

# THE CANADIAN THEOSOPHIST

VOL. XIV., No. 7 HAMILTON, SEPTEMBER 15th, 1933 Price 10 Cents  
s. 214 - 215

## REVIEWS

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The first translation of this invaluable Scripture in modern times, following the Theosophical teachings of Madame Blavatsky, was by James Morgan Pryse in *The Irish Theosophist* forty-odd years ago; this was republished in Toronto, the first Theosophical publication in Canada. Now we have a version with commentary by that very excellent Theosophical scholar, Mr. Pekka Ervast of Finland, whose English with certain exceptions of the second personal singular in his verbs, is exceptional.

There was a time when the Christian mythos was shunned in the Theosophical Movement, but in late years it has run to the other extreme and plagiarized and burlesqued it in its sacerdotal elements, till decent Theosophists are almost ashamed to look a real Christian in the face. However one can take Mr. Ervast's book in hand with perfect confidence and commend it to all and sundry of the Christian Churches, real or imitation.

Mr. Ervast has gone into the Greek text and satisfied himself of the intention of the author, which is not difficult, considering that logic and consistency are usual guides where other interpretations are vague and untenable. There is not much that is new to those familiar with Pryse's translations, but these are a small minority compared with the scholars who ought to be reading the New Testament as it was written.

It is a useful book, however, to introduce to people unacquainted with early Christianity the teachings which are fundamental, in the proper sense to its understanding. "Had not the mediaeval clergy in their councils anathematized the doctrine of reincarnation, our Christians today would know that the spirit of man will be reborn upon earth; it returns to this vale of sorrow time after time, until man chooses the life of the kingdom of heaven or spirit, thus educating himself to become a spiritual being, who no longer will be the slave of mammon and death."

The kingdom of heaven, however, is not a state to be entered only after death, but one to be enjoyed here and now when men are prepared to enter it. "It is not to be wondered at that the Christians have confused the conception of the kingdom of heaven with the idea of the after-death life, and it behooves us to understand perfectly that the kingdom of the spirit is open to all 'living' men as well as to those among the deceased who have tasted it during their lifetime. On the other hand as all dead men lead a very happy life in their 'heavens' before rebirth, it was necessary to emphasize that the life of the kingdom of heaven or spirit did not only surpass the highest possible bliss from an earthly point of view, but also the highest 'heavenly' happiness that men after death were able to enjoy."

Mr. Ervast distinguishes here that "the Buddhist teaching of nirvana lays stress on the extinction of pain and suffering and is rather of a negative character, but Jesus, speaking distinctly of a blissful happiness, is forcefully positive in his teaching." He translates righteousness correctly as justice, and explains the "poor in spirit" as beggars for the spirit, yearning for what they cannot sufficiently attain.

He disclaims any artificial attempt at construing the text. "I do not put into the words anything that is not there already." Anyone can understand the teaching "who has not got a wrong conception of God, *i.e.*, who does not worship idols in his mind." and he adds, "I do not speak of people who don't believe they can 'stand the truth,' who prefer living in a 'fool's paradise' rather than look truth in the face. They get their reward. They are fascinated by falsehoods. But now we are speaking of reason."

Mr. Ervast classifies the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount as Commandments and contrasts them with the Ten Commandments of Moses. He does not appear to have made an independent translation of the Second Commandment, which reveals in the original Hebrew text an interesting confirmation of the teaching of permutation. The book is scholarly and will interest any intuitive reader. He collates the translations in Finnish, Swedish, French, German, Spanish and Italian where they confirm or throw light on the renderings he gives of the Greek text. We are glad to see the Theosophical Publishing House turning to a more valuable class of literature than has been the rule far years past.