

The Sermon on the Mount or the Key to Christianity,
an interpretation by Pekka Ervast
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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

Under these circumstances, what else could

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But what is not, may still be.

P. E.