented by the vendors and moneychangers). A flash of fury and a flash of truth may appear the same, but they are two distinct things. I suspect that various scribes throughout the history of Christendom confused the flashes of truth and fury. Could this be due to the wrathful and

cruel image of God portrayed by some parts of the Bible, especially the Old Testament?

Cleansing the Temple is a decisive action in which Jesus's consciousness cannot be dimmed by anger, not for a moment. On the contrary, his actions are guided by crystal-clear deliberation. As Ervast indicates, Jesus's first commandment states that we should not get angry in our hearts. Our external actions can be forceful, our saying and doing can be decisive, yet our conduct is in strict inner control.

Violence is the external manifestation of anger. Like hatred and anger, it is blind, and its essence is a perversion of real power. It is based on the use of physical force to threaten or coerce. The person wishing to have real power will eventually realize that it is spiritual in nature, reflecting genuine authority. That kind of power presupposes the capacity to rule over oneself, that is, controlling lower feelings and desires.

When we start to practice the yoga of calmness, that is, not getting angry, we notice that our consciousness changes and grows. Eventually we will realize that there is no reason to get angry or feel hatred. This path enables all of us to do our share in reducing violence and conflicts in our surroundings.

The history of anger and hatred is so long that unlearning it could easily take a whole lifetime, perhaps many lives. However, this is a crucial lesson, and, unlike harboring hatred, it will keep us on the path. Avoiding anger can be taken as a daily yoga practice. It is not an easy lesson, but every step forward is rewarding, manifesting itself in enhanced self-control as well as in a gradual release from the grip of negative emotions.

A truth seeker who practices the yoga of Jesus has the task of observing himself calmly in a state of anger and pondering upon why he is "angry with his brother" (for a Christian, everyone is a brother or sister). In situations that give rise to anger and hurt, what are other possible ways of responding?

When practicing this form of self-observation, it is possible that one will get angry at one's own anger. But the reaction of anger cannot be vanquished by force or coercion. Instead we can calmly

learn to see what the origin of anger is, what lies behind it, and what it does to us. There should be no violent attitude towards it. Learning how not to get angry is in this respect closely connected to Jesus's fourth commandment, which states that one should not resist evil.

The psychologists are correct in saying that one should not confine or suppress anger and hatred, as "nice" people tend to do. Often these experts say we should express our anger. It is said that anger and a good fight clear the air, but this is not what we are addressing here. In fact, keeping long-term anger inside is not healthy for us. In this situation, the person who doesn't understand his anger tries to control or contain it, or just lets it erupt. The person who consciously aims at outgrowing anger is in a different position.

The same principle applies to being offended. Actually, being offended often occurs alongside anger, or is its milder form. It usually works in a reflexive manner in us, and always betrays something about our character. We often are offended by something that is not meant to be offensive in the first place.

I will not go further into the psychology of being offended; instead I will share a teaching I learned from a friend. I have thought about this for a long time: "We keep on being offended as long as we want to be offended." Do we want to be offended, or do we want to understand why we are offended?

We begin to see more when we learn how to control our tendencies to be offended and get angry. Control does not come through smothering, but by working to deeply understand these feelings and the factors related to them. We begin to become free from the patterns that have chained and blinded us. This emotional burden is often acquired at home, possibly transferred from one generation to another in our families and culture. The bright side is that it is possible to put an end to this chain.

Parents of small children have a good practice ground for avoiding anger. One often tends to become upset with small children. It is very easy, but if you are striving to educate yourself, you can make genuine progress by dealing with them. Ending the chain of anger fosters a nonviolent and peaceful atmosphere. It also

promotes holistic health by strengthening our etheric being. In this way, it diminishes one of the great obstacles to human liberation: disease.

Like everything in the yoga of Jesus, learning how not to get angry is learning to love. It liberates us from disease and ignorance. In addition, as Ervast states in *The Divine Seed*: “We begin knowing others’ thoughts, even though no words are uttered.” The person who has learned to keep his thoughts pure will learn to see others’ emotions—to see their energy bodies, that is, their auras.

Keep Your Thoughts Pure

In his second commandment, Jesus addresses the relationship a person has with one of the strongest drives: sexuality. Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

To the modern ear, this commandment sounds austere, but essentially it is about upholding purity in mind and thought. The same aspiration is found in all forms of yoga, and it is not limited to sexuality. Pekka Ervast has crystallized this maxim in the following form: “Do not be impure even in your thoughts.”

According to the Genesis story, human beings were divided into two sexes during the ages after the world and other beings had already developed: “He created them male and female” (Genesis 1:27). Human beings, divided into two sexes, received an inner force of attraction, a driving energy, a creative ability, God’s potential in us. As an attractive force, the sex drive is related to reproduction and hence to the survival of our species. In its higher forms, this creative energy manifests itself in artistic propensities. In people who have reached a higher level of development, sexual energy is refined into the energies of the purest love and creativity. These different but intertwined possibilities arise out of the same basic source of energy. These energies are accompanied by

* Pekka Ervast, *The Divine Seed: The Esoteric Teachings of Jesus* (Wheaton, Ill.: Quest Books, 2010), 60.

sexual pleasure, which is manifested at different intensities at various phases in life. This passionate pursuit sometimes provides pleasure and sometimes, in a cyclic fashion, frustration. In any event, the person who is striving for a higher life must pay the utmost attention to the questions in this domain.

The sex drive is a natural life-supporting force in the animal kingdom, whereas human beings, in the course of their evolution, came gradually to emphasize its pleasurable aspects. At this point the pleasure has become detached from its original connection. Over recent decades, huge industries have been built to promote and stimulate urges toward this type of pleasure. On the one hand, we embrace our addictions, and on the other hand, we try to liberate ourselves from them. A person may understand freedom as unrestricted license to satisfy his passions, but is he really free, or just a slave to his desires?

Drives, pleasures, and passions originate from our unrefined past. They reflect our way of reacting to these forces we have nurtured in ourselves. This is “the animal within” (although animals do not have addictions in the same sense as humans). Actually, we should talk more about a primordial primitivity, which is based on a selfish hunting for instant pleasures; this is always accompanied by some sort of suffering and remorse.

Nowadays sexuality is presented to us more and more detached from its natural surroundings, that is, love. It has become for many a druglike pleasure, in which loving interaction has been diminished, if it has not vanished altogether. In this case love—which is always about giving—turns into its opposite. Sometimes a person in the grip of passion is willing to sacrifice everything to get satisfaction.

It is easy to develop a strong addiction to sexual pleasure. I recall from a school psychology lesson an experiment in which rats learned how to stimulate their pleasure center in the brain. Eventually they forgot to eat and died of hunger in front of the lever that provided the stimulation.*

* For instance, see David J. Linden, “The Neuroscience of Pleasure,” *Huffington Post* (website), updated Sept. 6, 2011: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-j-linden/compass-pleasure_b_890342.html?guccounter=1.

Let us think of the five commandments in the Sermon on the Mount as maxims of life that bring us towards freedom. In this light, we can interpret the second commandment as follows: we should observe our thoughts in the same way as in the practice of not getting angry. We do not force ourselves, but we draw our attention to what is more important. We focus our thoughts away from desire and addictive factors and towards love. In this commandment, Jesus does not address sexuality per se; rather he addresses our attitude toward sex. He teaches us to listen to our heart and act wisely in the riptide of the strong energies of love.

The yoga of Jesus, like others, emphasizes controlling the mind. Mind is the crazy monkey that must be calmed down in order to allow the higher consciousness to take charge. This yoga entails the daily monitoring of thoughts and practicing the ability to distinguish the essential from the nonessential. This critical approach teaches me to question which aspects of my emotions are true and enduring. Am I just being driven by my lower instincts and desires?

When we meet others, our sense of responsibility grows little by little. We ask how I should react to another person and in what way I should love him or her. Practicing in real-life situations provides a measure of our status in the path. This practice invites us to a closer interaction and to a closer sense of communality, which seems to be elusive today. Indeed we find our real humanity in relationships. Mere analytic deliberation easily leads to mechanical choices—a bookish puritanism.

Admittedly, there is the danger of repressing sexuality. Hence it is worth remembering St. Paul's statement: "For it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 7:9). Yoga requires determination and self-discipline, but the right action arises from the right thought, not from force.

None of this means that we should reject the physical aspect of love as morally inappropriate. There is no such thing as *inappropriate* in the traditional sense: the individual is free to think and will. But Jesus is calling forth a growth of will in us. In the yoga of Jesus, one seeks for real freedom, in which no one and nothing, let alone lower desires, chains us or drags us down.

When the thought life is gradually purified, the student begins to pay attention to what is purest, most beautiful, and valuable in her feelings towards the other person when she loves, falls in love, and makes love. We usually want to give the best in ourselves to the person we love. We also know that after encountering another person only in the domain of sexuality, we may feel we wanted to say more. However, I do not recommend being too austere, relentless, or unforgiving towards oneself. This is resisting evil, which Jesus urges us not to do. Let us show wise kindness towards ourselves.

When the ability to discern the essential from the nonessential has developed to some extent, we notice the strong bursts of emotions that unclean thoughts and images can create. These churning emotions bolster passion. When we learn how to release these thoughts without fighting them, we start achieving mental balance, a calmness which is the sign of self-control.

A thought begets a deed. Pure thoughts create pure deeds. Jesus's second commandment teaches us to become free from the chaining passions of emotional life, which can even become pathological. It is not hard to imagine, for instance, that a man addicted to child pornography may have nurtured this addiction in an earlier incarnation and is unable to let go of constant lust, anxiety, and fear. Strong passion can indicate a karmic inheritance.

One might think that it is impossible to reach a pure mind when dealing with the strongest human passions. As we can see, Jesus aimed at a faraway future. Every day is an opportunity to embark on a spiritual journey, even if it is for the first time. This yoga is not easy, but "ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). These openings will come to us as a growing sense of inner peace and spiritual experience if we persist and do not give up when the first failures take place. Like any form of spiritual practice, the yoga of Jesus requires patience, but it also requires mercifulness and tolerance towards ourselves when we fail. The higher powers accompany everyone who follows the path of yoga; if we fail, there is always the mercy of a fresh start.

Be Truthful in Your Speech

Jesus's third commandment addresses speech. He forbids us to swear oaths: "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." Ervast crystallizes this commandment in this form: "Always speak the truth." When we take an oath, we solemnly swear that we are speaking the truth, but there is no need for an oath if we always speak truthfully: we are committed to the truth regardless of the consequences.

If we think of an explicit situation of an oath taking, for instance a military oath, it is above all an oath of loyalty and obedience. In this situation the oath taker hands over the power to make decisions and responsibility for his actions to others, in this case military leaders. One promises to obey without questioning and follow orders in future situations, with no knowledge of what the future might hold.

Of course, a true follower of Jesus cannot act this way. Responsibility is a part of being human: becoming a true human being means becoming responsible. Handing over responsibility in this situation is giving up one's humanity.

In discussing such topics as the army and going to war in the context of Jesus's commandments, we need to keep in mind that they are given as spiritual guidelines to individuals. The Master does not speak to states or nations; he gives his advice to his disciples, to those who want to follow him.

Speaking the truth is a demanding yet simple maxim. When we speak truthfully, we don't have to restate our case all the time. Relationships between people become easier. Living in the world is significantly easier with honest people than with liars.

What if we want to be honest when everybody else is lying? Admittedly there is a risk in honesty, but there is also one in lying. Someone who doesn't speak the truth is usually attempting to gain some advantage, such as money or power, or is trying to avoid the consequences of previous wrongs or lies. Little lies, gossiping, and slander—in fact, all the vices of the tongue—entangle us in a web of small chains, which are reinforced by new lies. Constant lying eventually drives a person into a corner, producing anxiety.

The wisdom of Jesus—“the truth will set you free”—is at its clearest in the context of the third commandment. Speaking the truth destroys the web of lies and cuts off the chains of fear: “When I tell a lie now, I cannot be honest in the future; otherwise my lying will be exposed.” Living in a web of lies is living in constant fear of being exposed. It is hard to breathe in such agony.

Right thought, right speech, right action, says the Buddha.

The purification of thought is closely related to speaking the truth. The yoga of honesty actually begins with the right thought. In his book *At the Feet of the Master*, J. Krishnamurti emphasizes temperance and deliberation: “It is well to speak little; better still to say nothing, unless you are quite sure that what you wish to say is true, kind, and helpful. Before speaking, think carefully whether what you are going to say has those three qualities; if it has not, do not say it.”

The yoga of honesty can be seen as fasting from speech, which gives us time to consider and purify our thoughts and mind. Taming the mind and speech, having them under conscious control, builds inner peace and improves mental insight. This development happens organically: when we give up the old, we receive something new to take its place. Speaking the truth develops our ability to discern the essential from the nonessential: we do not have to say everything that comes to mind. In some situations, it is possible to save lives by keeping silent. The use of reason is always advisable.

All of this relates to listening as well. We don't have to listen to lies, gossip, slander, or any evil talk about others. We can cut the chain and clear the air.

It is possible to stop lying to oneself and others and start speaking truthfully. It is always a daring decision, signifying that one has entered the path that leads to liberation from selfishness and self-interest using lies. It is also a step towards accepting karma. When we are honest, we are ready to accept the consequences of our words and actions. Deciding to start speaking the truth does not necessarily mean that we know the truth, but at least we are heading towards it. Speaking truthfully is the condition and prerequisite of evolution. Courage is needed, because we know that

the world treats the speaker of truth quite differently from the liar. It is peculiar that many are ready to take extreme chances, for instance, in war or crime, but when it comes to orienting ourselves towards what is good, truth, and right, they become cowardly and incapable. Perhaps it is because goodness and kindness often go hand in hand with courage in these decisions.

The world has seen, and still has, those who dare to speak the truth. Some of them have spent much of their lives in prisons. One famous example is Mahatma Gandhi, who utterly baffled politicians and other schemers by always telling the truth. On many occasions, Gandhi had to spend time in prison, yet in his actions he followed Jesus's teaching "The truth will set you free." Gandhi said he felt that he was freer than ever when he was behind the bars. He is no doubt one of the people in the previous century who best exemplifies the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount.

Speaking the truth will provide us with a spiritual backbone, alleviate fears, and bring forth both respect and self-respect. Followers of the yoga of Jesus are always truth seekers. Their strength and ability to see and deal with people, situations, and life in general grow out of truthfulness. Ervast reinforces what has been said above: "When we ask what new sense Jesus wishes to awaken in us with the aid of this commandment—in what new way we can become aware of the heavenly kingdom if we learn to control our thoughts and speech—we get this reply: 'You learn to see other people as they are. Within you a new sense will awaken that will inform you what talents, inclinations, and characteristics other people possess.'"^{*}

Do Not Resist Evil

Jesus's fourth commandment teaches us to regard evil in the right way. It is a fundamental question in Christianity and for humanity in general: according to the Bible we are here as human beings to solve the riddle of good and evil.

^{*} Pekka Ervast, *The Esoteric School of Jesus*, trans. Aini Pajunen (Hämeenlinna, Finland: Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross, 1977 [1915]), 88.

Jesus says in his fourth commandment: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

Many Christian thinkers have maintained that Jesus’s fourth commandment is the cornerstone of Christianity, but over the centuries it has been the stone upon which the church has stumbled. In a way this is quite natural for a church that has been bound up with earthly power. Had it understood Jesus’s advice, it would have acted more mercifully towards those individuals who have, for instance, spent time in prison for refusing to enter military service. The liberation struggle of India led by Gandhi sets an example that is still worth researching further.

The commandment to not resist evil is usually the hardest one to understand. It is natural to think that if we are striving for good, we must fight evil. Jesus’s advice requires inner strength and integrity. When one tries to follow it, one can find oneself in the midst of external difficulties. Nevertheless, this maxim is based on the fact that, on the one hand, it is not possible to conquer evil with evil, because one evil is fighting on the same side as another evil; the two will fight each other to the death. On the other hand, it is not possible to fight evil with good, because goodness never fights. The good acts differently.

Resorting to the good relies on a logic that is clearly not consistent with the present world order. Goodness comes forward, humbles itself, submits, turns the other cheek, understands, shows compassion, and loves. Learning how goodness works requires reversing the logic of the world, which is based on competition, scheming, cheating, and greater might.

Even if one understands Jesus’s logic intellectually, its implementation demands courage, although this is not always evident. The

prerequisite for not resisting evil is controlling the mind, which in turn starts with learning how to remain calm.

If a person wants to believe in the power of goodness and love despite all the difficulties, he will eventually face the authority structures of society. If he doesn't want to fight or kill for his rights, he will soon gain a reputation as a coward; instead of fighting back, he will let an attacker hit him. Furthermore, he will be called a traitor to his country because he doesn't want to learn how to kill in the army, which has a tight hierarchy, with no possibility for individual freedom. Declining to submit to the violent world order is one step in the path of not resisting evil; it is how many people choose to learn this principle in our time.

In the yoga of Jesus, the problem of evil leads us to define what is evil and what isn't. What is the evil that we should not resist but overcome? From Theosophy, we learn that there is evil, but it is more inside us than outside. Lower desires and lust form the evil that keeps us away from truth. In the yoga of Jesus, liberation from this kind of evil entails inner purification. We cleanse ourselves of desires without resisting any visible evil. It is a kind of light treatment. We concentrate on the light, that is, on the goodness within. Little by little, lower desires and bad features will wither, no longer receiving the nourishing energy of attention.

It is generally thought that external suffering is evil: cruelties, horrors, and various catastrophes and diseases that we see all around and which we encounter in our lives as well. But when we become aware of reincarnation and the law of cause and effect, or karma, we realize that this hardship is something we deserve. It is paying old debts, and its purpose is to teach us. As Ervast writes in *The Divine Seed*, "We realize that what we once believed to be evil is actually good because it is reflective of our past mistakes. In this way we rid ourselves of evil and being freed from these deeds teaches and enlightens us. Feeling indebted to others will preoccupy us until the debt is paid. We would be quite ignorant if we felt indignant when paying a debt, for it is natural that stable people pay debts in order to free themselves."*

* Pekka Ervast, *The Divine Seed: The Esoteric Teachings of Jesus*, 70.

Ervast's explanation forms the basis for the true Christian attitude toward suffering, as surprising as it may be, by which one is grateful for the suffering one meets.

Ervast addresses another key point related to Jesus's commandments and their liberating effect. He teaches that we must balance the suffering we have caused by bringing an equal amount of love to this world. This is a way of liberation from our karma, which is not just suffering, but the way of neighborly love and loving service.

The yoga of not resisting evil teaches us to react properly to suffering. It is not easy to see why someone would learn to meet violence and suffering with calm submission. However, the yoga of Jesus doesn't make us ineffectual wretches. It changes how we react to external suffering and punishment; it develops our consciousness and our ability to discern the essential from the nonessential. We begin to distinguish the times when our suffering is an unnecessary martyrdom that helps no one from the times when real sacrifice is needed. As we progress, our attitude towards evil changes. We begin to see more clearly how the law of cause and effect works. We will gain and cultivate a new attitude towards suffering. When we cease to fight evil, strength and certainty will flow into us from above. We rid ourselves of negative emotions produced by our desires to get even, punch back, and punish those who have trespassed against us. If we don't repay violence with violence, it loses its edge. It is good practice to observe situations in which people react with violence and see how those situations are devoid of love.

The practice of not resisting evil nurtures inner strength and peace. These qualities will follow us into the next life; they are not destroyed by moths and vermin. All the good we have acquired in this life will be available in some form in the next life. We leave our property behind us, but these qualities will carry us into the future. Furthermore, in *The Divine Seed*, Ervast promises that the path of not resisting evil eventually leads us into a state in which we remember our past lives.

Learn to Love Everyone

The commandment of love is the fifth step. It is stated in the Sermon of the Mount as follows: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

This is the most far-reaching and comprehensive of Jesus’s commandments. If one could condense the meaning of life in one sentence, it could be, “Learn to love everyone.” I believe that virtually everyone who has understood the fact of reincarnation can agree that our mission in this spiritual school of earth is to learn to love one another.

Life after life, we start as children, who must receive love to live, and finally we become adults, who are able to give love first to family members and then to the ever growing circle of people around us. Loving everyone is not a mission that can be quickly accomplished by anyone, and it may seem utopian. Yet it is the final goal of our earthly school, and it is the goal towards which we must work if we are to graduate wise and victorious. I see no alternative to this.

Learning to love is seamlessly interlocked with other ethical teachings in the yoga of Jesus: forgiveness, practicing how to remain calm, purifying the mind, speaking the truth, and not resisting evil. Actually, it encompasses all the other commandments.

In the first stage, loving all people means trying to relate to others with kindness, understanding, and compassion. The maxim of love is based on the ideal of brotherhood, which is the first principle both in Theosophy and in true Christianity. Over the centuries, the human tendency to discriminate against people based on language, skin color, gender, and similar qualities has clouded over the ideal of brotherhood. Although it seems that we haven’t gone very far in attaining this goal, a glance across history shows that some progress has nevertheless been made.

The commandment of love opens up paradisaical visions in our mind, and we can accept and understand them with our reason, but this is not enough. I believe that most people understand where love could lead us, yet the same people sigh in disappointment from one century to another: “It is not going to happen. One person is powerless to change anything. We are never going to be brothers. Human beings are such selfish and weak creatures. It is beautiful, but . . .” This is how the tempter whispers in our ear.

When impatience is great, the notion of reincarnation provides us with a perspective that does not end with death. It tells us that life is a school that we attend in order to become perfect. With each life, we are taught something new. One life cannot possibly be enough, but each new life offers us the possibility to learn more and grow. Our achievements are counted as victories in the next life. We can learn from our mistakes when we have an opportunity to atone for them in the next life. It is merciful to have a new beginning.

The human being is in essence a spiritual being who carries an image of God within and, one life after another, learns to achieve its likeness. This is our mission. At the same time, it is the path of our evolution. Spiritual evolution takes place alongside physical evolution. The Eastern traditions speak of it as transcendence. It is being raised to a higher level in spirit and consciousness. It is growing in love.

I am fully aware that this might sound utopian, but we all have an opportunity to embark on this journey, which provides us with unprecedented energy.

Amidst all the chaos, it is good to keep in mind that there is a vast group of people on earth—most of them the so-called meek—who have personally decided to find out whether the Great Commandment really is the truth and the life. When we follow the commandments, we ask whether there is a spiritual reality and whether the yoga of Jesus opens us a door to this reality, the kingdom of heaven, and to freedom, as he promised. A truth seeker who manages to change theory into practice will experience brotherhood and love as cosmic consciousness. Then he will realize for the first

time what the poet meant when he wrote the following: “He who forgets himself will have the happiness of dreams.”

Loving your enemy takes determination and faith. We can do it with people who are close to us: we all know people whom we find somewhat appalling. They are a good starting point. We have no need to look for enemies among “hostile nations.”

It is worth trying to see what kindness, compassion, and love can do when one starts practicing them. Isn't it the case that the echo changes when the input changes? We can see how the person we resented before will change and what other things can happen. Experience has taught that it is exactly these difficult people who teach us the most. My friend Jouko Ikonen, living in Kuopio, Finland, says it beautifully in his booklet *The Twelve Keys**: “Love the whole creation, in which you have only teachers, not enemies.”

Learning to love, together with other teachings of Jesus, changes us and our relationship with people close to us, to nature, and to reality as a whole. Practicing the yoga of Jesus enhances our respect for life and for all of existence. Spiritual empowerment changes our relationship to suffering and karma. Our spiritual growth is bound up with karma, the universal law of justice, which allows us to atone for our evil deeds and past mistakes. The spiritual power that guides us in this school of life becomes part of us and changes our relationship with karma and suffering. We can pay our debt to life more calmly and with a trustful mind. The will to atone becomes our inner richness and strength.

It is nowadays said that love is a verb. This is true, but it is also the right attitude to have towards our neighbor. The apostle Paul characterized love in his first letter to the Corinthians almost two thousand years ago, and his description can still be taken as a guideline for investigating how love works in everyday life. Freedom begins from within. When we do the inner work of purification, we make space for new love to come. It gives us unprecedented strength and courage, which then flow out of us as well. This is what the Master told his disciples: “You are the light of the world.”

* The Twelve Keys is freely available on the internet:
<https://teosofia.net/e-kirjat/12keys.pdf>

It is generally known that humans can use violent means to awaken their dormant spiritual powers. Many have looked for a shortcut to happiness from drugs, but they are no shortcuts to spiritual growth. The powers and abilities stimulated by drugs are virtually never based on enduring ethics or pure motives. Such supersensible abilities are not in the service of life; instead they serve the individual's selfish aspirations. In this case, spiritual powers and forces of consciousness can turn into forces of destruction, which are pernicious to the person using them. Elevated streams of energy that pass through the seeker are like intensive radiation, which burns off the impurities of mind. If there are too many of these impurities, the consequences can be fatal. Spiritual teachers do not cease warning about these matters.

Jesus gave his new five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount for inner life, which, together with the accompanying guidelines of purity, offer a safe way of development for us. He says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

The kingdom of God is, as Jesus says, within you. It is love consciousness, the divine light which is hidden in our hearts and which we are called to brighten from one incarnation to another. We come here to study love—the right, deeply satisfying kind of life. The journey will be long; it has already lasted for a long time, and it will continue to last for a long time. This journey requires patience. However, when we grasp hold of the light, it will constantly provide us with more consciousness and liberate energy that we never knew was in us.

Pekka Ervast describes this process in the context of the fifth commandment. In *The Divine Seed* he writes that "extending love and doing good acts have profound psychic influences and consequences, allowing us to see God, the Heavenly Father. Experiencing great love, which is behind everything and contains everything within itself."^{*}

* Pekka Ervast, *The Divine Seed: The Esoteric Teachings of Jesus*, 72.

The Lord's Prayer and the Power of Meditation

The Lord's Prayer is at the core of Jesus's yoga and the Sermon on the Mount; it is a composition of truly powerful verses. I will interpret this prayer, verse by verse, in the following chapters. The prayer starts with the words: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

The Necessity and Power of Sacralization

Have we lost touch with the sacred? Do not worry: it is still present in our lives. However, the problem is that *we* are not present. It is possible for us to experience, either for the first time or again, the touch and the subtle energy of the sacred when we concentrate on hearing and sensing and learn to relax our minds. We have to be mindful about the kinds of impulses we allow to flourish in our consciousness. There are ever more factors numbing our senses and making us less sensitive.

Experiencing and being sensitive to the sacred, living in its energies, is nourishment to our souls. The Lord's Prayer is at the heart of the yoga of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount; it is a true collection of powerful verses. In the following, I will unpack the prayer verse by verse.

The prayer starts with the words: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name." I have always thought that this verse literally means what it says. We must hallow God's name, guard it, use it always with care and only in certain contexts.

However, I wonder whether there is more to be found in this verse. What does the sacred mean to us? What happens in us when

we get in touch with the sacred, when we feel it within us or around us? When one concentrates on this question, one becomes more sensitive to it. One starts to notice how the sacred insists on becoming stronger within us. It works within us while we are working on it. Finally, I see that experiencing the sacred is both powerful and necessary for me.

The yoga of Jesus concentrates our consciousness on what we truly regard as sacred. We enter the presence of God in the space in which we release the mind from hustle and bustle and silence it completely. If we can concentrate, we place ourselves in front of the altar in our hearts. We start listening to or conversing quietly with our divine, higher self. The inner space we enter in the beginning of praying, is an important starting point of sacralization. Pekka Ervast says that at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, we place ourselves in a correct relation to "the invisible world, God, good, and evil."

The Old Testament commands us not to utter the name of God in vain. Jesus provides a clarification, saying: "Hallowed be your name." I have wondered what the name of God might be which should be hallowed. Indian scriptures say about God *Neti, neti*, which means "neither this nor that." In the Bible, God himself says the following: "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14): God is his own explanation. In addition, I have thought about all the magnificent features that could be attached to God's name: Truth, Goodness, Beauty, or Love. Most people could probably agree that God is love. It would be interesting to think that our daily prayer meditation could start with the thought: "Hallowed be love." What could follow from this practice in the Western world alone?

If God is everywhere, is love everywhere? This led me to interesting trains of thought and brought to mind even more encompassing names of the great mystery which is God. I finally ended up with the most comprehensive name of God possible: the Great Life. "Hallowed be the Life, the Great Life." This is the purpose of the human being: let life be hallowed! It could be compatible with Jesus Christ's understanding of life.

When Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, he told us to go into our room when praying, that is, into our inner silence. And he continued thusly: Do not keep on babbling and think you will be heard because of your many words; this is how you should pray. These words are followed by the Lord's Prayer.

We can ponder what the Lord's Prayer really means. If we don't, we are just babbling. Indeed, when we contemplate the Lord's Prayer, its every sentence becomes a magnificent maxim of life and a spiritual program for us. The Lord's Prayer is a tightly packed spiritual self-education program, a central part of the yoga legacy Jesus left us. It should be carefully thought over and analyzed by every follower of Jesus and anyone who considers himself a Christian. It should be kept in mind, and we should live accordingly. This could be the sacralization of our lives.

Prayer is a Spiritual Tool

First, one can take the Lord's Prayer as a personal meditation practice. In our Christian culture, we are not used to talking about meditation, which is the correct focusing of thought. This can be made a daily practice. When it is applied to everyday life, it will become the yoga of action. As Pekka Ervast states: "Meditation is based on the knowledge that human being is given a spiritual tool with which he can rule the worlds and place himself in the right mindset. This peculiar occult tool is thought, and its proper use is meditation or prayer."

Jesus does not provide us with specific guidance about time; for instance, he doesn't instruct us to pray each morning at eight o'clock. But he would not have considered praying the Lord's Prayer important if it made no change whatsoever in our everyday actions. Certainly he did not consider prayer to be means of asking God to fulfill our whims or mundane needs, or believe it should be merely a source of momentary peace and a healing state of mind. No. Clearly the aim is that we should understand more deeply what the content of the prayer-meditation is. This way, its ever deepening understanding can bring forth insights and strength to support

us in our everyday work and encounters. This process could be called sacralization.

In this prayer, Jesus unfolds the practice of the New Covenant on meditation. The Old Covenant prayer-meditation required retreating away from the world into solitude and asceticism and using severe spiritual practices to pursue a higher state of mind and meet God. In the New Covenant, the path is about pursuing one's inner divinity in everyday life. Jesus opened the way for all of us: we can contact our higher self, our divinity, in waking consciousness. Higher consciousness is brought down from above, from the heaven of spirit, in order to bring light and wisdom for the life we live here and now. This form of prayer-meditation aims at the sacralization of everyday life. In the yoga of Jesus, we can view the Lord's Prayer as a gateway to meditation, silencing the mind so that the sacred word can come down to us when the noise ceases to fill our minds.

When Pekka Ervast translated the Sermon on the Mount into the book of the same title, he noticed some overlooked details. One is in the first verse of the Lord's Prayer, which, in the original Greek, is *en tois ouranois*—"in the heavens"—in the plural form *heavens*. It is also plural in the Latin Vulgate: *in coeliis*. When we say, "Our Father, who art in heaven," we are not talking about life after death, as the verse is often interpreted. Understanding this is crucial for the theme of sacralization. Another way to formulate this verse would be "Our Father, in the heavens of my spirit." In this case, we would not be praying to a God somewhere out in the universe, but to the God within us, in our hearts, in the heights of our spirit.

Sacralization is a personal and experiential practice of the will that has both inward and outward aspects. On the one hand, it connects to the sacred in our inner world; it must resonate within. On the other hand, we are also able to bring forth the sacred in the world we live in—to see, experience, and extend it in our relationships with other people, nature, all life, and the universe.

Could this be the meaning of the next verse: "Hallowed be thy name"? The "hallowed name" we contact in the heavens of our spirit begins to sensitize us to the sacred. It enables us to invisibly

perceive and strengthen the sacred in the external world. Sacralization is a process of spiritual growth by which we can nurture new sensitivities within us.

The Sacred Universe

Another remarkable verse in the Lord's Prayer has had a deep impact on me. I became acquainted with ecophilosophy and one of its developers, the Polish-American professor Henryk Skolimowski, in the middle of the 1980s. By the end of the decade, I had read his books and articles on the history of philosophy and the development of Western science after the Middle Ages.

This theoretical study turned into a new insight about ten years later, when Henryk greeted us in the village of Theologos on the island of Thassos in the Aegean. As a welcome, he simply said: "Welcome to the temple, which is in the temple, which is in the temple . . ."

Henryk's observation was simple, yet it was based on a long line of reasoning, including the image of the universe as a sacred place, a sanctuary. This is a core idea in ecophilosophy, which sees the universe as constantly evolving and consisting of nested temples.

My own mind complemented this image with another. I recalled from the New Testament that we are temples, sanctuaries, of the Holy Spirit. This image did not appear to me as an empty church, but as a nested inner state of being filled with the Holy Spirit, just as a vast primeval forest can be a temple, and a person in that forest is a temple within a temple. A necessary question follows: does the person have any communion with the Holy Spirit in that temple? This is exactly what is sought in sacralization.

Skolimowski had been studying the history of philosophy over the years and in his writings summarized how the Catholic church, no later than the Middle Ages, dictated the conditions of sacralization. By doing so, it in effect defined its own place between God and man.

A new era dawned when Galileo and his colleagues started to crack the rigid authority and influence of the Catholic church all

over Europe. Soon after—starting at the beginning of the eighteenth century—science became trapped in the claws of a smothering mechanistic worldview. It moved our worldview to the other extreme. The universe was a gigantic machine (as in Julien La Mettrie’s *Man a Machine*, first published in 1747).

The transition into the contemporary technological worldview was the next logical step. Science was unable to provide spiritual wisdom, nor could it offer a nourishing antidote even for the dogmatic and petrified spirituality of the churches. As a result, the scientific-technological conception of the world helped create the materialistic-technological conception of humanity. Over the past few decades, this idea has turned us into visionless consumers and threatens to dash our existence into ruins through nuclear war or environmental destruction.

A vast number of Western people are still searching for a place between an intellectually free but spiritless science and authoritarian, fundamentalist, or irrelevant churches. Furthermore, philosophy, which is supposed to be the love of wisdom, has almost completely lost touch with the foundational questions of humanity and turned its attention to intricate intellectual games. We truly live in the dark ages now. These unfortunate trends have only seemed to accelerate in the new millennium.

What would happen if we accepted the principle that the universe is not like a machine but like a temple? If we accommodate our lives to this perspective, our way of living and being will change for the good. We will form a new worldview, in which space, planets, nature, and other central features of the universe gradually gain a sacred aspect. The whole of nature—people, animals, plants, even rocks—will be sanctified.

Skolimowski uses the term *resacralizing*, which means making something sacred again or restoring the sacred, which has been lost. When we rediscover the sacred in nature, we begin to act as if we lived inside a temple.

We would not behave in the temple of nature the same way as in a nature we perceive as an object of utility, exploitation, and pleasure. Nature in the latter sense can be regarded with arrogance and

indifference. It can be drained of life; it can be left to the forces of desertification and subjected to clear-cutting.

It is time to realize that we cannot live in a temple that is increasingly subject to destruction and pollution. Unfortunately, this is how things currently are in the world. Our way of life necessarily brings schizophrenic anxiety, agony, and a sense of powerlessness into our being and lives. Hopelessness is increasing, since so little seems to be in our own hands.

Modern science has come a long way from La Mettrie's conception of the universe as a machine and of the human being as just one part of that machine. Science has done a huge amount of work to make our everyday life easier, but it has not been able to solve the essential problems of being a human and evolving as a human. On the other hand, people who feel humble at the vastness and complexity of the universe and appreciate its mysterious nature have gradually emerged from the communities of biologists and nuclear physicists in the twentieth century. Skolimowski has sometimes quoted Albert Einstein's statement: "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science."^{*}

It has been fatal that modern science and the investigation of spiritual reality are antagonistic towards each other. Science leaves most of the inner reality of human beings out of its domain. Religions concentrate on their own history, dogma, and faith. In between is a large group of people who have the potential for spiritual growth but have no place either in science or religion. It is quite telling that one core concept of existence, sacredness, is not part of the domain of science; nor is love or other concepts that are imperative for human happiness. The methods of science are inadequate for investigating these phenomena; as a result, scientific discourse views love, the sacred, and similar ideas as marginal and insignificant. This attitude of denigration is bound to cause anxiety in the lives of those who hold it.

^{*} Albert Einstein, *The World as I See It*. (San Diego, Calif.: The Book Tree, 2007), 5.

Admittedly, we do have some true explorations of spiritual reality, and articles on that topic have been published on the borderline between science and religion. However, we seem to be currently enduring a kind of trench war between spiritual exploration, science, and churches (which sometimes shows the characteristics of a truce). We have arrived at a situation in which science doesn't even bother to comment on the dynamic observations and hidden truths that are ever surfacing from the spiritual realm. Scientists just seem to smile condescendingly, seeing no need whatsoever to find out about spiritual matters. On the other hand, the church in Finland takes a hard stance towards new spiritual movements, if it bothers to comment at all.

This is a phase we must live through. I believe that reality will soon force us to look past these theoretical oppositions. I also believe and hope that we will find a common path in the future, and that researchers interested in spiritual science as well as conventional science will someday overcome the obstacles of ignorance, bigotry, and prejudice.

Our church is living through a time of ferment. This is not merely a matter of female clergy, the role of gays, or other controversial issues. The real issue is how the church sees the dogma of eternal damnation and the image of God in general: both require new understanding.

Let me return to the idea of the universe as a temple. This insight initiated a necessary process in me, and I believe this will be the case for many spiritual aspirants. The idea of sacred life and a sacred universe can open a new, liberating perspective on reality. For a truth seeker, it may even become a necessity. When and how it unfolds for each individual depends on their personal circumstances.

I can see with the eyes of my soul that when we have reached the end of the journey, we will be able, at least in our higher consciousness, to understand and smilingly compare the ways we have taken to reach the top of the same mountain. Indeed it is possible to see more clearly and understand at the top of the spiritual mountain, even if it is a small one. That's why it is important to start climbing

at some point in our lives. It is futile to argue about the path to the top, whether there is only one true path, or what we might see once we reach the top.

Skolimowski's idea of the sacred universe, the foundational idea of ecophilosophy, appears to be far from contemporary scientific theory. Nevertheless, I believe that the sacred universe hypothesis will someday be accepted in one form or another (the sooner, the better).

Another core idea endorsed by ecophilosophers and the ecological movement is that the earth cannot sustain the contemporary scientific-technological approach, especially when it is almost completely subordinated to profit, greed, and exploitation. This has virtually brought the world to its knees.

Skolimowski poses a key challenge: can we think about the universe as a temple and act accordingly? It will be interesting to see how science will answer this question in light of the drastic difference between science and the spiritual worldview in this matter. In both scientific and occult investigation, the hypotheses used when investigating reality (visible or invisible) are determinative. If we assume that the universe is like a machine, we will get results that support this hypothesis. Similarly, if we assume that the universe is sacred, we will get results that support this hypothesis.

Hence the evolution of a holistic worldview is slow. Science, with its own prejudices, proceeds in its own direction and spiritual sciences in another. It is important that a more open-minded approach, which started at the end of the twentieth century, should gain strength. Insights from both sides could be used to create a new holistic vision, which the world desperately needs.

One has to be open-minded when investigating the borderline between science and spiritual science. If one starts with the assumption that there is no God or spiritual reality, one will have no chance to personally experience these things. In both spiritual and occult science, the research instrument is the human being, which has huge but largely unused potential. This instrument cannot be used for investigating spiritual realities, for example the sacredness of universe, unless it is correctly calibrated. This human instrument

has to be tuned into receiving divine impulses and spiritual information. If the tuning has not been correctly done, these impulses leave no traces in the person. The person simply concludes that there is nothing there, because no “radio waves” can be observed.

The concept of the sacred universe is a foundational starting point in ecophilosophy: everything else is based on it. The ecological movement has no chance of success without a philosophically and spiritually robust foundation. A movement aiming at saving the world should not be based merely on the fight for composts and rainforests, however important these may be. Global thinking and action should be built on the great vision of the sacredness of humans and the whole creation. This could be its strength.

The most beautiful visions of ecophilosophy have far-reaching philosophical roots and consequences. From this perspective, Kirsti Kataja wrote some fine verses in a seminar on ecophilosophy on Thassos about twenty years ago:

I breathe fresh air,
or do I just think so?
And how long?
Do we wake up and
stop polluting this air,
the gift we have received,
so that it would be intact
when we return again?

The Power of Thought

Sanctification is closely related to sensitizing and directing the mind and the power of thought. Prayer-meditation is about moving certain energies. As I have already pointed out, Ervast says that in prayer we have been given a tool that can be used to control the worlds. One often hears people from different traditions talking about the power of thought, both positive and negative. People seem to be reassuring both themselves and others about this phenomenon. It is becoming generally accepted. Even atheists can acknowledge it, because they can feel it.

We all can recognize hatred and aggression. They penetrate us when we encounter an aggressive person. Evil thoughts can also harm, shatter, suffocate, and hamstring us. Thoughts are a more sophisticated form of energy than words or deeds. Of course, evil thoughts also harm the person who generates them. The person may gain strength from hatred, but it is worth pondering the price. Positive, loving, and blessing thought is always uniting, including the one who thinks lovingly. But when one says in prayer, “Hallowed be thy name,” one knows that it is impossible to curse in the name of God.

Sanctifying is about organizing our subtle body. The *Kalevala* speaks symbolically about forging the Sampo. In this process the person becomes more sensitive and able to identify subtle energies, both within and outside. Working with these matters takes us in a different direction than where the world is going; it always has. We can see this in artists and people of spirit throughout the ages, who have systematically developed their sensitivity.

These days, confrontation is evident. The external world is trying with all its strength to desensitize us. It feeds us ever more powerful impulses and sensations, the “pleasure” which, like a drug, makes us numb. Some of these impulses are called “experiences,” although they usually lack all subtlety or depth. Material and mechanistic impulses are short-lived. They nourish our coarse veil, but bring no permanent satisfaction, peace, or balance.

Unfortunately, our young generations don’t receive adequate tutoring on art or aesthetic experience in school. Communication, advertising, and consumerism are part of our lives starting from childhood. Physical symptoms reflect a distress of soul. Disturbed children and adolescents struggle between anorexia and gluttony. Western society is rapidly moving to from consuming to gluttony, which is justified by claiming that increasing economic wealth will eventually benefit the poor and less fortunate.

This pressure is not easy to resist, but there are always people who see through the illusion. As a Swedish professor, Owe Wickström, aptly said, “One can reach the true source only by swimming upstream.” Fortunately, going back to the source can purify us. This

is a central idea in Theosophy, because the Ancient Wisdom teaches us that all great religions originate from the same point of origin. It is like a source of the water of life at the top of a mountain. This water flows through different paths from the top to the common sea. Although the water gets dim and dirty on its way, still it is in essence the same sacred water, having the same information and the same wisdom.

All this is similar to the necessity of sacralization. Whatever religion we decide to study, they all talk about practices which always go back to purifying actions, speech, and thought. I talk about Jesus's teachings in this book because they are closest to our culture. It is the tradition we have been born in, but we haven't bothered to study it for ourselves. Instead, we have received it already portioned and chewed to the extent that it has lost its taste. It doesn't make us think, and it doesn't fire us up. The other option is to give up, to believe that we don't have what it takes to be soldiers of faith.

Longing for the Sacred

A new hallowing is underway. Although we might grow disappointed, tired, and tempted to give up, it will not leave us, because deep down we know we have that strength. We know that it is right to think that a human being is sensitive. It is not weakness; it is a new ability, an evolution of new senses, which is looking for a new environment, a new tolerance, a new respect, and a new set of values.

Lest we despair when we see the world going in a madder and sicker direction, it is worth remembering that sanctifying is a process. It is personal work and takes place deep within us. It is achieved through many methods, in many traditions, and at many levels. Most importantly, much of this work takes place invisibly, in secret, with no signs or noise.

In our culture, sanctifying everyday life is not distant in time. In my childhood, both in the countryside and in cities, it was normal to keep the Sabbath day, to sanctify it. The home was prepared for Sundays. Cleaning was done on Saturdays, people washed up, and

special carpets were rolled out. On the other hand, the nature of Sunday was colored by the influence of the church in the 1950s, which for a child may have made the day feel stagnant and distressing. Even so, at the bottom there was a correct belief in alternating work and rest, inhalation and exhalation. In agrarian society, the sacred was present in our relationship with nature. The resacralization of nature is very important; it could be a national project.

Dining together among family members used to be standard, and fortunately this practice has not completely ceased to exist. Dining together is often endorsed by various lifestyle therapists as well as by Central and Southern European traditions, which help us see how healthy and empowering this practice is. It contains a seed of the sacred. Dining together can be accompanied by saying grace. I don't care for forced evening prayers, but a quiet, voluntary blessing can be enough. I have been touched by the prayer in the Waldorf preschools, where children say grace in the following way: "Bread out of a seed, the seed out of light, the light out of the good house of the sun."

The path of purification starts by cleaning up our thoughts, which creates inner peace and space for the sacred to reenter. The inner world is cleansed of anger, bitterness, and grudges. In addition, we may have strong addictions that must be purified, often related to sex or the lust for money and property. Spiritual practices are aimed at changing thought patterns that have become automatic. Our relationship to violence and evil plays a central role in our spiritual aspiration. This purifying inner work will develop and sensitize us for receiving the sacred. The sacred universe will sense its own sacredness through us.

Little by little, persistent work will unfold new abilities, such as psychic vision and clairvoyance. We become sensitive to human auras and energy fields in different places. It may not be far in the future when it can be scientifically shown that certain places have especially strong and beneficent vibrations. I visited France in the early 1990s and went to Chartres cathedral. The energy fields in that sanctuary were almost palpable. On the other hand, there is no need to go far. These energies can be also felt in Finnish temples; it

is a sign that spiritual work has been carried out there. Over the decades and centuries, thousands of people have brought their purest thoughts to these places. This thought energy has become attached to them and nourishes and tunes us when we visit them.

My impression is that the more subtle the energy, the stronger its effect. Each of us can elevate the vibration of a place. If we concentrate and work together, the effect will be stronger. We all know that there are people who have the ability to light up a room. The question becomes: can I live in such a way that I leave a sacred footprint, that my touch doesn't wound and wreck but nurtures and heals, and that my thoughts and words bless and nourish?

This question is posed to everyone who thinks about their effect on the world. Do I just seek some stimulus for myself? Do I have something to give to the world? Giving is the most important function of love. It is the verb that defines love. What do I have to give? This can be a start for reaching the sacred. Sanctifying is energizing and empowering. Prayer-meditation is about moving these energies, as Ervast said. If we return to where we started, to the original thought of the prayer—"Hallowed be thy name"—we can realize that we can create with the help of God's name. We can give our thoughts and actions the sacred name of God, its strength and quality, that is, truth, goodness, beauty, and love. We nurture these qualities in meditation, concentration practices, and prayers; these qualities will in turn cultivate us. We grow God within us and purify the space for him to enter. This sanctification will one day illuminate the whole world.

The Secret of the Kingdom

Jesus says that the kingdom of God is within you. This paradoxical statement is a mystery that can only be realized in one's own experience. How does the kingdom of God come? Can people hasten its arrival in this outer reality? Is it impossible for us to build a new paradise on earth, after all? We meditate and pray this in saying "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer.

The notion of the kingdom is often used in Jesus's speeches. Sometimes it is "the kingdom of God," "my Father's kingdom," or

“the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is speaking the word of the kingdom. In his parables, he describes an incident and starts by saying, for instance: “The kingdom of heaven is likened to a grain of mustard seed which a man had taken and sown in his field” (Matthew 13:31). The term *kingdom* appears in Jesus’s sermons and in his recommendations in various contexts. I will examine this question about the kingdom largely based on the keys provided by Rosicrucian theosophy. These impulses have in turn led to personal experiences and insights.

We who live here on earth can be viewed as citizens of three kingdoms: the physical kingdom, the kingdom of thoughts and consciousness, and the kingdom of spirit. We could take as a starting point the second sentence in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come.” This means that we pray that the kingdom of God will come to this material reality. The physical kingdom is all that surrounds us, the visible and sensible concrete world, in which we share similar observations. Then we have the world of mind and consciousness, which is intertwined with the world of matter and interacts with it. It is like a reflection of the material world that makes it understandable and moldable by our consciousness. In addition to these, there is something else that Jesus calls a kingdom. It is a divine consciousness that can come down from the world of spirit and enlighten our minds. This way it can manifest itself in the material world and mold its essence, infusing spirit into matter.

An important inspiration for the title of this chapter has been the mysterious novel *The Secret of the Kingdom*, by the great Finnish author Mika Waltari. The book offers a powerful portrayal, which has an exceptional effect on the reader. It fascinatingly takes the reader into the world in which the dead and resurrected Master is present and active after his death. In a mystical way, Waltari tells the story of the interface of two kingdoms—visible and invisible—in the Roman-occupied Judea of the thirties.

Occupied Judea was very different from the state we Finns, as a European nation, live in today. But have the most profound questions on life and its meaning changed that much in two thousand years? Probably not. We still think of our relationship with

the kingdom, power, and state. We are preoccupied with the same questions as those who lived in Jesus's time: Are we free? Can we freely direct our life and its course? How do I relate to the state, in my case Finland, and its security? How do we relate to the worldly powers, the authorities, and those who rule us? How do we see those who are below us in society: the disabled, sick, unemployed, and poor, about whom Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you" (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7)? What is my relationship with my own property and the power and security it provides? As individuals, we must also think of our relationship with personal ethics, our internal priorities. These questions must be asked regardless of any changes in external reality. It seems to be our task.

One doesn't need a deep understanding of the world to notice that the values of the inner kingdom and the spirit, in which one develops one's ethics and values, do not always coincide with those of the external kingdom. In this regard, the situation is very much as it was two thousand years ago. Still, we are obliged to consider the question Jesus raised: how I can "give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25)?

Next I will discuss what Jesus teaches about the kingdom and how it could be applied to contemporary life. When making this comparison, we must be careful to note the demarcation line that Jesus draws in saying that "my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Jesus Christ is the ruler in the kingdom of spirit. He refers to the kingdom that does not operate under earthly laws. At the same time, he provides clear and demanding ethical advice for everyday life, which creates the demarcation line between the visible and invisible kingdoms. We humans stand between these two kingdoms and must consider our responsibilities to both. Christian ethics, which contains the same teachings as the other great religions, emphasizes the difference in requirements of the two kingdoms. Which system of values do we find more appealing? Don't the values of this visible world demand an answer from us? This is certainly the case, but what is our foundation for the answer?

Pekka Ervast, who was a profound thinker and writer on Christian ethics, notes that Jesus directed his teachings to individuals: his followers and disciples. He didn't mean them to serve as economic or political programs or as laws for states. Any interpretation of Jesus's teachings will cause contradictions if this point is not crystal-clear. Christian ethics between nations will become possible only when the individuals living in a nation have so thoroughly internalized the ethics of love that it becomes the collective will of society. Every nation that is called Christian has a long way to go to achieve that end.

From the perspective above, the church associated with the state is in a difficult position. This difficulty is even harder since the church abandoned the doctrine of reincarnation during the early centuries.* As a result, contemporary Christians believe they must base their eternal future—either in heaven or hell—purely on faith, although this faith is more in conventional Christian doctrine than in what Jesus really teaches. A related problem is the doctrine of righteousness, which has had different theological interpretations over the centuries and has created tension between the branches of Christianity. The question is whether a human being is saved on the basis of deeds, faith, or the mercy of God. Since the Lutheran church has decided that mere faith and mercy are enough, personal striving and ethical self-education have become less important. It is believed that when a person finds faith, they will do good deeds. But this view neglects Jesus's teachings, which provide us with the means and advice needed for spiritual growth leading to contact with our inner God. This is not only faith but knowledge about the kingdom of spirit as taught by Jesus.

When dealing with earthly conflicts between the interests of state and church, the church is often compelled to let Caesar have his way. Over the centuries, prosperity and power have become more important than uncompromising following of the doctrine. This is evident, for example, in going to war to kill both neighbors and people living far away. As a user of earthly and economical

* *Editors' note.* Reincarnation was taught in the early church by some Gnostic sects, which were later condemned as heretical.

power, the church has a tricky position, as is always the case when one must serve two masters. Nonetheless, I do not want to belittle the progress or the social and spiritual good that the institutional church has created and is creating right now all over the world. Finland, as a Lutheran country, has a unique opportunity to come back to the roots of the original Christian doctrine and listen more carefully to what Jesus had to say.

The unbearable contradiction between the ideas of eternal damnation and of a loving, graceful God needs to be addressed immediately. This irrational contradiction has alienated thinking people from the church. Even if the church father Tertullian might have said that “I believe because it is absurd,” or if Luther has advised rejecting reason in matters of faith, it is nevertheless worth looking for a deeper interpretation of these issues. Although the ethics of Jesus are paradoxical, they cannot totally go against reason.

Wise and measured criticism has arisen within the Finnish Lutheran Church. Pastor Antti Kylliäinen, who wrote a daring book entitled *Everyone Will Go to Heaven*, introduced this topic some years ago in Helsinki. I asked him about the compatibility of the doctrines of a loving and almighty God and of a never-ending hell in the afterlife. His honest answer was: “They are in no way compatible.”

From this interesting tangent, let us return to the question about the secret of the kingdom. In the beginning of Jesus’s public work as a teacher and healer, John the Baptist emerged from the wilderness, called people, and said, “Change your hearts and lives, because the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 3:2). I will revisit this utterance at the end of this chapter, since it has its own special meaning.

Enter the Kingdom

The best-known occasion on which the term *kingdom* is used appears in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come.” Pekka Ervast says that when meditating on the first part of the prayer, we attune ourselves to a right relationship with “the higher self, to God, to

good and evil.” When I seriously started to think about this aspect of the prayer for the first time, an image was formed in my consciousness. In that image, everyone meditating the Lord’s Prayer wishes that the kingdom of heaven would gradually come closer to earth. If there were enough of these prayers, a critical mass would be reached, so this wish might come true.

So I initially thought. Later I realized that this is not quite the case. The kingdom of heaven comes from within. It will grow within us into a state of consciousness that acts in the background of the mind and energizes it. From within us, it will color and illuminate our thoughts with new light, and the quality and content of this light is love. In the Lord’s Prayer we ask (without necessarily realizing it) for this new, love-filled insight.

As part of a comprehensive system of prayer or meditation, the Lord’s Prayer is a meditative practice by which we direct our will and express to the universe what is important to us. With this practice, we approach a gate which, when it opens, will show us life’s true face and its true priorities. The new light, which can be turned on within us, requires practice. It entails a change in our mindset as well as striving, but when this light emerges, it will change the course of our life.

What else is included in this new state of consciousness? What is it like, and what is its nature? The person who hasn’t experienced the consciousness of the kingdom has great difficulties in understanding this transformation. It can be intimidating, and I think it is safe to say that this is always a personal mystery: each person has his or her own kind. The kingdom lives in every person as a seed: it is an inner mystery, a possibility, and a foreshadowing. Each person will approach the kingdom one step at a time from his or her own history and experience, through his or her own subjective understanding. In his parables, Jesus describes the nature of the heavenly kingdom, its laws, and how its inhabitants behave and act. One of his best-known sayings is the following: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

By my interpretation, this saying stresses confidence above all else, like that of a child who runs and throws herself trustfully into the arms of an adult. It is an act of full faith that comes with a child's marveling openness. For an adult, it corresponds to a newfound moment or state of innocence. This quality comes naturally to a child, but we can also perceive it in all highly advanced masters. It is a state in which constant trying, struggling, and striving have ceased. It is more than doing and executing; it is holy presence. Becoming childlike is always more a matter of the heart than the head; it requires the right kind of humility, which is a brother of love.

The Kingdom in the Parables

When discussing the kingdom of heaven in his parables, Jesus starts with explaining the principles it entails. He talks about a field in which wheat is growing. When people are sleeping, an enemy sows weeds among the wheat. (Sleeping doesn't necessarily imply that it is night. Actually we often live our day-to-day life in sleep, as the Finnish Theosophist and minister Yrjö Kallinen aptly pointed out.) The servants want to go and gather the weeds among the wheat, but the master forbids it because they could root up the wheat too. When the harvest comes, the reapers will gather the crops. Only then will the wheat be separated from the weeds.

Death is the reaper, the wise one who will enact this separation and make it visible to us. Each of us will see this separation at the moment of death. This phenomenon is well described in recent research reports on near-death experiences, which document people's life reviews. In this state, the dying person can be objective. It is as if she has stepped outside of her personality and is now capable of evaluating her bygone life and its deeds objectively.

This parable leads us directly to Jesus's fourth commandment, in which he advises his disciples not to resist evil. We are not supposed to tear evil from the midst of good. It is not our task to condemn. Jesus talks about turning the other cheek. Evil is not won with evil; it will get what it is due in time. Our task is to concentrate on the

good in us and in others. When we do, the good will gain strength and become more powerful. In recent years, there has been much talk about the power of positive thinking. This can be linked to Jesus's fourth commandment: not resisting evil means concentrating on good. In both, the inspiration is the same, which means that positive thinking is at least two thousand years old. The New Age movement has brought it to us again for testing.

The advice in Jesus's fourth commandment is directed also to evil we perceive in ourselves. We should not approach it with force and violence; instead we should pay no additional attention to it. When we make ourselves familiar with nonresistance to evil and all that it entails, we notice that following this advice has an enormous potential for change. It is a force that will open the gate of heaven for the practitioner.

At this point in history it is not possible to make nonresistance to evil a law or a model for action in any nation. There is no nation that is so evolved. However, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't look for and practice compassion, conciliation, and clemency on a smaller scale. On the contrary: these practices will build a more humane future. Through this example, nonviolence will grow in individuals and spread into society.

People who are interested in developing on a spiritual path should definitely familiarize themselves with nonresistance to evil—the philosophy of nonviolence of Tolstoy, Gandhi, Ervast, and others. These people have examined and lived this deep practice of Christian ethics—even Gandhi, although he was a Hindu.

One who is seriously dedicated to practicing nonresistance to evil and makes this a pledge for life will face many new experiences and situations. She will be tested with no warning and will come in contact with aggression and violence in the outer world. In addition, she will have to deal with her own inner dark side, her own bad impulses and lower desires. This is known to all who have made this kind of promise in their lives. Life will test us.

I would like to provide encouragement by saying that the world starts to change around such people. Practicing nonviolence and nonresistance to evil is unbelievably different from what one could

have imagined, because when this change unfolds in the person's inner world, it will also have effects in the visible outer world. When we concentrate on good, good will increase in our surroundings as well. The immense power and beauty of nonviolence will manifest itself.

Nonresistance to evil is one of the touchstones of faith. It is possible to test one's faith in Jesus's yoga by adopting the following working hypothesis: do not answer evil with evil. It is customary in science to have hypotheses: one assumes that something works in a certain way. This will then be tested in practice, and the outcome of the test will show whether the hypothesis is correct or not.

In a similar fashion, a truth seeker can test whether nonresistance to evil will work in her own life. This is esotericism in practice. When she goes forward in her pursuit, she will find out how this hypothesis works; faith will become personal knowledge. Then it becomes esoteric knowledge that has been tested in real life. The test laboratory is the human being, while the tests are provided by the forces of destiny.

One of the most important insights I have had on nonresistance to evil has been understanding Ervast's teaching that what we usually perceive as evil in the outer world (accidents, hunger, misery, and suffering) is in fact not evil at all. Evil is within us: lust for revenge, cruelty, mercilessness, grievances. This is the evil we must work with, and we must conquer it not by fighting but by understanding its roots. This is the work of a truth seeker.

The law of karma teaches that one reaps what one has sown. When I look at the world at this point in history, it seems to me that understanding karma is one of the greatest demarcation lines in human action. In Western culture, materialism and irresponsible attitudes encourage blatant disregard. Money and short-lived pleasures dictate the logic for action. This cultural decay is advanced by the most powerful people in society and the economy, who are themselves the very incarnations of greed. The righteous may feel powerless, but they will have their consolation from their Master's promises. After all, "each tree is recognized by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44).

Jesus continues his parables on the kingdom of heaven. He compares it with a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, which nevertheless will grow to be a giant tree. He also compares it with yeast: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33).

Pekka Ervast notes in this context that both of these parables describe “the heavenly kingdom’s own law and order.” He points out that “the heavenly kingdom is the higher life, which attempts to manifest itself in the human consciousness. Its seed is in every individual, and it is a reality which grows alone in the earth. Furthermore, it is the smallest seed because it is invisible.” It is the hope for a new, more rational, and more spiritual way of life—and this hope will grow and take shape if correctly irrigated. The yeast is born in an interaction. That is why it is worth constant attention to forming and nourishing, along with a critical monitoring of the development which drives us apart into loneliness.

Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and covered up. Then he sold all that he had and bought that field. In another parable, a merchant found a pearl of great value, sold all that he had, and bought that pearl. That is, the individual gave to this earthly, material life what belongs to it, and kept the pearl and the treasure, which are more precious than earthly wealth.

These parables are closely related to two other episodes in Jesus’s life. In the first episode, he holds a Roman coin in his hand and says to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s (Matthew 22:21). In the second episode, he meets a rich young man. Jesus urges the rich young man to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him. But this demand is too arduous for the young man, and Jesus responds, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23). Jesus speaks about the same thing in his first beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The kingdom is born within us when we can give up, give away, let flow, and learn how to be without attachment. The secret is not

to attach our mind to the fleeting material world, which is the object of ever more fierce competition on a global scale. Money is one of the worst addictions we have, and yet paradoxically it appears to be our most important guarantee of safety. It doesn't help to say that there are no pockets in the shroud; everybody already knows this. The problem is that we don't believe in the treasure or the pearl Jesus talks about, or in the bliss that is the higher state of happiness. We do not want to empirically test whether Jesus's teachings, taken as a working hypothesis, are true. Our fear and resistance to change keep us locked in our current misery. It would be daring to knock on heaven's door; after all, it might be opened.

Everyone who has tried knows that taking a crucial step in life is difficult: it might be the thing that requires the most courage. But it is extremely important not to give up and to keep trying. The time will come when we will see that the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl, and the bliss are part of the kingdom of light, which will open for us if we free ourselves from the chains of money. Jesus came to teach us how to conquer poverty and the abyss of money and how to concentrate on more important issues.

We are required to have the understanding and ability to change our relationship with money and possessions. It seems that if we learned this lesson alone, we could save our planet from destruction. On the other hand, we don't have to become beggars. Jesus says that the poor in spirit are blessed. This does not mean that we can't have money, even a lot of money. The question has to do with our inner attitude towards money. A rich person can handle a great fortune skillfully, as a gift, by understanding that it has been given to him because of his wisdom. Life entrusts money to us to use in a correct way. In a Theosophical context, this is called the "trial by earth"—controlling money and earthly possessions.

Jesus addresses the kingdom of heaven again in the eighth beatitude: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He doesn't say that the righteous will go to heaven after death; he is speaking in the present tense. He wanted to bring the kingdom of heaven here on earth and set it as our goal. He taught it and set his whole life as an example.

This was the life of the kingdom of spirit. He offered it in every way for us and emphatically said: “The kingdom of God is within you.”

When Jesus promises the kingdom to those who are persecuted because of righteousness, I interpret this to mean that the righteous one does what he knows is right in his heart regardless of opposition and persecution. Jesus consoles his followers and promises them the bliss of the kingdom of heaven. This is a new strength and a fearless joy even in the midst of persecution and hardship. Everyone who has experienced the kingdom of heaven, even for a short time, knows that Jesus is speaking the truth. It is, with no exception, the most important occasion in life, at least until a new experience takes place.

It is essential to have the courage to start the path, which takes us towards life, harmony, peace, and joy, and avoid going in the wrong direction, which will lead to a dead end. But even in the dead end there is mercy, a new chance from the Father, which is always open for us. It is mercy to have a chance to repent, turn around, and start over from a clean slate, or at least from a cleanable one.

In a well-known parable, Jesus talks about how a sower sows seeds, which are the word of the kingdom, in different types of soil. Seed that is cast on stony land does not germinate. The person hears the word and gladly accepts it, but he has no roots in himself for the seed to attach itself to and grow. The seed sown among the thorns will suffocate in the thorns, that is, money and mammon. But the seed in the good ground will bear fruit thirtyfold or more.

Ervast explains that the word of the kingdom does not, in this context, mean the teachings; it must be understood more widely. There are many paths to the top of a mountain; there are many mansions in the kingdom. “The word of the kingdom can be heard in the human consciousness, inside every human being,” says Ervast. Do we listen to this inner voice, or do we choose not to care about it? Is it suffocated under other things? Why, when we have so many important things to attend to, do we ignore the most important one?

Jesus also compares the kingdom of heaven to a net that is let down into the lake and catches many kinds of fish. When it is full,

the fishermen pull it up on the shore. Then they sit down and collect the good fish in baskets but throw the bad away. This is to say that when one enters the life and joy of the kingdom of heaven, it will pull up all that is evil and poor in you, but this is nothing to be afraid of. Ervast explains, “What is evil in you will be thrown away. You just go ahead on your way and trust the joy you feel.”

Forgiveness Opens the Door

Forgiveness is one of the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven with the king who forgave a ten thousand-talent debt that a servant owed to him. When the servant left, he met a man who owed him a small amount of money (a hundred denarii). The servant grabbed him by the throat and demanded payment; then he had the man thrown into prison. When the king learned what had happened, he summoned the servant and said: “You wicked servant, I canceled that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” The parable ends with the master handing the servant over to the jailers to be tortured until he pays back all he owes (Matthew 18:22–34).

What is this severe imprisonment? It is the next life, a new reincarnation, into which a human being will incarnate in order to pay off his old debt, his old karma.

Having mercy and forgiving are at the core of the Christian ethics; they are the great secrets of the kingdom, or the gates of the kingdom. They have been announced to everyone, yet they remain secrets, because we have not been able to put them into practice, failing to understand their value. They are also secrets in that they cannot be understood by talking or comprehending by reason alone. They are opened only after they have been personally experienced and lived; only then they will become knowledge.

This type of knowledge belongs to those we call sages—those who have followed a spiritual path so far that life itself has started to reveal its essence and deepest secrets to them. Jesus promised his followers that they would understand the holy scriptures. We

all have the possibility of having this insight, of reaching the vast inner treasure within all of us.

What Jesus says is also literally true: every time a person experiences the Christ in herself, she is more able to understand all great religions and holy texts. In addition she begins to see how the original teachings of all great religions greatly resemble each other. I do not know why this appears to be so hard to realize. Perhaps it is due to a lack of serious thinking on this matter—for instance, seeing that the Creator of the universe, God, is the same in every religion. Ultimately Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists have the same Creator. These religions merely have slightly different doctrines. The scribe in us and the urge to be right make us quarrel and fight, not God.

Let us come back to the parable addressing forgiveness. When we are unforgiving, cold-hearted, and proud, we believe that we are teaching a lesson to those who are in debt to us, that is, who have wronged us. Not forgiving is based on force and self-righteousness, which in countless situations lead us to dream of payback and revenge. This bitterness could take up years. It creates inner anxiety, and it poisons our lives. We masterfully create a rigid shell around our pride instead of letting go and finding peace.

We do not dare to forgive because we believe that forgiving would mean accepting the wrong. This belief is misplaced. Not forgiving amounts to punishing and tormenting oneself. Yet we are prepared to do this to keep from letting go of what we feel to be our right and duty. Actually, this is what our ego feels. It feels that it is our duty to seek for compensation or punishment from the person who has wronged us. We have identified ourselves with our ego, which feels that we will make a moral mistake if we let our debtor go without a punishment. We demand compensation or, at minimum, an apology. Jesus advises his followers to meditate and pray every day: “Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.” Jesus makes a promise: we will be forgiven our debts if we ourselves can forgive ourselves. The initiative is ours.

Could it be that we refuse to forgive because we think we don't have any debts requiring forgiveness? Haven't we done anything

requiring amnesty? What about our past lives? If not, we can ask whether our refusal to forgive is not ruthless. It is against the law of loving one's neighbor. The following ideal is part of the Christian ethics: "Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned" (Luke 6:37) or, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone" (John 8:7). When Jesus said this, the stones were left untouched.

Another matter is whether I can forgive. Could I, even if I wanted to? I may need to pray for this. In some situations, one can be so intertwined with the ego that forgiveness is out of the question. Also, one may be holding onto the thought that by forgiving, one is condoning wrongdoing against oneself and the community. This question brings us to the borderline between the ethics of the two kingdoms: we have to choose to listen to our inner voice, the word of the kingdom, and set ourselves free by forgiving. We are sometimes reluctant to believe Jesus when he says: "The truth will set you free." Instead we prefer to stay as prisoners in this earthly kingdom and its conception of justice.

Similar issues occur in other ethical questions faced on a spiritual path. Think of the principles of nonresistance to evil and not losing one's temper, and the history of conscientious objecting. The line of demarcation has been very strict in the past, and still is. Yet the undisputed advice by Jesus in his first commandment is: "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder. . . . But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.'"

Christendom has studied Moses's commandment: we have more or less learned not to kill each other. It is interesting, however, that the Christian church doesn't know what its Master taught, but instead teaches Moses's old commandment. Furthermore, it cannot stand behind Jesus's commandment in wartime.

Jesus's commandment is more personal. Learning how not to get angry is the yoga practice by which one learns how to control one's mind and attain mental tranquility. As Ervast promises, this practice will gradually lead to sensing and understanding other people's thoughts.

Not getting angry is difficult: this is true for all the entrance exams for the kingdom of heaven. When I write these lines, I feel a sting in my heart: can I live and be this way? No, I cannot yet do so. But I do want to learn, and I know that the thought must be clear first. It precedes action. One must understand the principle, at least to some extent, before acting. Even so, talking and writing about these things are not a substitute for action, not for long at least. This would quite soon lead to a dead end; one must do as one preaches, or cease talking. The following teaching of the Master is a life-sized thought for me: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The Kingdom Has Come Near

Let me return to an earlier theme, which is related to what Jesus proclaimed after his baptism: “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15).

What does it mean that the kingdom has come near? The sages go about this question in the following way: The appearance of Jesus in the world was a seminal event in the history of spiritual life and evolution. Before Jesus Christ, a spiritual seeker had no chance of attaining enlightenment in day-to-day consciousness, as we have right now. Instead they usually retreated from the world and implemented spiritual practices in the mountains, wilderness, and monasteries. The goal was to mortify life and desire and to break free from illusion, maya, and the cycle of reincarnation. This is the path of the Old Covenant. It is still open, alongside the path of the New Covenant, and many people still follow it.

Because of the New Covenant, which was born with Jesus Christ, it is now possible to experience enlightenment in a state of ordinary consciousness. There is no need to pursue other states of consciousness or to get away from the world. The aspirant can receive the Christ consciousness while awake.

The New Covenant also changed the status of Satan. The Christ defeated death, and at the same time he defeated Satan. He changed

the spiritual path as well as our life both in this visible world and in the afterlife. Indeed the kingdom of heaven has come near. We all live in the aura of Christ now. There is no need to strive to leave this world to attain spiritual heights. Our mission is to brighten the kingdom of heaven here on earth by following the example set by our Master, to initiate the birth of the kingdom within ourselves, and live the life of the kingdom in our everyday lives as well as we can. This is a correct and productive way to improve the world.

I would like to point out a small yet interesting observation on the notion of the kingdom in the Gospel according to Matthew. There is a story of a centurion who comes to Jesus and tells him about his servant who is ill. When Jesus asks the centurion to take him to the servant, the centurion declines and asks that Jesus simply say the word and the servant will be healed. Jesus then tells his followers: "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:5-13).

What could Jesus's statement mean? Pekka Ervast has said that many people will find Christianity through the Eastern religions, by getting first acquainted with the religions older than Christianity. On the other hand, the New Covenant has opened the possibility for all nations and cultures to encounter the Christ in spiritual reality, that is, to enter the Christ consciousness. Christ is not just for the Christians, or for one chosen nation.

In any event, it is our most important task to develop the Christ consciousness and approach it in this Christian world in which we have been born. This teaching should be the focus of study and development in our Christian church. The kingdom of heaven can be taken by a surprise attack right here and right now. This involves the whole of our will. All spiritual aspiration is focused on it. There is no sense in living our lives by waiting for heaven or fearing hell. Instead, why shouldn't we look for the kingdom of heaven, which is already within us and does not come just by saying "Lord, Lord"? It comes by striving and trying to do what Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount. In that practice, striving in the esoteric school

of Jesus, everyone will be shown the secrets of the kingdom. This kingdom is already here, and little by little it is emerging in the visible world.

Will Your Will Be Done?

“Thy will be done” seems to be one of the most difficult verses in the Lord’s Prayer. There is a struggle between the person’s will and God’s will. Many questions regarding free will, true humility, and faith are intertwined in this struggle, but above all it is about consciousness and one’s stage of development. This verse acts as a mirror in which one constantly must reflect upon one’s hopes and actions as well as upon one’s meditations and aspirations on the path of the truth seeker.

Pondering the verse “Thy will be done,” one might first ask, what do I need to do if it is all about God’s will, not mine? Can’t the Almighty exercise his will without my praying? A related question is, how can my will be adjusted to accord with God’s will? The philosophical question of free will is relevant here. Hence we encounter a huge question in the very beginning of our analysis. On the one hand, there are God’s incredibly high manifestations and evolutionary plans. On the other side, there are tiny objectives and small people implementing them.

Pekka Ervast says that God’s will is always done in the heavens, in the worlds of spirit, in which his spirit can freely act and manifest itself without restrictions. The situation is different here on earth. The struggle between spirit and matter does not permit the will of spirit to reign. Matter is not easily bent according to the aspirations of spirit.

We can infer from Genesis that God’s will was done in our original home, called paradise, at the beginning of time. In those times, we were living as one with each other and God; we were part of God. But our symbolic archparents, Adam and Eve, wanted to know good and evil. They wanted to leave paradise and come to learn in this physical realm. In that moment our relationship with God changed, and the great unity was broken. However, as the great religions teach us, this was not a permanent break.

In this new situation, the human being seemed to have a different will from God's. God gave human beings free will—freedom to search for a solution to the problem of good and evil, freedom to do as they please in the school of evil here on planet earth. God remained in the depths of our hearts as a divine spark, a monad, an invisible sound of silence, the potential for higher spirituality. From one incarnation to another, each of us carries along this potential for growth and divine consciousness. We are born to play different roles in life, which challenge us to develop different aspects of our personality. Life after life, we grow towards the measure of man through the free choices we make. In this school of two polarities, good and evil, we have a chance to eventually become pure, wise, and beautiful images of God. This process begins when we get in touch with our inner divinity. We will then merge with the divine light as well as with the divine will, which will eventually illuminate and transfigure our body. We will become cocreators in God's great work of creation and manifestation.

The spirit descends into matter every time a human being is born from the heavenly state to a new earthly life. At the same time, it descends into the realm of restriction, where the development of humanity takes place. We have wanted to be part of this cycle of development—indeed, we have willed it. We have wanted to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, to solve the riddle of good and evil. This will manifests itself in us as a living force, will to live.

The church talks about the Fall, but in his book *The New God* (which is not available in English; the title has been translated from the Finnish), Pekka Ervast sees this matter in a completely different light. He writes: "The greatest of miracles has happened in the creation of man; the Divine Consciousness has donated its sense, intelligence, will, itself: God has sacrificed himself for the birth of man. This is truly a miracle and the greatest mystery of all."

We are living here in the physical realm, in which matter offers obstacles to the realization of spirit. Matter is slow to learn and understand. It is sluggish in becoming conscious. It fights against the spirit. However, the Ancient Wisdom tells us that as we attain new sensory sensitivities, we can gradually begin to experience the

divine spirit vibrating in all nature, in everything. It sleeps in the rocks, awakens in the plant kingdom, starts to manifest in the animal kingdom, and becomes conscious in a human being.

During the vast periods of time since we were first born as humans, we have come into contact with will, which becomes something else besides the mere will to survive. When investigating creative evolution, Henryk Skolimowski concluded that evolution, the driving force in nature, has an inner intention to produce ever more complex and conscious organisms.

Will in Our Time

The problem of free will has been discussed for thousands of years. Let us consider our own time in a high-tech Western country, such as Finland, from the point of view of free will. It seems that the long period of the culture of obedience is approaching its end; by this I refer to the culture that was upheld until the first part of the last century. Today an ordinary citizen is much less on a leash or controlled by fear than a person a hundred years ago. Rural village communities no longer exert social control, and the church no longer has intimidating spiritual authority over people. Moreover, political organizations have lost much of their power they had, say, fifty years ago. One can claim on good grounds that the Finns have never been so free to live their lives as they wish.

When we ponder over this situation, we notice that society has indeed changed, but has it provided genuine freedom? Governmental, spiritual, and economical regulation is still alive and well in the structure of society; it has just taken a more subtle form, with more sophisticated methods of control. Over the last fifty years, we have developed completely new systems of authority and control for ourselves. We have handed over a great deal of collective and private power to structures that are much more complex than the communities, churches, and parties of the past.

All over the developed world, these new structures align, suppress, and manipulate individual will. Digital entertainment and leisure systems, integrated TV, cell phones, Internet platforms, vir-

tual reality, fashion, and advertisements all tell us, starting from childhood, what we should aspire for, what values should guide us, and what we should want. They attempt to tell us how we can be happy. Behind this all is a faceless global money and market economy that sets the highest goals as publicity, self-interest, and greed. Human values and individual volition are under great pressure.

Have we entrusted our will to the wrong hands? Have we chosen false leaders? What is behind this all? Are we doing this to ourselves? I don't believe in conspiracy theories, but I do believe that humanity is in its adolescence and is unable to understand, which may drive ourselves and our planet into a serious crisis. If we ask the wise, who see more deeply, we will receive an answer: there are spiritual powers in this planet that educate us through enticement and temptation. Behind this vast information and entertainment complex is a certain being, or a group of beings, whom the Theosophists call the teacher of this earth school.

Henryk Skolimowski points out that over the past 150 years, technological advancement has created countless means of making life and work easier for people. There has never been a time when work has been so easy and we have had so much leisure time. We have enormous powers in our possession. We have never been so powerful with respect to nature. Having said this, Skolimowski asks why the individual feels more powerless than ever before in history. Where can we find strength? After all, we are given free will to choose differently, and we don't have to let anything or anyone manipulate us.

Free Will: Where Does It Take Us?

Many philosophers say that human beings have been given free will. Although I am not an expert in philosophy, I haven't heard that this concept has been discarded from the collection of essential philosophical ideas. If I were to characterize the Theosophical view of human free will as I understand it, I would say that it can be actualized within certain frames defined by destiny, karma, and a wider blueprint of spiritual evolution. When a human being

resumes her development in a new life after a rest period between two incarnations, at the gate of reincarnation she sees the opportunities and restrictions of the next life and the framework defining the borders in which her choices—her own will—can be actualized. That field of life is open to different possibilities, which are bound by choices made by other people and society at large.

This is the domain of creative evolution, in which the individual's will and consciousness have a significant opportunity and responsibility to guide the process of development.

Free will is evident in children's play at a very early age. When a child is born, the first seven years of his development are about developing will; indeed the child develops by expressing and following his own will. At the same time the child is gradually becoming conscious of choices and the resulting consequences. Experts seem to agree that the first three years in a child's life are the most important for the future. The child learns by imitation. It is also known that one learns best by experience, not by teaching. During the first seven years, children learn by playing freely, expressing their experiences and sensations on the external world through play. (In Finland, children start school at the age of seven.)

Despite this knowledge, our time doesn't have the patience to respect children's developmental phases. In the midst of the creative development of will, which secures vital energy for the rest of the child's life, laptops and tablets are becoming toys in kindergartens. There is also a tendency to introduce children to a hobby starting as early as three years old. The government has been worried about increasing demand for an intelligent industrial workforce. Consequently, at one point there was some pressure to start school earlier, which in Finland would mean that children would start at the age of six. Educators call this age the child's regal year. This would mean, figuratively speaking, that a king would be placed behind a school desk. Fortunately, this plan wasn't implemented, because it was not supported by the Ministry of Education.

Even small children are exposed to the flux of entertainment, advertisement, and fashion, along with an oversupply of commercial sex. We are also fed the narrative that our children should be

good-looking, thin, high-achieving, and sexy, just like everyone else. This used to be called groupthink, but nowadays it is just called being trendy. Individuality is the proclaimed aim, but have we ever had consumers, including children, being whipped into herds as much as in our time? Or is individuality intended only for those with enough willpower or money to stand out of the herd?

In this state of affairs, free will is under trial all the time. How free can childhood be, or, for that matter, the worlds of teenagers and adults? External influence doesn't end with childhood. We face choices in all phases of our lives. Do we have free choice? Is it possible for a trendy person who meets all the demands of fashion in every aspect of life to be free in her choices? If not, who is guiding the choices? If one is asked about this, one answers that all the others are doing the guiding. What is, then, guiding one's choices? Is it free will? Possibly, but the foremost guiding factor seems to be fear of not fulfilling external expectations set by friends, school, society, and marketing and entertainment systems. There has been recent concern about increasing anxiety among very young children as well as among schoolchildren and adults. What is driving us? Is our free will chained this way?

This question can be approached from a different perspective. It has been said that in reality there is no such thing as free will; instead, lower lusts and desires, selfish urges, and aspirations control our behavior. In the school of desire, a person is mainly at the mercy of her own mind and emotions, such as strong feelings of love or hate, great passion or fear. On the one hand, the person tries to be willing, shaping her own life independently. On the other hand, she is guided by other people as well as her own unchecked urges and desires. This is the condition in which she is seeking for her own strength from one life to another, trying to gain true control over herself and her evolution.

It is true that we all must tread this wide road of life in the midst of the aforementioned contradictions and manipulations. However, we have to find the willpower to bravely move on, to see the end of the road. By this I primarily mean the courage to live without

being afraid of the challenges and pitfalls of life. We must be able to see life and its reverse side eye to eye. It is part of our right of free will.

A person goes to this school of life, with its ordeals, until he is an adult. He can see what can be reached with his own will and consciousness. He has to think whether or not the aims he has reached are enough. He reflects upon how happy he is and how happy he could be. Furthermore, he ponders whether all the competition and pursuit of possessions and status are sufficient for contentment. The individual may already have attained everything he was seeking and yet may feel empty inside. At that point he realizes that this is definitely not enough. There must be a deeper dimension in life. This usually happens in a life crisis. Sometimes the crisis will have a good outcome: the person may decide to pursue something higher. He leaves cynicism behind and goes in search of what he understands to be wisdom. This may be the first time in his life when he has genuinely made his own choices. He is at the verge of a new state of will: he is going towards the new dimension of will.

Then the question becomes: “How should I live my life? Is there a higher will I should follow? How do I know what it is? Is there really a God? How has he revealed his will? Has he really done it somewhere?” A person who investigates will soon notice that God has revealed his will through the great teachers we know as founders of religions. Similar guidance has been found in all religions. These teachings have always been advanced and highlighted by seers and mystics in their own lives. Hence the truth seeker starts reading and looking for knowledge that feels right and helps him to act and live accordingly. He recalls that according to the Bible, not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven. One has to do something—to do the will of the Father.

Soon the truth seeker notices that those great teachings point to a different direction than the one he has gone in before. He has wanted to have entirely different things: money, belongings, status, property, safety, and such externals. Furthermore, he has always been ready to get angry. He has wanted to enjoy himself with impure images and deeds. He has wanted to see justice take place,

even if it demanded violence, and he has wanted to have revenge and answer evil with evil. He often has wanted to hate other people, especially strangers and enemies.

The great masters, Jesus of Nazareth among them, seem to be talking about something else. Jesus says that we should never get angry and that we should guard the purity of our thoughts. We should speak truthfully. We should learn to be gentle and not to answer evil with evil, but to forgive and understand. In the end, we should learn to love all beings as our brothers. Jesus urges us to change our minds. In his commandments, he presents completely new ideals for us to will. And indeed this process has to do with will, because it is related to changing our being and consciousness.

If a person hears this call, she is at the beginning of the path that truth seekers call the path of purification. She will become a truth seeker herself. She notices that she lacks knowledge. She has not known or cared about Jesus's commandments. She also lacks something in her emotional life. At this point, she doesn't understand anything of God's love, and she has been attached to completely different things. She also lacks will, or at any rate her will has been directed towards things that have led to illusion and distress. Whenever someone starts to seek for truth in life, it is always an important decision, and it takes willpower.

Having discussed the essence of will and the opportunities to express it in our time, I will turn to two other aspects of human nature: knowing and feeling.

God Knowledge, God Feeling, and God Will

Western society has lived in the age of knowledge for over three hundred years. This age of knowledge, which we are currently living in, was created to oppose the authority of the church, which was based on a one-sided emphasis on faith. As a result, we have placed scientific, literary, and theoretical knowledge—that is, head knowledge—above everything, as the measure of all wisdom. To exaggerate only slightly, we have moved from the tyranny of faith and religion to the tyranny of knowledge. This tyranny has been criticized for over a hundred years, since the arrival of Theosophy

at the end of the nineteenth century. The second wave of criticism arose at the end of the twentieth century, when the New Age and subsequent new spiritual movements started to contest the supremacy of knowledge.

Theosophy literally means *wisdom of the gods*—the wisdom that gods possess—and it says that a human being can become conscious of his or her own divinity over many incarnations. This information can be easily received as a lower type of knowledge: head knowledge. We then read books, think, and argue about whether or not this knowledge is right or wrong.

A Theosophist has to realize that reaching God knowledge requires more than mere head knowledge. In fact, even reaching God knowledge is not nearly enough: we must become one with God wisdom, which requires heart in addition to intellect. It is said that we see and hear more clearly with the heart, and only when the heart is involved, we can call knowledge wisdom. At that point, emotion and intellect can find a harmonious balance.

Truth seekers must know their divinity with their emotions as well. They know it initially momentarily and then gradually more and more, when they feel the divine love passing through themselves from God to other people, including strangers and enemies. This is not the type of love we speak about in mundane life; it is the love that is discussed by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

As we aspire to reach God knowledge and wisdom, at some point we may realize that we don't know anything. From the wise who have trodden the path before us, we learn that this situation can be the beginning of deeper wisdom. Truth seekers can nurture within themselves God knowledge and wisdom, and God feeling, which is love. This self-education requires will and faith, which can become knowledge. But can our will become God will?

God Will and the Will of God

What is God will? What does God want from us? Or should we want something from God? If I were to humbly answer these questions, I would say that God wants us to behave as human beings—not to do or possess something, but just be. We must do this right

here and right now, because it is the only place where we can just be. The yoga of Jesus can teach us how to behave.

It is sometimes said that being born as a Finn is like winning a lottery. I wish we were able to make use of this opportunity. Being born in Finland means freedom of religion. We have the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with many spiritual traditions. If there is willingness to try, there is choice. It is possible to grow in the will to truth (although we will never know the whole truth). We have exceptionally good access to all great teachings of the wise.

Yet few people know that Theosophy, for instance, offers a completely new perspective on Christianity, in which we can grow and be active with no need to feel miserable or sinful. Although behaving in accordance with Jesus's ethics is demanding, it is also rewarding. It offers a new vista, new hope, strength, and meaning in life, even in future incarnations. If we use our will for good, we will gain strength. Our senses will develop and become more sensitive. We will receive energies for healing, clairvoyance, and other dormant abilities within ourselves.

Leap into the Unknown

Another question remains: should we want something from God? Could this be God will within us? I believe that we should want to have some kind of experiential relationship with God, which we usually need to become convinced that God does exist. As a Finnish saying goes, a Finn doesn't believe before he himself sees.

When one prays from the bottom of one's heart, "Thy will be done," it is always a leap into the unknown. This is probably why one avoids God. There is also a saying: "One doesn't seek for the truth; one runs away from it." No wonder. The fear of God has been preached in churches in Finland and elsewhere for centuries. I doubt that we have seen the end of it yet. When someone avoids, is afraid of, and runs away from God this way, one might interpret this as willingness to take responsibility for oneself. However, taking responsibility always means going towards greater freedom; responsibility is an essential part of spiritual growth.

Some people interpret “Thy will be done” as asking that all of our old karma will quickly come to us for repayment. I believe that this represents too narrow an understanding of karma. We must be able to see that the law of karma is not a mechanism for punishment. We have difficulty seeing that God is love. If he is, then the law of karma is a cosmic law of absolute justice and love. If we understand that love is a central attribute of God, we also understand that grace and mercy are essential features of karma. Jesus himself says, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Wouldn’t God be merciful as well? Why would God want to crush his conscious child because of some wrong choices? Isn’t it merciful to correct our mistakes? I would rather avoid these end-of-the-world interpretations. We have had bad experiences with them in history.

“Thy will be done” is such a hard thing to pray for because our own will has been so weak. It has been hard work training our will on this path of purification, in which we have been trying to follow the commandments of the great masters. It would be odd if, after I succeeded in nurturing a strong will, God would say, “OK. Now we will learn what it really means to say, ‘Thy will be done.’” We might think along these lines, but we are unable to see what happens in this process, because, like everything else in esoteric Christianity, it is paradoxical.

As Pekka Ervast pointed out, when we are able to say, “Thy will be done” with the right mind and heart, we have placed ourselves in a right relationship with God. When I say, “Thy will be done,” I no longer consider myself separate from God. I understand what Jesus meant when he said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” Saying, “Thy will be done” is addressing my own higher, divine consciousness, which is in each of us. If we are to stand on our own feet in this life, we must become conscious of the divine in us.

It is clear that for everyone who has tried to live that saying, “Thy will be done” is a frightening leap into the unknown. It demands faith in God’s will. It is also the will to believe what the wise have said: that fear can cease in the spiritual path. We have to muster courage to pass through our own fear of God, which has endured

for centuries. We must stop running away from the inner call. We have to follow the path of purification to the point where God lets us know that the time of fear is over in our life. This experience of liberation will come to everyone in the form they deserve. The experience of the innermost self is always an experience of true love, which is afraid of nothing. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18).

On the other hand, perhaps the church might paradoxically be right in praying out of the fear of God; after all, it is well known that one calls for the things one is afraid of. However, I do not think that this is how the church has thought about it.

This is the ultimate question about free will: is our will free only after we have given up our own will, after we have let our own will merge with God’s? When thinking about this matter, one has to silence the mind and cleanse it of all that is not essential. For one of our greatest problems is that although we would like to hear what God is telling us, we cannot. Our own mind is so noisy and fills our consciousness with so much junk that there is no room for God. If we want to be in contact with the will of God, which is love, strength, and courage, silence is required above all: willingness to listen, peacefulness, inner quiet, which allow the will of God—our inner will—to resound in us. This will manifest itself as love. It is living yoga and living prayer. It is the silent path of allowing God to enter our heart, into the holy temple of God knowledge, God feeling, and God will. In this temple, eventually only one verse echoes: “Thy will be done.”

The Mystery of Supersubstantial Bread

Among its other highly spiritual verses, the Lord’s Prayer has one verse about praying for daily bread, for nourishment for sustaining physical existence. One can understand this from the point of view of the world’s hunger problem (which we know could be solved with the available resources if we wanted to). But did Jesus have something else in his mind when he gave the verse on bread?

We all need something to eat to stay alive. Over the history of humanity, acquiring everyday bread and all that is related to it has

taken great effort. Even though today, especially in the Western countries, less and less effort is needed to acquire what is necessary, there is still some validity in the Bible verse, “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food” (Genesis 3:19).

Those of us who believe in the power of thought and prayer could think that this progress has been, at least to some extent, due to diligent praying of the Lord’s Prayer and its verse on daily bread for two millennia. Our prayer has been heard. Skeptics and secular people say this progress is entirely due to economic and industrial development. Of course this is true, as all things have their material aspect as well. At any rate, it seems that the hard work that has been going on over millennia is gradually getting easier. Certainly in the industrialized countries our time is no longer entirely consumed by sustaining mere existence. There should be more opportunities to fulfill higher aspirations. Whether we do this is another question.

My aim is to discuss the notion of daily bread, the bread Jesus talks about in the Lord’s Prayer, from a different perspective than is customary. Almost two millennia have passed since Jesus gave this prayer and meditation formula to his followers. The Latin version of the verse is as follows: *Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie*, which is, in English, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This verse doesn’t seem to contain any mystical truths, and few people, I believe, have given it any further thought. However, I was surprised when I first read Pekka Ervast’s book on the Sermon on the Mount, in which he presents his own translation, commentary, and interpretation of Jesus’s address.* The book is written in the format of questions and answers.

Ervast offers a completely different interpretation for this verse, as well as a different translation. However, this translation has existed for a long time. It can be found in the Latin Vulgate Bible: *Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*. This means, “Give us today our *supersubstantial* bread,” or spiritual bread. (The original Greek is *epiousion*, a rare and obscure word that has been given a number of meanings.) Could it be that we are supposed to

* Pekka Ervast, *The Sermon on the Mount or the Key to the Christianity*.

ask for something other than food in this verse? Not just asking for what keeps us alive, but for what keeps us in contact with the spirit.

I can imagine that Ervast was also surprised when he found this translation in the Vulgate. He justifies this translation by pointing out that later on Jesus tells us not to worry what to eat, drink, or wear. Instead, he urges us to look at the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, which are taken care of by our heavenly Father. This clearly indicates that we need to worry not about food but something else. God already knows what we need. Jesus says: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

Even so, when I think about Ervast’s observation from today’s perspective, it seems possible to justify the translation “daily bread.” Jesus often used parables in his teachings. It is natural to view daily bread as a metaphor for the nourishment of spirit. Yet Ervast’s interpretation is important. We are free to understand and pray for anything we like. Our needs as well as our consciousness are different. A prayer is determined by what we understand now and by what the Sermon on the Mount means for us today. Perhaps we have already evolved far enough to pray for spiritual bread.

I’m convinced that the Lord’s Prayer is Jesus’s most authentic teaching in the Bible. Each verse will have a deeper meaning as one meditates on them. Another saying of Jesus supports the spiritual interpretation of “daily bread”: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

When one thinks about these matters, one soon realizes how little one is able to understand the real meaning of these most central verses. Nonetheless, if we delve strenuously into them and seriously attempt to understand them from the point of view of our own lives, we will gradually see how charged they really are. Their meanings have links to many directions both in the Old and New Testaments, as well as to spiritual thought and traditions outside the Bible.

As I have noted, Pekka Ervast offers this famous idea about meditation: “A human being has been endowed with a spiritual tool

allowing him to rule the worlds. This spiritual tool is thought, and its proper use is meditation or prayer.” This is a magnificent claim about the power of thought: that one can rule the worlds with the right thought or prayer. In this context, we also remember Jesus’s advice in the Lord’s Prayer. The real thought or spiritual attitude is different from mere words, as Jesus says: “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words” (Matthew 6:7).

Prayers we have learned in our childhood will easily turn into mindless litanies that we can’t really think about anymore. They have lost the spirit and truth that Jesus talks about. Yet these ideals are the true strength of the prayer. We can see that the same prayer can have different meanings depending on the consciousness of the one who is praying. The power of prayer or meditation depends on the individual’s state of mind and depth of surrender in faith.

I have also heard that in true prayer, we can only ask for more light and understanding for ourselves; in fact, we shouldn’t pray for anything else for ourselves. Even so, I don’t want to belittle the power of the Lord’s Prayer: we are entitled to, and we should, penetrate beyond the words and reach for the true spirit in the words. There is plenty of evidence that the Lord’s Prayer can provide a powerful shield in some instances. Indeed it is a shielding and saving mantra.

What is the spiritual bread for which Jesus urges us to pray? There is a saying, “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10), and there is another Bible verse I have already mentioned: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food” (Genesis 3:19). These both seem to say that one must struggle for bread, raising an immediate question: does one have to struggle for spiritual bread as well? Isn’t spiritual bread free and automatically available? If so, does it mean that the one who is unwilling to work cannot eat supersubstantial bread? This is the question one faces upon entering the path of self-education. Answering it requires a serious attitude. Furthermore, this path is taught in the secret wisdom of all religions, as well as in esoteric Christianity.

Events, stories, and wisdom from various sources seem to indicate that one has to work to receive spiritual bread; just waiting passively is not enough. The Lutheran church has made a grave mistake in teaching that spiritual aspiration is not so important and that the only thing that matters is faith in Jesus's act of redemption. Yet "God helps those who help themselves." When we embark on the spiritual path, we must have faith that we will be helped. Experience tells us that people who act on the basis of that faith will observe changes in their lives.

When we meditate on the verse on daily bread and ask for spiritual nourishment, we are taking steps on the stairs of faith and trust. We are no longer thinking about surviving. Instead we are making progress in proceeding to a new realm. In that realm, we begin to live in the world but are not of the world. We aim at living and searching for spirit, our true higher consciousness and potential. It's essential nourishment for our spirit. One day it will not be mere bread and wine, but a feast that is called enlightenment. We all are going toward it.

Jesus deals with bread on a few occasions. In those cases, it is usually more than mere nourishment for the physical body. It is a symbol of higher energy and strength, which is love and light in their most spiritual form. Although bread is a symbol for sustaining physical life, it also stands for nourishment of the spiritual life and higher consciousness, which provides our lives with clear meaning and sense. Many people seem to lack this sense in their lives.

Word and Bread as Nourishment

At one point when Jesus is talking to the crowd, the people get hungry. The disciples have five loaves and two fishes with them. Jesus urges the disciples to give them to the listeners (Mark 6:33–44). In so doing, he follows the law of love and giving. When everyone who has something gives to those who don't have anything, there is something for everyone. Most importantly, the one who gives will have more to give. This is the law of love: love doesn't run out when it's given away.

On the other hand, when the law of selfishness and competition rules, those who are weak always get less or are left with nothing. Sharing breads sets an example on how to solve the hunger problem in the world.

Furthermore, the bread given away on the mountain is a symbol of spiritual nourishment. It is empowering energy, on which one should not scrimp. If generously given, it triggers the right thought and action in the other person. This example will spread, giving strength and fostering faith in a miracle. Did the people who were present see a miracle? Perhaps not, but the disciples did. Those who had eyes to see saw the miracle.

Jesus shows us how to share supersubstantial bread, nourishment for spirit. His method, here as well as elsewhere, is turning selfish thinking upside down into giving with love. It is striving toward overcoming our selfishness, which is the greatest plague in the world. When we begin to overcome our selfishness, the gates of light are opened for us. When the truth seeker believes in this logic and acts accordingly, it starts to work spontaneously. It is the water Jesus told to the woman at the well: “But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst” (John 4:14).

Sacramental Bread

Jesus passed out bread for the last time in his earthly life at the Last Supper. At that point he said, “This is my body given for you” (Luke 22:19). According to Theosophy, Jesus’s sacrifice of his physical body refers to a high initiation. From an occult point of view, Jesus Christ attained the sun body (or the Sampo body, as it’s called in Finnish mythology) after he sacrificed his physical body on Golgotha. This sun body is immortal. Jesus Christ has no need to reincarnate again.

The symbolic meaning of the Eucharist is hard to understand, and it is likely to remain a mystery to us. If I were to put it into words, I would say that bread becomes a symbol for the death and resurrection of the spirit in the Last Supper. It is the allegorical apex of Jesus’s earthly teaching work, which he wants us to remember. He installed the Eucharist as remembrance of him. The ritual

reminds us of our journey and its higher spiritual goals: loving service and sacrifice.

In the Eucharist, bread is consumed, symbolizing the body of Jesus, which at his resurrection was transformed into a light body. Matter becomes light. The physical body becomes an eternal vehicle for spirit. When Jesus says the Words of Institution in the Last Supper, the disciples do not understand it; possibly Jesus himself does not fully understand it yet. Only later on, after his sacrificial death, can these words be comprehended. When we participate in the Eucharist, we allow the memory of this transfiguration of matter to enter our body and consciousness. The bread will change: it will become supersubstantial love and light. The Eucharist symbolizes the mystery of this supersubstantial bread.

Light Is Nourishment

Professor Michael Werner allegedly hasn't eaten for years.* He claims that he lives on light and consumes only coffee, fruit juice, and occasionally a glass of wine. At any rate, the idea of light is central in spiritual thinking. In this spirit, there was a seminar called "The Wisdom of Light" led by Henryk Skolimowski in Vihti, Finland, in 2003. The seminar was organized by the Forum Humanum Society.

At the time, Skolimowski was preparing his book *Let There Be Light: The Mysterious Journey of Cosmic Creativity*. During the weekend we pondered on central ideas of the forthcoming book. Skolimowski's main thesis can be summarized as follows: "Everything is light." He considered light to be a central agent of evolution. From this perspective, it can be understood how light is a source of all food. Light is at the core of our daily bread.

Let me elaborate on this idea. From our school years, we are all familiar with photosynthesis, utilized by the plant kingdom to replenish itself and constantly produce nutrition. Photosynthesis is a

* Jane Fryer, "Professor Claims to Survive on Just Sunshine and Fruit Juice," Sunlightenment (website), last updated June 28, 2007: <http://sunlightenment.com/professor-claims-to-survive-on-just-sunshine-and-fruit-juice/>.

huge step in the visible triumph of light, by which it is transformed into living organisms such as grass, trees, and crops. All “higher” organisms on the earth receive their nourishment from the plants. In fact, they eat condensed light.

In Skolimowski’s theory, the next wave of evolution initiated by light is called *logosynthesis*. It takes place in a human being, who consumes this light in the form of plants, or, in a more modulated form, in meat. (This is an indirect way to consume light, which has proceeded one step further away from the first step in the process.) In the human being, light is transformed into thought. *Logosynthesis* originates from the Greek *logos*, a word that has many meanings, including *reason*. Through logosynthesis, light has produced human consciousness, through which the universe reflects upon itself. If we think about the relationship of the eye to the human mind, we can say that light has created a being in which the universe can be reflected, seen, and even understood.

The next great step in the triumph of light is *theosynthesis*, from the Greek *theos*, *God*. By theosynthesis, light has created a fine-tuned apparatus, the mind, which is capable of having an image of God, the supreme light. The yogi, saint, or spiritual aspirant has started on her way to the light and lets it work within her in order to unite with the universal center of light and achieve enlightenment. We are all children of light.

Skolimowski’s insights on theosynthesis brings us back to Easter and its surrounding events, including the Last Supper and what Jesus said about bread and wine. Jesus speaks in exalted, mystical, and symbolic language when he says: “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” The Gospel goes on to say, “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:19–20). We allegorically consume completely enlightened nourishment: the body of Jesus, which has gone through all the stages of enlightenment, at least from the human perspective.

Jesus Christ is our great example and teacher, our elder brother, as Theosophists say. In his baptism in the Jordan, he was able to receive God’s perfect image of humanity. After that point, working

intently, he learned how to tune his physical body, ethics, thought, and action so finely that the divine light could completely transfigure matter and sacralize it.

These themes require a great deal of thought. I could ask this: does Jesus's advice not to worry about what to eat and drink also include supersubstantial, spiritual bread? Doesn't our heavenly Father know that we need spiritual bread even before we ask for it?

This is certainly the case. Supersubstantial bread is always available. There is no shortage of it. However, the problem lies in our readiness and ability to receive it—whether we are able to receive higher knowledge, light, and love. Our state of prayer and meditation, our ability to pray in spirit and truth, will determine whether we can receive supersubstantial bread. That state is directly related to ethical practices, which are needed to tune the receiver of our consciousness.

If one asks what receiving supersubstantial bread requires from us, I would reply, "Tune your receiver." This point of view can be illuminated with this example: Many people wonder why they cannot live in the state of falling in love for a longer time, why the wonderful ecstasy disappears and we go back to our dull, everyday life. I believe that falling in love has to do with a cosmic force, which is in the hands of destiny. This force attracts people who have karmic lessons to learn from each other. When the cloud of falling in love disappears and ordinary life begins, the wonderful memory of that experience keeps them together. (Otherwise they will have another lesson waiting for them in the future.) But why does the cloud go away?

It may be because the energies of love are so highly tuned that they cannot reside for a long time in a person whose mind is even occasionally filled with dark energies. These dark energies are created by hate, greed, grudges, vindictiveness, refusal to forgive, and aggression, to which people easily become emotionally attached. Love lives in freedom.

A similar law operates with supersubstantial bread. Our being, the apparatus receiving the energy of light, or supersubstantial bread, has to be strong and pure spiritually. Our aim is spiritual

freedom and independence. We have to become free from our attachments. An angry and hurtful mind, lying, sexual lust, addiction to aggression, hate, vindictiveness, and envy are the burdens that prevent us from ascending in spirit. They are like anchors that bind us to the mud. The saying, “Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly,” describes the matter very well. God will set those free who are ready to become free. The converse also applies: the person who is filled with anger, bitterness, and negative emotions cannot receive supersubstantial bread.

When we pray as Jesus asked us to, “in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23), it tells us about our intention. We want to strive; we want to align our will with God’s. Right alignment and right thought are important. It seems that we are back to Ervast’s idea: “A human being has been endowed with a spiritual tool allowing him to rule the worlds. This spiritual tool is thought, and its proper use is meditation or prayer.”

Ervast says that at this point in the Lord’s Prayer, we look for a right relationship with the world around us. The progress of each aspirant is being observed. When we eventually reach the right state of attunement, when we are just empty vessels, then that vessel can become filled with heavenly energy. When we have reached this point of contact, our understanding will gain new dimensions, and we have the opportunity to live with the energy of light. However, Jesus’s advice is always worth remembering: “But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them” (Matthew 15:18).

We need spiritual bread, the light of spirit and cosmic energy, to carry on in this school of painful efforts. An old Finnish saying, “Bread keeps a man on the road,” can be interpreted from either the material or the spiritual point of view. This is our experience in everyday life. We can think that the same is true in the case of spiritual nourishment. Spiritual bread keeps us on the path, if we recall Jesus’s words: “I am the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Let us pray for supersubstantial bread in spirit and in truth, which keeps all of us, men and women alike, on the path to the truth and life.

The Most Significant Problem of Our Time

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us new attitudes for our lives and way of being. He sees the bonds in our minds, to which we are attached, and with his teachings and example, tries to show how we could be set free from these bonds. These bonds are attitudes, hardened ways of behaving, and models for thinking and acting that we have received from our culture. It is usually hard for us to ponder upon their significance in our lives, let alone to question them. The yoga of Jesus will unlock these attachments and blocks so that the spirit can be free and energies can freely flow in us.

We call Jesus “Savior,” and rightly so, since this is what Jesus did. However, the church has monopolized this concept and wants to interpret it only in terms of the redemption: that is, Jesus died on the cross for our sins. According to the church, just by believing this, we are saved and will go to heaven.

I will not address this doctrine of salvation any further here. I just want to pay attention to Jesus’s role as a savior in terms of his spiritual teachings. Jesus provides us with an example of what we should do in our lives. One important teaching addresses the way we should react to unfairness and insults. Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer as follows: “And forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). Here he shows us the direction of spiritual growth and liberation. We will be free if we follow this path. He says, “The truth will set you free” and clarifies: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” We will see this path of freedom when we learn to forgive, to let go of negative emotions and their dominance. In this freed inner space within us, we can experience forgiveness for our own wrongdoings and evil deeds. This is the forgiveness promised by Jesus in his prayer for those who want to forgive.

Letting Go of the Emotional Hook

Our energies are unable to flow unless we learn how to let go of our negative emotions, but we want to hold on to them, to keep

them inside us and with us. Even if we don't want to do so, we do not know how to let go of them. The psychotherapist Tuulikki Saaristo talks about emotional hooks in her book *Taikasanat* ("The Magic Words"), which discusses forgiveness. We are attached to these hooks, which is why we are under their spell. They are about insults, abuse, and criminal acts we might have encountered. These incidents arouse an emotional state that resurfaces again and again in our consciousness and constantly overwhelms us. In her book, Saaristo provides a piece of advice that helps us to get free from the emotional hook. It may appear to be mechanical, even too simple, but it has a certain logic, which I will try to describe later.

Negative emotions can easily hold on to us, but the same is also true of positive emotions. We often talk about attachments—emotions through which we become fond of other people. But when our spiritual path is towards truth, we will gradually learn to become free from our positive attachments as well. We will be free to love in a way that does not depend on its object. True love is the highest form of giving. It is unconditional giving, which is no longer transactional. (In a transactional relationship, I will give only if I get love or something else in return.)

All of us will grow into unconditional love at some point in our evolution, but before we can start learning this, we must learn how to let go of negative emotional attachments such as vengefulness, bitterness, hatred, and hard feelings. These can be overcome by following Jesus's teaching: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

The Occult Meaning of Forgiveness, by Sergei O. Prokofieff (the late chairman of the Russian Anthroposophical Society), was translated into Finnish at the same time as Saaristo's *Taikasanat*. Prokofieff considers forgiveness to be the most important ethical problem of our time. He provides some immensely powerful examples of the liberating effect of forgiveness in real life. In addition, he discusses the universal karmic effects that each of us can set in motion if we learn to forgive.

Concentrating on this issue with the help of these two books can open for us the depth of the process of forgiveness and its

therapeutic, even occult, effect. I will unpack the mechanics of forgiveness and evaluate the meaning of the Lord's Prayer on forgiving.

The next step into this matter requires introspection about one's own inner state regarding forgiveness. The true effects will present themselves to us; this is tested in the personal process. No one else will do it for us.

The Difficulty of Forgiveness

A common-sense analysis of the psychology of forgiveness quickly shows that it is not easy even to start thinking about this issue. When we believe that we should forgive, it feels like giving away or giving up something, swallowing one's pride, even losing face or self-worth. At the minimum, it feels like humbling oneself, perhaps showing some kind of weakness. Who would voluntarily do this?

This factor is most prominent in situations where forgiveness is an alternative to revenge, for instance for libel. When the pride of family, tribe, or a person (usually a male) has been violated, forgiveness seems impossible. It appears to be much manlier to pay back the violation, preferably with interest. This line of thinking has a long tradition in our culture.

On the other hand, there is also a long tradition of forgiveness in the Christian nations. Indeed forgiveness resides at the heart of Christian ethics. The ethics of Jesus as a whole is infinitely skillful in practice, even from the occult point of view. It is ancient Eastern wisdom, by which Jesus time after time reverses the demands of receiving into giving. When those who approached Jesus were attached to something or wanted to keep something for themselves, he always advised them to let go, relinquish, give away, forgive. This logic of Jesus, this art of paradoxes, surprises us by turning things upside down and showing how apparent weaknesses and uncertainties can turn into assets.

We want to cling to our tradition of hate and violence. We have been used to seeing our strength in coercion and force. Jesus teaches us to give up both and to see that in the long run, nonviolence

is the best alternative. Jesus was a true radical in his life and teachings. It is unusual for someone to live by the principle of winning over hate through love. In a number of situations, Jesus taught how humility in a peculiar way turns into strength, weakening from within the aggressive opponent, who trusts in coercion.

The Great Example

Jesus also taught us about money and property, which for thousands of years have been targets for prey. He taught how giving up mammon is like taking off a straitjacket. Property is not only power; it is above all a relationship that mammon creates between us and other people. An individual who is free from this relationship cannot be forced into anything.

Jesus taught how we should relate to power. True, loving service will make us leaders. In the final analysis, the last will come first and vice versa. On his last day of earthly life, Jesus showed how complete nonviolence, turning the other cheek, sacrifice, and forgiveness defy and conquer death with the power of love. The life of Jesus was a paradox. His radicalism was death-defying from the very start. It is not hard to see that he wanted to demonstrate that there is no death. Indeed this is what he did.

With his teachings and actions, Jesus established the New Covenant, whose cornerstone is nonresistance to evil. He placed grace and forgiveness in place of judgment. Jesus changed the Old Testament image of God: the vengeful Yahweh became a loving Father. At the same time, Jesus reversed old notions almost completely by luminously saying, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17).

From the beginning, it has been difficult for the church to accept the paradoxical logic of Jesus. The patriarchal and authoritarian societies of the Middle East and the Roman Empire could not take this new prophet, who preached the brotherhood of humanity and the equality of the suppressed, women, and all who are less fortunate. Once enough time had passed after Jesus's death, the church

gradually deemphasized his radical teachings in order to make space for dogmatism, which was better suited to the interests of the state and those in power. An image of God was established closer to that of the Old Testament patriarch, who ruled more with fear of hell than with mercy and love.

The church quickly came to realize that Jesus's teachings are too demanding for it and its members. According to the church, clemency was not the right way to keep the crowds at bay and in obedience to the Lord. Consequently, one of the key pillars of mercy, the doctrine of reincarnation, was declared heretical at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.* The church has preferred to build on the doctrine of redemption and the forgiveness of sins as the cornerstone of Christianity. This doctrine presents the choice between heaven and eternal damnation as a key ethical incentive. The church made an alliance with the state and has constantly been forced to give up its principles when the state's power ambitions have demanded it.

Consequently, the church regards Jesus as more a redeemer than a teacher. For a long time, it has been in an awkward situation, being compelled to belittle individual ethical thinking and aspirations. In regard to forgiveness, it has emphasized how sinners are absolved rather than forgiving others or what could unfold from that. The church has not understood that when we are able to forgive others, we will also forgive ourselves and will be freed from our own lack of forgiveness.

It seems that we have had a poor understanding of what Jesus promises us in the Lord's Prayer. He says that if we are able to forgive others their debts to us, our Heavenly Father will forgive

* *Editors' note.* The Second Council of Constantinople focused for the most part on the dual nature of Christ. It did anathematize the church father Origen (who lived three centuries earlier). Many have assumed that this meant the council rejected Origen's teaching of the preexistence of the soul, but the anathemas of the council make no specific reference to this issue. See "The Council of Constantinople: Sentence and Anathemas against the 'Three Chapters,'" etwn.com, accessed June 3, 2020: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/history-and-text-1456>.

us. The initiative is ours. We must understand and learn to be free from this burden of hatred, bitterness, false pride, vengefulness, the desire to deliver justice, and the vicious cycle of retribution. One or more of these feelings are always behind an inability to forgive, which will become a real burden and haunt us. Jesus promises that if we can forgive, we will be free from this burden, and at the same time we will be forgiven our own old debts. The Eastern wisdom calls these old debts *karma*, which comes to us from our past lives. It is worth noting that the original Greek of the Lord's Prayer talks about debts (*opheilemata*) rather than trespasses, which is the word used by the church.

Who is Burdened by the Debt?

For us it is important to calmly think about the nature of these debts, which manifest themselves in different ways that we may not recognize as debts. The debt always resides in between the relationship between us and the other person. And as we have seen, the debt always burdens the one who incessantly demands compensation, retribution, and revenge, that is, "I must be the one who is given amends."

This attitude is not easy to spot. The burden of insult or even of crime is usually carried by the one who has been wronged. The wrongdoer may not even remember what happened and could even be dead. The debt burdens the victim, not the wrongdoer, and it feels like guilt. This creates a peculiar yet common psychological setup: it is as if the victim were somehow guilty for what happened. One could even conclude that with a crime, the guilt is absorbed by the person who is able to do so, who is often the victim. The wrongdoer often doesn't see any need for remorse.

It is difficult to be free of emotional hooks such as bitterness, lust for revenge, and grievances. We cannot forgive. This is how the wronged person suffers and relives the same offense, even for years. It happens every time the memory of the unpleasant situation surfaces in the victim's consciousness.

In Debt to Life

Pekka Ervast unfolds this complex issue from a karmic point of view in his book *The Divine Seed*. He reminds us that we all have a debt to life. This includes the fact that in the heavenly state, when we were at the gate of rebirth, we were allowed to have a vision of our next incarnation. In that heavenly state, we accepted our destiny and promised to try our best to make the next life similar to the vision. Yet in the course of our lives, we stumble and fall and cannot fulfil the heavenly promise. We wrong others and ourselves in many situations: this debt has been accumulating over many incarnations.

In bright moments of our lives, we may be allowed to feel true happiness, that is, heavenly love. In these exalted moments, we get close to the heavenly state and see the enormous beauty of life as well as the limitless love and grace that surround us all the time, although we usually don't see them. In such special moments we have the inner strength to renew our vow: "I want to try again; I want to be good and I want to do my best." We should be able to forgive ourselves, and when we are filled with happiness, we can do so. These moments teach us graciousness and show that we can have mercy on each other. Let us recall Jesus's words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Jesus didn't urge us to pray that if we pay our debts we will also be paid. This appears to be self-evident. The debt can be about money, but it can be about other things as well. Everything we give to other people, such as money, goods, property, and services, can create a liability for debt in our own mind. When I give love to someone, say, my son or daughter, it can prompt a thought that I should receive love in return. The statement "I have loved you so much . . ." is no doubt familiar to many. Often we are unable even to give a present without expecting something back. We might even think, "Am I being stupid when I give a present to that person? She might not even be grateful, or perhaps she will just take advantage of my kindness."

These thoughts poison our minds and prevent us from experiencing the true joy of giving. When we give with a right mind, we don't necessarily believe that everything we give away will come back to us manifold. This kind of giving is always an act of love, and each act of love will remain as a permanent entry in the book of life. The more the people are strangers to us, the more precious our gift is. These entries in the book of life are the treasures in heaven that Jesus advises us to gather. A great Finnish poet, Eino Leino, said it very beautifully in his *Smiling Apollo*:*

Around the earth there are many creeds:
one lacking and all are deficient,
one creed alone but the singer he needs
its bounds are for him sufficient.
For me its gentle religion will do:
eternal promise it clearly rings true
and enough I think of its trace will remain
when sunset returns again.

Giving is the law of life, a central part of love and loving. Thus it is connected to the magnificent goal of learning in this school of life: to love one another. This is our task. We learn it by giving with no expectation of getting something in return, by serving without hoping to be served, by forgiving one another without expecting compensation or immediate justice. If forgiving is real, amends will be made and justice will be done at the same time. By forgiving, we atone and do justice. We see how important mercy is, both for the person who receives it and for the one who is able to show mercy instead of justice.

The Great Life, which has given us so much, is waiting for us to understand the law of life: everything must flow. Nobody and nothing, except our own foolishness, is forcing us to attach our minds for years to an insignificant debt, insult, or thought of revenge. Merely reminiscing about these things makes us relive the

* Eino Leino, "Smiling Apollo" (*Hymyilevä Apollo*), translated by Rupert Moreton, *Lingua Fennica* (website), Sept. 14, 2015: <https://linguafennica.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/smiling-apollo-hymyileva-apollo-eino-leino/>.

situation over and over, thinking of the ways we will teach a lesson to the wrongdoer.

We can remember the pattern of being offended from childhood, which can continue into adolescence. We withdraw into our shells and sulk for a long time. In the worst cases, we harm ourselves, thinking, "They will be so sorry when they see how badly I ended up and understand that it was all their fault."

The debts addressed in Jesus's prayer are accumulated when someone wrongs us and we demand amends and justice or harbor a desire for revenge. Usually we don't realize that everyone who harms another person harms himself. If we feel insulted, we want to pay back in kind; we want to teach a lesson to the debtor. Our mind is stuck, believing in the teaching method originating from the old Code of Hammurabi: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." This makes us blind and toothless, yet we call ourselves Christians, followers of Christ.

How long does it take to discover a better teaching method than insulting the insulter or hitting the hitter? We adults teach by hitting back. We often think that the lesson is learned even better if we hit back hard. We imagine that the aggressor doesn't know what it feels like to be hit. It has been said about a Finnish man that "if he doesn't understand, he hits." It is very often true. In many cases, these acts of violence are cries for help. Is it about time for us who do understand to learn a new way and make it visible? Turning the other cheek is a huge step forward in spiritual growth. It has nothing to do with fear. It is more like a Zen act, which teaches by doing the opposite of what the opponent expects.

I have already discussed slander and the debt of honor. This is probably a passing custom in the history of mankind, which has to do with the codes and habits of tribal societies. Avenging slander is associated with hierarchical communities, in which the hierarchy is, with no exception, patriarchal and usually maintained with some sort of violence. Mafia organizations provide an illuminating example of this conduct. When one closely examines these cases of defamation, one notices that the issue is not about honor, but about supporting the power of a leader with weak self-esteem and of a hierarchy maintained with terror and violence. Real honor comes

differently: it is not born from violence or coercion, and it is not restored by revenge. Honor is spiritual authority, which grows from righteousness, not from physical strength.

It can be hard to forgive even when we want to. A central reason is that we think forgiving is accepting injustice, the wrong deed that was done to us. However, this is not the case. By forgiving, we show that we want to understand the deed of the person who has wronged us. We might even be able to see things from his perspective. This takes compassion.

Is Justice Delivered?

Another obstacle in forgiving is our inner demand for justice, which has to do with the attitude described above. We may be unable to forgive even if we don't believe that forgiving implies accepting a wrong. The reason often lies in our conviction that the wrongdoer should be punished for what he did. We want to teach him justice. We demand that at least the debtor apologize to us. We don't want to set him free unless he is paid in kind (as conceived by us). We believe that justice is not served if we forgive. That is why we often suffer on our own emotional hooks. We refuse to let the debtor go without a punishment, but we don't see that in reality our debtor doesn't suffer; we do. We punish ourselves with this pain, even though it troubles the accuser, not the accused.

The demand for justice is based on the belief that everyone will not get what he is due. Because we are not familiar with the law of karma, we don't believe that it will take care of the situation with the immutable vigor of a natural law. Hence we want to take justice into our own hands. It is always easier to serve justice than to show mercy. H. P. Blavatsky, cofounder of the Theosophical Society, wrote in her *Key to Theosophy*: "The chief point is, to uproot that most fertile source of all crime and immorality—the belief that it is possible for them to escape the consequences of their own actions."* Jesus urges us to forgive in order to make us think about what it means in practice and follow this advice in our lives.

* H. P. Blavatsky. *The Key to Theosophy*. Theosophical University Press Online Edition, 2018 [1889].

I personally recall a small incident about a money debt that weighed me down for a long time. At the end of the seventies, a man came to my office as if he were an old acquaintance and asked me to lend him 250 Finnish marks. At first I thought I could not give that kind of money to a stranger. I had seen him a couple of times, and he hadn't made a good impression on me. Then he suggested that we could write a promissory note. I wanted to help, and I thought that because of this note, he would pay the money back. I lent him the money. Afterwards my colleagues said, "We hope that you didn't give him any money. He never pays it back." I answered that it was OK, because we signed a promissory note. My colleagues responded with sarcastic laughter: "Oh, that makes a difference; you have absolutely nothing to worry about then."

On the agreed date and time, I was waiting for this man to pay his debt. Nothing happened. I met him much later in a restaurant and asked whether he remembered that I lent him 250 marks.

"Yeah."

"Well, could you pay me back?"

"I have no money now."

"When will you have money?"

"I have no idea."

I realized that he had no intention of paying me back. It bothered me for a long time. Who would file a court case over 250 marks?

This incident happened a decade ago, but I still noticed that every time I thought about it, my adrenaline levels soared and I got angry: "How can a person be so treacherous, so disgusting? He should at least be beaten up to make him learn his lesson!"

Practice Makes Perfect

While preparing an article, I stumbled upon Jesus's verse: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." I started to think that this was something that must be done, but how? Before long, an acquaintance gave me a small booklet from Alcoholics Anonymous called *Father in Heaven*. I read it with interest.

The booklet advises how to make a decision to forgive. One needs to go in solitude and quiet down. Then one says a familiar

prayer, followed by these quiet words (translated from the Finnish version of the booklet):

I will freely forgive X (the name of the person). I release him and let him go. I will completely forgive him this matter at hand. As far as I am concerned, this is over. I will give all the bitterness to Christ. X is now free, and I am free. I wish him success in life. This case is closed. The Christ truth has set us both free. I thank God.

After this is done, you can resume your activities. Do not repeat the instructions. If the matter comes back to your mind, let it go. You will notice that it will come back less often until it is forgotten or becomes insignificant.

I followed the instructions in the booklet. It worked! Later I stumbled upon my debtor. He almost slipped away in the street, although he clearly recognized me. Nevertheless, I turned around and went over to greet him in a friendly manner, asking how he was doing and so on. I smiled internally while doing this, since I had conquered my bitterness. I felt light. I had also forgiven myself for my lack of forgiveness, which had continued for a long time.

I gradually started to understand the theory behind what happened to me. In her book *Magic Words*, Saaristo describes a method that is quite similar to the AA method of forgiveness. Saaristo talks about the emotional hook, which is our attitude towards the deed requiring compensation. Experts tell us that we are responsible for our own emotions. Only we can decide whether we want to desire revenge, feel anger, or demand justice. No one else is responsible for our attitude. The wrongdoer is responsible for his actions, and the law of karma will take care of the consequences. But it is the person who was wronged that has the emotional reaction. No one else is responsible for that, and no one else can liberate her from it.

Saaristo provides a simple exercise for forgiveness, which is implemented in the evening before going to sleep. When the book was published, it attracted quite a lot of attention and interest. Saaristo held workshops based on her book. She observed that the release of emotional hooks as a result of the forgiveness exercise often manifests itself as more lively dreams.

I remember a study group in which I participated. In one meeting, a woman told us about a dream in which she was invited to visit her friend in Madrid. When she arrived, a reception was arranged in a yard, which was decorated with beautiful flowers and bushes. A group of friends came to meet her, and she was told that they had prepared a gift for her. The gift was a beautiful white house in the inner garden. The woman noticed in her dream that withered weeds were growing through an iron fence from the next-door yard. She started to root out the neighbor's weeds. However, a voice in her dream told her not to do so; instead she was advised just to take care of the tidiness of her own yard.

About a year before she passed away, an Estonian healer and clairvoyant, Luule Viilma, visited Helsinki in the Forum Humanum lecture series. I talked with her before the lecture and asked what role forgiveness plays in healing. She responded that it is essential in almost all healings. She provided an example in the lecture about an old man who was brought to her by his children. The man was completely exhausted. Viilma examined him and soon realized what was the matter. She asked the man, "Tell me, who do you hate?" Surprised, the man admitted that he had indeed hated his neighbor for thirty years. In addition, the man revealed that he could converse with the neighbor without letting him know that he hated him. Viilma advised the man to stop hating his neighbor and told him that he must forgive him. If he didn't do this, he would die soon. The man was relieved by the discussion. He assured his children that they could go and that he was perfectly capable of finding his way home. When walking back home, he forgave his own hatred with one step and forgave his neighbor with every other.

Sometime later, Viilma received a concerned phone call from a neighboring house, which was located a bit less than a mile away from hers. The caller told about an elderly, tired man who told that he was coming from Viilma's reception and asked a permission to use the toilet. The caller asked what on earth had happened, because the toilet was clogged with feces consisting of little stones. Viilma reassured her that they were just kidney stones, which had come out in a natural way. The hatred had precipitated into kidney

stones over the years, and they left the man's body. In this real-life story, feuding and refusing to forgive had their effects, all the way down to physical reality. When hate and revengefulness are nourished long enough, there are only two alternatives: either the hate leaves, or then the spirit leaves—that is, the person dies.

In *The Occult Meaning of Forgiveness*, Prokofieff tells about two shocking cases that took place during World War II. They indicate how the person who forgives receives great resources, and how cosmic forces are liberated when we are able to forgive and start living a new life. The guardians of the law of karma will ensure with ironclad precision that every crime, insult, and so on will have their consequences in this or some other incarnation. However, if we know how to forgive, the forces of these hierarchical beings will be liberated and “there gradually begins to arise, in the very heart of that realm of iron karmic necessity which permeates our entire cosmos, a new kingdom where karma becomes grace and where Christ Himself works as the *Lord of Karma*.”*

We usually do not think about these influences, but every concrete debt—desire to have amends, lust for revenge, or bitterness caused by another—that you can forgive is part of your own liberation. You will be freed from the prison of debt to which you have been tied. Jesus's advice about settling quickly with our adversary while we are still together on the way (that is, while we are still living in this reality) is well suited to forgiving our adversaries (Matthew 5:25). We cannot deal with these matters in the afterlife. If you act wisely, you might acquire an admirer or even a friend who begins to see how a miracle of love takes form in the process of forgiving. Indeed redemption on a small scale will take place. With your forgiveness, you have brought a piece of Christ's heaven here to earth. This is what our Master did when he said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Jesus knew and understood the meaning of his deed, and we are gradually beginning to understand this great example ourselves.

* Sergei O. Prokofieff, *The Occult Significance of Forgiveness* (Essex: Temple Lodge, 1991), 83.

In the School of Good and Evil

Jesus addresses the problem of evil in the last verse of the Lord's Prayer. I will attempt to unravel the complex question of evil with the help of interpretations provided by people I consider wise. I will consider guilt, which is intertwined with conscience and is connected to the problem of good and evil in everyone's consciousness. I will also discuss love, because it is the most important key in winning the battle between good and evil.

The Lord's Prayer ends with a verse that is hard to understand: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Pekka Ervast explains this as follows: at the end of the prayer the human being attunes to a right relationship with his own lower self.* We are used to thinking that temptations come to us in order to teach us to overcome them. Our aim is to learn to control our lower, lustful nature and become masters in our own house. If this is the case, a reasonable question arises: why does Jesus urge us to pray not to encounter temptations? Are there temptations we should not face at all?

Each person who has seriously decided to follow the ethical code of Jesus or some other great teacher and has started the path of purification, in so doing asks to see his own condition—his weaknesses and strengths—more clearly. This request is answered very soon, and what emerges in consciousness is not always nice to observe. If the aspirant does not give up at this point, he gradually realizes how he is tested with temptations, taught by suffering, and supported and strengthened by providence and higher energies.

The temptations we tend to encounter are usually passing impulses of satisfaction and pleasure. Over and over, we tend to attach ourselves to the same hooks of pleasure: addiction to pleasure and lusts for such things as money, eating, gambling, and sex. There are also subtler temptations, such as the lust for power and fame. These are sometimes called "mortal sins." This doesn't mean that these lusts and addictions immediately lead to death. Instead, they cause us to die and reincarnate again until we have gained victory

* Pekka Ervast, *The Divine Seed: The Esoteric Teachings of Jesus*, 89–90.

over our lusts and addictions. From the Theosophical perspective, the wages of sin is a new life (compare with, “The wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23).

The School of Temptations

A truth seeker learns in the path of purification how to regard the temptations created by lusts and addictions. Jesus’s method teaches us the way of not fighting. One does not fight temptations; instead, they are conquered. This strange-sounding method is based on the commandment of nonresistance to evil and on not giving our thought energy to a desperate fight with our lusts and addictions. Instead we concentrate our attention on the good, which carries, lifts, and nourishes us. We announce our will to do this in the prayer by saying: “Lead us not into temptation.” When we have started the path and learn how to live accordingly, we gradually learn to will this way, although we know that the temptation is accompanied by pleasure. We have come to know that lower pleasures are always followed by suffering, which eventually becomes unbearable as we advance on the path. The path of purification is a practice of will which at some point opens a door to our higher self. This connection will provide us with new, unprecedented resources to continue on the path.

However, we still haven’t answered the question of whether there are temptations we should avoid. Pekka Ervast says that the temptation Jesus speaks of takes two forms. According to Ervast, the temptation we should avoid is considering good evil and evil good. We are used to thinking that external suffering, accidents, catastrophes, and diseases, which abound in the world, are evil. This is what we have been taught. However, the wise teach that this is all due to preexisting causes, usually our own mistakes and wrong deeds. When these causes have their consequences in life, we are tempted to consider them evil, although they are just the effects of a law in nature. We will reap what we don’t recall having sown. Ervast confirms this by stating that the “Christian must learn to understand that the divine nature never makes a mistake in terms of consequences. It has never done wrong, and it has never

wanted evil for a single living creature. . . . That's why the consequence of sins, wickedness, and mistakes which will come to him is never evil but good."

Seeking for justice has become a deep conviction for many of us, and we are reluctant to let it go. However, when the demand for justice concerns us, we find releasing it harder to accept. This is quite understandable in the case of karmic justice. We don't understand the law of karma very well, so we may still believe that Jesus's death has already redeemed us from all sin. But no one's death can erase the evil deeds we have done in our past lives. On the other hand, it is true that the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ has brought us a whole new perspective and a new opportunity to relate to karmic debt. The New Covenant and its central factor—love—will change our attitude toward suffering and toward paying our debts. We should study the ways of karma carefully, because our understanding of it tends to be too simplistic.

What about the other temptation we should not fall into? In this context, Ervast talks about the evil that grows inside us alongside the lust for power and glory. That evil is pride. All societies still advocate the pursuit of status, glory, and fame. This is visible on a small scale, for instance in seeking public attention. It is possible for a person to almost instantly become famous in the media, and in many cases the person is quite unprepared to handle the fame. Power, fame, and glory always come with the temptation to raise oneself above other people and gain control over them. It is a part of human nature. In a sense, this tendency has a good origin, reflecting the divine potential we humans have in our innermost selves. That's why we want to have different positions which bestow power and admiration upon us and enable us to rule.

However, this tendency often becomes an addiction, which compensates for our incompleteness and inner uncertainty. This is hard to realize when one has to get more power and glory. If one has some power, the minimum requirement is to keep it. All this will nurture pride within us; we will be fixated on it and blinded by it. It will immerse us in troubles, because often we are unable to control ourselves: this inability manifests as domination, threats, and other means of force.

Pride, with our inability behind it, eventually drives us into a crisis, which is always an opportunity for learning. If we are lucky, the troubles will help us to see our own abuse of power and its violent elements. We may realize that true power will come to us when we are more mature and responsible. The one who has been faithful with a few things will be put in charge of many things (Matthew 25:21). This is a promise Jesus made, but we seldom have the patience that it entails. This is related to a common problem in our time: over the centuries, we have become used to thinking that we have only this one life and we should have everything possible in it.

Power is always accompanied by temptation: pride and a feeling of superiority provide us with pleasure, which props up our unstable self-esteem. Jesus taught us to identify the paradoxical nature of power. Having more power requires some surprising qualities, such as wisdom, self-criticism, patience, and humility. That's why Jesus advises us to first become subjects of power ourselves: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26). We know that power corrupts, but the status provided by power is often a greater temptation than the danger of becoming corrupted by money. Truth seekers are looking for a different kind of power: one based on love. They know that love cannot boast or be proud. In the end, all power that is not based on love is violence.

Ervast says that power and glory tend to make us unequal and prevent us from feeling love and brotherhood toward one another. He specifically warns us about pride. In time of the Old Covenant, pride was seen as something fine and worth pursuing. It could enter into an austere ascetic who had conquered many temptations through an immense exercise of will. A student who has adopted a new Christian view of life realizes that pride in this situation is one of the subtlest, most difficult, and most treacherous vices. The person living the life of love in the New Covenant must identify the temptation of pride and find true loving, brotherly humility.

However, humility itself can also become a problem. It used to receive intense attention, because people in our Protestant culture were frightened by the sin of pride. At some point this led to another extreme. Dark, humility-centered churchliness has a great

deal to do with the well-known poor level of self-esteem among the Finns. On the other hand, there is healthy humility, which neither attempts to rise above others nor grovels.

Ervast says that the latter form of humility is an esoteric matter. It doesn't come to a Christian following Jesus before she has found a right stance toward evil. Ervast sharply analyzes the problem of humility and points out: "When one concentrates too much on humility as the opposite to pride, humility may become to him as great an enemy as pride when it changes him into a puritan who runs away from joy in life, science, and art. This is how misunderstood humility has turned people into pharisaic pretenders and fiends, who walk looking at the ground, but their heart is full of devils." True humility is not learned by humiliating and oppressing. A healthy self-esteem is the basis for true humility.

Deliver Us from Evil

In the last verse of the Lord's Prayer, we ask the Father to deliver us from evil, which is within us, even though we are keen on seeing it outside of us. A profound delving into the question of evil unfolds a central problem of being human, which doesn't exist for other living beings on this planet. The questions of right and wrong, good, evil and guilt, are issues of morality. These questions can be posed only by a being who has woken up in his I-consciousness.

Different religions depict the birth of I-consciousness with allegorical stories; the one most familiar to us is in the Bible. In the paradisaic state, the human being did not possess I-consciousness. He still lived in a divine unity consciousness, in eternity, with no separateness, place, or time. Divine consciousness was at rest in its eternal, unmanifested self. In the creation story, when the human being is born, the first germ of I-consciousness comes into existence. "Male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). Adam and Eve are already two separate beings. The great tale really starts when the two decide to find out the problem of good and evil, to eat from the tree of knowledge. In the unmanifest unity

* Pekka Ervast. *St. Paul and His Christendom* (1923). Not available in English.

consciousness a need arises, a desire for duality, for expressing the opposites. To manifest this, consciousness must limit itself and step down from unity to the world of constraints. It must come down to the visible, material world. Only through these limitations is it possible to experience good and evil as opposites.

In this world of matter, everything manifests as opposites. The unity is broken, shattered into opposing principles: spirit and matter, day and night, beautiful and ugly, young and old. We live in this realm of polarities, and we learn to live, evolve, and make choices in this school. Evolution proceeds from simpler life forms to greater consciousness. We are evolving toward greater sensitivity, toward the perfect human being, toward a resolution of the separateness in a new unity. The aim of the human is to rise above all earthly polarities and see the illusion of separateness. When the illusion becomes visible, the unity will reappear behind the separateness, and everything will be united again.

Until this happens, however, we must solve the problem of separateness in this world of matter as individual human beings and as humankind. This great work is crystallized in the problem of good and evil. According to Theosophy, the long evolutionary path toward perfection from one life to another is the school of good and evil. Sages of all religions in all times have talked about the teachers of this school—the rulers of evil and the seducers, against which many religions, like Christianity, still wage relentless war. On the other hand, Theosophy has always taught that devils, fallen angels, Lucifer, Satan, Ahriman, and other spiritual manifestations of evil have to be seen as our teachers in the school of good and evil. If we could get rid of evil, we'd be separated from our teachers. It is often the case that a student begins to understand the teacher only when schooling has nearly been finished.

The religions' fight against evil fosters the notion that evil is an independent challenger and opposer of good and God. There is also a deeply held view that evil could be an absolute, like God, and could even win the battle, even over God. Theosophy, however, has always considered evil, Satan, Lucifer, and other spiritual forces as executors of God's plan of evolution. We are told by the wise that

Lucifer (“light-bringer” in Latin) is a high spiritual being who has veiled his true nature and has taken an immense and difficult task of education for himself. He tempts and seduces us in various ways to selfishness and other evils, in other words to sin. He acts to inspire evil in us, but he is a servant of God.

It is crucial to realize that there is no absolute, independent evil or center of evil in the universe. We are reminded of this fact by this verse in the Lord’s Prayer: “Deliver us from evil,” which could be phrased differently. A Finnish professor of aesthetics, Eino Krohn, formulated it as follows: “Deliver us from faith in evil.” It is a wild and paradoxical thought that Satan will eventually rejoice over every human being who can abstain from evil and conquer its temptations.

“The first thing in this matter is to learn tolerance,” says Pekka Ervast. He continues: “Tolerance is first of all the deep conviction that the existence of evil is from God, that it is indispensable, and that we must conquer it.”* He then asks:

How are we to conquer it? Only with love, since evil cannot be conquered by violence. We will become truly tolerant only when we understand that we must not resist evil; instead, we have to win it over; we have to win over the evil person instead of opposing him. We have to win him over with love. The same principle applies to evil desires and lusts within ourselves: we shouldn’t resist them but overcome them. . . . One of the greatest secrets in the life of individuals and nations is exactly this: only when we learn to love evil, that black, dark side in the nature of God, will we overcome it.

In contemporary youth culture, the fashion of worshipping Satan has emerged. One of its core thoughts is the following: “Evil will eventually conquer good, so it is only natural to stand on the side of the winners.” Of course, we are allowed to choose evil if we fancy that evil will be victorious and it’s important to be on the winner’s side, no matter who wins. Human consciousness, the mind, is a battleground of good and evil. We are here to learn how to relate

* Pekka Ervast, *The Religion of Humanity* (1982). Not available in English.

to this changing duality. We must be able to choose freely, but how many have really thought about what it would be like to be in the triumph of the aforementioned winning party?

Satan is an exalted and peculiar being who doesn't need humans on his side. The spirit of the divine comedy that is being played out here is the possibility of becoming freer, wiser, and happier over repeated incarnations in this school of good and evil. If life is God's gift to us, it is possible that we will use our free will to choose the most painful, unfavorable, and darkest option. It might happen that we will decline to hold on to mercy and the possibility of growth, joy, and happiness, which is always present.

How should we deal with evil? In what way should we understand it? Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus taught us not to resist evil. This advice still stands as valid, but it cannot be interpreted as a request to take the side of evil. The New Covenant created by Jesus rests on the solid basis of love. Even the word *love* can be repellent to a Satan worshipper, but the truth is that only love can defrost evil. I don't want to judge Satan worshippers, because the phenomenon signals the dead end and distressing situations faced by young people, which is created by a loveless environment and a visionless society. Our world appears to be crazy and to offer only bad options.

The church is looking for solutions to this problem. The denominations are still waging a war against evil which has lasted for two millennia. All this time, they have been in an awkward situation with respect to Jesus's teaching of nonresistance to evil, especially because the church has been eager to wield power and have a bond with the state. There are virtually no examples of any state using juridical or military power along the lines of the Christian view of life, that is, according to Jesus's teachings. It's still almost impossible to imagine that criminals might not be punished, or that the military might not respond to an aggression, or that any army might be closed down for religious reasons.

Although the church is bonded with the state, its possibilities of affecting the positions of society and state are very small. One could hope, however, that the church could use its remaining

authority for more strongly supporting the peacemakers who are searching for Christian alternatives to the coercive practices of society. The church has not distinguished itself in this regard, but it is slowly waking up. Nonviolent politics and turning the other cheek could receive the support of the church in our society if there were more understanding and acceptance of the teachings of the Savior. The first step would be to understand that nonresistance to evil can grow in individual Christians and deserves support from congregations. The community of Christians can be the kingdom of God which is “among you”—perhaps even a Christian state in the future. Is this utopian? Well, it’s idealistic at least, and shows faith in the kingdom of heaven which is like a mustard seed or leaven, as our Master once tried to teach us.

Nonresistance to evil has been visible through the centuries in stories of individual heroism, in choices made by disciples who want to follow their Master’s example. This attitude can also be seen in some social structures in society. One example is the practice of mediation in offenses and disputes in Finland. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa serves as an international example. Neither of these prioritizes judging and punishing evil. The solution is sought through reconciliation and forgiveness. This is indeed Christian practice.

Jesus’s commandments, including nonresistance to evil, aim at ingraining a new kind of attitude: thinking and acting in the spirit of the New Covenant. The problem is that we have a hard time in seeing past the opposites and their illusory and temporal nature, crystallized in the problem of good and evil. It is difficult to understand that both good and evil exist here in the world because of God’s will, and that they both serve the same goal: the liberation of human beings and their growth toward perfection.

We come back to earth again and again in order to learn this lesson until we start to see the nature of the game. When this happens, our understanding brightens—a process that often takes place through the opposites and paradoxes of the visible world. Insights brought forth by paradox surprisingly show how the opposites both presuppose and turn into each other. Taoism, Buddhism,

Zen, and other remarkable Eastern traditions help us to reach that understanding. They serve as a foundation for the yoga of Jesus. These traditions tell us that good and evil are inseparable, like two sides of a coin. My friend Kauno says that evil is just the backside of good. Perhaps the most famous image of this relationship is the Jungian notion of evil as a shadow of good. As a proverb says, one cannot get rid of a shadow with a broom. The old book of wisdom, Tao Te Ching, described the relationship between good and evil in a very insightful way several centuries before the Common Era:*

When people see some things as beautiful,
other things become ugly.
When people see some things as good,
other things become bad.
Being and nonbeing create each other.
Difficult and easy support each other.
Long and short define each other.
High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.
Therefore the Master
acts without doing anything
and teaches without saying anything.
Things arise and she lets them come;
things disappear and she lets them go.
She has but doesn't possess,
acts but doesn't expect.
When her work is done, she forgets it.
That is why it lasts forever.

If good and evil are so interconnected, how is it possible to overcome evil without considering good from a new perspective? When one takes a look at world history, it is evident that immense numbers of atrocities, murders, and evils have been committed with good intentions. At the time of this writing, a leading Western

* Lao Tzu, Quotable Quotes, GoodReads (website), accessed May 31, 2020: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/582339-when-people-see-some-things-as-beautiful-other-things-become>.

country that calls itself Christian has for years been harnessing its military power in order to root out evil in Iraq. All this is, of course, for a greater good, but it seems that this is causing total chaos in the country that is “helped” this way. The violent means developed by science are employed to resist evil in contemporary international politics. It seems that the tough lessons of the previous century have not been enough for us. In her column “I Will Boycott Nevertheless,” author Tuula-Liina Varis writes: “Day by day, it becomes clearer that there is no more outdated, destructive, far-reaching, insane, and ineffective way to use resources than to make war in order to solve problems.”

It is laborious to understand the logic of overcoming evil, but it is possible to see that evil cannot be conquered with evil. Examples abound in history. The active operation of evil can be constrained and controlled, but it doesn't seem to go away. It is merely encapsulated; it grows bitter and dwells in vindictiveness, but it does not disappear. When constrained, it gathers strength for a new attack. Our system of justice has been harnessed for keeping external evil at bay.

Jesus saw evil and the suffering it caused in the world because of perpetual greed, lust for revenge, murder, and power, and the inability to forgive. All suffering and external evil in the world remind us of our own undeveloped and indifferent character. That's why Jesus places his hope in the awakening of the individual, in his ability and willingness to see good and evil with new eyes and start to overcome evil within himself. The evil Jesus talks about is within us, not outside.

The first and most important question in this work is this: where can we find that which is truly good within us and can melt away evil, finishing the grueling battle that has been going on for centuries? This question is the start of the real quest for making the world a better place.

In this quest, we will be occupied by the issue of suffering and its meaning. I already pointed out that the person who has started searching for truth will one day understand that suffering is paying back the old karma and that eventually it is a blessing in disguise.

It may be hard to accept this kind of thinking. A question might arise: don't we repay our evil deeds in a purgatory which purifies us before we can leave Hades and rise to heaven in our afterlife?

I understand this to mean that we will have to purify ourselves in purgatory in order to withstand the higher energies in heaven. However, this doesn't eradicate our karma. The suffering we have caused in our past lives, as well as our good deeds, will come back to us in a new incarnation in the form of consequences requiring redeeming or providing reward. This is why Jesus teaches us to store up treasure in heaven, that is, the treasure of good deeds. The heaven of our spirit will store them as happiness, joy, and the ability to love in our future incarnations. The yoga of Jesus is about gathering this undying capital, intently increasing our spiritual assets.

That which is truly good, the growing energy of love, can be used to understand and overcome evil. It is no longer a matter of the pleasure and good of our lower self, or ego. As we calmly observe our inner world in yoga or meditation, we see that when we are talking about what's good for the ego, the motivation eventually turns out to be selfishness and self-interest. We often call it our own will, less often our own desire, which would be a more appropriate expression.

The crazed monkey of mind must be calmed down with practice. It has to be silenced so that it can listen to higher wisdom, the voice of the heart. The yoga of Jesus is silencing our minds so that the sound of silence can be heard; this sound of silence will patiently wait until our mind is calm. It speaks what is truly good. It speaks the language of love.

Henryk Skolimowski views purifying the mind as the ecology of mind. He reminds us that mind can be seen as an apparatus that has gone through millions of years of evolution; in its complexity, sensitivity, and delicateness, it may be evolution's greatest achievement. Still, we often use this amazing achievement of the universe as a dustbin in which all kinds of junk are percolating. Everyone knows that an earworm can stay in our head for hours, refusing to leave. Skolimowski, citing the Upanishads, says: "Your mind will mold you" and "You will become what you think. When you think

pure and harmonious thoughts, or just stay quiet, you will prepare yourself for love, which will stay for good.”

Crushing and Uplifting the Power of Guilt

Guilt merits a more thorough discussion, because it is such an essential part of the issue of good and evil. Guilt is the system that keeps us awake and alert to good and evil. We have our own personal ways of dealing with it. If we use guilt as a reminder, we can see it as a driver for spiritual growth. We can also reject its message if we want to sleep or are too tired to wake up.

Guilt has origins similar to those of good and evil. When we came down from unity consciousness, all these polarities (such as good and evil, guilt and innocence) were manifested. When God said, “Let there be light,” the first polarity emerged—light and darkness—and since then, all of visible reality, which is based on polarities, came into being. Guilt is an essential part of spiritual evolution, of developing toward higher consciousness and perfection. Guilt is there to remind us that we haven’t reached our goal yet, that we must continue striving forward.

Guilt arises as a reaction to wrongdoing: acting against our conscience and committing to evil. This emotion can spring from two sources. First, it is born when the person is disappointed in expectations set by herself or others. Initially she may feel guilt for not doing as she was told; she hasn’t obeyed or met the expectations. The moral code has been formed within since childhood by family, relatives, community, and life experiences. It often happens that others define what is right and wrong for us and how we should act and behave.

Second, we also have inner knowledge, which is called the voice of conscience, the voice of God within a person, or the higher consciousness. When a person listens to that voice, she has another code, the inner way of identifying right and wrong. These two codes—external and internal—may conflict, which can increase the burden of guilt.

The situation is familiar to all of us, and it is always topical on the spiritual path. We are living through an interesting transition

time with respect to guilt: there is both an element of incrimination and guilt that arises from within. My own generation carries the remains of the long-standing era that was controlled by external authorities, both secular and clerical. Until the rupture of the 1960s, we lived under external authority, which always let us know whom we should obey. Something of this time remains, and these remnants can be quite powerful.

The old way was about raising a child to obey and to be nice and humble. The elder always knew what is right; the child didn't. The child's own will was uprooted. It wasn't appropriate to praise children; it could make them think too much of themselves and become too proud. This was the official principle about educating a child. Refusing to obey and rebelling against orders could cause lasting guilt (as may still be the case.) However, this may also have been a beginning of new consciousness, if one had the ability to analyze and dismantle external guilt.

When it came to the art of living, it was always the older and stronger people who knew what you should do in order to prosper and live long. If you did the right thing, it wasn't praised in any way, but if you did the wrong thing, blame and punishment followed. If you took the initiative and made a mistake, punishment was automatic. Humiliating a child was acceptable, even recommended. The outcome of all this was to create feelings of inadequacy and guilt.

My generation, and that of my parents, had to live in this strongly conditioned environment. Those who educated us are deceased, but their voices can still be heard. I can still hear what they told me: "Remember, Mauri, boys don't cry." I learned in the army that "pity is a disease" and that "an enemy is not a human being." Girls were also conditioned: "Just stay quietly in the background and let the wiser ones do the talking." The list goes on and on. Many of us have examples of this kind of educational practice. In addition, we were exposed to political dogmas and orders, hierarchies, and the ever-present church, with its spiritual power and its notions of sin, judgment, and eternal damnation. Behind kindness was forced, traumatized obedience.

Responding to external expectations on the one hand and to a growing inner consciousness on the other is part of everyone's development. When the person concentrates on her inner strength and listens to her inner self, she will identify with her own spirit, the higher self. This way, as Deepak Chopra says, the person is able to operate in "the field of pure potentiality."^{*} She will then get in touch with the energies emanating directly from the higher self. When this happens, fear and the constant need for control start to lose their grip. The individual also begins to give up the constant struggle for acceptance from others. This is coming of age. In a similar manner, the struggle for external energies ceases. Finding a path from within will surely help the person to better understand guilt and how to become free of it.

At the heart of becoming a true individual is the possibility of free choice. This includes the possibility of making wrong choices, which is imperative for development and learning. Feeling guilt as a state of being is related to unfinished development—being on a journey and not yet knowing how to live. Furthermore, we are tied to social structures or are so powerless that we do not dare to take decisions and actions that internally we know are right. When we begin to understand this situation, we cultivate sympathy and forgiveness toward ourselves and others. Both these qualities are essential for inner growth, because they form a basis for love to grow within us. The ethics in the Sermon on the Mount is the yardstick against which we can measure our inner voice and its advice.

We live in a transitional time. Up until recently, social structures demanding obedience and submission determined good and evil, right and wrong, for us; all we had to do was to obey and join the group. Since the 1960s, these guilt-generating structures have loosened up, a trend with both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, we are freer to make choices, and we have a greater responsibility to decide what is good and what is bad. On the other hand, the blurring or loss of basic human values causes great confusion. It tells us that we haven't fully thought through why we are

* Chopra, *Seven Spiritual Laws*, 33.

here or what our relationship with life, existence, and other people should be.

The developmental phase we are currently living through provides us with the first chance in centuries, perhaps in millennia, for greater freedom. It is the freedom to listen to our inner voice, make our own choices, and take more explicit responsibility for them. The turning point in the dawn of the new millennium can be seen as our nation's transition from childhood to adulthood, from obedience to responsibility, to communities that are capable of making our own choices. We are about to move on to the future, which will hopefully be based on voluntary, even brotherly, communion instead of the old authorities.

Is Guilt Inheritable?

It is said that guilt is inheritable. The church teaches that all people share original sin from the fall of Adam and Eve. It is also said that we can only be saved by God's mercy and faith in Jesus Christ's redemptive death. The church emphasizes that humans are evil and sinful and tries to impose guilt and fear of hell in order to make us repent.

Theosophy sees all this very differently. Like the great Eastern religions, it takes a more positive viewpoint, which concentrates on spiritual evolution. Over repeated incarnations, we have the opportunity to become more and more conscious of our divine origin, to evolve, and to understand our higher, divine nature. This is present in all of us, and it will brighten our consciousness and existence; the light will grow in our path toward perfection from one incarnation to another.

In this context Theosophy talks about karma. Karma means that we always have to be responsible for our actions. Everyone will receive justice, sooner or later: nature and life will take care of this. The concept of karma is more logical than the doctrine of original sin: we will face the consequences of our actions in this or another life. Payment or reward will come to us eventually; knowing this fact makes it easier to face and accept these things. Our karma may be part of the karma of our family or nation. We are responsible

for creating that karma as well. I find this view both logical and comforting. Then we begin to understand that it is not our duty to punish evil and exact revenge; instead our task is to understand and forgive.

I have a very early memory about the accumulation of guilt. I was perhaps four or five years old. I was taking a walk with my grandfather in Punavuori, where we lived at a time. While walking, it occurred to me to ask, “Grandpa, why are there wars in the world?” He answered, “Look, there is a kind of web above the world in which all evil thoughts and deeds accumulate. If there are too many of them, the web is ruptured and there is war.”

The idea of participation in the karma of one’s family, relatives, and nation is admittedly quite complicated. Because our understanding is not adequate for following such long chains of cause and effect, we might easily conclude that there is no justice in the world: some people live in constant misery and suffering, others, in prosperity, with no idea what to do with their wealth. The wise ones of humanity, who have achieved peace of mind through meditation, say that everything is in order. If this doesn’t seem evident, one has to adjust one’s own mind.

How Do We React to Our Guilt?

We all have commenced our personal development, attending this school of good and evil until we voluntarily learn to choose good and avoid evil, selfishness, and everything that causes guilt in us. We can affect our own actions in a way that enables us to break the chain of guilt, and sometimes rejoice in our actions and even be proud of them. Could this be possible?

This is what all the world’s religions and their great spiritual teachers—such as Lao Tzu, Confucius, Zarathustra, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad—teach. They all teach essentially the same things in the moral domain: purify your thoughts; mind your speech; do not steal; do not commit adultery; learn tolerance; cultivate compassion, forgiveness, and pity; and learn to love one another.

This is what we have always been taught. There is no shortage of ethical teachings. We usually know what is right and wrong. The problem is our stubbornness and spiritual laziness. We do not want to believe in these teachings; we don't believe that anything would change if we followed them. Or we may not believe that we are able to live by them. Perhaps we are too lazy to even try. We are comfortable in the current situation and stop trying altogether.

Yet it is of paramount importance to try. The great maxims are easily forgotten in the heat of everyday life. We don't have the strength to think about ethics. So we do what we have always done: make choices based on what appears to be beneficial for us in the short run and then wonder why we are not happy or balanced and we feel guilt.

Guilt is an emotional reaction signaling that we have done something wrong. Let's ask ourselves how we deal with guilt. How do people usually cope with it?

Unreflective people don't feel much guilt at all. They ignore it, relying on prevalent morality and opinion, which support their thinking and actions. They want to believe they have done the right thing. Not caring about ethical justifications, they justify their actions by relying on groups that may even accept violent actions toward the less fortunate and minority groups. This is the "I just did what I was ordered to do" kind of morality.

The person running away from truth doesn't want to face his guilt. He avoids it, pushes it into the background, and thinks that his reaction is normal since "this is what everyone does." He refuses to look at himself in the mirror; instead he comes up with excuses. It often happens that this kind of person buries his guilt, which surfaces from time to time and nags him.

On the other hand, people who acknowledge their guilt fall into different categories, depending on how honest they can be toward themselves. Such people usually try to get free from their guilt: they regret, make amends, and ask for forgiveness.

There are also people with a highly developed sense of guilt along with a great sense of responsibility. They work actively with their guilt. Usually these people are writers, moral philosophers, or

other benefactors of humanity who hold up a mirror to other people. One can find deep thoughts from them, for instance, “There is no happiness for me without happiness for all people” (Elvi Sinerovo) or “I am guilty for all evil, that takes place in the world” (Leo Tolstoy).

Hiding or minimizing guilt has consequences. We hide our guilt, not wanting to process it. Saaristo talks about a similar thing in her book on forgiveness (*Magic Words*): the person is trapped on an emotional hook. Guilt, as well as hate or the feeling of being offended, is so strong that this unprocessed feeling consumes one’s energies and vitality.

Guilt is an expression of the laws governing our inner reality. Each of us, if we are healthy, has an internal ethical code which lets us know when our actions are right or wrong. Possibly also a faint feeling of guilt is a distant remembrance of the moment when we entered our new life and accepted its overall course. (I have already addressed this in the context of forgiveness.) Before we are born, we are shown our forthcoming life and its opportunities as they might develop. At that moment we promise to do our very best, as Ervast notes. We accept our life. Later, however, we don’t always have the strength to keep our promise; we fail to do the right thing, or we make an incorrect choice. At this point we faintly—perhaps unconsciously—remember our promise, and we feel guilty.

A person may find herself in a hopeless position, with no way of getting free from guilt. Think of a murderer, or parents who have lost their child to drug abuse. What kind of guilt might they feel? Guilt and remorse don’t raise anyone from the dead. Whom could one possibly ask for forgiveness?

The Lord’s Prayer has a verse on forgiveness that gives us an opportunity to work this kind of guilt. The guilt tormenting us can be redeemed by learning compassion and mercy and by refusing to demand revenge or amends from those who have caused us suffering or are otherwise in debt to us. In this way, we all have a chance to liberate wrongdoers from their guilt by forgiving, by letting mercy take the place of the demand for justice.

A more familiar way is that the person regrets and tries to atone for his action through suffering (for instance, Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment*). In this case the person voluntarily accepts suffering, or otherwise atones for his deeds and thereby frees himself from guilt. He understands and accepts the educational nature of suffering. There is atonement in this very act of acceptance. He sees that the suffering to which he voluntarily submits, which we would superficially regard as evil, is not evil at all; it is a consequence of our own actions. When we do evil, we must voluntarily take responsibility for our actions, or karma will make us suffer. Karma teaches us through suffering. It can also teach us through good. Whenever we see evil, we can always ask what lesson suffering is trying to teach us. Gradually we begin to see the means of alleviating suffering in the world.

When talking about karma, one has to be careful. A simplified conception of karma can easily lead to a trivial fatalism, which has nothing to do with universal love or justice. We too readily think that if someone encounters a loss, an accident, or a disease, they deserve it; it is their karma. We may say this even though we have no idea of the reasons behind the misfortune or its message. The chains of karma are complicated and have roots in distant times and situations; they can also be due to the karma of our family or nation.

It is good to think before judging. Instead we should think that perhaps we have encountered the suffering of our neighbor to test us, to learn whether we can help, have sympathy for, and console her. This is our duty as neighbors. The law of karma asks for mercy, acts of consolation, and carrying others' burdens—not just liberation from our own burdens.

Guilt Is a Message

Guilt has been given to us as a reminder. It reminds us of the task of the human being in this world. It is important to be silent and listen, trying to understand the message of guilt. We can seldom be freed from guilt during a weekend seminar, but the seminar could help us regard our guilt differently. We can learn to analyze who

causes us to feel guilt, what kind of expectations we face, whether we really have to behave according to these expectations or listen instead to our inner self. If the guilt is devastating, we must work even harder. Furthermore, we can keep Jesus's advice in mind: whoever looks back is not worthy of me. This refers to our tendency to dwell in guilt and negative emotions when we could repent, get rid of old attachments, and move forward.

Wendy Beckett, a well-known art critic, states this idea refreshingly:

I don't think being truly human has any place for guilt . . . Contrition, yes, but guilt no. Contrition means you tell God you are sorry and you're not going to do it again and you start off afresh. All the damage you've done to yourself [is] put right. Guilt means you go on and on belaboring and having emotions and beating your breast and being fixated to your ego. Guilt is a trap. People love guilt because they feel if they suffer enough guilt, they'll make up for what they've done, whereas, in fact, they're just sitting in a puddle and splashing. Contrition, you move forward. It's over. You are willing to forgo the pleasure of guilt.*

From Guilt to Love

From one life to another, we have a chance to align ourselves toward higher consciousness, observe our guilt, and with its help correct our mistakes and become free of them. We are reminded of the power of love and its victory in the "eternal" battle of good and evil.

Evil is overcome by love. But what kind of love can do that? It cannot be the love we talk about daily or which is addressed in hit songs. If one tries to understand love in a larger perspective, one can view it as a divine or cosmic all-encompassing energy which animates and upholds all life and functions in the universe. It keeps the universe together; if it were taken away, the universe would disperse into cosmic dust.

* In Laura Doyle, *The Surrendered Wife: A Practical Guide to Finding Intimacy, Passion, and Peace with a Man* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 227.

I am fascinated by the definition of love as a cosmic energy permeating everything from galaxies to atoms. Human beings are like light bulbs: the purer the filament, the brighter the bulb. Our role is that of a light bulb cleaner. Our mission is to become the light of the world.

It is said that love is blind. This statement has some truth to it, although it refers to falling in love, which is only the first step to true love in our lives. Falling in love is like a gift, which we can have more than once in a lifetime. Although that gift is wonderful and makes our heads spin, it also reflects a higher state of love: all-encompassing bliss, which, in its higher stages, can become a permanent state. Falling in love erases all evil from its object, although without love, we see evil everywhere. Falling in love allows us, for a short period of time, to see the object of our love, as well as other things around us, through rosy lenses. That wonderful feeling opens our locks and bolts. Falling in love can be seen as momentary, or perhaps as a more long-lasting state of opening. As long as it is present, we can reach a childlike state of basic experience. For a while, we are shown how the world looks when it is at its best, that is, when love reigns. Perhaps the cynics says that love is blind only because the state of love avoids all calculations.

The more I think I understand love, the more convinced I become that we are led to situations that provide us with something to love. Learning to love begins with one person. This is the work of destiny and karma. Theosophy talks about the Lords of Karma, who use the attraction of love to bring us people who have something to teach us about good and evil, right and wrong. In this way, people who are challenging and important “accidentally” appear in our lives; they are our training partners as much as we are theirs. The world works so that the human race increases in population through love. This is also how we grow as humans. Falling in love and love are closely related and easily confused, because the universal energy of love, which manifests itself at all levels in a human being, is related to creativity. It manifests itself in falling in love as sexual energy. It is an instinct driving us to unite, become one, and achieve fulfillment. It also brings us toward creating new life.

This union can be seen as a symbolic reflection of the lost unity consciousness.

We addressed earlier how the euphoria of love doesn't last. The person is not pure enough. Love is a fine cosmic energy, which cannot live long in consciousness. There are many points in spiritual evolution in which one can come in contact with cosmic, divine energies. All religions aim at this contact, which powers the evolution of the individual. This power is enhanced by acting lovingly even in demanding situations, but it is not given to a person whose motives are not pure, because this power acts as a destructive force if it is used for impure, selfish purposes.

I believe that love, in all its forms and stages, is a reflection of unity consciousness. It draws us together and attempts to raise us above separateness. It can be seen in falling in love as well. When the rosy cloud evaporates, we start to look for a new object of affection. It is like a drug, although we fear that its effects will quickly fade away.

We are also attracted to a new beginning by the sex drive and its mechanism of pleasure. Desire, which is lust, is different from will. Lust is driven by the pursuit of pleasure, the good of the ego. Eastern philosophies talk about overcoming lust, because it is always followed by suffering. When lust dies, suffering ceases as well. That's why it's important to develop discernment and integrity in order to see what is love and what is desire in oneself.

Desire comes with the blindness of falling in love. We walk for a period of time in a fog until we want to open our eyes. Love opens them. Falling in love comes and goes whereas love doesn't. It just is. St. Paul says that "Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8). It is our eternal challenge, and we should learn to understand it more deeply. We should learn to live in it. It saves us.

In fact, there is nothing more important than love. It makes us human. The more we are able to love, the stronger we are in relation to evil, and the more we understand it. Thorwald Dethlefsen crystallizes this truth in his wonderful book *The Challenge of Fate*: "To hate something invariably means not understanding it."

* Thorwald Dethlefsen, *The Challenge of Fate* (Coventure, 1984)

What, then, is true, enduring love? Is it serving others unselfishly, placing the happiness of other people before your own? Is it compassionate help, the attitude that helps us to relate to evil in the right way? If it is, it's wonderful, of course, but where do we receive the strength to do so? What is the way of power here?

In addition, Jesus urges us to love all people. This appears to be impossible. There must be a wise interpretation that will enable us to understand this. I understand this to mean that our mission is to learn to love the people we encounter in life: we have to practice love with those who are with us—with no distinction between good and bad. Eino Leino expresses this idea beautifully in his poem *The Teaching of the Sun*:

O Sun, please, tell me
what is the true happiness of a singer?
Do as I say
just shine on.
The happiness of a singer is in giving.

The practice of love starts with doing work upon ourselves. The forces and energies of love, and the ability to love, linger longer with us when we purify our inner being, say with the yoga of Jesus. Our intellectual and emotional aspects (Theosophy uses the terms *mental* and *astral bodies*) have to be tuned like a musical instrument in order to experience “the happiness of a singer.” Each time we let ourselves lose our temper or become offended with our brother, we lose control of our mind and let negative energy rush into our consciousness. Something valuable that we tried to build is shattered. At the same time, love goes away. We must start cleaning up our mind all over again. However, we are allowed to start again. This is mercy.

The work of purification is related to Jesus's third commandment: speaking the truth. A person seeking truth is always seeking love. Truth and love live in the same realm. One can become a truth seeker just by wanting to learn to love.

Speaking the truth is about taking steps toward freedom. A lie is a fog that prevents us from seeing the truth; in that fog, we cannot

tell what the path is. Speaking the truth clears the fog because truth tellers can be trusted. They open people's hearts. If one can open other people's hearts, one is a step closer to love. Love purifies our thoughts and acts. Spiritual growth is the outcome of purification.

Some people say that it is not useful to speak honestly; it is not good for us. What, then, is good for us? Usually one takes the easy path, which appears to be useful at the moment, without looking any further.

The logic of love is in giving, surrendering, forgiving, and forgiving oneself, especially when one has not had the strength to stick to the truth. If we think only of what we can gain in a given situation, we are thinking against the logic of love; we waste our opportunities and stay stagnant. Refusing to lie says something about one's worldview. A truth teller is building a world in which everyone can speak truthfully. It is a policy of sustainability and presupposes a world in which good actions will prevail. Being honest becomes a resource for us; it will grow along with the love it fosters within us.

Jesus urges us to love all people, even our enemies. We love God best if we love one another and remember that we all are children of the same Father, all images of God. Even the lowest and most miserable of us carries the same divine spark, which incarnates again and again and patiently waits to be ignited into a bigger light. We can nurture this spark by feeding it with the fuel of love. As we become greater in love, we become smaller in pride. We overcome the temptation Ervast talked about. The ego grows smaller. The masters of love never boast or take pride. We can never take pride in our ability to love, because love doesn't boast or take pride: this is against its very nature. To paraphrase the *Tao Te Ching*, love is like water, which fills even the smallest notches.

The Inexhaustible Wisdom of the Sermon on the Mount

In this final chapter, I will address topics on the Sermon on the Mount and esoteric Christianity that have not been discussed earlier. I will continue using Pekka Ervast's book on the Sermon on the Mount, because it opens avenues for thought and challenges us to see new and easily ignorable aspects of the sermon.

The most important sermon in Christianity is problematic in many respects. First, it is tied to its own time, addressed to people living in a very different social and cultural reality than ours. Second, it is open to many interpretations; one can easily look for loopholes. Its ethics is hard both to understand and to apply in everyday life.

The Sermon on the Mount should be understood as a whole. If I were able to view this text with the eyes of the Holy Ghost, I could see it as a whole. However, I'm just an ordinary person, so I'll have to be content with a method of science: analyzing the text in parts. This kind of study is helped by intuition and the associations inspired by this sermon. In this way one can approach it as new in different phases of life and find fresh perspectives that are relevant to current situations. These observations can be a source of joy if their insights can help us to see a new attitude or action we haven't tried before.

The Resounding Gong and Music of the Spheres

We grow and gradually learn to trust in love through many incarnations and many crises. Having eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we started in the school of painful efforts. Here,

in the world of polarities, conflicts, and separateness, we learn to resolve the polarities and to find the unity behind them.

Jesus teaches his followers using paradoxes in which the opposites seem to transform into each other. We face a question: does paradoxical thinking enable human consciousness to evolve toward unity? When we meet people who have started to purify their minds, we notice that they have found the key to contradictions in paradoxes.

They see beauty in and through ugliness. They understand that suffering is a blessing in disguise. They believe that by giving away and giving up before they must, they can have everything. They see that being sensitive takes the greatest courage. They treat malefactors with compassion and love, because they know that in the end there is no other solution. They understand that true love is born and becomes stronger by giving. It doesn't ask, "What's in it for me?" When people start to see paradoxes, they learn that there is a microcosm within that is like the macrocosm without: "As above, so below." Death is inevitable, but it is not a disaster; it is a gate to a new life. A new opportunity emerges out of the crisis.

There are paradoxes even in the highest stages of spiritual evolution. In a high-degree initiation drama, the sword is not for killing or violence; instead, one learns how to point it toward one's own heart. Turning the other cheek is just the beginning of this initiation. We change our weakness into strength and asset by delving deep in the reasons causing the weakness. Darkness is necessary so that we can understand and see light. Erik Blomberg says it beautifully in his poem:

Don't be afraid of the darkness, that's when the light is lit.
You cannot see the stars before the dark sets in.
Don't fear the darkness, it is a womb of light,
Don't fear the darkness, it is a condition for light.
You also have a black iris in your eye,
only through the darkness can light be seen.

Love raises us above polarities. As St. Paul says: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a

resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). There is a Finnish saying about a rattle that comes out of empty barrels. We hear a lot of resounding gongs and clanging cymbals around us, and I can hear this noise inside myself as well. There is too much loveless effort and struggle in the world.

How, then, do we make the gong ring? How do we tune the clanging cymbal so that it resounds with love? These questions create further questions. How does one learn to love? We learn to love everywhere, in all our encounters. We teach it to each other all the time.

If you decide to put your love to the test, if you decide not to resist evil, or if you decide to approach a person with love, even if you dislike him or consider him an enemy, your decision will be heard, and you will find yourself in situations where you can test your ability to keep your resolution. You will be tested for your words. If you are serious but don’t yet have faith, give it a try and see what happens.

Learning to love takes courage. It is always about putting yourself on the line. Every time we earnestly try to talk about love, act lovingly, or experience love in art, we have to reveal what is most vulnerable in us. We give up all the structures we have set up to protect us. Possibly we will be hurt in these situations where we have opened ourselves. However, we shouldn’t keep records of wrongs; we should persistently prepare for a new attempt, remembering that giving, not receiving, is the most important thing in love.

Sometimes we may lose our strength and energy, our courage fails us, and it feels as if we have failed even when we have tried our very best. Again, determination is invaluable—concentration on what is essential, a new attempt, and a trust that life will prevail. The verse “Thy will be done” will gain prominence within us. We may struggle with faith, but this faith is not just believing that something is true; it is action guided by conscious will, and love is its essential core. We will always face situations in which our faith—and our faith in love—is on trial.

Not resisting evil, learning to understand its logic, and learning to love are all the same practice with the same aim: to ignite the

divine spark that everyone, Christian or not, carries within. It is the highest self, the Christ within, as the Theosophists say. When this state is opened, the person is able to feel the greatest love that can be felt on earth. This union is described as nirvana, moksha, or samadhi. Western mystics and alchemists talk about the cosmic or mystic wedding, which is a great festival of love. I submit that people in all religions aspire to have contact with their higher selves.

A truth seeker who enters the path of purification and begins to study the basics of expanding love may encounter moments of smaller or greater cosmic love. These will give the seeker more understanding, trust, and strength.

Understanding is an important outcome of learning to love. Trust fosters faith, which will be transformed into knowledge on the path of purification. Conscious search and struggle can begin in the midst of everyday life, on the playground or in the mall, while we are learning love with those who are closest to us. There is no need to be isolated from humanity when reaching for cosmic consciousness.

Jesus Christ was such a great spiritual teacher because he could bring a model of divine love to us so brightly in his life and teachings. He brought it into everyday life, where the common people live; he reached out to outcasts, prostitutes, thieves, despised and supposedly useless people.

The path of purification is a start. Proceeding on this path will produce a change in our love life, which is connected to sexuality.

Once a man asked, "What shall we do when everyone is a saint? Where is all the fun then? How do humans carry on?"

It was a good question. Evolving always means that something must be left behind to make room for something new. Of course one must avoid any kind of coercion. One cannot force oneself to enter the spiritual path, which is about giving away, forgiving, and loving unselfishly. Love lives in the atmosphere of freedom. Coercion will always produce a counteraction.

One can outgrow sexuality when there is no satisfaction in it anymore. We have to see that experiences of spiritual love have more to offer than those of physical love. If we don't have this

faith, there is no incentive to try. Motivation will grow by studying speeches and writings of the elder brothers, who reveal their own experiences with cosmic love.

One answer to the questions posed by the man above is that when one has become a saint, one can do whatever one likes. Hermann Hesse writes that “we must prepare for parting and leaving, or else remain the slaves of permanence.”* When the old practice doesn’t work anymore, it’s natural to start something new.

Pekka Ervast tells us something about our distant future as male and female. In his book *The Gospel according to John* (which has not been translated into English), he writes:

Reaching eternal life is the longest and most arduous path. It is a great secret, which will be reached only by transforming the sexual force fully into inner, spiritual force. . . . Creating new life takes place in this visible world. However, the condition for creating life is love, which manifests itself in two hearts beating in the same rhythm. . . .

We as human beings are here to learn the lesson of life and love so that we will ascend back to spiritual heights. We have learned how a heart meets the other heart, and that we create new life in their union. We have to learn to love by looking each other in the eye, and then create new life. It is a wonderful effort to learn to love and create new life by looking in the eyes. It demands wondrous purity to do so, and it takes great effort before the human being becomes such an angel knight that he just looks the other person in the eye and loves that way, not more intimately.

I am convinced that we are on our way toward greater kinship, greater brotherhood, and greater unity. At this point in history, I’d say that we are playing in an orchestra with only solo instruments: resounding gongs, clanging cymbals, and empty barrels. Occasionally we will have a visiting artist—someone who teaches us to play in a way that deeply touches our hearts. There are masters, such as Jesus Christ, St. Francis of Assisi, and the Finnish hero and

* Hermann Hesse. *The Glass Bead Game* (St Martins Press, 2002).

demigod Väinämöinen, who play so divinely that they attune us to the Great Song. They all have listened to the music of the spheres, which can rarely be heard here on earth. We aren't able to hear this music, although it is everywhere. Only the few who have practiced and attuned themselves can hear it.

I recall a scene related to this topic from the Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, which is one of the greatest movie experiences I've ever had. A trio consisting of a scientist, an author, and a guide have returned from their expedition to an unknown region after sharing a joint spiritual experience. Stalker returns to his dark shack, his bitterly nagging spouse, and his crippled daughter in the vicinity of atomic power plants overshadowing polluted shores. The only consolation is a ramshackle radio tepidly playing the great finale of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*.

For me, this altered St. Paul's words, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12) into: "For now we hear only from a ramshackle radio; then we shall hear living music."

It is we who chime the living music. We must start training with resounding gongs, clanging cymbals, and empty barrels in order to tune them for playing the music of the spheres—the universal music as described by the great composers or initiates such as Plato. This is about tuning the instrument of each and every one of us. The instrument *is* us; it must be kept in good shape, and it must be loved, because this instrument is unique in the cosmos. It has to be tuned to play as purely as possible. It has to be tuned with love and for love; otherwise there will be no harmony. All this is possible. The band of the universe is waiting for new players, who are slowly graduating from the music academy of Tellus. There is room for everyone in the band of the spheres. We all will eventually play in that band, and the jams will be heavenly.

The Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World

After starting with the beatitudes, Jesus's sermon continues as follows: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness,

how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot” (Matthew 5:13).

In this passage, Jesus encourages and supports his disciples. What is the salt of the earth? Two millennia ago, salt was a valuable substance. It was sought in the ground, dug up, and purified; it was a well-guarded treasure. Salt is used to preserve food from spoiling. One such food is bread, which, as we have seen, Jesus talks about in the Lord’s Prayer, referring both to material bread and to spiritual bread, that is, is food for the spirit. Jesus also reminds us that “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Jesus needs the salt of the earth, that is, his followers and disciples, to preserve spiritual bread, which comes from the mouth of God.

Salt is a substance that serves best when it’s used for the right purpose: to preserve supersubstantial, spiritual bread through the ages. It is also possible to think of the salt of the earth as a powerful flavoring, which makes earthly life more flavorful. It turns dull life into something delicious and enjoyable. Supersubstantial bread, combined with the salt of the earth, makes life good.

Ervast approaches this topic from another perspective and talks about “Attic salt,” which refers to subtle wit. Ervast notes that the Latin word for *salt* is *sal*, which can also mean *intelligence* or *sharpness of mind*. Hence it is possible to interpret Jesus’s words on salt as saying, “You are the intelligence of the world.” Ervast, elaborating on this thought, says:

Jesus’s followers are far from being “simple,” “kind” but “stupid,” they are, on the contrary, the most reasonable and acutely intelligent among 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 savor 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.*

* Pekka Ervast, *Sermon on the Mount*, 53–54. The quote is slightly edited.

Salt losing its saltiness means losing one's strength or skill through neglect or lack of practice. Then it is like a candle that has been lit but veiled. Jesus talks about this in the following way: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house" (Matthew 5:14–15).

What is the light of the world? It seems to be more than the salt of the earth: it is something that affects the whole universe. The sun is the source of light in our world. God causes the sun to shine for the evil and the good alike (Matthew 5:45). The source of life resides in the sun; it is the source of all plant-based food on earth. From the occult point of view, the sun is the spiritual center of our planetary system, an immense alliance of intellect and love, which makes our existence possible.

Jesus's reference to the light of the world reminds us of sayings on light in other parts of the New Testament: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5). Attic salt is a symbol for intellect in the same way that light is. One can talk about the light of reason as well.

However, there is also a dimension of love related to the idea of light. The light of the world is not just cold reason; it's also the light of love, wisdom, and truth. When Jesus calls his disciples the light of the world and the salt of the earth, he is charging them, and his other followers, with a huge task of advancement as well as with responsibility, foreshadowed by enormous spiritual visions for the light bearers.

Jesus concludes this part with the following words: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14). He reminds us that praise belongs only to the Father. There is no need for the disciple to look for kudos or praise. Jesus returns to this topic later when he talks about good deeds and fasting: "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with

trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full” (Matthew 6:1–2).

Great tasks and responsibilities are always accompanied by the temptation of pride. A person who advances and receives the light of spirit and spiritual powers can explain things correctly and wisely. Her efforts have enabled her to receive knowledge and abilities that other people marvel at and envy. At this point the danger looms near. The disciple must always take great care to remember that all wisdom, faculty, and spiritual skills have been given to her for more adept service and the ability to love her fellow humans. If we have the faintest idea of this service, we realize that there can be no swaggering.

Jesus adds, “Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:4). He gives the same advice about prayer: “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6). The disciple’s inner spiritual life, prayer, and fasting will be reflected in his external life. The question is always about motives. Why do we follow various spiritual practices? What are our aims? What are we trying to achieve? We ask these questions from ourselves, and these questions are asked of us. I would say that right meditation and prayer create an inner consciousness which guides external behavior in such a way that there is no need to constantly question one’s motives.

Jesus goes on to say, “When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what the right hand is doing” (Matthew 6:3). How is this possible? It is possible when our consciousness is so deep and high that it has penetrated our reflexes and gone into our body memory. We have become so competent in our service that the right inner motive and right thoughts will arise spontaneously. An old saying from Eastern philosophy states that “What you think, you become.” This is the ongoing process of the path of purification.

* More precisely: “Whatever one frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind.” From the *Dvedhavitakka Sutta*.

When we think about Jesus's words, "Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you," we could conclude that right action in love is a reward in itself. It creates comfort in the world, which is close to what we call happiness. People often want to get something and ask, what's in it for me? Ervast explains:

That Jesus was thinking of no outer rewards, you will realize 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 recognized position in the invisible kingdom of heaven. Keeping in mind these "karmic" results—as an Oriental would say—of our good deeds and endeavors, we do not wonder at all that Jesus spoke of "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 spirit—immortality and eternal life?

Everything Flows

After the Lord's Prayer Jesus addresses our relationship with worldly treasures, mammon—generally what we call everyday worries. He says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19).

Jesus teaches us that all we have received and will receive in life is merely a loan and a gift we have been given so that we can learn to give forward to those in need. Jesus urges us to give away whatever earthly possessions we have. This helps the flow of life. In a way, Jesus is a great prophet of recycling. St. Paul frames the same

* Pekka Ervast, *Sermon on the Mount*, 112–13.

idea as follows: “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). The motive and manner of giving are important. Someone who doesn’t understand the importance of flow, of breathing in and out, constantly tries to stop the flow of life. They have a hard time comprehending that everything changes and flows, but this is a law of life.

We try to stop the flow because we want to feel safe. We create blocks and dams to prevent the flow. We collect money and belongings, piling up possessions and goods. We want to prevent things from happening when it appears to be useful for us to do so. We believe that it’s possible to freeze life so that we can enjoy something forever. It takes a very long time in each incarnation to remember that this is not correct. Life is advancement, evolution, constant change, and growth.

What happens if we dam the stream of life? Life doesn’t cease flowing, even if we try to stop it. Life passes by and goes around us like water. Sometimes it snatches us into the foam, and it may take a long time before we come around. But perhaps this is quite rare. Usually life respects our free will and lets us sit on top of our pile of money or possessions, or keep our stagnant emotions and attitudes. At some point, however, we will wake up and ask why life has passed us by.

The flow of receiving and giving sustains the breath of life. By the usual mode of thinking, we only give something to someone with expectations of getting something back; we wonder what kind of service will come to us in return for being so good. We also do good deeds and services expecting that people will be thankful to us and praise us. These attitudes can easily lead to clubs of mutual praise, where good deeds become goods for sale.

The law of flow in life works differently. Each truly good deed will beget new deeds, but the consequences will not immediately come back to us as favors; instead, good deeds pass on forward in an expanding chain. The Finnish songwriter Juice Leskinen told a story about a contagious yawn. What if it so happened that a yawn passed across the globe so that we eventually got back the yawn we initiated? According to one theory, yawning is due to lack of

oxygen. Similarly, we could extend Leskinen's idea to cover good deeds, which foster the intake of spiritual oxygen.

Unconditional love is the way spiritual life works. Love lives and breathes in the flow of life. When Jesus gave the commandment of love, he elaborated on it as follows: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" (Matthew 5:46).

Love is constrained in too small a circle. Those outside the circle become strangers, and brotherhood is not extended to them. I will cite a summary by my friend, yoga instructor Timo Myllykangas, of Jesus's double commandment of love: "Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbor as yourself" (this is a slightly shortened version of Luke 10:27). When we live in this world knowing this maxim, we realize that we are subjects of God's love, wherever we might be. We are loved all the time, no matter what we do. When we recognize this at some point, we start to think how we could respond to this love. It will dawn on us that the way to do it is to love God in other people. We love and serve God by loving and serving one another. This service will store up treasures in heaven for us, as Jesus puts it. That love will be our legacy in the world. In addition, it will build our heavenly life from the loving thoughts of the people who love us.

Life Supports You

When Jesus talks about mammon in the Sermon on the Mount, he urges his disciples to stop worrying about external matters and relax in a heavenly freedom from care. Worry will cease only when one has a strong trust and faith in life, which prevails even if one gives up worrying over external matters.

Naturally we avoid this piece of advice, explaining that of course we must take care of ourselves; it would be irresponsible not to do so. We come up with excuses because our faith is not strong enough. We retreat behind responsibility, although our real issue is the fact that we do not trust that life will prevail. However, we must take responsibility for one another; God will take responsibility for us. This is one aspect of the double commandment of love.

Where do we find the courage to trust that life will prevail? Jesus answers this in the Sermon on the Mount: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom could be interpreted to mean the state of mind Jesus referred to when he said: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14). The kingdom in which we can be like children is within all of us. Children have confidence. They don’t question for a moment that they won’t be taken care of. That’s why they can throw themselves fully into whatever they are doing. They don’t expend their energy in asking whether something is right or everything is all right. An adult knows what is right, because the adult has gone from childhood’s freedom to mature conscious choice. Now the adult has a new chance to be creative and surrender to what spiritual life has to offer.

The leap of faith here has troubled many who have thought about the process of letting go. Often one has to be forced to the edge before one is ready to take the leap. On the edge, there are no other alternatives. Søren Kierkegaard wrote: “I would have perished, had I not perished.” One who has taken a leap of faith may say: “I would have fallen, had I not jumped.” I have also heard the following: “Most of us will sink; only few will dive.”

Jesus ends this passage by saying: “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34). This short verse offers a lot to think about, and I have a feeling that it will become important for those who are looking for truth in our time. One must live now, not in tomorrow, which is uncertain, nor in yesterday, since it cannot be lived anymore. We must live now and make this moment into a continuous now. This point is related to what Pekka Ervast and Uno Pore, the former chairman of the Finnish Rosy Cross, used to say: “The kingdom of heaven will be won over by a sneak attack.” Without thinking or fearing about the consequences, one must leap into this moment and take hold of the truth right now. (Of course, a devil’s advocate would see an invitation to irresponsibility here: one could take this as permission to live without any regard to future generations or the teachings of the past.)

Some of Jesus's maxims may be related to his teachings on treasures in heaven and our relationship with mammon. One such verse could be the following: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22–23).

Ervast states that reason or intellect is the light of the body. When the reason is bright, the whole body is healthy. Purity in thoughts springs forth as a right way of life.

I'm sure that Ervast is right in his interpretation, but this verse reminds me of the saying, "The eyes are the mirror of the soul." What happens inside us can be seen in our eyes. We cannot hide our thoughts when our eyes betray us.

A disciple who has followed the path of purification and has had spiritual experiences will receive the powers Jesus is referring to. These powers affect other people by flowing through the eyes. That's why Jesus stresses the meaning of purity in thoughts and motives. In my opinion, this is related to the verses in which Jesus talks about his disciples as the light of the world.

By the same token, this passage seems to be related to Jesus's warning on the false prophets at the end of the sermon: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:15–18).

A false prophet is known by the lack of light in his body. The quality of his work is revealed by the fruit of his work. We must sharpen our powers of intellect to prevent us from following the wrong people.

This warning seems very timely. The ethics in the Sermon on the Mount continue to be the proper yardstick. Jesus's teachings are not outdated; people generally have not started to follow them in the first place. On the other hand, we have to take care in following

any prophets, that is, other people. It seems to be enough for Jesus if we search for the kingdom of God within us. Everything else will be given to us with it.

At the end of the sermon, Jesus talks about his yoga as the narrow gate and the narrow road. He says thusly: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13–14). There are many spiritual guides in the media whose teachings should be compared with those of Jesus. These are the rock, the enduring foundation, the law from which “not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear” (Matthew 5:18).

Miracle makers and different kinds of masters will come forward nowadays, but it is difficult to ignore the fact that we must make an effort ourselves. No cosmic angel, spiritual ray, or Maitreya will save us unless we want to be saved and are willing to do the needed work.

Next Jesus gives his well-known parable about building on the rock: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock” (Matthew 7:24–25).

Jesus’s teaching, his new ethics, is seen as a universal foundation in Theosophy. There will be many teachers, new prophets, novel spiritual systems. All these can be compared with this bedrock. It is the measure of human development.

Toward the end of his sermon, Jesus gives a promise related to what was said earlier: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9–11).

These verses promise to deliver help for anyone who asks for it. Asking, begging, and praying are signs of faith; although they are not signs of its strength, they are nevertheless signs of faith. They tell about our relationship with the divine.

I know people wiser than me who often wonder: “Why don’t you ask?” The experience teaches us that it is indeed wise to ask. Usually we ask other people, but we don’t know how to ask our inner self. Yet the wise continually remind us that all wisdom is inside the human being. Our problem is that we have doubts in trusting ourselves, our inner intuition, our inner divinity. When we look around, we soon notice that not many people have asked, searched, or knocked seriously enough. How many have really knocked on the door of the kingdom, asking for entrance? Instead, don’t we simply go where other people are going? We don’t have the courage to ask for more light in our lives, because it would expose the unclean corners within us. Instead of daring to heal, don’t we just take a medicine that expels the symptoms? What would happen if the door were opened for the one who knocks?

People for whom the door has been opened, that is, who have experienced expanded consciousness, are usually cautious about sharing their experiences. They may sometimes refer to these experiences, and may say something related to them, but they seldom reveal the actual experience. Words fail us, because the enlightenment experience is very personal in nature and arises directly from the life of the experiencer.

To sum up, the goal in the yoga of Jesus is to achieve union with a higher state of consciousness. This spiritual system, which is given us by our Master, expands the mind and consciousness by teaching a practice of thinking and living in ways this book has attempted to discuss. It is a safe path of advancement, and it opens pathways to the ultimate spiritual goals, which are pursued by people all over the world.

However, because of a lack of certainty, most of us prefer to be asleep. Moreover, taking a leap of faith is fearsome. And waking up necessarily requires change, which is frightening as well.

In an old Zen story, a student has studied wisdom at the feet of his master for a long time. One day he is tired and frustrated and asks, "Master, tell me: is there anything I could do to achieve enlightenment?"

The master answers, "My student, you can influence the enlightenment as much as you can have influence on the sun rising every day."

The student, becoming even more frustrated, asks, "So why does all this studying and practice go on and on?"

The master replies, "So that you can be awake when the sun rises."

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For a brief biography of Ervast, see “Pekka Ervast,” Theosophy Wiki (website), last updated June 4, 2019:

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