Sermon on the Mount

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The Sermon on the Mount:

A STUDY

BY

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DEDICATION.

The author has for thirty-five years taught the English Bible to large classes of College and University students, aggregating perhaps two thousand in number. To those who are living, and to the memory of those who have died, this little volume is lovingly dedicated.

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PREFACE.

THE author proposes to publish several small volumes of studies in the English Bible, so as to leave in more permanent form the results of his life work as a pioneer in teaching the Scriptures as a necessary part of a liberal education. He does not propose to tax the public with any general commentary or any digest of his three or four years' course, for it is not needed.

It would be strange, however, if, in this new form and field of work, and the different modes of study incident thereto, he did not make some inductions and generalizations, and reach some conclusions of value not found in the amazingly rich and varied literature which is the proud and glorious heritage of the Church to-day. This he has done in the loyal judgment of many of his most judicious pupils. Many of his conclusions have been so startling to himself as to give him pause in promulgating them, lest he be a setter forth of strange doctrines. But this has been his comfort. His conclusions all lead back to the old paths, and not one of them savors of the so-called "broad and liberal scholarship" of to-day, if indeed some of them may not be the real antidote for some of its fads.

But why discuss "The Sermon on the Mount?" Can anything be added to what has been written? The answer in part is this: so many forms of error to-day take refuge behind this discourse of Christ, and draw their inspiration from it, that we may well enquire whether the true object and scope of it has been properly set forth

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and vindicated; whether its relation to the other scriptures has been well defined; and whether the mission and attitude of Christ as a teacher has been sufficiently understood. It would seem presumptuous to entertain such questions; but they will not down. A proper settlement of them will give complexion to the entire Scriptures. Let the book itself argue the case and answer the questions.

J. B. SHEARER.

Davidson, N. C.

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SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

CHAPTER I.

The True Point of View.

THE object and scope of any teaching or writing is not always easy to ascertain, because several elements do commonly enter into the problem, some of which may be personal to the speaker and to the hearers; some may require the recognition of fundamental principles; historic facts often throw side lights on the subject; parallel discussions contribute their quota; the proper setting needs also to be understood. Any exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount which ignores such elements is just to that extent partial and incomplete, and may be false, or, at best, misleading.

Misapprehensions here are apt to determine one's views of the entire Scriptures, both the Old Testament and the New. For illustration:

1. Some think that Christ here expounds an improved and perfected moral code.

2. Some think that Christ here supersedes the moral teachings of the Old Testament.

3. Some find the Old Testament narrow, harsh, cruel, bigoted, imperfect, impure, and semi-barbaric, and claim that this is all corrected by Christ.

4. Some say that this discourse expounds the way of salvation and differentiates Christianity from all other systems of religion.

5. Altruism roots itself in misconceptions here, and

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even the golden rule is made to justify many destructive heresies.

These and other false views of this wonderful discourse may be made to vanish into thin air if we can rightly ascertain the object and scope of the Sermon.

There are certain unities in the entire Scripture which throw light on this matter:

1. There is the unity of authorship. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "Thus saith the Lord" is the prophet's formula. God the Father is the author, through the Son as mediator, and by the Holy Ghost, so that we have the triple formula, "the word of God," "the word of the Lord," "the Holy Ghost saith." Any criticism or disparagement of the Scripture must needs be a criticism of God himself in his threefold personality.

2. This leads us to expect to find unity of doctrine everywhere, for it is all of divine authorship. There is no place here for a naturalistic development of doctrine in the human intelligence, by long and tedious processes reaching after truth. The teacher is a personal teacher, even God himself communicating his own knowledge to the race.

Nor is this divinely communicated knowledge a mere doctrinal development, reaching its culmination and perfection in the personal teachings of Christ. Such a view does not comport with the fact that Christ and his apostles appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures for confirmation of all their claims and their teaching. The Gospel of the New Testament is the Gospel of the Old. (Heb. iv. 2.)

This again agrees with the fact that Christ himself constitutes the real doctrinal unity of the entire Scriptures. Type and prophecy are fulfilled, and were, from

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the beginning, fulfilled in him, so that it is properly said that he was "slain from the foundation of the world." Salvation, and the same salvation, was provided by him and taught by him to the saints of all the ages, from Abel to Stephen. He was the true prophet and teacher in all dispensations of grace. Unity of doctrine seems both necessary and easy of belief.

3. Again, doctrine is the basis of morals. There can be no moral system that is not grounded in doctrine. If one is true, the other is sound; if one is false, the other is perverse and corrupt. If the doctrine is inadequate or variable, the moral system is vitiated to the same extent.

We maintain, therefore, a unity of morals as well as of doctrine throughout the entire Scriptures. We would argue, *a priori,* that a moral code of divine origin is necessarily perfect. Abraham said, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25.) Paul says, "The law is holy: and the commandment holy, just, and good." (Rom. vii. 12.) In Psalm xix. 7-11, we read, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb." This is God's own estimate of the perfection and purity of the divine law which was promulgated by himself. This law is the exponent and the expression of his own "holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." There is no place, then, for sitting in judgment on any code of morals of divine origin, and the

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Socinian charge that the Old Testament code is harsh, bigoted, impure, and semi-barbaric is false.

This is the more apparent when we consider that the decalogue is perpetually binding as a perfect moral code. The first table is the summary of man's relations and obligations to God, and the second table summarizes man's relations and obligations to his fellow man. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. All good human law is based on its eternal distinctions, and springs out of its plain provisions.

The same principle serves to vindicate the absolute righteousness of all God-given institutions, and their constitutions and laws, civil and ecclesiastical, social and personal, religious and secular. Wherever the moral element is seen, it is as "holy, just, and good" as God himself.

How is it, then, that men do so impugn and slander the Old Testament moral system? The answer is threefold. The Socinian, in the first place, does not understand the institutions which he criticises; and then he sets up a purely rationalistic theory of his own as the standard of virtue, and denounces everything that does not conform to it. But the main reason of his contention is this: when he denies the vicarious atonement of Christ, and all his priestly functions, he must needs find some work for Christ to do, and some reason for his life and death. He therefore exalts his teaching work, and finds it necessary to exalt him as the great reformer of all that had gone before him. The blackening of the Old Testament system furnishes a convenient foil or background for this theory. The denial of one fundamental truth makes it necessary to distort and blacken others.

It may not be out of place, just here, to emphasize one prominent feature in the growth of written revela-

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tion. Sin and Satan were ever on the alert to pervert and destroy the truth, and as new heresies arose new prophets vindicated the old truth, and we have a record of the conflict down to the close of the canon. This historic vindication of the truth has been mistaken for a doctrinal development, in which each new stage of truth is made superior to that which preceded it until Christ comes to improve and correct and perfect it into a final system.

Many who have no real sympathy with the Socinian impeachment of Mosaic institutions have heard them so often criticised and minimized, that they have unconsciously fallen into the errors which the Socinian propagates. Nothing is more common than to hear from orthodox pulpits a disparagement of the Old and the exaltation of the New, either directly or by implication. They mistake the historic consummation of the doctrines and facts of redemption for a new and better way, and assume a higher and purer morality under Christ than under Moses, under the Gospel than under the Law. The popular misconceptions and heresies concerning slavery, polygamy, divorce, goelism, and other things, have so smirched Mosaic institutions that true and loyal hearts gladly take refuge under a supposed superiority of Christ's morality over that of Moses. To this end constant appeal is made to the Sermon on the Mount. Does the object and scope of that sermon justify any such appeal?

In further reply, we maintain that Christ was born under the law as a subject. He was "born of a woman," made under the law to redeem them who are under the law. He took on him the "form of a servant." He took the sinner's place under the law. He obeyed that law with a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience which

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the sinner could not render, and so wrought a perfect righteousness for the sinner; and then he bare the penalty of the broken law in his own person in the sinner's place. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matthew v. 17.) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. iii. 13.)

In the days of his humiliation, under the law as a subject and as a servant, occupying the sinner's place under the law, it was not competent for him to modify the law in any way, either to exalt or to lower its demands. It would have been just as competent for the sinner himself to do so. We say this with all humility. The son of God, who was also the son of man, was neither law-giver nor judge in the days of his flesh. This was the true kenosis. He emptied himself, not of his divine attributes, but for a time of such functions as he could not exercise while he himself was under the law, and before the judgment bar in the sinner's place. This principle, rightly apprehended, furnishes a clue that runs like a red thread through the entire scriptures, adjusting the new to the old.

But did he not speak with authority? Certainly. He was the law-giver on Mount Sinai, and the law expounder on the Mount in Galilee. On Mount Sinai, amid awful scenes of clouds and fire and smoke and earthquake and sound of a trumpet, he spake the decalogue in the hearing of all the people. Enthroned on the same mountain he gave to Moses the entire Sinaitic economy. On the Mount in Galilee the meek and lowly Jesus expounded that law with authority as no one else could do, for the law-giver is now the law expounder. Besides the authority born of the conscious truth of his

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teaching, the Father stood with the Spirit on the witness stand, ready on occasion to attest his teaching by mighty works. Many heresies had sprung up after the law-giving at Mount Sinai. Many prophets had arisen to vindicate that law, and to restore the old paths. After the closing of the Old Testament canon there sprung up the last great heresy of the ages—Phariseeism—which assimilated into itself well-nigh all the heresies of ages past.

Other and earlier heresies attacked one truth or another, and were duly exposed and refuted by the prophets. This great compound heresy grew into a great organism of false philosophy and false interpretation which sat in Moses' seat. It was Satan's great masterpiece, which made "void the law, that it should be of none effect." It was clad in the garments of a superb holiness, and challenged the admiration and loyalty of the Jewish people throughout the world. Sadduceeism was its opposite pole, sometimes its ally, sometimes its enemy, more often its semi-political rival, modified by an easy-going Epicureanism.

Christ said to them, "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (Matthew xv. 6.) And in Mark vii. 7–9, "In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

The Pharisees' creed was an unwritten creed. Professing to hold to the Scriptures, their real creed was an unwritten false exegesis of the Scriptures. They referred to their creed by the name, "Tradition," "Tradition of the elders"; and in secular history it is called "The Pharisaic constitutions." They quoted from the "fathers," from the "elders," and from "them of olden times,"

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with the same authority with which Paul said, "The Holy Ghost saith."

But how did these traditions originate? They took form in the intermediate period between the Old and the New. They were evidently a growth by accretion and usurpation; and pious frauds helped to give them their validity and authority. The opposition went down in civil wars and blood, and ended in shameful compromises of the truth.

The story of their origin, which finally prevailed, is this: When the written law was given by Jehovah, he gave along with it an oral interpretation of it to Moses and Aaron, and they transmitted it word for word to Eliezer, and he to his successor, and so on down through the centuries. It passed on down uncorrupted in the transmission. This tradition carried with it supreme and infallible authority, and was the final appeal in all matters of doctrine and practice. Though unwritten, its main features were far better known and far oftener quoted than the Scriptures themselves.

These constitutions, or traditions of the elders, were reduced to writing some time in the earlier centuries of the Christian era—first the Jerusalem Talmud and then the Babylonish Talmud, which expounded the Jerusalem Talmud. These two, under the names of the Mishna and the Gemara, have practically superseded the Bible for the Jews, except for occasional sects; and the real difficulty with the Jews to-day is not in their Scriptures, but in these same traditions.

We are now prepared to announce that the Sermon on the Mount is an exhaustive discussion of Phariseeism. Christ expounds the law against the tradition of the elders, and against Pharisaic glosses and interpretations. It is the refutation of the last great heresy of the ages,

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and the overthrow of the last great bulwark erected by Satan against the truth, that master stroke of cunning by which he substituted the deceitfulness of sin in place of holy living, and a refuge of lies in place of the divine law.

These things will become more manifest as we proceed.

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CHAPTER II.

Preliminary Questions.

WHERE was this sermon delivered?

1. It is generally agreed that the place was somewhere in the range of high hills and bluffs on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. Traditions of the Latin monks name the Horns of Hattin as the Mount of Beatitudes. This must have been seven or eight miles distant from the City of Capernaum, which was probably in full view of the speaker and his hearers. Recent travellers are disposed to accept this tradition, for they find there a "plain" or "level place" on the side of the mountain just suited for the audience, while the speaker sat against the wall of an abrupt and steep ascent.

2. When was it delivered?

It is not necessary to our purpose to discuss and justify the details of the Harmony, and place every event mentioned in the several Gospels in exact chronological order. If we had only Matthew, it would seem that it was at the close of Christ's first circuit in Galilee, and as he was returning to his home in Capernaum. This we think was in his early ministry, after he had attached to himself a band of disciples, who seemed to attend constantly on his ministry. He had already established his reputation as a teacher by the wonderful miracles which he wrought. He had won a position as a prophet and teacher, which enabled him to arraign and impeach successfully the acknowledged religious leaders of his day. It was probably early in the second year of his public

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ministry. Nothing, however, depends on locating the time accurately. Neither the exact place, nor the exact time, is of the essence of his teaching.

3. Who composed the audience?

In order to answer this, and to confirm previous intimations, we may here quote the entire passage in Matthew iv. 23–25: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great mutitudes of people, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan."

Then in Matthew v. 1, "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them." He taught the multitudes and not merely his disciples. They were only a part of his audience, for when he had finished, the "great multitudes followed him." (Matthew viii. 1.) Luke's statement of the case is equally clear. He spoke to a great concourse of people. (Luke vi. 17–20.)

It is evident, however, that the disciples were immediately before him and next to his person; and his words were addresed more immediately to them, but were not limited to them. He addressed words to the rich, to the full, to the carnally joyful, and to all that heard him. (Luke vi. 24–27.)

4. Is the discourse in Luke vi. 20–49 the same as that

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in Matthew, Chapters v. to vii.? We think them the same, but the theory of their identity is not necessary to justify the use we shall make of the sixth of Luke in this discussion.

Commentators generally think them the same. We quote and adopt two reasons for this opinion assigned by Dr. Robinson in his Harmony.

1. "The beginning and the end of both discourses, and the general course of thought in both, exhibit an entire accordance one with another."

It is true, however, that Matthew gives us a great deal that is not found in Luke; Luke also gives us some things that are not found in Matthew; and further, the statements in Luke are sometimes quite different in form and application from those in Matthew.

2. "The historical circumstances which follow both discourses are the same—the entrance into Capernaum and the healing of the centurion's servant." (Matt. viii. 5; Luke vii. 1, 2.)

More than this, Luke tells us that Christ had just named the twelve and constituted the college of apostles, after spending the previous night in prayer. This, according to Luke, seems to be the immediate occasion for the sermon. He has organized his forces for a great and notable campaign, and he leads the first gallant charge. Matthew nowhere mentions the selection of the twelve; he does, a little later, refer to them as already appointed, and it would be easy to read that previous appointment into the closing verses of the fourth chapter of Matthew, where it undoubtedly belongs.

5. How shall we account for the admitted differences between the discourses in Matthew and in Luke?

It is not to be supposed that either Matthew or Luke give Christ's discourses in full, either here or elsewhere,

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but rather an epitome, or syllabus, or abstract of his teaching. We may fairly suppose that Christ discussed, illustrated, and elaborated just as any other teacher would. They sometimes gave his exact words by memory, according to a promise given later; sometimes they doubtless gave the substance of his teachings in their own language, which is entirely legitimate, both for inspired and uninspired reports of the teachings of another.

The variations of expression, and even of sentiment, found in Luke are not in any sense contrary to, much less contradictory of, the words and statements of Matthew, but they both readily blend into a harmonious whole.

Matthew wrote especially for Jews and Luke for Gentiles, and each had his own point of view, and his own purposes to accomplish under the guidance of the same Spirit. They each used such measure and forms of the words of Christ as suited their respective purposes, without any implication of garbling, perversion, distortion, or suppression of the truth.

There is a still greater difference between Matthew and Luke than the ones already noted. Luke makes no mention of the Pharisees and their gigantic system of false teaching, and he makes no direct reference to, and no quotations from, the Pharisaic constitutions or the traditions of the elders, while in Matthew it would seem that every gun in the battery was trained against that system of falsehood.

How shall we account for this? The answer is twofold. It is not always necessary to cite an error to refute it. It is often sufficient to set up, or even to state the truth, and error shrinks away from its clear shining light.

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The other answer comports with this. Gentile Christians knew but little of Phariseeism as a system, but the same and similar heresies are world wide. These can be met only by the same truths in substantially the same forms of statement, varied within the limits of absolute truth, and with varied illustration and application. All of this may be made to appear more clearly as we proceed.

6. Why is the discourse in Matthew always spoken of as a "Sermon," while the discourse in Luke seldom, if ever, received that name?

Is it a mere convention or habit? Hardly. The discourse in Matthew is a complete and exhaustive discussion of a large and comprehensive subject. It is constructed according to the highest possible model of such discussions, and it contains all the parts of discourse in proper logical and rhetorical form. The laws of discourse are gotten by analysis and generalization from the master pieces of human eloquence. Literature furnishes no superior to this Sermon on the Mount.

This we might expect, for he was himself the fountain and source of all truth, and was perfect master of its relations and correlations. Added to this, "he spake as never man spake." It differs much from his other teaching, just as a set and formal discourse differs from personal teaching in the social circle, or the teaching of changing groups by the way-side, or the expository teaching in the synagogue. The sermon of the Latins, and the sermon of the English, is the highest form of set discourse.

According to rhetorical analysis, a discourse consists of certain necessary parts: The introduction; The theme, or subject of discourse announced as a topic, or a proposition; then The discussion under such main heads or divisions as may be exhaustive, under each of which

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there may be two or more sub-heads for expansion or illustration; then The conclusion, with appropriate lessons and applications. In accordance with this scheme we suggest:

The introduction, Matthew, v. 3–19.
The theme, verse 20.
The body of discourse, v. 21 to vii. 6.
The conclusion, vii. 7–27.

More minute subdivisions will be made later on.

7. The reader has a right to inquire at this point, what method will be followed in this study of the Sermon on the Mount?

1. We shall pursue the exegetical method, with a minimum of necessary references to the original Greek, and the treatment shall be expository, and not homiletic.

2. The parallel discourse in Luke must be studied along with it as a part of the whole truth, whether the two discourses be identical or not.

3. The Old Testament Law must be carefully cited at every point, in order to rightly understand and vindicate Christ's exposition of it.

4. We must needs expose the false philosophy which underlies the Pharisaic glosses and interpretations, by which they made the law of none effect. Every error and heresy in any department of thought and action is based on a false philosophy.

5. All other teachings of Christ concerning the matters discussed in the Sermon on the Mount need to be considered in connection with them.

6. The whole must be so studied on the comparative method as to vindicate the fundamental assumption of the unity of doctrine and of morals throughout the entire Scriptures.

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7. All this ought to be done with such brevity, and in such a common-sense way as to interest and convince the unlearned and the ignorant, and also to satisfy the well instructed and the learned.

8. It would also seem necessary to traverse the entire field of modern thought and usage, so far as it departs from the divine law. This is not the discussion of an effete system and the vindication of a dead past, but the issues are all living, and we must deal with burning questions of to-day.

9. "Who is sufficient for these things." If the writer shall be able to approximate, in any measure, this ideal treatment, he will thank God for the privilege,—may he say?—for the call to labor in this field.

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CHAPTER III.

The Introduction. (Matt. v. 3–19.)

VERSE 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. 5. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. 7. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. 9. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. 10. Blessed are they which are (have been, R. V.) persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. 13. Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. 15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. 17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one

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jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

The introduction to a discourse may take a very wide range, and may accomplish several things, as may seem necessary; it may contain one or more minor discussions and applications, provided it anticipates no proposition, head, or sub-head which is to be discussed in the body of the discourse. The introduction must, however, have this sole limitation; every part of it must be germain to the theme or subject to be discussed, and must lead up to it in some easy and natural way.

Rhetoricians tell us that an introduction may lead up to the subject by likeness, analogy, contrast, illustration, logical relations, or necessary connection. It may discuss the history of the subject and emphasize its importance both to the speaker or to the hearers; it may be in a proper sense apologetic, defining the speaker's relation to the subject; and it may introduce such caveats and exhortations as may seem necessary in view of all the circumstances.

These principles give the speaker a wide range, and the success of his discourse often depends upon the skill and tact with which he approaches his subject. Just as the warrior must wisely order his approaches if he would capture the stronghold of the enemy, so must the wise captain, under the banner of truth, order his approaches in his warfare against the strongholds of error and sin. This is the more evident when we remember that the religious teacher and preacher seeks to win the hearts, and consciences, and the allegiance of men.

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The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is found in verse 20. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Christ proposes to arraign and refute Phariseeism.

He does not propound the subject at the beginning, but he approaches it by contrast—a contrast so skillfully made as to arouse no antagonism, or even suspicion of hostile intent at the beginning, but a contrast apparent to all when he unfolds his theme.

The introduction consists of five parts, each important as he approaches his subject.

1. He conciliates the best part of his audience with the Beatitudes. (Verses 3–9.)

2. He fortifies his disciples against the antagonisms which his teaching would excite. (Verses 10–12.)

3. He shows the importance of the subject to his disciples under two figures, (verses 13–15,) with an appropriate exhortation. (Verse 16.)

4. He defines his own relation to the subject, (Verses 17, 18.)

5. He then states his own sense of responsibility, and the responsibility of all teachers in handling such a subject. (Verse 19.)

We shall follow this division.

I. He conciliates the best of his audience with the Beatitudes. He pronounces a blessing on several characters and dispositions, and proclaims their appropriate rewards. Every speaker is entitled to make friends in his audience in every proper way, not by falsehood and flattery, as the demagogue so often does, but by such a presentation of facts and truths as to excite a generous response in sympathetic hearts. This is the more necessary in approaching a difficult or delicate subject, or one

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that is likely to arouse popular prejudices and deep-rooted antagonisms.

Doubtless when he uttered those Beatitudes and proclaimed their glorious rewards, every heart in sympathy with these things, and many who admired them afar off, were wholly won by the gracious words he spake.

In discussing these Beatitudes we must note that every one of them is in striking contrast with the character and dispositions of the Pharisees, whose teachings and practices he is about to impeach.

There is no evidence that Christ intended here to tell what it was to be a Christian, as some represent; nor what a Christian ought to do, as some say; nor is there any evidence that his purpose was to give an exhaustive sketch of a well-rounded character, as others say. Yet we cannot over-estimate the importance and value of these traits, as found in our hearts and lives, for they are still blessed, and always will be.

Nor may we discuss each trait noted as a germinal trait, including far more in it than appears on the surface. This was a popular discourse, and it will be sufficient to emphasize the obvious meaning of the terms used, and to point out their contrast with the character and practices of the Pharisees as justified by their traditions. We need to follow this clue in the elucidation of the entire sermon.

Verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Luke vi. 20, gives "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." One explains the other. There is here no blessing on poverty as such, and no reflection on riches, as is sometimes claimed. Neither poverty nor riches is the best ideal condition. (Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.)

Nor does he mean the poor-spirited. There is a sham

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and a counterfeit by which a man refuses to undertake obvious duties, under the deceitful plea of unfitness and inability, and he calls his moral cowardice by the names of modesty and diffidence, and he vainly considers this a mark of true worth. If any earthly ambition beckons this man, he is apt to consider himself equal to any call, and even better fitted than others who may aspire to the same.

The word "poor" in the original is a real poverty, coupled with a sense of need; a real poverty in spiritual matters; poor towards God, with such a sense of poverty as is realized in the spirit. This is true humility. This is in striking contrast with the Pharisee, who is proud and self-sufficient, really poor, but he has no sense of it.

"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," or "Yours is the kingdom of God." That is, ye belong to the kingdom, are members of it, true citizens of that kingdom. The contrast is glaring when he announces his theme in verse 20, that the Pharisees "shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Verse 4, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." Luke vi. 21: "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh."

There is no virtue in carnal sorrow and tears, as some imagine; nor does Solomon teach any such doctrine in Ecclesiastes vii. 3, 4. But the mourning and the tears are spiritual—the expression of a sense of need felt by the poor in spirit. To all this the Pharisee is a total stranger. He has no proper sense of sin, and cannot taste the joys and comforts of pardoned sin. Here are repentance and forgiveness.

These two Beatitudes are set forth in Psalm xxxii. 1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin

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is covered." Also in Isaiah lxvi. 2, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, who trembleth at my word."

We may say here once for all, that the Beatitudes are Old Testament blessings. God's people needed and received the same comforts and joys from the same Saviour in all ages, just as now. Psalm i. 1-3; Is. xl. 1, 2.

Verse 5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness is the companion grace of humility and repentance. It is gentleness, freedom from self-assertion, freedom from unholy ambition. Moses was the highest illustration of it in Old Testament times, and Christ was "meek and lowly of heart"; "when he was reviled, reviled not again"; "so he opened not his mouth."

Whatever else this meekness may be, the Pharisee laid no claim to it. He was the very opposite, self-assertive, resentful of injury, vengeful, proud, and malignant. The contrast grows more and more striking.

"They shall inherit the earth" (or "the land"). Without ambition, the meek attain the rewards of the highest ambition, as was the case with Moses. Godliness has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." God promised Abraham that he should "inherit the land." In Psalm xxxvii. 9, 11, 22, 29, we read, "Those that will wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land"; "the meek shall inherit the earth"; "such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth"; "the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever." What land? Canaan? Yes, and more. The heavenly Canaan, the eternal home of Christ Jesus shall be the home of all that shall be like him. The inheritance is both earthly and heavenly.

Verse 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Luke

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vi. 21: "Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled."

The righteousness discussed in this sermon is right living, in accordance with a righteous law. There is no reference in the sermon to the plan of salvation—justification by faith, and by the imputed righteousness of Christ, as expounded in Romans. This we shall see as we proceed.

The Pharisee knows nothing of this hungering and thirsting after righteousness, because he is righteous in his own eyes, self-righteous. But the man who has a sense of sin, and has tasted the comfort of pardoned sin, desires above all things to live aright. This is the obvious lesson of the fifty-first Psalm.

Verse 7, "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." Mercy is sometimes called the darling attribute of Jehovah. He proclaimed his name to Moses, "Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) His throne in the tabernacle, his royal pavilion, was called the mercy-seat.

Mercy is more than goodness; it is more than pity and compassion on the weak and the helpless; it is more than help to the needy. It is kindness, pity, compassion, help, and forgiveness to the guilty. To be merciful is to be like God and like Christ in this darling attribute. But how unlike the Pharisee, who was unforgiving, vengeful, cruel, and relentless, and not even satiated with blood.

"They shall obtain mercy." They who show no mercy, can have no sure hope of divine mercy. Further discussion of this is postponed till we consider the doctrine of forgiveness as propounded in the sermon.

Verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall

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see God." Purity of heart may have reference to the aims and purposes, rejecting all trickery. James iv. 8, says, "Purify your hearts, ye doubled minded." So in Psalm xxiv. 3, 4, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?—(that is, to see him and continue in his presence); he that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

In a wider sense, pureness of heart refers to dispositions, motives, and character. David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." Paul speaks of "Charity out of a pure heart." It is holiness of heart, not absolute, but as opposed to an external holiness by purifying rites.

Here the contrast with the Pharisees reaches its climax, as we see, from Christ's denunciation of them in Matthew xxiii. 25–28. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

"They shall see God." When we shall be made perfect in holiness, we "shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure." (1 John iii. 2, 3.)

Verse 9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

This is a sad world of wars and fightings and blood-

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shed. Contention and strife are constantly seen in the forefront. The Pharisees fomented strife and prosecuted their private revenges. They secretly stirred up civil commotions and seditions against the government of the Romans; they aided and abetted, and shielded Barabbas and the like of him in their seditions and murders.

Has Christ no closing beatitudes for them as he seems to be ruling them further and further away from the kingdom of God? No. This last beatitude leaves them outside of a blessing. "The peacemakers." The meek, the merciful, the pure in heart are the peacemakers, not the proud, and relentless, and corrupt Pharisee. The meek and lowly Jesus, gracious and full of compassion, and free from sin came to make peace between God and man. (2 Cor. v. 18–21.)

He was and is the great peacemaker. Peace and reconciliation are the end and aim of the gospel, and also peace and good will among men. He is the "Prince of peace" and the "God of peace." The day is coming when "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah ii. 4.) The prophet beautifully expands the same thought in Isaiah xi. 6–9. The sword and the strife introduced by the gospel are but the alchemy of sin. The strifes, contentions, and jealousies among men can only be healed by the peacemakers. They are like Christ.

"They shall be called the children of God."

They are like him in heart and deed: "Children of God." "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

It is not far to see that these blessings imply opposite curses, which he spoke also, for Luke adds (vi. 24, 25):

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"Woe unto you that are rich; for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep." Carnal joy can only end in sorrow and everlasting woe. Carnal security, based on self-righteousness, says, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." It does not know that it is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. iii. 17.) These words are akin to the words pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees in so many places, and which are hurled against them on this occasion. The denouncing of these woes is the unmasking of the batteries against them.

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CHAPTER IV.

Introduction Continued.

WE have seen that Christ, while approaching his theme, by contrast conciliates the best part of his audience with the Beatitudes. (Verses 3–9.) This is the first part of the introduction. As he pronounces woes against the rich, and the full, and the self-righteous, and the carnally secure, we can almost see the angry scowl, and hear the murmured discontent of the scribes and Pharisees who begin to see that he spake of them. Their rising wrath is ominous of future persecutions, and a reminder of past revilings. No wonder his disciples shrink from the ordeal.

II. He therefore strengthens and fortifies his disciples against inevitable antagonisms by pronouncing one more blessing. Verses 10–12: "Blessed are they which have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Luke states it a little differently (vi. 22, 23): "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." We may sum up all this in one sentence: The persecuted saints

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and martyrs of past ages are blessed members of the kingdom of heaven; and this same blessedness is yours when they shall persecute you.

Christ tells them at another time that they may expect persecutions. "If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also." (John xv. 20.) The scribes and Pharisees were already "filled with madness, and had communed one with another what they might do to Jesus," all because of his healing on the Sabbath day (Luke vi. 7–11). "They took counsel with the Herodians how they might destroy him." (Mark iii. 1–6.)

His brave words of cheer, spoken in the face of his own malignant persecution, were calculated to inspire the disciples with the same sublime courage to meet all that was before them. He does not here mention the scribes and Pharisees as the persecutors, but everything pointed to them.

The forms of persecution were various, as foretold in these verses—hatred, excommunication, reviling, reproaches, all manner of evil speeches, falsely conceived and uttered—all this for "righteousness' sake," and for his "name's sake." Poverty, suffering and death awaited them, as they awaited him for the truth's sake. They were called to this warfare; truth with only spiritual weapons wielded by the poor, and the meek, and the pure in heart, and the peacemakers, on one side, and on the other every cruel and malignant carnal weapon which sin and Satan could devise. The contest would seem unequal; but he says, No, "Blessed are ye"; "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." The twelve who were before him on the mount were, a little later on, beaten before the council and the officers, and they went out "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

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(Acts v. 40, 41.) Paul the persecuted was sustained by this same joy. (Acts xvi. 25.)

Christ gives three reasons to sustain them in persecution:

1. They belonged to the kingdom of heaven: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He had just enrolled the poor in spirit in the same blessed citizenship. Poverty of spirit and persecutions, borne aright, meet in the same person.

2. The "reward in heaven" is great. Peter says, (1 Peter iv. 13,) "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

3. They had notable examples to sustain them, "For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." It would place them in that catalogue of worthies who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

Persecution for righteousness' sake was no new thing in Paul's day. "In like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." He enunciated a universal principle in 2 Timothy iii. 12: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." This was true when Abel was slain for the sake of the truth; when Jezebel slew 400 of the Lord's prophets; when Zacharias was slain "between the temple and the altar"; when Isaiah was "sawn asunder."

Christ was preaching no new doctrine when he told of persecutions, and of their glorious rewards in the heav-

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ens. The hunted and persecuted Elijah was borne away to heaven in a chariot of fire. He only cited familiar facts and truths to sustain and encourage them in view of the warfare upon which they were entered.

Here he says "their fathers killed the prophets." In Matthew xxiii. 29–32, and in Luke xi. 47, 48, he shows their inherent likeness to their fathers, and in scathing irony he says, "Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed the prophets, and ye build their sepulchers." Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

Luke presents the other side also (vi. 26), "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." The friendship, the fellowship, and the laudation of a sinful world, and of murderous persecutors belong to false teachers.

We do not know how much of all this was elaborated by Christ in this connection, but it is entirely legitimate to cite parallel and cognate truths from the entire Scriptures for the elucidation and the unification of his teaching.

Many homiletic and practical lessons suggest themselves when we undertake textual and topical studies based on the several and separate propositions found in these Beatitudes, and are entirely legitimate so far as they are generic, but it is not our purpose to unfold them here.

III. In verses 13–15 he shows the importance of this discussion to the disciples under two figures, and follows with an apppropriate exhortation in verse 16.

1. Verse 13: "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men."

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The obvious meaning of this figure is this: Salt has great preservative power to prevent corruption and decay; so his disciples are to save the world from corruption, decay, and absolute ruin. But how? By the truth which they teach and illustrate in their lives. This truth is the saltness. Right doctrine and right practice are of supreme importance to all disciples, and especially to teachers, as we shall see more fully as we proceed.

In order to understand this figure rightly we must understand certain conditions in Palestine. The supply of salt for Palestine was gotten, and is still largely gotten, from a large basin on the east of the Jordan, in the land of Gilead. It is a salt lake in the rainy season. The water all dries out in summer and leaves an incrustation of salt in the entire basin. This when broken up contains a large amount of sand and gravel. When the salt is removed from this in the various households, by leaching and otherwise, the sand and gravel is of no other use than to spread upon the walks about the premises. Travellers tell us that there are similar incrustations around the south end of the Dead Sea which have lost their saltness. The lesson is obvious: a disciple without the truth fails of his mission, and is worthless.

2. Verses 14–15: "Ye are the light of the world." Christ says, "I am the light of the world." John says, "He was the true light." He was the fountain and source of all truth and knowledge. He has committed his truth to his disciples. As he set the sun, moon and stars to be light bearers in the heavens at the beginning, so he has set his disciples to be light bearers on earth among men, to hold forth the word of truth by precept and example.

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." (Verse 14.) He probably pointed to the city of Capernaum on the

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distant hill, with its minarets and towers shining in the sunlight. "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, (or under a bed), but on a candle-stick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house." (Verse 15; Mark iv. 21; Luke xi. 33.) The lesson is obvious: the disciple who has the light of truth cannot hide it if he would, and ought not, if he could.

Here again he approaches his subject by an obvious contrast. The Pharisee has no saltness of truth, nor the light of truth shining in his precept and practice wherewith to save himself and his followers. Therefore he adds (Luke vi. 39), "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

How appropriate now is the exhortation to his disciples (verse 16), "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Pharisees were purely selfish in their religion, and they sought only their own glory, as he shows in Chapter vi. 1–6. But the true disciple, poor, penitent, hungry, pure, and persecuted, while ordering his own steps by the light of Christ, bears the torch of truth, to save his fellowmen and to bring glory to the Father. The light he bears is doctrine and practice, truth and good works.

IV. In the fourth part of the introduction Christ defines his own relation to the subject. (Verses 17, 18.) "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." It is always legitimate for a speaker to define his own relation to his subject, if it be important for him to do so, that his position be not misunderstood, and that his words may have proper consideration.

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The Pharisees had made "void" the law by their traditions. He proposes to overthrow and destroy their traditions. Let no one think that in so doing he overthrows or destroys the law; nor in so doing does he propose to alter or modify the law one jot or one tittle. We have already seen that it was not competent for him to do so, because he came under the law, and not as a law-giver. He was the law-giver at Sinai, and the law he then gave was holy, just, and good, the expression of his own holiness. It therefore needed no improvement because of ethical and moral imperfections. It was necessary to brush away the traditions which made the law of none effect, "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." The prophets were the Old Testament expounders of the law. He came to destroy neither the law nor the prophets. He expounds them both, and gives them their true meaning, and so he fulfills them both. It is sufficient to repeat that the law-giver on Sinai was the law expounder in Galilee. Strange that so many mistake his position, and his attitude toward his own law.

He fortifies his position by appealing to the immutable character of that law. Heaven and earth may pass away; the law shall not fail in the minutest point. There is no reference here to the fulfilment of predictive prophecy, nor to the fulfilment of type and ritual in him; for he makes no reference to such things in the discussion, which is limited to the refutation of Pharisaic teaching concerning moral and spiritual issues. He proposes to add nothing, and to destroy nothing as a teacher, but to fulfill it all in his teachings.

V. He then states his own sense of responsibility, and the responsibility of all teachers in dealing with the divine law. He argues this as a conclusion from what he has already said. (Verse 19.) "Whosoever therefore

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shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is used variously in the New Testament, at least in six cognate senses: 1. The true spiritual kingdom set up in the hearts of men. This is the invisible church. 2. The outward organized kingdom, including a membership partly regenerate, and partly unregenerate. This is the visible church. 3. The kingdom of glory in the heavens. 4. His providential government and kingdom. 5. His mediatorial kingdom, or his headship over all things to the church. 6. It is often used to suggest some phase or feature of one or the other of these five. The context easily decides which of these senses is meant in any given case.

In two of the Beatitudes (verses 3 and 10), the poor in spirit and the persecuted believer are said to be citizens of the true spiritual kingdom. And in verse 19 it is evidently said that different teachers take different rank in the same kingdom, in proportion as they approximate the true requirements of the law in their doctrine and practice.

There is no occasion here to emphasize the distinction between the least and the greatest commandments, nor the difference of rank in the kingdom. Very little is revealed in the Scriptures on these points. We only know that "some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others." We know further, that the rewards in the kingdom of glory shall be adjusted to "every man according as his work shall be."

These five several parts of the introduction are all

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natural and appropriate, and germain to the subject he proposed to discuss, and they all suggest the theme by contrast.

The theme, or subject, or text, is announced in verse 20: "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

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CHAPTER V.

The Theme (Verse 20)—Analysis of the Discussion.

VERSE 20. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The subject is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and its utter inadequacy, even to exclusion from the kingdom.

The "poor in spirit" belong to the kingdom, but not the Pharisees. The victims of their persecutions belong to the kingdom, but not the persecutors. Many other teachers have a low place in the kingdom, because of defective doctrine and practice; but the Pharisees had no place. Christ vindicates this bold and startling proposition by an exhaustive analysis and discussion of Phariseeism.

This theory of the object and scope of the sermon is not generally recognized. Several theories have already been noted, and have been shown to be inadequate, and even misleading. Another theory has been put forward and elaborated in a most fascinating and profitable way. In fact, the sermon is so rich, and full, and suggestive of sound doctrine and practice, that almost any discussion of its several parts is profitable if it does not violate the proportion of faith. In fact, some advocate this canon of interpretation, that it is lawful to make every passage of Scripture teach any and everything it can be made to mean within the limits of the proportion of faith; that is, provided it does not violate or contravene the obvious

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teaching of the Scriptures in other places. This is a dangerous rule of interpretation, even in the hands of a judicious expounder, but far more in the hands of a half-trained enthusiast. It is far better to expound every passage of Scripture in the light of the context.

The theory referred to is this, that the sermon is a discussion of the kingdom of heaven, the principles, and the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and of citizenship therein. Now it is legitimate to find much that is valuable on these points as taught by implication, or by way of corrolary from principles laid down in the discussion, and the more because all truth stands correlated.

But the theory referred to claims further that Christ here unfolds a higher and broader meaning of the law than it had before, and so fulfills it in the sense of completing it. A distinguished expounder says, "The word fulfill here signifies to make full, to complete." "The idea seems to be that the law is regarded as previously incomplete, not fully developed into all the breadth and spiritual depth of its requirements; and Christ came to make it complete."

This view, in its final analysis, makes Christ a law-giver. Every jurist knows that a law is just what it meant and was accepted to mean when promulgated, or, at least, what it was expounded by competent authority to mean in its administration. Now the law was of divine origin, and was expounded and administered in a theocratic government, by oracle and prophet, for a thousand years; all of which we find in the Old Testament Scriptures. Any attempt to complete that law after fifteen hundred years, by giving it a "broader and deeper meaning," is certainly an attempt to modify the law just to that extent, and the modifier is really a law-giver. We have seen that this was not competent for Christ to

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do. We shall see, as we proceed, that he only restored the true "broad and deep spiritual meaning," as already set forth by oracle and prophet, and by himself, in a thousand years of adminstration. No other code of laws was ever so expounded and vindicated as was this divine law. The Pharisees, by their traditions, sought to modify, pervert, and destroy, but Christ vindicates its old and accredited meaning, as we shall see. All his ethical and moral teaching is in exact accord with Moses and the prophets, through whom he had delivered the law, and interpreted and enforced it, under his own theocratic rule.

So much for this plausible and fascinating theory of the teachings of Christ. All other "completion" theories, whether we call them naturalistic, evolutionary, development, and the like, are yet balder departures from sound principles, and do put Christ himself into a false position, and into false relations to the Old Testament Scriptures.

It may not be amiss to repeat here again that Christ and his apostles based all their claims on their Scriptures, on the obvious and common-sense meaning of the same, rather than on new and authoritative expositions.

It may not be amiss here again to emphasize the connection between doctrine and practice. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A right law, rightly interpreted, is determinative of right action. If a man "put light for darkness, and darkness for light," his life will correspond with his creed. There is no place for the popular utterance, that it makes no difference what a man believes if only he will do right. If his moral and ethical judgments are perverted, his practice will correspond; but if they are in accord with a righteous law, we may expect his life to illustrate the same.

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Christ charges that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is wholly inadequate, both their doctrine and their practice, because of their traditions. They break all the commandments, and "teach men so." He, therefore, arraigns their traditions, the precepts and practice of which we call Phariseeism in its complete and well-rounded sense.

He analyzes this great heresy of the ages, and discusses it under four heads, which we may properly call Literalism, Formalism, Covetousness, and Censoriousness.

Now a man may be chargeable with one or more, or even all the sins suggested by these terms, and he may repudiate them, by repentance and otherwise, as he grows in knowledge and in grace. Such a man is in no sense a Pharisee. But if these four things enter into the very web and woof of his character, practice, and teaching, they do constitute him the Pharisee.

We subdivide the discussion as follows:

1. Literalism.....Matt. v. 21–48.
2. Formalism..... vi. 1–18.
3. Covetousness..... vi. 19–34.
4. Censoriousness.... vii. 1–6.

It is easy to see that these four heads are generic, and include under them specific forms and manifestations, some more, some less. These are properly discussed as sub-heads, and will be formally so indicated as we proceed with their orderly exposition.

It is proper here to put in a caveat concerning the quotations made for comment and refutation. Some imagine that they are made from the Old Testament, partly for refutation, and partly for betterment. We have already seen that this would be impossible from the

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very nature of the case. Besides, some of the quotations are not in the Old Testament, *e. g.*, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." (v. 43; also verse 21.)

Quotations from Scripture are definitely made throughout the New Testament in some such formulas as these, "The Scripture saith," "The Holy Ghost saith," "That the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," and the like. There is no such formula of quotation in the Sermon on the Mount which would indicate quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures.

The quotations are made from the traditions of the elders, which consisted of words said, or spoken to them, as was claimed by them and handed down as authoritative expositions of the Scriptures. These were the Pharisaic constitutions, which "taught for doctrines the commandments of men." This was the "oral law," dating back to Mount Sinai, and transmitted down the ages, as was claimed.

His formulas of quotation are definite, and were understood by his hearers: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time"; "said," not "written"; "them of old time," the elders. This formula is used in verses 21, 27, 33. Then the briefer formula is sometimes used, "Ye have heard that it hath been said" (verses 38 and 43); and the still briefer formula, "It hath been said" (verse 31.)

Then, after the discussion is well under way, there is no formula used, and quotations are seldom made, but the several topics are cited and expounded in such a way as to expose the fallacies of the traditions, and to set up the true significance of the law. In short, the traditions were so familiar to that audience that a word was a sufficient pointer, and a mere statement of the

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truth a sufficient refutation of the errors of the Pharisees.

It may be further noted, that the quotations are very brief, and sometimes consist of a few suggestive words, which are found in the Scriptures as well as in the traditions; but his hearers could make no mistake, and imagine that he was setting aside the Scriptures. Besides, in the actual delivery and elaboration of the Sermon, he, doubtless, made longer and more numerous quotations from the traditions. The evangelist gives us only an epitome of the Sermon, but, in doing so, he has sufficiently noted his quotations, so that the careful reader need make no mistake in the light of verses 17, 18.

It has been necessary to emphasize all these things, even at the risk of being tedious; but it will be manifest in the end that these preliminary matters will enable us to economize time and space in the exposition.

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CHAPTER VI.

Literalism (Matthew v. 21-48).

IN the narrower sense, literalism substitutes the letter of the law for its spirit. In the broader and proper sense, it is a false philosophy of morals, which destroys all real moral distinctions. This false philosophy was the source of all the vicious teachings of the Pharisees. It may be indicated in three propositions.

1. It makes written law the basis and limit of moral obligation. It denies all original moral distinctions, and bases obligation on authority—the authority of the law-giver, whether human or divine—and this authority is, in its last analysis, the power to enforce. In other words, "might makes right."

This grounds obligation on the Social Contract theory of government. This theory makes a man's desires the only limit of his natural rights. These desires constantly clash, and society, therefore, agrees to surrender some of their natural rights for the protection of others. This consensus is enacted into law, which law is enforced by the power of the commonwealth. Obligations begin here, and fail if the power of enforcing the law fails. The law furnishes the limit of the obligation. This was the doctrine of Hobbes and his school. They taught that the enactments of government make right and wrong, and are not the expression of an essential morality. Sin against a law of the state is crime without any reference to original moral distinctions. Sin against God's law falls into the same category, and the claim is, that a thing is right only because God commands it, and has the power to enforce it. This is the baldest possible selfish system

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of morals, and grounds a sense of obligation only in wholesome regard for one's own interests as against the lawgiver's power to enforce the law. This theory confessedly denies and destroys all original moral distinctions.

Against all this, the true theory is that God's holy law is but the expression of the divine holiness. He commands what is right, and because it is right. Moral obligation originates in the nature of things. Human law approximates this eternal distinction of right, and this approximation is made on purpose; and besides, human law carries a sense of obligation and approval only to the extent of that approximation, intelligently apprehended. Bad laws may be enforced by the stress of fear, but such enforcement begets no sense of obligation, but, rather, of tyranny and despotism. Authority and power do not originate obligation. Might does not make right. (See Romans ii. 12, 14, 15.)

2. Literalism ignores motives and dispositions, and makes sin to consist only in actions. In the administration of human law crime is an infraction of a plainly written law,—no infraction, no crime. In such a case human law takes no account of the desires and disposition of the heart as such. Human law and human judges can take no account of these.

This, however, is not all. Human tribunals determine criminality by the ascertained motive. The thief takes away the watch and the money of a drunken imbecile to satisfy his greed; the honest friend takes them away for safekeeping. While technical criminality is determined by the letter of the law, actual criminality is determined by the internal motive and disposition.

Such is the adminstration of human law, shall the divine law-giver and judge take less account of motives

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and dispositions, and shall the searcher of hearts take no account of the heart? Now, a false philosophy says that there is no sin except in overt actions. It says that it is equally absurd to speak of a holy disposition and of a holy stone; and that holiness and sinfulness are the attributes of actions only; and that a man is righteous or wicked only because of his complement of actions that belong to the one category or the other. Under this theory self-righteousness takes no account of the heart, and finds it easy to minimize the debits and maximize the credits, and to bring down a balance largely in its own favor. This philosophy ignores the real moral element,—motives and dispositions,—and so destroys moral distinctions a second time.

3. Literalism excuses natural appetencies, and denies that they have any moral character.

There are many natural desires that spring up in connection with natural feelings. Some of these feelings originate in the body and some in the soul, and all have their corresponding desire or appetency. These are all in a sense natural.

In the body all of the senses have their appropriate feelings and corresponding desires, or appetencies. The entire nervous system is the source of a great variety of them. It is sufficient to cite a few: hunger, thirst, cold, heat, fatigue, activity, nervousness, and all the varieties of pleasure and pain. These all excite their appropriate desires. Then, in the soul there are wonder, curiosity, wit, humor, the æsthetic, moral beauty, sympathy, and a host of others, simple and compound, with their several desires or appetencies.

Now literalism excuses all of these because they seem to be natural and spontaneous, and allows them to be

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cherished to any extent, provided only there is no overt sinful action, or infraction of written law.

Many of these feelings and appetencies are natural and spontaneous, and necessary to man's comfort and well-being, and in themselves do have no moral character at all; and if man were not a sinner, they would all conspire to his well-being. Others, again, are moral in their nature and essence, and constitute the moral faculty. It is easy to see that sin may and does change the complexion of them all. A sinful self-will changes self-esteem to pride, love of power to ambition, desire of gain to covetousness, acquisition to avarice, indignation to revenge, and so throughout. These sin-perverted appetencies become ruling dispositions, and if these be ignored or condoned, it is but an easy step to the utter destruction of all moral distinctions.

This false philosophy in its threefold form really makes the law of God of none effect, while pretending to uphold and honor it. The Pharisees made "void the law" when they took away its realm in the heart and soul, and refused its jurisdiction over our feelings and desires.

All this false philosophy may be summed up in one sentence: It makes written law the basis of morals, ignores motives and dispositions, and excuses natural appetencies.

It is not our purpose to discuss this false philosophy in categories, nor to expand this discussion into a treatise on moral science, but, rather, to follow Christ's arraignment and exposure of it. This rather elaborate definition of their vicious doctrine of morals has been given here in order to avoid too much repetition in exposition.

Christ proceeds to discuss the literalism of Pharisaic teaching under eight sub-heads.

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1. Personal Ethics (v. 21–30).
2. Family Ethics (v. 31–32).
3. Social Ethics (v. 33–37).
4. Private Revenge (v. 38–39).
5. True Honesty (v. 40).
6. True Patriotism (v. 41).
7. True Generosity (v. 42).
8. The Law of Love (v. 43–47).
9. Application. The true "Higher Law" (v. 48).

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CHAPTER VII.

LITERALISM CONTINUED.

I. PERSONAL ETHICS (MATT. v. 21–30).

CHRIST discussed the Literalism of the traditions under eight sub-heads, as already indicated.

The dispositions determine the moral character of actions, and the sin is heart sin before it eventuates in act, and even if it never so eventuates. He uses two illustrations of this principle, drawn from Pharisaic glosses of the sixth and seventh commandments.

A. He quotes from the traditions (Matt. v. 21), "Ye have heard it said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." He is not quoting the sixth commandment, but the Pharisaic gloss which made guilt attach only to the actual murderer, so that only he was in any sense liable to punishment. They ruled out and ignored heart sins, and their minor forms of expression.

He shows that the virus of murder is found,

1. In causeless anger (verse 22), "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." He does not denounce anger, but causeless anger. A just and righteous indignation is often necessary, as well as proper, and has no virus in it, but causeless anger poisons the desires and the disposition. "And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council." Raca seems to be a scornful and contemptuous epithet hurled at the innocent victim of causeless anger, and prompted by malice,—blockhead. "But whosoever shall

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say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." This term, fool, seems to express the very climax of indignity, causeless and malicious. The guilt of such causeless anger and its expression in such words, is not to be passed upon by mere human tribunals, but deserves "hell fire"—the "Gehenna of fire."

It may be better, perhaps, to consider the three clauses not as a climax, but a triple and exhaustive parallelism to teach that heart sins, which they considered venial, deserve punishment, both in this life and that which is to come.

2. An obdurate and obstinate temper has the same virus in it. (Verse 23.) "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." The gift brought to the altar by a Jew was either a bloody sacrifice for atonement and reconciliation with God, or a thank offering for such reconciliation. The gift is futile in either case if the offerer cherish an obdurate temper. The presumption, and even the possibility of acceptance in such a case, is vain. The obstinacy which persists in wronging the brother is in itself murderous, as well as malicious.

3. So also a litigious spirit. (Verses 25, 26.) "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." The reference here is to legal process for the collection of debt. Judges and officers and courts seem to be necessary to redress wrongs, and to correct the blind selfishness of the parties to a lawsuit.

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They are called litigants, because of the strife engendered. We sometimes hear of a frendly suit, but the lawsuit is usually otherwise. The very worst side of human nature may be seen in the courts, and a litigious spirit marks the parties to the bitter end. The courts are the arena of contention and strife, and the justice of the decrees is by no means a certainty. Now, Christ teaches that this litigious spirit, the very delight of Pharasaic lawyers and clients, has the same virus of murder in it as causeless anger and an obdurate temper. He counsels compromise and settlement and peace, rather than litigation and strife, under the forms of law.

Thus we see that he argues the sin and the folly of causeless anger, an obdurate temper, and a litigious spirit; all of which are forbidden by the sixth commandment, and are the virus of murder, and deserve punishment.

This was no new doctrine, as may be seen in such passages as these: "Grievous words stir up anger." (Prov. xv. 1.) "Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous." (Prov. xxvii. 4.) "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." (Eccl. vii. 9.) Cain the first murderer was wroth with causeless anger, and slew his brother. (Gen. iv. 3–8.)

B. Another illustration is drawn from the Pharisaic gloss of the seventh commandment, by which they limited sin to the overt act (verse 27), "Ye have heard it said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery." This gloss was so well understood that there was no need to quote in full, though he may have done so. Their philosophy said—no act, no sin. They took no account of sinful dispositions and desires.

Christ says, Not so, (verse 28,) "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart."

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Sinful purpose is born of sinful desire; the sinful act is but the consummation of the sinful purpose; or, as we read in Jas. i. 14, 15, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin."

This, also, was no new doctrine taught by Christ, to supplement the seventh commandment. Job understood and acted upon it. "I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid." (Job xxxi. 1.)

But the Pharisee would excuse all sexual desires and lusts as a natural appetency similar to hunger and thirst, and other natural appetencies necessary to man's well-being. They admitted that actual gluttony, and drunkenness, and adultery are actual sins, but that the feelings and desires are non-moral and neutral because natural.

He teaches that desires, however natural and necessary, must be repressed and sacrificed, and even if possible exterminated, (Paul says crucified,) if they lead to sin. (Verses 29, 30.) "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." What is more natural and necessary to the body than the right eye, the right hand, or the right foot? Still, the loss of one or more of these is better than sin and hell. This is a strong illustration to show that natural appetencies are no justification or palliation of sinful lusts.

This same sentiment is found in Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my

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tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." Paralysis of hand and tongue is better than loss of love for Zion,—better than sin.

The principles elucidated in these illustrations apply to all the details of personal ethics as against Pharisaic teaching which condoned heart sins, and, in the last analysis, made personal virtue a nullity.

John traces all worldliness to heart sins: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Christ teaches that all sins proceed out of the heart. "From within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." (Mark vii. 21, 22.)

This is the Old Testament doctrine, and, therefore, the preacher says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.) We read also in the Old Testament of a wicked heart, a hard heart, a gross heart, a stony heart, a contrite heart, a heart of flesh, a deceitful heart, an evil heart, and much more of the same sort throughout.

While Christ teaches no new doctrine here, he does bring it out with great distinctness in his scathing exposition of Pharisaic doctrine and practice. This remark is true of all points of the discussion, and needs not to be constantly repeated.

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CHAPTER VIII.

LITERALISM CONTINUED.

II. FAMILY ETHICS.—DIVORCE. (MATT. v. 31, 32.)

THE transition is easy from personal ethics to the ethics of the family, because of their intimate relations. The doctrine and practice of the Pharisees loosened the bonds of the family, and unsettled the relations of the sexes. It led to wholesale violations of the seventh commandment under color of law. Their doctrine of divorce was false, and destructive of the most sacred of earthly ties. It reduced marriage to the level of a partnership, that might be dissolved at pleasure, whenever it became irksome.

So we read in verse 31, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." They held that it might be done for every cause, but the proper writing must be given; and a woman might put away her husband in the same way, as we shall see.

But Christ says, verse 32, "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, save for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

It is proper here to quote all other references to divorce, so as to get the exact teaching of Christ on this subject, for it was then, and is to-day, a greatly controverted subject.

Matt. xix. 3–9: "The Pharisees, also, came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a

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man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? And he said unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

The same incident is recorded in Mark x. 2–12, with slight variation of statement. In verse 4 he says, "bill of divorcement," and in verses 11 and 12, "whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Luke xvi. 18: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery."

We find Moses' law of divorce, a God-given law, in Deut. xxiv. 1–4, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate

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her, and write her a bill of divorcement and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or, if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife, her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord; and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

Some say that this provision for a divorce was only an attempt to mitigate the evil of general divorces, by requiring a formal writing, and that it contained no great principle to regulate the matter; and that the Pharisees were practically right in their interpretation of Moses; and further, that Christ says that such divorce was a concession to their perversity or "hardness of heart"; and, further, that Christ promulgates a new authoritative principle or law to regulate divorce.

To all this we reply:

1. The divorce law of Moses was no mere expedient, lacking in clear-cut moral issues, for its last provision is fortified by these words: "For that is an abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God gave thee for an inheritance."

The full force of these words may be seen by reference to Leviticus xviii. 3, 24–30, where it is plainly taught that sexual abominations so defiled the land of Canaan that it "vomited out her inhabitants." And the Lord said, "Ye shall not commit any of these abominations," "that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you."

2. This divorce law of Moses goes into full detail of all questions connected with divorce. It assigns one sufficient ground or reason for divorce; defines the nature

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of the writing to be given, and the rights of both parties as to future marriage.

3. It is necessary here, again, to emphasize the fact that Christ in the flesh was under the law, and was in no sense a lawgiver. James enunciates this same great fact in Chapter iv. 11, 12. He teaches that to judge the law, and to do the law, are incompatible. Christ in the flesh was a doer of the law, and was in no sense a judge or lawgiver. It follows, therefore, that Christ and Moses taught exactly the same thing, if they are rightly interpreted, while the Pharisees made the law void by their traditions; and they had so defiled the land with their vicious divorces that it was nearly ready to vomit them out.

It will require no forced exegesis to show that the teachings of the Old and New Testaments are identical on this, as well as on all other questions of morals. It is not difficult to maintain the following propositions:

1. From the beginning marriage was an indissoluble bond, and no provision was made for divorce. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife." (Gen. ii. 24.) So also quotes Christ (Matt. xix. 5), and he adds, "They are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." There was no provision for divorce, expressed or implied, but the contrary. Divorce does violence to the very constitution of the family, and dismembers it. We might argue, *a priori*, that nothing but sin could so poison the life of the family as to destroy the bond. But we are not left to argue this proposition.

2. Moses and Christ agree that sin only, and the same sin, may justify divorce. Moses says, "Because he has found some uncleanness in her." The original may be

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rendered "Matter of nakedness." This is a technical term to indicate some form of lewdness, and there is no reference to ceremonial and ritual uncleanness. It can only mean uncleanness in the marriage relation, sexual sin. This view is confirmed by the strong language used in reinforcing the law, as has already been noted. (Gen. xxiv. 1, 4.) Christ expounded this only "cause" of Moses to be fornication or adultery—sin in the marriage relation.

But some object that Christ names another and a different reason for the divorce in Moses law—the "hardness of their hearts." (Matt. xix. 8.) This term can hardly mean a general and a chronic perversity about any or every matter of interest. The term does mean a perverse and dominant sinfulness, and the context must always suggest or define that sinfulness. We are, therefore, shut up to find the sin in the marriage relation—hardness of heart in the marriage relation—a perverse and a dominant sinfulness—uncleanness, fornication, adultery.

3. The Pharisaic claim for laxity of the law of divorce is based on the clause, "and if it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes"—incompatibility—"for every cause." They garbled the law by detaching this clause from its ground or reason. If they interpreted Moses correctly, they had a strong case against Christ for seeking to overturn the laws of Moses. They do charge him falsely with this, at a later period.

4. Sin does not, *ipso facto,* cancel the marriage bond under either human or divine law, but the sin is a valid ground for seeking divorce. It has always been held that the party wronged may forgive the sin, and, as a matter of fact, often does condone the offence, and thus pre-

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serve the integrity of the family, and rightly so, if the repentance be genuine.

God himself sets the example of forbearance in the family, for there are passages in the Old Testament in which God addresses his people as an adulterous wife, whom, however, he still recognizes as his own, and strives to recover to his bosom. Neither Christ nor Moses had occasion to touch this question directly.

5. The writing to be given was more than a mere certificate given by the divorcing party, as was often done among the Gentiles. Moses calls it a "bill of divorcement," and Christ refers to it as such. The words rendered "bill" suggest some form of legal document issued with authority. This point, however, does not seem to have been in controversy.

6. Both the husband and the wife were entitled to the remedy of divorce against the sin of the other.

In construing law it is the universal custom to apply it to both sexes, though it is given only in one sex, unless there be conditions or definitions in the law itself which limit the application to one sex. There are no such conditions in Moses' law of divorce. A law based on an expressed reason, or principle, applies wherever the reason or principle is found.

Then Christ refers to the wife's equal rights in this respect, and indicates also the practice. (See Mark x. 12, already quoted.)

It may be noted, however, that the woman is far more apt than the man to forgive the wrong done her, and that for reasons that need not be argued here.

7. Under Moses there was, and could be, no competent divorce except for the cause mentioned.

The origin of the family is divine, and its constitution is God-given. He only could provide for its dissolution.

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Christ teaches the same. The bill of divorce may be issued for other cause, but the bond is not dissolved in God's sight; the twain are still one flesh. In such a case marriage of either party is adultery. (Matt. v. 32, etc.) We need not requote. Christ seems to say in one or two places that unlawful divorce causes adultery. We explain by noting that divorce implies new marriage, and is usually issued for that purpose.

8. The laxity of divorce laws means one of two things: Either the adoption of the Pharisaic doctrine that divorce may issue for every cause; or that the family and its constitution are the creation of the State, like any business corporation or partnership, and are subject to similar changes in their regulation.

9. Under Moses' law both parties may marry again, the guilty party as well as the innocent. The only limitation to their marrying is that they shall never marry each other again. The reasons for this may not be far to see, but they do not come within this discussion.

We claim that Christ said nothing different from Moses. If his teachings are taken out of connection with their context, they may be made to teach a different doctrine. Mark x. 11–12, and Luke xvi. 18, if considered isolated, would teach that neither party could marry again. This was, and still is, the doctrine of a large part of Christendom. This doctrine practically denies that there is any divorce law in the Scriptures.

Then, again, isolated clauses in Matt. v. 32, and in Matt. xix. 9, if taken out of the context, would seem to teach that the sinning party shall not marry again.

But when we examine the context, and compare one passage with another, we easily see that the real question at issue between Christ and the Pharisees was whether a man might put away his wife for any cause other than

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adultery, and whether Moses did not so ordain. Christ shows that both parties are barred from re-marriage if divorced for any cause other than adultery. Yet nearly all Protestant Christendom hold that the sinning party may not marry. They have overlooked the express provision of Moses' law, that the sinning party may marry.

But some still insist that Deuteronomy xxiv. 1 is not a divorce law, just as some have argued that Leviticus, Chapters xviii. and xx., are not marriage laws. The general reply to both these is this: If these are not incest, marriage and divorce laws there are none in the Bible. Christ nowhere ordains and promulgates such laws; he only expounds on occasion.

The claim that the sinning party may not marry is based on the false assumption that the sin dissolves the bond, and annuls the contract as effectually as death does. Neither Moses nor Christ teach any such doctrine. The divorce may issue and annul the bond. What if the offense be forgiven, as is so often the case? Are not the parties still man and wife? Any assumption to the contrary is false. Much less do the Scriptures teach that fornication (before or after marriage) forfeits the natural right to marry; on the contrary marriage is enjoined as the natural remedy. (1 Cor. vii. 2, 9.)

10. Is desertion by either party a just ground of divorce? Neither Christ nor Moses say so. They expressly exclude every cause but one. But it is argued that desertion signifies adultery, and may be assumed to mean that, and nothing else. Rather let the adultery be proven.

11. Those who teach that desertion cancels the tie appeal to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians vii. 1–16. Strange that they overlook the fact that, in verses 10 and 11, Paul teaches that ordinary desertion does not

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furnish cause for divorce, and quotes Christ as teaching so. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; and let not the husband put away (divorce) his wife" (for said desertion).

Indeed, common sense would say that, if desertion cancels the tie, then the party wishing a divorce needs only to desert. Paul teaches that desertion relieves neither party of marital obligations, but they must remain unmarried, or be reconciled. So ordinary desertion is ruled out as a proper cause for divorce.

There were new cases arising, growing out of the religious antagonism of pagan unbelievers against their believing husbands or wives. Verses 12 and 13 teach that the believing husband or wife has no right to desert or leave the unbelieving mate. But if the unbelieving departs, suffer it to be so. "A brother or a sister is not in bondage in such a case." This is interpreted to mean that the marriage bond is cancelled by the desertion. Suppose that the unbeliever comes back the next day, the next week, or the next year, repentant and believing perchance. Paul evidently means for the believer to remain unmarried and seek to be reconciled. Else why does he argue in the next verse (16), "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband, or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife."

Besides, the marriage tie is nowhere called bondage in the Scriptures. The word translated "brought into bondage" is the passive of a verb which has but one meaning, "to make a slave of," "to reduce to bondage." Paul only says, "If the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not made a slave of, or reduced to

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bondage, in such cases." It is gratuitous to make Paul say, "A brother or a sister is not bound by the marriage tie in such cases."

Some think that Paul disclaims divine authority for his advice about this matter; if so, why seek to set up a new cause for divorce—desertion for religious antagonisms?

If, however, he claims inspiration, as we believe, why seek to torture his teachings into a contradiction of the teachings of Moses and Christ?

It would be interesting, but out of place here, perhaps, to sum up the numerous "every cause" found in the codes of states and nations, by which the family is imperilled,—as the result of which the God of infinite justice and holiness may cause the land to vomit up its people. Only one other thing brings the same peril,—innocent blood unavenged.

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CHAPTER IX.

Literalism Continued.

III. Social Ethics (Matt. v. 33–37). IV. Private Revenge (Matt. v. 38, 39).

III. *Social Ethics.—Oaths* (Matt. v. 33–37).

"AGAIN, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his foot-stool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

The brief quotation in verse 33, made from the traditions of the elders, seems very plausible, and if there were nothing more, no fault could be found with it. It evidently forbids false swearing, or perjury, and would seem, also, to reinforce the ninth commandment. It is sometimes necessary to confirm the truth by an oath, for Paul says an oath is for confirmation. "An oath is a solemn action, whereby we call upon God, the searcher of hearts, to witness the truth of what we affirm." Perjury seeks to make God himself a party to the falsehood. Moses' law is very severe upon a perjured witness, and Christ has no quarrel with this teaching of the fathers about perjury.

It also teaches that promises, pledges, and vows sealed by an oath are binding, and must be kept or paid as a

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most solemn obligation unto the Lord. Christ evidently does not object to this proposition.

We therefore inquire, what was the Pharisaic doctrine of oaths which made the third and ninth commandments of none effect. They taught that there were two classes of oaths—one, by the name of the Lord. They held that this oath guaranteed truth in statement, and fidelity to a promise. Their other form of oath cited other things as witnesses, such as, by heaven, by the earth, by the temple, by the head, and many other things. The Talmud, which embodies largely Jewish traditions, says that such oaths are not binding. It is plain, therefore, that if such oaths do not bind the conscience to speak the truth or to keep the promise, the obligation to do so without any form of oath would sit very lightly on them indeed.

These minor oaths, if we may so designate them, were in very common use among the Jews, just as they are to-day among the Arabs, and other Asiatic peoples, and they implied no obligation to speak the truth.

Christ strikes at the very heart of their heresy, and says, "Swear not at all." He refers only to the second class, or minor oaths, as is evident: "Swear not at all, neither by heaven," "nor by the earth"; "neither by Jerusalem"; "neither shalt thou swear by thy head."

It needs to be noted, that the reference is to social swearing, and Christ does not forbid the oath for judicial and governmental purposes, as the Quakers and others suppose. He is speaking of social converse only, for he sums up and applies his doctrine to "your communication." This means ordinary conversation.

He does not touch the question of major oaths—by the name of the Lord—but leaves them where law and prescriptive usage had always placed them, in the very

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forefront of dignity and solemnity as an act of worship. The formula of such oath was, "God, do so to me, and more likewise, if I keep not all the words of this covenant to do them"; and it was solemnly repeated as the covenanter passed between the divided parts of the sacrificial victim. The Lord himself ratified his covenant with Abraham in this way, when he passed as a smoking furnace and a burning lamp between the pieces of the sacrificial victims. (Gen. xv. 17.)

The oath for confirmation was used by Abraham and Abimelek, by Laban and Jacob, Jacob and Joseph, and all the way down through the Jewish commonwealth, for civil, national, and international purposes. In fact, the oath has always been used among all peoples for such purposes, and such use is evidently of divine origin and appointment.

Christ shows that minor oaths were, in their last analysis, not different from the other class of oaths—"by the name of the Lord"; "for heaven is God's throne and the earth is his footstool." We find this point fully expounded in Matthew xxiii. 21: "Whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

The Pharisees made other distinctions of valid oaths, which were absurd, as we see in Matthew xxiii. 18–20: "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools, and blind; for whether is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools, and blind; for whether is greater, the gift or the

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altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon."

It was by such puerile juggling as this that they justified social profanity in themselves, and taught men so. Christ shows that all social swearing violates the third commandment, and he showed that truthfulness has no need of more than simple affirmation: "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more cometh of evil," or, "is of the evil one." Satan is the author and patron of social profanity.

Bald blasphemy, cursing, and swearing in the social circle by the name of the Lord God needs no condemnation, for it had no advocates in Christ's day, and it is ruled out by common decency in our day. The profane swearer seldom invades the circle of the virtuous, the society of ladies, the presence of judges in court, or the house of God, with his oaths.

But the so-called minor oaths are only too prevalent, and their true character is unrecognized. It would be easy to show that many of them are contractions of fuller forms of oaths and imprecations, *e. g.*, "My gracious," "Bless my soul," "My eyes," "Zounds," and such like. Then there are others less easily traced: *e. g.*, "By Jingo," "On my life," "I wish I may die," etc.; and then there are others which are mere slang, in vogue to-day and forgotten to-morrow.

There are in use a great many strong terms intended to fortify the speaker's statements, not warranted by the occasion or the subject: *e. g.*, "I do declare," "You don't say," "Awful," etc.

Christ does not discuss fully the evils of social profanity, except the sweeping statement that "Whatsoever is more cometh of evil"; but the evils are manifold, and not hard to see. The habitual use of strong language

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debauches the mind, begets a reckless habit of thought, confesses to a need of fortifying in order to be believed, discredits simple truthfulness, makes the oath so meaningless that perjury becomes easy, destroys reverence for God, and breeds contempt for his works. Social profanity is one of Satan's masterpieces.

IV. *Private Revenge* (Matt. v. 38–39).

"Ye have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Under the Mosaic law the punishment for malicious bodily injuries was to be adjusted to the offence, and the penalty was appointed in kind. The fullest form of the law for the direction of the magistrate or judge is found in Exodus xxi. 23–25. "Thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

This law is repeated in briefer form in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Some think that this law was semi-barbaric, and that somehow Christ modifies it, and even sets it aside. If Christ has done either of these things, he assumed to modify or set aside a law given for the guidance of the civil magistrate. This he repudiated when he said, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke xii. 14.) Besides, he was a citizen under this law, and not competent to do what is claimed.

As for the charge that this and other civil laws of the Jewish commonwealth were semi-barbaric, such charge makes the divine lawgiver semi-barbarous. Besides, it is an open question whether the modern civilized (?) mode of punishing such offences, by fine or imprisonment, is

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more suitable to the end in view. Men think they can endure any form of punishment, either in this world or the next, if only their precious bodies can escape punishment.

This provision of the Mosaic law is called the *Lex Talionis,* and is universally recognized in that class of crimes that call for capital punishment; and the broad principle of adjusting the penalty to the offence is recognized in all codes. Neither the Pharisees nor Christ had aught against this provision of the civil code.

But the Pharisees taught that this law was the rule of every day life, and they justified retaliation for private offenses. There is a large number of personal and private offenses for which the civil law furnishes no redress, such as slights, insults, innuendoes, insinuations, opprobrious epithets, and such like. These are often harder to bear than injuries to person or estate; and beget a burning and often a righteous indignation. The Pharisee preached and practiced retaliation for such things. "Tit for tat" was their doctrine. Every man must vindicate his own personal honor is the later form of this principle.

But Christ says "resist not evil." The original means "Do not stand up against," as in battle: "do not withstand." Personal retaliation is what Christ forbids in such cases. "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also." This smiting was certainly not a blow to kill, nor even to injure the body materially. Other principles would apply to such a case, either flight or self-preservation by force. It would be easy to show this from the Scriptures, and from universal law.

The smiting, therefore, is a slap, or a fillip on the cheek, for insult rather than injury; and the cheek

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burns with a sense of the indignity rather than with pain. Christ says let him repeat the insult, if needs be, but do not retaliate in kind, nor seek to punish the offender in his own person. God has never given the right to inflict punishment on the persons of offenders except in due process of law in the state, or in the exercise of wholesome government in the family.

Retaliation for such offenses leads to the direst evils, brawls, melees, bloodshed, and murder. A Virginia judge is reputed to have charged his juries that the "damn lie" is the first blow in a fight. A glove thrown into the face, or a few drops of wine, justify the cartel; and duelists shoot each other down, or draw the life-blood with the sword in vindication of personal honor.

Besides, retaliation practiced for petty offenses makes retaliation and revenge easy for all offenses. This is the key to the bloody feuds of families and clans, handed down sometimes for centuries, till one or the other is exterminated.

The latest development of revenges for personal offenses to ourselves or others is lynch law. Heat of blood does excuse homicide, and ought to do so. But heat of blood rapidly subsides, and a rational indignation soon supersedes it, and leaves the ends of justice to the civil law, or to the providence of him who says, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

The lyncher usurps all the functions of government. He makes himself witness, sheriff, judge, jury, and executioner. He stands prepared to strike down all resistance to his usurpations and to kill such officers or deputies as stand in his way. He takes his victims out of the hands of the courts, batters down the bars and bolts with which the state protects the criminal, and in so doing overrides the power and authority of the state.

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His plea is the weakness of law, and the inefficiency of the state in its administration. Substitute lynch law and the earth becomes hell.

Christ set the example of the doctrine he taught as against the Pharisees, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." When one smote him with the palm of his hand, he made a quiet and dignified protest. When they spit upon him, and put a purple robe on him, and a reed in his hand, and added other indignities, he said never a word.

When Paul was on trial, Ananias the High Priest commanded to smite him on the mouth, and Paul replied with a well-deserved rebuke, and then made apology because he did not know it was the high priest.

From these examples we learn that this doctrine makes no man weak and pusillanimous, but rather noble, brave, and heroic.

Christ makes no reference here to our treatment of enemies, and returning good for evil. We find this in verses 43–47. "Good for evil" is the companion doctrine to "Resist not evil"; and we shall there see that both doctrines are amply vindicated in the Old Testament as well as the New.

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CHAPTER X.

Literalism Continued.

V. True Honesty (Matthew v. 40). VI. True Patriotism (Matthew v. 41). VII. True Generosity (Matthew v. 42).

V. *True Honesty* (Matt. v. 40).

"IF any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." Or, as in Luke vi. 29, "Him that taketh away thy cloke, forbid not to take thy coat also." Luke makes no mention of a suit at law.

Some suppose that Christ says we must not protect our rights by legal processes, for he has already rebuked a litigious spirit in verse 25. The Dunkard and other sects teach that it is sinful to take any part in an action at law, either as plaintiff or defendant. Such a doctrine denies the righteousness of courts of law, and of the laws they enforce. This is anarchy in its last analysis. They make Paul teach the same doctrine in 1 Corinthians vi. 1–8. But Paul evidently advises believers to settle their rights and disputes among themselves, by referee or otherwise, rather than go to law before unbelievers,—better suffer wrong even than make the scandal.

Others argue non-resistance in the courts, even to the extent of being stripped of everything. This is an extension of the same false doctrine of non-resistance that has already been noted.

Christ has already shown how literalism corrupted and destroyed personal, family, and social ties, and

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made futile the protection of law by their doctrine of private revenge. Now he shows that their civic ethics is equally destructive.

While the decisions of courts are sometimes travesties of justice, the presumption of right is always in favor of the courts. Neither Christ nor the Pharisees utter any diatribe against law and its adminstration. The laws and the courts of the Jews, at least, were ordained by Christ himself; and the Pharisees made law the basis and measure of moral obligation, as already noted, and so claimed to exalt the law. They taught that debts were to be paid only as required by law, and that the written provisions of the law created the obligation.

Now the Jewish code provides for a homestead exemption law. A few things of the absolute necessaries of life are put beyond the power of the creditor to take for debt by legal process. These exemptions are made in the interest of mercy. They were the upper and the nether millstone, used for the daily grinding, and the outer garment, which was needed for a covering by day and by night. Other garments might be taken. (Deut. xxiv. 6, 13, 17.)

They also had a bankrupt law, that cancelled debts every seventh year. Christ means to teach that obligation is not cancelled when the limits of legal process have been reached. The honest debtor will not consider his obligation cancelled by homestead exemptions and by bankrupt proceedings. Honesty according to law is no honesty at all. The danger is that such checks upon the legal rights of the creditor will debauch the debtor's sense of obligation, therefore the limitations were made very narrow. The tendency to-day is to make excessive exemptions—in some states a homestead of one thousand dollars, five hundred dollars of personal property, a year's

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supply of provisions, etc.—all these exempted from process for debt.

Christ means to teach that an honest man will recognize his debts, and will make every effort to pay, no matter if legal process does not reach him. How much worse is the prevalent custom of covering up property under the name of the wife or others, or in insurance policies and other instruments, in order to escape legal liability for honest debts. In these customs we easily see how expansive a false principle may become, until the very lawmakers themselves have their own sense of right utterly debauched.

It may be well here to note that Jewish law gave the creditor almost unlimited power for the collection of debt, even to the sale of the whole family into involuntary and enforced service for a limited time. This teaches further, that the divine lawgiver held the wife and children liable for the debts of the husband and father, unless the creditor waived his rights; and all laws to the contrary to-day are vicious and immoral.

VI. *True Patriotism* (Matt. v. 41).

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain."

We need not again rule out the doctrine that we must submit to double oppression, when one has been put upon us. Such a doctrine would encourage every form of aggression, and break down human rights under the name of a meek non-resistance. We may find another meaning for the words of Christ.

It was the custom in Persia and in other Eastern countries to send important government dispatches by couriers pressed into service. This custom was adopted by the Greeks and Romans, and the word used here in the

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original signifies impressment for such service. The courier first impressed was required to run with all speed for a mile—the distance prescribed by law; he then impressed another into service, and he another, and so the dispatches were delivered with the utmost possible speed. No courier was compelled to run beyond the prescribed distance. It might easily happen that he would find no suitable person at the end of his appointed race, but a true and loyal subject would run on further in order to promote the interests of his king, and insure the more rapid delivery of his message. This would be true patriotism, to go beyond the requirements of the law if it was needed.

This is what Christ meant by the illustration used, "If a man compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Certain duties are required by law of citizens of the state, and they are rightly protected by law against the arbitrary exactions of unreasonable or unscrupulous rulers. Taxes, military service, labor on public works, and the like, are required of citizens in every state, and the law prescribes the measure or amount of service to be rendered. When that is given, they are quit of all further obligation in ordinary cases; but occasions may arise when the country needs more, and true patriotism will ignore the provisions of the law, and will lay down service, property, and even life itself, at the country's call.

There were no standing armies in the Jewish commonwealth. Military service was absolutely voluntary, but the country seldom called in vain. Republics generally rely on such voluntary service.

Patriotism made the Swiss the most heroic of all peoples, in their wars with the Austrian invaders. Some doubt if ever there lived a William Tell, but none deny that the type was found in every Swiss peasant. Arnold

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Winkelried may have never lived, but his spirit lived in the breasts of his people.

The most shameful episode in American history happened in the war of 1812, at Queenstown, Canada. General Van Rensselaer crossed the river with part of his army, and gained signal advantages in three bloody engagements, constantly expecting reinforcements from the other side. He recrossed the river to ascertain the causes of the delay, and found 1,200 men, state militia, who refused to cross over and help their comrades, because, forsooth, the constitution does not require militia to cross the frontier without their own consent. Reinforcements came to the enemy. They witnessed the dangers and the disaster of their comrades, and refused both commands and entreaties to go to their help.

This same principle applies to official duties of all sorts, in the state, in the church, in the family, in the bonds of friendship, and wherever duty calls. The man who measures service in a cold-blooded way, by rule, or law, or usage, or convention, or contract, or emolument, is a total stranger to all high principle.

We find notable examples of the working of this principle in Old Testament times. The law named the tithes, but pious Jews made voluntary offerings besides, and sometimes with such a profuse liberality that they were told to cease their offerings, as at the building of the tabernacle, and on other occasions. Their response for military service in their country's need wrote them a nation of heroes, from David to the Maccabees, whenever they kept the covenant, and a nation of poltroons when faith and duty failed them. Christ was teaching no new doctrine here.

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VII. *True Generosity* (Matt. v. 42).

"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away." Also Luke vi. 30: "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again"; and verse 34, "And if ye lend them of whom ye hope to receive again, what thank have ye."

These verses have been variously construed, because they have been so often taken out of their connection on the textual method.

Some think that Christ enjoins us to submit to all the petty exactions and irritations of borrowers. Some people borrow umbrellas, books, household utensils, garments, provisions, and small amounts of money in a thriftless way, and do not concern themselves about returning them at all, and take no care of the things borrowed, or of their condition if they be returned on solicitation. Now this literal interpretation makes it wrong to refuse to lend to any one, and also wrong to try to recover the thing lent, and withal to feel no irritation at such treatment, but rather to take it joyfully. This interpretation would put what the world contemptuously calls "sponging" on a very high plane. Christ certainly does not teach this.

Another theory is, that Christ is discussing the duty of almsgiving for the relief of the poor and the needy. They tell us we must never turn off a beggar or a tramp, whether their pretenses be honest or dishonest. This interpretation is too bald to need formal refutation. This view is supported by the fact that the terms "borrow" and "lend" are used once or twice in the Scriptures to signify an actual gift, and sometimes the terms are used

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in English as a euphemism for a small gift that is not to be returned, as "lend me a pin."

In the preceding context Christ shows that the real obligations of the debtor are not measured by the letter of the law, and do not originate in law, whether he be debtor to an individual or to the state. He then takes up the case of the creditor, and shows that he has obligations resting on him aside from his legal rights as creditor. These obligations may be summed up in one word, generosity—generosity in lending, and generosity in collecting. Generous dealing cannot be reduced to a legal equation, just as other noble sentiments have no legal expression; and so with the duties and obligations which grow out of them.

Literalism, therefore, is a stranger to generosity, and the Pharisee cannot reckon it among his virtues. "They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt. xxiii. 4.) Generosity? "Ye devour widows' houses!" (Matt. xxiii. 14.) They did give a prominent place to almsgiving in their practice, but for reasons other than generosity, as we shall see later on.

Evidently the borrower contemplated here is not the speculating and prosperous borrower in the marts of trade and commerce, nor is he the helpless pauper who needs to be relieved by almsgiving; but he is the average poor man, who has a little credit by reason of his honest industry, but has no rating in the commercial world. Sickness or misfortune overtakes him, and he needs to borrow in order to bridge over his troubles, and he hopes to be able to repay the loan. His more prosperous neighbor is able to help him with a loan, but he can give no gilt-edged security.

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It is of such a man's needs that Christ teaches that personal relief must not be limited by the legal rights of the creditor. This is the teaching of Moses also; for he states the case fully in Deuteronomy xv. 7–11. We need only quote a part: "Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Beware that there shall be a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand." The year of release terminated the legal rights of the creditor; still this should be no reason for refusing to lend. Generosity should offset the risk in making such a loan. Not to make it is a sin (verse 9). To make it insures God's blessing (verse 10). This is a permanent principle, "For the poor shall never cease out of the land" (verse 11).

This same generosity in enforcing the legal remedies for debt in such cases is also plainly taught. This is the other pole of the same principle. For this reason the cruel usurer, the evicting landlord, and the relentless Shylock are universally hated. The contrast of generosity and cruelty in collecting debts is sharply set forth in the parable of the king who took account of his servants. (Matt. xviii. 23–35.) We shall note later on that this principle is found in the Lord's prayer—generosity to debtors. How striking is the contrast of all this with the cruel selfishness of the Pharisee.

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CHAPTER XI.

LITERALISM CONCLUDED.

VIII. THE LAW OF LOVE (MATTHEW v. 43–47).
IX. THE TRUE "HIGHER LAW" (MATTHEW v. 48).

VIII. *The Law of Love* (Matt. v. 43–47).

IN the last three sub-heads of the sermon we do not find the quotations from the traditions of the elders. Perhaps they were omitted because the Pharisaic doctrines on those points were so well known to his audience that there was no need to quote, and the enunciation of the truth was a sufficient refutation of their heresies; or, perhaps, the abstract is so brief that the quotations are left out, as well as much of the argument and illustration. Be that as it may, Christ resumes the usual formula, and quotes one more heresy for refutation (verse 43), "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy."

The second great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." They emasculated this commandment by a false definition of the word neighbor. They made it mean only the man they were friendly with, and one able to reciprocate courtesies. It is reputed that, in certain quarters to-day, two families that lend and borrow from each other are called neighbors, to the exclusion of all others. This is even more exclusive than the Pharisees were.

In Luke x. 25–37, we read of a certain lawyer, evidently a Pharisaic expounder of the law, who sought to justify himself as a keeper of the law, who said unto Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" This was apparently a much mooted question, and Christ answered with the

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parable of the good Samaritan. It would seem unnatural that the priest and the Levite should pass by on the other side. Not so, but it was the most natural thing in the world, because, under the Pharisaic definition, the poor sufferer was no neighbor of theirs. Their literalism taught that their sense of obligation originated in the written law, and the law did not cover the case. Sentiments of compassion, sympathy, or love were to them impertinences, which created no sense of obligation, and must not be allowed to divert them from their mission of business or pleasure, as the case may have been. The Samaritan relieved the sufferer because he was his neighbor, even though the Jews and Samaritans ordinarily had no dealings.

It is further true that law does not, and cannot, originate any noble sentiment, whether patriotism, or generosity, or compassion, or love, but is intended to direct and regulate each and all of these, and to give them proper cultivation and exercise. Literalism ignores the dispositions of the soul in the exercise of virtue, as well as in the practice of vice. This doctrine dwarfs and dries up every noble sentiment of the soul, and in the last analysis abolishes the distinction of right and wrong.

The law said, "love thy neighbor," and they added as a self-evident corollary, "hate thine enemy." This comports exactly with their doctrine and practice of private revenge. While denying the authority of the nobler sentiments, they justified and cultivated the doctrine of hate, and malice held sway in a wide domain. It is plain that their definition of "enemy" was as broad and expansive as their definition of "neighbor" was narrow and contracted. Hate and malice were exalted into obligatory virtues. There is no such doctrine in the Old Testament.

The true doctrine is, "Love your enemies." Verse 44,

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"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." This is the surface doctrine of the Old Testament, and the Pharisees ought to have known it. Exodus xxiii. 4, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox, or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back again to him. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Proverbs xxiv. 17, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." Proverbs xxv. 21, 22, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." David made this his rule of action in dealing with Saul and his house; and even Saul commended David as more righteous than himself, in that he returned good for evil. The New Testament adds nothing to this rule of righteousness, save to restore it from Pharisaic perversion and destruction. Verse 45, "That ye may be children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

This law of love, thus understood and practiced, constitutes us sons of God, at least in the sense of 1 John iv. 7, 8: "Every one that loveth is born of God." It is the evidence of sonship. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." The Pharisees claimed God for their father without evidence. Christ said to them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John viii. 44.) And we read also in 1 John iii. 10, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whoso doeth not

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righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Luke says, "He is kind to the unthankful and the evil" (vi. 35). We hear a good deal about helping the "deserving poor," and men are disposed to withhold repeated kindness from the ungrateful. This is not God-like. He does not measure his good providences, nor the gifts of his grace, by any such standards. It is admitted that indiscriminate giving may pauperize the receiver; and, besides, we must be careful to recognize impostures; still, the law of kindness to all, coupled with common sense, will solve many of our difficulties in this matter.

The son is like his father. Much is said about heredity in these days, both bodily and mental. Heredity is likeness. So the Son of God is like God, for "God is love." The son imitates the father. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (Eph. v. 1, 2.) This is heredity and imitation conjoined.

Christ not only allows the hope of reward, but he appeals to it. (Luke vi. 35.) "And your reward shall be great and ye shall be the children of the highest." Can the reward be measured? John thought not: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

It may be well here to put in a caveat against those who tell us to reject, as sinful selfishness, the hope of reward and the fear of punishment, as motives to help us do right. We need not discuss this, except to note that both Testaments are full of promises on the one hand and threatenings and warnings on the other.

When the Pharisees did profess to recognize the law of love, they reduced it to the lowest form of mere natural affection by absurd limitations to its application. "For if

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ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?" Or, as in some manuscripts, "Do not even the Gentiles so?" We may be permitted to add that dogs and other lower animals, which have no moral sense, do the same.

At any rate, such an application of the law of love, and such a limited exchange of the little kindnesses and courtesies of life, reduced their righteousness to the low level of the publicans, and the heathen. No wonder Christ said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

IX. *Application. The true "Higher Law"* (Matt. v. 48). "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." In Luke we read, "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The term "perfect" used by Matthew is generic, and embraces all the divine attributes as manifested in his law, and the term "merciful" is specific, and expresses that darling attribute which moves him and his people to kindness, goodness, and generosity towards the undeserving and the sinner.

Peter says, "It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." The divine holiness is made the plea for personal holiness. This injunction and plea is made three times in Leviticus. The divine perfection and the divine holiness are set forth as the standard in both the Old Testament and the New. It is not pertinent here to discuss modern vagaries and theories about perfected holiness in this life, for that question was not under discussion. The standard of the Pharisee was the written law, emasculated by their glosses and interpretations; Christ holds up the standard of the divine perfections.

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"Therefore," he says—in view of the entire discussion and exposure of their teachings and practice—"Therefore be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." This is the true "Higher Law,"—men have claimed to nullify and set aside plain provisions of righteous law, and judicial decisions, and binding contracts, on the plea of a higher law evolved out of their own consciousness, and set up by purely rationalistic processes. This finds the standard of righteousness for each man within him, and finds the seat of all authority within him.

The Scriptures point to a standard outside, and base all authority on the absolute righteousness, holiness, and purity of an infinite and eternal God. The law is the expression of those eternal attributes.

This question still remains: If "the letter killeth, and the spirit giveth life," how shall we ascertain the spirit, and the life of the law, as against a narrow and vicious literalism? This would no doubt be difficult if there were nothing in the Scriptures but a formal statement of the categories of the law. Instead of this, we have a multitude of parallel categories to check each other, inspired expositions, precedents and decisions, the practices of the righteous and of the wicked for four thousand years recorded and classified; and besides, we have God's dealings with all these to approve or condemn, and then, his own righteous activities revealed. These things do so check and elucidate each other that an honest, loving heart need make no mistake.

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CHAPTER XII.

Formalism (Matthew vi. 1–18).

I. Almsgiving (Verses 2–4).

THE more we study heresies the more readily we see that there is a kinship among them, just as we find that truths are often correlated.

Literalism and formalism are kindred heresies, and we may expect to find the literalist to be also a formalist. We have seen that literalism substitutes the letter for the spirit; formalism substitutes the form for the substance. The former deals with law as a rule of righteous living; the latter deals only with ordinances of worship. These last are a part of righteousness towards God, and if rightly performed, make up the complement of right living toward God, expressing our love and adoration to him, and also securing the divine favor in God's appointed way.

Every ordinance of worship, both ceremonial and spiritual, has a meaning and a definite object, and must be so understood by him that uses it. Christ limits the discussion to the ordinances of a spiritual worship rather than a ceremonial worship. Isaiah had amply exposed the formalism of his day in the use of the ritual.

He abundantly refuted the *opus operatum* doctrine, which gives a real spiritual value to the mere performance of an outward ordinance. Christ refutes this also, and shows its absurdity.

It may seem strange that he makes no further quotations for refutation. But there was hardly need to do so, for his arraignment of Pharisaic teaching and practice is

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more and more vigorous and overwhelming as he proceeds.

Formalism grows into a self-righteousness, because its value depends on the sum of the good works done, set over against the shortcomings and sins that need an offset. Formalism seeks to furnish a surplus of *opus operatum* acts of formal worship. The larger the surplus the greater the righteousness. This is self-righteousness, pure and simple.

Formalism also tends to ostentation and self-righteous parade. It imagines itself to be "rich and increased in goods," and makes display of it all. We see then why formalism is hypocrisy in its final outcome. We have no need to say "self-righteous formalism," nor "ostentatious formalism," nor "hypocritical formalism," because formalism is all of these in itself.

We shall see that this is the teaching of Christ in the first eighteen verses of the sixth chapter of Matthew. He shows, further, that their formalism vitiated and destroyed all true worship. Besides, he sets up the true doctrine of worship in its place. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness to be seen of men; otherwise ye have no reward of your father which is in heaven." (Matt. vi. 1.)

The word "righteousness" is used advisedly instead of "alms." The revised version so uses it, following the best authorities. This term is generic, and the principle enunciated is true of all works of righteousness, of any and every kind. Ostentatious righteousness is worthless before God: "Ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (vi. 1).

This is no new doctrine, for the Lord uses much stronger language in rebuking formalism, as found in

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Isaiah i. 10–15; and there is reason to believe it to be older than Isaiah.

Christ now proceeds to discuss the formalism of the Pharisees under three heads: Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

1. *Almsgiving.*—"Therefore," because of the principle just enunciated; "therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men; verily I say unto you, they have their reward" (vi. 2).

Almsgiving has always been recognized as an act of worship. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase." (Prov. iii. 9.) The bringing in of tithes and offerings was an act of worship. Collections were taken in the synagogues for the poor. So also in Christian churches, for the poor and other pious uses.

There is no satisfactory evidence that it was customary actually to blow a trumpet to draw public attention to giving alms, though some authorities think otherwise. The evident reference is to ostentatious advertisement. The motive was to be "seen of men." This is hypocrisy—mere acting for applause. The word "hypocrite" first signified an actor on the stage of the theatre for applause; it then came to be used only in a bad sense, to signify one who merely acts a part and poses falsely for selfish motives. The hypocrite is only a counterfeit. His alms are not true alms, but the price paid for his own glorification; and the Pharisees got their reward. They received what they paid for. This spirit did not die with that generation.

But why this counterfeit? Men counterfeit the genuine. Good deeds, like good money, have their counter-

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feits, which often pass current for the genuine, because it is not always easy to read the heart and discover the motive of every action.

There is a true almsgiving. "But when thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." (Verses 3 and 4.) The right hand is the symbol of integrity, good faith, and nobility of purpose, as is understood when a contracting party says, "Give me your right hand on it." The left hand signifies false motives, base purposes, and even treachery. The Latin name for the left hand is "Sinistra," and the word is transferred into the English language, and we speak of sinister looks, motives, and purposes.

This, then, is his meaning. True alms spring out of a noble and generous heart, and are unselfish. They lose all their value, and forfeit their name and character, if they proceed from base pretences and false motives. Pharisaic almsgiving is hypocrisy.

But true almsgiving is here characterized as "secret" alms: "that thine alms may be in secret." He does not mean absolute secrecy, for the receiver of the alms would know in most cases, and we often need to set a good example, one to another, in this as well as in other pious practices. But he means "in secret" as opposed to the self-righteous ostentation which he is rebuking.

True alms shall have an open reward from the Father, who reads the heart and discerns the motive. This open reward is promised three several times. We shall consider its nature later on, for it will become more and more apparent as we proceed.

Job understood and practiced true alms. "I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had

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none to help him." "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor." (Job xxix. 12, 15, 16. See also Job xxxi. 15–22.)

The Old Testament and the New tell us that God "loveth a cheerful giver," and it was left for the Pharisee to vitiate and destroy his gift with unholy motives.

The Old Testament estimate of giving to the poor may be seen in the provision made for them in the Mosaic law. The gleanings of fields and vineyards were to be left for the poor; so also the spontaneous products of the seventh or Sabbatical year. Besides this, one-tenth of the increase was to be laid up at home every third year, to be distributed to the poor as they might have need. This was the third tithe. Yet men imagine that Christ teaches a more generous and loving help for the poor in the New Testament than he did through Moses.

We have already seen how the Pharisees were wanting in true generosity. This reduced their almsgiving to a pure formalism, and we would expect them to withhold alms whenever it suited them, and also to justify themselves in so doing. We are not mistaken in the surmise, for they justified the withholding of necessary help from aged and needy parents, under certain hypocritical conditions. (Mark vii. 10–13.) "Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother," "but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mayest be profited by me, he shall be free, and ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or mother; making the word of God of none effect by your tradition which ye have delivered."

Now it would seem much easier to justify the withholding of help in any ordinary case, where there was no such claim to generosity as in the case of the needy father and mother. The conduct of the priest and the

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Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan might be cited here again as a case in point. John deals with this as a supreme absurdity. (1 John iii. 17.) "Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

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CHAPTER XIII.

Formalism Continued.

II. Prayer (Matthew vi. 5–8).

THE second subject Christ discusses under this main subdivision of the sermon is *prayer*. Prayer is an ordinance of worship of supreme value, and most intimately connected with spiritual life.

The simplest, and at the same time most comprehensive, definition of prayer that has been made is this: "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

If this definition be correct, prayer is a heart product in all its elements, and embraces desires, submission, a sense of sin, a sense of need, humility, true penitence, thanksgiving, and adoration. All the religious sentiments seem to meet and find their expression in prayer.

A mere formal prayer would seem to be the vainest and emptiest of all possible things, and the most hypocritical. And it seems that, in this discussion of formalism in worship, the most pertinent name for the Pharisee is hypocrite. (See vi. 2, 5, 16; vii. 5; Luke vi. 42.) He denounces them as hypocrites on four other occasions, as recited by Matthew; and on one occasion he repeats it seven times. (Matt. xv. 7; xvi. 3; xxiii. 13–29.) Luke names two other occasions; (see Luke xiii. 15; xi. 44;) and on three other occasions he speaks of their hypocrisy. (Matt. xxiii. 28; Mark xii. 15; and Luke xii. 1.) We

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are now prepared to find hypocrisy to be an essential element in Phariseeism.

Verse 5: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and my Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

We sometimes classify prayer as public prayer, social prayer, and private prayer. It would be easy to find the warrant for all three of these in the Scriptures. It is evident that Christ is not here discussing the public worship of the sanctuary, nor prayer in the family, the prayer meeting, or other social circles, although all of these may be vitiated by ostentation and self-righteous parade.

The matter under discussion is private devotion, as distinguished from public and social worship. The special time for prayer was at the hours of the morning and evening sacrifice, at nine in the morning and at three in the afternoon, at which times a priest burned incense on the golden altar in the temple. It was usual for large numbers of people to assemble at that hour in the court of the temple, and engage in personal prayer while the priest made intercession and burned incense, which was also the symbol and type of the intercession of Christ.

Others frequented Proseuchæ, or places of prayer, at those hours. These were enclosures with the open heaven above. Others frequented the synagogues for private prayer, just as is so common in heathen temples, and also in Romish Cathedrals.

Others again stopped, wherever they happened to be, for a little season of private prayer; on the street, in the

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marts of trade, or in the forum, just as may be seen everywhere in Moslem countries to-day.

Now it does not appear that Christ intended to criticise any of these customs. On the contrary, the custom of private, personal prayer in the court of the tabernacle, and then of the temple, seems to come down from the earliest times with the divine imprimatur upon it. Hannah's prayer and its answer in Eli's time furnishes us a case in point. As for the propriety of private prayer at other places and times, much depends on the fashion of the times. In our day, the bowed head, and the bended knee at the bedside, or in the great congregation on entering church, are not in themselves matters of critcism.

The thing criticised is ostentation and display,—"to be seen of men." "They loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men." Or, as we read elsewhere, "for a pretence they make long prayers." The thing condemned here, as in almsgiving, is pretence, hollow forms, desire of applause, and selfish ostentation. This is hypocrisy pure and simple.

The thing commended is secrecy, in contrast with all this. The closet and the closed door, the shade and the foliage of the vine or the fig tree, bear their testimony to sincerity in private and personal devotions. It is here also, as in alms-giving, we cannot hide our private devotions in absolute secrecy if we would, and we ought not if we could.

Another manifestation of formalism in prayer is empty repetition. (Verse 7.) "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye not, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."

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The tendency of formalistic worship is to empty repetition. If a form of prayer recited counts for so much, a repetition counts for twice as much, and so on to numerous repetitions! Long prayers, made for a pretence, would greatly tax the mind, but numerous repetitions, each as empty as the other, and requiring little effort of mind and heart, are easy of performance. This is the real *opus operatum* doctrine of repetitions by the heathen, "for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking." Missionaries tell us of various mechanical devices for repeating prayers without further time or attention on the part of the worshipers. It is not amiss to notice the Papal practice of telling the beads on the rosary, by which they keep the count of the number of repetitions,—the large beads representing each a Pater Noster, and the small beads each an Ave Maria. Christ does not forbid repetition, for he himself prayed the same thing three times in Gethsemane. Importunity must needs repeat, but not in a vain and formal way.

At the same time he does discourage the frantic repetition of our needs, as when the prophets of Baal in frantic agony cried out all day, "O Baal, hear us." The remedy for such frantic and despairing repetitions is the assurance that God is our Father, and "he knows what we have need of even before we ask him."

There is some evidence in the Talmud that the Jews had learned to imitate the practice of the heathen, and that the value of a prayer is measured by the length of it. A self-righteous Pharisee would naturally make everything possible count on the credit side.

The Old Testament touches this matter also. (Eccl. v. 2.) "Be not rash with thy mouth, to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few." Many prayers are re-

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corded in the Old Testament, but they bear the stamp of genuine worship, and no test can prove them counterfeit.

The prayers of the self-righteous formalist must needs be as defective in matter as in spirit, and therefore they are not prayers at all—certainly not true prayers, but void and of none effect. Doubtless this is the meaning of Jas. iv. 3, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts."

The vanity of formalistic prayers is taught in Isaiah i. 15: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear"; so also in Ezekiel xxxiii. 31: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." New Testament and Old Testament doctrines of prayer come from one and the same teacher.

In view, then, of the deficiency and vanity of the Pharisaic doctrine and practice of prayer, and the vicious models which they set for imitation, Christ adds: "After this manner therefore pray ye," giving what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." "After this manner" is in contrast with the false and vicious manner which he had already exposed and rebuked. He means nothing more and nothing less than this.

Some take these words out of their connection, and tell us that Christ gives here a universal and authoritative form of prayer, to be used on all occasions, and with endless repetition, as in the case of the Papist, as already noted. Why, this is the essence of the very heresy of formalism which he is combating.

Others, again, tell us that this prayer is a comprehen-

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sive and exhaustive form of prayer, and that all possible prayers are in a proper sense included in it, and to be evolved out of it. They maintain this view in a plausible and even in an edifying way; but there is no hint that Christ so intended it beyond the natural coherency of truth.

The true view of the purpose of the Lord's prayer would seem, from the context, to be this: to present a prayer in a series of categories which shall furnish both the matter and spirit of an acceptable prayer, as against a Pharisaic prayer, with which all were familiar. This view will be maintained in our discussion of it, and we shall find the contrasts to be as startling as in the beatitudes, and also practically the same.

It is well, however, to pause here and consider whether a different view is not justified by Christ himself in Luke xi. 1–4. It seems that John the Baptist had found it necessary to give his disciples lessons in prayer because of the vile teaching around them. The disciples of Christ one day asked him for similar lessons, and evidently for similar reasons. He, in reply, gave them substantially the same petitions that they had heard him give in the Sermon on the Mount. If he had stopped with this, it would have been still competent to say that this was intended as a corrective of the false teaching they were familiar with, and an antidote to its poison. But he extends his prayer lesson beyond this in verses 4 to 13, and repeats substantially what he said in the Sermon on the Mount in another connection (Matt. vii. 7–11), all of which will be more properly considered later on in its proper place. We may anticipate the climax of the lesson, which is this: the Holy Spirit is the true and proper teacher in prayer.

For convenience we quote the Lord's prayer entire.

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(Matthew vi. 9–13.) "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen."

It is pertinent here also to quote the only recorded prayer of a Pharisee. (Luke xviii. 9–12.) "He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

We shall consider the contrast of these two prayers in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Formalism Continued.

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew vi. 9–15).

IT was suggested in the last chapter that the object and scope of the Lord's prayer was to show the matter and spirit of true prayer, as against the formalism of the self-righteous and hypocritical Pharisees. It is easy to exhibit the contrast in detail.

1. *"Our Father which art in heaven."* In approaching a superior it is of importance to do so in a proper manner, worthy of the person and of the occasion. This is true of our approach to God in prayer. The form of address in this prayer is eminently proper, both for its simplicity and for the sentiments expressed. We see in it filial confidence and affection; a sense of reverence and awe, and of his superiority over an earthly father; assurance of his care for his children; and, not the least, a sense of fellowship in his family.

The formalist finds no response in his heart to these sentiments. Self-righteousness is their contradictory. The Pharisee begins his prayer, "God, I thank thee," etc. There is no recognition of the divine superiority in attributes or relations. It is only in the familiar intimacy of a recognized equality that men address each other so, and then only in a colloquial way. In more formal address and for important intercourse, and for the solicitation of favors, and for the expression of the sentiments of loyalty, or friendship, or honor, endearing epithets and appreciative terms are always used. To address the infinite God in such a bold colloquialism and self-righteous

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equality is essentially profane, and refuses any recognition of his superiority in names, titles, attributes, words, or works.

It is needless to say that proper forms of address in prayer are very numerous and varied, and are usually suggested by the occasion, the spirit, the needs, and the gracious sentiments of the worshiper. In fact, modes of address are as varied as his names, titles, and attributes. It is to be noted, however, that formalism often recognizes this, and affects the most elaborate and varied forms of address in prayer, and repeats them over and over in such a way as to deserve the charge of vain repetitions.

Again, formalism often recognizes the absence of true reverence and godly fear, and supplements the lack by holy tones, bowing head, and numerous genuflections. Akin to this, again, is the cultivation of the æsthetic in worship. A cultured pantomime excites natural emotions, which are mistaken for Christian graces. Taste and beauty are mistaken for the "beauty of holiness." To discuss this would perhaps lead us too far afield. It is not too much to say that this development of formalism is perhaps the most delusive and fascinating.

2. "*Hallowed be thy name.*" This is the first petition. It has enfolded in it an ascription of praise and adoration to the divine holiness. It is also a petition that God's name may be declared holy, and honored as holy by ourselves and others. The Scriptures make the divine honor and glory supreme, and this petition prays for it.

Now the Pharisee is concerned about his own glory rather than God's glory. The self-righteous hypocrite assumes and declares his own holiness. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." "They go about to establish their own righteousness." They "trusted in

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themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." They declare and honor their own names as holy instead of God's.

3. *"Thy kingdom come."* It is not necessary here to discuss all possible questions about the "kingdom." A mistaken exegesis would limit this to a prayer for his second coming, to set up a personal reign and kingdom for a thousand years. It is much safer and more natural to say that he uses the term "kingdom" in the same sense in which it is used in the first part of the sermon, and again later on in the discourse (verse 33). The evident reference is to the kingdom set up in the heart. This is confirmed by the next petition, as we shall see.

The predominant sentiment of this petition is loyalty. First, a loyal son of a heavenly father, and then a loyal subject of a heavnly king—loyalty of desire and loyalty of effort. The only loyalty the hypocrite can feel is to self and to Satan, first as his son and then as his subject. He recognizes other men as the subjects of Satan, "extortioners, unjust, and adulterers." We have seen how his false philosophy and traditions enable him to deny his own sinfulness; and then he builds up a fictitious righteousness, with formal tithes, fastings, and hypocritical prayers. Was there ever a contrast more striking?

4. *"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."* This petition expounds and emphasizes the previous petition, "Thy kingdom come." The two petitions might well be considered one. At any rate, the loyal heart that pleads for the one pleads for the other. The obvious standard for which he pleads is the divine holiness, as manifested among the angels of God. We have seen that the Pharisee has no such standard. How, then, can he pray for it?

If in this petition we pray, "That God by his grace

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would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven," then the self-renunciation, the humility, the poverty of spirit, and the hungering and thirsting after righteousness of the Beatitudes are all ours. But we have seen that the Pharisees had no part in these things.

5. *"Give us this day our daily bread."* We find a similar petition in the prayer of Agur, "Feed me with food convenient for me." (Prov. xxx. 8.) It is not necessary here to vindicate the doctrine of God's providence, nor to explain how he opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. This petition recognizes the fact, that "every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights."

Temporal blessings are as much a part of our needs as spiritual blessings, and this petition recognizes that temporal supplies are God's gift, and that we need his blessing with them. The underlying sentiment of this petition is a grateful sense of dependence on him for the supply of all our wants. He who recognizes this dependence for spiritual blessings has no trouble with the temporal.

But we have seen that spiritual pride feels no sense of dependence for spiritual blessings, but is self-sufficient. We would hardly expect it to relinquish that self-sufficiency in temporal things. Spiritual pride is only one form of that pride which says, "my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me all this wealth." (Deut. viii. 17.) The rich fool in the parable was actuated by the same sentiment; and the context shows that Christ spake this parable against covetousness, which was one feature of Phariseeism, as we shall see. (Luke xii. 15, 21; Luke xvi. 13, 14.)

6. *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our deb-*

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tors." This is the only one of the petitions that seems to call for separate serious argument and comment. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The same argument is repeated in Mark xi. 25, 26, in a somewhat different connection.

We learn from this argument these connected propositions:

1. All prayer implies a sense of sin, and a plea for forgiveness.

2. A forgiving spirit is necessary to acceptable prayer.

3. The evidence of forgiven sin is a forgiving temper.

4. It is presumption to claim forgiveness for ourselves and deny it to those who sin against us.

5. The grounds of God's forgiving us, and of our forgiving others are the same, hence their interdependence; and neither is the ground or reason of the other. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Col. iv. 32.)

Now it has already been seen that the Pharisees cherished an unforgiving temper and a litigious spirit. This would rule them out here, even if they were not righteous in their own eyes. The parable of the hundred sheep was aimed at the Pharisees who "needed no repentance."

It would be of interest here, no doubt, to discuss the whole doctrine of forgiveness—God's forgiveness of the repenting sinner, the heavenly Father's forgiveness of the sins of his children, the forgiveness of enemies, and the forgiveness of brethren, and their several limitations; but Christ does not here enter upon these distinctions. Such discussion, therefore, is not legitimate here.

7. *"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us*

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from evil," or "from the evil one," as the Revised Version has it. The Revised Version also says, "Bring us not," instead of "Lead us not" into temptation. This is a better rendering of the Greek, perhaps.

The word "temptation" here evidently means such a condition, or environment, or set of circumstances as might result in sin. The previous petition craves forgiveness of sin. This petition asks for deliverance from the risk of sinning, and also from the "wicked one." Sin and Satan are so closely connected that it makes little difference which reading we adopt.

This petition recognizes that the Heavenly Father is our providential guide and leader, and that Satan is the real tempter to lead us into sin. God is not the author of temptation to sin: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away with his own lust and enticed." It is plain that the tempter appeals to lust, else he would have no power; "then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." (James i. 13–15.)

This matter is further elucidated in 1 Corinthians x. 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it." No comment is needed except to say that our Father, who guides all our steps, will give us all the grace and strength we need.

Temptations have their uses as well as their dangers. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the

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Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 12.)

Much more might be said concerning these things, but there is no need, for the lesson is a very simple one. This petition recognizes the danger of temptation, the evil of sin, and the power of the tempter, and pleads for our Father's guidance, help, and deliverance.

On the other hand, we easily see that the Pharisee's prayer has no such petition in it; and if he does sometimes use similar petitions in his prayers, it is an empty utterance, with no heart nor soul in it. And why? Self-righteousness is self-sufficient, and has no fear of temptation. He has no fear of his own lusts, for he denies their very existence. And if he has no lusts, why should he fear the tempter's appeal to them? But "we are not ignorant of his devices."

8. *"For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."* This conclusion is omitted in the Revised Version, though it is admitted that the "Old Syriac and other early versions," and "many authorities, some ancient," use it with varying form and expression.

However this may be, it is in no sense unscriptural in its use or statement. We find similar and almost identical ascriptions of praise and glory in the Revelation of John, and the sentiment is certainly inspired. Luke does not use it.

Assuming it to be properly used in this place, it is an unstinted ascription of praise to God, which is his due, and we find in his "kingdom, power, and glory" our encouragement in prayer to him alone. Suffice it to say that the ascriptions and pleas of this doxology have no such proper logical relations to the Pharisee's prayer, but are in startling contrast with it.

There is no need to argue further the futility of the

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Pharisee's prayer. It is not amiss, however, to note that we find no trace of a self-righteous formalism in the recorded prapers of the Old Testament. Both the principles and the practice of prayer are the same there as in the New. The prayers of Job, Moses, David and Solomon are in point.

We are permitted to notice one other feature of the Pharisee's prayer—mere thanksgiving—a thanksgiving which is patronizing if not actually condescending. Cain's creed and practice seem to have been the same. He denied that he was a sinner, and refused to offer a bloody sacrifice for atonement, and patronized the Lord with a thank-offering. His self-righteousness proved murderous when his brother and his God refuted him. It was so also with the Pharisees. They were persecuters and murderers.

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CHAPTER XV.

Formalism Concluded.

III. Fasting (Matthew vi. 16–18).

A MERE formal fast is worthless. (Matt. vi. 16.) "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward."

It is not only worthless, but worse; it is hypocrisy. It is not necessary to repeat here what has been said already about ostentatious and self-righteous parade in worship. It all ends on self.

The true manner and spirit are set forth in verses 17 and 18: "But when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

It was common for persons fasting to neglect attention to the body, such as ordinary decency requires, and to affect and cultivate a squalid dress and person in token of fasting. Asceticism sometimes went so far as to identify discomfort and filth with a superior holiness. Such devotees came to be regarded with great admiration. The sinful element in this was in the motive, "to be seen of men." The same principles should regulate fasting as were applied to almsgiving and prayer—"in secret,"—as opposed to ostentation; not absolutely secret, but modest and honest.

Different nations and peoples and ages have had different modes of expressing sorrow and grief. Job put

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on sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. There was no sin in this. The wearing of rough hair garments, often next to the skin, in times of sorrow, was common among the Jews and other ancient peoples, and would seem to have been as common as mouring weeds are to-day, and there was nothing wrong about it in itself.

Fasting also was just as common among all peoples when they sought the consolations of religion in great sorrow. Fasting and sackcloth were used conjointly in such cases. Christ had no quarrel with the fashion of the day. The evidence is that such exhibitions of sorrow and mourning had the stamp of the divine approval rather than not.

What is fasting in the Bible sense? Mere abstinence from food is not fasting. It was a religious ordinance, and was coupled with strong religious exercises. It was not a mere modification or a change of diet, as in the pretended fasts of the Papists and their imitators. It was abstinence both from meat and drink, usually until the going down of the sun, and sometimes for a longer period.

It was no doubt a divinely appointed ordinance. By an examination of Leviticus xxiii. 27–32, we learn several things about fasting.

1. God appointed a universal fast every year, on the tenth day of the seventh month.

2. This was the great Day of Atonement, when the high priest made atonement, first for himself and then for the people.

3. They were to "afflict their souls." This embraced sorrow, mourning and repentance for sin.

4. They were to eat nothing for twenty-four hours, from the evening of the ninth till the evening of the tenth day.

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5. The day was to be kept as a Sabbath of rest, and they should do no work under heavy penalty.

It is evident that all fasts were to be kept in the same way; and it is either expressed or implied that fasting and prayer together constituted this ordinance of worship. If there was no true prayer there was no true fasting.

We find that fasting was often practiced. Moses fasted forty days in Horeb; Elijah fasted forty days on his trip to Horeb; Christ fasted forty days, doubtless in the same wilderness. There is no evidence that these were miraculous fasts, as some suppose, but the contrary. But there is evidence that these three fasts were accompanied by the most intense religious exercises.

Numerous cases of fasting are mentioned, from Moses down to the restoration and afterward. The king of Nineveh, and all his people fasted three days when they repented at the preaching of Jonah, eating and drinking nothing.

There is not a case of fasting mentioned that did not spring out of the very exigencies of the case. We need only to cite the repulse of Joshua and his army at Ai; the dreadful disasters in the civil war with the tribe of Benjamin; the deliverance from the Philistines under Samuel; and the heralded destruction of Nineveh.

The popular fasting of Christ's day was formal in the last degree. The times and seasons were appointed and kept without any reference to exigencies, or to any great need. The praying Pharisee put two fasts every week to the credit of his self-righteous accumulations.

On one occasion the scribes and Pharisees challenged the neglect of fastings by Christ and his disciples. "And they said unto him, why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees: but thine eat and drink?"

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We may pause a moment to note their adroit dishonesty in putting themselves in the same category with John, whom they hated, in order to put Christ in the wrong about fasting, and if possible to retaliate the blow with which he had demolished their doctrine and practice of fasting in the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee. Poor John, rotting in a Roman dungeon for a year before his execution! No wonder his disciples fasted and prayed!

Christ, however, declines to notice their shrewd hypocrisy, and proceeds to expound the matter of fasting for all time. He replies by four companion parables. The common lesson of all four is that fasting, like other things, has its fit seasons. There is a fitness in things. A little common sense, as well as taste, tells what is appropriate at a wedding, in mending a garment, in making wine, or at a feast. (Luke v. 33–39.) This is what Solomon meant: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."

Christ always spake two companion parables, and sometimes three, in order to emphasize their common lesson or moral, and to prevent the abuse of the parables for other purposes; but this is the only place where he uses four companion parables to enforce a common lesson. Perhaps the reason was the great difficulty of stripping off the will-worship and the self-righteousness of the Pharisaic fasting.

We may note here that Christ endorses fasting as a means of grace, and as proper worship, at proper times and seasons. Protestant doctrine and practice has so reacted against Papal practices that fasting is now very largely neglected. Or is this a better reason—a lack of intensity in the religious sentiments of the present day? In either solution, the neglect involves signal loss.

But the question recurs here, how can abstaining from

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food be a means of grace? It cannot be in itself. But it is true that any strong emotion reacts on the body in such a way as to retard or suspend the appetites, and the secretory processes. This is markedly true of the sombre emotions, such as grief, sorrow, and mourning. It is also true that the condition of the body reacts on the emotions in such a way as to intensify them. Hunger and satiety have contrary effects, on the sombre emotions especially.

It is easy, then, to see that strong religious emotions arrest the appetite for meat and drink, and voluntary abstinence in turn contributes to their intensity. The influence is reciprocal. There are natural psychological and physiological relations between fasting and intense religious affections which must not be ignored.

We may note, again, that fasting and repentance bear fruits in common. (Isa. lviii. 3–7.) "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

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No further arraignment of the empty formalism of the Pharisee seems to be needed—no true fasting—no true prayer—no true alms-giving—no true repentance—no true righteousness.

We are now prepared to consider the open reward of the humble worshiper, who out of a sincere and honest heart, does his righteousness for the glory of God. It is vindication here and hereafter. God rewards his people in kind, and gives them what they most desire. Their alms-giving grows into an abounding generosity; true prayer cultivates every grace, so that men take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; true fasting intensifies repentance, so that the fruits of good living abound. The ordinances of worship bring us so close to God that we do see his face, "though in a glass darkly, and we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

Such shall be our open reward, our vindication in this life. But the vindication at the last day passes all comprehension when it shall be proclaimed, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still. And behold my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. xxii. 11-12.)

In closing this discussion of the formalism and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, it is not amiss to quote again Matthew xxiii. 23–28, in part at least: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within, they are full of extortion and excess." "Ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beauti-

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ful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness." "Even as ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

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CHAPTER XVI.

Covetousness (Matthew vi. 19–34).

THE third feature of Phariseeism is *covetousness.* The covetous man seeks some worldly good to which he is not fairly entitled, and he scruples at nothing to obtain it. Covetousness is the inspiration of the hypocrite and of the counterfeiter alike. They both expect to make something out of their devices. Divest them of that expectation and the motive ceases, and their occupation is gone. Covetousness and hypocrisy make the bigot in large measure, though the analysis is not yet complete. Convince the bigot that nothing is to be made by his bigotry, and his zeal is at once abated.

We have seen that the worship of the Pharisees did not rise above the rewards of this world, and those of a most ephemeral kind—mere human applause. It would, therefore, seem impossible for their aims and purposes to rise above an absorbing pursuit of the good things of this life, and the acquisition of riches at all hazards. The heart must be engaged in the pursuit of something. If worldly wealth be the absorbing pursuit, it is covetousness.

Jesus discusses and rebukes their covetousness, and furnishes the antidote in Matthew vi. 19–34, which is the third main division of the sermon.

1. He contrasts earthly and heavenly treasures. (Verses 19–20.) "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor

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steal; for where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

The folly of covetousness is here argued in several points:

1. Earthly treasures have no permanency, even in this life, for a full store of garments may be moth-eaten, riches corrupted, and the precious metals cankered. (Jas. v. 2, 3.)

2. Earthly treasures are of no value beyond this earth: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided." (Luke xii. 20.)

3. Earthly treasures engage the heart, but do not satisfy the soul: "So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke xii. 21.) Solomon's testimony to the failure of riches to satisfy the soul remains unchallenged. (Eccl. ii. 1–11.)

4. Heavenly treasures cannot be destroyed, but abide forever. These are the "weightier matters of law, judgment, mercy and faith." Faith, hope, and charity abide forever, or rather the good works that spring out of them. These things are not left behind. "Their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

5. Christ does not discourage the acquisition of this world's goods. They are in a proper sense God's gift; but the proper use of them for God's glory increases the treasures in heaven.

If these several propositions be true, covetousness is supreme folly. The man with the muck-rake in the Interpreter's house in the Pilgrim's Progress is the very prince of fools. Christ calls him a fool, as already quoted.

But the question recurs, Does Christ here really arraign the covetousness of the Pharisees; or is this a forced exegesis, invented to sustain a pet theory of the

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object and scope of the Sermon on the Mount? The reply is, in part, that all the rest of this chapter fits in with this theory without a hitch. But the complete and final vindication of this theory is found in Luke xii. 1–34. The proof is this: on a different occasion, and in an elaborate way, he there discusses first the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and then their covetousness, and repeats, with slight variations of order and statement, nearly every proposition found in Matthew vi. 18–34; and his meaning cannot be mistaken.

Besides this, on another occasion still he repeats the statement, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," and we are told that the Pharisees, "who were covetous, derided him." (See Luke xvi. 13, 14.) And the discussion then culminated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus—"the poor rich man, and the rich poor man." It is therefore maintained without question that the entire trend of this third section of the sermon is an arraignment of covetousness, the third element in Phariseeism.

Verses *22, 23*: "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

There has been much discussion concerning the "single eye" and the "evil eye"; but it seems to be easy to explain if we notice that the real contrast is between perfect sight and absolute blindness. If the eye be "natural," the sight is perfect; if the eye be "useless," or "good-for-nothing," there is total blindness. The lexicons justify the translation "natural" instead of "single" and "good-for-nothing," or "useless" instead of "evil." Now the seeing eye stands in the same relation to the body that true principles bear to the soul.

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The lesson therefore is this: true sentiments and principles will guide aright in this matter of heavenly treasures, while the false leave a man in total darkness. It was for this reason he denounced the Pharisees as "blind leaders of the blind," (Matt. xv. 14;) and "blind guides," and "fools," and "blind," and "thou blind Pharisee," (Matt. xxiii. 16, 17, 26.) They and their disciples were blind for lack of true moral sentiments. In this case, covetousness blinded their minds to the claims of heavenly treasures, and they groped in the darkness and blindness of earth. "How great is that darkness!"

But why not pursue both heavenly and earthly treasures? So we may, if we adjust them rightly, and make earth subsidiary to heaven. But this plea is made in the interest of saving the idols, for covetousness is idolatry. (Col. iii. 5.) Idolaters are slow to give up their idols, and make any and every plea to save them.

Why not both? Verse 24: "No man 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." It was for these words the Pharisees derided him, because they were covetous. (Luke xvi. 13–14.) The human heart is so constituted that it refuses a double allegiance. This is the more difficult if the two masters are rivals, and still more difficult if the two masters are enemies to each other; and the difficulty is cumulative, and grows into an impossibility if each master claims supreme allegiance.

Mammon is a Syriac word, and means riches. Some think it was also a pagan deity, the god of riches; the Pluto of the Asiatics. It is enough to say that mammon is personified here as the god of the covetous.

Now God and mammon are sworn enemies, and neither can brook a divided allegiance. Each must have the

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whole heart or none. The word translated "serve" defines the service as bondservice, and implies absolute ownership and authority, lodged in the master and recognized by the servant. According to Paul the servant of sin is the "slave" of sin, and the servant of holiness is the "slave" of holiness. It is a curious fact that the typical good service, and even the heartservice of the Bible, is bondservice, while the hired servant is the typical cheat and fraud, serving his master only as he can serve himself.

It is pertinent to notice that covetousness is embraced in the catalogue of the gravest sins, as already quoted. (Mark vii. 21, 22.) Paul includes it in a still fuller catalogue describing the pagan world of reprobates. Similar catalogues are found in other places. And we are constrained to conclude that all these sins met, in some measure at least, in the character and lives of the Pharisees, and what is worse, they taught men so.

Christ teaches no new doctrine in his arraignment of covetousness. It is forbidden in the tenth commandment. Achan coveted and took the accursed thing; David coveted Uriah's wife. No man need desire the punishment of either. The references to covetousness and the warnings against it are the same in both Testaments.

Covetousness is perhaps the most aggressive of all the evil desires. It would seem to be the inspiration of all aggressions upon the rights of our fellow men, and, directly or indirectly, leads to the violation of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments.

It is also a most insidious and deceitful passion. Christ says, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness" (Luke xii. 15), as if it were a serpent lurking in the path, or an assassin waylaying the traveller. It assumes the

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garb of thrift and prudence, and claims its rewards under the title of industry. It underlies all false maxims of trade, and derides its victims for lack of shrewdness and good common sense. Its euphemisms are numerous and delusive.

Every false principle has its proper answer, every evasion has its exposure, and every poison its antidote. These are all supplied in the remaining verses of this chapter.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Covetousness Concluded.

Its Antidote (Matthew vi. 21–34).

AT the risk of seeming repetition we may further emphasize the evils and dangers of covetousness. Woes are denounced against it. (Isa. v. 8.) "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth." And we see from the context that riches often lead to oppression, pride, conceit, perversion of truth and justice, drunkenness, and other dissipations. Paul says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.) James v. 1–6 teaches the same doctrine.

Of course these passages set forth the very culmination of the evils which spring out of a dominant and unrestrained covetousness. But it often exists in a much lower degree, even in the hearts of the children of God. In such cases it occasions much suffering, in the form of inordinate cares and anxieties about their temporal wellbeing. They often worry and vex themselves about the result of their labors to provide for themselves and families. They mistake these cares and anxieties for a natural and proper solicitude for the successful issue of all their pursuits. There is a proper solicitude: we ask God's blessing to reward our labor; we are disappointed

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if the harvest fails for lack of sunshine and rain, or for any other cause.

The first fruits of covetousness are carping cares and inordinate anxieties. Under the influence of these the transition is easy to forbidden methods in order to success. We must therefore find an antidote before these cares eat into the soul as a canker, and destroy the very life.

The antidote is a rational and intelligent view of the matter in all its aspects; and it is presented in rather an elaborate argument of great simplicity. It is of little value to oppose wrong sentiments and passions with mere exhortation and appeals to the will to restrain or cast them out from the heart. It would accomplish nothing to say "take no thought"; do not indulge in such cares and anxieties. One says, "I know it is wrong, but how can I help it." The passions can only be modified and restrained by rational considerations intelligently apprehended and cordially embraced. God appeals to us with reasons and motives, not to mention the work of his Spirit just now in this connection, for there will be occasion to do so later on.

He furnishes the antidote for inordinate cares and anxieties, and covetous desires, in eight heads of argument. We shall allow him to present the argument in his own language, and only add such words of comment as will clinch the nail driven by the great master of assemblies.

1. Verse 25: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor for your body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" He begins the argument with "therefore I say unto you." It is a fit conclusion from what he has just said about mammon and the things of

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earth; but he reinforces his conclusion by additional reasons and arguments. The argument here is, "The life is more than meat and the body than raiment." Why worry about matters of minor importance? God gave the life and God fashioned the body; and he permits you to pray for daily bread, then why indulge in sinful anxieties?

2. Verse 26: "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" The argument here is based on your superiority to the fowls of the air. He will therefore be more ready to care for you than for them. Besides, he is your heavenly Father. He does not put any slur upon sowing and reaping and gathering into barns, but he argues that, if he provides for the fowls without such help, how much more shall he provide for you, with your intelligent co-operation in these things.

3. Verse 27: "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" We find added in Luke xii. 25, "If ye be not able to do that which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" The argument here is this: You cannot add a cubit to your stature; but if you could, the exercise of power in doing so would be a mere trifle compared with the providential control of the course of nature, by which God supplies food and raiment; then why be careful about these things?

4. Verse 28: "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Such cares and anxieties betray a weak faith in your Father

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in heaven. The very lilies shame you. Surely he cares more for his children than he does for the lilies and the grass of the field.

5. Verse 32: "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." Their every aim and purpose is fixed on these things—mere earthly good. They may well tremble with anxious forebodings in the face of every disaster and disappointment. They know nothing of heaven and its treasures, nor of the true riches that God gives. Solon is reputed to have said to Crœsus, no man may be accounted happy or fortunate until he is dead; and Crœsus remembered this when sitting on his own funeral pyre.

6. Verse 32: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Or, as he has said already, verse 8, "Your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." A father's loving care fortifies the heart against disturbing doubts and fears about needed earthly blessings. To the same end he adds in Luke, "Be ye not of doubtful mind."

7. Verse 33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The argument here is that the righteous shall be provided with all needed blessings. This agrees with 1 Tim. iv. 8: "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of the life which is to come."

This does not forbid proper forethought and industry, any more than does the promise that "seedtime and harvest shall not fail." It only teaches a restful reliance on God's blessing, and on his care over us.

This comports with the teaching of the Old Testament everywhere. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. ciii. 13.) "As

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one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." (Isa. lxvi. 13.)

The kingdom of God and his righteousness is but another designation for treasure in heaven, as opposed to treasures on earth. It is the pearl of great price, the one thing to be sought; but it is not an unfolding of the plan of salvation and justification by faith in the Pauline sense, as some suppose. It is obvious that Christ uses the terms "kingdom" and "righteousness" in substantially the same senses throughout the sermon. The "kingdom of God" is the spiritual kingdom to which the "poor," the "peacemakers," and the "persecuted" belong; and "his righteousness" is the right doctrine and right living he requires, to all of which the Pharisee is a stranger.

8. "Therefore take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." It must be recognized that this world is an evil world. Every day presents evils, to be overcome in a cheerful, trusting spirit of dependence on our Father's help. Why then borrow troubles from the morrow! but rather meet them when they come, and, if they come, in the same spirit?

This is not a philosophy—certainly not Stoicism. It is part of our religion, in which we honor God, and in which he blesses us.

In reviewing this discussion of covetousness and its antidote, we may note still further the dangers attending upon riches. Agur prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of God in vain." (Prov. xxx. 8, 9.) "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." (Deut. xxxii. 15.) "Pride and fulness of bread" was found in Sodom. (Ezek. xvi. 49.)

When the rich young man declined to lay up treasure

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in heaven and went away sorrowful, "Jesus said to his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven," etc. His disciples were amazed and said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus said, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom." And why? Because they trust in mammon and have no treasure in heaven, no true righteousness. "But all things are possible with God."

If, therefore, the Pharisee shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, he must come in the same way as any other sinner, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He can find no salvation in outward conformity to law, nor in formal worship, nor in the God of this world, nor in all of these combined.

There remains for discussion one more element of Phariseeism.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

Censoriousness (Matthew vii. 1-6).

MATT. vii. 1: "Judge not that ye be not judged." There are two kinds of judgment which are not under discussion here. One is the judgment of approval which we instinctively pass upon the good deeds of others. It is the testimony of a good and honest heart to the right. The heart that does not so respond to generous and noble deeds must be in a most abnormal condition. The other is the judgment of disapproval on witnessing oppression, or cruelty, or any other form of wrong-doing. A normal conscience enters its prompt and emphatic protest against such things. If it were otherwise, we could hardly claim to be intelligent moral beings. That normal conscience is just as prompt, and even more pronounced, in passing sentence on our own shortcomings and sins.

These two judgments are certainly not condemned by Christ, either here or elsewhere. In fact, both of these stand out in great prominence throughout the sermon. He approves the right and condemns the wrong with equal and unsparing fidelity. He charges the Pharisees with making void the law by their traditions. He calls them hypocrites because of their ostentatious and self-righteous formalism. He denounces their covetousness, which devoured widows' houses, and even now he charges them, not obscurely, with sins of the greatest magnitude.

It is evident that he is exposing a censorious and fault-finding spirit. Censoriousness is the other pole of self-righteousness. Pride looks down on others, often in

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a most supercilious way. Spiritual pride is more intense than ordinary pride, for it is woven into the very web and woof of self-righteousness. It must needs vindicate and prove its claims to superior holiness, and it does so by tearing down the claims of others. It is by false and censorious judgments of others that it secures the largest self-laudation and comfort. Besides, the censorious man supposes that he vindicates to himself and others his own superior standard of virtue.

Christ does not name the Pharisee in this immediate connection. We cannot lose sight of the fact that he threw down the gauntlet at the very beginning of the discussion—(Matt. v. 20)—and his arraignment of their doctrines and practices in no wise relaxes as he proceeds.

Do we need proof that censoriousness was the malignant side of the Pharisee's character? They pursued Christ himself with a malignant criticsm. They condemned him for healing the sick on the Sabbath; for receiving publicans and sinners, and eating with them; for receiving the grateful and tearful ministry of a repenting harlot; they said he had a devil; they set aside the evidence of his mightiest miracles, and said that he cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils. They denounced his claim to be the Son of God as blasphemy, and they pursued his life with a malignity born of their self-righteous censoriousness, and proved themselves bloodthirsty and murderous.

It is evident from the discussion that he no longer addresses the children of God, arguing a father's love and blessing, as he had just done in giving them the antidote to covetousness; but he says "Thou hypocrite." This is the name he had fastened so successfully on the Pharisee.

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"Judge not." Of course there is no injunction here against passing a just and righteous sentence against an evil-doer in the civil courts. Nor is it intended to protect shameless vices from the just verdict of a virtuous public opinion. And yet it is now too common for mischievous heresies concerning divine truth to claim, in the name of charity and under the guise of honest conviction, an equal standing and toleration with the truth itself; and the man who seeks to vindicate truth and righteousness is called an uncharitable heresy hunter and bigot.

"Judge not." The reference here is not limited to the malignant censoriousness already referred to, but points more decidedly to minor criticisms, so often indulged in. Social gossip delights in retailing small matters, with insinuations and innuendoes, and surmises of evil, often based on inaccurate hearsay. It picks flaws, and impugns motives, and tears down character, and enlivens scandal with a touch of wit. Differences in politics, competition in trade, rivalries in the social circle, religious differences, or a mere love of gossip, are facile motives for such things. It need not be supposed that so-called innocent gossip is exempt from this injunction. It is true here as elsewhere in the habit of sin, that constant practice of gigantic sins would brand a man as a monster, while a large number of the smaller sins are easily condoned, and confirm the habit of sin.

"Judge not." Christ argues against censoriousness and cites several reasons.

1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Luke states it, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

The obvious teaching is that there is a special judgment

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and condemnation for the censorious. This may be what Christ meant when he said, "By thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. xii. 37.) Paul says, "Wherein thou judgest another, thou that judgest doest the same things." (Romans ii. 1. Compare also verses 19–24.) The same principle is recognized in Luke xix. 22: "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

The evident meaning is that God will judge the censorious man by the standard he sets for others. But a charitable and forgiving spirit may trust in God's forgiveness. This doctrine has already been considered in connection with the Lord's prayer.

2. "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." These are two aphorisms, or proverbs, found in the Talmud, and were evidently in common use. These aphorisms have more especial reference to this life, for Luke unfolds this idea: "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (vi. 38).

3. Verses 3, 4: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye?"

This illustration shows the absurdity of censoriousness. It teaches that the censor is far worse than the man he criticises, especially if the censor be a Pharisee. The entire trend of the discussion up to this point leaves no doubt of this. Indeed, his very lack of charity is worse than many sins he criticises.

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4. Verse 5: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." This brands censoriousness as hypocrisy. It also teaches that an honest, sincere, and loving friend may greatly help those who are weak, or not well instructed.

The question arises here how far it is necessary to speak out the righteous judgment we form concerning the misdeeds of others. Is it necessary to utter our testimony on all occasions and under all circumstances? This question would naturally arise in the minds of the disciples as they saw the angry scowls and heard the muttered wrath of the Pharisees after this fearless exposure of their teaching and practices. It is a difficult question to know when to speak and when to be silent. There is no question that there are times when one must speak if it costs him his life. John's testimony to Herod cost him his life; Christ was crucified for the truths he spake; so with the martyrs of all ages. The answer given by Christ seems to be that it is not always necessary to speak. It is necessary to be as "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." The answer is given in verse 6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you." We find here a Hebrew idiom,—a double clause in the first member of the sentence, and a double clause in the second member. The last half of the second member limits the first half to the first member, though separated from it. A similar idiom is found in Canticles i. 5, and in other places. It is evident that the "dogs" will "turn and rend," and the "swine will trample under foot."

This does not give a categorical answer to the question, but it does teach that the same common sense that

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directs the proper course of action in one case would solve the other.

We are now prepared to see that Formalism, Covetousness, and Consoriousness, constitute the bigot—the religious bigot. Add Literalsim and we have the Pharisee. It is common to denounce the man who holds to sound doctrine as narrow and bigoted, and to call the man of no positive creed broad and liberal. Why call the enemy of sound doctrine broad and liberal? Why charge a lack of charity to a staunch adherent of truth. Such charity for falsehood is a mawkish sentimentalism, which condones crime and makes a hero of a murderer. This is what the Pharisees did when they chose Barrabas and slew the Prince of Life.

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CHAPTER XIX.

The Conclusion (Matthew vii. 7–29).

CHRIST concludes the sermon with six applications, each of which seems both proper and necessary. Matt. vii. 7–11; verse 12; verses 13, 14; verses 15–20; verses 21–23; verses 24–27.

1. Prayer solves all these apparent mysteries, and opens all difficulties, for our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer.

We can easily imagine the perplexity of many in the audience on hearing this discourse. They had regarded the scribes and Pharisees as their teachers and guides. They had yielded to them their claim to righteousness and holiness; but now all this is swept away. The very foundations seemed to be destroyed. The natural inquiry is, what shall we do? To whom shall we turn? It is all so sudden and even alarming. Every refuge of lies has been swept away; their unaccustomed feet are not yet stable on the bedrock of truth and righteousness.

He answers to their appealing looks, if indeed there were not also appealing cries in his audience (verses 7–11), "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Christ does not here give a universal warrant for prayer and its answer. But he cites the warrant for the comfort and strengthening of the disciples. The mercy seat has been the refuge of God's people in all ages. He points them to the fact that none go empty away. He uses the several words, ask, seek, knock, to indicate, exhaustively,

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sincere, and believing prayer. The prayer is assumed to be true prayer as opposed to the perfunctory and formalistic prayers of the Pharisees. He is simply giving encouragement that they may come boldly to a throne of grace in time of need.

Then he varies the encouragement (verses 9, 10, 11), "Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him." He argues from the less to the greater; from the limited love of one to the infinite love of the other; from the selfish, sinful love of an earthly father, to the pure and holy affection of our Father in heaven. "How much more?"—the difference cannot be measured or computed; he will supply every need.

But how will he supply this, their present need, when tossed with perplexity and doubt by reason of his teachings? He regards them with infinite compassion, and points them to certain help. It is evident that Matthew does not give us all that he said, for Luke varies the encouragement, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—not mere good things for general purposes, but the Holy Spirit for their present need, to teach them, to comfort them, to lead them into the way of all truth. Or, as David puts it, to "open the blind eyes," and "unstop the deaf ears," and to "teach wondrous things out of the law."

2. The golden rule is the square and the plummet; the sum and test of duty. Verse 12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

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He here reiterates the law of love in an aphorism, or in proverbial form. We read elsewhere that "love is the fulfilling of the law." The second table is summed up in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It is easy to abuse a proverb. It must be interpreted in the light of human experience. In fact, it is the lesson of experience, and is of the nature of a working principle. The golden rule simply says look at both sides of the question, under the searchlight of the law of love, in order to determine the line of duty one to another; and not under the blinding of covetousness, nor selfishness, nor prejudice, nor hostility, nor a mere literalism. We may see now why he introduced this rule with a "therefore." The golden rule itself is to be interpreted in the light of the entire discussion.

The golden rule does not set another standard of right than that found in the divine law, nor is the law subrogated to it, as some have supposed. It is intended as a help to determine one's duty in doubtful cases, and not a rule by which censoriousness shall judge others. This last is a very common mistake. The professional beggar and the anarchist find their stock arguments in a perversion of this rule, and so also the fanatical reformer of social order. A great deal is said about abolishing injustice and oppression and war with the Golden Rule, as if it were something superior to the divine law. If it be the universal panacea for all the evils of society, who will apply it? It must not be taken out of its relations to the discussion in which it is found. It promulgates no new law and no new principle of action.

Some claim that this is the true higher law that supersedes or dominates all other law, or at least interprets it. In the last analysis we find that this higher law, like that already discussed, locates all obligation in the conclu-

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sions of the human mind. It reduces the altruism they teach to a mere rationalism of a very low order; for the great mass of mankind have intelligence of a very low order, which limits their rationalistic conclusions, and puts them on the same low grade. It is not what man might wish or desire, under this or that condition, which determines right from wrong, but, "Thus saith the Lord," is the standard.

3. The issues of life and death call for supreme diligence and effort from the very nature of the ways. Verses 13, 14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." On another occasion he said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able."

Several considerations here conspire to impress the lesson upon them. The way of life is narrow, hedged in by the law as by an impregnable wall on either side. The gateway is equally strait and narrow. The way of death and its gate is broad and easy of access. Every man may walk in it according to the sight of his eyes and the desire of his heart. The facility of the way is in man's proneness to evil, and his varied sinfulness. There is no caste in sin, and no separation enforced among sinners, in the broad road to death. "Many there be which go in thereat." The narrow way is not crowded, "Few there be that find it." Covetousness, formalism, and censoriousness are ruled out with all their fruitage. Right doctrine and practice are required of those who walk in it. Therefore Christ says "agonize" to enter in. Supreme

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dilgence and effort are required, because the issues are life and death.

We read in one place, "The way of the transgressor is hard," and we read in another place, wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace." These passages do not contradict Christ's teaching here, for they refer to other aspects of the lives of the righteous and the wicked.

4. False prophets and teachers enhance the dangers. How shall they be detected? Verses 15–20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

He has disposed of a large class of false teachers. Besides, many false prophets, and even false Christs, should arise like ravening wolves. False prophets, false teachers, and false Christs were detected by the same test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." False doctrine expresses itself in sinful practices, and truth bears a fruitage of holiness, just as certainly as the fruit is determined by the tree on which it grows. And in turn, we judge the character of the tree by the qualities of the fruit.

We may not press this beautiful illustration any further than this, because the scope of the discussion does not allow it. If we take these verses out of their proper connection with the preceding parts of the sermon, we may fall into serious errors, such as sinless perfection and

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antinomianism, which are the opposite poles of the same error.

5. False teachers, false prophets, and false professors shall be unmasked in the day of judgment. Verses 21–23: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

It is difficult to elaborate an application of a discourse, for its meaning must be obvious. We may point out briefly the pertinence of this. He has shown beyond question that the Pharisees should in no case enter the kingdom of heaven, whether in this world or in the world to come. Their disciples are also ruled out. Every false prophet, with his doctrines, practices, and pretended signs and wonders, is excluded for the same reason. And even many who claim to be his own disciples shall be also ruled out, because they do not the will of the heavenly Father. All these are aliens and strangers and shall be rejected in the last day.

6. He contrasts the fate of the two classes of hearers—those who hear and do, and those who hear and do not. Verses 24–27: "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and

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the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Nothing can be added to the point and vividness of this illustration. James says, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (i. 22). Paul says, "Not the hearers of the law are just before the Lord, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. ii. 13.)

It may not be amiss to repeat here, that there is no discussion in this sermon of the plan of salvation through the blood of Christ, and by faith in his name; nor of the fulfillment in him of the typical and ceremonial system of the Jews; nor of the offices of Christ, the nature of justification, the new birth, and many other questions which pertain to the very essence of the gospel. The sermon is nowise defective for leaving these things out. Its object and scope was to expound the law against the traditions of the elders, and to show the futility of Pharisaic teaching. It is an exhaustive discussion of Phariseeism.

The evangelist says, by way of comment, "And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Verses 28, 29.)

They were astonished at his teaching, both at the matter and the manner of it, because it was in such contrast with the teaching of the scribes. They cited the authority of the fathers and the traditions of the elders; they quoted the Talmud and all manner of glosses and precedents, and sustained it all by a false philosophy, all of which was plausible and deceitful. They had no strong personal convictions and no inspiration of truth

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behind their teaching. If they had zeal, it was fanatical and hypocritical, and it begot no genuine love for the truth in their hearers.

Not so with Christ. He spoke as one having authority. He said on another occasion, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." He taught with a dogmatism born of clear conviction, and conscious knowledge of the truth. His attitude was dignified, earnest, and even majestic, as he bore witness to the truth against all comers.

His authority was not the authority of power, for he claimed none in his estate of humiliation. He did not even claim the authority of prophecy and miracle, as he was entitled to do, and as he did do on other occasions. He abounded in clear-cut definition, apt illustration, inexorable logic and sound exegesis, all based on an absolute knowledge of his subject and a thorough understanding of his adversaries. No wonder the officers who were sent to arrest him on one occasion returned, overawed, and said, "He spake as never man spake." His conscious knowledge was reinforced by the fact that he was the lawgiver of sinai, where he enforced the law by the most awful demonstrations of power, and was the law expounder in Galilee, where he enforced his teaching by the power of the truth itself.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Sermon on the Mount furnishes a pulpit theme in every verse; and all systems of morals seek their verification there. Nor is it surprising that many a heresy garbles and perverts its teachings, just as Satan himself quoted Scripture in his conflict with Christ in the wilderness.

Altruism exalts the Sermon on the Mount as setting forth all of Christianity, and rejects or explains away the plan of salvation as expounded by Christ and his apostles;

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and they do greatly delude themselves and others with the cry, "Back to Christ." They interpret the sermon, both in its trend and in its details, to suit their scheme, and brand all the distinctive truths of the gospel as dogmatism and traditionalism. They run into that broad and liberal Christianity which has already been noted. There is little danger of running into such abuse of the sermon if we keep steadily in view its object and scope as set forth in this treatise.

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