



"Fortunate (Matt. 5) are the humble and the poor; the heavenly realm is their lot.

"Fortunate, too, are those who endure suffering; one day they shall find solace.

"Fortunate are those inclined to gentleness; they shall know the joys of peace.

"And fortunate are those who thirst for justice; their yearning shall be fulfilled.

"Fortunate are those who feel compassion; for them too there will be compassion.

"Blessed are the pure of heart; for them holiness is very near.

"Happy are those who love peace—you will be called God's children.

"And blessed are those who are persecuted in the quest for integrity, enduring defamation and disgrace for it—be glad and rejoice, for you are the citizens of a divine realm.

"Of you, my friends, I would like to be able to say that you are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its savor and blends indistinguishably with everything else, what are we to season with? So too, if the power of goodness were to die in you, your deeds would perish right along with the rest of mankind's pointless preoccupations. Be as lights to the world, showing yourselves in such way that your deeds illuminate all men and enkindle the better impulses within them, that they might learn to look upward to higher purposes and to our father in heaven.

"Do not believe for an instant that I have come to declare that the laws are no longer valid. I have not come to annul what the laws demand, but rather to make them complete, to breathe spirit into these lifeless / bones. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not the demands of the moral law nor the obligation to obey them. Whoever absolves himself from adherence to them is unworthy to be called a citizen of God's realm, while he who not only complies with them himself but teaches others to honor them will be highly esteemed in the heavenly realm. The one basic condition that I add, in order to make the entire system of laws complete, is this: You must not remain satisfied, like the scribes and Pharisees among you, with observing the mere letter of the law; although human tribunals may have this alone as their object, you must act out of respect for duty and in the spirit of the law.

"Let me give you an example from your legal code. You are all familiar with the ancient commandment 'Thou shalt not kill; whoever kills is to be hauled before the tribunal.' I say that it isn't just the fact of someone's death that constitutes a crime deserving punish-

ment. When anyone is unjustifiably angry toward his brother—although no earthly court could punish him for it—he is, in keeping with the law's spirit, no less deserving of punishment than a killer.

"In like manner, you are commanded to offer sacrifices at specified times. But if, as you approach the altar, you remember that you have offended someone and that he is still disturbed over it, then let your offering sit before the altar and go to your brother, extending your hand in atonement, for only then will you have approached the altar in a manner pleasing to God.

"Another of your commandments says 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.' But I say to you that not only is the actual deed a transgression, the very lust itself is sure sign of the heart's impurity. It does not matter what the propensity is—nor how natural or close to your heart it is. Resist it. If necessary, do injury to it. But do not let it drag you into deviating from what is right, and thus gradually undermine and destroy your principles. And do this even if the gratification of your impulses does not violate the letter of the law.

"Another ancient law is 'Do not take an oath falsely.' But if you have true regard for yourselves then any assurance, any promise indicated by even so much as a mere Yes or No, ought to be just as sincere, just as sacred and inviolable as an oath in the presence of the Deity. For your Yes or No must only be given if you fully intend to act accordingly before all eternity.

84 "Consider as well the civil law 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' Do not let this juridical precept govern your private life either in response to an insult or when acknowledging a kindness. Give up vengeance in favor of the nobler sentiments / of gentleness and goodness, and, indifferent to the possession of property, do not insist upon your own advantage however often it may seem justified.

"You have also been told to love your friends and country, although you may hate your enemies and foreigners. But I say, if you cannot love your enemies, at least respect the humanity in them. For those who curse you, wish that good come to them; for those who hate you, do good to them. For those who lie about you to others, seeking to use them to make you miserable, intercede on their behalf. In this way you become true children of the father in heaven, alike in spirit to the 'All-bountiful himself, who lets his sun shine upon both good and bad, who lets the rain fall equally on the just and the unjust. For if you love only those who love you, do good

only to those who do good to you, or lend only in order to receive an equivalent value in return (Luke 6:35), what have you accomplished? All this is a matter of natural feeling, which even the wicked would not dispute. Toward your duty you would have as yet done nothing. To be holy is your goal, in the same way as the Deity is holy.

"Liberality and the giving of alms (Matt. 6) are commendable virtues; but like the foregoing commandments, if they are put into practice not in the spirit of virtue but merely for show, then they are entirely without merit. So if you want to give alms, don't spread news of your deed or have it circulated as do hypocrites who hope to be praised to the skies. Do it so privately that the left hand does not know what the right hand is giving. Your reward (if you have need of the notion of a reward as incentive) is the quiet thought of having done well. For although the world may little know the author of your action, even what you do on a small scale—like the aid you tender in misfortune and the comfort you offer the sick—has an effect whose bounty is eternally rich.

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrite—going down on your knees in the temple, folding your hands in the street, burdening your neighbors with your singing—all in order to be noticed. The prayers of hypocrites bear no fruit; but yours, whether within your chamber or without, should raise your spirit above the petty goals people set for themselves, and above the appetites which drive them to and fro. The thought of the holy should remind you of the law engraved in your bosoms and fill you with a respect for it that cannot be compromised by any of the lures of the inclinations. And do not suppose that the essence of prayer consists in a lot of / words; people 85 imagine that by means of these they can curry favor with God and be able to learn something about him and about the design of his eternal wisdom. Do not be like them in this. Your father knows what you need even before you ask him for it. Thus natural needs, wants, and inclinations cannot be the proper object of your prayer; for how can you know whether the gratification of these is the true purpose of the Holy One's design? The spirit of your prayer should be such that, animated by the idea of what is divine, your firmly resolve, before God, to dedicate your entire life to virtue.

"This prayerful spirit might be articulated something like this: 'Father of mankind, to whom all of heaven is subject, you, who alone

are all holy, be for us the image* that we strive to approximate, so that some day your kingdom will come, a kingdom in which all rational beings will make nothing but the law their rule of conduct. To this idea all inclinations, even the cry of nature itself, will eventually be subjected. Conscious of our imperfections in face of your holy will, how could we set ourselves up as stern or indeed even vengeful judges of our brothers? We mean to work on ourselves instead, to improve our hearts, to purify that which moves us to act, and gradually to purge our dispositions of evil so as to become more like you, whose holiness and bliss are alone unending.'

"A sure sign of growth in moral perfection is the increase of brotherly love in you and your readiness to forgive—not the accumulation of worldly treasures, which you can never call entirely your own. Gold and silver, beauty, dexterity, and the rest all come and go; such things change with the tide—they rust away, they are devoured by insects, they are stolen; but none of them fills your soul anyway. Gather instead an imperishable treasure within yourselves, a moral wealth; only a treasure of this sort can you call your own in the full sense of the word, for it attaches to your deepest self. The forces of nature, the evil wills of men, even death have no power over it. The eye serves as the body's lamp; when sound it guides the body in all it does, but when defective it leaves the body awkward in everything. So too, if the light of the soul, the light of reason, grows dim, how are any of our drives and inclinations supposed to obtain their true bearing? Furthermore, just as one cannot serve two masters with equal fervor, so likewise is the service of God and reason incompatible with / devotion to the senses. The one excludes the other—or else there ensues a wretched and pathetic vacillation between them.

"This is why I exhort you to tear yourselves away from your endless preoccupation with what to eat, what to drink, and how to dress; for most people such needs describe the whole orbit of their endeavors and, judging by the importance they place on them, appear to constitute their very destiny, the be-all and end-all of their existence. Is there truly to be found no higher need in the human soul than that of nourishment and clothing? Look at the carefree birds in the sky: they do not sow, they do not reap, they do not heap up things in barns; the father of nature has provided for their nourishment.

*ideal

Isn't your destiny higher than theirs? Could you really be condemned by nature to exert all the noble powers of your soul in the gratification of the stomach's needs? You expend so much effort on adorning and beautifying the form which nature gave you; but can your vanity, with all its expenditure of wit and anxious concern, add one inch to your height? Or look at the flowers in the fields, which bloom so gloriously today only to be turned into hay tomorrow; could Solomon in all his splendor have rivaled such natural beauty? Therefore rid yourselves of some of this anguished obsession with how to feed and clothe yourselves. The highest goal of your endeavors should be the Kingdom of God, and the morality by means of which alone you may become worthy of being its citizens. Then the rest will take care of itself.

"Do not be harsh in your judgments of others (Matt. 7); for the very standard you use will redound on you, and this may not always turn out to your advantage. Why is it that you are so fond of seeing the smaller mote in the eye of the other, and fail to notice the much larger one in your own? Hypocrites! First remove your own, then give thought to treating someone else's. Reform yourselves first, before you would undertake to reform others. How can the blind show the blind the way—won't both fall into the ditch? Or can the teacher make the pupil more capable than he himself is? (Luke 6:40) And when you do want to better the lot of others, do not turn to just anyone imprudently and indiscriminately. Do not throw the sacred (ring) to the dogs, or pearls to swine: they would only trample it under as they turned to devour you. / Approach people imploringly and often they will yield to you. Seek out a side from which they can be reached; you will find one. Knock softly and you will be admitted.

87

"To act only on principles that you can will to become universal laws among men, laws no less binding on you than on them"* — this

*The general rule of prudence is: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you (the rule of conventional morality). [Editor's note: It would seem that Kant's footnote in the *Grundlegung* of 1785, in which he explains the unfitness of the Golden Rule as a genuine moral principle, did not escape Hegel's attention. Kant had written: "Let it not be thought that the banal '*quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.*' could here serve as guide or principle, for it is only derived from the principle and is restricted by various limitations. It cannot be a universal law, because it contains the ground neither of duties to one's self nor of the benevolent duties to others (for

is the fundamental law of morality, the sum and substance of all moral legislation and the sacred books of all peoples. Enter the temple of virtue through this gate of righteousness. It is narrow, to be sure; the path to it is perilous and your companions will be few. Far more sought-after is the palace of corruption and depravity, whose gateway is wide and whose streets are smooth. Along the way, be particularly on guard against false teachers who approach you with the gentle demeanor of a lamb, beneath which they hide the cravings of a ravenous wolf. You have a reliable sign by which to unmask their hypocrisy: judge them in accordance with their works. Surely one does not gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles. All good trees bear good fruit, and all bad ones bad fruit; one that bears bad fruit is not good, just as one that bears good fruit is not diseased (Luke 6:43).

"By their fruits, then, you shall know them. Goodness springs forth from the wealth of a good heart, evil from what fills a bad heart (Luke 6:45). So do not let yourselves be deceived by mere pious words; not everyone who cries out to God, who offers him prayers and sacrifice, is a member of his kingdom, but only he who does God's will, which is disclosed to man in the law of his own reason. In eternity, before the judge of the world, there will be many who will say: 'Lord, Lord, when we performed wondrous deeds, exorcising evil spirits and doing other great things, did we not invoke your name, did we not praise and thank you for them as though they were your work?' They will be answered: 'What was the point of your miracles, your prophecies, and your other grand accomplishments? Was this what life was all about? God does not recognize you as his. You miracle-makers, you soothsayers, you performers of great deeds — you are not citizens of his realm. Your actions were evil; morality alone is the criterion of what is pleasing to God.'

"Those who have heard these principles and have internalized them I compare with a wise man who has built his house on solid rock. When a storm comes and floods roar all about, when the winds blow,

many a man would gladly consent that others should not benefit him, provided only that he might be excused from showing benevolence to them). Nor does it contain the ground of obligatory duties to another, for the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who sentences him. And so on." —Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. L. W. Beck. Bobbs-Merrill, 1959, p. 48n.]

they beat upon his house as upon everybody else's. But it does not fall, for it has been erected on / rock. —Those who, even though 88 they have heard this teaching, do not act on it I compare with a fool who has built his house on sand. When the storm comes and hits his house with its weak foundation, it collapses with a crash."