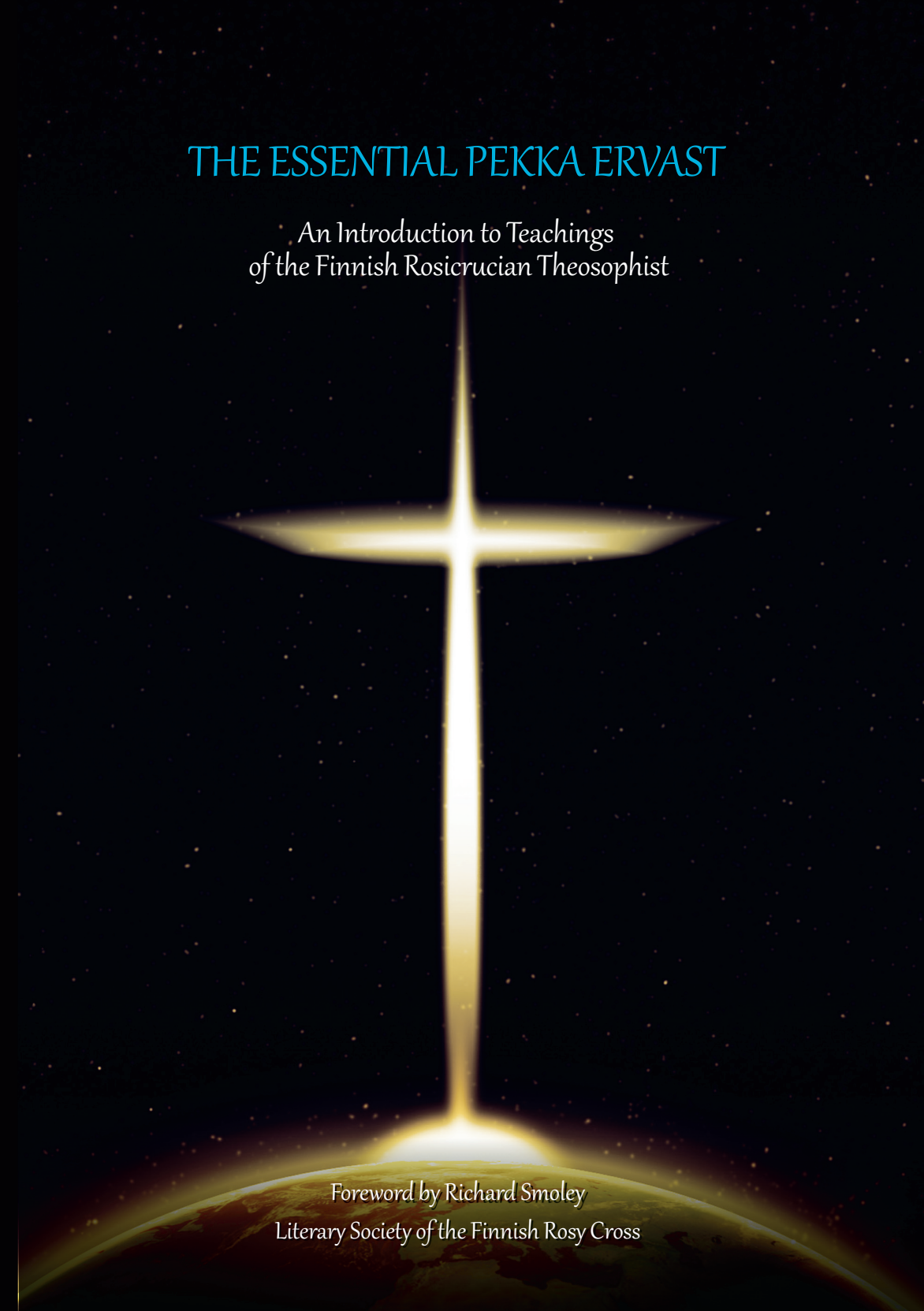


THE ESSENTIAL PEKKA ERVAST

*An Introduction to Teachings
of the Finnish Rosicrucian Theosophist*



Foreword by Richard Smoley
Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross

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AN INTRODUCTION TO TEACHINGS
OF THE FINNISH ROSICRUCIAN THEOSOPHIST

The Essential Pekka Ervast

An Introduction to Teachings of the Finnish Rosicrucian Theosophist

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Foreword by Richard Smoley

What is a Christian? Over the centuries, the answer to this question has evoked an enormous amount of quarreling, hatred, torture, and extermination. This all so grossly contradicts the message of the Gospels that it would be funny if it had not brought about such incalculable suffering.

My own answer to this question is simple: a Christian is someone who tries to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. That is all. Everything else—the creeds, dogmas, doctrines, proclamations of popes and Reformers alike—is purely discretionary. You can accept it or dispense with it as you like.

This answer would be unacceptable to many if not most theologians, although I believe it is in keeping with the thought of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist who turned his mind toward spirituality in his later life.

It is appropriate, I think, to mention these ideas in connection with this anthology of the great Finnish Rosicrucian and Theosophist Pekka Ervast, because Ervast found his early inspiration in the simple but profound Christianity expounded by Tolstoy. Furthermore, Ervast came to much the same conclusion as I have suggested above: “Christianity is about following Jesus and nothing else.”

In any event, anyone who earnestly tried to live every day by the teachings of Christ would for that very reason be far superior to the ordinary run of human beings.

Ervast’s approach to Christ’s teachings—notably those in the Sermon on the Mount—entails more than becoming a kind and decent human being. It also encompasses a method of inner transformation. And this method of transformation centers around what Ervast calls

the five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Do not be angry with others.
2. Do not commit adultery in your heart.
3. Do not take an oath, but always speak the truth.
4. Do not resist evil.
5. Do not make war, but love all people.

One could point out certain historical details here. For example, the injunction against taking oaths reflects the teachings of Christ's contemporaries, the mysterious Jewish sect known as the Essenes. Flavius Josephus, a historian of the first century AD, writes about them, "Every word they speak is more binding than an oath; swearing they reject as something worse than perjury, for they say a man is already condemned if he cannot be believed without God being named."

For reasons I have discussed in my book *How God Became God: What Scholars Are Really Saying about God and the Bible*, such evidence suggests that Christ very likely studied with the Essenes at some point but broke with them before the time of his own preaching.

To return to Ervast: his understanding of these five commandments takes them beyond the bounds of moral strictures into the realm of inner transformation. And I believe that the directives of Christ have this dimension.

Let us take the famous injunction to turn the other cheek when struck. Such things do not happen often on a daily basis, but we can apply the teaching to everyday emotional triggers: having someone cut in front of you in line, zooming out in front of you in traffic, or any of the other petty annoyances suffered by the typical person in the developed world.

Generally when one experiences such aggravations, the immediate response is to react with anger: to curse, swear, abuse the offender, whether within or outside of their range of hearing. The old esoteric Christians called these impulses *passions*, or *pathē* in Greek (singular *pathos*). They are not passions in the sense in which that word is used in present everyday English. They could be better be characterized as *impulses*. They are highly reactive and indeed automatic. The individual

who tries to block their expression will probably not succeed the first time, or the second.

From a conventional point of view, we can see why it is good to block the immediate expression of negative reactions: they often lead to arguments and altercations. But the esoteric Christian view takes the matter further. The expression of automatic negative emotions expends energy—a certain subtle inner energy. Merely repressing the expression of these impulses may keep one free from quarrels, but it has the disadvantage of leaving this negative energy pent-up inside the system, which will ultimately lead to stress, neurosis, or, if enough of this energy builds up, an explosive act of violence. We do not have to search far in the news media to find examples—many of them appalling.

A more profitable way of applying Christ's injunction is, at the moment the impulse arises, *to avoid expressing it while feeling it fully*—by which I mean somatically. Some energy will certainly arise, experienced, perhaps, as a kind of burning sensation in the arms or torso. If you can consciously avoid the outburst while feeling this energy directly, it is no longer pent up in you and can be freed for more positive uses—some would even say for the construction of subtle bodies. Again, someone who tries this practice may not succeed the first or the second or the third time.

Ervast's approach to Christ's commandment is different but, I believe, equally valid: "We must not bury a desire for revenge or a wounded sense of justice within us, but take a completely new attitude towards evil. We must then understand Jesus' commandment, 'Do not be against evil,' in the following way: 'You call the man who tempts you evil; you call suffering and misery evil. If you call them evil in your heart, do not resist them, but submit to them. You will then learn to erase the word "evil" from your mind, learn to see the good in evil, and prepare yourselves to be able to overcome evil.'"

For Ervast, the occult purpose of Christ's commandment is this: "When we overcome ourselves and step outside our own personality, the eye opens in us to see the world as an ordered cosmos, in which the lives of human beings and all living beings are guided and directed from the unseen world."

Ervast tells us that the practice of these commandments will lead to the development of occult powers, for example, the opening of the third eye in the center of the forehead. I do not doubt this, but it may be easier to understand the point in more everyday terms.

People who meet advanced spiritual teachers are often amazed at their powers of perception: they sometimes appear able to read minds or tell a person some detail that that person had never mentioned to anyone else and may not even have known. It would be possible to attribute such powers to clairvoyance, but the explanation may be simpler: the advanced individual has, to one degree or another, freed himself from his own personal nonsense and reactivity. This alone not only frees up psychic energy but enables him to see others far more openly than is common.

It is an unfortunate fact that all of us, in our ordinary condition, are ridiculously, pathetically obvious. We go around unconsciously displaying our weaknesses as a military hero displays his medals: they are sitting out for all to see. Why do others not see them? Because they, like us, are blinded by their own illusions, their posturing, their self-image, their anxieties. Someone who has freed himself from these, even a little, will be able to see much more objectively and may start to look like a being with superhuman powers.

These are some thoughts that arise when contemplating Ervast's simple but profound Christianity, which (rightly, I believe) focuses on the Sermon on the Mount as the epitome of Christ's teaching. Ervast observes one thing about this passage that has eluded practically everyone else. You can look at any number of paintings of the Sermon on the Mount, and they will inevitably show Jesus preaching to a crowd. Bizarrely, Matthew's Gospel says the exact opposite: "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him" (Matthew 5:1). Jesus has gone up the mountain to *get away* from the crowds: he is speaking only to his disciples.

We are then led to the conundrum of esoteric versus exoteric Christianity. It is commonly believed that there *is* no such thing as esoteric Christianity: everything is as plain as day. But as Ervast's explorations indicate, this is by no means the case. The Gospels, which, even in this



Pekka Ervast (1875-1934) was a pioneer of the Finnish Theosophical movement and the founder of the Finnish Rosy Cross. For over thirty years, he gave public lectures based on his spiritual experiences and wrote books on Rosicrucian Theosophy. Ervast left behind a large body of work, much of it compiled from his lecture series. His main themes included the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount, esoteric Christianity, and the human being as an evolving spiritual and eternal being in the school of karma and reincarnation.

This book is compiled from Ervast's works and coherently presents his essential teachings.



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