

# THE MARK

*Maurice Nicoll*

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## PREFACE

**B**EFORE his death on August 30th, 1953, my father, Dr Maurice Nicoll, was writing a book to which he referred as *The Mark*.

When Dr Nicoll died he had not yet decided on the order of the contents of this book, and they have therefore been arranged as we think he would have wished.

*The Parable of the Sower and the Seed, Metanoia, Nicodemus and Truth* had already been finished and corrected and were clearly meant for inclusion in this book.

He also definitely wished to include the dream, headed *The New Will*, the incomplete piece on *War in Heaven*, and the unfinished chapter at the end of the book called *The Telos*.

A few fragments from his notebooks have been added where it is thought they may interest the reader. The rest of the material is taken from papers he wrote at various times, and which he might, or might not, have included.

I would only add that here, often in passages of great beauty, is the key for those who long for a greater understanding of the teaching of Christ, and the meaning of our existence on this earth.

JANE MOUNSEY

# **Physical and Spiritual Man**

## PART ONE

A MAN touches the Earth with his physical feet, but he touches life with his psychological feet. His most external psychological level is sensual, a matter of sensation, a matter of the senses. That is, his most external thinking and feeling arise from what he perceives from sense. This level represents the feet of his psychological being as distinct from the feet of his physical being, and the kind of shoes which cover his feet represent his particular views, opinions, and attitudes that he wears or uses in his approach to sense-given life. Without your five senses, external life would not exist for you.

How does a man *walk the Earth*? We speak here psychologically. How does his outermost psychology relate itself to external life?

Now a man who understands life only through the evidence of his senses is not a *psychological man*. He is a sensual man. His mind is based on sense. This is called elsewhere 'the mind of the flesh'. [ὁ νοῦς τῆς σαρκός (Col. ii.18.)] In such a case he thinks *from his feet* - and has no head. Most particularly, he thinks from what 'shoes' cover his feet. This is his form of truth, different in different cases, but of the same order or level. He is as yet far from being a *Man*. He thinks literally. He takes, say, a parable literally. But, to become a Man, one must begin to think, apart from literal sense. What is significant to anyone who craves internal development is to think psychologically. Why, for example, is it said so often in esoteric literature, as in the Scriptures, that a man must *remove his shoes* before entering a sacred place? It means that the sensual mind cannot understand psychological truth. So he is told to remove his shoes - that is, his sense-based truth - because the mind based on the senses and the truth formed from their evidence is not capable of comprehending a higher order or level of truth - that is, psychological truth. To put the matter in other terms: the physical man cannot comprehend the spiritual man.

So, when it is said that it is necessary to take off one's shoes before entering a sacred or holy place, it signifies that the sensual cannot comprehend the spiritual. Sensual thought cannot touch

a level above itself. Another kind of thinking is required. The *mind* is at different levels and its lowest level cannot grasp the working of higher levels. To try to understand psychological truth with the lowest, most external level of the mind is impossible. So *those shoes* must be removed when entering into the sphere of knowledge above sense-knowledge. *To drag psychological understanding down to the level of sensual understanding is to destroy everything in Man that can lead to his internal development and make him a man inwardly.*

People try to understand 'God' and the 'Divine' with their sensual mind. They try to understand with their shoes, not their head.

When the angel appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he said to Moses: 'Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground' (Exodus iii.5 A.V.). And when the angel with the drawn sword stood before Joshua, when he came to Jericho, he said to Joshua: 'Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy' (Joshua v.15 A.V.). The disciples of Christ who were sent out to preach the Gospel had to go without shoes. 'Provide . . . neither shoes' (Matthew x.10 A.V.).

A man has an organised physical body *given to him*. He then comes under the organisation of the civilisation to which we belong. This social organisation is kept going by means of laws. A man commits murder. The laws of his country condemn him. But Man has not a *psychological* body. He has no inner organisation. He obeys the laws out of fear and for the sake of avoiding scandal. *In himself*, if all restraints were abolished, he would murder those he hates. Hate is a deep factor. In one sense it is possible to say we all hate one another. We are told: 'Thou shalt do no murder' (Exodus xx.13). Literally taken, this command is kept because of the fear of consequences. Psychologically it means that one must do no murder in one's thoughts or

feelings. It is just in this inner sphere that the inner development can take place. It is the *psychological* meaning of the command.

### THE FEET AND THE HEAD

The psychological man is constantly the theme of vision, parable and dream. He is divided variously into outer and inner parts. This is the same as lower and higher levels. The *head* represents the highest or inmost division of the psychological man. To mix the thinking of the feet (the shoes) with that of the head is to confuse two levels. The thinking of the feet forms the shoes and is sensual and so it concerns the outer objects of sense. The thinking of the head is psychological and so concerns the inner *meaning of things*. These two orders of truth are not contradictory, but become so if they are viewed as opposites. They are not opposites but on different levels. So there are different forms of truth, on different levels. But if a man thinks only from his feet he cannot understand levels. He thinks only on one level and so turns things into opposites which are not opposites. So it comes about that when people lose all sense of levels - of higher and lower — the world turns into opposites and violence.

### THE NAKED MAN

In psychological language, clothes, coverings, garments, denote what the *psychological* man wears - that is, what truth he follows. So the naked man is man naked psychologically, without mental clothes. He is the man without a psychology, without any kind of truth. It is said in Revelation: 'Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame' (Revelation xvi.15 A.V.). The meaning is psychological, not physical.

But what must be clothed? In one place it is said that the *King* was naked:

'When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and

before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: *naked*, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' (Matthew xxv.31-36 R.V.)

By the King, then, something *in oneself* is meant. Many assume they follow truth. But *what in them* does?

The question apparently is: Is the King in oneself clothed ? It seems the King is there already and it is a question of clothing him or not. This King in oneself is either naked or clothed. Also, people do good *without knowing it* - that is from goodness. Does not the parable go on to say:

'Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.' (Matthew xxv.37-40 R.V.)

We understand that the physical man is composed of visible flesh and blood and bones. We do not understand that the psychological man is composed of invisible thoughts and feelings and desires. What he thinks and desires determines the quality of the psychological man. But while the given physical body is ordered and can work harmoniously the psychological body is not given and is by no means ordered. A man may think one thing, feel another, and desire a third. From this point of view Man's task is to bring about order in the psychological body which is in disorder.

For this reason there has always existed a literature, under various guises, that does not refer to the physical but to the



psychological man - as, for example, the fragments of teaching preserved in the Gospels and many other fragments.

But again we are going wrong because this psychological man is in some way already there, in us — only we have to clothe him. Shall we say, then, that he is either naked or wrongly clothed and that the task is to cover him from foot to head in the right garments. Recollect that the King apparently is there — either naked or clothed - and that in those cases where he is left naked the person has failed and in those cases where he is clothed the person has not failed.

#### WASH THE FEET IN WATER IN A BASIN

To purify the thinking, change the mind, is symbolised by washing with water; this is washing the mind from the senses.

The basin is the receptive vessel to *hold* the water; to concentrate in.

The feet are the lowest mind in contact with the external world. This must be changed *in this life*.

'After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter, and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.' (John xiii.5-10 A.V.)

## PART TWO

IN the first five books of the Old Testament called the Pentateuch, and attributed to Moses, a great number of extraordinary stories are found, which are usually regarded as historical. For example, there is the story of Pharaoh and the butler and the baker, which occurs in Genesis XL, which apparently has no particular meaning, and as it stands seems quite trivial. However it is susceptible of being understood, as having an inner meaning. Or again, there is the great story about Moses getting the children of Israel out of Egypt and the power of Pharaoh (Exodus). But this no doubt can again be taken historically - that is, in the sense that Egypt means Egypt, and Pharaoh means Pharaoh, just as in the previous example, the butler can be taken as the actual butler, and the baker as the actual baker.

Let us take the movement of the children of Israel out of Egypt and their journey towards the promised land, not literally but as a parable having a psychological significance quite apart from any historical significance. Let us take it in other words as referring to man moving away from some power signified by Pharaoh and Egypt, and journeying towards a new state of himself. All esoteric teaching concerns a lower and a higher level, and the essence of esotericism consists in the fact that man is capable of undergoing a transformation and attaining a new level of himself. Man has to escape from the power of Pharaoh and Egypt and move in another direction first signified as the wilderness and eventually as the promised land. One can see in the allegory how difficult this is, for it is shown how Pharaoh will not let the children of Israel leave Egypt, although plague after plague is brought upon him. Man glued to the senses, to visible reality, to external life, can only move with great difficulty to a level of comprehension which lies beyond the facts of the senses and their power over him. This is the first problem of esoteric teaching and in the parable the emphasis is put upon the power of Pharaoh which Moses tries to overcome. Pharaoh represents the power of the lower level and Moses the power of the higher level, Moses having been

told by God to get the children of Israel out of Egypt, Egypt representing a psychological state of humanity. The many different sides of a man which can grow into a new inner development are firmly held down in Egypt by Pharaoh - i.e. by the power of the lower level of understanding gained solely through the world as it appears to the senses and the understanding that we gain from this first source of meaning. This level of interpretation is Egypt and Pharaoh is the concentrated power of this level. He can be compared with the 'ruler of the feast' in the parable of the marriage at Cana (see page 171). Let us look at some definitions in the Old Testament as to the meaning of Egypt. In that extraordinary book called Isaiah which is full of psychological interpretation and offers a key almost to the earlier books of the Old Testament, it is said, 'Now the Egyptians are men, and not God: and their horses flesh, and not spirit' (Isaiah xxxi.3). From this we can see that if we take the narrative of the emancipation of the children of Israel as meaning psychologically the passage from a state of 'flesh' to a state of 'spirit', we must understand that a mental transformation is signified. In one of the epistles in the New Testament, Paul speaks of the mind of the flesh or the carnal mind (Colossians ii.18). 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by *his fleshly mind.*' Therefore if we apply the story of the children of Israel and Egypt to an interpretation above any literal historical meaning, we can begin to understand that it is about the emancipation of a man glued to the evidence of his senses - the man of sensible facts - and his development into a new state of understanding based on principles and meanings coming from another level of insight, that is, a passage from 'flesh' to 'spirit'. The horse, which is what a man rides on, represents in the ancient language of parables, of which many traces exist in ancient Greek mythology, the intellect or mind. When Isaiah says that the horses of Egypt are flesh and not spirit, he gives a clue to the whole meaning of the exodus from Egypt. He enables us to understand the whole matter psychologically. Pharaoh is 'flesh' - Moses is 'Spirit'. It is we ourselves who have to get our children of Israel out of Egypt.

Since everything in esoteric psychology is about man himself and his possibilities, and with what things he has to go in himself and what things he must give up and separate himself from, we can realise that the great parables are not capable of cut and dried explanation, nor indeed are they comprehensible to us save in a small degree depending on our state of understanding meaning apart from literal meaning. Behind the words used lies an inner sense. But this inner sense does not fit in easily with our ordinary mind. We have to think in a new way and see connections which although psychological are not literally logical.

In trying to comprehend some inner meaning in the story of Pharaoh and his butler and baker, we must take Pharaoh in this case as meaning a man based on his senses beginning to undergo a change in his understanding. It is, so to speak, your Pharaoh that stands firmly in the senses and their evidence. The butler and the baker represent two sides of oneself- one of which has to be hanged and one of which is redeemed. In this story we see that Egypt is transformed through the influence of Joseph who finally becomes controller of Egypt. It is the same story as that concerning the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt but told in another way. The psychological idea is the same but in this case Egypt itself is brought under a new mastery. When we understand that all these parables refer to man himself and have really no historical significance and that they must be taken apart from their literal meaning, then it is not difficult to understand that they are really speaking about the same thing - the emancipation of man from a lower level and his transformation into a being of a higher level - although the casting of the imagery is various.

#### THE FIGHT BETWEEN SERPENT AND HORSE

What we have to grasp is that the 'natural' man with his sensual thinking cannot undergo the development inherently possible in him. His sensual thinking will prevent it, because it is antagonistic to psychological thinking. Unable to think psychologically, being glued to the senses, he is bound to remain an undeveloped man. Where can we find anything said about

this question of sensual and psychological thinking being antagonistic? It is referred to in Genesis xlix.17. 'Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.'

The serpent is used as a symbol of sensual thinking. The heel is the lowest natural, the lowest things of reasoning from the sensual. 'The iniquity of my heels hath encompassed me' (Psalm xlix.5). And in Genesis iii.15: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: and it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.' The serpent is the sensual understanding and the woman (here) spiritual understanding. Sense and spirit are here at variance. Christ reconciled, joined, the Human and Divine, sense and spirit.

'Behold, I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions' (Luke x.19). The serpents and scorpions are those who are deceitful and pretend civility with hatred in their hearts or appear pious and in secret loathe, or champion reform to gain power. What the person is and what the person appears to be are in contradiction and so the mind *is split*. Deceit is the divided mind. A man speaks well and thinks evil or does well and wills evil, and so is full of *hidden poison*. Deceit is malice from the will, cloaked by outward friendliness.

Christ called the Pharisees, 'Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers' (Matthew xxii.33 R.V), because outwardly they appeared good and inwardly they were evil. This deceit penetrates the whole being of a person and renders him incapable of growth. He is dead - finished. Christ says to the Pharisees, as examples of deception, 'Why wash the outside of the platter?' 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outside of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess' (Matthew xxiii.25 A.V.).

## PART THREE

### FAITH

THE word translated *as faith* (pistis - πιστις) in the New Testament means more than belief. It means *another kind of thinking*. Let us take an example from the Gospels. In Matthew xvi.5-12 A.V. it is said:

'And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? . . . How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them beware not of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.'

In this incident it is clear that the disciples took something said by Christ in its sensual meaning — that is, according to the literal sense of the words. Christ told them that this was a sign that they had little faith. It is not a question of *belief*. They may have believed greatly in the seen Christ. Yet they had *little faith*. What does this mean? It means that faith is something more than belief. In this case, faith means understanding on a level other than literal understanding. Sensual understanding cannot make contact with the meanings contained in Christ's teaching. He was not speaking of literal leaven but of psychological leaven. Christ was not speaking sensually but psychologically. His words had no sensual meaning but only psychological meaning. The leaven spoken of was not literal leaven nor was bread literal bread but falsity infecting good. Sadducees and Pharisees are always within us. The Sadducees can be compared with the scientists of today. They did not believe in any life after death. That is their leaven of falsity. The Pharisees can be compared with people who are in appearances, who, so to speak, think the important thing is to go to Church on Sunday 'to be seen of

men' (Matthew vi.5). That is their leaven. They were stigmatised as hypocrites - without inner belief. Now Christ here connects the disciples' lack of psychological understanding and consequent inability to see what was meant with littleness of faith. In other words, Christ connects the capacity of *psychological understanding* with the possession of faith; and sensual understanding with littleness of faith, or even elsewhere with blindness, with complete absence of faith and inner death. *Faith is necessary to open a part of the mind not opened by the senses.*

Let us turn now to some other passages concerning faith and its high meanings. Many may have believed in Christ as a visible miracle-worker. They believed through what they saw, through the evidence of the senses. But in Hebrews xi.1 faith is called a *basis* for belief in what if *not seen*. 'But faith is a basis for things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen.' It is not only a conviction of things unseen, but is a basis or plane on which another world of relations and values can be reached, one that is above the seen world and the cause of it. So the unknown writer of Hebrews continues in these words:

'It is faith that lets us understand how the worlds were fashioned by God's word; how it was that from things unseen all that we see took their origin' (xi-3).

The writer goes on to describe how through the possession of faith certain things have been done. Now although it may be true that nowhere in the Scriptures is faith exactly defined, but chiefly its effects, certain things are said about it - as above - to shew it has to do with an inner perception of scale. If faith causes a man to perceive in his mind that a world, invisible to sense, lies above the seen world and is the cause of it, then he perceives things in scale - that is, in terms of higher and lower levels. When the centurion said that he was a man who was under those above him in authority, while he himself had those who were under him in rank, and added that it must be the same with Christ, he was speaking in terms of scale. He meant that Christ only had to give orders and his sick servant would be healed. On hearing this Christ exclaimed that never before had He met anyone who understood better what faith meant. It is related that a centurion sent messengers to Christ asking him to heal his servant:

'And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. And when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole.' (Luke vii.6-10 R.V.)

To return to Hebrews, the writer goes on to say: '... it is impossible to please God without faith' (xi.6). That is, it is impossible without the basis or foundation of faith, which makes it possible for a man to think beyond the evidence of his senses and realise the existence of invisible scale and understand psychological meaning. To realise scale means to realise that there are different levels of meaning. Literal meaning is one thing, psychological or spiritual meaning is another thing - although the words used are the same. For example, we saw that the word *yeast* used in the incident quoted indicated two levels of meaning. The disciples took it on the lower level and were told it was because *their faith* was little. Their thinking was sensual. They had difficulty in thinking in a new way on another level. And their psychological thinking was so weak just because they were based on sense and not on faith. Thus *sense and faith* describe two ways of thinking, not opposites, not antagonistic, *but on different levels*. For without the perception of scale and levels, things are made to be opposite when they are not so, and Man's mind is split into 'either - or', which leads to endless confusions and mental wrangles and miseries. The writer goes on to say: 'Nobody reaches God's presence until he has learned to believe that God exists and that He rewards those that try to find Him' (xi.6). It is apparent that if scale is behind all things, if *order* is scale, and if to set in order is to set in scale then what is higher and what is lower must exist. To everything there must be an above and a below. A man who cannot



perceive scale, visible and invisible, as did that centurion by means of his psychological understanding due to his great faith, will be shut to the intuitions that only faith opens out to every mind that hitherto has been asleep in the senses and the limited world revealed by them.

# Transformation

# MEANING

*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λογος, και ὁ λογος ἦν προς τον Θεον,  
και Θεος ἦν ὁ λογος.*

**A**t the beginning (of Time) Meaning already was, and God had Meaning with Him, and God was Meaning' (John i.1).

When a man finds no Meaning in anything he has at the same time no feeling of God. Meaninglessness is a terrible illness. It has to be got over. It is the same as godlessness, because if you say there is no God, you are saying that there is no Meaning in things. But if you think there is Meaning, you believe in God. Meaning is God. You cannot say that you do not believe in God but believe that there is Meaning in things. The two are the same, in that one cannot be without the other. *God is Meaning.* If you dislike the word *God*, then say *Meaning* instead. The word God shuts some people's minds. The word Meaning cannot. It opens the mind.

Meaning was before *Time* began. It was before creation, for creation occurs in running Time, in which birth and death exist. Birth and death belong to the passage of Time. But Meaning was before Time and creation in Time began. There is no way of describing existence in the higher-dimensional world outside Time, save by the language of passing Time - of past, present and future. Meaning *is* - not *was* - before the beginning of creation in Time. It does not belong to what is becoming and passing away but to what *is*, above Time. If, then, there is Meaning above our heads, what is our Meaning by creation?

## TRANSFORMATION OF LIFE

THE universe is not merely what the senses show. It is not the outer scene alone — in fact, it is never the outer scene alone but always the combination of oneself with it. It is not merely the perceptions of the senses, this hard world of earth, that outer point of light in the sky, but perceptions of ideas, insights into truths, realisations of meaning, the seeing of familiar things in a new light, intuition of essences, experiences of suffering and of bliss. It is given as bread from heaven as much as fact from earth. On its grandest scale it lies beyond all command of the senses and is only discerned inwardly in the understanding. There can suddenly be opened within the heart or in the mind a realm of experience that is not the external world (though it may interpenetrate it) and we are then bathed *in the light of meaning* - in that light without violence, which is pure experience, luminosity without shadow, in which the hardness of self vanishes. We *see*: with the authority that meaning gives us. We *touch*: without the sense of separateness and externality that all *physical* touch inevitably gives us. We *feel*: in depth, without talking to ourselves, without the mirror of surface personality. Every experience of that light deeply creates us. It is creating light, transforming meaning, which all have sought since the beginning of time, light that can do no violence to anyone, meaning that shows us what we have always known and never had the strength to remember. Not only do we feel ourselves created by every experience of that light, but this, we say, is what we are always looking for - this meaning and reality, this bliss that we have misinterpreted and sought in a thousand useless physical directions - this is what we all desire, which the outer light of life pretends to offer, but never properly gives, this union which we perceive really is *union*, the secret idea behind our odd, searching, incomplete lives.

How is this light obtained? How can we obtain this union with meaning? Through what does it shine? Where must the knife enter to open a way for it? It has always been spoken about. A man must begin to dissect himself *away from himself* to find it. This, in brief, is the substance of all teachings concerning it.

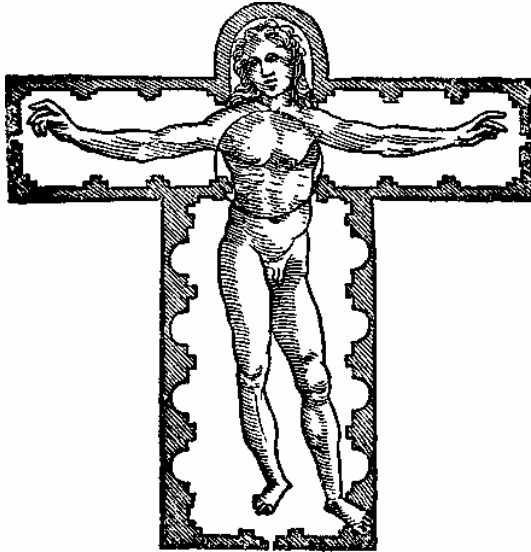
And this he cannot do unless he begins to see himself directly as a new conscious experience, a new event, the daily event of himself - not analytically, not critically, nor as a source for talkativeness. This kind of consciousness, whose direction leads towards the region through which meaning is received, is not what we ordinarily have. Very much stands in our way. First in strength is imagination. We imagine we have it. The imagination is a psychic material out of which every substitute for reality can be made, the most powerful force in life; and second, we have to put into constant practice this process of using consciousness as a dissecting knife. This requires effort that is not needed in life. So we easily forget, and fail to keep alive what we began.

But before any such thing is conceivable, man must feel that there is an internal side of the universe drawn in through the inner senses: that he lives outwardly in nothing but a world of effects whose hidden causes lead into the mysteries beyond all human solution and that in himself there are states unknown to him. For if a man is sense-governed, he is the wrong way round. He thinks sense prior to mind. Nothing internal can then belong to him: he has inverted the natural order. He will then deal with everything, ultimately, by violence. For the sensory object, taken as *ultimate* and highest reality, can be smashed, injured, blown up or killed. That is why materialism is so dangerous, psychologically. It not only *closes the mind* and its possible ingiven development but turns everything the wrong way round, so much so that man seriously explains the house by its bricks or the universe by its atoms and is content with explanations extraordinarily poor of this quality.

The object of every 'church' has always been the salvation of man, and in himself man is the church, communicating with what is above and what is below, having an outer and an inner side. The great cathedrals are nothing but half-beautiful, unfinished representations of *a man*.

But consider the knowledge that constructed them in those dark, violent, superstitious times! Consider the terrific labours and the steady intention. Something has always been kept alive

and handed on from generation to generation, from church to church, from religion to religion - an *idea* about man - about each man - about oneself. This idea was expressed by likening a man to a seed which could not grow through the light of the natural world, i.e. by sense alone. And the salvation of man which has always been insisted upon as necessary for the health of the whole world meant the growth of this seed which cannot



IDEAL PLAN FOR A CHURCH

From CATANEO, *Quattro Primi Libri di Architettura*, 1554

grow through the influences of ideas that belong to a mind wholly commanded by the senses. So we come back to the danger of materialism in regard to the real welfare of humanity. If there is a higher part to a man, he is not lifted to it by the ideas and customs belonging to the lower part. He must first of all accept the existence of a higher side and then find how to imitate it. And, this being so, he will expect to find, scattered about the records of history, a literature that deals with the ways and means of attaining this higher side. And, of course,

the ideas in this literature will not be of a similar order to the ideas that belong to the lower physical side.

Nothing is true until it is assimilated. Truth can only *be your* experience of it — not in books. There is a process of half-thinking and half-imagining which is very intimate. It is partly conversation with oneself, partly being oneself, partly seeing oneself and partly listening to oneself - to new meanings that are entering. It is half-active, half-passive, and something that is purely *oneself*, neither active nor passive.

We rarely can pursue our own thoughts. The traffic in the mind prevents us. We do not *individually* join one thing with another, or see the truth of something for ourselves. The rush of associations, the continual reactions to life, are too powerful. Few of us will say we have built much inside. We have not re-created - re-represented - the world but left it in the form of a confused sensory image.

If we notice ourselves when reading, three people are concerned. There is the reader, the person inside listening to him, and a judge. These three people are all present when we read. This listener cannot hear what outside people say. He listens to the reader: and notices what the judge says. In order to re-create the world - that is, to create the world in oneself, to give it meaning, form, interpretation, order, significance - it is the *listener* who must learn. One takes one's ideas, one's thoughts, one's feelings and one's power of imagination and works internally with them, realising that no matter what other people know or have said or have written or done, nothing has as yet happened *in oneself* of any value. There has been no personal assimilation of truth, no inner discovery of it, no creation in oneself. If our emotional life were more awake then the union of thought and emotion would feed this deepest and most real part of us and we would feel the happiness that comes from the mingling of meaning with life.

Our behaviour would be different because everything would present itself to us with infinitely more differences than is pos-

sible as long as we receive everything in a habitual way. Life fails to nourish us because we view it *habitually* - through a few habits of the mind. We recognise - and do little else. We call this *knowing* - or even *truth*.

There is no doubt that we have - and sometimes realise - powers of reception very much finer than those we employ. And if we seek to define what development can mean we can say that it consists in the far more conscious reception of daily life through the use of these powers - a far finer perception whose direction is towards both the inner and outer. That would mean having continually to *stand aside* (through a continual recognition of them) from habits of mind and feeling - to dissect ourselves from ourselves. As it is, we allow our lives to become a monotonous repetition, not seeing the cause in ourselves but in circumstances.

Consciousness is unshareable. Your consciousness is your own, mine is my own. Since consciousness is unshareable, the whole direction of one's life should be towards experiencing *everything* for oneself, to be conscious to oneself of oneself, to *see for oneself* and to be able to do for oneself. Only in this way is anything created in oneself, and once created it is one's own and is permanent and real.

So everything is fresh, everything is new, everything is untouched and unspoiled by previous explorers.

Everyone is at a *certain stage* in thought, feeling, in understanding, in experiencing. It is impossible for growth and meaning to borrow truth; to be told dogmatically what is true, is to accept mass-truth. It can only be an experience - according to one's stage. No one can taste an apple *for you*. A description of how it tastes is useless. Just in the same way, in everything that really matters no one can really help *you*. Only your own power of seeing the truth of anything can help *you* - and it is exactly this power which we seek to throw away in the hope of finding something easier. In every situation and problem, if we could go deep enough into ourselves - away from habitual reaction - we would know what to do, because we would light upon new meaning, and see the situation transformed.



The chief preliminary voluntary act - and it needs to be lifelong in its voluntariness - towards the inner spirit, the source and conveyor of meaning, is that of *affirmation*. Only by this act does all that is outward, external and dead become connected with what is internal and alive. This is the chief of all psychological acts. It is the preliminary and at the same time the continually renewable act whereby psychology, in the deepest sense - (that is, the science of personal evolution) - begins. The final goal of it, far ahead, is the unity of oneself. *Man becomes gradually united through himself with himself* and not merely with what he accidentally has become and believes himself to be. Affirmation is not by argument but by understanding. Negation leads always to an inner deprivation and so to an increasing superficiality, impatience, loss of meaning, and violence. One can always deny. What is easier? One can always follow the path of negation, if one evades all acts of understanding as sentimental or as scientifically and commercially valueless.

We know, however, better than we argue - better even than we think. But once a man sets out on the path of negation with malice - as many today - he finds on every side all the proofs and corroborations he requires. Consider the effect of suspicion in this respect! Yet the result is a lie, as we all know.

The psychological effect of affirmation is entirely in the reverse direction. To grow one must affirm. Denial as an end is violent, coercive, destructive. Now all that hidden, half-felt side in us which can develop cannot be *coerced*. That is why the senses do not give us a clear proof, an unmistakable affirmation, of intelligence and meaning behind the scheme of things.

A clear sensory proof would *coerce* the mind, as, say, a God visible in the bright sky. The conviction that there must be something, when it springs from the understanding, the inner intimate reflections, *coerces* no one. It opens the mind - in certain vitally important directions. We can all be dragged down by the aspect that seen life presents, its horrors, injustice and suffering. Take life sensorially — as seen — and we can get nowhere. But that may be part of the plot of the play.

Man has far more in him by birth than sense or its derivatives. Mechanical evolution cannot explain his unused or rarely used side. And if the scheme is development within the field of one's

own consciousness - if each person is a potential development through the use of inherent powers (always private to himself) then we could never expect that life, as seen and given, would be of such a nature as to produce no deep problem and no life-long struggle in him.

On the contrary, we would expect that it would contradict him. Development must mean effort; and if life were sweet and beautiful, without pain or misery, there would be no incitement towards self-creation, no struggle whereby we come to recognise the finer ingredients we possess and separate them from the coarser. We slowly learn that in every situation fine and coarse are mingled. In our physical construction we have finely adjusted nervous instruments whereby we reject bad food. We have also a digestive machinery which assimilates the finer and eliminates the coarser. But in the realm of the living of our lives, a corresponding machinery does not exist. It has to be created — and this creates us. For this reason in every age we need teaching of a special sort. What, for example, is the inner meaning of the parables in the gospels save an indication of how to create such a selective machinery and so how to become men?

Here is a method of self-creation - once we understand and apply the given ideas. At this point, it can be said, a man begins to exist - realising suddenly what it means to begin to live consciously. He is no longer a creature driven to and fro by circumstances, by fashion and by the latest craze. He is no longer *so much* a slave to the terrible machinery of life in which everyone is turning. He no longer thinks only in terms of a sense-engendered life. *He has within him another system.* By this he finds a new relation to what he experiences. Ideas different from the ideas he acquired from brute-life enter and awaken his mind. And, listening, the meaning of these ideas gradually unfolds in his understanding. The first stage of a development of his whole being is set in motion. In his intimate conversation with himself he talks to himself in a new way, and the listener in him hears and begins to stir.

The facts of life do not penetrate us deeply. The listener is continually misled by them. But some ideas can penetrate to depths that we have not previously known, and stir energies that we have never experienced.

# TRANSFORMATION OF MAN

## THE SALT OF THE EARTH

MANY words in the Gospels are used in a special sense. We cannot suppose that the teaching given in the Gospels was anything but a *special* teaching and one thing is quite plain - that the teaching in the Gospels was not about the ordinary aims of life. In giving his teaching, Christ was not speaking about how to become a successful politician, a successful business man, a lawyer or doctor, etc. He was speaking about a special idea, connected with the Kingdom of Heaven. He was speaking about how a man could undergo re-birth or inner evolution or transformation. And since he was speaking about a special idea about Man on earth many words were used *in a special sense* — that is, they were used in a technical sense, just as, let us say, an organic chemist, in dealing with the possible combinations and transformations of elementary atoms into endless new substances, speaks in a technical language, not understood by those who have no idea of chemistry, which is a science of transformation of one substance into another and which in the early form of alchemy started from this idea - the *idea of transformation*.

But in the case of the Gospels, what Christ spoke of was the highest form of Organic Chemistry' - namely, the possible *transformation of Man himself into a new man*. In the Gospels, Man is regarded as material for a step in inner evolution. He is regarded as an *experiment in self-evolution*. He is, in short, explained as material sown on earth for the Kingdom of Heaven, which represents that level of inner development latently possible in him. Man is sown on earth as material for self-evolution once he is brought in contact with the further sowing called the 'Word of the Kingdom'. Therefore, Man on earth, from the standpoint of the Gospels, is incomplete, unfinished, not perfect, and his deepest meaning lies in the fact that he is incomplete, but capable through a new understanding and a *new will* of reaching an inner completion. The further stage of a Man cannot be reached by outer compulsion. No rules, no enforced regulations, no strict rituals, no external coercion, can bring it

about. The completion, the self-evolution, the re-birth, and so the fulfilment of a man can only be brought about through himself, through his own individual seeing the truth, his own understanding of it, his own desire for it, his own will applied to it. This is the supreme idea of Man on earth, as taught by Christ. Sown on earth as a seed for the Kingdom, in this sense, he can remain a seed, a child of earth, or he can, only by hearing a teaching similar to that given by Christ, by his own insight, his own thought, his own inner grasp, evolve or not. No one can *make* for him his own evolution. No exhortations, no restrictions, no penalties, no laws, no forms of outer compulsion, can *make* him evolve in and from himself. It is his own question — a matter of his own inner choice, a matter of his deepest, most individual understanding. A man either begins to see for himself, to understand from himself, or he does not. It is all left, as it were, free for him to decide in himself and from himself. It is left free for a man to serve life or serve the Kingdom of Heaven. People sometimes wonder why, if what Christ taught is true, people are not *made* to become better, *made* to be good and so on — why, in fact, God does not insist on it. But how could this be so? If people were good from external compulsion, if they saw God in the sky, and were afraid, they would be coerced. They would do nothing *from themselves*, from their own inner understanding, and their own will, but everything from fear of being punished. And there would be no *self-evolution*. For this reason there is nothing in the external world, nothing in nature, that shews a man definitely whether there is a God or not. For if the senses gave clear evidence, one way or another, a man would be *compelled* through the outer side of him to believe or not. But, if you will notice, there is nothing in nature, nothing in what your senses shew you, that can be taken as certain evidence one way or the other. Nature is beautiful and cruel. Life is good and bad. It is impossible, *starting from nature or life*, to decide anything. In other words, nothing *compels* a man from outside — nothing external via sense coerces him. And this fact is in itself extraordinary. You can interpret nature or life just as you please. But it is not extraordinary if you understand that Man is sown on earth for the purpose of individual re-birth, individual inner development, from his own choice, from his

own deepest reflection and thoughts, from his own experience and finally his own understanding or will - in short, that he is born as material for self-evolution to the level of the Kingdom. It is a question of a man's *understanding*, which is so insisted upon in the Gospels - namely, those 'who have ears to hear'. For a man is first his understanding - not his body, not his face, not his outer physical appearance. And second, a man is his *will* applied to his understanding. This is the *Man of the Kingdom*. And you must realise that a man may be far on in life, and far on in knowledge, and yet have no understanding - and still less the *will* to live what he has seen and understood. So, seen in the light of the teaching of the higher level - that is, in the light of the teaching in the Gospels about the Kingdom, about the *higher Man* - every man is nothing but his understanding and his will in relation to it. This is the real man, in regard to the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. No matter what he is externally, in position, in life, in appearance, and so on, the real man is his understanding of the teaching of the *higher Man* and his will towards it. It is not surprising therefore to find that many *technical* words are used in the Gospels that refer to the *science of the higher Man* or the Man of the Kingdom. There is, for example, the word *metanoia*, *μετάνοια*, so wrongly translated as repentance, which means *change of thinking*. There is the word *phronimos*, *φρόνιμος*, wrongly translated as wise. There is the word *faith*, *πιστις*, so often translated as *belief*: faith and belief are two different things, that is, one can *have faith* where one does not *believe*. There is the word *soul*, *ψυχή*, so often translated wrongly as *life* as in the instance 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John xv.13). We have already given this as the supreme definition of conscious love, that a man must lay down his *soul* — i.e. put those whom he loves in place of himself, thus going against his soul. And in another place (John x.15) Christ says: 'I lay down my *soul* (translated *life*) for my sheep' (*The New Man*, p. 64).

But we must now study another word used in a technical way that requires explanation. This is the word *salt*. There are several passages in the Gospels in which the word *salt* is used. What does salt mean? In what technical meaning was this word used?

'Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savour wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves: and be at peace with one another'. (Mark ix.50)

The teaching in the Gospels that a man should do good without any idea of reward is very difficult to understand. In one place Christ says: 'But love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again' (Luke vi.35 A.V.). But how can we do good with no idea of reward, 'hoping for nothing' ? Yet it is implied in many passages that if a man does good and keeps the commandments with the end in view of gaining happiness in heaven, as a reward, he will fail in his object. Now we can understand, in regard to doing good in the wrong way, that one example is that of the hypocrite (described in Matthew vi-5) who makes long prayers at the street corners in order to be seen of man and does his alms in public because he loves the praise of men before everything else. But why is the doing of good, not to be seen of men, but in order to be rewarded in heaven, regarded as wrong? What is the reason? For there is always a reason for everything said in the Gospels - a *psychological* reason, connected with what helps or hinders a man's inner evolution. I mean that the Gospels do not contain a collection of arbitrary rules and moral precepts, but are a set of *psychological charts and directions*, some simple and some very complicated at first sight, which, if a man could understand them and if he could carry out their instructions rightly, would lead him inevitably to the discovery of the Kingdom of Heaven in himself. Now one of the things that is clearly said is that a man must first *hear* and then *do* what Christ teaches. That is, he must first understand, for to try to do anything without first understanding what it is can lead nowhere; and then he must begin to do what he thinks he has understood - that is, *live* it. But a man may do what he thinks he understands in the wrong way and from a wrong motive or a wrong side of himself. And it is here that the teaching that a man should do good without any idea of reward comes in. The reason why a man must not do good with the *end in view* of a reward in heaven is because he is then acting only from *self*. That is, expressed in the

technical language of the Gospels, he is not acting from those emotions termed 'love of God' and 'love of neighbour' but only from 'love of self and because of this cannot reach the level of the Kingdom of Heaven. For we are made to understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is founded on 'love of God' and 'love of neighbour' in contradistinction to the Kingdom of Hell, which is founded on love of self and hatred of one's neighbour - and this means that a man doing everything for the sake of an eventual reward, and so from the love of self and self-interest, can neither see nor reach the Kingdom of Heaven. For Christ says a man must be born again or anew before he can *see* the Kingdom. And one meaning of that saying is that a man must get beyond self, or become *poor in spirit*, as the state is described in the first beatitude. Vanity, self-conceit, pride, contempt of others, and all the endless coarse and subtle emotions and their derivative thoughts, make a man 'rich in spirit' and belong to the single root of the *self love*. - from which a man must begin to detach himself.

What is the psychological significance of *looking back*? In the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife 'looked back'. She was turned into a pillar of salt. Salt signifies many psychological things, good and bad. It can kill and preserve. Christ said: 'Have salt', to his disciples, arguing about who was first. But salt can conduct the meaning of psychological sterility. Christ did not mean: 'Be psychologically sterile', but the reverse, - as if the meaning were 'laugh at yourselves more - do not be so serious.' In this particular sense of becoming useless, one who 'looks back' becomes internally sterile - dead, although walking. In two very strange parables Christ connected their hidden meaning with Lot's wife:

'Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. *In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the*

*field likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.'* (Luke xvii.28-32)  
In these two parables we can at least see that the idea of not *going back* appears, and since Lot's wife is mentioned, going back and looking back must have a common meaning of inner death, inner sterility. This cannot mean what Christ said when his disciples were quarrelling about who should be first. To them Christ said: 'Have salt one with another.' When the future is becoming obscure, one looks back, or goes back even to infantility, if hope is lost and replaced by fear. The illnesses that this internal retreat in one's time-body - one's life - causes are due to failure of the internal spirit which, in spite of outer difficulties, must fight, must *go on*. In the esoteric conception, Man has an inner goal, the approach to which constitutes his real meaning and is a matter of his inner understanding, which has to do with faith and so is a question of the activity of the externally-unsupported spirit. A man gives up spiritual striving in the real sense of '*he himself*' and begins to look back or goes back. He is disturbed by outer trouble. So he becomes sterile - and probably more successful in life. But spiritually he becomes a pillar of salt, because he gives up something indefinable and yet known to everyone internally, if they wish to know it. Is not this one of the most difficult things to see and understand - in one's own case? How many little pillars of salt lie in one's time-body - in one's living past? And how many pillars of salt exist in life, walking the streets daily?

What, then, does 'Have salt one with another' mean? Christ said to his disciples: 'Everyone shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another.' (Mark ix.49-50)

There is the common phrase relating to a man who is not overwhelmed by life and so negative: 'He has good salty talk.' Salt has its meaning as what preserves, what keeps things from going bad in oneself. A man can easily take the continual changing events of life - the same for everyone - with or without salt. He can be broken, depressed by them or not. In the case Christ spoke of, the disciples were disputing about who was the



best, who was first - one of the commonest sources of self-pity, grievance, and resulting violence. Not to be able to laugh at oneself - to take oneself tragically - is absence of salt. A little wit about oneself - yes, a little of the salt of wit - will give another approach to life. Real esotericism should give a man salt, as sectarian religion so rarely does.

## LOT'S WIFE

The story of Lot's wife, as told in the Old Testament, has a psychological meaning. But we can, of course, regard it as a literal story, describing how a woman, by looking back, was turned into a pillar of salt. Yet this view is scarcely possible if we take into consideration a remark made in the Gospels that refers to Lot's wife. Christ is speaking in a very strange way about what he calls the 'consummation of the age' or the 'end of the world'. He says: 'As it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away: and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife.' (Luke xvii.28-32 R.V.)

Let us remind ourselves, to begin with, of the story of Lot's wife. You will remember how it is related in Genesis that angels came to Lot in Sodom to warn him to escape with his wife and daughters and sons-in-law before the city was destroyed because of its sin. The sons-in-law would not believe the warning and Lot himself lingered, until the angels led him and his wife and his two daughters out of Sodom. The narrative continues thus:

'And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my lord: behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight,

and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain lest evil overtake me, and I die: Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.' (Genesis xix.17-26)

All this has a psychological meaning, and refers to the passage from one state to another in ourselves. It is all about a stage in 'inner development' - that is, about how an individual has to leave behind him what he formerly was and what he clung to. Let us take one phrase from the narrative quoted above. The man called Lot had to leave what he was - he was beginning to evolve. He argues and bargains and wishes to go to a small city called Zoar. The angel eventually agrees and says: 'Haste - I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.' Zoar represents a new state, but it means something small. When Lot reaches this inner state, apparently less than was expected of him, it is said: 'The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came to Zoar.' What does *earth* mean? In the Lord's Prayer it is said: 'May thy will be done on earth as in heaven.' When a man passes, in his inner development, to a new stage of understanding, the 'sun rises upon the earth'. A man's earth is in himself. To evolve, a man must leave this 'earth', that is himself. Notice that 'all the cities of the Plain and all that grew upon the ground were destroyed'. Lot, as he was, is told that he must 'escape to the mountain' - that is, reach something at a higher level in himself. The angel says he cannot *help Lot* unless he separates from his old state, called Sodom, and comes into a certain new state called Zoar. His previous state cannot be destroyed until he touches a new understanding. But Lot

doubts if he is able to reach this new state of himself. 'I shall not be able to escape to the mountain', he exclaims, and begs to be allowed to some extent to think and act as he used to, from his former state. A new state is reached where a man not only sees for himself the truth of the esoteric knowledge that he has been given but, as it were, becomes it in his practice of life so that it is a part of him that he cannot do without and no longer merely something he knows or can recall to memory when he finds the time. There is a great difference and indeed an incommensurable difference between what a man *knows* and what he *is*. Nor can what he *knows* become a living part of him unless he sees the supreme good of it and realises that the good of it is its highest aspect and far more important than the knowledge that leads to it. First he sees the truth of it, then the good of it. All esoteric knowledge is germinal in that it leads on to another stage and in fact continually grows and transforms its meaning. So it changes in the man as the man changes, and he cannot go back and cling hold of *what he once understood* for that is to return to what he has already left behind. His previous understanding will indeed now be dangerous to him. One must lose one form of life to gain a new one.

Christ speaks of Lot in connection with the consummation of the age or end of the world, when the 'Son of Man shall be revealed'. But it refers to a man's inner state and the passing from one state to another state. That is why it is said: 'Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it' (Luke xvii.33 R.V.). It refers to a man reaching a certain understanding where what *was* holy to him ceases to have any meaning - that is, where his ordinary basis and ordinary values, what he has held as sacred, no longer have any meaning for him. Here is the point where something can take place in him. So it is said in the corresponding passage in Matthew: 'When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand) then let them that are in Judaea flee to the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloke. But woe unto them that are with child and to them

that give suck in those days. . . . ' (Matthew xxiv.15-19 R.V.)

To find that what we once thought holy is of no value is a very difficult period.

You will notice that Christ says: 'Let him that readeth understand.' This means that it must be understood not literally but psychologically. A man can reach a point in which he must either go on, and get *beyond* himself, beyond what he was, or be destroyed. Lot was reluctant to move. His own city of Sodom was himself as he was. He had to move away from himself- or else die. When the abomination of desolation stands in the place that is holy, then 'escape to the mountains' is necessary because to lose values and meaning is the worst thing. But life is meant to bring us to that point and here esoteric teaching - the mountains - can meet you. One's former life - that is, all that is useless in it - can then be destroyed as was Sodom, the city on the plain. The whole story is about this inner change and re-birth — about leaving the level at which one was and reaching a new level.

You will remember, or you can read, that the episode of Lot and Sodom follows on a visit of three strange men called angels to Abram and his wife Sarai, who have both reached the age of ninety, and they are told they will have a *child*. Abram is re-named Abraham and Sarai re-named Sarah (= Princess). In both cases a letter *He*, one of the sacred letters in the name Javeh, is inserted. You must understand that the whole narrative is psychological and refers not to a literal child but to regeneration or re-birth. Sarah laughs at the angels and then denies that she did this and is not quite forgiven. 'Nay; but thou didst laugh,' one of the angels says to her. This is followed by the failure of Lot's wife, in the next episode. Now if anyone takes a step forward in evolution, what was formerly his state must be destroyed. A person cannot remain what he is and at the same time develop into a new kind of person. A seed cannot remain a seed and become a plant at the same time. So when we can see that the allegory of Abram and Sarai refers to something *new* arising - a son being born - we may expect to find, in the continuation of the allegory or parable, that something must be destroyed. The new cannot be *contained* in the old. The new must destroy the old, taking from it what is necessary. To

put new wine into old bottles is mentioned in the Gospels in illustration of this truth.

However, since everyone thinks that they can change and yet remain as they are, or, to put it differently, imagines that change of themselves has nothing to do with becoming quite different from what they are, it is difficult to understand that when any reference in scripture is made to a *new state* (as a son being born to Abram and Sarai) that it will naturally be accompanied by some reference to *death*. The new cannot come into existence save by the death of the old. You cannot remain a seed and become a tree. Because of this difficulty in understanding, people do not realise why Christ died. They do not realise that re-birth, or a new state, must mean also a death to a former state. In view of this, it is not surprising to find that as soon as a son is promised to Abram and Sarai there arises a question of destruction of something — in this case called Sodom and Gomorrah. It is all internal, all psychological, all about how a man can actually pass from one level to another. The names shift, the characters are varied, the scenes are different, but it is all internal, all psychological, all, as it were, in the language of parables or dreams, and referring to the same inner process as, for example, in the Pilgrim's Progress which is told 'in the similitude of a dream' - that is, in that language. But it is all about *one* person - a man - in his internal life and development. Let us notice that Abram, now become Abraham, pleads with God for the preservation of Sodom. He says: 'Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?' When God agrees to this request, Abram pleads again for the city to be saved even if there are only forty-five righteous men, and then if only forty can be found, and then if only thirty can be found, or even only twenty. Finally he says: 'Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure only ten shall be found there.' And God answered: 'I will not destroy it for ten's sake.'

And then let us notice that Lot is unwilling to leave Sodom. The idea is the same. It is with great reluctance that we leave what is familiar and natural and easy. It is difficult to under-

stand anew. It is difficult to abandon one's merit and virtue and feeling of success. It is very hard to see that our filthiness - that is, Sodom in us - lies just in this merit and self-love and this ascription of everything to our own cleverness. The inhabitants of Sodom thought they could have intercourse with angels - that is, that they were equal to them in understanding. Lot knew better. He takes the angels into his house and shuts the outer door on the men in the street. This represents an act of inner realisation - namely, a distinction between what is valuable and what is worthless. Lot could distinguish those personalities in himself that were worthless and nothing but different experiences of self-love. They were outside his inner understanding and he shuts the door on them. You must understand that the self-love is different from the love of neighbour or the love of God.

These are the three stages of development. A man, to develop, has to leave the first stage, because all that is formed and laid down by the genius of self-love is wrongly connected. It is simply a bad bit of machinery. This is Sodom. Consider what arises from the undisciplined and unrecognised self-love. From it come all the delights of power and possession, whether on a big or on a small scale. From it arises every kind of appearance, every sort of deceit, falseness, lying and external pretence. And from it more deeply come hatred, revenge, the unpleasant pleasure in harming others, all sorts of cruelties and making mischief, which can give a secret feeling of power to the self-love and inflate it. All this is Sodom, whether viewed in the realm of a man's thought or in the realm of his feelings or in the realm of his actions. For the change of a man into another state of being he must leave this former state. So Lot must leave Sodom and the angels warn him that he cannot linger and that once set out on his journey he must not look back.

The journey is a psychological journey, for, when a man passes from his previous inner state to a new one, he has gone a journey from one state of himself to another. These journeys on a small scale are always taking place in us. Things are always moving in us. But here it is a journey from a lower to a higher *level*. Lot must leave the plain and go to the mountains and this means that nearly everything in him that is *related* to his

previous level must die or be abandoned. A man is related or connected to different sides of himself in different ways. Just as he has outside relations in the external world, such as mother, father, wife, daughter, son, and so on, so has he relations in his internal world of thoughts, feelings and desires, of ideas, aspirations, of different glimpses of truth and of knowledge, of different states of himself, of different wishes, different insights, different perceptions, different aims and so on. Lot's wife is a relationship or connection in Lot that had to become sterile. It was a fruitful connection with Sodom. The death of this intimate relation is represented by Lot's wife looking back and being turned to a pillar of salt.

The subject in all the above quotations concerns the violation of esoteric truth. Like everything else it can be misunderstood. It can fall not only on the wrong people 'who will violate it and so make it more useless' but it can fall on the wrong place in a man himself, for a man is not one person but many people. He has many different sides to himself. In consequence he may get hold of a thing wrongly, not having the necessary quality of understanding, and turn the whole thing into ridicule. Then his state is worse than the first state. If esoteric knowledge were on the same scale as ordinary knowledge that we can acquire from any school or university the botching of it would produce its own obvious results. We say simply that the man has failed, that he does not understand a subject, he is no good at it. But in the case of esoteric knowledge and the psychological development that can take place from it, if it falls on good ground, the understanding is quite different, because if it is botched a person's possibilities of a real development of understanding are permanently ruined. If we take the story of Lot and Sodom as applying to the individual himself and the various sides of him and if we can even vaguely comprehend the opening and shutting of doors, as applying to a person's inner and outer understanding, we can realise it is about a man separating himself from these factors in himself that are useful or useless for his inner evolution. All those elements in a man that wish to deny the existence of a definite psychological evolution 'press

sore upon the man even Lot and draw near to break the (inner) door' and so ruin his understanding. This is psychological violation which the whole episode deals with. Everyone has in him great sources of denial that in the further evolution that leads to transformation will inevitably make war against him. But these elements in this narrative are shown as being made blind so that they cannot find the door. This means that at a certain stage of temptation, a man receives help. He receives help from the higher level he is struggling to reach and the antagonistic elements are, as it were, misdirected or blinded. This refers to a certain stage in his inner life. At first the door is almost broken down, but once he has accepted the 'two men', once they are inside him, he is helped, because in the narrative it says that 'the men put forth their hand and brought Lot into the house to them and shut the door' (Genesis xix.10).

Another example of what might be called typical recurring ideas in esoteric psychology is the use of the word 'street'. The men that Lot has to struggle against are 'in the street'. They demand that the two visitors should come out into the street 'that we may know them' (v.5). This latter expression contains in the Hebrew a sexual meaning - expressions such as 'he knows him' refer on the literal level to sexual intercourse. But all unions of any kind can be expressed in such terms. In the language of images, in the language of esoteric allegory and parables, literal images are used to convey psychological meanings. The point made is that the men in the street must not have any kind of union with the two visitors who are inside Lot's house. The idea of Man as a house containing many rooms is a very ancient image. The inner constitution of a man is compared to a house with rooms on different levels. The 'men in the street' in this narrative represent external sides of Lot. They represent those elements in him which have external understanding based on their external world as given through the senses. The knowledge of esoteric psychology cannot be sown on this side of a man because the outer side contradicts the development of the inner side of a man. A man must realise that there is something else apart from what he beholds in the world. If he takes everything as he sees it happening he will be extremely external and have no inner reflection. Esoteric



psychology in its action begins when a man perceives that there must be something else, apart from what his senses shew him, otherwise he will always be dragged down by the events of life and will be unable to form in himself anything that can resist the chaos of outer life. This is why the men 'in the street' must be resisted. The same idea is met with in the parable of the Sower and the Seed: 'The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of heaven devoured it' (Luke viii.5 R.V.). The truth, the knowledge of this further evolution of Man that is the subject of esoteric psychology, must not fall 'by the way side' in a man. It must not fall on those parts of him that are 'in the street', on those sides of him concerned with outer life only. The most external side of Man is that side of him that deals with the world as he sees it, with the daily tasks, with the effect of appearances on him. Esoteric knowledge must fall more deeply than this. It must touch an inner side in a man. And once it touches a deeper side there will inevitably start a struggle between the inner understanding and the outer understanding. So Lot has to struggle with the men 'in the street' because he has reached a stage in which something quite definite can happen to him and is at once in the danger of losing what inner understanding he has. In fact, his inner understanding is in great danger of being violated by his outer understanding. When his two visitors come to him they say they will 'abide' in the street all night and 'he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him and entered into his house; and he made them a feast' (v.3). This means that he could understand the difference between what is simply of life and what belongs to esoteric knowledge. He understood that there was a development possible for him but he had to insist on the reality of it. He had to affirm it and so he pressed them greatly to come into his house and they consented. Once inside the house they made it possible for him to resist those 'in the street'. That is, they made it possible for him to resist all his doubts, all those sides that could never understand. But Lot is in that state in which he cannot break away from himself and still wishes to come to terms. He is not strong enough to separate himself from his life-understanding and so he offers his two 'daughters' to

the men 'in the street' (v.8). You must understand of course that this is not literal. It means that he wished to make a compromise. He knew that esoteric truth must not be violated and guards it but he has not the strength to rely on it fully. The 'daughters' represent two points of contact in him belonging to the side of feeling rather than the side of knowledge. He does not offer his two daughters to the two visitors but to the men 'in the street', although they are his daughters and so intimate sides of himself in the realm of feeling. Later on these two daughters have intercourse with him and produce a new side of himself. The two visitors insist that he leaves Sodom, which means his present state. They urge him to leave quickly but Lot carries 'And when the morning arose then the angels hastened Lot saying, Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. But he lingered, and the men laid hold upon his hand and upon the hand of his wife and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him without the city', (v.15-16)

The city is then destroyed. All those elements that are useless in regard to this possible transformation of a man are destroyed. There is only a further reference to the men 'in the street' being blinded and unable to find the door. But the psychological story depicts a man who cannot face fully all those inner changes that are necessary for transformation.

It is a story about a man who has reached a certain level and is drawn up from one side and kept down from another side. He still wishes to compromise with the men 'in the street', and that side of him represented by his wife, which means some intimate affection, still wishes to go back. The angels tell him he must escape to the mountain - that is, to a higher level of himself — but he cannot do it. The angels in him, the higher understanding, say to him 'escape for thy life'. This is not the physical life but the psychological life and they add: 'Look not behind thee neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed' (v. 17). But Lot complains; he does not wish to go to the mountain, in fact he is afraid to do so. He says: 'I cannot escape to the mountain lest evil overtake me and I die' (v. 19). He feels he is not able to reach this higher

level in himself and if he tries to do so he will die, he will die psychologically, not having strength to live on this new level. He begs to be allowed to go to a small city. He feels he is only capable of a very small change and cannot endure what he is asked to do and knows that he should do. So he argues with the transforming forces in him and says to them: 'Behold now this city is near to flee unto and it is a little one. O let me escape thither (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live', (v. 20) The angels agree and one says: 'Haste thee, escape thither for I cannot do anything until thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar'. (v. 22) Zoar means smallness. No one can escape from himself unless he has somewhere to go to. A man cannot change himself unless he has already something new to go to. Before the old can be destroyed something new must present itself. Lot, both understanding and reluctant, could not go to the mountain but had enough formed in him of what was new to take refuge in. This is Zoar. And his reluctance is shewn by his wife's turning back to the former state. He has been told not to look behind him or to stay in the Plain. The narrative says that 'the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came to Zoar' (v. 23). This is the language of the new state. Lot reached a new state, a little one, called Zoar. His 'earth' was illuminated by this new state. 'The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire, and he overthrew those cities and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground.' (v. 24, 25) The old state was completely destroyed. All that grew upon the ground, upon the Plain, was destroyed. All that side of Lot was destroyed. 'But his wife looked back from behind him and she became a pillar of salt' (v. 26). Salt has different meanings in the esoteric language of parables but here it means something quite sterile, quite dead. All Lot has left to him were the 'two daughters'. We are then told that Lot feared to dwell in Zoar but dwelt in a mountain in a cave with his 'two daughters' and that through them he propagated when he had been made drunk with wine.

All this narrative depicts the terrific struggle in a man and in a sense how he failed and how all that he gave rise to event-

ually was wrong. But the essence of this struggle is depicted in the scene in Sodom between the men in the street and the angels inside the house. What we have to understand is that it is a real description of the different stages in esoteric psychology. It deals with the inner states of a man who is beginning to undergo individual evolution. It deals with psychological rebirth. It is not historical any more than anything in the Gospels is historical. It is not literal but psychological and it was written by people who knew about esoteric psychology. To take it literally is to abuse its meaning completely and taken in this way it will only disgust the reader.

## TRANSFORMATION OF MEANING

*Let the dead bury their dead* (Matthew viii.22). 'Surely,' says St. Augustine, 'these dead buriers are not dead in body, for if this were so, they could not bury dead bodies. Yet doth he call them dead: where, but in the soul within? For as we may often see in a household, itself sound and well, the master lying dead, so in a sound body do many carry a dead soul within, and them the Apostle arouses thus: *Awake, thou that sleepest*, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light'. (Sermon 38)

Man can be alive on this earth and yet be dead, at the same time.

In the last text quoted by St. Augustine, which occurs in the fifth chapter of Ephesians (v. 14), the emphasis is first placed on *awakening from sleep*. A man must awake first, he must rise out of his ordinary state, which is compared to a state of death or sleep, and then light can reach him.

People find difficulty in not taking everything literally, especially what is written or said with a meaning beyond the words themselves. They can understand more easily the underlying meaning expressed in allegorical pictures - that is, visual allegory, as in the daily cartoons, but not allegory in words. Thus, the *dead* to them are the actual dead. Awakening is waking up in the morning and sleep is sleep in bed. The deaf, the blind and the lame are actually deaf, blind and lame people. And the idea always seems to them far fetched that there is an outer person in us - the body - who may actually be deaf, owing to disease of the ears, or blind, owing to disease of the eyes, or lame, owing to injury to the legs; and also an *internal* or *inner man* who may be deaf, although the outer ears are not diseased, and who may be blind, although the sight is unimpaired, or lame although the physical legs are strong. This step in the transformation of meaning from the sensual or sensory level to the emotional and mental levels is one of the activities referred to as *faith*. 'We walk', Paul said, 'by faith and not by sight' (ii Cor. v. 7). Even if we believe we understand what this means, when it comes to the point, all of us 'walk by sight' - that is, the literal, apparent meaning of everything has the greatest power over us.

So people take always one another's actual *words* up, not the meaning behind them.

For St. Augustine and many more before and after him, the sick, the deaf, and the dead in the Gospels are the sick and deaf, and the dead *within*. And in speaking of the two blind men who, sitting by the way side as Jesus was passing, cried out and asked that their eyes might be opened, he asks if we can really suppose that this is merely an account of a miraculous event concerning two physically blind men? Why does it say that the *crowd* try to restrain them, and that they fight against it and insist on attracting the attention of Jesus? 'They overcame the crowd, who kept them back, by the great perseverance of their cry, that their voice might reach the Lord's ears. . . . The Lord was *passing by* and they cried out. The Lord *stood still* and they were healed. *For the Lord Jesus stood still and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They said unto him, That our eyes may be opened.*' (Matthew xx.30-34) The blind here are those who cannot see but wish to see. Augustine says they are those who are blind in their hearts and *realise it*. Like the deaf, like the sick and the dead, the blind are a certain kind of people. They are, in this case, people in a certain inner state, knowing they are blind, and wishing to see clearly. 'Cry out among the very crowds', he says, 'and do not despair.' Who are these *two* blind men who know they cannot see but who recognise the spiritual meaning typified in the person of Jesus - what individual functions of the soul are shewn here that struggle with the crowd of commonplace meanings and thoughts and finally, by their own determination, receive their power of vision? 'If *two* or three are gathered together in my name . . . ' said Christ (Matthew xviii.20). What *two* sides of ourselves must first take part that our eyes may be opened - that is, our understanding? Why *two*, to make it effective?

There are, Swedenborg says, *two* sides of a man which must awaken and grow together if he seeks regeneration, the *mind* and the *will*. One side is characterised by the general term *truth*. The function of the intellect is to seek truth, to distinguish it from falsity and lies. The other side is characterised by the

word *good*. Truth without good is useless. It is blind, ruthless, cruel, harsh, domineering. Truth feeds on good and good on truth. Truth only can live from good. In a bad world, where there is no good but only violence, truth cannot continue to live. It will be twisted into falsity, into lies. Then lies will seem truth.

The will blindly always seeks 'good', but according to its own quality. It is either a good or an evil will, and seeks correspondingly - i.e. it always seeks what it regards as good. So the human struggle is between different sorts of good and no one seeks evil deliberately. -

The affection for truth and the affection for good must increase together for a man to develop normally and the 'heavenly marriage' whereby a man becomes a *unity* is that of good with truth and truth with good.

Again, every man is first two men, an *external man* and an *internal man*. These at first are, or appear to be fused, just as if they were one. Only when a man begins to reflect on his life, and on the kind of man he is, and on his actions and speech and intentions, does the internal man begin to become separated from the external, and conscience can stir in him. This is a necessary state preliminary to the first stage of regeneration. Let it be again said that regeneration is the supreme *idea* of man. It is the true *evolution* of man. A *man*, in this sense, is not a violent external creature, more cunning or stronger than others, a principal animal. *What a man is, is according to his understanding*. And unless the inner man is separated from the outer, a man remains incapable of becoming a *man*. He is incapable of understanding, which begins originally, perhaps, only by 'standing-under' oneself, and this may be the inner sense of the word, which is unknown etymologically.

The parable or incident of the two blind men comes at the end of a chapter (Matthew xx). Two parables precede it, both about *being first*. The opening parable likens the Kingdom of Heaven to a householder who sends labourers at intervals to work in his vineyard:

Tor the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the

labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the market place idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last.' (Matthew xx.1-16 R.V.)

The other parable is taken from an incident in which the mother of two of the disciples asks Christ that they should sit in the highest places in the kingdom: 'Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy Kingdom.' The ten other disciples are indignant. Christ says to them that in life people occupy high places, and exercise authority over one another, but that amongst them it must not be so: 'Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you, shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matthew xx.25-28).



Then follows the incident of the two blind men: 'And behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace: but they cried out the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes: and straightway they received their sight, and followed him.' (Matthew xx.30-34 R.V.)

Both the parable of the vineyard, and the private teaching given following the request of the mother of the two disciples, shew man as blind to the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. Man cannot understand what it is. The mother of the sons of Zebedee is shewn as thinking of it as being like an earthly kingdom, with all its pomp and pride of position. And the labourers in the vineyard cannot understand it. It does not seem fair or just to them. They are all treated in the same way. Those that came to work last are given the same reward as those who came first. The whole distinction made by the natural human mind about *justice* is removed at a stroke. In fact, it is called *evil*. 'Is thine eye evil, because I am good?' asks the master of the vineyard of the first comers who are complaining to him, and he adds: 'So the last shall be first, and the first last,' as if this were a necessary state of things, the realisation of which had to be brought about in the human mind, to replace its ordinary conceptions. The parable is about our ordinary ways of thinking, our mental concepts, whereas the comparison made in connection with the request of the mother of Zebedee's sons has to do with the vain side of man nourished by the mother, with his self-emotions, his desire to triumph over others and satisfy his mother's darling wishes, his inevitable and necessary firstness with his mother. *Intellectually* man is blind, and *emotionally* man is blind, to the idea of the 'Kingdom of Heaven'.

Swedenborg, in his tremendous interpretation of the opening books of the Old Testament, bases their significance upon the

need for overcoming the psychologically *maternal* in man - that is, all that is derived from birth through woman in man, and takes it as an esoteric document of the highest man, Christ, evolving internally. Strangely enough, this is not understood, possibly even by those who follow his teaching.

Suppose the two blind men, the crowd, the outcry and Christ passing and standing still represent man *at a certain stage of evolution*. Can the inner state of a man be represented more simply than by means of visual description and allegory, just as the political situation is explained at a glance by a cartoon? Of what import would the bare incident be, when it is so often stated that the blind were healed? The description follows upon two illustrations of defects in human nature, one very hard to grasp theoretically, and the other easier to understand though extremely difficult to deal with practically. Both these defects have to do with the human idea of being first. Both are connected with another idea, the notion of the *first being last, of the master being servant*. It cannot be merely sentimental in meaning. If the direction of human development called 'Kingdom of Heaven' is so difficult even to grasp that it requires every kind of analogy to indicate it, all the practical teachings - that is, the methods - will be also very difficult to understand.

Now evolution is to come into a new state of being, one that is *higher*. The evolution of man is the unfolding, the unrolling of man, just as the evolution of a seed or egg is the unrolling of the tree or bird, the unfolding of the full being. The being of a seed is different from the being of a tree and the being of an egg is different from the being of a bird. Their destinies or uses are also different. Throughout the New Testament man is compared to a seed. Otherwise there could be no doctrine of evolution, no real firm basic idea about man, - and so, no real eternal psychology of man beyond all temporary fashions and notions. *Man comes from a seed: and man is again himself a new seed*. That is, man as he is by birth and natural growth is not full man, evolved man, being a seed himself, the latent seed of himself, having all the requisite physiological, and also *psychic* functions (of thought, feeling, insight, consciousness, etc.) that can bring about his own unfolding into evolved man or full man. All real psychology - all true science of the soul - is about this new seed,

*man himself.* If we imagine this progress, we can realise it is not *in time*, but in some other direction. What does this mean? The parable of the labourers in the vineyard seems to be based on the *argument from time*. Some worked a longer time than the others. Is, then, one of those blind men, who cries out (and fights with the crowd in himself) a side of man nearing a new realisation of life and aware of a higher range in himself, which begins by understanding that *time* is what prevents him? *The passage of time is not evolution.* It is not the quantity of effort but its quality that marks development. Time is not progress, and length of time is nothing by itself. Evolution, development, is a higher or deeper form of a thing. It is a movement towards something *above* what a thing is, not to something *tomorrow*. It is a moving towards what is more internal, to what is deeper experience, to greater integrity and purity of vision, to quality and not mere quantity.

# **The Parable of the Sower**

## PART ONE

In the Lord's Prayer, we are told to say: 'May thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.'

το θελημα σου, ως εν ορανφ, και επι γης.

Earth *psychologically* means that part of a man built in him by the senses. This is 'Earth' in him psychologically. Man is governed by what he sees. The Will of Heaven is not done in this 'Earth' in him. He must learn to understand apart from the senses.

In all that follows, one thing must be kept in mind - namely, Man's relation to esoteric teaching that is sown from a higher level in mankind. The categories of Man described in the following pages refer to categories of men *in their relationship to esoteric ideas* - those who cannot understand them and those who understand them wrongly and those who actually understand and follow them.

Man is created as a self-developing organism, as a seed that can grow upwards in the vertical scale of being, and from the higher level that creates man comes all esoteric teaching - that is, the eternal teaching about Man and his possible inner evolution and the means whereby this can be attained.

When a person takes everything literally, it means that he is using one level of thinking - the lowest or most external level. At this level the outer world meets his senses and his thinking is placed here. His eyes behold objects illuminated by the physical light of the sun and his mind forms ideas from these objects - from all he sees and hears and touches round him. His ideas are thus derived from visible, tangible objects. He thinks from these ideas, for everyone thinks and can only think, from the ideas he possesses. Thus, ordinarily, all the ideas of a person's mind are founded on things in the world - that is, his mind is moulded on the things revealed by the senses. This is the literal mind. This level of the mind cannot get away from things. *Only things and ideas derived from things are real to it.* Take away from it the ideas derived from the world of things and its thought would be destroyed. Or give to this level of the mind

the idea, let us say, that time is a dimension in which the past and future is extended, and it will make nothing of it, because it can only think from what it sees.

This lowest level of the mind which thinks naturally, from appearance, is the first mind formed in us. And it is of the greatest importance, because it relates us to external life. But this level of mind must be used for what it is meant to be used for. It must not be used for ideas that are not derived from appearances. There are other levels of the mind, not opened up by the external senses and to these levels other ideas and ways of thought belong. Let us take the simplest possible example of what it means to think from the senses - that is, naturally, literally, or from appearances — and what it means to think from a slightly higher level of mind. From appearances, that is, according to the evidence of our senses, the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. A man, thinking naturally, would swear that this is so. Yet, thinking from a slightly higher level, and so *against appearances*, this is not true. The Earth rotates and makes it *appear* that the sun rises and sets. But no one sees the Earth rotating. We see instead the sky apparently rotating and therefore naturally think it swings round the Earth every twenty-four hours. This is natural or mechanical thinking, based on what the senses shew - that is, on appearances: it belongs to the literal mind that thinks in terms of things and the ideas derived from them.

Now it is very important that a man should learn to distinguish between *different categories of ideas*. He must eventually come to know what it means '*to think in different categories*' (OUSPENSKY, *A New Model of the Universe*, p. 324, Routledge). A man cannot develop inwardly in himself otherwise. If he does not learn that ideas belong to different categories, he will mix up ideas belonging to different scales and they will come into collision and seem contradictory. There are different kinds of ideas. *Ideas* are of different levels, and levels cannot mix. The very idea of levels is that things are different and cannot be mixed up and must be kept distinct. All esoteric ideas are on a level above the level of the mind that thinks naturally, according to the appearance of things. It is impossible to understand these ideas on the most mechanical, literal level of the mind.

Yet, at the same time, they must to some extent fall first on this level, for no one can think in a new way unless he starts from what he knows and understands already.

Very many problems exist in regard to the teaching of esotericism. Esoteric ideas lie far beyond natural ideas. Yet some connection must be made. This is one of the problems of esotericism - namely, to find how it is possible to convey ideas of a higher category, belonging to a higher level of the mind, to those people who think naturally, literally, from the senses, from things as they appear. In the Gospels, a bridge was effected by means of *parables*.

## PART TWO

A PARABLE is a medium of connection between a lower and a higher meaning. But it is necessary to look more closely at the basis of parables and the reason they exist. In ancient teaching, Man is taken as a link between a higher and a lower world, between 'heaven' and 'earth'. Man lives physically on earth by the light of the sun but psychologically he lives by the light received by his level of understanding, which is light from 'heaven', a far more wonderful light. As a man grows in understanding, he stands more in this light and it can be said that it is only by means of receiving some fraction of this light that a man can think at all. A language exists, that was once known, that connects Man on the level of the Earth with Man on the level of Heaven. *It is in this language that parables are cast.* It is a specific language, speaking, in terms of earthly objects, of meanings that these earthly objects represent at a higher level. In this language everything on earth represents something belonging to the understanding. Objects represent ideas. All physical things have definite psychological meanings - not arbitrary subjective meanings invented by Man, but objective meanings - that is, meanings quite apart from Man's subjective associations. Everything created on the earth has a true, a real, objective significance, because it represents something at a higher level that only the understanding can grasp. If a man were fully awake he would see the objective meaning of all things around him. It would be enough if he were fully awake in the *emotional centre* - that is, if he were conscious in the Higher Emotional Centre. The Higher Emotional Centre is a world above us. The language of the Higher Emotional Centre is the language of the parable. It is the language of vision. It is, for instance, the language in which the Book of Revelation is written. In this strange book the language is cast in the image of the senses. We read of horses, trumpets, swords, stars, sun, moon, kings, wars, pestilences, and so on, and think it means, literally, these objects. Its meaning lies in what these earthly objects represent in this lost language, that still exists in us. This language was once known and understood, and made



deliberate use of in myths, legends, parables and in other ways. The emotional centre was once awake in Man. He then walked and talked with God. He named everything created. That is, he knew what every object represented.

'And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air: and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof (Genesis ii.19).

If man were awake in the Higher Emotional Centre, through its illumination he would see the significance of all things. *He would see things as they really are.* He would know the properties, qualities, and the use of all things. He would know what everything represented. He would perceive the ideas that each physical object represents. He would pass from a world of physical things into a world of supernatural, inconceivable meaning. He would be in a state of *objective consciousness*.

## PART THREE

EVERY word used in a parable in the Gospels, or in a description of a miracle, has a special meaning, belonging to this language which connects the visible things of the world with the understanding of the mind of the Higher Emotional Centre. A parable is only alive when it is based on this language for then it has connection with higher levels. Everything literal that is constructed rightly in terms of this language conducts force from higher levels and so has life in it. This is the basis of miracles, for a miracle is brought about by attracting the laws of a higher world to act in a lower world. It was the reason for ritual, only ritual has lost its meaning partly because to be effective - that is, to conduct force - not only an emotional understanding of its meaning is necessary, but a certain emotional state must be reached. For example, the laying on of hands was a ritual based on this lost language. The hands represent *power* and laying on represents *contact*. But as a mere ritual act nothing curative can result. But ritual itself has great importance. Things had to be done in the right way *in order to correspond with this language*, otherwise force could not be transmitted. The case is somewhat like ordinary language: if you arrange the words rightly, they conduct meaning.

It is the basis of objective art. A parable is an example of *objective art*. By being rightly arranged it conducts *permanent* or eternal meaning: and it will be understood by everyone strictly according to his level of being. That is, it will grow in meaning as a man grows in the level of his understanding. At the lowest natural level of the mind a parable will be understood *literally*. It will seem merely to be a story about some shepherd or some spendthrift son, and so on, and an actual king or shepherd or son will be thought of and perhaps a scholar will make researches to find out who, historically, is referred to. One has only to read the more modern commentaries on the New Testament to realise how literally everything in the Gospels can be taken. In ancient times there was better understanding.

Let us begin with what is called the parable of parables in the Gospels. It is the first parable given in Matthew and appears

in the thirteenth chapter. Up to that point in this gospel the teaching of Christ is presented in the form of discourses, such as the Sermon on the Mount. Then quite abruptly, Jesus begins to teach in parables. The first parable is a key parable, because Christ says to his disciples unless they can understand this parable how can they expect to understand any other parable? This is not recorded in the version given in Matthew but in the account of the same parable in Mark iv where Christ says to the disciples: 'Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all the parables?' (v. 13). This key parable is the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. It is given in Matthew xiii, Mark iv and Luke viii, but not in John, because the gospel of John is quite differently written and came from another school.

Let us begin with the version in Matthew. It is sometimes important to notice the introduction to a parable. In this case, the introduction is as follows:

On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And there were gathered unto him great multitudes, so that he entered into a boat, and sat; and all the multitude stood on the beach. And he spake many things to them in parables...'

Now this can be taken literally, but it has another meaning. That is, apart from its literal sense meaning it has a psychological meaning. The *sea* is sometimes used, in the language of parables, as meaning something distinct from the 'Earth' — that is, the meaning here is that Christ is speaking of things not belonging to the earthly literal understanding of Man, but of things at first sight incomprehensible to the sense-based understanding. He is speaking from another level and so is represented as not being on earth, but on the sea, close to the beach. Different categories of ideas belong to different levels of understanding, and these different levels, in the natural language of the senses, are represented in different ways, as by a mountain as distinct from the ground, or by the sea as distinct from the land. The opening of the Parable of the Sower as given in Matthew is:

'And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow: and as he sowed some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them' (xiii.3, 4).

Let us take only this part of the parable and try to under-

stand its meaning. It so happens that this parable is one of the parables that is given some interpretation by Christ. The disciples ask what the parable means, and also why he speaks in parables. Let us leave out for the moment Christ's explanation of why he speaks in parables, and take his interpretation of the first part. It is as follows: 'Hear ye then the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side.' You will notice that in the last line it says: 'This is *he* that was sown by the way side.' (*οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ παρά τῆς ὁδοῦ σπαρεις.*) It refers to Man - to a certain kind of man. Man is the seed. Yet seed is also defined as 'word of the kingdom', (*ὁ λόγος τῆς βασιλείας.*) This, of course, refers to the teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven which is expressly said elsewhere to be *in a man*. Christ said to the Pharisees on being asked when the Kingdom of God would come:

'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo there! for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you' (Luke xvii.20).

The seed that is sown is therefore both the teaching of esotericism - the teaching of the possible inner evolution of Man to a higher level called 'Heaven' - and it is also Man himself, for it says here, 'This is he that was sown by the way side.' In all esoteric teaching, Man is regarded as a seed. It is said of Man in this respect that unless he dies to himself he cannot bear fruit. When Jesus heard that certain Greeks had come to speak with him, he said that his hour was at hand. Why did he say this when the Greeks came? Here is the strange passage which is found in John's Gospel only:

'Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his

life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' (John xii.20-25) And this passage is strangely interesting, for it was a fact that in the Greek Orphic Mysteries, the green ear of wheat, that is, the seed, was a central idea in this little known teaching. The ear of wheat represented Man. This passage shews a very definite connection between the older Greek schools and the drama of Christ, but for some reason none of the commentators on the New Testament seems to realise that this is so. Man is a seed: and esotericism itself is a seed. But when a man hears the ideas of esotericism and does not understand them, the birds come and devour them. *Birds* represent something definite in this language of parables. They are, in general, *thoughts*. You meet in Plato the image that the mind of man is a bird cage, for example. (The chief theme of the Ititus is this bird-cage.) It is a bird-cage which all sorts of birds enter and leave. If a man hears the ideas of esotericism and does not understand them, it means he has false or wrong thoughts and these false thoughts, like birds, devour the ideas, or alter them, twist them and make lies out of them. That is, the ideas are devoured by false thought. False thinking is the 'evil one' (ο πονηρός.) This is the meaning of the devil in regard to the mind. And everyone can see this in himself. Everyone who is sincere in his self-observation knows what power a lie has and how he must struggle against lying in himself - taking things wrongly, giving a false meaning to what has happened, and so on. Birds, here, therefore, mean false thinking. But they can also mean right thinking. The prophet Elijah was fed by ravens in the wilderness. 'And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook (i Kings xvii.6). Here birds mean the same thing but in the opposite sense. He was fed by right thoughts, by right understanding. Wrong understanding destroys us all internally. Right understanding nourishes us all. Man is a seed sown on the earth and esotericism is a seed sown in Man to awaken the seed that Man is into life. The first category of Man described here is a man 'who is sown by the way side'. Such a man cannot understand the ideas of esotericism, or misunderstands and falsifies them. People, as seeds, are sown into the world differently and their power of understanding varies according to where they are sown.

## PART FOUR

WE have now to think of the strange idea that men are differently sown into the earth, in the light of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed as given in the version of Matthew. I will quote again the first part of the parable:

'Behold, the sower went forth to sow; and as he sowed some seeds fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured them.'

After Christ had told his disciples in reply to their question why he spoke in parables, that it was given to them to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven but not to the multitude, he says:

'Hear ye then the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side.' (Matthew xiii. 18, 19)

It is the last sentence which is strange: 'This is *he* that was sown by the way side.' It is strange because it implies that Man is sown differently into life. That is, men have not the same opportunities for understanding *esotericism*. Christ has already said that the multitude cannot understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven but that his disciples can, for he has said to the latter: 'Blessed are your eyes for they see: and your ears, for they hear' (v. 16).

And this, of course, does not mean the literal eyes and ears, the actual sense-organs. The eyes mean the inner sight of the mind and the ears the hearing of the emotions - i.e. the emotional understanding - for only the mind can see the truth of a thing and only the emotional centre its value and good. But in Christ's interpretation of the parables, he extended this idea that only some out of many can understand and follow his teaching, and defines six classes or categories of people. The first category are those who hear the *Word* - that is, the teaching and ideas of esotericism, and the idea of conscious man and the idea of self-evolution to that state called the Kingdom of Heaven which is the conscious circle of humanity - and under-

stand nothing about it. Their eyes and ears are open to life, to the world, to the things of the senses - that is, intellectually and emotionally they only know the world. And this is not their fault because it is said that such a man 'is he that is sown by the way side'. Such a man is entirely in life. He is 'glued to his senses' as it is put in the Greek teaching of Socrates, and ideas that pass beyond the range of the senses are shut to him because he can only think naturally, literally, in terms of things. And this point is further emphasised in this language of parables which we are studying, in the version given in Luke (viii 5.RV).

'The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden underfoot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it.'

You will notice that a sentence is added here to the same passage as given in Matthew. The seed fell by the way side, 'and was trodden underfoot'. Let us speak of the meaning of 'underfoot'. The foot is where a man touches the external world, registered by the senses, and in the language of parables represents the most natural, literal, external, sense-based level in a man's mind - that is, the part of the mind that thinks directly from this source. The ritual of washing the feet means for one thing to cleanse the natural mind from the fallacies of the senses - that is, from appearances, from life as it appears. In John xiii.14, after he had washed the disciples' feet, it is recorded that Christ said: 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

But if a man cannot think and understand apart from the evidence of his senses, he cannot cleanse the natural mind. He can then neither think of nor yet understand anything about the ideas of esotericism. For you must always remember that esotericism begins from something none of the *external* senses shews us, namely, the invisible *oneself*. It begins not with the observation of the external world, but with *self-observation*, with

the *invisible* world of oneself. And I believe it would be a very good thing if you would try to see what is meant here and understand clearly that to observe *oneself* is not a matter of the external eyes or ears or of touching yourself, and so on, but an inner thing, beyond the range of the outer senses. When Christ said: 'The Kingdom of Heaven cometh not by observation' (Luke xvii.20), he meant it is not something outside, something observable by the external senses, but internal - namely, a stage of inner evolution *above* us and in ourselves in the vertical scale of possible being - and the beginning of it is to observe *yourself*, in the light of the ideas and teaching of esotericism. For then you begin to understand why, as you are, the Kingdom of Heaven is not attainable and that a very great deal of work on oneself is necessary over a very long period before it is possible to dream of such an attainment. How far we are from the Kingdom of Heaven! But how wonderful it is to begin to see the way to it! And this is what esoteric ideas can shew to everyone who seeks it and treasures it. How wonderful it is to understand that mechanical goodness cannot lead to it any more than mechanical badness. How wonderful it is to begin to realise what it means to work against one's own mechanicalness. To return to the idea contained in the phrase 'trodden underfoot'. Taking the foot as the natural, literal level of a man where he rests on the earth, it is then possible to see the meaning of the 'way side'. The seed falls by the way side and is trodden underfoot. What is the way side? Psychologically, it is where the traffic of life goes on in you. It is all your mechanical thoughts. It is your mechanical side, the mechanical part of you turned to life, to the senses. It is impossible for this mechanical part - that is, the part which works almost automatically from life - to understand esoteric ideas. If these ideas fall on this mechanical part, they fall 'by the way side'. They fall on the wrong place in a man - a place useful for life, but useless for self development. Let me remind you: a man must be able to think in different categories. He must think of his affairs in life. He must think of esoteric ideas. But he must not think in the *same category* of life-affairs and of the ideas of esotericism. He must know and see that they are different in quality. And if he cannot see that they are different, then he has no *magnetic*



*centre*. Esotericism is about living in life but it is not of life. Its source is not from life. If it were it could not lift you above life - above mechanicalness. How can what originates in life lift you above life? Esotericism is a rope — above life. The magnetic centre in a man means his power of distinguishing between influences which are life influences and created within the sphere of life, and influences which come from conscious man, from outside life. A man must be able, for example, to distinguish between the football news or war news and esoteric ideas, and not let them contradict and destroy one another. If you have no sense of scale - and a sense of scale is one of the meanings of having magnetic centre - then everything will be contradictory simply because you do not put things where they belong, on the right level, but mix them all up on the same level. That is, you have no feeling of the vertical arm of the cross, which represents different levels, and different categories - in short, higher and lower, and so, more conscious and more mechanical levels in you. And remember that if you want to be in more conscious parts of yourself, you get there by directed attention, to begin with. The whole idea of esotericism is to make us first of all more conscious, more aware of what we are thinking and feeling and saying and doing, and the object of this is to get us to live in more conscious parts of ourselves, which in most people are unoccupied or almost so. And self observation is an act of internal attention. The object of esotericism is to lift us in the vertical scale of being.

Magnetic centre is therefore something in a man that gives him the first feeling of things above and things below or things more internal and more external and relates him to the idea of the vertical scale of things, however dimly. For the vertical is internal and everything higher in the vertical scale is more internal in man. It is like a little machine in him that like a small lift works upwards and downwards. A man with magnetic centre therefore will not only understand literally and naturally, but will catch the meaning of what is above the literal and natural level. That is, he will understand *internal* meaning, apart from *external* meaning. This is the starting point of everything else in a man's evolution and if a man does not possess this little machine then he is one of those sown into the world,

who hearing the ideas of esotericism makes nothing of them. You will see therefore that the first category or class of people spoken of in the parable are those who have not magnetic centre. It is expressly said that they are 'sown by the way side'. And in the version in Luke it is put more strongly. Christ is represented here as saying of this first category: 'The seed is the word of God. And those by the way side are they that have heard: then cometh the devil and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved.' Notice the last sentence: 'that they may not believe and be saved.' What does this mean? *Everyone cannot be saved.*

The 'Word of God' is the teaching of esotericism - that is, the teaching of the means of self evolution, of what you must think and do to begin to evolve in yourself to the level of conscious man or the Kingdom of Heaven.

You must grasp the meaning of one analogy here. There is an ancient Hermetic saying: 'As above, so below.' This means that everything is stamped by the laws that prevail throughout the created universe. What you find on a great scale, you find represented on a small scale. As above, so below.

There is an analogy in the human body. The human body represents in itself the ideas of conscious man and mechanical man. The brain cells, so shut off and isolated, represent the conscious circle of cells in regard to the rest of the body. They are immortal in terms of the body. Now if all the body cells tried to become brain cells - that is, evolve to the level of brain cells - the body would break up. It would cease to be able to be a body and perform its functions as such. But a few cells, out of the billions and billions of living cells composing the body, can escape without disorganising it. That is, a certain number of body cells can become brain cells without upsetting the work of the body as a whole. It is the same in regard to the life of Nature, which is a great body. Certain cells in it — that is, in this case, human beings — can escape from its laws without disorganising its general function and purposes. If you think, you will see what is meant. And one thing can be added here. The number of those who at any particular time can begin to escape from the service of nature are more than those who seek to do so. It is this thought that helps one to understand the

situation. Otherwise people, first hearing this explanation, and not trying to see its real significance, are inclined to say that it is not just or fair. And I know that some of you will say something like this: 'In this passage quoted from Luke it says that the devil comes and takes away the seed lest they should believe and be saved. It looks as if some evil force prevented people from awakening. That seems to be unfair and unjust, etc.' I will try to answer this. In the version given in Matthew, the devil is called the evil one, and in the parable itself, it is said the *birds* devoured the seed. The birds signify, as already said, in this case, false thinking or evil thinking. If a man thinks in a false way, if he thinks evilly, how can he understand the teachings of esotericism? He himself is the devil. He himself is the evil one. Now let us change the idea of the devil into *mechanicalness*. If a man thinks mechanically, he cannot receive the ideas of esotericism. In the mechanical parts of a man, 'the birds devour the seeds' - that is, destroy them. The whole thing is to keep esotericism away from mechanical thoughts, to value it, to lift it up, to make it, as it were, sacred - that is, a special thing, a holy thing, and this is the significance of a thing being made holy - otherwise it falls on the wrong place in you and is devoured and trodden underfoot. Understand that *underfoot* means in your own mind. You must think consciously of esotericism and be conscious when you think of it. You cannot think of it always — at least to begin with — but you must not let yourself think of it mechanically, negatively, and so on. But there are certain forces that tend to keep Man in habits — that is, in mechanicalness. They hang on mankind and keep people doing and saying and thinking the same things over and over again. For this reason you must make the ideas of esotericism stronger than the ideas of life, otherwise the pressure of mechanical life will keep you literal, natural, sense-based, so that hearing the ideas of esotericism you will reject them, think evilly about them, be suspicious, blind, deaf, and so on. You have only to try to speak to others of esotericism to see how 'the birds devour the seed'. And if you are so poetical as to think that people cannot really think falsely and cannot really think evilly, then all I can say is that you have not yet begun to observe yourself sincerely and seen what you yourself are capable of.

## PART FIVE

WE now come to the second category. The first category is the most externally based man - the man of the senses. The second category is more interior. Each category goes more and more inwards, that is, higher and higher vertically. The second category is described as follows in Matthew:

'And others (that is, seeds,) fell upon rocky places, where they had not much earth: and straightway they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun was risen they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away.'

Let us try to understand this category of Man, in regard to the sowing of the seeds of esoteric teaching in humanity. These are the people who have a certain kind of magnetic centre, which I will explain later. Let us first see how Christ is said to have interpreted this part of the parable:

'And he that was sown upon rocky places, this is he that heareth the word and straightway with joy receiveth it, yet he hath no root in himself, but endureth for awhile, and when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumbleth.'

At first sight this describes the man who can face no difficulties in esotericism, either in himself, or in the teaching itself — that is, he is a person who cannot work on himself and who cannot work with others or bear their unpleasant manifestations.

In following an esoteric teaching, there has to be first evaluation of the ideas of esotericism; then follows the application of the ideas to oneself; and on this will follow necessarily the realisation of one's own personal difficulties. If a man reaches so far, he realises that his difficulties are not due to others, but lie in himself. If he does not get violent or depressed, he may pass further, because he can find the force to go on and not waste his force in complaining and finding fault and in being offended.

But this second category means something more than shallow enthusiasm. It strikes far deeper in its meaning. In its deeper meaning, the man sown in rocky places is the man who only

follows *knowledge*. He is the man who works only on the line of knowledge. You must work (and that means, make effort) to get the knowledge of esoteric ideas into your minds. This opens up new connections. But you must also work on *being* - on yourself, on the kind of man you are. If you are a violent man, you must work on that. If you are a morose man, you must work on that. If you nourish yourself with negative emotions, you must change that, and so on. A man who works only on the side of knowledge is one-sided. When human difficulties arise, he breaks. He knows, but cannot do. Why cannot he do? Because his level of being, the kind of man he is, is far below his level of knowledge. That is the man meant in the parable. He is the man who is sown on rocky ground. Rocks, stones, in the language of parables, stand for *knowledge* - or let us call it the knowledge of truth or truth alone. The Rock of Ages means Eternal Truth. By truth is meant the *knowledge* of esotericism — not ordinary life-truth, but the special truth relating to transformation of Man - that is, esoteric truth. Ordinary knowledge does not transform your being. But, nor again, does special knowledge, unless you *apply* it - to yourself. For you yourself are the subject of the knowledge, you are the experiment.

A man who has some magnetic centre receives the knowledge of esotericism with joy. He wants to hear all about it and compare it with other esoteric ideas he has studied. But when he has to apply it to himself, because he has no *emotional root*, he wilts and fades. Knowledge must become emotional to affect us. Esoteric ideas must reach the emotional part of us to influence us. The man in the parable wishes to keep everything as knowledge and get the satisfaction of *knowing* about Truth. He is theoretical. He can hear the *word* but cannot do it: and does not try to do it. He likes to hear new ideas about esotericism and so on. He can see the difference between esoteric ideas and life ideas but it all remains in his mind only. His magnetic centre is in the region of knowledge only. When the 'sun is arisen' — that is, when persecution and tribulation come — he is weak. He cannot face his inner difficulties, his negativeness, his doubts, his inner persecutions and tribulations, and so he cannot fight for esotericism in himself and so can bear no fruit. This is the second category. It is extraordinary to notice people

of this category, how they go from teacher to teacher, how they take up now this with joy, and then you hear they are taking up something else with equal enthusiasm. And in talking to them, you find only a mass of odd bits of knowledge, often very confused and without any practical application. Their interest lies only in picking up certain kinds of ideas, but they do not feel the depths of these ideas or their own relation to them, and as soon as things become difficult they run away and take up some other ideas. It is little else than a kind of mental *curiosity* about esotericism. The whole thing is still external with them, not so external as with the first category, but external-internal. If they meet a teaching that gives them a personal shock they are offended. This is the meaning of the phrase 'when persecution or tribulation ariseth, because of the word, straightway he stumbleth'. To stumble (σκανδαλίζω) means in the Greek *to be offended, to be scandalised*. The person becomes negative, pities himself, talks badly, cannot see any connection between what he has been taught and how he is behaving.

As was said, the Rock of Ages means, in the language of parables, Eternal Truth. And you will remember that the disciple Simon was renamed by Christ. He was called Peter, which in the Greek is *petros* (πέτρος), meaning 'stone' or 'rock'. Of Peter, Christ said, 'On this rock I will found my church' (Matthew xvi.18). Peter had knowledge and could remember it. But it was not yet emotional, so Christ told him he had as yet no faith and would deny him. And because he was only a man of knowledge, a man of truth, but capable of deeper understanding, Christ had to teach him what forgiveness meant. This is why two parables about forgiveness are addressed to Peter, for a man based on truth alone is harsh and unmerciful. He forgives no one. And this is why it is said, after the denial of Christ, that Peter wept. He wept because the teaching of Christ became at that moment emotional. He saw it no longer merely as knowledge. What had been intellectual penetrated to the emotional level in him. He saw himself in the light of the knowledge he had been taught. He saw the distance that lay between what he knew and what he was. In place of merely knowing he began to *understand*. The allusion to Peter made here is only in connection with the meaning of *rock* or *stone* in the language of

parables, and so with the significance of Simon's being renamed *Peter-that* is, stone or rock. I am not saying that Peter belonged to the second category in the Parable of the Sower, for when tribulation and persecution arose, he *had root in himself*. But at first he believed only through his teacher and not from himself. *Rock* represents a primitive level of Truth that does not quench the thirst. The 'hungry' and 'thirsty' are often mentioned in Scripture. Without knowledge of Truth a man is said to thirst. Nor can *rock* satisfy this thirst. From rock *water* must be struck, as Moses struck it. Christ says that the man who believes 'shall never thirst'. In the Book of Amos it is said that a famine is coming on the land and it is expressly explained that it is 'not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of God' (Amos viii.11). It is plain beyond doubt that all these words, famine, land, thirst, have a psychological reference, and are not literal in meaning. In the following passage, lack of truth is again represented as famine and thirst. 'They regard not the work of the Lord, neither have they considered the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity *for lack of knowledge*: their glory are men of famine and their multitude are parched with thirst.' (Isaiah v.12-14)  
Lack

of the *knowledge of Truth* - a psychological state - is represented in the visual language of parables by famine and lack of water, which give rise to bodily states.

## PART SIX

THE third category is formulated in the parable in these words: 'And others fell upon the thorns: and the thorns grew up and choked them.'

In his interpretation of this verse Christ is made to say:

'And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word and the care of the world (aeon, αἰών) and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and he becometh unfruitful.'

In Mark, 'and the lusts of other things entering in choke the word' is added to the interpretation.

And in Luke the interpretation of Christ is given as:

'These are they that have heard the word - (to hear means to understand) - and as they go on their way, they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.'

In this category, people who hear and understand esotericism are referred to: but their *emotional* part is wrong. In the second category, 'Those sown on rocky ground' has reference to the intellectual part: in this third category, attention is drawn to the emotional part. Thorns refer to the emotional side, to the side of the emotional interests. When Christ says in another place: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' the same idea appears. The thorns and thistles represent the emotional life. Wrong emotions cannot produce good fruit. Nor can you expect fruit from people whose ordinary emotional interests override the emotional interest and valuation required for esoteric teaching to develop in them. The magnetic centre in the emotional part is not strong enough. The crown of thorns placed on Christ's head before the crucifixion has an identical meaning. It represents the state of those who crucified him. Christ was crucified by those who could understand, and even did, but emotionally could not develop his teaching, being always distracted by intrigues, jealousies, by fears, by the lust for power, etc., called here thorns and in other places briars or thistles, to which also belongs the idea of cares, anxieties, and negative emotions. The



crown of thorns represented the general emotional state of humanity at that time. They were choked emotionally by self-interests and although many of them could understand Christ's teaching, they could not give it any room. The 'will' side of them, which springs out of the state of a man's emotional centre and changes with his emotional development, was such that they could not let the teaching of Christ act upon them in any real way - that is, become *the first thing*, emotionally. For if you do not feel emotional enough about knowledge it cannot touch the side of your being - that is, it cannot act on you. It will have no power over you. In other words, although you may feel it to some extent emotionally, you cannot apply your knowledge and begin to live it. Other emotional interests are too strong.

This idea is expressed in many parables - namely, the idea of what is really most important to you, emotionally. The emotions make a thing important — that is, valued, loved, coveted, sought after. The image in the parable means that a man who is very identified with life and whose main emotional interests are concerned with himself and his position in life grows thorns in himself, which not only hurt and pain him, but choke any emotional development. Such a man has magnetic centre in the emotional part of him, but it is not strong enough, and is swamped by all the cares and anxieties of life and all that life seems to offer. He can and does understand, but he is sown in life in such a way that nothing can happen.

Now all these categories so far considered — the man who understands nothing, the man who understands intellectually, the man who understands emotionally, but not enough — also represent more deeply the different stages of a single man in his relation to esotericism. But of this we will speak later.

## PART SEVEN

AFTER the three categories of people mentioned in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed who cannot undergo inner evolution, because they have been sown into the world in such a manner as to make this impossible, a further three categories are defined. These form one class, being those who are sown on good ground and yield fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty and some thirty. Of these Christ says, in his interpretation of the parable:

'And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.' (Matthew xiii.23)

In all, four kinds of *ground* are described in the parable: the ground called the way side, the ground called rocky, the ground choked with thorns, and good ground. Those seeds sown in bad ground produce no fruit, while those sown in good ground produce fruit in three degrees represented by the numbers 100, 60 and 30. You will notice an inversion here, for it would have been more natural to expect the order the other way round, culminating in those who produced most fruit. In the accounts given in Mark and Luke the inversion does not appear. In Mark, Christ is made to give the interpretation in these words:

'And those are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty-fold, and sixty-fold, and a hundred-fold.' (Mark iv.20)

And in Luke:

'And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.' (Luke viii.15)

In the account of this part of the parable itself, Luke writes:

'And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundred-fold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.' (Luke viii.8)

The interpretation of the parable put into the mouth of Christ varies in each of the evangelists. For instance, Luke does not understand that Man himself is *sown* into life differently

and so gives the interpretation as 'those by the way side are they that have heard' (*οἱ δε παρά την οδον*), and 'those on the rock are they which, when they have heard, receive the word with joy' (*οἱ δε ἐν της πετράς*), and so on, whereas both Matthew and Mark speak of people being *sown* into life differently, some being sown by the way side, some on rocky ground, and so on, and the word of God being sown in turn upon them, with quite different results. The Gospels were written long after Christ's crucifixion. Luke never saw Christ. He was originally a follower of Paul, who was not taught by Christ but possibly got what teaching he had from some school near Damascus. The closer a Gospel is to the original source of teaching, the fuller and richer the language of its parables. If we look at the curious inversion of numbers in Matthew as having some significance not understood by Mark or Luke, it might be considered that it is the Gospel that is the closest to the source and to the original. But it is usually considered that Mark is the original Gospel. The first three Gospels are called *synoptic*. But this does not mean they were written by eyewitnesses, as often supposed. It means merely that they see eye to eye in contradistinction to the Gospel of John. If the Gospel of Matthew was written by the disciple Matthew, called originally Levi, the tax gatherer, then only this Gospel was written by an actual eyewitness of Christ. Mark and Luke were either not born or were little children when Christ died. It must be understood that the knowledge of the teaching given by Christ was preserved in *schools*, where people were taught orally and the teaching kept living, and that the date of the first publication of the teaching in written form is quite another question of secondary importance. The teaching about Man's possible inner evolution and his real meaning on Earth has always been kept alive in schools and preserved in this way throughout the ages. It emerges at stated intervals, or rather calculated periods in history, in religious or other forms, to give an impetus to lift mankind above the level of barbarism, to which it inevitably tends if left to itself, and so makes possible the development of art, science, and literature, so as to bring people to a certain 'normal level' of understanding, which must be reached by at least some before any question of *inner evolution* begins to be possible. What

we call our 'Christian culture', in which, historically speaking, various movements in art, literature, philosophy, and science have been able to take place and would otherwise have been impossible, began with an impetus given partly by the carefully enacted drama of Christ and partly by the work of many others, before and after. And although it may be true to say that there have been no Christians in the real sense - that is, people who attained the degree of inner evolution reached by Christ through endless temptations and through suffering quite apart from the death on the cross - it must not be forgotten that this impetus was the source of a gradual organisation of life which raised Man, outwardly, above the level of barbarism, and made possible a civilisation.

Let us now return to the general idea of the Parable of the Sower before seeking for the meaning of the 'good ground', for parts and details cannot be understood save in relation to the general idea as a whole. The parable as a whole is about the teaching of the inner evolution of Man and the categories of people defined in it refer to the possibilities of people differently placed (or sown) in life with regard to receiving and understanding this teaching and undergoing the inner evolution that it is concerned with. Behind every parable there lies a general idea and the details and language vary in meaning according to it. Everything in this parable is said in reference to the general idea that, first, there is a teaching called here the *Word*: and second, that some cannot and some can understand this Word or teaching, and out of those who can, some accept it fully, and apply it. The latter are called those sown on good earth and these can bring forth fruit to perfection. Now a teaching about inner evolution necessarily is about a man himself. The man himself is the subject of the experiment. It is he who must evolve, through the knowledge and application of the truth about inner evolution. Only in this way can he produce fruit. The seed of the Word grows in him. At the same time he himself is a seed that can grow, through the seed of the teaching sown in him, and the seed of the Word cannot grow in him unless he grows or evolves himself. That is, as he grows in himself, the seed of the Word grows. This may be difficult to understand at first, for people take knowledge or truth quite

apart from themselves - that is, apart from the kind of people they are. The idea that there is an order of knowledge or truth that cannot be understood aright save through a personal development of *oneself by* means of it seems strange. Yet, if you think of it, it is obvious that if there is a teaching about self-evolution it must involve an evolution of *oneself*. Its art must be applied to oneself. The art, artist, and the subject he works upon, are all one. Now no one will ever take the trouble to apply any sort of knowledge, of whatever order, unless he sees the *good of* it. If a man does not see the good of a thing he will not learn much about it. Or he may learn something, but, finding it difficult to apply, give it up. What makes a man *strong* in whatever he does, in connection with his knowledge, is his own conviction of the good of it. If he has no deep conviction of the good of a thing, even though he may be intellectually interested in it as a form of knowledge or truth, it will have no real weight with him. We have seen that the category in the parable defined as those sown on rocky ground are of this nature. They receive truth but have no depth of earth - that is, they cannot see the good of it enough and once too many difficulties arise their interest withers away.

It is only those who are classified as being sown in good earth that produce fruit. To have good earth means to have the power of *seeing the good*. To see the *good* of the 'Word' sufficiently - that is, the knowledge that teaches the truth about inner evolution or the 'Kingdom of Heaven', which is *within a man* - is possible only to this category. The first category in the parable, those sown by the way side, cannot see any good in it. The idea of inner evolution means nothing to them. The second category, those sown on rocky ground, see a little good in it. The third category, those sown among thorns, see good too much in other things - in all the cares and preoccupations of life. The last category see the good in different degrees, but in every case see it enough to produce fruit. Fruit means to bring to fruition, *in themselves*, the teaching of inner evolution. They themselves are the fruit, through their own evolution. It is the same case with many things in nature that evolve mechanically. A grub becomes a butterfly. But this is mechanical. It happens. In the case of Man, his possible evolution to a higher state of himself *does not*

*happen*. He must labour consciously. But as in the case of the grub it is he himself that is the subject of the experiment in this inner *metamorphosis or transformation* that the Gospels emphasise so clearly as the real goal of Man. Man as he is is 'Earth': Man, having undergone inner transformation, is 'Heaven'. When people use the Lord's Prayer and say, 'May thy will be done on earth as in heaven' they are really praying for this transformation *in themselves* — without knowing it. They are praying for the fullest possible fruition of their own lives, of themselves. But the Earth in a man is of different qualities. It is in some merely the way side, in some rocky ground, in some it is choked with thorns, and in some it is good earth. For, in order to change, a man must first of all be able to receive this teaching about inner change on his natural level, in his own 'earth'. The seed must find a right soil and the soil is the *kind of man*. As we have seen, in this respect there are different kinds of man, or different soils. Truth falling on Man as a seed by itself is powerless. Truth must find the right soil. This truth, this knowledge, this teaching about inner evolution, must unite with *good* to develop and grow. This means a man must be able to see the *good* of the truth he is taught, or otherwise nothing can take place. To be able to see the good of any form of knowledge is something quite different from 'being good'. In a way, it has nothing to do with 'being good', but rather with having the power of good. To be able to see the value of a thing is to have good - that is, to have the power of seeing its worth. This is goodness. And this is the fundamental conception of *good* in the Gospels. Every form of knowledge, every form of truth, must find and unite with its proper good to become living. Every truth has its own particular good and Man is the point where they can meet and unite. Good and truth must unite to produce fruit. When a man begins to see the good of some truth he had been taught, then a union between what he knows and what he is begins to take place. This is because a man is unable to *will* anything unless he feels it to be good. Merely to see a thing is true is not enough. He must *will* the truth and for this to be possible he must see the good of the truth, the good of the knowledge he has been taught. Truth then becomes internally connected with him, so is made living. Then the more good he sees in it, the

more will the truth grow, and develop: and the more truth he sees, the more will the good he sees in it grow.

But I will later on say more about the meaning of good and connect it with early Greek teaching. All these ideas are hidden in the Parable of the Sower, and many others as well, for a parable lies in the dimension of height and depth, and its meaning extends from the simplest outer literal or external meaning to the highest possible inner meaning, only comprehensible in the highest state of consciousness, where language and imagery pass into pure meaning. (See Appendix, p. 208.)

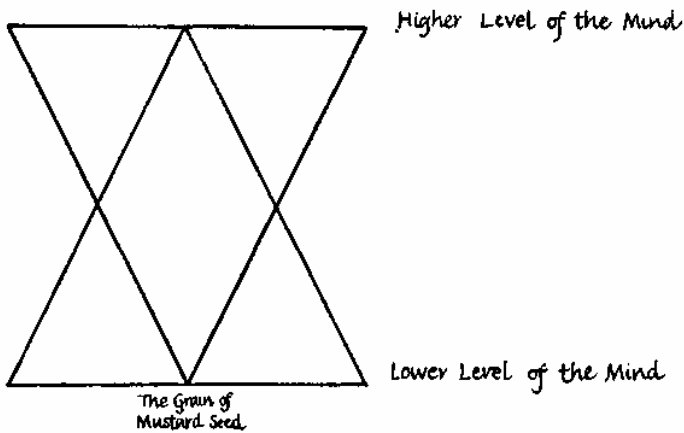
# **The Grain of Mustard Seed**



And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

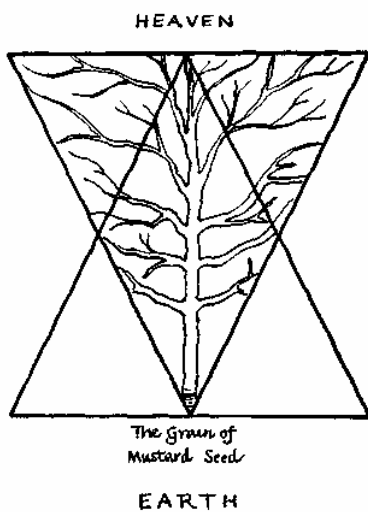
It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches: so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.' (Mark iv.30-32)

Why is the seed of the higher level called the *least* of all seeds? Because at the level of the senses and of the mind based on their overpowering evidence, the idea of a higher level of meaning - of far finer distinction of meaning - is almost nothing. The higher level can be nothing but a *point* in the lower - an undeveloped point - just as the lower level and all that belongs to its form of life and its meanings is nothing but a *point* in the higher level - in this case, a very little meaning. This can be represented as one of the ideas in an ancient diagram, called the Seal of Solomon.



The lower level and all that belongs to it terminates as a point in the higher level, as very little or a mere nothing of total meaning. And all that belongs to the higher level is a

mere point in the lower. Now if we draw a tree starting from the point where the higher touches the lower level, and stretching up to the higher, it would represent the connection that is meant in the parable.



# Metanoia

## PART ONE

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH...

*γενηθτω το θελημα σου . . . επι γης.*

WHAT stranger prayer could be uttered than this : 'Thy will be done on earth' ? The meaning of the phrase is that the will of God is not done on the earth.

In spite of this, religious people usually imagine that what happens on earth is always God's will, and they seek to comfort and strengthen one another with this thought, even in the face of the most senseless and fortuitous accidents, disaster and death. People who are not religious take it as evidence that there is no God.

There is something strange here, a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding, some strange confusion of thought.

People judge of the existence or non-existence of God from what happens on earth. Every decade books are written proving that the existence of God is impossible in view of the fact that there is so much evil in life, and so much cruelty and waste in nature, while most people in the privacy of their own thoughts come to a similar conclusion. They witness an accident in which harmless people are suddenly killed, or an epidemic which cripples and destroys scores of children; volcanoes erupt, flood and famine wipe out their millions ; they see the cruelty of nature — animal feeding on animal, while ruthless laws regulate the whole creation.

In the face of this, and arguing from the standpoint of the visible world, is it possible to believe that God - as the supreme Principle of highest Good - exists? This problem is the first that confronts any person who begins to think seriously, and, as a rule, the result of his thought is doubt or pessimism. The atheist, who bases his conclusions on the visible world with all its tragedies, is quite right in judging that life as seen does not teach God's existence.

People do not understand that what happens on earth simply happens ; they go further, they even want to read into disasters that happen to humanity a special meaning, namely, that they

are in the nature of a punishment inflicted by 'God'. They see the will of God acting on earth.

But this is denied in the New Testament. When the disciples reported to Jesus that Pilate had murdered some Galilaeans (Luke xiii.1-5), Christ replied: 'Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all other Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?' Clearly the disciples must have thought that the murdered Galilaeans had been punished by God for their sins. That was their explanation of the catastrophe, and that is how we are sometimes inclined to take misfortune to others. They saw the hand of God punishing evil on earth. So it followed, from this way of reasoning, that the murdered Galilaeans must have been especially wicked. Christ asked the disciples if they really believed that and then answered them: 'I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'

What does this answer mean? It means that the important thing to grasp is not a question of sin and punishment in life or to try to explain what happens in life every day. The important thing is to 'repent'. Life proves nothing. People who die atrocious deaths are not sinners any more than others. What we see is not the point. If we always look to visible life for evidence of the existence or non-existence of God, nothing will come of it. That is what the disciples were thinking and they are told that the answer does not lie there, but in something called 'repentance' - a word, which, as we shall see, does not convey the real sense of the original Greek. The disciples' attitude to life and their attitude to the teaching to which they were listening were both wrong. They were mixing their ordinary ideas, derived from life, with the ideas of which Christ was speaking. So Christ continues to explain and goes on to ask them whether they imagine that an accident which had happened recently in a suburb of Jerusalem also meant that those who had been killed were especial sinners. He asks: Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' (Luke xiii.4-5)

To both questions the same answer: the evils that happen to people in life have nothing to do with divine punishment for

sin and must not be taken in that way. Searching for God in life, questioning life anxiously, starting from outer life and its events as a basis, and so being always influenced by what happens in outer life, by all the incidents taking place every moment in the world, is to miss the whole meaning of what Christ was teaching. But so little is this understood and so difficult is it to grasp the underlying conception, that in the Authorised Version of the Gospels a synopsis of the contents of the thirteenth chapter of Luke actually is headed by the words: *Christ preacheth repentance upon the punishment of the Galilaeans and others*. The astonishing thing is that this is exactly what was not preached. Christ even emphasised his meaning by adding an example to make it as clear as possible to his disciples how entirely wrong was their attitude to life. They had asked him about the Galilaeans and were told that their death had nothing to do with divine punishment for sin. And Christ goes on to add that the fall of the tower in Siloam which killed eighteen men had again nothing to do with punishment for sin. Yet this wrong attitude to life, which Christ is trying to correct in his disciples, has persisted throughout religious thought and has finally produced the fatal collision between religion and science today. It is possible to say, of all books and teaching dealing with religion, that a division into two classes can be made; one, the overwhelming class, starts from the disciples' point of view; the other, very small, from the meaning of Christ's answer to his disciples.

In the answers which Christ gives to his disciples it is obviously implied that the will of God is not done on earth. And this is what the Lord's Prayer says. Therefore, to draw conclusions about God from what happens on earth is to start from an entirely wrong point of view. Yet, since it is so difficult to free ourselves from the senses, it is from this point of view that everyone starts in his thoughts about the existence of God. People continually start from this wrong level, just as did the disciples, and so everything becomes mixed up in their minds. And, like the disciples who wished to make moral reflections upon punishment for sin on earth out of the local news of the day, they regard the visible external world as the first theatre of divine vengeance and see in its events the hand of God

punishing or rewarding human beings according to their behaviour. They even wish to see the hand of God in war. They see God as right or justice on earth. They see the hand of God in war and believe that God is on their side and that victory will mean that the will of God is fulfilled. It is this *external*, sense-based idea of religion that is rebuked by Christ. He says that all people suffer the same fate unless they repent. But what is to *repent*?

How is the word to be understood? Already it is possible to discern what the real meaning of the word must be - the word which is such a bad word because it so completely mis-translates the original Greek word. The meaning begins to appear in the very context in which it is used - namely, from what Christ is explaining to his disciples in connection with their way of taking life as the result of the will of God. They have to see life differently. There is another way of looking upon life - and this is the most important thing that anyone can understand. Unless, Christ says, a man 'repents', he is useless and suffers a common fate - that is, a fate common to everyone who has not reached the stage of understanding called *repentance*.

To see the will of God done on earth in everything that happens in life is not to understand what this interesting word 'repentance' means. Only through something called, or mis-called, *repentance*, does a man's attitude to life become right, and as long as he does not *repent* he shares a common fate with all others, good or bad, moral or immoral, civic or uncivic.

In some way everyone takes life wrongly, and unless the initial error is altered, everyone suffers the same fate. Without *repentance*, morally good or bad are equally failures. ' . . . those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye,' Christ asks, 'that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' In Jerusalem there dwelt many morally good and bad, righteous and unrighteous, civic and uncivic, as in any city today, in London, Paris, or Berlin - but everyone perishes in the same way, all alike, unless they repent. ' . . . Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'

The word translated throughout the New Testament as *repentance* is in the Greek *meta-noia* (μετάνοια) which means

*change of mind.* The Greek particle *meta* (μετα) is found in several words of comparatively ordinary usage, such as metaphor, metaphysics, metamorphosis. Let us take metaphor; it means transference of meaning. To speak metaphorically is to speak beyond the literal words, to carry over or beyond and so transfer the meaning of what is said beyond the words used. Metaphysics, again, refers to the study of what is beyond purely observable physical science, such as the study of the nature of being or the theory of knowledge or the fact of consciousness. Metamorphosis is used to describe the transformation of form in insect-life, the transformation of a grub into a butterfly - a transference or transformation of structure into entirely new structure, into something beyond. The particle *meta* therefore indicates transference, or transformation, or *beyondness*.

The other part of this word translated as repentance — *noia* — is from the Greek word *nous* (νοῦς), which means mind. The word *metanoia* therefore has to do with *transformation of the mind* in its essential meaning. Why, then, is the translation repentance inadequate, or indeed, wrong? The English word repentance is derived from the Latin *poenitare* which means 'to feel sorry'. Penitence, feeling sorry, feeling pain or regret - this is a mood experienced by everyone from time to time. But the Greek word *metanoia* stands far above such a meaning, and is not a mere mood. It contains no idea of pain or sorrow. It refers to a *new mind*, not a new heart, for it is impossible to have a new heart without first possessing a new mind. A new mind means an entirely new way of thinking, new ideas, new knowledge, and a new approach to everything in life. Although a great deal has been written about the real meaning of this great word and about its wrong interpretation and although it has been emphasised again and again by scholars that *repentance* does not give the right rendering, recent new and so-called 'colloquial' translations of the New Testament (such as Moffatt's and others) still render the word as 'repentance' and so imply that a moral and not a mental change is indicated.

It is now worth while going back to Christ's words to his disciples about the question of the murdered Galilaeans and the men killed at Siloam in view of this meaning of *metanoia*. The whole conversation becomes clearer. The disciples are



*thinking wrongly* and Christ is answering them not in the sense 'unless they repent' but '*unless they can think quite differently*' - that is, think in a new way. He is saying that otherwise they are bound and fixed and cannot escape from a general fate common to all people who start always from the seen, the apparent, the visible, or, in short, from the senses, and derive their ideas and views from visible evidence. The first step is *metanoia*. The inadequacy of the word repentance can be clearly seen in Paul's letters to the Corinthians. People can be grieved and hurt by life up to the point where they lose all belief and cease even to think, and try to gratify themselves as best they can, or merely give up hope and live as dead things.

More rarely they may begin to reflect on what has happened to them and so come gradually to some new standpoint, to some new way of taking life. Something may begin to start individually in their thought. A new activity of the mind may begin — their minds begin to awaken. In moments of great personal disaster and suffering people often feel that everything that happens in life is unreal, and this is a right understanding of life. It is touching a stage in which *metanoia* is reached - that is, transformation of the mind. Everything appears suddenly in a new light, something makes one understand that all that is happening in life is not the important thing, but what is important is one's attitude. For a moment a turning point is reached in which a revolution of the mind is possible. What was previously passive and governed by the senses, governed by the events of life, no longer submits to the outer world, and begins to have an independent existence. And this rousing of the active mind is what Paul speaks of in the following passage, in which the word repent occurs several times in the English translation although in the Greek the word *metanoia* occurs only once.

Paul writes to the Corinthians as follows: 'For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed unto repentance.' (ii Corinthians vii.8, 9)

In this passage the word *metanoia* occurs only once - in the phrase '*unto repentance*' (eis metanoian), εἰς μετάνοιαν, and the

passage merely shews how inadequate is the word *repentance*. When Paul says, 'I do not repent. . . ' he used a quite different word, *μεταμελομαι*, which is equivalent to the Latin *poenitet me*, which is exactly from what our ordinary word *repentance* comes. Yet these Greek words of such infinitely different values are translated by exactly the same word in English.

It is not sorrow or repenting in any ordinary sense that brings about a change of mind. Man may sorrow, but not to the point of *metanoia*. Yet there is a special kind of suffering that leads to *metanoia* and it is of this suffering that Paul speaks when he contrasts it with the ordinary suffering of life: 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation . . . ; but the sorrow of the world worketh death' (ii Corinthians vii.10). 'Ye sorrowed unto repentance' - it was this right suffering of the Corinthians which brought them to repentance. Dean Stanley, one of the few English commentators who understand the meaning of *metanoia*, remarks: 'The passage shews how inadequate is our word "repentance". *Ye were grieved so as to change your mind or your repentance amounted to a revolution of mind.*' And this is exactly what is meant and in a far deeper sense it is what all life means — to bring a man to the point where, instead of saying blindly to himself 'This cannot be true', he undergoes an awakening, a momentary sense of the unreality of what is happening in the world, and the unreality of its connection with himself. This is *metanoia*: this is the beginning of the transformation of the mind.

The whole point of Christ's remarks to his disciples about the murder of the Galilaeans and the accident at Siloam lies in the idea that the meaning of the phrase, 'Thy will be done on earth', cannot be understood without understanding the word *metanoia* or change of mind. However we may believe that we know what is meant, yet we do not understand it at our present level of thinking. And unless a man separates in himself the world as seen with all its events, and the idea of a supreme meaning for his own existence in visible life, he remains in a state in which *metanoia* or change of mind is impossible. *Repentance*, that is, a new attitude, a totally different way of thinking, can only begin when people realise that God's will is not done on earth. People often say, when they hear of misfortunes happening to others: 'It serves them right.' And everyone has

this standpoint in some degree, however he may think otherwise. Everyone especially who feels he is moral and who understands religion solely as morality, has this point of view. This external view of religion, in which life is regarded as a place of punishment or reward, is based on the idea that God's will is done on earth, and everyone has seen people being treated from this point of view. (I remember one case especially in which a very moral man, who was a medical missionary, treated a girl who was suffering from syphilis exactly in this way, as if she had been punished by God for her sins and therefore should be treated as something vile, and in this particular instance, not worthy to have an anaesthetic for a very painful local operation.) Is it not a fact that most of the savage cruelty, torture, bitterness and evil that marks religious history is based simply on the fundamental error of seeing God's will done on earth and so imagining that one knows what God's will is? Therefore it is of the most vital importance to try to realise what Christ was saying to his disciples in connection with the murdered Galilaeans and the people killed at Siloam. These events had nothing to do with God's will and the disciples were told to consider them from a new standpoint - and this involved, *not repentance* - for why should the disciples *repent*, in the ordinary sense, about the Galilaeans or the men of Siloam - but a *change of mind*. And this change of mind means that a man must no longer think that people on earth are being punished for their sins or that those who do not happen to agree with their own moral views or ideas of right or religious principles are sinners, and, if they happen to undergo misfortunes, are clearly punished by God for being such wicked people. This, Christ is saying very clearly, is an entirely wrong attitude to life. Whether people are religious or not, they often believe that those who do not agree with them, in political ideas, or moral or scientific or social ideas, apart from religious ideas, are wicked, and they assume towards them an attitude of special distinction or superiority, and even think they should be punished or destroyed. Their belief is from life and rests upon life - that is, it is external and not an inner question *within themselves*. And unless this viewpoint is entirely abandoned, the first beginning of a man's inner evolution cannot take place.

For it makes no difference whether a person judges others by his religion or by his politics or by morality or by anything else. The point is that all that belongs to life, all that belongs to the external world, witnessed through our meagre senses, is not the place from which a man can start who wishes to undergo this transformation which Christ teaches first as *metanoia* and later as re-birth. We have to speak of re-birth later, but it must be noticed that *metanoia* or change of thinking is the first stage. And the first example of this change of thinking is to cease to imagine that God's will is done on earth. So the phrase in the Lord's Prayer: 'Thy will be done on earth' — when taken in conjunction with what Christ said to his disciples, when obviously they were taking the point of view that the Galilaeans and the people at Siloam were punished for their sins by what happened to them, and clearly were at that level of mentality from which they thought that God's will actually was done on earth and that everything that happened on earth was the result of God's will - this phrase, in the Lord's Prayer, means something of incalculable importance. What Christ really says is: 'Unless you change your minds, you will all perish just in the same way.' This is the first clear example of what Christ taught of the meaning of the extremely difficult word *metanoia*. The extraordinary meanness in human understanding which makes a man think that if another man is not of his persuasion and suffers hardship it is because it serves him right, is based on the idea that outer life and the evils of the world are a sign of meaning. And meanness signifies a lack of sufficient meaning. However we understand the supreme symbol of meaning - namely, ultimately God - and whether we actually believe in God or not, everyone acts personally from what he takes as his meaning. For without meaning no one can exist. A meaningless existence is insupportable. So it is clear that everyone lives by his own meaning, whatever it may be, and therefore sees in life what relates to his own meaning. But Christ says that to find meaning in life, in the sense of supreme meaning or God acting in life, is quite wrong. The highest meaning exists apart from the events that happen in life, and unless a man can *change his mind* in this respect, he suffers a common fate with the good and bad in life. He has not begun to find the right basis to start

from. That is to say, if we all believe in God, in this sense, as the source of meaning, and we believe that our personal existences have a special meaning and we seek this special meaning in outer life, seeing rewards and punishments in life as full of the highest meaning, we start from the wrong basis. So it follows that the strange word *metanoia* is of such importance.

It is not the external world that a man must start from. If he does - as everyone does - he is not yet capable of any further change, any further evolution. To find meaning in external life, to take what meaning one finds in external life and to judge from it, according to one's upbringing - all this is contrary to *metanoia*. It is about this common view of life that Christ is speaking to his disciples when he emphasises how necessary is *metanoia* - that is, *change of mind*. But the point is that no private individual is free from this view of things. In fact, every private individual keeps up his own self-esteem and self-adoration from his outer beliefs, from a groundwork formed in him in his early years, from a feeling that he is better than others, whether he is placed in a higher or lower position in life. And everyone believes, religiously or otherwise, that the external world is the theatre of moral action, in which we must prove, by contempt or violence or persecution, that we are always right. So everyone sees ultimate meaning - and that is 'God' - in external life and acts accordingly. Moral people act in this way, political people in this way, and so on. It is extremely difficult to separate oneself from this view of things. But to begin to do so is to begin to practise *change of mind*, or *metanoia*. Everyone judges life, without ever knowing he does, according to his morals, scruples, principles and so on, and these are all based on the view that outer life is the source of everything. But Christ says that nothing can be got in this way from life as we see it. What happens in outer life is no guide to anything. But people think that life itself is the whole question; and they do not see that, whatever they do, life remains always the same, and they fail to grasp that life is by its very nature something that can bring a man to *metanoia* - the supreme goal. It is not a place where 'God's will is done' - hence the prayer 'Thy will be done on earth'. And unless a man understands what this phrase means and begins to see all its implications he does not understand what he is

saying when he repeats the Lord's Prayer. And it is not only this phrase but every phrase which has to be understood in the Lord's Prayer, so that a man, saying the Lord's Prayer, would have to be in the highest state of consciousness, understanding the value of every word and phrase to make it significant, that is, to make it prayer in the real meaning of prayer. This would be *metanoia* in the fullest sense.

## PART TWO

FROM the standpoint of the New Testament, what is the nature of the world and the meaning of our existence upon it? Paul says: 'The creation was subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it. . . ' (Romans viii.20). Paul is speaking of the state of things on earth. Put thus, it is a very strange and startling idea. He teaches that life on earth is not for man's good and is not directed by the good, and that everything on earth merely happens. Paul does not say that things on this earth are right or intentional or governed by a supreme God. On the contrary, he says, quite openly, that things on this earth are 'subject to vanity', not because the inhabitants wish it, 'but by reason of him who subjected it'. This implies a power who, in regard to creation on this small earth, is *inimical* to man. If we suppose that all that has power over creation on earth is to be called by the name God and if at the same time we believe that *God* is *One* and also all *Good*, this statement of Paul is incomprehensible. How, if a supreme God rules directly all the phenomenally created worlds and his will reaches them directly, can it be said that creation is subjected to 'vanity', against its will? If Paul is preaching the idea of *Good*, the fundamental conception of a supreme and good force acting on all living things, how can he make so strange a statement? Man, he says, as part of creation, is forcibly subjected to vanity against his will. How is it possible, then, to entertain the view that God is *Good*? Certainly, looking at life and its events, and believing that a supremely good God directs all things, it is impossible to explain even a fraction of the incidents that take place on the earth. But Paul does not say that the power acting on this created earth, with all its creatures, is good. Actually he speaks of a 'God of this world' (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου), who 'blinds the minds of men' (ii Corinthians iv.4). Man, as part of creation, has been *subjected to vanity* and is under some power, some influence, some good, that acts against his will, against what he wants. The creature was subjected to vanity *not of its own will*. By whose will? 'By reason of him who subjected it.' Paul does not call him *God*. What

explanation does Paul give? The creation was subjected to vanity (in the Greek *ματαιοτης*; this means *faultiness, uselessness, meaninglessness* or in the Latin *frustration, in-vainness*). Paul adds, *in the hope that it might escape from bondage, into liberty* ('into the liberty of the glory of the children of God'). We ourselves, he says, are all in this situation. Not only, he continues, 'the whole creation groans and travails in pain together . . . not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves' - as if confined in a narrow prison - 'awaiting our adoption' - as Sons of God.

The useless *suffering* of creation, of the world, is recognised. No attempt is made to hide it or to say that it is the best of worlds. All this suffering, all this pain, all this misery, all this death, destruction and meaninglessness is not explained in terms of itself. Life is not explicable *as such*. It cannot, as such, be understood. Another *idea* is concealed behind its visible outward appearance, an idea not derived from the deductions we can make from what we see, but an idea for which there is no sense-proof.



## PART THREE

IF we wish to begin to understand the technical meaning of the teaching in the Gospels, it is necessary to get rid of all sentimental views about its import. The inner meaning of Christ's teaching is not sentimental. It has nothing to do with comforting weak and useless people or encouraging slave-morality. The sentimental liberties taken in literature and art and poetry that have grown up around the teaching of Christ are merely an example of the complete misunderstanding of what this tremendous and ruthless teaching meant.

Christ's teaching is about a possible individual evolution in a man.

If we try to find the first technical word - or rather, technically speaking, the first stage that it is necessary for a man to reach before anything further is possible in his development - it lies exactly, as we have seen, in the difficult word *metanoia*. John the Baptist, the herald of the new message, is portrayed as teaching *repentance* - that is, *metanoia* or change of mind, or transformation of thinking. Unless a person begins to think in some entirely new way he cannot enter upon all that follows in the teaching of Christ. Everything in the Gospels depends on this, and no one can understand what the whole teaching, which is wrapped up in such difficult parables and paradoxes, points to, unless this starting point is grasped.

Christ, mentioning one meaning of the word to his disciples, taught a further stage called technically *re-birth* following on *change of mind*. But both taught still another idea. John came preaching *metanoia* and the 'Kingdom of Heaven' and Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, taught *re-birth* and the 'Kingdom of Heaven'.

What we have to grasp is that *metanoia* - change of mind - is impossible unless another idea is grasped - the idea of the 'Kingdom of Heaven'. This idea is impossible to grasp unless the concept of the individual evolution of a man is realised - i.e. that everyone on this planet is capable of a certain inner growth and individual development, and that this is his true significance and his deepest meaning, and begins with *metanoia*.

But change of mind is useless, impossible, impracticable, save in view of this other idea that makes a change of mind possible and gives it its meaning and its fulfilment. If life on this earth is all, then *metanoia* is impossible. And this other idea makes all man-invented psychology unimportant and arbitrary. For if a man is born on earth as an individual capable of undergoing a transformation latent in him, comparable to the transformation of a grub into a winged insect, which possibility is latent in the grub, then a true and genuine psychology of man can and does exist - a psychology of transformation of oneself. But if not, all psychological systems are so much temporary fashion and invention. So if we wish to begin to understand what the Gospels are about, it must be understood that they are about a possible inner development or transformation of man, and that this begins with *metanoia* as its starting-point. And as we have seen, this *metanoia* begins with seeing that God's will is not being done on earth, which means, in other words, that a man ceases to find his supreme meaning in the outer events of life and in all he has undergone in life. Where then does he find it? He finds it in an idea that is apart from external life and is called the 'Kingdom of Heaven'. So it is not surprising that after Christ has explained to his disciples that it is useless to try to see God's will being done in life's accidents and catastrophes, and tells them that change of mind in their attitude and thinking is essential, he at once goes on to speak of the 'Kingdom of Heaven' by means of a parable. He has just said that the men killed at Siloam were not worse offenders than the rest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and has repeated the words: 'I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish', and immediately goes on to tell this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.' (Luke xiii.6-9)

What possible connection can this parable have with the

text immediately preceding it? How can it bear upon the significance of the words, 'Unless you repent, ye shall all likewise perish'? The parable, as will be seen clearly later, is one dealing with the 'Kingdom of Heaven', which is never spoken of in a direct way but is always 'likened unto' or compared with something, and so indicated by an illustration, by some story or by a familiar everyday image. A parable is a comparison. In relation to the idea of the 'Kingdom of Heaven', man is often compared with a tree capable of bearing fruit, or mankind as a whole with a vineyard. The parable becomes comprehensible in its connection with the previous verses if we have realised something of the meaning of the words addressed by Christ to his disciples. Mankind is like a tree or a vineyard capable of producing fruit and unless this fruit is produced, the vineyard is in danger of being exterminated as useless - hence the words 'ye shall all likewise perish'.

The first step, the first stage of man's producing fruit is *metanoia* — that is, of undergoing some transformation of mind that causes him no longer to seek for God's will being done on earth or to take external life as his chief source of meaning or to dwell on what has happened to him or to others in outer life, but to turn to an absolutely new idea, and so to an absolutely new way of thinking, to a change of mind, given by the idea that the real meaning of humanity or man is comparable to a fig tree or vineyard whose object is to produce fruit - that is, in the case of a man, to reach a new inner state, within himself, which is called the '*Kingdom of Heaven*'. The real meaning of human life on earth is not to be found in external life, or in the things of life, but in the idea of a transformation which, happening within a man, leads to a state called the '*Kingdom of Heaven*'. So all the troubles and misfortunes, all the private misery and heartaches, all the disappointments and vexations, and all the unhappiness, as well as all the happiness that everyone experiences in life, are, seen in the light of the '*Kingdom of Heaven*', nothing but a means to an end, and in themselves have no meaning at all, and have nothing to do with God's will. It is this new idea, this change of mind, that is indicated by the word *metanoia*, which is so poorly and inadequately translated as *repentance*.

With this new attitude to life, in view of the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven, everyone is changed. People's whole lives are changed. The entire meaning of their lives is changed and all that happens to them, all their tragedies, all their secret discontents and painful thoughts and sense of failure, is transformed - once external life is seen to be not the main issue or where we must believe that all meaning lies or where, indeed, God's will is acting. This is *metanoia* in relation to the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven.

## PART FOUR

### THE IDEA OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

THE first notion that can be formed of the 'Kingdom of Heaven' is that it is a place where the will of God is done: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' But as a rule people suppose not only that God's will is done on earth but that what is meant by Heaven is some hereafter which everyone who has led a good life passes into at death, and it is always contrasted with the idea of Hell, which again is always taken, not as a possible state that a man may reach on earth, but a place to which wicked and bad people go eventually after they die. A great many important ideas in the Gospels are taken precisely in this way, as referring to a hereafter in time, and no connection at all is made with a man living on the earth now - that is, with a man existing at the present moment.

But a man living on the earth now can, at different moments, be in a better or worse state.

He can for a moment touch a better state of himself, from which he sees everything in a better light, or a worse state, from which he sees everything in a worse way. He can rise or fall vertically. He can see things from a higher level or a lower level.

Everyone is aware of this fact.

And this rising and falling, these moments of insight and of darkness, which characterise everyone's life, have nothing to do with time and a hereafter, but are states that a man is capable of reaching in himself now. They belong to a movement, upwards and downwards, within a man, and so are, as it were, vertical.

When a man is in an evil state, such as a state of suspicion, everything is connected in one way. When circumstances change his state, he sees everything connected quite differently. This is such a common experience that it is unnecessary to emphasise its truth. But the *future* of a man in a state of suspicion, as regards states or levels of understanding, is not in time but within him. He may be dragged increasingly downwards by his suspicion until eventually he acts in some violent

and irrevocable way. His true future is to reach another state of himself and this future which is psychological does not lie hereafter, in the mere passage of days - that is, in time - but in a change within himself. So a man has always two futures, one in passing time and the other in change of state. And it is this latter future, in the state of a man, that is spoken of in almost every line of the Gospels. People ordinarily think that time is progress, and that the mere passage of days and years and centuries will and even must lead to a better condition of affairs. Or, in the case of themselves, they hope and believe that next year or the year after, everything will be different. But it is very difficult to believe that this is so. Life remains much the same. And as a person ages, things do not improve. Time is not the factor that brings about a transformation either in the general level of life or in an individual. But here there is a deep-seated illusion that acts upon everyone. Tomorrow will be different. Tomorrow will bring about better conditions of affairs. And this illusion, which is so complex that it is impossible to disentangle all the currents of thought and emotion which enter into it, governs mankind and every single person in one way or another. Everyone, finding life, privately, so difficult and really impossible to grasp, naturally feels that there is always one thing that remains open - namely, tomorrow. Or, on the other hand, thinking that he should try to do something, and make some effort, he feels again that there is always tomorrow. Every man quite sincerely and genuinely thinks of tomorrow as an opportunity to do what he feels he should do and he escapes from the burden, that most people feel, of his own shortcomings, by the aid of tomorrow.

But the most important thing is that people think of their lives in terms of past, present and future. They think of their lives in terms of time, not of state. So it is very easy to believe that a better state can be reached eventually, or in some hereafter. But the hereafter of anyone is not merely in time, but in himself, and consists in changing his state now, at the moment when he realises the state he is in.

To return to the example of suspicion - a man begins to pass into a state of suspicion and, as it continues, begins to consent more and more to the ideas and connections of things that this

state suggests to him. Every psychiatrist knows very well that once this state passes beyond a certain indefinable point, insanity is close at hand - in fact, it is diagnostic. What is this man's *true future*? Is it in time or in some other direction? In time his future is an increasing belief in the hypnotic ideas that his state induces. But another future of the man is possible, *now*, namely, the reaching of a better state. This future, which is not in future time but now, can be thought of as vertical to time - as belonging to an upright line, indicating higher and lower states, like a scale or ladder. If we imagine time, diagrammatically, drawn as a horizontal line - that is, a line representing past, present and future - this vertical line, entering a man at any moment of time, indicates the possibility of a higher or lower state of himself at that moment of time. And if we wish to understand anything about the Gospels, this imaginary upright line, indicating the possible states of man, must be grasped, for the Gospels are all about a man reaching a higher state of himself, not externally in the world, but in himself in this life, and not in a hereafter, but now.

But the meaning implied by the word *metanoia* is far more than mere temporary change of state. A man who tries to restrain himself and struggles not to go with what he believes is his worst side and strives to keep to what he regards as good or the path of duty and to live what he believes to be a righteous life, does not reach the stage of *metanoia*. And even though he may feel convinced that his mode of life is not due to the desire to feel meritorious, or to be an example in the eyes of other people, or to the fear of the police, or of social contempt, or of losing his reputation as a respected man, but that it is really due to himself, yet he does not undergo any change of mind. And, as it was said, there must have been many people in Jerusalem who led good and moral lives, yet Christ's words 'unless ye repent' — that is, undergo a change of mind — 'ye shall all likewise perish' shew that something else is meant.

Here lies one of the deepest ideas in the psychological teaching of the Gospels. A radical permanent transformation is taught as being possible and *metanoia* is the technical description of it. But a man cannot reach a permanent higher level of himself unless there is built up in him a connection of ideas

that can gradually lift him beyond his present level. The idea of the Kingdom of Heaven is therefore a supreme idea in this respect. It represents the higher Good. It stands beyond visible life and material truth and physical theories and, however dimly conceived, opens a direction in a man's mind that is new and brings about new connections in his thoughts and feelings and new communications in his understanding. The idea of the self-evolution of man, the idea of *metanoia* or transformation of mind, and the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven are all connected and related ideas. What must be understood is that for this self-evolution and transformation to begin a man must cease to follow only the evidence of the senses. He must give up deductions from nature and phenomena and events and occurrences of life. He must no longer see in external life the full meaning of his own life or strive to find it outside himself, nor must he see the will of God being done in life on earth. It must be realised that a man who has come to the conclusion that there can be nothing higher than what he represents, and that there is no 'God' because of the bad and evil state of the world, is in the same situation, psychologically speaking, as the disciples who thought everything that happened on earth was due to the will of God.

The idea of *metanoia* and the Kingdom of God lies in another direction. A man must turn round from the world and see himself. Many of the parables in the Gospels deal with this, and one of the most significant is the parable of the prodigal son. Just before the parable, which is about *metanoia*, is given, Christ is shewn as speaking of the importance of 'repentance'. He remarks to his hearers that 'joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance'; and again, 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth'. Then he relates the following parable: A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine



in that land: and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.' (Luke xv.11-32)

In this great parable it is shewn how a man turns round in himself from seeking everything in life and changes his direction. And it is interesting to observe that in this parable the prodigal son was in the state of having lost himself as is shewn by the

phrase 'And when he came to himself' or, more literally, 'When he came into himself (*εἰς ἑαυτον δε ἐλθων*).

But people very often connect some idea of literal profligacy, as of spending money and so wasting an inheritance, with the parable, and picture a young man actually reduced to poverty and actually eating husks. They do not think that this refers to themselves, to a psychological state of themselves, in fact, to a state reached by everyone - a state where a man loses himself and all the external forms of life and outer things of life nourish him as little as do husks.

It has already been said that a parable is a comparison. Its physical, literal or sensual meaning is one thing, but its real meaning lies on a level above the senses. A parable is thus a transforming-machine between two levels of meaning. It has its literal meaning, and also another psychological meaning. It is a medium through which greater meaning can be indicated apart from the words or images used in it, which have their own lesser meaning, and for this reason it is used throughout the Gospels. The meaning of a parable is always psychological, and never literal or physical.

A parable thus bridges two levels of meaning, sensual and psychological. In one place it is said that Christ spoke to the multitude only in parables, but gave direct teaching to his own disciples in private. And it must be recalled that Christ is continually said to have told his hearers that they did not understand what he was saying because they had no ears to hear with and no eyes to see with - that is, their understanding was shut, and all internal or psychological meaning was incomprehensible to them and everything was taken quite literally, as relating to the realm of external, physical facts and events.

The parable of the prodigal son is not about a young man who squanders his fortune. It is about everyone born on this earth. But the last part does not by any means refer to everyone because only a few realise their situation and 'come to themselves'. This is the moment of *metanoia*. And it must be noticed here that the prodigal son does not 'repent' but 'comes to himself and realising his situation seeks to begin to escape from the power of external things over him. There is no mention of

repentance, but only of a certain change of mind, called here 'coming to oneself' and referred to, just before the parable is given, as *metanoia* - that is, as a transformation in thinking, as an entirely new way of taking life.

# Nicodemus

## PART ONE

NICODEMUS, a Pharisee and ruler, came by night to Christ, and the state of obscurity in which he was is shewn in the conversation which follows, given in the Gospel of John (iii.2-10).

"Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these miracles which you are doing, unless God is with him."

"In very truth I tell you," answered Jesus, "that unless a man is born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"How is it possible", Nicodemus asked, "for a man to be born when he is old? Can he a second time enter his mother's womb and be born?"

"In very truth I tell you," replied Jesus, "that unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished at my telling you, 'You must all be born anew'. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

"How is all this possible?" asked Nicodemus.

"Are you," replied Jesus, " 'the Teacher of Israel', and yet do you not understand these things?" "

There is something strange in the sequence of these words, especially at the beginning. What does Nicodemus mean and what does Christ mean? Nicodemus has not asked a question, yet Christ is said to answer him. What is he answering? It is not obvious at first sight that anything needs to be answered in the preliminary words which are put into the mouth of Nicodemus. In this narrative of a supposed conversation at night between the Pharisee and Christ, Nicodemus is shewn as saying, earnestly and without any intention of flattery, that he has seen the miracles done by Christ and is therefore convinced that Christ is a teacher come from God. 'We know', he says, 'that you are a teacher come from God, because no one can do these miracles

which you are doing, unless God is with him.' This seems a reasonable statement requiring no answer, and one that is going to lead on to some actual question or perhaps a confession or a request for advice. But it is just at this point that Christ is described as interrupting him by an answer. What was the reason of this interruption and what was there in the preliminary words of Nicodemus that it was necessary to answer? It might be supposed that Christ would have agreed with Nicodemus and have said to him, in so many words, that he was quite right in his conclusion and that the miracles were convincing evidence that he was a teacher come from God. But, instead, Christ says something that is apparently irrelevant and it is this apparently irrelevant and uncalled for answer that gives the passage a strange quality, as if it were out of focus, as if two entirely differing meanings were forced together. And it is just in this fact that the significance of the passage lies. The standpoint of Nicodemus and the standpoint of Christ are brought into open collision at the outset in two briefly formulated sentences in order to shew the extraordinary difference between them, and, like everything else in the Gospels, the passage is in the nature of a *test* for the understanding of whoever reads it. In the two opening verses of the conversation the words follow one another smoothly, but the meanings involved in them are contrary, and this fact is brought out into greater clearness subsequently in the rest of the passage when Nicodemus is shewn as not understanding anything at all of what Christ is speaking about.

What is the standpoint of Nicodemus? It is a standpoint which has its origin in the senses. Nicodemus begins from what he has seen with his physical eyes, and presumably he wishes to build up his belief in Christ's teaching from this starting-point. He has seen miracles done and signs wrought and this evidence of the senses decides his belief in Christ. He does not start from anything he has seen internally but from what he has seen externally. Christ corrects him. Nicodemus had not even yet asked a question but he had begun to talk *in a certain entirely wrong way*; and this is what is taken up by Christ. Christ does

not directly say that Nicodemus is quite wrong in his approach, but implies it by his answer. He does not actually say to Nicodemus that it is useless beginning with visible proofs of God but implies that the whole question is one that concerns *man*. He says: 'In very truth I tell you, that unless a man is born anew . . . ' he cannot 'see' God. That is, Christ says to Nicodemus, that only a new man, *another kind of man*, can know anything about God. But Nicodemus, searching for outer evidence of God's manifestations and impressed by the miracles, cannot take in what is meant. He thinks that the whole question is to find a visible outside proof that 'God' exists, or is manifested in this or that person. And he wishes, quite earnestly, to start from such seen and so outer evidence. So, having seen the miracles, he felt that Christ must at least be a remarkable person and, in fact, a divine man.

Everyone naturally tends to think like this and start from this point and regard the evidence of the seen as final proof, because the mind is first developed by contact with objects of sense and so is based naturally on the seen world. Nicodemus' faith starts from the sensual and so from what is outside, and Christ shews here that this is impossible. Whatever is of the senses and verifiable by them is not the right starting-point. If man is capable of undergoing an inner development, an individual transformation, here technically called re-birth, it is clear from what Christ implies that it cannot begin from the evidence of the seen and so can have no starting-point in life. So that whatever we may imagine about the meaning of re-birth, it is obvious that we can already understand one thing - that it can only begin with something internal, something seen within a man, something understood and realised internally, and cannot begin from the worship of anything outside a man, or from any conviction reached by external evidence, such as miracles, or by anything belonging to external life, or, in short, anything coming from outside through the channels of the five external senses.

## PART TWO

'How is it possible', Nicodemus asked, 'for a man to be born when he is old? Can he a second time enter his mother's womb and be born?'

The idea of re-birth is taken literally in terms of sense by Nicodemus. To be born again must mean, to his mind, to be born physically again, to enter physically again the womb of one's own mother and once more find oneself on the earth, starting life afresh as an infant. But this idea - the idea of starting afresh, of being actually born physically again in this sense from the *same* mother - is an idea that exists historically in the thought of humanity.

The repetition of the *same* life, the idea that everything repeats itself, that time is curved and so a circle, coming back to the same point, where everything recurs again, just as it was before, has existed as a definite idea and has been referred to in the past by many ancient writers and believed in by many people. This is not the same idea as reincarnation. *Time as a circle*, that is, time as bringing back the past and restoring everything once more — in fact, the idea of the *recurrence of all things* — is a very old idea, going back to the beginning of our western culture, and, in fact, probably going back to Pythagoras, and one that has been revived at different times and sometimes brought forward as one explanation of life and of people's actions, differences, talents and destinies. This idea, that Nicodemus *seems* to touch, or at least seems to be made to touch by John, based on the recurrence of all things, accounts for many things in life that are otherwise difficult to account for. A man may *remember* his life - the life he has lived before and is now living again - or he may remember nothing. But if he *remembers*, he knows beforehand - that is, he senses what is going to happen, because it has happened before - and there remains in him some dim feeling, some vague sense of the future. Or he finds that very early in life he seems to be more ready, more interested, more able to grasp and understand certain sides of life that seem familiar, or to realise what he wants to do, so that sometimes he may develop very early, as a



musician, a writer, an artist, or a 'man of destiny', as it is called, or perhaps merely as a man who feels something deeply, but does not know or has forgotten what to do, or he may remember only what not to do.

In this literal sense a man, or rather all men, may be *born again*, physically, from the same mother, and once more find themselves *in the same time*, in the same events, in the same historical period; and if a man remembers something, through former suffering, or through some awakened interest, he will know more of some aspect of his time than others and, without *directly* knowing, he will feel what he has to do and to what course he must devote himself and what he must avoid; and he may even know how to act in some emergency, because it all happened before. From this point of view all events, all wars, all the incidents belonging to a particular time, have happened again and again and are always happening in *Time* itself. The knowledge which comes from a memory of having 'done all this before', strange, vague and probably always indirect, the memory that *all this has happened before* and that certain things must inevitably happen once more will make a man feel that he is not placed in life as others are, who remember nothing, but that there is something different in him, something authoritative that he must respond to, whether it leads him to success or failure. And such a man will not believe that a single life explains him, or others, or that everyone begins life at birth.

In this sense - that is, in the sense of the physical, literal recurrence of all things - a man will certainly again enter his own mother's womb. And in this sense, if death means that everyone returns at once to the moment of his birth and is again born, literally, at the same time as he has always been born - the same year, the same day and the same hour - then a man can be said to enter again 'when he is old' into his mother's womb and once more be born into the same life, as a baby. And even if he remembers nothing, he will do, and be able to do more easily, what he did before, *whether good or bad*. And if he feels things before they come, the knowledge of the future will really be a knowledge of the past - of what he has lived in and experienced before - because, if time is curved and forms a circle, then there is no real past or future, since

everything will turn in its own circle of time, and the events of the past will always return, and so become the future, and the events of the future will always be what has already been, and so the past. So past and future will be relative terms, according to one's position in the circle of one's own life - that is, the shifting moment we call the present, which we can never catch, never really live in, never really see, save through our senses, which give us only the present moment - as if, perhaps, we were looking through a slit at a vast inconceivable world standing in an eternal present, in all the dimensions of 'Time', in which all we call past, present, and future is simultaneous in existence - and seeing it only in a brief way, as a section, a slice, as a world limited to three dimensions moving under the power of an ungraspable mysterious engine called Time, which always silently hurries us on, whether asleep or awake, from everything we had and from everything we felt or thought, forcing us to live our lives and reach the moment of death.

The remark of Nicodemus: 'Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb?' may not therefore have been given in John's account without intention. The idea of literal recurrence may have been introduced here purposely. The Gospels were not written from the point of view of what, actually, in a narrow historical sense, occurred. Everything in the Gospels was written in order to convey meaning or illustrate meaning. The important thing, whether it is a question of parable, incident, or conversation, is to grasp what is *meant*. The Gospels are only secondarily historical as regards truth. Primarily they convey truth of another order. Whether the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus by night actually took place is unimportant because the importance of everything mentioned in the Gospels lies not in historical truth, but in meaning. That is to say, an incident, which may or may not have happened, was used to bring forward some *psychological* aspect and indicate some meaning in relation to the main teaching given by Christ. So, in a certain sense, the Gospels are invented and the incidents are grouped in such a way as to convey meaning rather than to record literal historical truth. Nicodemus did not necessarily speak as he did. He may not even have met Christ. Obviously he is used by John as a *type* of man in superficial

touch with Christ's teaching, to shew how such a type reacts to it.

The Gospels are very concentrated meaning, outwardly clothed in incident and event, where actual parable is not used. And all the teaching is given in a high form of paradox because it was a teaching not easily understood and not possible to give in direct form. Another language was necessary to convey the ideas of which Christ spoke, a language which ordinary mankind - that is, people as we are - cannot take in, and so parable, incident and illustration were used as a medium.

Nicodemus appears in the Gospels as a man who can only understand Christ's teaching in a literal way and he is also a man who certainly believed that an earthly Kingdom of Heaven was coming, in which a real, physical King would reign, and probably kill off everyone who did not agree with what Nicodemus felt was right. It is so obvious that Christ is trying to take Nicodemus off the level of physical interpretation and explain to him that man as he is, with all his prejudices and dislikes and all the illusions of the senses, is not a person who can 'see' God and that he must first of all undergo a process called 're-birth' before he can even begin to believe he knows or understands anything of God's will. Another *level of being* is necessary before anything is possible in regard to speech of 'God'. So Christ says to Nicodemus 'unless a man is born anew' — that is, unless he is born as a new man and becomes actually another kind of man — he cannot see God — that is, he cannot even imagine what 'God' is.

But people wish to realise 'God' on their own level of being, and many believe they can talk of God and God's will, and people preach and write about God's will, as if they know exactly what God's will means, without even troubling themselves with the meaning of the Lord's Prayer: '*May thy will be done on earth.*' They imagine not only that God's will is done on earth and that if their friends suffer misfortune it signifies that God's will is being done towards them, as a punishment, but they suppose that they know about God and what God wishes, and listen to sermons about God's wishes, and even feel superior towards all those who do not act in a religious way, according to their ideas, or go to the same churches. This is the

usual situation in life of that thing called 'religion'. But Christ taught no religion. He taught *re-birth*. And the whole meaning of the Gospels is *metanoia* and *re-birth*. But because no one understands that there is anything so specific and real behind what Christ taught and because everything Christ clearly and specifically taught was turned into 'religion', the whole meaning of his teaching was changed into something else — something that was merely a matter of argument, of division, of sectarianism, and so of eventual violent and bloody persecutions, and horrible wars. All this was due to not *understanding* the teaching of Christ. It was inevitable because what Christ taught and what meanings lie hidden in the Gospel narrative are *beyond mankind* because he spoke of a *higher level of man*, of a development of man beyond the level he is at, whatever sort of man he is, or believes that he is.

## PART THREE

WHAT does it mean that a man must be born anew? How can a man in this life, surrounded by all the overpowering phenomena, all the changing events, of the external world, be born anew and become a new man, another kind of man, a different man? A man, Christ says to Nicodemus, is born of 'flesh' and 'water' as he is, and to become a different man, a man born anew, he must be born of 'water' and 'spirit'. And elsewhere in the New Testament, it is shewn that a man must die to himself as he is before he can be born anew. That is, he must die to the 'flesh' before he is born of the 'spirit'. But these words, which have so often been listened to by hundreds and thousands of people so easily become merely words and give only the satisfaction of familiarity, of being recognised, and nothing else.

What does 'flesh' mean, and what is 'water', and what is 'spirit'?

People may think they at least understand what 'flesh' means and that dying to the 'flesh' or overcoming the 'flesh' means to subject the body to some discipline or to starve it or to give up all physical pleasures. This is probably what is most usually understood by going against the 'flesh'. Certainly many people understand it in this way, and think of anchorites, hermits and saints merely as people who have made this their main aim, hoping to reach some higher level, some higher development, of themselves by such means. Nothing more absurd could be imagined, for no one, starting only from this external viewpoint, can ever reach anything or has ever reached anything. Such people have not grasped the meaning of a phrase used by Christ, in another place, when he speaks of those who wish to follow his teaching. He says that in order to follow him - that is, his teaching - the teaching of re-birth - 'a man must deny himself. But people usually fancy this means to deny themselves of something external, of comforts, of perhaps something that they are especially fond of. They do not grasp that for a man to deny himself, he must deny *himself*.

In the passage in which Christ utters these words (Matthew xvi. 24), the literal Greek means that a man must *utterly deny*

*himself* (ἀπαρνησάσθω εαυτόν). And it is obvious that if man is capable of a further development that is latent in him and so of reaching a higher level of himself, he cannot remain the *same* man, the same 'himself and yet undergo this inner change. For to change internally, to change oneself, does not mean to add something on to what one is already, as a man adds something to his knowledge by taking up a new subject. The idea of transformation has nothing to do with addition. The Greek word *meta-morphosis* (μεταμορφοομαι) — used by Matthew, translated as 'transfiguration' (xvii.2), and by Paul in the passage where he says: 'Be not fashioned according to the world but be ye transformed by the entire renewal of your minds . . . ' (Romans xii.2) - means an entire transformation of mind. In the experiments nature has made in the field of insect-transformation, the metamorphosis of a grub into a butterfly is not a new addition to the grub, as the addition of wings, but a transformation. Change in the sense of mere growth and decay or increase and decrease exists everywhere in the universe; but there also exists everywhere another order of change, the phenomenon of transformation. All chemistry is transformation, and so, in a sense, miraculous. The fire burning in the hearth is transformation. The development of a chicken within an egg is transformation. The growth of a human being from a cell is transformation. The transformation of a cell into a man or of a grub into a butterfly belongs to nature, whereas the transformation spoken of by Christ does not belong to nature. All that we have discovered about nature and this form of evolution and transformation belongs to a quite different order from what is spoken of in the Gospels and in many other writings more ancient than they are. It is not astonishing to think that since nature brings about transformation by its own slow and gradual processes there is also in the life of the mind, feeling and consciousness, a process of a similar kind whose object is to bring about a further transformation. The fact that transformation is found in the external world, in the phenomenal world, in the natural world, inevitably suggests that there is also transformation in the psychological, the mental, the emotional world, the world that everyone really lives in. It is this transformation of which Christ speaks to Nicodemus.

This transformation - or re-birth - if we try to understand what is possible concerning it - depends on a man's no longer being in or of the 'flesh'. He is, as he is, of 'flesh' and 'water'. He can become of 'water' and 'spirit'. That means that one connecting element or one principle or factor remains in this transformation - namely, '*water*'. All these terms are clearly technical terms. That is, they belonged to a special language understood by those who were in close touch with Christ. But if we consider the significance of the term *metanoia*, we will be able to grasp that the 'flesh' refers to the 'mind of the flesh' - a term actually used in the New Testament - and that Nicodemus represented, by his literal attitude, the mind of the flesh - that is, the mind based on the external senses, turned outwards to life or 'fashioned according to the world'. Something far more subtle than mere vanity and worldliness is meant here. The deeper meaning does not lie in such considerations. The mind fed only upon the 'flesh' - upon the food supplied by the senses - cannot make contact with the 'spirit'. The first thing we must notice is that if a man must deny *himself*- that is, all the ideas he has of himself, all the forms of imagination he has of himself and all the illusions about himself that make him think he is what he supposes - then the 'flesh' cannot help him to change. For no one can see into himself with the sense-organs provided for contact with the external world and no one can even begin to see 'himself by external observation. The mind based on the senses cannot bring him to the right place from which to start and so he will be like Nicodemus, who starts outside himself and is corrected by Christ who tells him that the whole point is that a man can be re-born - and so must begin from within - in other words, from 'himself and not from observed miracles or deductions about God from the outer evidence of the senses.

## PART FOUR

### THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

WHAT is meant by the word *water*? In the phrase: 'Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven' the word obviously has a special meaning and belongs to a language of words used in a particular way. Nothing is said in the conversation between Nicodemus and Christ to shew what it means. But it is used in other passages in the New Testament in a special way, as for example in the conversation between Christ and the woman of Samaria who had come to draw water at Jacob's well. In this conversation, which resembles in some points the conversation with Nicodemus, there is an obvious play of meaning on the word *water*. The passage is given in Weymouth's translation as follows:

Jesus, tired out with his journey, sat down by the well to rest. It was about noon.

Presently there came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus asked her to give him some water; for his disciples were gone to the town to buy provisions.

'How is it', replied the woman, 'that a Jew like you asks me who am a Samaritan woman, for water?'

(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

'If you had known God's free gift,' replied Jesus, 'and who it is that said to you, "Give me some water," you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.'

'Sir,' she said, 'you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; so where can you get the living water from? Are you greater than our forefather Jacob, who gave us the well, and himself drank from it, as did also his sons and his cattle?'

'Every one,' replied Jesus, 'who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water that I shall give him will never, never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become a fountain within him of water springing up for eternal life.'

'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me that water, that I may never be thirsty, nor continually be coming all the way here to draw water.'

'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus; 'and come back.'

'I have no husband,' she replied.

'You rightly say that you have no husband,' said Jesus; 'for you



have had five husbands, and the man you have at present is not your husband. You have spoken the truth in saying that.'

'Sir,' replied the woman, 'I see that you are a prophet.' (John iv.6-19)

In the verses quoted above the conversation seems to fall into two parts that are not connected, or, if they are, the connection is not obvious. This first part ends with the woman's asking for the wonderful water which Christ has spoken of. But as in the case of Nicodemus, who took the idea of re-birth literally, something also appears to be taken here in a literal sense. And just after this, the second part begins. Christ abruptly tells the woman to fetch her husband. Why does he do this? What possible connection has this with the first part?

It seems strange that Christ, after speaking of 'eternal life' and the 'living water' that can give it - that is, after speaking on the highest possible scale of meaning - should descend to the commonplace level of moral criticism and apparently accuse a woman who happened to draw water at the well of not being married and of having had five husbands. But if the theme is marriage, in the sense of the union of two things that give rise to a birth of something new, all birth being the result of the union of two things, a connection is found that does away with the feeling of bathos which arises when the passage is taken on the literal level of meaning. For it is then possible to see that the second part directly follows on the first part and brings into a narrower focus the situation of man in regard to the ideas of Christ's teaching and to the ideas he derives from the world outside him, from the evidence of his senses.

Let us attempt to find the connection, avoiding the literal or sensory meaning. Christ has told the woman that she has had five husbands and added: ' . . . he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.' What is the idea? The idea is that of some *wrong union*. This follows immediately on the idea of a *wrong understanding*; for Christ has just spoken to her of 'living water' and told her that anyone who drinks of the water that she is drawing will thirst again but anyone who drinks the water he can give will never thirst, and she has taken this in some literal way, as her answer shews: 'Sir,' she said, 'give me that water, that I

may never be thirsty, nor continually be coming all the way here to draw water.' Her answer shews that there is some wrong understanding, because the idea from which Christ is speaking escapes her and she answers from her own idea, which is a different idea - just as Nicodemus answered Christ from his own idea.

A person can only think from the ideas his mind is furnished with and if another person speaks from ideas that he does not possess he can only misunderstand him, or, if he tries to understand, understand him wrongly. Both Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria represent, at the lowest level of sensual meaning, actual people and any parable about them will include in it elements that belong to this literal aspect. But they also represent certain states of mind or levels of thought and understanding and so begin to pass from the physical level of actual external visible people into a subtle psychological level, for any typical state of mind or stage of understanding reached by people in the course of their experience of life is something psychological or internal, and quite distinct from any outer appearance — that is, quite distinct from what we behold of them as external objects, rendered through our five senses.

But a parable, in the Gospels, always begins from the purely sensual level and the ideas belonging to it, and so, taken as such, it seems merely to be what it appears to be - that is, a story about a king, or a vineyard, or a person called Nicodemus, or a Samaritan woman who comes to a literal well in order to draw literal water. In other words, a parable always starts from the first level of meaning that a man acquires from his contact with life - the level of sensual meaning and the ideas belonging to it, which enable a man to live in the world and deal with it according to his natural intelligence. The teaching of Christ is on a different level of meaning, one that refers to the acquiring of quite new ideas, and aims, and new interpretations of life, in the light of a possible individual evolution of man, contained within him as a possibility, but not fulfilled by the action of life or by any mere adaptation to the external world of life and its changing events, passing in time from moment to moment. Christ speaks of another level of man - of another and new state of his mind and of a new integration or stage of under-

standing - and this new level was nearly always connected, not with time, but with the word *eternal*, which we shall speak about later on.

But for a man to pass beyond *himself*, and so beyond the existing ideas he lives by - that is, for him first of all to undergo *metanoia* or change of mind - it is necessary for him to find the ideas and forms of truth that will lead in this direction, for if there be potentially in every man a higher state of himself awaiting his own entry into it, there must also be a definite science, a definite knowledge and practice relating to the attainment of this state, just as, if a man wishes to learn something such as mathematics, it is necessary for him to find definite knowledge and right ideas and forms of truth that actually relate to this possibility. For the possibility of acquiring knowledge will not be realised if a man has *union* with the wrong ideas or goes to the wrong teacher, or in this case to a man who does not even understand mathematics himself. It will then be nothing but a case of the blind leading the blind. And Christ at the least represents a man who has reached a higher level of *man*, and all his teaching is about what it is necessary to think, and not to think, to do, and not to do, *for a man to reach this higher level* and attain this inner development and undergo this inherently possible individual evolution without which, as he said, 'all men equally perish' - and this, it must be repeated, is not the ordinary idea people have of the meaning of religion.

Many commentators on the New Testament, from the earliest times, have thought that the woman of Samaria represented a man's soul. What is a man's soul? It is the concentration of his interests, his desires, his impulses. And all these represent where he believes what is best, and what is most true, lie. A man strives always towards all *he* thinks is most true and real and good and desirable. A man's soul is his most secret and his deepest 'love', his most imperious side, his most energising force. A miser's 'soul' is his avarice. He sees literal gold as the end of life. An ambitious man sees the end of life in getting to the highest position or gaining the greatest outward power, or the largest possessions. A vain person desires the greatest adulation and praise from external life. Or a man loves comfort, eating, drinking. And, more deeply, everyone's love of himself is his

soul. Soul is the greatest meaning in the man as he actually is.

The woman of Samaria as the 'soul' in a man is represented as having had five husbands - that is, it has been wedded to all the five senses in its search for what it believes is best and most true - and now is living with 'a man who is not her husband'. What can this mean? It can only mean a state of the soul, when the contact with the external world, through the five channels of sense, no longer claims the same hold or excites the same fascination. At this point the 'soul' vaguely turns to other interests - perhaps to some sort of philosophy or to different forms of so-called occultism, to opinions, theories and imagination and so on, in an endeavour to satisfy its thirst with truth other than the truth of the senses. In the narration before us — which can only be a parable and not a mere narration of an actual incident — the soul, thirsting for 'water', in this state meets with Christ. Christ says that what it is living with is not its husband. The 'truth' it is following does not really belong to it, and so is like a false union. Now it is possible to see why Christ has previously spoken of 'living water'. He has been speaking of a form of truth that can satisfy the searching soul: and this means an order of truth that can lead to a man's attaining inner growth and development once he makes union with it by acknowledging it and living it.

The whole parable is about *truth*. If the use of the word *water* is studied in this parable it can be seen that it really has four meanings, one lying behind and beyond the other, as does all meaning in parables. First, on the most external sensual level, it is simply literal water and this level forms the framework. Second, it is water as denoting *truth* of a certain kind, as the truth connected with the five senses - and this truth is, on its own level, real, because the term marriage is applied to it. Third, it is opinion, theory, mere imagination, which is not called a marriage, but a false relation and so can lead nowhere. And finally it means that order of truth, and those ideas and practices that stir a person inwardly into a state of being alive and form a living spring in him of fresh meanings, so that he never thirsts. All this play of meaning cannot be rendered in any words, because one meaning passes into another and again into a third. But that the meaning of *water* is *truth* can easily be

proved by quoting a phrase in the third part of the parable, which is given as follows in Weymouth's translation. Christ says: ' . . . a time is coming - indeed, has already come - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for indeed the Father desires such worshippers. God is Spirit; and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.'

## PART FIVE

IN his conversation with Christ, Pilate asks the question: 'What is truth?' The incident is given in the Authorised Version as follows:

'Then Pilate entered into the judgement hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.' (John xviii.33-38)

Pilate does not wait for an answer to his question about truth. In this picture of him by John he is drawn as going straight out to the multitude. But this action, as well as everything else said about him throughout the trial of Christ, gives one answer to his question about truth. For the narrative throws into clear relief the type of man to which Pilate belongs, and shews what truth means to this type of man. Pilate is at first sight an enigmatical figure. But he is actually a man for whom truth is a question of policy, and, however well-educated, however enlightened and humane such a man may be, he will always act at the critical moment in the same way. However he may think and feel privately, he will avoid all personal responsibility, all independent judgement, and follow the multitude. Christ says to Pilate: 'Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.' Pilate says: 'What is truth?' and goes straight out to the multitude, which is his truth. And although he knows Christ is guilty of no crime and says so, he does not follow his own knowledge. The voice

of the multitude decides his policy; and this, for him, is the right thing to do, and this for him is truth. For whatever a man feels it is right to do is for him truth. Although everyone has a different idea of truth, whatever a man calls truth, it is that which seems right to him and what he does.

For Nicodemus truth was a matter of the senses. He begins to believe in Christ from the evidence of miracles he has seen with his own eyes; and he is told by Christ in so many words that this is a wrong and useless starting-point. For Pilate truth was a matter of calculation, caution and compromise, but at the same time he knows better. He is afraid to act from what he knows and feels. So, in the account given in Matthew (xxvii.24), it is said that, fearing a tumult, 'he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.' And this is Pilate throughout the ages.

In the Apocryphal Gospel entitled *The Gospel of Nicodemus or Acts of Pilate* the efforts of Pilate to liberate Christ are more emphatically portrayed. But an incident is narrated where Pilate, speaking privately to Christ, asks: 'What shall I do with thee?' Jesus answers: 'Do as it hath been given thee.' Pilate asks: 'How hath it been given?' And Jesus replies: 'The prophets foretold concerning my death and resurrection.' He had to die and so Pilate had to condemn him to death. This extraordinary passage means that Christ practically told Pilate to put him to death and, however unwilling Pilate was to do so, he was helped by what Christ said to him privately to act as he did. And this passage, apart from many other reasons, has given effect to the deeper view that the whole drama of Christ was deliberately and consciously acted for a definite reason. And in this connection, anyone can see for himself in the account given by John that while Pilate was anxious to free Christ, yet Christ had warned his disciples continually of his predestined death. And in view of such new thoughts, the whole of the Gospel drama changes its entire import and significance, so that it is not possible to imagine that Christ was a mere victim of a cruel world or to take the sentimental view of the fate that he suffered. Christ had to die, in fulfilment of the part he was playing. And Pilate, being the kind of man he was, and following the form

of truth that affected him most powerfully, eventually acted in the requisite way.

In the same Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus and Pilate there is an addition to the part of the narrative where Pilate asks what truth is. It is as follows: 'Pilate saith unto him: What is truth? Jesus saith unto him: Truth is of heaven. Pilate saith: Is there not truth upon the earth? Jesus saith unto Pilate: Thou seest how that they which speak the truth are judged of them that have authority upon earth.'

What perhaps is not often understood is that Christ taught a definite teaching of which we have only fragments collected in the Gospels. But what has been preserved shews that the teaching was nothing like a mere exhortation to be pious but a definite practice, based on definite knowledge and definite ideas, concerning the possibility of a man's establishing a connection with a higher state of himself. This practice was internal — that is, no emphasis is laid on the performance of external rites, but the emphasis is upon the inner work that a man does on himself, once his mind begins to awaken and his inner consciousness becomes active and he begins to see what he is like and what his situation on earth is really like. The evolution or perfecting of a man cannot take place unless this internal work, carried out in relation to understanding certain definite ideas, is undertaken. A man who always lies, a man eaten up with vanity, a man filled with self-righteousness, or with hatred, and so on, is incapable of evolution as he is, not for moral reasons, but because his inner psychic life is distorted or crippled. Thus people, from this point of view, were spoken of in the Gospels as the halt, the lame, the blind, the deaf, and so on. Truth, therefore, always referred to this possible inner evolution and its goal, called the Kingdom of Heaven. It referred to the inner state of a man - that is, to the *kind* of man. For it does not require any great amount of thought to see that a man who is always lying or always hating cannot develop rightly even in the ordinary development that external life brings about, nor can anything good come out of a man with a distorted inner life: and from this it is possible to see that many other features and many other qualities or absence of qualities will hinder a man internally, about which special knowledge is necessary.



For if there be a higher level of a man in himself, and a possible connection with it, and if others have reached it in themselves, there must exist a special knowledge relating to this development and so a certain form of *truth* bearing upon it. And it is this kind of knowledge and this form of truth that is spoken of in the Gospels, and it is for this reason that it has been already mentioned more than once that Christ taught a 'definite teaching', beginning with *metanoia* and leading to *re-birth*.

Of his teaching Christ says many important things, some of which are very difficult to understand. But he always connects 'truth' only with his teaching - that is, 'truth' begins with the knowledge of his teaching. In one place he says: 'My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me ... he that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true' (John vii.16-18). And he repeatedly makes it clear that what he taught was not the knowledge that a man can gain from his ordinary contact with the world. As we have seen, Pilate is made to ask, in the passage from the Apocryphal Gospel, whether truth does not exist on earth, and Christ replies to the effect that if it did people would not wish to crucify him. In another place, Christ says: 'I am from above: ye are of this world' (John vii.23). This and many other passages shew that by *truth* was meant, in the Gospels, that which leads a man to the attainment of that inner state of development, or rather, to that further state of himself, spoken of as re-birth, and in verse 32 as freedom. 'The truth will make you free.'

There is truth, in other words, that does not enslave a man and bind him more and more to the power of the external world, as in the case of Pilate, but truth that frees him. But since truth is perceived only by means of ideas, knowledge must precede truth, for truth is born out of knowledge as a personal experience. Knowledge can be taught, but the truth of it can only be seen by each individual. There is knowledge of every kind and truth arising from it of every kind. But the highest knowledge and truth refer to the inner evolution of man. Wherever knowledge is spoken of in the New Testament it refers to knowledge of this order, for there can be no knowledge more important and no form of truth more useful than that which develops

a man and transforms him into a new being. In the Gospels, when Christ says: 'Woe to you expounders of the Law! for you have taken away the key of knowledge . . .' (*της γνώσεως*) (Luke xi-52) it is to this order of knowledge that he refers: and similarly the phrase 'knowledge of salvation', *γνώσις σωτήριας*, (Luke i.77) refers to this special knowledge concerning man's possible evolution. In the Epistles of Paul, the term 'knowledge' (*γνώσις*) is frequently used, but the word occurs very rarely in the Gospels (only in the two phrases quoted above) whereas the word 'truth' (*αλήθεια*) is constantly used, and for this reason it is necessary to speak about the meaning of truth in more detail. What does truth mean to us? What does a man call truth and what does he call knowledge, and what relation has truth to knowledge? And what kinds of truth and of knowledge exist? These questions will be discussed in the next chapter. But what can be understood at present is that the Gospels speak of *truth* as the key to re-birth and that there can be no possibility of re-birth unless a man has begun to see the *truth*. Everything in a man that is a lie hinders him and nearly everything in any man is a lie. All the lies in a man, all the lies upon which his life is founded and upon which the world is founded, stand in the way and keep every man where he is, and so keep the whole of mankind where it is. There can be no evolution of a man save through truth and all that is essential and real and good in a man can grow only in the light of truth. This truth is that of which Christ speaks when he says that 'truth is of heaven' (Apoc. Gospel of Nicodemus). There is no truth upon the earth; and this means also that there is no truth in that side of a man that is of the earth. The things of the visible world have their own truth. Christ speaks of another order of truth. The truth of which Christ speaks is 'from above' (*ἀνωθεν*), and a man must start from within, from the spirit of his own understanding, in order to reach up to it, for this truth is above the earthly senses and thus it is of heaven'.

# Truth

## PART ONE

IT is necessary to go back to the fifteenth chapter of Luke to gain the setting in which, first, the Parable of the Prodigal Son is placed, and then, immediately following it, the Parable of the Unjust Steward.

The Pharisees are murmuring against Christ because he eats with publicans and sinners. In their idea of religion, in their external view of it, this is a sin. They say: 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' Christ then gives the Parable of the Lost Sheep:

'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance.' (Luke xv.4-7)

This may seem simple at first sight, but it is not by any means easy to follow. In the narrative, a shepherd goes forth and searches after what is lost until he finds it and brings it home. In the explanation a sinner repents. What is the connection?

Let us look at the Parable of the Lost Piece of Silver which follows immediately afterwards:

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I have lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' (Luke xv.8-10)

In both parables the finding *of one* out of many is the subject. And this *one*, when found, is connected with *metanoia* (repentance).

Both the lost sheep and the lost piece of silver represent something *lost*, the finding of which is explained as 'repentance'. That is, there lies in these two parables a further indication of what *metanoia* or transformation of mind, means. Since 'repentance' is an internal act taking place in a man the parables must have an internal meaning - that is, *the lost sheep is something lost in a man which he must find himself*; and similarly in the case of the lost piece of silver. And it must be said again that this something in each case is designated by the numeral *one*. The finding of the *one*, therefore, defines the meaning of *metanoia* taking place in a man.

He leaves the many in order to find the *one* that is missing.

These two parables are given the external setting so often found in the Gospels. The Pharisees are, as usual, criticising Christ, in this case because he eats with publicans and sinners; and so these two parables are often interpreted as referring to them, in the sense that since Christ came to save sinners, the lost sheep means one of these sinners; and, possibly, the ninety and nine mean the Pharisees, who 'need no repentance'. The phrase 'have no need of repentance' (οὐ χρειαν ἔχουσι μετανοίας) means literally in the Greek 'have no use for repentance'. It is ironical. Those who justify themselves at every moment and imagine that they are righteous feel they have nothing to repent of and so 'have no need of repentance' in the sense of not wanting it, having no use for it. Their opinions are fixed, and their ideas are settled and for such people 'change of mind' is impossible simply because there is nothing in them that seeks it. In the most external sense, this passage means that only one man out of a hundred feels the necessity of re-understanding his life and - finding new meanings for his existence. The rest are self-satisfied and seek nothing, feeling that they are righteous. But Christ repeatedly says elsewhere that no one can evolve internally unless his 'righteousness' exceeds that of the Pharisees. Otherwise, everything he does is of the same quality. The Pharisees were unreal, an imitation. What they did was done to gain merit, or praise, or out of fear of loss of reputation. The *Pharisee in a man* is this side.

A man acting from this side does not act from anything genuine in himself but from various complex outer considera-

tions relating to how he stands, what others will say, what his pride will allow, or what will give him more esteem or attract most attention. So Christ says of the Pharisees: 'Woe, unto you Pharisees! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues and the salutations in the market-place' (Luke xi.43), and elsewhere he defines them as those that 'love the praise of men more than the glory of God' (John xii.43).

In such men nothing is real, and if nothing is real in a man, he cannot see what is real. He may oppose tyranny, he may preach repentance or he may die heroically, and yet it is not *he* who does all this. In such a man - that is, in all of us - there is only the truth of all that this side aims at, the 'truth' of position, merit, and so on; and if the external world were suddenly taken away, with all its values, aims and ambitions and its restraints, scarcely anything, or even nothing, would remain. That is to say, the 'man' as we knew him would collapse and vanish, or only very little would remain — and what remained would not resemble the man we knew.

To return to the parables, in which the idea of a man's leaving many in order to find the one is expressed - how can this be understood? In order to understand what this idea can mean, let us suppose a man finds himself in possession of a number of bullets and wishes to aim at a target. He tries one and another bullet, and then a third, and fails. He then examines the bullets and finds to his astonishment that one of them is marked with his name or has some mark upon it that he recognises instantly as his own. He uses this and finds that even without aiming very carefully he actually hits the target. With this *one* bullet which is his own he cannot miss.

In the Gospels the word translated as *sin* means in the literal Greek *ἀμαρτανω*, 'missing the mark', as of a spear thrown at some object and failing to hit it. And from meaning to miss the mark, it came to mean failing in one's purpose, and so erring or doing wrong.

In everyone there is a conventional side which has been acquired from life, and which is not a man's own. Or if we take the *Pharisee in a man*, whatever a man does from this side is a pretence and not done genuinely from the man himself. Everyone who makes an effort from what is not really his own

or does something that is not from himself can only *miss the mark*, for the one thing in him that can succeed is not being used. He is not making effort from the one point in him that is real. This point is, in fact, *lost*. This is what it is first of all necessary to understand before considering any further these parables and their connection with those following them.

## PART TWO

IN the eighteenth chapter of Matthew the Parable of the Lost Sheep appears in a slightly different form, but apparently in a quite different context. This often occurs in the Gospels, and, to the literal-minded man, these discrepancies prove a stumbling block. He will argue that because the parables do not always correspond word for word and are not always given in the same context, they cannot be 'true'. But it is a mistake to suppose that truth is only conformity to external or to historical fact. Truth is not of one order. Physical truth is one level of truth. The parables obviously do not represent physical truth or literal facts, as they are called - that is, the Parable of the Lost Sheep does not rest, for its truth, upon any actual shepherd who had exactly a hundred sheep and lost precisely one of them. The truth contained in parables is of another order. It is psychological, and this means that parables refer to the inner life of man - to inner truth.

A great part of the real teaching given by Christ about man and his possible evolution is contained in the parables. And since the most important thing was to give them, they are inserted into the general account of the drama of Christ wherever an opportunity occurs. This is one reason why the Gospels are not uniform.

No single interpretation can exhaust the meaning of a parable. But if no attempt at all is made to see what it means it cannot 'work' in the mind. A parable is designed to pass beyond the purely literal, sense-based mind that demands a visible proof for everything, and to fall on the internal understanding from which alone a man can grow, for a man is his understanding. So it can be said that a parable is designed to make a man think; and unless a man begins to think in a certain way for himself *metanoia* is impossible and so his evolution cannot begin. For this reason Christ emphasised that 'repentance' (*metanoia*) is the first essential step.

In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew the parable of the Lost Sheep does not appear in the familiar setting, so often used, of the Pharisees criticising Christ. The context in which



it is given refers to the theme of *the little one*, the one that must not be caused to stumble. The disciples ask Christ who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and he calls a little child and says:

'Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little one in my name, receiveth me, but whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.' (Matthew xviii.3-6)

There is a change of meaning in regard to *little one* in this parable. At first *paidion* (*παιδίον*) is used, which means, in the Greek, a little child. But when Christ says: 'Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble', the Greek word is different — it is *mikros* (*μικρός*), which means small, little, as in *microscopical*. This refers no longer to little children but to people who have begun to follow Christ and to have a little understanding - or rather, have begun to understand through what is little in them - that is, it refers to those in whom *metanoia* has begun.

Then, further on, after saying that occasions for stumbling must necessarily come, 'but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh', he adds:

'See that ye despise not one of these little ones (*ton mikron*) (*ένος των μικρών*). For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. How think ye? If any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and go unto the mountains and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' (Matthew xviii. 10-14)

Here the lost sheep is the 'little one'. In this parable a connection is made between the *one* that is lost and 'the will of your

Father which is in heaven'. It is on this *one* that the will of God is directed; or, it is this *one* in a man that can connect him with 'heaven'. 'Even so it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.' And although no direct mention of 'repentance' is made, we must remind ourselves again of the phrase spoken by Christ: 'Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.' That is, as already said, a man who does not reach to the state called repentance, or *metanoia*, perishes. But the will of God begins to act on a man who 'repents'; and this has to do with finding what is lost or gone astray in him. And if we turn again to the phrase in the Lord's Prayer: 'May thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven', and apply it again, in its inward sense, to the inner state of a man, it is possible to realise that it refers to 'heaven' in a man, or rather, to that possibility in a man of coming under new influences, called the will of God. And this is, in this parable, connected with the finding of what is lost in himself - namely, this *one*, of which it is expressly said that it is not the will of heaven that it should perish.

To take another analogy: let us suppose a man wishes to extract gold from the earth. In order to do this, he must have some apparatus for the purpose. But the apparatus is only a means to an end. The end is to extract gold and, once the gold is found, the apparatus is of no further use.

The view of *man* taken in the Gospels is similar in some respects to this analogy. Man is regarded as lost as he is. But there exists in him something as precious as gold. At first he must learn how to live in the world and acquire from it, as it were, an apparatus for living. But this is not, in view of the teaching in the Gospels, his *end* (τελος). The apparatus a man acquires from life may be good or bad and if it is bad there does not exist in him anything that can carry him further. All good that he acquires from life is not really *his own* but is his first stage, and a stage that it is absolutely necessary to reach, in regard to the whole teaching about human *evolution*. This acquired side of him, which is not really his own and at the same time makes it possible for him to play some useful part in life, and to behave decently, do his duty and so on, is not the part of him from which he can evolve. But unless it is formed in

him, no inner growth or evolution is possible. All this side, which, as was said, may be good and useful and which must be acquired from life by education and training - for without it nothing further can happen in him - can be roughly called 'the ninety and nine' - or that side of him which 'needs no repentance'. It needs no 'repentance' because it cannot grow. A man in whom this side is well built up, in the best possible way, through the action of the best influences in external life, is not yet himself *alive*. However good, he is still, from the inner standpoint of Christ's teaching, *dead* or *lost*. But what it is necessary to understand is that life brings a man only to one stage of his possible evolution, and all the teachings in the Gospels, and elsewhere in similar teachings where *man* is dealt with in the most internal sense, is concerned with *a further evolution*, which begins with *metanoia*. But for a man to *unlearn*, to become 'as a little child' (ὡς τα παῖδια), to seek for what is lost in him, necessarily goes against all that he feels himself through and all that he has accomplished and all that he considers valuable in his career. All this side is represented by 'the ninety and nine', who need no 'repentance' simply because it is not necessary. For a man to *shift his inner basis* and begin in a new way - or to 'turn', or to detach himself from his reasonable feelings of merit - means a struggle that cannot even begin unless he sees all that he has done is a *means* to another end. It is of this end (τέλος) that the Gospels speak, almost in every word.

## PART THREE

EVEN after about three years' contact with Christ the disciples had not undergone 'repentance'. Almost the last words spoken by Christ to Peter were: 'I have prayed for yourself that your faith may not fail, and you, as soon as you have repented (*ἐπιστρεψας*), must strengthen your brethren' (Luke xxii.32). The Greek word *epistrepheo* (*ἐπιστρέφω*) used here means 'to turn about, to return' and metaphorically 'to repent, to come to oneself.

It is already obvious that *metanoia* (repentance) signifies a 'turning round': 'Except ye *turn* (*στραφητε*) and become as little children' is the phrase used in Matthew xviii.3. In the Authorised Version it is translated 'unless ye be converted'. But *conversion* has come to have a vague sentimental meaning. Literally, it means something definite - namely, a 'turning round' of the mind, a true mental transformation. The word in the Greek is used of horses being checked and turned, or soldiers being wheeled round. In the Acts of the Apostles (iii.19) the words *metanoia* and *wheeling round* occur together (*μετανοήσατε και επιστρεψαε*) and are translated: 'Repent and be turned.'

A definite inner act is meant, one that can really take place - namely, the mind can undergo *revulsion*. And this act is shown clearly in the Parable of the Prodigal Son where the younger son 'comes to himself and *returns* to his father.

In this parable, which, as was said in a previous chapter, is so often taken quite literally, as referring to a young man who squanders his fortune, and which gives rise so often to comments on the unjust behaviour of the father, the same idea appears as in the two preceding parables. Something which has been lost is found. In this case, what is lost is called *the younger son*. In the first parable, it is *one* sheep out of a hundred, in the second, *one* piece of silver out of ten, and in the above parable it is *one* out of two brothers. And although no direct verbal reference is made to 'repentance', as in the first two parables, it is clear that the whole parable represents the act taking place *in a man*; and that this act has to do with the finding of this *one*, as is so clearly expressed in the preceding parables. In addition, in this

parable, the finding of what was lost is connected with a further idea - namely, the difference between being alive and being dead: 'For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.' It is clear that being dead and being alive cannot here have a physical meaning, but can only refer to the inner state of a man. That is, the state of a man in whom this *one* is lost represents a man in whom *metanoia* has not taken place and is compared with death. It must be noticed that, when this change has taken place, the subject is referred to not only as being alive but alive *again* (ἀνεζήσσε). Why again? And why is the younger son the subject of the parable? And why, as we have seen from a previous quotation, is it necessary for a man to become *as a little child*? And to what must something in a man turn round to, something that has got lost in him; and what is it that gets lost, that is *one* in him, for which everything else is left?

It is clear that if something gets lost in a man, there *was* a state of him when it was not lost; and that if a man can become alive *again*, there was a state when he was alive.

There is something in us, eternally young, that can understand beyond this visible world, beyond phenomenal reality. But this one thing in us, eternally young, is lost by us in the world of objects and the external things of the senses, and, using the logic of the senses, wastes itself in useless speculations which are without meaning for it, because it is capable of understanding a higher logic and a new world, utterly different from this dark world of sense and temporal logic into which it passes and in which it becomes lost. This magical side of ourselves which in childhood we feel, is destroyed by life, and remains only as a memory, dimly felt at moments, recalling for a fleeting instant something that we knew once and possessed and which has gone out of our lives.

It is this, this *one* in us, that must find itself again, for it is about this absent part of ourselves, which is lost, that all these parables are speaking. Its real destiny is to be taken out of life, withdrawn from the power of outer things and outer events. In this way a man is made alive *again*. For as we are, in our present

state, in which this *one* is lost, we are all living in a wrong way, however we desire to do good and however we act. This *one* has lost its true connection and as long as this is the case with a man he has not reached his right state, from which his own evolution can begin. He has not 'repented' - that is, undergone *metanoia*. So he perishes. And as long as this *one* thing in him is lost, all he does is wrong. For when a man is overpowered by outer life and influenced only by all that acts upon him from outside, and argues only from what he can see, he is machine-driven by his senses and internally, the wrong way round. He is dominated by external life and has no life in himself. That part of him which is truly himself, and from which his own individual existence and growth can begin, is lost. It is in the wrong place. *And this is sin*. That is, in this state, everyone has missed the mark, missed the very idea of his own existence.

And people often feel something of this for themselves and know that by feeling too strongly or being over-anxious about things or always upset and worried and at the mercy of life, they are doing wrong in some indefinable way, which has nothing to do with morality or moral wrong; and that they should not let life have such power over them, and that by doing so they are guilty of some crime which they feel instinctively and do not understand. And they do not realise that, all through the Gospels, it is precisely this *wrong state of a man* that is being spoken of, and that in view of it, nothing else is of importance ; and that unless a man realises that he is in this state and begins to seek for that part of him which is lost in things that do not matter and do not belong to it, and draws back in himself and begins to alter his relation to life, he has failed in his purpose and has not understood the secret of his existence. People think the Gospels are about external life, and about a moral relation to external life; and they do not see they are about *man* and his possible re-birth. In nearly every sentence they are speaking about man's inner state, about the wrong state he is in, and how this state must be changed. They speak, not about external life or outer morality, but about man himself and the condition he is in within himself in life. They do not speak about a man as being simply good or moral but about a man's actually changing and becoming a different

man. This is their whole message - that a man can and must change in himself and become a different person, however 'good' or 'bad' he is in life. And the first step is *metanoia*.

What is the nature of this side of us, this side that is *really ourselves* and which we have all lost? Is it possible to define it or make it more clear to our understanding? This *one*, in the guise of the prodigal son, journeys into a far country. He wastes his substance and spends everything, and at the same time a famine arises in that country. He begins to be in want and no man gives him anything; and it is then that he 'comes to himself and remembers: 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish of hunger!' he exclaims. What is this hunger, this want, this famine? And what is *bread*? The parable must be lifted wholly from its literal setting and its physical meaning. It is not physical hunger or want that is meant, nor literal bread; nor do 'wasting his substance' and 'spending everything' refer to actual money. The man was *dead* - but he came to himself; and so began to be alive again. In the act of remembering himself a truth came to him. He did not really belong to the place he was in, in the far country to which he had journeyed, where no man gave him anything and the food of swine was all that he could get. Life had become meaningless; and such meaning as offered itself was like the food of swine - nothing but husks. There is not a single thing in external life that cannot become entirely meaningless. This is not a moral truth but a fact, however uncomfortable it may be to face it. It is equally a fact, belonging to the nature of things, that everyone seeks the fulfilment of himself, and all that he craves, in life. Although he is disappointed he feels either that his case is exceptional, or that he will eventually find what he seeks, or he feels that if his circumstances were different, or if life were different, everything would come to him as he desires. But life cannot be essentially different. Life, essentially, is always the same; and a man is always locked up in the prison of himself, of his own jealousies and hatreds, and cannot escape this feeling of himself, however outer circumstances change. It is not from life that a man suffers but

from himself. As long as he sees all he needs and all he desires as outside him and strives to reach it in this way, he wastes meaning and eventually reaches famine in spite of the greatest riches he may have gained. And as long as he feels that what is *himself consists* in all this, he 'sins' - that is, he misses altogether what man is meant to do and can become - he misses the mark.

There is no worse sickness than meaninglessness. But life can become meaningless in two entirely different ways. It can become simply without any interest, so that all one is doing or has done seems useless and without purpose and one's own existence without any meaning. But there is a quite different experience, in which, in view of *greater meaning*, all ordinary meaning ceases to have any value. In such an experience, which happens at one time or another to many people, a man is drawn back from all the meaning in life. This experience comes when a man in a flash suddenly feels that *he* is different from all that he sees, hears and touches. He becomes aware that he himself exists. His own existence is no longer an existence merged with life. He becomes distinct from all that surrounds him. He realises that he is *himself*- not what he has been taking himself as - and he ceases to feel himself only through comparison with others as better or worse than others. He sees that he is alone, *one*, and unknown to others, and invisible. He sees that he is himself, and that others see only his body. He knows that if he could keep this state, this new sudden *consciousness of himself*, life could never hurt him and nothing in life would ever seem unjust and he could never be jealous or envious or hate. In such a moment a man *comes to himself*.

The moment passes and once more a man is in his ordinary state — that is, this intense, internal meaning *of himself* as a separate creation, as an individual, as utterly unique and distinct from everything else, vanishes. Once more he finds himself dominated by his senses, merged in external life and its meanings and in the things and aims of that reality that is offered by sense. Once more he begins to think from his senses and their logic and to gratify the appetites that are satisfied by what is outside him. The internal meaning of himself has disappeared. The realisation of what is most real, what has most meaning, passes, and is replaced by another 'reality', by another



set of meanings, which are now seen as outside him. He is no longer distinct from his senses and their images of life. He has forgotten himself and is once more a man *lost* or *dead*. But if he remembers anything, he knows that the state of consciousness he experienced is the secret of his life and that, if he could find it again and keep it, nothing else would matter.

This is *metanoia* in the fullest meaning. It is a new state of *consciousness*, suddenly touched and as suddenly vanishing. In this state of consciousness a man finds himself. He finds what is lost. He finds 'I'. *This is the first truth* - the first realisation of it. This is when a man becomes alive, and is the point from where inner evolution starts. Everything a man attempts in his ordinary state is done in the wrong way and from the wrong place in himself. So Christ repeats: 'Unless ye repent (unless ye reach *metanoia*) ... ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' And in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, this revulsion of the mind in a man is put in dramatic form, for the whole parable is internal in its meaning. The *one* in a man becomes withdrawn from the power of sense and the conceptions of sense and *comes to itself* and *remembers*. What was lost is found. The man awakens from the sleep of the senses, from death, and becomes alive *again*.

## PART FOUR

THE Prodigal Son finds that famine surrounds him and remembers that there is bread and enough in his father's house. But, as was said, neither this famine nor this bread are to be taken literally. The bread that is lacking to the Prodigal Son is not literal bread; and, similarly, when it is said in the Lord's Prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread,' it is not literal bread that is meant. Let us take the meaning of bread in the Lord's Prayer. The word translated here as *daily* is unknown in classical Greek and is used in the New Testament only in the two places where the Lord's Prayer is given (Matthew vi.11 and Luke xi.3). The Greek word is *epi-ousios* (ἐπιούσιος), and this word, like the word *metanoia*, is not a word that can be easily understood or rendered by any simple translation. The word *epiousios* does not mean *daily*. It has a far more complicated meaning. Although this has always been realised and many interpretations have been given, the translation both in the Authorised and Revised Versions of the New Testament remains as *daily*. And so most people perhaps imagine that daily bread is meant and believe that they are asking for enough to eat, day by day, in a literal sense. Those who have plenty of bread to eat, mouth these words without understanding them and, if they think at all of the meaning of the words they are saying, they believe they must refer to poor people who lack sufficient nourishment. They do not think that it is extraordinary that this phrase, which comes so early in the Lord's Prayer, should refer simply to physical nourishment; and they see nothing strange in the context: 'Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses.'

The request for 'daily bread' is the first personal request made in the Lord's Prayer and therefore the most important; and it is followed by the second personal request: 'Forgive us.' That is, after the tremendous significance of the opening phrases of the Lord's Prayer, which have so far only been touched upon at one point - namely, that God's will is not done on earth - people let themselves think that the whole level of the prayer is suddenly changed and a personal request for literal food is made, followed by the second personal request that our sins

should be forgiven, That is, they believe that the first request is a physical one; and, although they realise that the forgiveness of sins must be something far greater, something spiritual, and so psychological in the deepest sense, they do not see anything odd in the fact that this request for daily bread should come first.

There are three personal requests in the Lord's Prayer - the first for 'daily bread', the second for 'forgiveness', and the third 'not to be led into temptation'. At this point the prayer ends. This is the original form of the Prayer, But there were added to it the words: 'for thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever Amen.' In the form given in Matthew and in Luke, the only two Gospels which give the Lord's Prayer, these latter words do not occur in the Revised Version, although they are included in the Authorised Version, in Matthew's rendering of the Prayer.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son it is clear that once a man *turns* in himself and goes in an opposite direction — and this *reversal* is clearly enough presented in the merely outer pictorial form of the parable - he goes in a direction where he can get *bread and enough*, and escapes the famine he finds himself living in. But what is this bread? It is this qualifying word *epiousios* (ἐπιούσιος) in the Lord's Prayer, translated so inadequately as *daily*, that defines the nature of this bread. Let us make some attempt to understand this word. It can be divided into two parts, *epi* and *ousios*. In the Greek, the word *ousia* (οὐσία) means *that which is one's own*; it refers in a legal sense, to what is one's own individual property. Taking the derivation of the word in this way and only up to this point, the first personal request in the Lord's Prayer comes to have a new meaning. By uttering this sentence: 'Give us this day our daily bread', one is asking really for *what is one's own* - not for literal daily bread, but for the nourishment that nourishes what is one's own. In life, where nothing is what it pretends, and everyone leads an artificial and unreal existence, and has long ago lost what is 'his own' and no longer remembers anything, this request put in this way begins to have a deep significance. Let us note that in the first phrases of the Prayer, after acknowledging that a higher level of existence is possible and that there are powers above the level of humanity, and so, that a new state of a man

can be reached, and after praying that God's will may be done on earth, and thus individually *in a man*, in the 'Earth' of a man, the sensory man, the first personal request is that what is *his own*, and thus real, may be given nourishment. This is no ordinary bread that is asked for, but the very food through which a man can grow internally, in his own being, in his own thought, in his own feeling, in his own understanding. But if this transformation or re-birth of a man - with which the Gospels are solely concerned and of which they speak in almost every line - if this transformation is possible, there must be something internally close to or touching every man which, if he can hear, if he can feel and begin to understand and eventually follow, will lead him to *metanoia*, to this re-turning, and thus to an entirely new sense of himself and the meaning of his life on earth.

In the word *epi-ousios*, the particle *epi* (ἐπι), in its most primitive sense denotes position — namely, the position of anything that is resting *upon* something else, and so, above it and touching it. Thus the full meaning of this word, translated as *daily*, in its connection with the following word *bread* (which in the Greek is the ordinary word for bread, *ἄρτος*), signifies that that which is real in a man, what is his own, and what he has lost, is just above and touching him; and this part of the Lord's Prayer is a personal request to feel what has been lost, this lost feeling, and to feel it now - this day, this moment - because this feeling is food - not literal food - but the food that enables a man to become alive. When the younger son in the parable 'came to himself, he felt the first traces of this feeling, of this food, which he had forgotten - and so he *turned* and began to recognise him anew.

## PART FIVE

### THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

THIS parable is about a man who fails and the direction in which he turns when he fails. It follows on the general parable of the Prodigal Son where a man is shewn as 'coming to himself and 'returning'. But this *return* is represented only in principle. The prodigal son awakens and returns and he is seen from afar by his father and welcomed. But nothing is said of the difficulties of the way back. It depicts only success, and rejoicing at the recovery of what was lost and the coming to life again of what was dead. But the Parable of the Unjust Steward is about a man who fails but who acts in a way that is commended. This parable is always regarded as the most complicated and confusing parable in the Gospels. It is related as follows:

'There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtor's unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye

have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' (Luke xvi.1-13 A.V.)

As can be seen from the comments made by Christ, this parable is about the *true riches* and *what is one's own*, which are contrasted with the *mammon of unrighteousness* and *what belongs to another*. 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?' Christ says in his comments, 'And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?' Unlike the Parable of the Prodigal Son, this parable, as already said, is about failure and how it can be faced. The unjust steward has failed in regard to his rich lord, but he thinks of a remarkable plan, which he carries out, and is commended by his lord and by Christ. 'And his lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.'

The steward had failed. In what respect? By interpretation, he had failed as steward of the *true riches*. But the parable and its interpretation concern a man who under the circumstances retrieves himself. The parable does not directly say that as a consequence he could eventually become again a steward of the true riches. But in the comments made about it, it seems probable. Christ says that unless a man is faithful *in the least*, he cannot be faithful in much. 'In the least' (*ἐν ἐλαχιστῷ*) is the mammon of unrighteousness. Compared with the true riches, the mammon of unrighteousness and its truth are *the least*. But unless a man can be faithful to the mammon of unrighteousness, he cannot expect to have the true riches and what is his own. Only note the word *faithful* (*πιστός*), which connects with the whole meaning of *faith* in the Gospels. Of this word and its meaning we have spoken earlier. But faith does not mean mere practical efficiency - and the parable is not about this. Faith implies, even in quite an ordinary worldly sense, trust and

belief, beyond what is self-evident. A man in ordinary life is called faithful usually in connection with being tempted — that is, tempted to believe no longer in what he is doing and so not holding to his trust, and so by a faithful steward people understand one who continues to give his service under difficult circumstances or even against his own interests.

The steward is called *wise* - and the Greek word used here, *phronimos* (*φρόνιμος*), is very important to understand. It means having presence of mind, being practical in discernment and quick at intelligent action. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew xxv), five virgins were *phronimoι* (*φρόνιμοι*) (translated wise) and five were *morai* (*μωραι*,) (whence the modern word *moron* is derived, meaning idiotic or imbecile). The word *phronimos* appears many times in the Gospels, always with an essential important meaning. In Matthew xxiv is an allusion to a steward, who must always be on the watch, in case his house is broken into and robbed: 'Who then is a faithful (*πιστός*) and wise (*φρόνιμος*) servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household . . .', etc.

The Greek word *sophos* (*σοφός*), also translated in the Gospels as 'wise' has quite another meaning, as when Jesus says: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the *wise* (*ἀπο σοφῶν*) and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes' (Luke x.21). Wise here is *sophos* (*σοφός*) in the Greek, and it is clearly used in a bad sense, though it is translated in this misleading way.

*Phronimos* (*φρόνιμος*) is obviously used in the Gospels in a special way and refers to a quality that people must have who wish to follow Christ, as is evident in the parable of the man who built his house on the rock and the man who built it on the sand, where Christ says: 'Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a *wise* (*φρόνιμος*) man, which built his house upon a rock and the rain descended and the floods came and it fell not . . .' (Matt. vii.24). Here 'wise' is *φρόνιμος*. From all this, and from other examples which could be quoted, it is obvious that since the steward was called *φρόνιμος*, it meant something technically of great importance in this language used by Christ, and points to a high quality in the steward, that manifests itself at the right moment

in the right way. The steward acted in a consciously intelligent way - or in a *conscious* way. The commentators usually say merely that the word means *prudent* but it means more than this.

The steward is called 'wise' directly, and he is also called, indirectly, in the comments, 'faithful'. These two defining terms cannot be disconnected. The steward, in what he does, is not only intelligent but faithful. Faithful in what? This is shewn in the words: 'He that is faithful in the least is also faithful in much.' The steward was faithful, in what he finally did, 'in the least' - that is, towards the mammon of unrighteousness. He had to turn away from his stewardship of the true riches, and, without complaining, he turned *to the world*. Instead of being the steward of the righteous world - that is, the Kingdom of Heaven — he became a faithful steward of the unrighteous world, the world of mammon, the world we all live in, with its truth, its ideas, its values, concepts, knowledge, science, and so on. For this reason, after his action, which is commended, he is called 'the steward of unrighteousness'. And this is quite wrongly translated as 'unjust steward' or 'unrighteous steward'. In the parable the steward is never called the unjust steward. In the Greek version, *after* his action, he is called *Oikomonos tes adikias*' (*οικονόμος της αδικίας*) and this means the *steward of unrighteousness*; and this is followed in the next verse by the phrase *mammona tes adikias* (*μαμωνας της αδικίας*), which means the *mammon of unrighteousness*. He has become a steward of the unrighteous world, and is now referred to as 'faithful in the least'. And Christ says that unless a man learns to be faithful *in the least* — that is, in the mammon *of unrighteousness* — he cannot expect to be faithful in the true riches.

A man must learn all he can learn from life and know all he can know of the knowledge and truth belonging to life before he can safely go on to higher truth and higher knowledge. This is the essential meaning of the parable and the comments, which were directed especially towards the disciples. If a man fails in his highest purpose he must turn to what he can know and understand. This interpretation of the parable explains, in the first place, why the steward was merely told that he could no longer remain the steward of his rich lord. The accusation is not defined, and even a malicious accusation, and something



that was mere hearsay, is suggested in the original Greek. It is plain from the parable that the steward had neither been taking money from his lord's debtors nor had he saved money for himself. The debtors owe very great amounts and the steward had nothing.

Let us now come to the parable itself. *The parable is not about shrewd finance or sharp practice*, and if it is taken from this point of view, the more it is studied the more incomprehensible and confusing it becomes. The first comment about it, namely, 'but the children of this world (or world-period, αἰών) are wiser in their generation than the children of light' means that this world in its degree, or the men of this world-period at their level of truth and knowledge and science, are far more intelligent and practical and industrious than the 'children of light' in their degree or at their level of knowledge and truth - that is, there is a great deal to be learned from this world and its truth and knowledge and, in general, its science. The steward can no longer remain a 'child of the light'. He can no longer be a steward of the true riches, of the truth which Christ spoke of. He has come up against a barrier and cannot go on. Perhaps he has been told this, as it is said in the parable, or perhaps he has begun to know it for himself, since he makes no complaint when he is told he has failed. But, instead of despairing, he tries to form a plan and eventually exclaims: 'I am resolved what to do' - which, in the Greek (*ἔγνω τι ποιήσω*), implies rather that an idea struck him suddenly, or that he suddenly saw what was possible, not from what he had known already, but from what he now saw, in the situation in which he found himself. Up to then, he had perhaps regarded the world as of no importance; but now he turned towards it. If he had ceased to be able to progress along the path of return which he had followed, it still remained open to him to make the most of what lay behind him. But he had to readjust his ideas and also his attitude; this is shewn in the action he takes. This is the plan that he resolves upon: he makes the world *seem to be better than it is* in order to return to it and gain from it what he can, in order to live - but still as a *steward*. He becomes a steward of unrighteousness, of the world and its knowledge, while retaining all that he, as a steward of the true riches, has learned, and, by applying what

he knows already to all that he can learn from the knowledge existing in the world, he can keep *alive* in himself. For by the term *steward* (*οικονόμος*) we must understand a man who has reached a responsible state of mind, a certain development of understanding. He decided to be faithful *in the least*, (*ἐν ἔλαχιστῷ*) and for this he is commended, and not only so, but it is implied that by being faithful to the *mammon of unrighteousness* - that is, to the least, and to what is not his own - a man *prepares* himself to be faithful to what are the *true riches* and what is *his own*. But in doing this, the steward does not serve mammon but 'makes friends to himself out of mammon' (*φίλους ἐκ τοῦ μαμωνᾶ τῆς ἀδικίας*) - that is, *he makes use of mammon*. To serve mammon is one thing; and Christ says no man can serve God and mammon. But to make *use* of mammon, to make use of the world and its discoveries and its knowledge, which are its riches, is not the same as being of mammon and serving the world and its truth, in the sense of taking it all as the only truth and knowledge. Christ's advice to his disciples in this connection has puzzled many readers because of the misleading translation. In the verse containing the passage: 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations' (or 'eternal tabernacles'), the phrase 'everlasting habitations' or 'eternal tabernacles' is incorrectly translated. In the previous verse (8) the phrase 'the children of this world' occurs; and here the word for 'world' is *aiōn* (*αἰών*) in the Greek, which has different meanings and is rendered in many different ways in the Gospels. Here it means 'world-period' or 'time-period' or 'age'. The same word, as an adjective, *αιώνιος*, appears in the next verse, but translated as *eternal* - that is, eternal tabernacles or habitations - implying at once some higher significance, which is impossible in view of the context. The phrase, literally, 'the children of this aeon', refers on directly to 'their aeonian habitations' in the next verse, and the rendering should be 'the children of this time-period' and 'the habitations of this time-period', and by habitations (literally *tents*) (*σκηναί*) is meant what this world-period, or human age, regards as established or settled, what it thinks is truth, and so esteems and believes in, and so inhabits. The general sense of the verse therefore is not contradictory as would

appear from the customary translation, but means that the steward makes use of his time-period and is able to make a place for himself in it and use its truth and all that belongs to it. In the parable, the *debtors* (χρεωφειλετης) represent the world. Man, in his ordinary state, not having 'come to himself', and not aware that his real meaning is not found only in external life and its aims, is regarded in the Gospels as a *debtor*. Throughout the Parable of the Unjust Steward and the commentary on it runs the idea of the two orders of truth, one that refers to a man's inner evolution and development, so that he eventually comes into *his own*, and the other which refers to external life and everything that is not a man's own. Seen from below there is a gulf between them - and the gulf is mentioned in the Parable of Lazarus, which follows this Parable (Luke xvi. 19-31). It is impossible to pass from worldly truth and science to the truth of which Christ spoke, because what is lower in scale cannot comprehend what is above it. But higher truth can comprehend lower truth *and use it* - so that the steward's action is understandable. Everyone who remains in ignorance of the idea of higher truth is regarded in the Gospels as a *debtor*, and although higher truth has always been sown into the world and people have read it, they do not understand it — and for this reason, in the following Parable of Lazarus, Christ says that even if a man were to rise from the dead, people would not repent, that is, undergo any transformation of mind (Luke xvi.31). 'Neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead.' Men are regarded as *debtors* in relation to higher truth - that is, to a higher possibility in them. If a man remains inferior to himself, he owes to himself, and so is a debtor to himself. If, for example, a man knows better but acts worse, he owes himself - that is, he is in debt to his better nature and his better understanding. This makes everyone unhappy, because most people feel this about themselves, only they do not really know where they owe, or about what they are in debt to themselves. But from the standpoint of the Gospels, where it is taught that a man must undergo an inner evolution beginning with *metanoia* and ending in *re-birth* and the Kingdom of Heaven, everyone without exception is regarded as a debtor. There are many parables about owing, one of which compares man with

a debtor who owes millions. In the Lord's Prayer, the second request is to *forgive one's debts* — that is, in the literal Greek (*ἀφιῆμι*), to have all that one owes cancelled, completely written off, which is the real meaning of forgiveness. The steward cannot cancel the debts of his lord's debtors for that would mean to pretend that the world is righteous and owes nothing and is the same as the Kingdom of Heaven. But he writes them down for himself - in his own mind. He remits part of what they owe - that is, he makes it appear that they, the debtors, namely, life, owe less than they do. In this way he bridges the gulf between the true riches of knowledge and the world. He is not shaken by his apparent dismissal nor is his attitude to the true riches changed. There is still an opportunity for him and he uses it. He remains a faithful steward, but now he turns his knowledge towards the world — the unrighteous world — and so becomes a steward of unrighteousness. And to do this he deliberately sees life as owing less than it does — that is, *as better than it is* - and people as better than they are, and he uses the knowledge existing in the world in the light of his own knowledge gained as a steward of the righteous world or the true riches. So he makes use of the 'mammon of unrighteousness' and for this he is commended by Christ. But the Pharisees are made to misunderstand completely Christ's comments, and believe he is speaking simply of worldly wealth and think that all that has been said refers to literal riches - namely, money. 'And the Pharisees who were lovers of money heard all these things and they scoffed at him' (Luke xvi.14 R.V.).

Let us suppose a man to have entered perhaps a school of some kind, or a monastery, and to have put himself under some discipline with the object of reaching higher truth. Or let us take the disciples who had put themselves under Christ as their teacher and who, as they are described in the Gospels, understand very little of what they are taught. What is a man to do under such circumstances, if he is told that he can no longer remain? Let us suppose that he already knows something, understands a little, and perhaps has reached a position such as that of the steward in the parable. He is suddenly accused, or

some charge is trumped up against him maliciously and without its accuracy being established. This man is told he can no longer be steward - as the parable relates. Where can he turn? Up to that moment he has probably thought that life and its truths are useless and this may have been the reason for his seeking another order of truth. He may have been hurt by life and incapable of doing anything in it, or quite possibly he has had little experience of life. Let us imagine that his teacher, or whoever he is following, sees quite clearly that he can get no further as he is, and must go back to life and learn from it, and, in order to test him, he tells him he must go. And it is this word *test* that we may very well introduce into the parable from its very opening in order to explain the work of the rich lord and the vagueness of the charge. Is the man going to act wrongly, become weak, complain or feel that he is badly treated and seek to justify himself? Note the reference in verse fifteen to the Pharisees justifying themselves. 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.' Or is he going to act as a man who still retains the discipline and understanding of all he has learned - that is, to act as a man who is *φρόνιμος*? The steward in the parable acts in this way. That is, he does the right things from the standpoint of Christ, and from the standpoint of all that he has been taught and is following. Seen in this light, the parable transforms itself into a wonderful parable of mercy and intelligence, a parable concerning a man who, meeting with what everyone must meet with under the circumstances, acts in the right way, and, without attempting to justify himself, takes thought and at once does what he clearly sees is the only thing left to him to do, if he acts rightly.

#### NOTE ON THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

It will be easier to understand this parable if we take Christ as the rich Lord - that is, lord of the true riches and so of the righteous world - and the steward as one of his disciples - that is, one who is being taught, as in a school. The debtors who owe so much, who, in fact, owe wholly and completely, for the

number one hundred intrinsically has this sense, are those belonging to the outer world or the unrighteous Mammon. The steward, for some reason, is told he can no longer be a steward of the true riches. He must go back, therefore, to the unrighteous world. The theme of the parable is how he goes back. He cannot serve God and serve Mammon, for that is expressly mentioned in the commentary. He cannot, that is to say, go back into the unrighteous world and immerse himself in its interests and ambitions, for then he will no longer serve God. But he must leave the school where he has been a learner in the capacity of a steward. He decides on a plan whereby he remains a steward, but now of the unrighteous world, and after carrying out this plan he is then called in the parable the steward of unrighteousness - that is, steward of the unrighteous world of Mammon - but not 'unjust steward', as it is translated. This plan enables him to make use of the unrighteous world, and he is called *phronimos* - that is, clever, intelligent, shrewd - by Christ. He makes friends out of the unrighteous Mammon and is received into its worldly (not eternal) household. What is this plan? The plan he resolves upon is a right plan and Christ remarks that unless a man is faithful in the least, he cannot be faithful in what is greater and so cannot receive the true riches. The plan that the steward carried out towards the least - that is, the unrighteous Mammon, and so the debtors - is therefore connected, by Christ's comments on the parable, with the idea of *being faithful*. And the plan is that the steward resolves to forgive some of the debts owed by the 'sons of the world' by telling them and giving them his authority to write *down* their debts by so much. And the extraordinarily deep meaning here contains the sense also that he takes on himself something of what they owe. He makes himself responsible for part of their shortcomings and in this way makes everything more possible for them. This is *being faithful* in the least, for the idea of *faith* in the Gospels is often connected with the power of making all that belongs to the world *less* than it is. In the Gospels by the power of faith is always meant a *transforming* power. The steward is faithful in the least, therefore, because he transforms the situation of some of the debtors. The steward, with the knowledge he has gained of the true riches, makes

possible a starting point for his lord's debtors. Through the power of his faith, he ignores part of what he sees, and even what some of the debtors themselves know, and in this way continues to be a steward, but now towards the unrighteous world and its debtors. And in the idea of 'making friends out of the Mammon of unrighteousness' is also contained the meaning that, still holding to the knowledge he has so far gained as steward of the true riches, and not for a moment becoming negative towards it owing to what has happened to him, he turns to the knowledge of the world and of 'the sons of the age' who are more *phronimos*, more clever in their own way, than the 'sons of the light'. For if a man has already obtained some knowledge and understanding of the 'true riches' and does not, under exceptional trials, even deny them, he will find that everything he reads and studies belonging to the ordinary world assists him and confirms him in his viewpoint, because he can see, from what he has learned, what is useful and what is useless, what is true and what is false, having already gained a standpoint that makes this possible.

The parable is about a man at a certain stage of development - that is, about a man who has gone a certain distance along the path of return so clearly shewn in the parable of the prodigal son — who reaches a point where he is told he must go back to life, and the issue of the parable under discussion is *how* he goes back to life, and the parable shows how such a man in such difficult circumstances goes back in the right way.

**A New Heaven  
and A New Earth**



## JOHN THE BAPTIST

The strange remark of Christ about the Kingdom of Heaven being taken by violence and how the violent seize it by force must be taken in connection with John the Baptist and what Christ says about him. It will be best therefore to quote in full the incident as recorded in Matthew:

'Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me. And as these went their way, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken by the wind? But what went ye out for to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. But wherefore went ye out? to see a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. *And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force.* For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come.' (Matthew xi.2-14 R.V.)

First of all, note that Christ said: 'From the time of John the Baptist *until now* the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force.' The phrase 'until now' can only mean: 'Until I, Christ, came.' It is clear that the path followed by John the Baptist was not the same as the teaching of Christ and this is implied all through the passage if we begin to grasp what was meant by such phrases as 'a reed shaken',

'kings' houses', 'soft raiment', and so on. We know that the Baptist was clad not in soft raiment but in skins. 'John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins' (Matthew iii.4). *And* it is clear that Christ refers to John the Baptist in a special way in saying that although he is the greatest of those born of women, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. We can only understand this as meaning that the Baptist was on one level of understanding but not on the level of the understanding of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven, and, therefore, that John's teaching was on a different level from the level of Christ's teaching. John is surprised that Christ's disciples do not fast, that they drink wine, and so on, while the Baptist's disciples fast and abstain. The disciples of John were sent to Christ to ask: 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?' So John doubts Christ. 'Art thou indeed the Christ?' (Matthew xi.3). The behaviour of Christ obviously worried the Baptist. He could not understand Christ. He saw the attainment of the higher level of Being, called the Kingdom of Heaven, as lying through violence to oneself, through abstinence, the keeping of rituals and fasts, the literal keeping of the 'Word' at all moments and under every circumstance. There was, no doubt, little mercy in his harsh outlook and harsh understanding of truth. His understanding perhaps rested on the literal meaning of the doctrines he followed. The Sabbath Day was, perhaps, to him an exact literal observation of the Commandment. Nothing must be done. No one must even be healed on the Sabbath. If he ever heard of Christ's remark, when accused by the literal-minded Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath, he would not have understood it. The Pharisees had blamed Christ's disciples for plucking and eating the ears of corn as they walked through the cornfields, saying: 'Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?' They blamed Christ for healing on the Sabbath. Christ said to them: 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath' - a thing difficult to the understanding of many today (Mark ii.27).

Up to the time of the appearance of John the Baptist the Kingdom of Heaven had been prophesied as something that would come in the future. 'For all the prophets and the law

prophesied until John' (Matthew xi.13). But the Baptist, as herald of Christ, taught that the Kingdom was now here, now present, immediate. It was a time of crisis. He cried: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,' meaning, in the person of Christ on Earth. Why, then, did he not follow Christ, when Christ came to be baptised by him? At one moment he seems to recognise Christ, at another moment he seems to doubt. It has always been extraordinary to me that the Baptist on meeting Christ did not unmistakably know him and follow him - straightway, as Mark would have put it. Sometimes I have thought that Christ was cold to John - that even he did not like him. And yet, when the Baptist was beheaded for interfering with the marriage affairs of Herod, 'When Jesus heard it, he withdrew from thence in a boat, to a desert place apart' (Matthew xiv.13). No doubt that he gave John's spirit force then, for later, when Christ was transfigured on the mountain, did not Moses appear on one side of him and Elijah on the other? 'Behold, there appeared unto them (the disciples) Moses and Elijah talking with him' (Matthew xvii.3). And had not Christ already told his disciples concerning John: 'If ye will receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come' (Matthew xi. 14). It is almost as if Christ did not want to work on him in life but did his work on him after his physical death, when he could reach him better. Certainly, at the Transfiguration, John was no longer wearing skins and leather but was clad in light. It is said in one gospel, 'There talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory' (Luke ix.30, 31). We know that by withdrawal and long meditation we can give force to another person, for this is one form of intelligent sacrifice. How much more, then, could Christ do this, to both the physically living and dead. Did he not give force to Peter living, where Luke records that Christ said to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned, stablish thy brethren' (Luke xxii.31,32). Seen thus, there is John the Baptist, the greatest of men born of woman, but not in the Kingdom of Heaven; and John the Baptist transfigured by Christ and so in the Kingdom, no more a man born of woman, but a man re-born and so beyond

violence. Did not Christ say to his Mother: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' when he had reached that level of inner development, the outer sign of which was his power to transform water into wine? To take the word of the law literally is to do violence to others and to oneself. The literal sense, say, of a parable, does not convey its inner levels of meaning. Literal truth is without mercy, grace or charity, and can be most crude and most violent in its results, as we see in religious persecutions. The harsh clothing of the Baptist is contrasted with the soft raiment of those who live in kings' palaces. A man is clothed psychologically in the things he follows. The mind is clothed in the truths it holds to. To change one's mind (*metanoia*) is to clothe it anew - with new thoughts and new truths. John the Baptist taught this *metanoia*. It is translated as 'repent', but it means 'change your mind'. Yet, taking his clothing as representing his teaching, he is shewn in harsh vesture, living in the wilderness. He cried: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Here we can understand that this *metanoia*, this change of mind, had reference to the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven was an actuality and that men had to begin to think of their meaning on Earth in view of this supreme selective Kingdom far more important than any kingdom on Earth. John did not know the teaching of Christ. But he was the first to say that the Kingdom of Heaven is not in the future, but *now*. There are, then, three teachings here about the Kingdom. The prophets spoke of things that were to come: the Kingdom was to come, in the future. The Baptist said the Kingdom is at hand — and so was greater than the prophets — 'Yea,' said Christ of him, 'and much more than a prophet'. And Christ later said: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you' - that is not in *the future* or in some locality - a thing which perhaps the Baptist had not grasped. For external, literal truth does not grasp internal, psychological, spiritual truth. Yes, Heaven is not a place above and Hell not below in space. Heaven and Hell are *within* a man, so we notice that the conception of the Kingdom lay first in the future in time, then as being present in time and space, and finally as being in a man himself apart from external time and space.

In thinking of the two most enigmatical figures - to me - in

the Gospels, John the Baptist and Judas Iscariot, I have often wondered what the Baptist would have thought of the many parables Christ used to illustrate what the Kingdom of Heaven is - usually beginning with the words: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto . . . ' No doubt with his harsh literal conceptions of truth the Baptist thought of the Kingdom as a place that one had to take by force - by some tremendous effort over the flesh, by every sort of self-denial. But, if so, Christ says that this is not the way. The harshness is no good. It is not the way into the Kingdom. Christ asked whether in going to see the Baptist in the *wilderness* (where his food was locusts and wild honey) the people expected to see something weak - a reed shaken by the wind? If so, they were wrong. The Baptist was strong - as a man born of woman, which is the first birth. But all esoteric religion teaches a *second* birth as did Christ when he said: 'Ye must be born again — from above.' Are we to think that John realised this? Are we to imagine from what Christ says of him that he had grasped *what* can take a man into the Kingdom? It seems to me that the answer is *no*. He thought that, as he was, a natural man, a man born of woman, he could take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence to his appetites. And it seems that for a brief period this was possible: 'From the time of John the Baptist until *now* the Kingdom suffereth violence.' But certainly not after. In bringing in this contrast to the Baptist's harsh method, Christ speaks of those clad in soft raiment. They, he implies, are in the Kingdom. They were capable of understanding far beyond the rigid, literal word and where the Baptist saw only one thing, they saw a thousand things. They were flexible, not rigid. Their understanding was not keeping literally a law. They had mercy, charity, and, above all, relative thinking. They were, in brief, on another level of understanding, wider, more intelligent and gracious, where narrow, rigid truth no longer was put before the lovely wideness of goodness, but where the marriage of truth and good had taken place within them, so that literal truth was never allowed to go before goodness and so where no one could do non-goodness in the name of truth, and no one could hate or kill his neighbour in the name of literal truth. For if you put narrow, rigid truth before goodwill and goodness you are clad, as the Baptist, in

harsh skins and leather and the food of your goodness is locusts and wild honey and your dwelling place is the wilderness barren of all life. So we find in the Gospel of John, which has nothing to do with John the Baptist, that Jesus is described by the beloved disciple in these terms: 'And we beheld him full of grace and truth.' Yes, grace first, and truth from grace after.

One therefore asks: 'Is the Kingdom of Heaven, if it is within us, some conscious state of understanding that is sometimes open and sometimes shut?' Then one might easily say: 'If this is so can people press into it only at different times in the world's history?' I would add: 'Is this then the good news (Ευαγγελιου) — namely, that *now* a man, a woman, may enter because in the flux of things the doors happen to be open?' Do you remember the man who got into the Kingdom of Heaven wrongly? I quote from the Parable of the Marriage-Feast:

'When the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment. And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.' (Matthew xxii. 11-14)

One can see that this man had not at least the soft raiment that Christ spoke of. Sheer unmerciful truth is not a wedding garment - a relaxing and releasing thought to many brought up under an interpretation of Christ's teaching based solely on literal truth with no inner mercy and no goodwill, and no trace of psychological understanding. Is it not extraordinary how the literal word for word meaning is still upheld without the slightest idea that *this is not enough* and is not real understanding, and that in such an interpretation of Christ, such a man, causing endless perplexity and pain to others, has no wedding-garment and is destined to be turned out of the Kingdom. Is it too much to say that such a man, so formidable in the literal interpretation of truth, who theorises from pulpits, a man who perhaps condemns everyone, who regards Man as made for the Sabbath and refuses to believe that the Sabbath was made for

Man, is one who, having no grace or inner charity or human kindness, and so no wedding-garment, is nothing but a man of self-will and violence and not a *man* at all, in the sense of Christ? It is just as if people might imagine that by going to Church regularly all their lives they are already in the Kingdom of God. Is it not clear that this cannot be the case and that *metanoia* and *re-birth* is the essential and real meaning of all that Christ taught and that *no one* is in a real sense a Christian - and, worse still, that so many think they are so? Only Christ himself was a Christian. Why? Because he united perfectly in himself the human mother-side with the Divine side and rendered the connection between Heaven and Earth open again at a stage in human history when all connection was being lost and mankind was being cut off from all higher values and so higher direction.

## THE TEACHING OF CHRIST

THE problem of esoteric teaching is to connect a higher level of understanding with a lower level. The supreme example is Jesus Christ, who was born of a human mother and yet was the Son of God. We can understand nothing about the drama of Jesus Christ unless we understand that he was in a way two things - the son of man and the son of God. This means that he was in contact with a lower level and yet in some way in contact with a higher level. Speaking in a more general way the problem of esoteric teaching, which is sown into the earth at definite intervals, is to maintain some kind of contact with a higher level of being. When contact between the upper and lower notes is lost, all that is below perishes, goes mad, and ends in violence. Christ came as a mediator between the higher and lower level. His task was, as simply a human being exposed to every temptation, to overcome everything belonging to the lower level, that is, the human level, and to unite the human level with the divine level. God came down to earth as a human being but as such was unable to use the divine. We can understand in our small way that otherwise his task would have been easy and we often wonder why his task was *not* easy, being of divine origin — that is, that he had in him the divine and as such was the Son of God. Unless we understand this we cannot realise why he was tempted up to the last moment. We argue in some such way as this: if Christ were the Son of God, why was he tempted? Why did he suffer such agonies? Why was everything so difficult for him? Why could he not simply show people his powers? Why did he not turn stones into bread? But the whole question is infinitely more strange and subtle. At the stage of history when Christ appeared, there was the greatest danger that the human race might be cut off from all communication with a higher level of understanding. The whole world was burning up into violence and materiality. All higher values were disappearing or had disappeared. There was no kind of understanding that man is a spiritual being and not merely a creature of the flesh. And in this situation someone had to establish the connection between the level of earth and



the level of Heaven. But you can see that if a man were endowed with powers of a higher level, or the level of Heaven as it is called in the Gospels, and having these powers, or rather, being able to use these powers on earth, he would not make an example of a human being raising himself up through inner battles, inner doubts and human temptations. If you read the Gospels closely, you will see that Christ had not only many temptations but many doubts and even on the cross, he said: 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Now if we realise that the task of Christ was to connect the human with the divine, the Son of Man with the Son of God and for this reason he had to suffer everything that a human being must suffer in climbing the ladder of inner development, we can understand the central meaning of the Gospels much better. We can also understand why he had to overcome his mother, as is exemplified in many parables and miracles, because his mother represents his human side. By overcoming, by fulfilling his task, Christ once more established connection between the higher and the lower level, between the spiritual and the natural and for that reason he had to undergo all his sufferings and finally undergo the death of a criminal without any help being given to him. But by bridging this gap between the human and the divine, he re-established the connection, and set things in order once more and made it possible for the human race to receive influx from a higher level.

Christ was therefore two things and his task was to connect these two things and for this reason everything that we read about Christ is paradoxical and requires a form of understanding that is not logical in the ordinary sense. He descended and eventually ascended but his ascent was due to his own efforts; starting from his birth on this earth from his mother he had to overcome this birth and be re-born and for this reason the teaching of the Gospels is full of this idea of re-birth. How often Christ says 'Ye must be re-born' and how difficult it is to understand what this means. But if we catch a glimpse of what we might call the idea of Christ and the whole drama of his death and resurrection, we can then understand better why, in the extraordinary parable or incident called the marriage at Cana, when he turns water into wine, he says, to his Mother, 'Woman,

what have I to do with thee?' We can realise that the significance of this incident in the second chapter of John refers to a stage that Jesus had reached in himself and that it signifies that he had overcome the human side of himself and had at least reached some definite step in this inner evolution. He was now in possession of another level of understanding in the long path of his return to the divine level. He has, for the time being, nothing to do with that side of him represented by the mother. And yet he says to his mother, who will finally crucify him, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.' We can understand dimly this means that the human side was not yet overcome and that the final overcoming of it meant death on the cross. His body came from his mother and it too had to be triumphed over, and indeed transformed, so that even after its death it could be used as a living physical body no longer having its sustenance from life but from forces outside life. This typified the complete union of the human with the divine, of the lower with the higher.

But when Jesus reached the stage of being able to turn water into wine, this complete transmutation had not taken place. It was preceded by a psychological transformation represented by the power of turning water into wine, which in the words of John, was his first sign. The miracle followed from the sign. It is not called a miracle but a sign, that is, a sign that Jesus had reached a certain stage of inner power, which he could communicate to representative objects such as water. Water, in the ancient representative language of parables, is truth. The turning of water into wine signifies the turning of truth into something that is not merely truth but a stage beyond truth; when you see the truth of Truth and its values, truth is no longer simply truth but becomes full of meaning. What was formerly truth by faith begins to multiply itself into endless meaning, so that it is no longer merely truth but a continual source of meaning that can intoxicate the soul as wine. A union has taken place between truth and something else. We can call it the *meaning* of truth or the good that lies in truth and reaches us through the medium of truth as its recipient. So Jesus calls upon the servants, who, if you notice, are commanded by the mother to obey him and to fill the water pots full of water to

the brim, and transforms the water into wine. This means that all the truth that Jesus has acquired can be transformed into its real meaning by him.

In our own experience we sometimes suddenly see the connection between a number of things that have previously been separate and unconnected and then we understand differently, just as when the separate letters of the alphabet which we are learning as children, magically turn into words or even whole sentences and we reach an entirely different level of understanding.

Now glance at the end of the parable after Jesus has turned water into wine. This wine is taken to the ruler of the feast, who makes a curious remark. He says that ordinarily, that means in life, for the ruler of the feast represents life and its methods, the good wine comes first. 'Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when men have drunk freely, then that which is worse: thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.' Notice the word good is used. In some esoteric teaching the words truth and good are used and they speak of a marriage that is possible between truth and good, such that the man sees the good of a truth he has been taught and so begins to be governed by good and not merely by truth. Notice that the good comes last, in as it were an inverse order to life, as the ruler of the feast indicates. In life we tend to take the good first and the worst afterwards. In this connection it might be said that to climb the ladder of self development we must pay beforehand.

(To the reader: A fuller account of this 'sign' from a rather different point of view, can be found in *The New Man*.)

## ESOTERIC SCHOOLS

LET us consider some passages where the term *wine* is used, both in the Old and New Testaments, in a sense that evidently cannot be literal. When, in Genesis XLIX. 11, it is said, 'He washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes. His eyes shall be red with wine and his teeth white with milk', it is fairly apparent that wine has a special meaning connected with what a man 'wears' and how he 'sees'. To imagine that this passage has a literal meaning is to make nonsense of it. Psychologically, what a man dresses in refers not to the literal clothing of the body, but to the clothing of the mind, to the mental beliefs and attitudes. Everyone is dressed up psychologically in opinions and viewpoints, which form his mental garments; and his mental eyes view things through them. There is a description of both 'garments' and 'eyes' being washed in some state of insight called 'wine'. Psychologically, a man is dressed in what he believes is true: and mentally he sees by the same means. If wine represents a particular stage in the development of the understanding of Truth, the phrase the eyes being 'red with wine' refers to the state of vision belonging to it. Some very high state is indicated, a state of the development of the understanding beyond the level *of water*.

In the Apocalypse, in the vision of the four horses, it is said of the black horse: 'And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard a voice saying, A measure of wheat for a penny and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.' (Revelation vi.5,6) It cannot be assumed that the wine here refers to literal wine, nor indeed the oil. At this earthly level of thought indicated by the black horse, where a strict balance rules and everything is measured, so that a man must pay strictly for what he gets - even here there is oil and *wine* - that is, something higher - and this must not be hurt. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan wine again appears, in a significance that can be taken either literally or psychologically.

In esoteric teaching, the term *vineyard* is often used in connection with schools of teaching that seek inner evolution. The

attempts made to raise man internally, the schools formed for this purpose, are compared with vineyards from which grapes and wine, or a vintage, are expected. 'For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard . . . ' (Matthew xx.1). Or, to take another illustration which shews how easily all teachings about Man's inner possibilities and evolution can be distorted or fail:

'And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the wine press, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And at the season, he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed; and many others; beating some, and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son; he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do ? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.' (Mark xii.1-9)

There have always been attempts in known history to lift Man from the stage of barbarism by the dissemination of definite ideas about the deeper meaning of one's life on earth. The inner side of these endeavours is not a matter of ordinary history. All that we can read about is usually a history of the misuse and misinterpretation of the ideas, when they pass into life, so that they become sources of political intrigue, greed, violence, horrible persecutions and wars. Yet in our period it is quite clear that if the teachings of Christ, as given in the Sermon on the Mount alone, were followed by humanity, all wars, injustices and social evils, would at once cease and a new world would begin. But for this to take place everyone would have to awaken to what he or she is really like internally.

The object of a vineyard is to produce fruit and wine. A definite teaching about the means to an inner stage of development is planted, as a vineyard. The prophet Jeremiah complains about the Children of Israel and asks them why they want to go back to Egypt - that is, their previous state: 'And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Shihor?' God, he says, broke their yoke of old time. 'I have broken thy yoke and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not serve; for upon every high hill and under every green tree thou didst bow thyself playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?' (Jeremiah ii.18-21). The meaning is psychological: it is obviously not literal. They are accused of returning to old beliefs, to the state called 'Egypt' and *mixing* this teaching or seed with other teachings, which is called 'playing the harlot'.

When a teaching is given it must be kept pure until it has effected its purpose. It lasts only for a time. In every part of Time, different teachings appear and last for longer or shorter periods. Their object is to lift man. They are similar in internal form, in so far as they aim at Man's individual evolution through a development of the understanding and quality of his being. Each *vineyard* is planted to produce its particular wine. There can be no *mixing* of seed, or ideas. This condition is expressed in some words of Moses: 'Thou shalt not sow thy vine with two kinds of seed . . . thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass. Thou shalt not wear a mixed stuff, wool and linen, together' (Deuteronomy xxii.9). It is evident that these words have meaning apart from their literal sense. But they can of course be taken as observances to be carried out literally, and so without meaning. When a 'vineyard' begins to die - that is, when the significance of the teaching originally planted in it is perverted or lost - it is destroyed. The Old Testament is full of destruction, in this sense. Teaching constantly went wrong because people perverted it. The prophet Jeremiah laments the destruction of a school called Moab: 'With more than the weeping of Jazer will I weep for thee, O vine of Sibmah; thy branches passed over the sea, they reached even to the sea of Jazer: upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage the spoiler is fallen. And

gladness and joy is taken away, from the fruitful field and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to cease from the winepresses: none shall tread with shouting; the shouting shall be no shouting.' (Jeremiah xlviii.32-33) This refers to a loss of teaching. The same prophet says in another place: 'Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard' (xii.10). That is, many teachers have destroyed the original teaching. Amos describes the destruction of a teaching in this way: 'The multitude of your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees hath the palmer worm devoured' (Amos iv.9). The teaching has been eaten up by wrong ideas. Sometimes the grapes are found to be sour, as in Moses' description of the vineyard of those who perverted the Truth: 'For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of the asps, (Deuteronomy xxxii.32, 33). This happens especially when a teaching or 'vineyard' has become a means of worldly power and of political intrigue, as in the following prophecy about the school called Jerusalem: 'There shall be no grapes on the vine, no figs on the fig tree and the leaf shall fade' (Jeremiah viii.13). Many other examples could be given. What can be understood is that there has always been *teaching* of a certain order sown in mankind and that always there has been a failure of such teaching in *process of time*. But this does not mean that the teaching has not, at its height, produced results. It fails in *time*: or, to put it differently, it endures only a certain limited time. It is valuable to understand this, because we are inclined to think that a thing should last *continuously* if it is real and true. But just as there are fashions of every kind, as in science, or society, or politics, so is the case with esoteric teaching. Yet it is not really the same because it reappears in another form, another guise, and yet in essence is always about the same object - the evolution of Man. People must become more conscious first of themselves and then of others. They must forego violence as an easy solution to things. They must genuinely forgive each other, which is only possible by being conscious of themselves and what they are like and what they do. They must behave to others as they would wish others to

behave to them - a very difficult thing. They must understand that their lives have another *meaning* and that the nature of one's existence is not understandable in terms of things that happen on the Earth. They must see the beams in their own eyes before they make an unpleasant uproar about the mote in another's eye. They must cease being good for show, they must stop hatred, stop pretending, stop lying, and so on. All these ideas belong to the *Way of Individual Evolution* which esoteric teaching is always about. It is impossible to understand the history of mankind without taking into consideration the influences of esoteric teaching, from which we have gained all art and culture. Man without teaching remains barbarian. But as regards the limited extension in time of any particular example of teaching of this quality, we can cite the words of Christ where he warns his pupils that *Anti-Christ* is bound to come: 'Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet.' (Matthew xxiv.4-6)



## THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGE

IN the esoteric teaching in the Gospels many references to the second coming of the 'Son of Man' are found. To understand what they mean, it is necessary to realise one of the fundamental ideas of esoteric psychology in reference to the human race on earth. A particular form of esoteric teaching given at a certain moment in time — that is, historically speaking - lasts only for a limited period. Its force and its meaning gradually begin to die. In the case of the teaching of Christ, which gave meaning and force to many developments in human life we notice that Christ did not say that this teaching would last for ever. He gave a very clear indication that it could only last for a certain time. In this connection he speaks of what will happen, what signs will occur, when the force, the impulse that was given by his strength begins to wane in the world. He warns his disciples that a time will come when truth is exhausted, and then speaks about the sign of the second coming of the 'Son of Man'. His disciples ask him what shall be the sign of the second coming of the 'Son of Man'. 'Disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Tell us when those things shall be and what is the sign of Thy coming and of the consummation of the age (*αἰων*); and Jesus answering said to them, See that no one lead you astray; for many shall come in My name, saying I am the Christ, and shall lead many astray; but ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not disturbed; for all these things must needs be, but the end is not yet. For nation shall be stirred up against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. But all these things are the beginning of sorrows.' (Matthew xxvi.3-9)

The phrase 'consummation of the age' is sometimes translated as 'end of the world'. For this reason many susceptible people think that a time will come when the visible world will be destroyed. However, in the Greek, *ἡ συντελεια του αιωνος*, the meaning is quite different and it has nothing to do with the visible world. We rather have to think of the meaning as referring to the end of a period of culture, the end of a phase of humanity, and the beginning of an increasing confusion, in

which literally nation may rise against nation and so on. But the psychological meaning refers to something quite different. In many of the esoteric books of the Old Testament, which have a meaning quite apart from the literal sense, the idea that truth may fail on the earth is frequently found. When a nation or a people lose their fundamental and traditional values and no longer have any background, they can be compared with an earthquake. Now when esoteric truth fails, when man becomes entirely sensual, a creature of the senses, and believes nothing else but the evidence of the senses, when all meaning has been destroyed apart from physical meaning, he inevitably begins to degenerate and pass into increasing violence because he has no inner direction and no inner values, which have always been created in him by one form or another of esoteric teaching. Esoteric teaching always gives values beyond physical life and it is only through these values that any culture can be formed. When all inner values break up, when there is no truth to govern a man more internally, so that he realises he cannot do certain things, owing to a sense of inner integrity, then the 'end of the world' begins. The whole force of inner development begins to die, the whole idea that man is on this earth to learn something, the whole possibility of inner development ceases. And when this is widespread it is the consummation of the age; the force brought into the world away back in time is exhausted. But we have to notice that when this happens 'a second coming' is at hand. From Matthew xxiv, we can see that man regarded psychologically from the standpoint of higher and esoteric teaching must be given truth to lift him from the level of violence, self-interest and appetite, and that when this truth by its passage through generation after generation becomes completely distorted, a period of confusion follows which leads to a second manifestation of the truth, represented as the second coming of the Son of Man. People imagine that truth will always maintain itself but all truth wears itself out and a new form (of the same truth) must be sown on humanity. Every nation, every race, has been given truth. It is always the same truth but given in different forms, sometimes with the emphasis more on one side, or more on another side, according to the conditions of the time. But when truth of this kind breaks up

and loses all its guiding force, when it has lost all its effective power, there is a consummation of the age followed by a period of confusion, which heralds the coming of another form of the same truth. With this brief description we can perhaps realise that the consummation of the age does not mean the end of the world but the end of one manifestation of the truth; and also that it will be inevitably followed by a new manifestation of truth - which of course may take centuries to come into force. It is a cycle that recurs. So we can understand that the 'Son of Man' will come again, for this means the renewal of esoteric teaching on the earth. The force is given and gradually dies away in time — the period of chaos follows: the force once more comes down again. Each manifestation is called in the esoteric teaching of Christ, the Second Coming of the Son of Man - of some Being taking on the level of humanity, raising himself up through his own overcoming of all human temptations, and once more re-establishing order and so again opening the way for human development. The higher level is then once more open to the lower level, and the purpose of man's original creation to pass from a lower to a higher level of being and understanding is once more made possible.

What, then, is this truth that is sown into the world at definite intervals to lift man beyond his senses? Is it merely a question of arbitrary literal commandments? We can notice that Christ began his teaching not with any literal commandments but with a psychological idea - the idea of *metanoia* which means change of mind. Esoteric teaching begins with the idea that change of mind is the first thing. This word, *metanoia*, awkwardly translated as repentance, means a new way of thinking about the meaning of one's own life. Esoteric teaching is to make us think differently. That is its starting point: to feel the mystery of one's own existence, of how one thinks and feels and moves, and to feel the mystery of consciousness, and to feel the mystery of the minute organisation of matter. All this can begin to effect *metanoia* in a man. The contrary is to feel that everything is attributable to oneself. The one feeling opens the mind to its higher range of possibilities, the other feeling closes the mind and turns us downwards through the senses.

## WAR IN HEAVEN

THINGS do not remain the same.

'Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them' (Isaiah xlii.9).

But apparently it is not only conditions on earth that change, but in heaven also.

'There shall be a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation xxi.1).

Moreover it is indicated that those in heaven do not necessarily remain there when a new heaven is created. We read of there being 'war in heaven' - of Michael and his angels fighting with the Dragon and his angels (Revelation xii.7). The Dragon and his angels were cast out of heaven 'neither was their place found any more in heaven'. They seem to represent all those who externally are moral and pious, but inwardly have no belief. Christ laid great stress on the necessity for inner belief and the uselessness of outer religion only. It would appear that the outer practice of religion may be rewarded by a sojourn in some kind of heaven which comes to an end. As in their life on earth these people who inwardly believe nothing but are externally rigid, literal and forbidding are compared to dragons. There is nothing of grace about the dragon-faced. Peter says: 'We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (ii Peter iii.13).

It is clear that self-righteousness which comes from pride is not meant, for it has no connection with righteousness, which springs from inner goodness.

Christ said some things about the changing nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. Speaking of John the Baptist, after saying: 'Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he', he goes on to say:

'From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force' (Matthew xi.12).

What can this strange remark mean? It can only mean that

the conditions of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven change. From the time that the Baptist began to preach, to the beginning of Christ's teaching, there was a period where 'the violent take it by force'. Does this mean that those who did violence to themselves gained the Kingdom or has it an entirely different meaning?

The conditions of entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, and the frequent mention of a *covenant* being made between God and Man are connected. A covenant is an agreement made between two persons to the effect that if one of them fulfils certain conditions, the other will do what he promised. It is not permanent, as the phrase 'covenant of an *age*' shews. The Hebrew word OLAM translated often in the Old Testament as 'everlasting' really means *age-lasting*, lasting for an aeon, as in the passage in Jeremiah xxxii.40.

'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good.'

In a developing humanity which is being raised from a state of relative barbarism, it would not be expected to be permanent. The Ten Commandments given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai were a covenant between God and Israel. If the Israelites obeyed them, God would prosper them:

'If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them.... I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. . . . And if ye shall despise my statutes or if your soul abhor my judgements, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant.... I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.' (Leviticus xxvi.3, 9, 15, 30)

The commandments are about what was to be done and about what must not be done. That was the *Mark* to aim at. Consider the first Commandment: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me', and the last: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass,

nor anything that is thy neighbour's' (Exodus xx.3, 17). Are these possible to carry out? It has often been said that what a man loves most is really his god. A man may of course imagine he loves God before everything. In that case he does not notice himself. Although self-love is a giant power, it is not easy to observe even a fraction of it. When it peeps out unmistakably, we justify ourselves at once. Again, who can say that he is aware of all his forms of covetousness and that they have no power over him? If he says so, does he observe himself enough?

Sin means to *miss the Mark*. In the New Testament, the word translated as 'sin' is taken from aiming an arrow at a mark and missing it. In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were the Mark - that is, the Law. Christ said he brought a new law: love one another. He speaks of a certain kind of love - conscious love - and not of emotional love which changes so easily into its opposite. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another' (John xiii.34).

Christ speaks in a parable of the end of the age. He uses the word *aeon*, which refers to a period during which certain possibilities and conditions exist. With the coming of Christ one of these periods began, and with it certain conditions for entry into the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who followed the teaching of Christ sincerely, from their hearts, and not merely externally, could gain the Kingdom of Heaven. The Parable which is usually called 'The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat' is as follows:

'The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we

go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.' (Matthew xiii.24-30)

Christ explains that this parable is about the end of the *aeon* (not *world* as it is translated):

'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world (aeon). The Son of man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.' (Matthew xiii.37-43)

This explanation of the parable refers to the termination of a period of conscious selection. In each age there is the idea of *selection* - not blind but intelligent. Each age or period appears to bring about a different kind of selection. In one short parable Christ compares the Kingdom of Heaven in general to fishermen using a net to catch fish. When they had got sufficient they selected the good and threw the useless away.

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away' (Matthew xiii.47-48).

# **The New Will**



SOME one pushes me up a grass slope. There is a ditch. It is not wide but difficult to cross. The difficult-to-cross ditch at the top of the slope is full of the bones of prehistoric animals - the remains of violent things, of beasts of prey, of monsters, of snakes. They go far down into this abyss. There is a plank to cross by, but the air seems full of restraining power, like the invisible influence of some powerful magnet; and this, with the fear of crossing this depth — although the width is not great — holds me back. I cannot say for how long for there is no ordinary time in all this. Then I find myself across — *on the other side*. What wonderful vision do I now behold? I see someone teaching or drilling some recruits. That is all. At first sight there seems nothing marvellous. He smiles. He indicates somehow that he does not necessarily expect to get any results from what he is doing. He does not seem to mind. He does not shew any signs of impatience when they are rude to him. The lesson is nearly over, but this will not make any difference to him. It is as if he said, 'Well, this has to be done. One cannot expect much. One must give them help, though they don't want it.' It is his invulnerableness that strikes me. He is not hurt or angered by their sneers or lack of discipline. He has some curious power but hardly uses it. I pass on marvelling that he could do it. I could not take on such a thankless task. Eventually I come to a place, perhaps a shop, where boats are stored. Beyond is the sea.

When I wake I think of this man. To do what he is doing is so utterly contrary to anything I would do. I would need a new will to do it.

It would mean I would have to go in a direction I never went in. I thought much about this direction. How could I define it to myself? I would have been violent to those recruits. Yes, that was it. He showed no violence. He had not a will of violence. He seemed purified from all violence. That was the secret. That was the source of the curious power I detected in him. *A man without violence*. And then I reflected that to reach

him I had had to get across to the other side of the deep gulf full of the bones of prehistoric beasts, full of the remains of violent creatures. This had been done for me somehow and I found myself in the border of another country, at the edge of it only, but beyond the prehistoric beasts. Here this non-violent man lived and taught. It was the country of the non-violent, where recruits were being taught. They seemed an indifferent lot but perhaps they represented people who could learn something eventually.

He had nearly finished his lesson. Beyond, was the sea and there were boats stored near it. No doubt when he had finished the course, he was going on somewhere, beyond the land. As for me, I had been given only a glance into the meaning of a new will — a will not based on violence or on having your own way. I repeat - only a glance. For I knew I had not, save in spirit, really crossed that deep gulf yet, filled with the bones of the violent past, and left it behind finally. There were no recruits for me - or were those recruits different 'I's in myself that he was trying to teach? Certainly none of the waiting boats was mine. But from this glance I know more practically what going in a new direction is and what a new will purified from violence means. I know also that the possibilities of following this new will and new direction lie in every moment of one's life - and that I continually forget.

# The Telos

## PART ONE

CHRIST shows his conscious attitudes of power by an argument, by repartee.' How can you forgive sins?' they ask, when he has told the paralytic, borne by four, and let down through the roof, that his sins are cancelled. 'I will shew you that I have this power,' is the reply. 'Arise, take up your bed and go to your house.' The implication is that the paralytic could not have been cured unless his sins had been cancelled and his inner state altered, through his contact with inward truth being restored. The paralytic immediately arises and takes up the bed (formerly borne by four - yes, formerly borne of four with him helpless, and now borne by one — himself) and goes forth before them all - not as he came, let through the roof, the press of people being too great. The outer change reflects the inner transformation: whereas in himself, when indeed there was such a press, he was taken no notice of, now he goes out before them all. Why? Because his sins are forgiven, cancelled, torn up, like a promissory note, so that his internal accusers no longer can persuade him that he is utterly insignificant, of no importance. They, who hitherto prevented his coming near Christ now see him walking before Him - before them all - no longer lying passive, but standing active, no longer in mind horizontal in the heavy feeling of Time but vertical in the light of Eternity. The time-situation has changed in a flash to the Eternity-situation where a man from being prone, becomes upright, his sins having been forgiven. For Eternity, which is fullness, must always be forgiving Time for its poorness, its wretchedness, its inability to imitate eternal things: and so the eternal Christ forgives men on earth, *provided they have faith*, which is vision. Faith is the power of looking up. For when the paralytic and the four bearing him were unable to approach because of the press and had climbed up and opened the roof, is it not said that Christ perceived their faith - for is not all faith climbing and opening the roof, breaking up that which prevents us looking up? Notice he perceived their faith - not the paralytic's only, but also the faith of the four who bore him and climbed up and opened the roof taking the helpless

paralytic with them. 'They uncovered the roof where he was and when they had broken it up they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay.' But Christ, perceiving their faith, speaks only to the paralytic, for not all five are one in faith (Mark ii.1-12).

## PART TWO

THE possibility of some definite change in a human being is indicated in 'esoteric' teaching. This is plain. We find it in the few fragments of Christ's teaching that have been preserved. We can find it in other sources. But what is this change? It is difficult to say. The Gospels are the most difficult books to understand. We can see that much of Christ's teaching is deliberately veiled in the form of parable. He actually says so. 'And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For to whomsoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing hear not, neither do they understand.' (Matthew xiii.10) Parables contain an 'esoteric' meaning, which means simply an inner meaning. Again, sometimes Christ used a high form of paradox. Yet it is plain enough that a definite *transformation* is being spoken of all through and that fragments of hard-to-understand teaching concerning how to attain it are scattered about but without any clear order. The idea seems to be that a man is incomplete as he is, like an unfinished house, and that to complete him he has to be largely pulled down and rebuilt. In another way much of what he has learned has to be unlearned. Much that is useless or false in him has to be stripped off. In this way he is transformed. He becomes a new man.

Now this end of transformation of a man can be thought of as *The Mark* to be aimed at. One may never see it or never grasp. Or one may have poor aim.

Sin means to miss the mark. The Greek word *ἁμαρτανω* (*hamartano*) really means 'to miss the mark'. But it is translated

as *sin*. Literally the word was used in archery, when the target was missed.

It would seem clear, therefore, that we cannot understand the idea of sin in the right way unless we gain some idea of what it is we have to aim at. To miss the mark is 'sin'; but *what is the mark?* The existence of a mark evidently causes sin, because if there were no mark to aim at, there would be nothing to miss and therefore no sin. In fact, Paul exclaims that had there been no commandments he would never have sinned.

The commandments caused him to sin - a startling idea - just as in the mythos of Adam and Eve the prohibition to eat allegorically the fruit of the tree of knowledge caused sin and the fall of Man. The mark was somehow missed.

Speaking of the tenth commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet', Paul says: 'Had it not been for the law I would never have known what sin means. Thus I would never have known what it is to covet unless the law had said: "Thou shalt not covet." The commandment gave an impulse to sin and sin resulted for me in all manner of covetous desire - for sin apart from law is lifeless.' (Romans vii.7) He would not have recognised such a thing as sin but by means of the law. He was alive and flourishing, he says, without the law, 'but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died'. Whatever his meaning is in this and the verses that follow we can at any rate understand that Paul took the law — the commandments — as the *mark* and the keeping of them as the *aim*. But he says more than once that no one can possibly keep the ten commandments and that Man cannot be saved by the law but only be condemned. He says Christ came to do 'what the law could not do'.

In Romans (vii) he sees that 'the law is *spiritual*' (v. 14). 'So then with the *mind* I *myself* serve the law of God: but with the flesh the law of sin' (25). 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man' (22). Notice how he places the feeling of *I* in the inward man, not in the outer or carnal man. He does not say / to the flesh: 'For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing' (18). He is dividing himself into the inner and outer man. So he says: 'For the good which I would

I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do' (19). Two different senses of / are meant. It is not the same / that would and does not, or would not and does. Let us call one of these *It*. Then the passage would read, 'For the good that I would *It* does not: but the evil which I would not, that *It* does.' It then becomes clear why he goes on to say, 'Now if I do that I would not, it is no more / that do it' (20). *It* does it, not /. So he concludes that to this part of him that does what he would not, and does not what he would, he can say: *This is not I*. Through this the feeling of / is withdrawn from it and concentrated in the inner man.

It is said at the beginning of chapter eight that the commandments failed to set men free because no man could keep them, therefore Christ came to do '*what the law could not do*'. ' . . . that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit' (2-4). The *telos* is to *free* us. For Christ is the *end (telos)* of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth' (x.4).

The Mark is the *End - τέλος* - and this is 'conforming to the image of his Son' (the firstborn of many others) (Romans VIII.29).

You cannot start with the law. Paul's whole teaching is based on the forming of 'Christ in you'. Then the keeping of the law follows naturally.



# Appendix

I N the Old Testament, the word translated as *repent* is the Hebrew *shub* - to turn or return, to change direction, to turn right round and face the other way. In the Koran, two words are translated as *repentance*: *nadam* - remorse, *tawbah* - returning, turning unto God.

'The Latin word is retrospective. It looks back with a revulsion of feeling to past acts; whereas the Greek word is prospective - it speaks of a moral renewal with a view to transformation of the entire man.' (Hastings)

'We translate it (*metanoia*) "repentance", with the meaning of lamenting for our sins; and we translate it wrongly. Of *metanoia*, as Jesus used the word, lamenting one's sins was a small part: the main part was something far more active and further, the setting up an immense new inward movement for obtaining the rule of life. And *metanoia* accordingly is a change of the inner man.' (Matthew Arnold: *Literature and Dogma*.)

## EPIOUSIOS

The translation of *epiousios*, ἐπιούσιος, which has been sometimes rendered as *super-substantial* (Give us this day our super-substantial bread) though based on the derivation of the Greek word given on page 147, does not sufficiently express the clear ideas contained in the original word, but is far better than some translations which trace the origin of the word differently. For example, in the footnote in the Revised Version 'bread for tomorrow' is given, taking the meaning of the particle ἐπι (*épi*), not as referring to the present order of scale or position, namely, to what is adjacent but above, but as having a time sense; and from this point of view 'eternal bread' has been suggested, or 'bread of the future life'. The Greek word translated as *eternal* does not occur in the Lord's Prayer save in the added part, where it is translated 'for ever and ever' quite wrongly, it having no meaning of endless time, but referring to an order *above time*.

## EARLY GREEK TEACHING

'Blessed is the man who has gained the notion of divine wisdom: wretched he who has a dim notion of the gods in his heart' (Empedocles: Fragment 132). The whole idea of all the ancient divine philosophy influenced by Pythagorean teaching was *purification* and *loosening*, so that mind and heart were re-opened to realities and truths that could be internally reached, and that daily life obscured. The soul has fallen from a blessed state — a state of bliss - where the Eternal Realities were beheld, into the stream of time, into half-realities and confusion of the senses. So the meaning of earthly life is first to arouse the charioteer of the soul. The ultimate aim is to regain the vision without which the soul dies. The method is by *purification* (catharsis) and *loosening* (luisis). It is not for those who 'think that nothing exists save what they can grasp in their two hands'.

The pre-Pythagorean Orphic mystery seems to have contained the same idea. But it was popularly grasped as a religion in the ordinary sense, in which festivities were held, rites practised and sacrifices made for those in Hades; and a purely ceremonial instruction prescribed for those at an early stage of teaching and understanding. Of these it was said that there were 'Many who hear the word, but few Bacchi'. Exactly the same idea and in a similar connection is expressed in the New Testament: 'Many are called, but few are chosen.' This remarkable interpretation of the meaning of life, which finds parallels in many ancient sources, has as its base the doctrine of evolution. Man can evolve in a definite direction and towards a definite goal, which some have reached, and of these a few have left behind their instructions, which become usually turned into religions. So the Greek philosophers despised the Orphic rites. They did so because they felt that only philosophy was the real way of preventing the soul's re-incarnation into time, and effecting its return to the star which belongs to it. And by philosophy they meant first of all a *continued state of attention*, which Plato above all things has made clear in the person of Socrates. In fact the whole of the dialogues can be seen in this light as a description of a *means*, used by the school of which Plato was a member. This continued effort of the mind was accompanied by *catharsis* and *luisis*. We can at least understand

what *luisis* meant. Literally, the verb from which the noun is derived means to *loosen*, and an important secondary meaning is 'to ransom, to unbind by payment'.

Socrates was constantly shewn as loosening men from themselves — from their borrowed opinions, imagination and false assumption of knowing. Everyone suffers from himself, which he does not see. People remain ignorant because they imagine they already know. 'We can draw a line which divides ignorance into halves, one a very great and bad sort. . . quite distinct from all other sorts . . . what is it? When a person supposes he knows, and does not know. This appears to be the great source of errors. . . .' (*Sophist*, 229 B.C.) To free men from the illusion of knowing was clearly one side of the loosening that frees the soul. This is a painful process that few can tolerate because it involves the action of another on the person himself — that is, in his intimate psychology, in the seat of his self-love and self-importance.

Many became offended, some furious. And a similar situation is mentioned in the Gospels more than once. People were nearly always *offended* by what Christ said. He said to the Pharisees: 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.' Man is not equal to the development indicated in religion. He cannot even see the idea concealed in its language. And he cannot make the necessary efforts. He misunderstands the whole thing and believes that religion or creed at bottom is external worship and nothing more than a social or political invention for making people moral or obedient, or a sort of tenacious superstition. He cannot understand that it is about super-psychology - that is, about real psychology, about the next state or level of man and what it is necessary to do and think and feel and imitate and understand in order to reach that level. He does not see that all real religion, and this is its test, is not about another world, but about *another man latent but unborn in every man*, who is in another world of meaning, and that what it is talking about in parable, allegory and paradox, is this *superman* in man. And this is why it talks in parable, allegory and paradox, because there is no way possible to describe the transformations leading to, and the states belonging to, a higher level when ordinary

language itself is a function belonging to a lower level - the level of things seen.

### TELEIOSIS

Zosimus Panopolitanus speaks of a *τελειωσις*, a transformation which is the goal of human beings. Zosimus, speaking of the *τελειωσις* of the soul, mentions a certain mirror. When the soul looks at itself in this mirror it sees what it must get rid of. What, asks Zosimus, are the instructions given to man? *Know thyself*: and this refers to the mirror. 'It (the instruction) indicates thereby the spiritual (pneumatic) and intellectual (noetic) mirror. What is this mirror, then, if not the divine spirit? When a man looks in it and sees himself in it, he turns away from all that is called gods and daemons.' He attaches himself to a process of purification, through the instrument of the mirror, which becomes the holy spirit, and becomes a perfect man. By means of the mirror he eventually sees God who is in him, by the intermediation of the holy spirit - in the light of the eye of the spirit.

This passage is, in full, as follows: 'This mirror represents the divine spirit. When the soul looks at itself in the mirror, it sees the shameful things that are in it, and rejects them; it makes its stains disappear, and remains without blame. When it is purified, it imitates and takes for its model, the holy spirit; it becomes spirit itself; it possesses calm, and returns unceasingly to that superior state in which one knows God and is known (by God). Then, having come to be stainless, it gets rid of its bonds, and it (raises itself) towards the Omnipotent. What says the philosophic word? 'Know thyself.' It indicates thereby the spiritual and intellectual mirror. What is this mirror then, if not the divine and primordial spirit? Unless one says that it is the principle of principles, the Son of God, the Word, he whose thoughts and sentiments proceed also from the holy spirit.

Such is the explanation of the mirror. When a man looks in it and sees himself in it, he turns his face away from all that is called gods and daemons, and, attaching himself to the holy spirit, he becomes a perfect man; he sees God who is in him, by the intermediation of this holy spirit.

'Behold your soul by means of this spiritual mirror of electrum, made with the two intelligences, that is, with the Son of God the Word, joined to the holy spirit, and filled with the spirituality of the Trinity.' (*Hermetica*, vol. 4, p. 143. Edited Scott and Ferguson. Oxford.)

Christ says, 'If you would *be perfect* . . . ' (Matthew xix.21) τελειος. The ancient mysteries taught at Eleusis in Attica and elsewhere were called τελεται, finishings, perfectings. Their significance was to complete man through gradual instruction in the knowledge of divine truth.

The mysteries differed from popular religions which often were elementary and barbarous. They seem always to have existed as a hidden stream of knowledge, while popular religions rose and fell.