

UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

A Presbyterian Quarterly

CONTENTS

	Page
The Source of Religious Certainty.	
By Rev. Holmes Rolston, Jr., Pastor of Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Rockbridge Baths, Va.....	113
The Church and the New Morality.	
By Rev. Cecil V. Crabb, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Clarks- dale, Miss.....	126
Religious Education and Presbyterian Faith.	
By Rev. L. J. Sherrill, Ph. D., D. D., Professor of Religious Education, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary.....	133
The Gospel Which Jesus Preached.	
By Rev. J. B. Green, D. D., Professor of Theology and Ethics, Columbia Theological Seminary.....	151
The Sermon on the Mount for To-day.	
By Rev. Andrew W. Blackwood, D. D., Professor of Homiletics, Prince- ton Theological Seminary.....	162
Justification by Faith.	
By Rev. Thomas Cary Johnson, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Union Theological Seminary.....	178
Reviews of Current Theological and Religious Books.....	192

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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

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THE SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY.

BY REV. HOLMES ROLSTON, JR.

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A boy in a Greek class once said to his teacher, "Professor, when I am locating a Greek verb, I do not merely want to know, I want to know that I know." In expressing himself thus, he voiced an elemental human desire, the desire to pass from the realm of probability to the realm of certainty. Men want to know and to know that they know. Men want to be right and to know that they are right. The mathematician who has worked out the answer to his problem is not satisfied until he has checked his answer and proved that he is correct. The inventor of a new machine is not satisfied with a demonstration on paper. There may be factors which he has overlooked. When he has built the machine and has proved by a thorough demonstration that it will do what he has claimed for it, probability has passed into certain knowledge and then, and not until then, his heart is at rest. Probability may be the guide of human action, but the quest of the human soul is for certainty.

In the realm of religion, the quest for certainty becomes a consuming passion. In religion, men want to know and to know that they know. They may be willing to trifle in other things, but in religion they want certainty. Nor is it difficult to find the reason for this. The heat of the passion for certainty increases in proportion with the greatness of the issues involved. The scientist may be interested in the question as

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT FOR TODAY.

BY THE REV. ANDREW W. BLACKWOOD, D. D.,
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The Sermon on the Mount is perhaps the most popular part of the Bible. The mythical "man in the street", for example, boasts that he cares little about the Ten Commandments and many other portions of the Bible, but that he gets his religion from the Sermon on the Mount. Surely he would do well to get a good deal of his religion from this inspired source, but unfortunately he does not understand what these chapters mean and what they require in the way of old-fashioned goodness. Perhaps he has gained his mistaken ideas from some of us who prate about the Sermon on the Mount as though it were easy to understand and still easier to obey. Let us therefore turn to it now and ask what it means, as well as what it requires from us as modern men.

The accepted title—*The Sermon on the Mount*—is by no means accurate, for these chapters contain teaching rather than preaching (Matt. 5:2). The current opinion among scholars is that the evangelist has collected teachings of our Lord spoken at different times and on different occasions, but some of us prefer to think of these words as the report of His teachings at a sort of mid-summer Bible school. The Master is here addressing believers rather than unbelievers (Matt. 5:1), and He is teaching them ethics rather than doctrine. If we remember these facts—that the Teaching on the Hill consists of ethical precepts addressed to believers—we shall escape from some of our misconceptions.

The key-note of these teachings is the Kingdom (Matt. 6:33), by which we understand the realm where the will of God is being done, gladly and well, whether in heaven or on earth (Matt. 6:10); the emphasis here is upon the kingdom on earth. The character of these teachings is so exalted in its spirituality that they are as high above the ethical standards

of the man in the street as the heavens are higher than the earth. The range here is so vast and the topics are so varied that it is practically impossible to bring the various paragraphs into a symmetrical outline, but it may help us to carry these truths in mind and to have them quickly available for use if we tie them up in a few bundles, somewhat arbitrarily, and if we attach to each bundle a familiar label.

I. *The Citizens of the Kingdom* (Matt. 5:1-16).

Such a heading is too stilted to accord with the teachings of the Beatitudes and of the few verses which follow; for the Master is here describing the character and the influence of the members of the family of the redeemed children of God. In the Beatitudes He is describing their character, both negatively and positively; for the first three Beatitudes, as well as the eighth, are negative, whereas the other four are positive. He blesses those who are poor in spirit—humble in the sight of God; those who mourn—whether because of sorrow or because of sin; and those who are meek—humble in the presence of their fellowmen. These virtues are passive rather than active; they call for being rather than for doing; and they are often caricatured, as by Charles Dickens in *Uriah Heep* and his hypocritical mother, who were ever boasting about being “'umble”.

The one Beatitude which causes us most concern is the third, in which the Master says that the meek shall inherit the earth—a saying which seems to be the antithesis of the truth. But we forget that each of these Beatitudes is spiritual rather than material, for the Master was not so much concerned about material things as we are. When we do not understand His words we should study them in the light of His life; for He was meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29), and in the most beautiful sense of the term, He inherited the earth. He made the best of both worlds, and He wishes to share with believers, here and now, the riches of His own spiritual experience. Such a philosophy of life is foreign to the thinking of the man

in the street, for the Teaching on the Hill begins where the average man's morality ends.

These four positive virtues are equally spiritual, and equally foreign to the practical philosophy of today. The Master takes for granted that believers will be honest and brave and strong, and He says nothing here about such fundamental virtues. "What do ye more than others?" It is the overplus that counts with God. So the Master blesses those who hunger and thirst after righteousness; "They shall be filled". Filled with what? Filled with righteousness! Blessed are the merciful—the pure in heart—the peacemakers. In each of these Beatitudes, as well as in those above, the emphasis is upon the latter portion of the saying. In the fourth Beatitude, for instance, the blessing consists, not in hungering, but in being filled.

The eighth Beatitude is the best of them all, for it strikes the same note as the first one, but an octave higher. The blessing pronounced upon those who are persecuted for righteousness sake is exactly the same as that pronounced upon the poor in spirit, and for the same reason—only those who are poor in spirit submit in silence when men say all manner of evil against them, falsely, for Jesus' sake. Surely this is the height of human attainment here on earth, and it is possible even to Christians only by the grace of God. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

All of these virtues must be found, at least in a measure, in the heart and life of every believer. Too many of us are trying to employ the elective system in Christian living, so that one of us strives to excel in this virtue and another in that, but the true believer is like his Lord in showing the world how to blend all these virtues in the alchemy of Christian love. In preaching to children one might illustrate this truth by showing how the musician employs all of the tones of the diatonic scale in rendering the most exquisite melody, and how he would mar the entire composition if he neglected to strike the various keys in their turn. Again, one might use a prism to show how a single beam of sunlight resolves itself into all of

the variegated hues of the rainbow, or one might blend seven different colors of paint so as to form the purest white. One cannot go astray in using the facts of nature and of art in helping boys and girls to understand that being a Christian means being like the Lord Jesus in the beauty of his heart and life.

In the four verses immediately following the Beatitudes the Lord Jesus describes the influence of believers, showing that it is both unconscious and conscious, or invisible and visible. But instead of using such abstract terms, as we often do, He talks of the salt and the light, thus appealing to the imagination. Where Horace Bushnell writes learnedly about unconscious influence, Jesus tells us that it is like the unseen working of the salt, which purifies and preserves and makes palatable. Christian influence is like the salt in being noticeable only when it fails to operate, for in the lives of believers the most wholesome influence sometimes wanes, just as in the Orient salt sometimes loses its savor. For a modern confirmation of the Master's words consult *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, in loco, but remember that in reading the Bible the fact is more important than the figure. Only by the use of the reverent imagination can we hope to interpret the teachings of Jesus.

Even more impressive are the Master's words about the light, which represents the visible outshining of Christian character. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid"; perhaps the reference here is to Safed, which was doubtless within the view of the Master's hearers. He stresses the fact that one must first of all be luminous, and then that one need only let the inner light shine forth. Too often we strive to *make* our light shine, forgetting that the best light calls no attention to itself, shining so steadily and so quietly that those who bask in its gentle radiance forget that it is there, but they miss it sorely when it goes out. Perhaps this is why we seldom appreciate our loved ones while they are with us in the flesh. A radiant Christian personality is to be attained, therefore, not by agonizing after spiritual influence, but by being filled with the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. (Both of these figures tell of the quietness of

true religion. Cf. the Christmas hymn by Phillips Brooks, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, especially the third stanza.)

The key verse in this first portion of the Teaching on the Hill is the one which we know the best and love the most—“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven” (5:16). This is the first place in the Bible where we read of God as our Heavenly Father, and this is one of the places where we learn of the high value which the Master places upon good works, as the normal outshining of Christ-like character. If we are Christians we delight to serve God by serving our fellowmen; we serve, not because we must, but because we can. How much more satisfying is this sort of teaching than that which speaks of Christian service as drudgery—doing one’s duty in the spirit of pious resignation—“as ever in the Great Taskmaster’s eye”.

II. *The Standards of the Kingdom* (Matt. 5:17—6:18).

This central portion of the Teaching on the Hill is the most difficult of all to understand and to explain, partly because it concerns the attitude of the Lord Jesus towards the Old Testament. He is dealing with the Old Testament, not as it is known to us, but as it was being interpreted by the Scribes and Pharisees, who overlaid it with their man-made traditions, so that it was like a sturdy vessel whose hull is incrustated with barnacles. The Lord Jesus ruthlessly removed those many traditions, but He accepted the Old Testament itself as the Word of God, and He gave it to us with the stamp of His divine approval. “Think not that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). The emphasis here is upon that significant word *fulfil*: the Lord Jesus Himself is the incarnate fulfillment of the God-given hopes which shine forth from many an inspired page of the Old Testament. (One of the greatest needs in the Church just now is a scholarly book showing in a popular way the attitude of the Lord Jesus towards the Old Testament, which was His Holy Bible.)

The sum of the teaching here is that the standards of the Kingdom under the present dispensation are vastly higher than the standards of the Old Testament, especially as it was being interpreted by the Scribes and Pharisees. Here again the Master is speaking concretely, for He points out six applications of His general principle, in the last of which He shows how the Christian can meet such exacting standards by following the law of love. He interprets the commandment—"Thou shalt not kill"—so as to make it include a prohibition of anger; and the commandment—"Thou shalt not commit adultery"—so as to forbid the unclean desire and the lecherous look. In like manner He interprets the ancient laws concerning divorce, the taking of oaths, retaliation, and hating one's enemy. In each case His teachings are difficult for us to comprehend, and vastly more difficult for us to obey, because they run counter to all of our natural inclinations.

This central portion of the Teaching on the Hill reaches its climax in the amazing words—"Ye shall therefore be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48)—a verse which constitutes "the culminating summary of the Sermon on the Mount thus far" (D. A. Hayes). The Master probably does not mean that we are to be as perfect as God is perfect in an absolute sense, for that is obviously impossible, but that we are to adopt the God-like attitude in relation to these six commands, and surely such a standard is not too lofty for the Christian. Every one of these "counsels of perfection" has to do with man's duty to his neighbor, and as the last of the six teachings clearly shows, the way to keep all of these commandments is the old-fashioned way of Christian love; that is, we must adopt towards every person—whether neighbor or enemy—an attitude like that of the Father God towards us as His sinful children. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." The only satisfactory illustration here is from the earthly life of our Lord, Who even on the Cross prayed for those that did Him deadly wrong. "Who follows in His train?"

The standards of the Kingdom, therefore, are higher than those of the Old Testament as interpreted by the religious leaders

of that day, and at the same time these standards are more inward. This is the principle which shines forth from what the Master says about almsgiving, prayer and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18). The difference here is that He is dealing with the three virtues which the Jews of His time considered most essential, whereas in the preceding paragraphs He has been speaking about vices, most of which they professed to abhor. He is careful not to find fault with those who give alms and pray and fast, but He insists that believers should perform such ceremonies to please God and not to win the approval of men. Here He employs that heart-searching word *hypocrite*, which means literally *a play actor*, for the man who engages in the holiest of ceremonies in order to be seen by other men is only playing at religion, and so he receives a more scathing condemnation than the Master ever bestows upon men and women who are brazen in sin. Obviously, Christian goodness can never be theatrical goodness; it calls no attention to itself; it tends only to exalt God.

The first illustration of the inwardness of true religion concerns almsgiving, to which the Jews attached great importance. According to the Master, almsgiving must be a matter of the heart, and when it is sincere it does not strive to call attention to itself. The man who gives to the poor simply to be seen by other men cannot expect a blessing from the God Whose favor he does not desire, whereas the one who shows his love for God by relieving the distress of his neighbors—the one who distributes his alms so quietly that he occasions no embarrassment to the persons whom he befriends—such a giver will receive a rich blessing from the Father God. In doing good, as in everything else in religion, the motive is vital, because the motive largely determines the method. Here is no formal legislation concerning the best ways of helping the poor, for the problems of poor relief are not to be solved by a formula; but these problems will begin to be solved much more surely when from the heart we accept as our guiding principles the teachings of the Master about love.

The second illustration is even more important, for it has

to do with prayer. In the days of our Lord the ecclesiastical leaders of the Jews had reduced prayer to a stiff, mechanical system, so that it seemed to be primarily a matter of saying approved words at approved times, at approved places and in approved ways; and somehow the ways which were approved were those which lent themselves most easily to publicity. Time and place and form are essential in prayer, but true prayer is more than any or all of these; it is the spiritual fellowship of a human being with his God. Such prayer is the most difficult and the most delicate task which mortals ever undertake. "Lord, teach us to pray!"

Here is the Lord's Prayer, which ought rather to be known as the Disciple's Prayer, for the Lord never prayed with sinful human beings as one of them; the true Lord's Prayer is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Fourth Gospel. In the Disciple's Prayer the Master reveals to us the essence of true religion, in words which have long since attained literary immortality, because they are as simple as they are sublime. In the first three petitions He teaches us to pray for the wider interests of the Kingdom of God—for objective mercies; and in the last three petitions He instructs us to pray for subjective mercies. This is the proper order: first get into right relation with God and His Kingdom, and then you will be ready to pray for personal blessings.

The heart of the Disciple's Prayer is to be found in those familiar words—"Thy kingdom come"—by which the Master means almost the same as in the following petition—"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." In heaven the saints and the angels keep doing the will of God, gladly and well, not because they must, but because they can; so when the Kingdom of God comes into the heart and life of man or nation, the will of God begins to be done in the heart and life of that man or nation, somewhat as it is done in heaven. Herein lies the hope for human betterment throughout the world.

In the latter part of this model prayer the emphasis is upon forgiveness, including the forgiveness of sins and the forgiveness of wrongs. Forgiveness of sins is God's way of bringing

the sinner back into right relations with Himself; this is the greatest personal blessing which the believer enjoys here below. Forgiveness of wrongs is the Christian's way of dealing with the person who treats him ill; the general principle here is that man's forgiveness of wrongs ought to be like God's forgiveness of sins. Such forgiveness of wrongs is the most difficult duty which the Christian ever faces; apart from divine grace such forgiveness is practically impossible; and so the Master bids us face this duty in the spirit of prayer. This sort of prayer is never theatrical; when the sinner is pleading for the pardon of his sins, or when the saint is pleading for grace to forgive the person who has done him a deadly wrong, such a suppliant is thinking about God and is not merely saying his prayers to be seen and heard by other men.

The third illustration of this principle of inwardness is the one which we Protestants find the hardest of all to understand, because it has to do with fasting, and we have practically ceased to think about fasting as a part of our religion. We insist that the Hebrew cultus was primarily one of joy, flowing from the assurance of right relations with God, and that Christian worship is even more largely one of joy, resulting from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. If the ancient Hebrews were required to fast only one day in the year—on the Day of Atonement—why should we Christians ever think about fasting at all? Even our Catholic neighbors do not fast so often in Lent as the strictest of the Pharisees used to fast throughout the year. "I fast twice in the week," said the boastful Pharisee in the Master's tale about the snob and the sinner (Luke 18:12).

The fast days of the Pharisees were fixed on the second and the fifth days of every week—the days corresponding to our Monday and Thursday. These were likewise the regular market days, so that those zealous fasters could parade their piety (Matt. 6:16). Those two days were set apart, not because there was any such injunction in the Old Testament, but because Moses was supposed to have ascended into Mount Sinai the second time on a day corresponding to our Thursday, and

to have descended on a day corresponding to our Monday. For some such reason the Jews now set apart every Friday as the day for public lamentation in Jerusalem at the Wailing Place, where the massacre recently occurred.

No one of us should cast a stone at the Jews, ancient or modern, because of their mournful remembrance of their departed glory. Doubtless our own religion would be more worthy of praise if we voluntarily set apart at least one day in the year for fasting and prayer, so that we might humble ourselves before God and confess our sins. But we must not let the Master's illustration obscure the principle which it embodies—that religion is primarily a matter of heart relation between a man and his God, and it does not depend upon his doing a certain number of things at certain fixed places and in certain prescribed ways; it depends upon the heart's sincere desire to lay hold upon the grace of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Ceremonies are necessary as means to such a high spiritual end, but they are worse than useless when they become ends in themselves.

A brief survey of this central portion of the Teaching on the Hill should convince any impartial observer that the standards of the Kingdom are high, almost incredibly high. It never has been easy to be good in this world, and it does not grow easier as life become increasingly complicated; in fact, it is impossible to be good apart from the grace of God. What lofty spiritual standards! But happily this is not the end of the Teaching on the Hill; the closing portion is the best of all.

III. *The Ideals of the Kingdom* (Matt. 6:19—7:27).

The Lord Jesus is the one perfect idealist. The other men of the Bible were the loftiest idealists in the ancient world, but He towers above them as the Alps in Switzerland tower above the surrounding portions of Europe. Everywhere in the Gospels He is teaching us the God-given possibilities of human nature, and here He is setting forth ideals which should lead the children of God to the loftiest heights of adventurous

living. First of all He shows the ideal attitude towards material things (Matt. 6:19-34). "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth"; do not set your heart upon things. You may get them or you may not; if you get them you may keep them or you may not; but even if you get them in abundance and keep them for a time, sooner or later you must leave them, and then you will be very poor indeed, because you are not "rich towards God". Do not be a pagan, for a pagan puts things in the place of God; "After all these things do the Gentiles seek".

The Christian practical philosophy of life is the reverse—"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." The best way to do that is to live for people—to invest your time and your substance, your strength and your life blood, in promoting the welfare of human beings, especially young people and children, for they will live to enrich the world long after you have fallen asleep. This was the practical philosophy of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh (Mark 10:45), and it is the only practical philosophy for believers today (Phil. 2:5). Herein lies the secret of Christian contentment, over against the spirit of covetousness. These are the two prevailing attitudes towards things: the Christian loves to employ things in serving his fellowmen, whereas the pagan thinks of things as ends in themselves. The attitude of contentment ministers greatly to the world's happiness, whereas the attitude of covetousness is responsible for a large proportion of the world's unrest.

These things about which the Master is speaking are by no means evil, or even questionable; they are good things, for they are the gifts of God's love. Food and clothing and shelter—things to own and use and enjoy—these are essential to the existence of mortals here below. A man's attitude towards such things reveals his religion or his lack of religion, for while religion itself is a matter of a man's heart relationship with his God, this relationship goes far to determine all a man does in the practical affairs of life. The key-note of the Master's teachings here is in Matt. 6:33, which is the

most important verse in these three chapters—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Make the doing of the will of God your chief concern in life, and He will supply all of the things that you need in order to do His will. The main product of a good man's life, therefore, is spiritual, and things material are only the by-products. Too many of us, alas, are specializing on the by-products, whereas the Christian ever keeps first things first. Herein lies the cure for much of our worldliness, and worldliness is the most prevalent disease in America today.

In this same paragraph the Lord Jesus points out the contrast between worry and trust. He shows that there are three reasons why God's children should not worry: worry is foolish—it cannot possibly do any good, and it is almost certain to do harm; worry is needless—the Heavenly Father is abundantly able and willing to supply all of the needs of His children; and most serious of all, worry is sinful—it involves lack of trust in God, for it amounts to practical atheism. When one worries it is a sign of lack of faith; when one trusts in God one does not worry. One might expect pagans to worry, for they do not know the Father God as revealed in the Lord Jesus, but the believer should learn from the Master how to live without worry, how to work without hurry and how to look forward without fear. In the midst of such a bewildering world, surely we need such a religion as this!

In the opening verses of the seventh chapter the Lord Jesus explains the Christian attitude towards persons (Matt. 7:1-12). A Christian is charitable in his thoughts of every one else; he is humble in his thoughts of himself; and above all, he is constant in his feeling of dependence upon God. A Christian makes every possible allowance for the failures and the shortcomings of other folk, but he makes no such allowance for his own infirmities and sins. He finds it necessary to appraise other persons impartially (v. 6), but he is unwilling to condemn any one else, for he knows that he himself is unworthy. The emphasis here is upon the sin and the folly of harshness

in criticism of others, for such criticism is almost always an evidence of pride in one's self and of lack of faith in God. The only way to live according to such ideals is to cultivate the habit of prayer (vv. 7-11).

In the midst of these heart-searching demands the Lord Jesus utters a few words with which the man in the street is familiar, for he really knows the Golden Rule. But does he understand what it means, and what it involves? The Golden Rule means that in thinking about one's self in relation to other persons one ought to pile up one's desires mountain high, and then remember that what one desires for one's self is the measure of what one owes to others. The whole situation is complicated by the fact that those other persons have their own peculiar, distinctive desires and needs, so that the Golden Rule calls for the use of a gifted imagination and of a Christ-like sympathy; it calls for putting one's self in the other person's place, looking at this world through his eyes, feeling as he ought to feel, and doing whatever one can do to aid him in conforming to the will of God. What a lofty ideal for the man in the street and for everybody else!

Here also is the Christian attitude towards life in general (Matt. 7:13-27). For the sake of emphasis the Master Teacher employs the principles of contrast and of repetition; he says practically the same thing in three pairs of contrasted figures. In each case He is stressing the importance of life's great permanent choices. "Choose well; thy choice is brief, yet endless." The first contrast is between the two gates and the two ways: the narrow gate shows that it is difficult to enter into the Christian life, and the narrow way shows that it is still more difficult to keep on in the path which leads to God; whereas the wide gate shows that it is easy to enter into the way of the world, and the broad way shows that it is still easier to walk in the road which leads to destruction.

In the King James Version we read about the *strait* gate—though not about the strait way—and sometimes we let our children imagine that the Christian life will be an uninterrupted sequence of sweetness and light, whereas we ought to

explain the difference between a *straight* road, which is easy to follow, and a narrow, winding trail, which taxes the endurance and the patience of every pilgrim. It is almost never easy to be good in such a world as this, and the Master would have no one enter upon the pilgrimage lured by mistaken hopes. But by His grace it is always possible for the sinner to pass through the strait gate and to keep on in the narrower way until at last he arrives at the Father's home. All of this we learn anew from *Pilgrim's Progress*, which contains many an echo of the Master's teachings.

A second contrast here is between the two trees. (I am omitting verse 15, which presents the same truth in still a different guise.) In the Holy Land trees are not so common as they are with us, and so they are greatly prized. This is especially true of the olive tree and the fig tree, which afford much of the food in that Eastern land. (For an interesting fact about the geographical distribution of the olive tree in the countries where Paul labored, consult Deissmann, *Paul*, pp. 39-41.) An olive tree has other uses, but its chief purpose is to bear fruit, and if its fruit proves to be bitter and worthless, that tree is soon cut down to make room for one that will bear good fruit. Here is the basis for a sort of Christian pragmatism which differs much from that of William James. The follower of Jesus must show the reality of his religious professions by his character and his service. Professions of faith and love are good in their time and place, just as blossoms must precede ripened fruit, but the memory of beautiful blossoms in the early spring is a sorry substitute for the taste of luscious fruit at the harvest time. "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

The last contrast here, and the most effective of them all, is between the two houses. In His early manhood the Lord Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), or, as Dr. Moffat translates the word, He was a builder, somewhat like Adam Bede or his brother Seth. Hence it is not strange that in His teachings about the Kingdom He often employs figures about building. In the present illustration the only perceptible difference be-

tween the ways of the two builders is that one of them built his house upon a solid foundation, whereas the other did not. Perhaps the foolish builder selected a pleasing location, followed excellent plans, used good materials and erected his structure in a workmanlike way; but all the while he was building upon the sand. As long as the sun kept shining and the south wind kept blowing softly, this house may have seemed as comfortable and secure as the other, but when the storm in all its fury burst upon that house it fell, and great was the fall thereof.

The lesson of the parable is obvious. Every man is a builder, and he ought to be building for eternity. If he makes life's first great permanent decision aright—if he chooses to build his life and his work upon the foundation of faith in God—he can hope to achieve a character and to render a service which will endure the testing of time and of eternity. But if he attempts to live and to work without the foundation of the true religion, he will some day discover, perhaps too late, that he has wasted his life and his labor, because he has neglected the fundamental fact in all spiritual building. What an inspiration, and what a warning! But the chief stress here is upon the house which stood, and not upon the one which fell.

During the San Francisco earthquake, when many another structure crumbled to earth because it had not been built securely, the tallest sky-scraper in the city, the Spreckels Building, stood unharmed, because the architect and the contractor had given special heed to the foundation, and had moored that massive structure in the solid rock. In the Back Bay District of Boston, on the other hand, a congregation discovered that the walls of its new edifice were beginning to crack, and when they called in a consulting engineer, they learned that they must tear down those walls and tear up the foundations, replacing the sub-soil with steel piles practically as solid as rock—all because they had built that beautiful structure upon man-made land, which had been brought to the Back Bay from the brow of Beacon Hill. What a sad picture of the way in which many a man today is lavishing time and strength and money, as well as life itself, upon the building of a life work

structure that will not endure, because it stands upon man-made foundations.

The Conclusion of the Whole Matter (Matt. 7:28, 29).

Let us now glance back over this Teaching on the Hill and ask how closely it accords with the practical philosophy of the man in the street, or of the average man in the Church. Here we learn about the citizens of the Kingdom—they are spiritual, both in their character and in their influence. Here are the standards of the Kingdom—standards which are higher than the highest standards of the ancient world, as well as more inward, and therefore more difficult to attain. Here again are the ideals of the Kingdom—ideals which are so lofty in their spirituality that learned men who understand what they mean are anxiously debating about whether or not it is possible for any person today to live according to the lofty spiritual idealism of the Lord Jesus Christ. After such a brief review the best of believers can simply exclaim—"If this is what it means to be a Christian, then I am not much of a Christian. I must cast no stone at the man in the street, for I too need the grace of the Lord Jesus and the saving power of His Cross."

All of this is true, and it is the sort of truth which we ought to present in the pulpit today, for if the man in the pew understood the ethics of the Gospel, doubtless he would feel a deeper sense of his need of the Saviour. But this is not the truth which the inspired Evangelist impresses upon us as he closes his record of the Teaching on the Hill. He tells us rather about the authority of the Lord Jesus. This too is a theme on which we ought to preach again and again, for the most acute problem among many believers today is concerning the seat of authority in religion. "Where is the Supreme Court to which we Christians may submit all questions relating to belief and practice?" Is it not the Lord Jesus, as He is revealed in the Bible, and supremely on the Cross?

"The multitudes were astonished at His teaching, for He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt.

7:28, 29). Thus near the beginning of the First Gospel we learn about the authority of the Lord Jesus as the Teacher in the days of His flesh, and at the very close of this Gospel we learn from His own lips about His authority as our Teacher and as our King, during all of the ages until the end of time, as well as throughout eternity. When we gladly submit to His authority as our Teacher and our King, then we are prepared to learn from Him everything that we need to know about truth and duty (John 7:17). Let us therefore pray, not only for the man in the street, but first of all for ourselves, that we may yield without reserve to the loving will of Him Who alone is the way, the truth and the life. "In His will is our peace."

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

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It is a help to the apprehension of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith, to keep in mind two things: (1) The source of the doctrine; and (2) the place of the doctrine in the steps of God, as He goes about saving a sinner.

(1) The source of the doctrine is in the supernaturally revealed word of God. No convincing argument has been discovered by the uninspired intellect that a just God will justify the ungodly. Much more the uninspired reason does not know intuitively that God will justify the ungodly. Certain ethical propositions can be validated by convincing arguments of the uninspired intellect, and certain other ethical propositions are known intuitively by the uninspired reason. But the great doctrines of grace cannot be thus reached by the natural