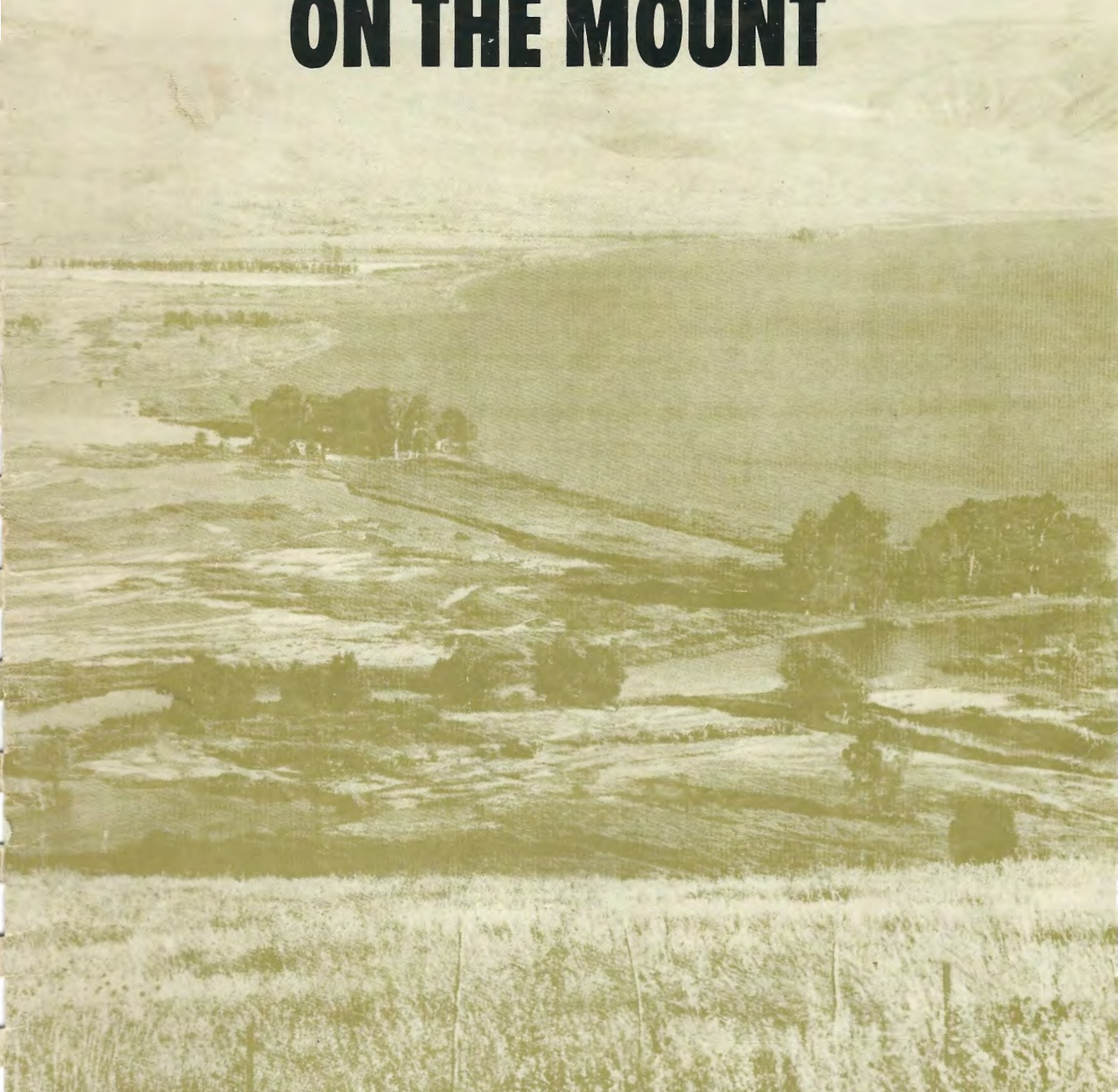


R. DAVIS

THE LORD'S DISCOURSE ON THE MOUNT



NOTES PREPARED FOR
14th CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE
PERTH, W. A. — 1977

FOREWORD

These notes have been prepared to assist you in your study of Matthew's gospel, chapters 5 to 7 — commonly known as "the Sermon on the Mount," but perhaps more appropriately described as "the Discourse on the Mount."

We want you to prepare carefully for the work of study which we hope to enjoy together upon the subject of these particular chapters.

Concerning the majestic teaching of these words of Christ, one Christadelphian Scholar has written: "He (Jesus) called upon his disciples to give practical expression to his teaching: oaths are to be avoided, evil is not to be resisted, love must be cultivated and manifested. He called upon his followers to look to the Father in heaven for their example, for He pours out His good gifts on good and evil alike, that He might draw all by His love. Such unadulterated love should be revealed by them if they would claim to be His children" (Mat. 5:33-48). (H. P. Mansfield, "The Story of the Bible," Vol. 8, p.157).

The Discourse on the Mount must probe deeply into the heart and conscience of all Believers who permit the words of the Lord to enter into their minds. The study is thus a most serious and sober one, for it sets forth the terms of discipleship, by which one might become a true follower of the Son of God.

Prepare your mind now. We suggest you to do so in the following manner:

1. Attune your mind to the Father and His word through the exercise of prayer, before the commencement of the study. Seek His blessing upon your endeavours to reach a deeper understanding of His word.
2. Read carefully through these 3 chapters of Matthew's gospel. Read the chapters in the A.V., and other translations also which you have found to be basically sound; such as Rotherham, Weymouth, Twentieth Century New Testament, R.S.V., etc. Read with care and reverence.
3. Examine the notes herewith provided, making particular note of points which you believe require more thorough emphasis or deeper exposition. Make your own additional notes; as many as you feel necessary.
4. Refer to other sources of exposition upon these chapters — with especial emphasis upon recognised Christadelphian expository works. You will find that many Christadelphian works contain important references to these chapters. For instance, "Elpis Israel," "Eureka," "The Law of Moses," "Law and Grace," and "Ministry of the Prophets — Isaiah" all make some references to these chapters in Matthew. So do quite a number of other Christadelphian writings. Use the Scriptural indexes, usually found at the back of Christadelphian books. Exercise extreme caution in considering the writings of non-Christadelphians; for the conception held by the Clergy and Theologians of Christendom upon these words of Christ generally leaves a great deal to be desired.
5. Use the left-hand pages of these notes to record your own comments.
6. Mark your Bibles upon these three chapters verse by verse, when you have a clear understanding of what each verse is teaching.
7. As you read and meditate upon the purpose of the forthcoming Conference and ask Yahweh's blessing upon all that is done thereat, for the elevation of His word and the honour and glory of His Name.

The Conference Committee

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. . . ."

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INTRODUCTION

The Discourse on the Mount is to be understood not merely as the teaching of the Son of God, setting forth those fundamental precepts by which he requires his disciples to live; the exposition must also be understood as a set of statutes by which the Son of God himself was prepared to live. In other words, these chapters in Matthew's gospel reveal the true and perfect character of Jesus Christ, in his relationship with both God and man.

The precepts and principles set forth in the discourse on the Mount were not intended for the world at large. The world, generally, neither understands nor acknowledges these ideals. These words were spoken and written for the benefit of those who would become the Body of Christ, the true Ecclesia. The Lord himself lived by these standards, remaining a sinless man. He was, therefore, "the word made flesh." Similarly, when the members of Christ's Body live by the same divine standards which the Lord Jesus set for himself, they, too, become "the word made flesh." Herein then, is the perfect character which all God's sons and daughters must strive to develop.

From beginning to end, the teaching of the Master in the discourse on the Mount establishes a set of precepts which are foreign to the natural inclinations of the flesh. Thus is emphasised the fact that, for men and women to be prepared for an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God they must crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts." They must learn to "walk in newness of life" according to the revelation of the Divine will, as seen in the perfect character of the Son of God, and revealed in the teaching of God's word (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:4; Mat. 4:4).

The discourse on the Mount deals primarily with *actions* and *attitudes*. In other words, the "word" must be "made flesh" in practical ways. Life in "the Truth" is not merely to believe certain doctrines and attend various Meetings. Life in "the Truth" is a *Way of life*; and therefore the teaching of the Son of God must be understood in terms of practical day-to-day living. Needless to say, the "truth" can only be lived in a practical way upon the basis of sound doctrinal understanding. Sound doctrine may thus become the foundation for sound conduct (Mat. 5:48; 6:22-24, 33; 7:13-16,29).

The discourse on the Mount leaves no room for hypocrisy in the life of the Believer. He must be prepared for his innermost thoughts and motives; his actions and his conduct to be probed by the unerringly accurate mind of the spirit, as revealed in the words of Christ.

Men and women brought into contact with the teaching of Christ will react in one of two ways: either they will reject his teaching and remain unwilling to apply themselves to following in his footsteps — in which event Christ's judgment upon them will be "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (7:23). Or, they will see his life and his teaching as the perfect example of God-manifestation in the flesh and, desiring to honour their Creator, they will humbly seek to imitate the character of their King; in which event, through hearing and doing "these sayings" Christ will define them as "wise" (7:24) and, therefore, they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Finally, it must be remembered throughout the course of these studies that the Body of Christ is one, not many. There was *one* set of Divine precepts and principles which resulted in the development of the perfect Christ-man, the singular Son of God. And it will be that same set of precepts and principles which will develop the Christ-Body, in the multitudinous sense. The grand objective of the Truth is that we should "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect *man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

That *one* Christ-character is set forth, in essence, in the discourse on the Mount.

BACKGROUND

The Lord had been baptised by John and publicly acknowledged by his Father to be the Son of God. He had then been led into the wilderness, by the guidance of the Spirit, to be tried. He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34).

Having come out of the wilderness he transferred his centre of activity from Nazareth to Capernaum. "From that time" he began to preach the gospel — or glad tidings — of the Kingdom of Heaven. He taught, preached, and healed (Mat. 4:17, 23). In these actions he demonstrated his desire to bring about the salvation of men and women, whilst at the same time providing the means whereby humankind might glorify their Creator.

His fame ("the report of him." R.V.) spread throughout Syria. He thus acquired "great multitudes" who became his followers — and his reputation as a great teacher and healer was clearly established.

Large numbers followed him from as far afield as the Galilee, Decapolis (a confederacy of ten towns, all east of Jordan save one) Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Considering the limited area in which the Lord had moved up to this time, this was a notable reputation to gain in such a comparatively short space of time.

Luke's gospel account, which records the Lord's life and ministry in chronological order, indicates that numerous important events took place between Matthew chapters 4 and 5, including events described in the first four chapters of both Luke and John (cp. Lk. 4:44).

It should be remembered that, at that time, in anticipation of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel, the Jewish people were in a state of expectancy, awaiting the appearance of Messiah (Lk. 3:15). The Lord began his ministry, therefore, against a background which provided a suitable setting for a major religious revival.

The glory of the Divine character had now come to tabernacle among men (Jn. 1:14) as "a light to lighten the gentiles" and to bring "glory" to God's people of "Israel" (Lk. 2:32). At that momentous epoch of history it could be truly and humbly said, by men and women of faith, that "light is come into the world" (Jn. 3:19).

With due reverence, let us draw near to "the light of the world," knowing that all who "follow" him will not "walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

MATTHEW

CHAPTER FIVE

- Vv 1-16:** Divine blessings to come upon those who respond to God's goodness by walking in the way of the Truth.
- Vv17-20:** Christ's commandments must be recognised as divine Truth, and must produce righteousness in the life of the Believer.
- Vv21-37:** Christ's teaching must be absorbed mentally, and manifested morally.
- Vv38-42:** How Christ's disciples must react in the face of evil treatment which may be meted out to them.
- Vv43-48:** How disciples must positively act towards others, thus producing in their lives the moral likeness of their Father, which is in heaven.

AND seeing the multitudes, * he went
up into a mountain: and when he
was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and
taught them, saying,

CHAPTER 5

Vv. 1-16 DIVINE BLESSING TO COME UPON THOSE WHO RESPOND TO GOD'S GOODNESS BY WALKING IN THE WAY OF THE TRUTH

VERSE 1

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain”

“Great multitudes” had begun to follow the Lord, from many areas (4:25). These people had separated themselves from their basic environment that they might follow Jesus of Nazareth and listen to his words. It is an exhortatory exercise to contemplate the question: How many of these folk, so keen to follow the Lord in his early ministry, remained faithful to the end? The true test of discipleship is not merely to listen to the teaching of Christ, but to absorb his doctrines, understand them clearly, accept them as a way of life, and then remain faithful to Christ and his cause until our life shall end, or the Lord returns (cp. Mat. 15:8; 20:16; 24:12; Jn. 6:59-69).

“And when He was set, his Disciples came unto Him”

Of the “multitudes” the Lord had seen assembled on the lower ground, only those who were “disciples” laboriously followed him up the mountain. (“Disciple” is the Gk., *mathetes*, which means “a learner”). Why did the Lord ascend “up into a mountain” at this time? There appears to be a profoundly symbolic motive behind his actions: he desired to draw men upward, toward Divine ideals and precepts. But this would require that they follow him, ascending to a plane of mental thought and moral action far above the level of the flesh. The Greek text includes the prefix “pros,” meaning “towards.” The wording indicates that his disciples drew closely towards him at this time, in an attitude of intimate oneness and friendship. Contrast the atmosphere — and attitude of the people — at the giving of the Law: Ex. 20:18-19; Deut. 5:23-27; Heb. 12:18-24). The Law taught men that they could not approach directly unto God, because of sin (Ex. 19:10-13); but now God has sent His own Son, to draw men and women unto Himself, upon the principle of Grace.

VERSE 2

“And He opened his mouth and taught them”

He was “full of grace and truth,” and he was “the word made flesh” (Jn. 1:14). No man ever born of woman was better qualified to set forth the power and beauty and infinite wisdom which is found only in the mind of Yahweh, the Great Creator. The words of the Lord were words of “spirit” and “life” (Jn. 6:63), and his teaching was therefore able to make men “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15-16; cp. Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Thess. 5:9).

The words which the Lord uttered as he taught his disciples did not represent his own philosophy of religion. The words he spoke were God's words — his teaching was entirely of Divine origin (Jn. 12:49-50; 14:10).

Matthew records that he “taught them, saying....” The fact that he “taught” them is an indication of his authority and qualification to do so — in contrast to the lack on the part of the people. They needed to be taught the truth. Teaching requires that the right words should be uttered, for the enlightenment of minds that would otherwise remain darkened. It behoves men and women in the presence — literally or

3 ^b Blessed *are* the poor in spirit:
for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

figuratively — of such a Great Teacher, to have receptive minds, ready to reason upon what is said, to accept the authority of the Teacher, and to absorb the wisdom he is endeavouring to implant in their minds. The effect of his teaching may be seen in the final words recorded concerning this discourse: 7:28-29.

VERSE 3

“Blessed”

Gk. makarios, lit., “happy” — derived from a root which indicates that which is large or lengthy. There appears therefore, to be a reference to a *continuing* state of happiness. The Truth — and only the Truth is capable of producing this. Contrast worldly ideals concerning true happiness: wealth, position, the enjoyments of life, etc. The only true and *lasting* happiness is that which is to be found in a true understanding of God and His word. (cp. Jn. 13:17).

“The poor in spirit”

This is a reference to Isa. 61:1-2; cp. Lk 4:16-20. This phrase defines the class of person who will be receptive to Christ’s teaching. *Only* “the poor in spirit” will inherit “the kingdom of heaven.” None can receive the kingdom who have not *first* received the gospel. And to receive the gospel they must manifest a particular attitude of mind: they must be “poor in spirit.” Of this word (Gk. ptochos), W.E. Vine says: “an adjective describing one who crouches and cowers....to cower down or hide oneself for fear...poverty-stricken, powerless to enrich...” The word was associated with the activities of destitute beggars. The word describes someone, says Bullinger, “having nothing at all.” In short, here is the class of person described in Isa. 66:2. Their disposition is one of utter humility before the greatness and majesty of the One True God; they recognise that of themselves they are nothing, and that “in” the “flesh” dwells “no good thing,” and therefore “the flesh profiteth nothing” (Rom. 7:18; Jn. 6:63). Recognising these conditions, they exhibit a poverty of spirit which causes them to tremble (“careth anxiously” — Roth., Isa. 66:2) for the word of God, as the only means whereby they might be delivered from sin and the death-stricken nature which they bear. The need for such an attitude had been clearly taught in the spirit of the Law: Lev. 16:29-31; cp. Jas. 4:6-9. If the Lord’s listeners appreciated the spirit of the Law they would have had little difficulty in grasping the principle he was setting before them.

In contrast to what the Lord taught here, the “spirit” of “the flesh” resists being “taught of God” (Jn. 6:45). The self-assertive spirit of the flesh must be crushed within the disciple of Christ, and their dependence upon the teaching of God’s word must become absolute. Yet, finally, that which begins as a poverty of spirit will end in riches of incredible grandeur: the riches of faith, leading to the reward of Divine nature, and the honour, glory and immortality which will be bestowed upon all who humbly walk before God in the spirit of the Truth (See Jn. 5:44).

“For their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven”

The Lord here used the present, possessive tense. How can it be said that disciples of Christ *now* possess the kingdom? Because of their covenant-relationship with God, through Christ. It is “their’s” because it has been promised to them. God’s word cannot fail, because His integrity

**4 ° Blessed *are* they that mourn: for
they shall be comforted.**

is unimpeachable. All those who follow the example of Christ, and who thereby truly walk in the way of the truth, will inherit the kingdom. The same principle now applies to Christ himself. He is said to have gone "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Lk. 19:12). He will not literally "receive" the kingdom until he returns to earth to establish it; yet, such is the certainty of the event that it has been described as having already taken place (Rom. 4:17; Mat. 25:21; 2 Pet. 1:11; Heb. 12:28).

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" occurs 32 times in Matthew, but not at all in any of the other gospel accounts. This is because Matthew's gospel presents Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the king over the coming kingdom — a kingdom which, though to be established upon the earth—is of Divine origin, and therefore "heavenly." The kingdom is to be a "heavenly one" because "*the God of heaven*" is the One who will establish it (cp. Phil. 3:20, Diag.; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15, etc.). Those who are "poor in spirit" and who meet the spirit of the other requirements as set forth in this discourse, will receive an eternal inheritance in the kingdom when Christ returns to reign over all nations from Jerusalem (Isa. 2; Micah 4; Ps. 72; etc).

The terms "kingdom of heaven," kingdom of God," and "hope of Israel" are inter-changeable. "a kingdom is the dominion of a king.... A kingdom is not located in feeling, or in heart.... It must have a place, a locality, as well as a name." ("Elpis Israel," p. 221).

VERSE 4

"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted"

This verse expresses the spirit of Isa. 61:1-3. The Lord describes a state of mind which is affected by the emotional and mental processes. Whilst we are to understand that there is great joy in the Truth (v.12), the disciple of Christ *mourns* daily. He mourns the absence of his Lord (Mat. 9:15), the weaknesses and failures of his own nature, the evil and Godless environment in which he must live until Christ returns.

We are also caused to mourn when we become partakers of the sufferings and afflictions of Christ. We crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24) and we "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

This is a state of mind, in contrast to the outward show manifested by hypocrites (6:16-18). This state of mind is an obvious extension of the attitude described in the previous verse.

To develop this state of mind, as the Lord would have us do, we must have a clear knowledge of the differences between good and evil, and an awareness of the differences between sin and righteousness. Yahweh Himself is "grieved" when He sees the wickedness of man (Gen. 6:6). We must, therefore, endeavour to behold and understand our own nature, and everything in life about us, from the standpoint of the Great Creator who would have us imitate His character in all respects. The majority of mankind are unable to "mourn" in this way, because they remain oblivious to sin and to its consequences, and do not understand the true nature of man. They, therefore, remain in ignorance concerning their real, desperate needs, and neither "mourn," nor become "poor in spirit" in the Scriptural sense. How privileged we are to be able to manifest these

5^a Blessed *are* the meek: for °they shall inherit the earth.

qualities of character because our minds have been enlightened with the word of God.

Our Heavenly Father is able to provide comfort for those who mourn according to the spirit shown in this verse (2 Cor. 1:3-7; Ps. 38:6, etc.). The word “comforted” has been rendered from the Gk. *parakaleo*, meaning “To call to one’s side.” — In measure we have this “comfort” when we embrace the truth; but in the fullest sense our time of “comfort” will come when we are actually “called” to the “side” of the Lord, at his return, to remain ever near his comforting presence if found worthy at the Judgment Seat. True and complete comfort will come when all the evils and weaknesses which trouble us have been removed — when we look upon the “peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122), and rejoice in the restoration of Israel; when we see the peace and enlightenment which will flood the earth (Gen. 12:3), and the nations acknowledging “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men” (Luke 2:14).

For those who will remain faithful to Yahweh, a great time of comfort is seen to dawn; “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain...” (Rev. 21:4).

VERSE 5

“Blessed are the meek”

These words are quoted from Ps. 37:11. (Note the context of Ps. 37 carefully. It is as though the Lord is saying: “If you wish to know the type of person who will *inherit* the kingdom, study Psalm 37.” It has been called “The Psalm of the Two Seeds” — the seed of the woman versus the seed of the serpent. The Psalm speaks of a class of person who struggles onward through life, resolutely resisting all attempts to draw them away from the true principles of Divine worship, that they might serve God alone and ultimately be received into His kingdom).

It is significant that the original Hebrew word for “meek” speaks of affliction. Rotherham has translated the word as “the patient oppressed ones...” They are oppressed by the influence of sin, both within and without; and they are constantly bowed down with a sense of humility in recognition of the weaknesses inherent in their nature. But they “patiently” endure, until, in God’s good time, they will be relieved of their burdens and will discover the joys and wonders of Divine nature.

The Gk., *praus*, eloquently describes a particular type of character: “meek, gentle, enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit...” (Bullinger). “It is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him... Meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness... simply because it is not occupied with self at all” (W.E.Vine). Cp. Num. 12:3; Ps. 22:26; 149:4; Jas. 3:14. Meekness is not weakness. It is, in fact, strength. It is practised when an individual humbly surrenders his self-will, to be replaced by the guiding influence of Yahweh and His word. “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Ps. 25:9). This is a state of character only attained to when the individual has permitted the purging and cleansing power of God’s word to bring him into subjection to

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger
and thirst after righteousness: ^ffor
they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: ^sfor they
shall obtain mercy.

the will of God (Eph. 5:26).

“For they shall inherit the earth”

V. 3 has indicated that they will possess the kingdom; now the Lord adds that they shall “inherit” it. See Heb. 6:12; 11:8; Acts 7:5; 20:32; Eph. 1:11,14,18; Gal. 3:18,29; Rev. 21:7. It is only heirs who receive an inheritance.

VERSE 6

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness”

The Lord did not say “Blessed are the righteous” — for none, apart from himself, would qualify for such a blessing. But those who maintain a *continuing* desire to pursue the qualities of righteousness will receive this blessing. Development in this direction is caused through the influence of the indwelling word of God.

The natural man “hungers” and “thirsts” only after those things which will sustain him, or gratify his fleshly desires. But Isaiah taught: “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye...” (Isa. 55:1). Yet, the only people who will learn to “hunger” and “thirst” after *righteousness* will be those who have a knowledge of what righteousness means. “Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and draw from the breasts” — which is to say: those who have learned to develop towards maturity in the things of Divine truth and wisdom (Isa. 28:9 cp. Eph. 4:13).

It must always be remembered that righteousness comes only from God (Isa. 51:1-7; 54:17; Mat. 6:33). God’s righteousness has been revealed in the perfect character of His Son, and in the gospel (Jn. 1:14; Rom. 1:16-17). It is, therefore, necessary to gain a true understanding of the word of God, and to come to an intimate knowledge of God and His Son (Jn. 17:3). Without such understanding a person is unable to seek after righteousness.

“For they shall be filled”

“They shall be completely satisfied” (Wey.). This is an unconditional guarantee. Any person striving, with integrity before God, to live by the spirit of these words need never fear that Yahweh will forsake them or fail them (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5-6; Mat.7:7). The God of Israel is faithful to His word.

VERSE 7

“Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy”

A reference to Ps. 18:25, “With the merciful Thou wilt show thyself merciful...” Mercy is the first of Yahweh’s virtues (Ex. 34:5-7), and is therefore a vitally necessary characteristic to be manifested by all who would become His sons and daughters. The Lord’s later usage of Hos. 6:6 helps us to understand the importance of this attribute (See Matt. 9:13). God can only call “sinners to repentance” by showing *mercy* towards them in forgiving their sins — therefore, if God is prepared to do this for us we should be prepared to exercise the same attitude towards others who exhibit this same need. God exercises His mercy towards those who acknowledge their need, and seek His mercy through the means that He has provided.

8 ^h Blessed *are* the pure in heart:
for ⁱ they shall see God.

This statement is akin to the second greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39, cited from Lev. 19:18).

We must always guard against righteousness turning into *self-righteousness*. As we pursue the cause of righteousness it is necessary to remember the two greatest commandments (Mat. 22:36-40). As we have responsibilities and obligations to God, so we do also to our fellows. To exercise mercy towards others is to acknowledge our own need of Divine mercy. The unenlightened Jews did not understand this matter and so condemned Christ's disciples (Mat. 12:7 — note the past tense; cp. Mic. 6:8). The final words, "shall obtain mercy," are in the passive tense. *We* cannot provide the mercy we need. Only God can do that. We must, therefore, humbly acknowledge, even at the Judgment Seat, that we have not *earned* eternal life. We will, if accepted by Christ, passively behold with wondering eyes and joyful heart, as the Lord pronounces our acceptance and transforms us to Divine nature.

VERSE 8

"Blessed are the pure in heart"

A reference to Ps. 24:4; cp. Ps. 18:26; 73:1. The heart represents the mind (Mat. 15:19; 12:35). The human heart (mind) is naturally biased towards evil (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:18-23), — but it can become purified upon the basis of faith (Acts 15:9; Ps. 51:10; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). The word "pure" has been rendered from the Gk. *Katharos*, meaning "pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture, whether good or bad; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any useless thing whatever; free from every false adornment..." (Bullinger). In short, this is a disposition of undivided loyalty to Yahweh and His truth — a state attained unto only through a clear knowledge of the truth, the exercise of faith, and a wholehearted dedication to Divine things. It is an attitude of mind described elsewhere by the Lord as "an honest and good heart" (Lk. 8:15). This disposition can only be achieved upon the foundation of self-surrender, when the individual gives up his life to God so that the purifying influence of God's word may change the naturally evil heart into a pure one. The candidate for the kingdom must, therefore, be humble and meek towards God, and must be teachable (cp. Lk. 10:27; 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:22, etc.).

This verse is of particular relevance to the Lord's overall discourse, because it brings us to the very inner core of the human being. The "heart" represents the human brain as the organ which governs man's thinking, emotions, feelings and desires. Man is ruled by what happens in his mind — therefore, a Divinely orientated disposition is essential for those who desire to inherit the kingdom.

"For they shall see God"

Concerning the word "see," Bullinger has written: "It denotes not the action of seeing, but the state of him and the affection of the mind of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented, to truly comprehend and know." This class of person will "see" God in the revelation of the Divine character — especially as manifested in His Son (Jn. 14:9-10; Heb. 1:3). But we shall also "see" the Father in the Son, at his return (1 Jn. 3:2-3) and also "see" the fulness and perfection of God when we are changed

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 *Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

to His nature. See also Rev. 21:3; Heb. 12:14.

VERSE 9

“Blessed are the peace-makers”

“The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable...” (Jas. 3:17). James condemned “envying and strife,” which could only lead to disharmony within the Body, because nothing good comes from the flesh, or the works of the flesh. A spiritually-minded person who is poor in spirit (v.3), mourns (v.4), is meek (v.5), hungers and thirsts after righteousness (v. 6), is merciful (v. 7), and is pure of heart (v. 8), will never desire to cause disorder or disharmony among men. And it is only the “wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:17) that causes a person to develop this disposition in a Godly way. “Peace” is one of the fruits of the saints (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, true and worthwhile peace can only be established and maintained upon the basis of Divine Truth, a peace which results from the mind of man being in harmony with the mind of God. If the sinner will not become reconciled to God upon the basis of Divine Truth, he cannot hope to find peace with God (cp. Mat. 10:34; Eph. 2:14-17).

The most vital way in which Sons of God must endeavour to *make* peace, is by drawing men and women (whether within or without the Body) to the wisdom of Divine Truth, whereby they, together with us, may find peace and oneness with God, and with one another. Peace, upon any other basis, will be the product of the flesh and not the spirit, and therefore will provide no benefit of lasting value, to the glory of God.

Yahweh is “the God of peace” (Rom. 16:20), in that His purpose is to bring His creation into oneness and harmony with Himself. At present this purpose is being pursued with individuals (Acts 15:15), but after Christ’s return and the establishment of the kingdom, this work will be taken upon a world-wide scale (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8; Isa. 2:2-4; Ps. 72, etc). See “Elpis Israel,” pp. 110-114, and apply the principles revealed therein to ourselves, as individuals, in this present age.

The world at large will only find peace and oneness with God upon the same principles by which we, today, seek to attain to that state.

The word rendered “peace-makers” is derived from a most expressive word, in the Gk.: *eirene*, mean “peace, rest; in contrast with strife, and denoting the absence or end of strife....” (Bullinger).

“For they shall be called the children of God”

The two key Gk. words here are *kaleo* and *huios*, thus the phrase is better rendered: “they shall be acknowledged as sons of God” (Wey.). The grand objective of the truth is to bring men and women to a state of peace, or oneness, with their God. The “peace-makers” will become true sons of God because they will have manifested sufficient of the character of their Father to become identified with Him, in that their way of life will show them to be the off-spring of Yahweh.

VERSE 10

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”

The Lord Jesus was treated in this way (Jn. 5:16; 15:20), and his apostles also (1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:12) — because they manifested an attitude of dedicated loyalty to the *cause* of God’s

11 ¹ Blessed are ye, when *men* shall
revile you, and persecute *you*, and
shall say all manner of ^m evil against
you ² falsely, for my sake.

righteousness. Whilst we are not to seek persecution at the hands of the world it may be that, because of our loyalty to Christ, the world rejects us. After all, the characteristics which we are studying, and which together make up the character of the Christ-Man, or Christ-Body, do not find acceptance with the world at large simply because Christ's character was not in accordance with the character of the flesh. And in view of the fact that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17), the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent must be very real. Although it is sometimes difficult to accept this state of affairs, it is needful to always remember that it is a situation which exists because God decreed it in the beginning (Gen. 3:15). Such a Divine verdict was pronounced, not with the object of creating disharmony among men, but rather causing men and women to realise that, to be acceptable to Yahweh they must repudiate the flesh and strive to walk in harmony with God. The "enmity" comes into existence when men *refuse* to either understand or obey the call to "worship" God "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

Those who are fleshly minded reject those who endeavour to develop the disposition which is in accord with the Truth. See Jn. 7:7; 3:19.

Above all, in this expression, note that the Lord is speaking of those who are persecuted because they stand for the *cause* of righteousness.

"For their's is the Kingdom of Heaven"

A most interesting repetition — for the first time in this chapter — of the words concerning "the poor in spirit" (v.3). In both v. 3 and v. 10, it is said that "their's is the kingdom of heaven." There is an obvious link between these two verses: to be "poor in spirit" in the eyes of Yahweh requires renouncing the flesh — *and the world* (1 John 2:15-17). And the world does not like to be renounced! (cp. Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 12:10; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 4:13-16).

(See notes on v. 3).

VERSE 11

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you"

The word "revile" has been rendered from the Gk. oneidizo, in the active voice. It means "to defame, assail with opprobrious words, cast in one's teeth, reproach with anything" (Bullinger). The word "persecute" is the same as in v. 10, and occurs again in v. 12 and v. 44. Note the change from the general "they" to the more personal "ye". *The* poor in spirit will receive the kingdom; *they* that mourn will be comforted; *the* meek shall inherit the earth; *they* which hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled; *the* merciful shall obtain mercy; *the* pure in heart shall see God; *the* peacemakers shall be called sons of God; *they* which are persecuted will receive the kingdom. But now the Lord turns to the word "ye" — expressive of the things individuals must be prepared to suffer, and the responsibilities and obligations they must be prepared to accept, if they are to become, individually, true disciples of the Son of God. Not all Christ's disciples, down through the ages, have had to suffer the dreadful physical treatment which has been meted out to many, at the hands of a hostile world. Yet, the Lord told them, even in the midst of such physical sufferings, they could be aware of their "blessed" or happy state, because

**12^a Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:
for great *is* your reward in heaven:
for °so persecuted they the prophets
which were before you.**

of their relationship to God through Christ. (cp. 1 Pet. 1:7; 4:14 etc.). Brethren may experience a state of happiness now, in this present evil age, as they humbly share in the sufferings of Christ, knowing that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ's cause. It requires a strong and unwavering conviction to make a stand when knowing that it could result in this type of evil treatment. This conviction was termed by Peter "a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). See Acts 5:41. Happiness under such circumstances as these comes not only through having faith and confidence in the Truth, but also through being able to see clearly, through the eye of faith, the glories of the future: Heb. 12:2; Rom. 8:18.

"And shall say all manner of evil against you falsely"

The cause of the wicked can never be right, so long as they continue to be governed by principles of the flesh. Thus, their condemnation of those who endeavour to follow Christ is false.

"For My sake"

This is the same as "righteousness' sake" (v. 10). The true disciple of the Lord acts as he does, not out of any sense of fierce loyalty to a philosophy or ideology, but because he knows that Christ's cause is the cause of true righteousness. Therefore, God is honoured when men and women remain loyal and faithful to the Truth, no matter what their circumstances might be.

VERSE 12

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad"

"Be joyful and triumphant" (Wey.) "accept it with gladness and exultation" (N.E.B.). This attitude of mind will only be manifested by those for whom the cause of righteousness transcends all other considerations. These are the same words used of the joy and exultation to be experienced by the approved Saints at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). That same fundamental attitude of mind is as essential during the time of probation as it will be fulsomely manifested in the day of glory.

"For great is your reward in heaven"

"...your reward is great in heaven" (Wey.) — That is where the reward is, at the moment, but Christ will return from heaven to bring the reward with him (Lk. 19:12; Jn. 14:2-3; Isa. 24:23). The reward is actually a "gift" and not payment for works performed (Rom. 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8, etc.). We are dependent upon Divine grace and mercy for salvation (Rom. 3:27-28; Gal. 2:21, etc.).

"For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"

Tragically, the suffering of the prophets was, in the main, at the hands of their own people; those who were either ignorant of the Truth or hostile to it. The implication is that the faithful and true prophets accepted persecution in this spirit, and were therefore men who understood the spirit of the Truth. (For examples, see 1 Kings 18:17; Amos 7:12-13; Jer 37:13; Dan. 6:13, etc.). The words "which were before you" appear to be in the form of a challenge to Christ's disciples; it is as though the Lord was suggesting that the prophets had, in earlier generations, set an example worthy of emulation by those who would follow after them.

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: ^pbut 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 ^a Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

VERSE 13

“Ye are the salt of the earth”

Mention of salt would cause Christ’s listeners to think of “the salt of the covenant” (Lev. 2:13). Salt was used in all sacrifices under the Law, and was therefore to constantly remind them of their covenant-relationship with Yahweh.

The expression “salt of the covenant” clearly teaches this. Salt is known as a preservative, and therefore indicates the need to preserve Divinely-originated covenants; salt makes a fine antiseptic, and speaks of the means by which purity might be attained; and salt adds flavour to food when it is eaten. Disciples are described as “*the salt*” — which is to say, they must manifest in their way of life all that the “salt of the covenant” represented, as they sacrifice their lives in the service of their God (cp. Mark 9:49-50). The salt of true sacrifice and dedication to Yahweh will bring a state of humility which will result in the attainment of peace. True disciples must preserve the truth, and their allegiance to their covenant; and they must flavour all their dealings with God and man with the spirit of the Truth, that they might become purified thereby.

“But if the salt have lost his savour wherewith shall it be salted?”

“But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again?” (J.B.). This question constitutes a grave warning. When an individual has been converted to the truth, walking zealously and enthusiastically in the spirit of the Truth, such an attitude must be maintained. If one becomes indifferent to the Truth and displays a general attitude of casual insipidity, he may continue to believe he is offering himself to God as “a living sacrifice,” but the sacrifice will have become tasteless. The desire to become pure, whilst preserving the covenant, will have dissipated. This challenging question points to the need for a daily self-examination by every individual disciple. We must become aware of any slackening or lessening in our love for the cause of righteousness, and take prompt action to remedy any such deficiencies.

“It is good for nothing, but to be cast out”

The point of the question is pressed to its finality: if the distinctive spiritual qualities symbolised by salt are lost, with what can those qualities be replaced? The answer is: nothing. Either salt is useable and valuable, or it is useless. Those found in this state at the Judgment Seat will be rejected. (cp. Rev. 3:16).

VERSE 14

“Ye are the light of the world”

Two emphatic statements have now followed one upon the other: “Ye are the salt of the earth....Ye are the light of the world” Although there are many negative aspects to life in the Truth, the life of the Saint is, basically, a positive one. Israel had been chosen to reflect the light of the Divine glory (Num. 6:24-27; Isa 2:5; Jer. 13:11). Now, that responsibility was about to be passed on to Christ’s disciples. They were to follow in his footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21). And as he was the “light of the world” (Jn. 8:12), so they were to become reflections of their Lord and King (1 Pet. 2:9; Mat. 4:16; Lk. 1:79; Eph. 5:8-11; 1 Thess. 5:4-5 etc.). It should be observed that the Lord did not say: “You carry the light” but “You *are*

15 Neither do men ^rlight a candle,
and put it under ^sa bushel, but on a
candlestick; and it giveth light unto
all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before
men, ^rthat they may see your good
works, and ^rglorify your Father which
is in heaven.

the light..." This is the doctrine of God-manifestation. The character of the Father, which was perfectly revealed in the Son, must now become real and living in every disciple.

"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid"

It has been suggested that the Lord had in mind the city of Saphed, which was probably very near to the place where this discourse was delivered. But the Lord, by analogy, was speaking of his disciples. They were to be like a city set on the peak of a hill. They could not hope to hide away from their worldly environment, and would be closely observed by their contemporaries. If they proclaimed the truth, "all men" would "know" that they were Christ's "disciples" (Jn. 13:35) — therefore they must become manifestations of the pure light of Divine truth. This phrase represents a considerable challenge to the discipleship of those who would claim to follow Christ. Men and women, whether within the Body or without, must see the light of Christ's character in his disciples. The Believers cannot hide from the critical gaze of their fellows; yet their conduct must be artificial, to impress others; if they are truly "the light of the world" they will manifest Christ's character because they are dedicated to the cause of righteousness, rather than being motivated by human pride.

And most important of all: like a city on a hill we cannot hide from God. He is able to observe closely whether or not our claims to be disciples of Christ are matched by performance. Ultimately we are answerable to Him rather than to our fellow-men.

VERSE 15

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel"

"No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub" (J.B.) "...under a bowl..." (Moff.) "...under a meal-tub" (N.E.B.). Such would be a pointless action, on two counts. First, no light whatever would be seen, so light would become no more effective than darkness; secondly, beneath such a container, the light would become starved of oxygen, and within a short time would go out completely! The truth must be lived in a very practical way. The truth must not only be seen *in us*, it must shine forth *from us*. (See 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6-8, etc.).

"But on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house"

The word candlestick should be understood as meaning "lampstand" (Wey., Roth., J.B., etc.), as the word "candle" (above) should be rendered "lamp." These were lights that consumed oil.

Again the point is stressed: light must shine to serve some worthwhile purpose.

VERSE 16

"Let your light so shine before men"

The Lord now pressed home the challenge of the analogy to every individual disciple. Whilst remaining separate from the world in all its righteousness, they must not shrink from "declaring...the testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1), in thought, word and deed. Whilst they are not to be immodest, they must courageously exhibit Christ's characteristics in their daily lives.

17 ¶ "Think not that I am come to
destroy the law, or the prophets: I
am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

“That they may see your good works”

The Gk. word, *ergon*, can mean “the thing wrought” (Bullinger); in other words, something produced, and not merely works as such. The Lord is not referring to the works of law, such as filled the Judaisers with pride in their pious achievement. He spoke here of the works of righteousness which are produced upon the basis of faith. He did not say: “That they might see the *good worker*...” He spoke here of a character which has been developed in an individual — a character which should be recognised and acknowledged for its Godly integrity. “By works of law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16), but works of righteousness which are produced as the outworking of faith will bring the approbation of Christ the King, and his Father in heaven.

“And glorify your father which is in heaven”

We may endeavour to teach others the Truth — but if they observe that we understand it in theory whilst failing to live according to the principles we claim to stand for, they will reject both ourselves and our teaching. On the other hand, when the Truth is held forth, both by word and example, men and women may be drawn to acknowledge the power of the Truth, for they see it *working* in the one who is trying to persuade them to become a follower of Christ. But note how powerfully the Lord has drawn attention to two classes of humanity: there is the class who will revile, persecute, and say all manner of evil against Christ’s brethren, because they walk in the way of the Truth (Vv. 10-11), and there is the class who will humbly recognise the truth for its true worth and purpose.

Vv. 17-20 CHRIST’S COMMANDMENTS MUST BE RECOGNISED AS DIVINE TRUTH, AND MUST PRODUCE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

VERSE 17

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets”

The law and the prophets were not given to Israel that they might be destroyed, but rather that they might be fulfilled. Moses and the prophets “prophesied of the grace that should come...” (1 Peter 1:10). When the Lord Jesus appeared, “*full of grace and truth*” (Jn. 1:14), the hopes and aspirations of Moses and the prophets were vindicated. The Lord Jesus fulfilled his destiny in this regard by always doing the will of his Father. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me...” (Jn. 4:34; cp. 6:38; Ps. 40:7-8; Lk. 24:44, etc.).

“I am not come to destroy but to fulfil”

The revelation of Yahweh’s entire purpose had been enshrined in the message of “the Law and the Prophets” and Christ came into the world to carry that purpose forward. See Lk. 4:16-21.

Surely this phrase demonstrates the unity of God’s overall purpose, as declared in both Old and New Testaments. (Cp. Num. 14:21 with Ps. 72:18-19, Rev. 21:22-23). Jesus was the fulfilment of that which had been promised in both “the Law” and “the prophets” — he had then to fulfil those things required of him, to bring Yahweh’s grand purpose with the earth to fruition. No one could accuse the Lord of attempting to “destroy” the inspired Old Testament writings, substituting his own religious philosophy in its place.

18 For verily I say unto you, ²Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 ³Whosoever 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.

VERSE 18

“For verily I say unto you”

Gk. *amen*, meaning “true, certain, faithful” (Bullinger). This is a word which has been transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and English. See Heb. usage: Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; 65:16; Ps. 19:7; 111:7, etc. This passage has been rendered “I tell you truly” (Moff.), “In truth I tell you” (Wey.), “I tell you solemnly” (J.B.). The point about to be made must be understood with absolute clarity.

“Till heaven and earth pass”

The word “till” indicates that the “heaven and earth” *will* pass away. This appears to be an allusion to Isa. 51:6, 65:17. Remember the context of these terms in Isaiah’s writings: he had called upon the “heavens and earth” which then existed to “hear” the word of Yahweh, and respond thereto. That “heaven and earth” was the nation of Israel, both rulers and subjects (Isa. 1:2,10). Isaiah indicates that because the kingdom of Israel failed to “hear” the call of Yahweh, their kingdom would pass away, and God would create a “new” heavens and earth. This is Biblical symbology and is not to be taken literally. The “new heavens” are those who respond to the call of Yahweh to honour His word and His name, and walk in His ways. They will rule the earth with Christ in the Kingdom Age. The “new earth” will be the subjects of the Kingdom, instructed in the word of God and disciplined thereby. Thus, in this verse the Lord spoke prophetically of the final overthrow of Judah’s Commonwealth (Mat. 21:33-44).

“One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law”

The word “Jot” is from the Gk. *iota*, which is the equivalent of the Heb. letter “yod”, the smallest of the Hebrew letters; “tittle” (Gk. *keraia*) means “a point” and refers to the pointing in the Hebrew language, as in English we “dot” our letter “i”. Thus the Lord is saying: “Not even the smallest letter or a single point of the Hebrew lettering will fail to find fulfilment.” Vv. 17-18 provide wonderful proof of the Lord’s belief in the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures.

“Till all be fulfilled”

“until all has taken place” (Wey.); “until its purpose is achieved” (J.B.). The Lord laid an awesome foundation here for the way in which his disciples must respect and reverence the Divinely inspired words of “the Law” and “the prophets” — they form a vital part of the Divine revelation to man, and must therefore continue to be treated with the veneration due to the word of Almighty God.

VERSE 19

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments”

The word “break should be more correctly rendered as “loosen” or “relax.” the word has been rendered “relaxes” (Moff); “relax” (Roth.); “sets aside” (N.E.B.). A principle is here being propounded: Divine commandments must be treated as such, and must not be weakened. Through relaxing the clarity and standard of Divine commandments men may eventually conclude that sin may be justified (cp. Amos 5:6-7; contrast 2 Jn. v 6).

“And shall teach men so”

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

These few words constitute a very sober exhortation. If we begin to “relax” the power and clarity of the commandments in our own lives, it will be only a matter of time before we begin to justify our attitude, and thereby teach *others* to adopt the same inferior standards which we ourselves have now espoused. The message is clear: there must be no compromise with Divine principles and Divine commandments.

“He shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven”

The word “least” is in contrast to the word “great,” in this verse. One who relaxes the commandments and teaches others to do likewise, will not be honoured in the Kingdom. He will be “least-esteemed”, as the phrase has been rendered. See Lk. 16:10.

“But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven”

Such will be held in the highest esteem, and receive a place of honour in the Kingdom. It is necessary to have a clear and sound knowledge before it is possible to “do” and “teach” the commandments of God. The two greatest commandments epitomise all others (Mat. 22:36-40). They show that Christ has set before us the formula of life whereby we might fulfil all our obligations and responsibilities to God, whilst at the same time discharging our duty to our fellow-men. The Truth is so beautifully designed and balanced that it allows for this two-fold commitment, without one aspect coming into conflict with the other.

VERSE 20

“For I say into you”

“I tell you” (N.E.B.); “I assure you” (Wey.). Again, the Lord stressed his authority to teach in this way, whilst at the same time implying the importance to be placed upon the essential value of his words (7:28-29).

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The Pharisees could never hope to fulfil righteousness, because their attempts to do so were based upon the principle of law rather than faith and grace. The Law showed every man — save one — to be a sinner, and never told them they would become righteous through law (Gal.2:16, 21; 3:18, 21, etc.). Christ’s disciples were to avoid the religious hypocrisy practised by the Pharisees (Matt. 23:2-3). There is only one way by which the Believer has any hope of striving towards the objective set forth in this verse, and that is to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. See 2 Pet. 1:1-11; 1 Pet. 2:21. The words “ye shall *not* enter” are emphatic. A person who does not walk in the way of righteousness will not inherit the Kingdom. Again, the Lord emphasised the doctrine of God-manifestation in the flesh. A legalistic approach to the Truth will never put an individual into the correct frame of mind wherein they might hope to follow Christ (Mat. 19:16-17).

Vv. 21-37: CHRIST’S TEACHING MUST BE ABSORBED MENTALLY,
AND MANIFESTED MORALLY

VERSE 21

“Ye have heard that it was said”

21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said
²by them of old time, ^aThou shalt not
kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be
in danger of the judgment :

22 But I say unto you, That ^bwhoso-
ever is angry with his brother without
a cause shall be in danger of the judg-
ment : and whosoever shall say to his
brother, ³° Raca, shall be in danger of
the council : but whosoever shall say,
Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

“You have learned that our forefathers were told....” (N.E.B); “You have heard that is was said to the ancients....” (Wey.); “You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors...” (J.B.). These various renderings indicate that the Lord had in mind not merely the teaching of the Law, but the way in which it had been interpreted by the religious Leaders of his own time. Such men, in the times of Christ, although influential with the people, did not understand the spirit of the Truth.

“By them of old time”

See marg. “by” should be rendered “to”.

“Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment”

Quoted from Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17, and referring to Ex. 21:12. This was the straight-forward legalistic way in which the Jewish teachers understood and expounded these passages of Scripture. But the same Law which said “thou shalt not kill” also said: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...” (Lev. 19:17, cp. 1 Jn. 2:9-11). What was to be gained by coming down heavily in favour of a merely legalistic approach towards one commandment, whilst totally ignoring the true spirit of another? God’s word was not designed to be treated in such a fashion.

VERSE 22

“But I say unto you”

The statement which now follows is not to be understood as Christ’s teaching in *opposition* to the Law, but as the *true spirit* of the Law, as seen through the eyes of Yahweh. For the Lord Jesus spoke on behalf of Yahweh (Heb. 1:1-2).

“Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”

The idea of the word rendered “without a cause” is that of yielding to rashness or passion; hence: “every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment....” (Roth.). Unless we restrain the evil impulses of the flesh we will produce in our lives “the works of the flesh” rather than “the fruit of the spirit” (Gal. 5:19-26). If unrestrained by the influence of Christ’s example, we will not be “the light of the world” (v. 14), but will, in effect, manifest the same darkness (of mind) that the Lord condemned (Jn. 3:19). The word “judgment,” in both v. 21 and here, is rendered from the Gk. *krisis*. It is said to apply, in this context, to the Jewish civil court (the equivalent to a Lower Court, in Australian terms). cp. Deut. 16:18. Thus, the degree of God’s judgment is shown under this analogy.

“Whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council”

“Raca” was a common term in those times, to denote not merely anger but insolent contempt. The word is also said to mean “empty-headed,” and therefore represents an accusation alleging a man to be brainless or an idiot. The word “council” here has been rendered from the Gk. *sunedrion*, meaning “a settling together” (Vine), or “a sitting together, a council....” (Bullinger). The word was here applied to the Sanhedrin, and referred to a higher form of Court than the previous case.

“But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire”

**23 Therefore 'if thou bring thy gift to
the altar, and there rememberest that
thy brother hath ought against thee ;**

Hell-fire”

“Thou fool” is the equivalent of debasing a man’s integrity and character. The term would charge a person with being “dull, sluggish, stupid, foolish...morally worthless, a scoundrel...” This Gk. word (*moros*) “scorns” a person’s “heart and character” (Vine). There are, then, expressed in this verse, three degrees of reproach or detestation which we might level against others; each more intense than the previous one, and each bringing a more serious form of Court judgment. The word “hell-fire” is the Gk. *Gehenna*; so the Lord was stating that such extreme hatred leaves the unjustifiable accuser worthy to be “burned” in utter destruction.

It must be clearly understood that these various degrees of malevolence are all *the product of the flesh*, and not the spirit. There is such a thing as “righteous anger” (Mark 3:5; cp. Jn. 3:36), but the true test as to whether anger is based upon a righteous cause, is the aim and objective of the anger, and the reason for its manifestation. If anger is the outworking of fleshly impulses or reactions, or is in any sense an attempt to establish personal self-justification, it will be an ungodly form of anger, and therefore unjustifiable.

Obviously, the Lord was drawing attention to the fact that the root of all evil is found in the heart of man (Mark 7:21-23); therefore the disciple of Christ must carefully guard his innermost thoughts and emotions, and ponder his motives in all that he says and does.

VERSE 23

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee”

The Gk. *doron*, was used to denote a sacrifice. “...bearing thy gift towards the altar...” (Roth.).

There is a clear link with the previous verse, i.e., “What sort of a relationship do you have with your brethren? As you make your way towards Yahweh’s altar, indulge in deep and careful self-examination.” It has been claimed that this verse is speaking of a situation wherein the offerer, although guiltless of any crime against a brother, has a brother who holds something against him; and that, although the offerer is innocent of the alleged transgression, he must leave the altar and make an attempt at reconciliation with his misguided brother. This is not implied by the wording. The implication is that the offerer is guilty of some wrong-doing against a brother; and the conscience of the offerer, under self-examination as he approaches the altar, is awakened to the need of the moment, which is to rectify his wrong-doing. “...you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you...” (N.E.B.); “...some ground of complaint against thee...” (Knox); “...your brother has any grievance against you...” (Moff.); “...you remember that your brother has a grievance against you...” (Wey.).

The servant of God, in this present age, has an altar through which he might worship Yahweh — and that altar is Christ (Heb. 13:10). How holy is every act of divine worship. How careful we must be, as to our state of mind when we draw near to Yahweh.

VERSE 24

“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be

24 ° Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 † Agree with thine adversary quickly, ‡ whiles 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.

reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"

Vv. 21-24 deal most eloquently with certain aspects of the question of fellowship. To have fellowship with the Father, it is necessary to "walk in the light" of His Truth (1 Jn. 1:5-7) — which is to say: we must walk according to His revealed will. However, in addition to desiring fellowship with the Father, the Truth requires that we seek to walk in harmony or fellowship with one another, upon the basis of a mutual acceptance of the One Faith. Therefore, human or personal differences — as referred to here — must be settled, so that true unity and oneness may be re-established upon a spiritual basis.

The Gk. word for "reconciled" occurs only in this place. It means "to change one's own feelings towards another, so that he changes his..." (Bullinger). A beautiful meaning to a wonderful word, which, when put into practice can repair much sorrow and heartache. But it requires that the spirit of the Truth must work in *both* parties to achieve this unifying result. (Note carefully Ps. 66:13-18).

We must appreciate that this verse is not dealing with the question of reconciliation with a brother who has become doctrinally unsound, or who is walking in a disorderly way. The formula for handling such a situation as that has been set down in Matt. 18:15-17, where it should be noted that the words "against thee" (v. 15) do not appear in the original text.

VERSE 25

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him"

The illustration is drawn from the legal process which a creditor would institute to receive payment of an outstanding debt. The analogy suggests that it is better to make an arrangement with one's creditor whilst on the way to the Court rather than face the judgment of the Magistrate, which would probably involve not only repayments of the debt but also appropriate prison sentence. "Be ready for a reconciliation with your opponent, even when you meet him on your way to Court; for fear he should hand you over to the judge, and the judge to his officer, and so you should be thrown into prison..." (T.C.N.T.).

To willingly "settle" with one's creditor without being forced to do so must be seen as an act of humility — and this provides the key to understanding the message of this verse. If we were to be brought before Yahweh — who is not only the Judge, but the One to whom we are always in debt, we would be tried, convicted, condemned. Because of sin. God, in His abundant mercy, extends to us the offer of settling out of Court. "If thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:3-4). It is desirable to be of the same mind as David: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Ps. 119:63). Yahweh, through His Son, has provided the means whereby we might escape from the power of sin. See 2 Cor. 6:2.

The verse also obviously has a literal meaning, indicating that when we are at fault, and shown the error of our ways, we should immediately be prepared to be reconciled to our brother and to the principles of the Truth, in a spirit of humility and wisdom. This verse leaves no room for self-defence or self-justification when we have been shown that we have

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ^hThou shalt not commit adultery :

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever ⁱlooketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

departed from divine principles.

VERSE 26

“Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing”

“Believe me, you will not get out of there until you have paid the last farthing due” (T.C.N.T.). If we remain stiff-necked and proud, refusing to humble ourselves in face of the evidence raised against us, we will arrive before the Judge from whom we may expect to receive the justice due to us. Justice is exact and unrelenting, as the word “farthing” indicates. The word represents the quadrans, the smallest Roman coin of the period. Only mercy can save us from the otherwise inevitable sentence which justice would demand. These two verses (Vv 25-26) are intended to cause us to look inwardly upon ourselves, examining our true attitudes and motive in regard to the Truth. Are we willing to settle out of Court, exercising conscience, wisdom and humility? Or will we resolutely defend our wrong-doings and a way of life not in harmony with the truth, resulting inevitably in our being brought before the Judge to receive only justice and not mercy?

VERSE 27

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time”

See note on v. 21.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”

Jewish religious leaders who endeavoured to interpret the Law were more concerned with external practices rather than the inner state of a person’s heart. But anyone seeking the true spirit of the Law would see that the Law constantly tested the motives and convictions of the heart, and the true inward state of mind of the individual. For instance: “I had not known lust,” wrote the apostle Paul, “except the Law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’” (Rom. 7:7, quoted from Ex. 20:17). Whilst lust (that is, inordinate or unlawful desire) may well be displayed in outward action, there is no question but that it is a *state of mind*, before any action can result.

VERSE 28

“Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”

The devastating word here is “already”. Without making any move whatsoever, a man in such a case as this has become a convicted sinner. The tragic fall of David provides a compelling illustration of the precise accuracy of the Lord’s words here. When did David commit the sin which involved Bathsheba? When he “walked upon the roof of the king’s house” and “SAW a woman....” (2 Sam. 11:2, cp. v.4). And David was later to acknowledge that his troubles had begun through the giving over of his mind to adulterous thoughts: “Create in me a *clean heart*, O God; and renew a *right spirit* within me” (Ps. 51:10). “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for *out of it* are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). To the Hebrews, the heart represented the mental processes, and therefore the intellect. Yahweh is to be loved with *all* the heart (Deut. 6:5; Mat. 22:37), therefore all thoughts and desires should be directed towards Him, so that the

29 *And if thy right eye ⁴offend thee,
¹pluck 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.

disciples of Christ will become purified in their mental and moral attitudes and actions. We are called upon to bring "into captivity every *mind* (lit. Gk.) to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

This verse makes a particularly strong appeal to young people in these present evil times. Young folk today are growing up in what is termed "the permissive society," wherein moral standards of the past are little known or respected. Young people throughout the world are being corrupted and degraded because the pressures of their environment invite them to conform to the "generally accepted standards." Movies, television, music, entertainment in general, literature, fashion, the advertising industry, and even the English language, is being used powerfully to destroy moral standards and principles. Young people who desire to be in the kingdom of God should avoid contact with every worldly environment which will undermine their faith and the moral standards which the word of God requires of them. It must always be remembered that God's saints are a people at war, during this present dispensation; for they must be involved wholeheartedly in the *warfare of faith* (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rom. 6:13, see margin.; 1 Tim. 1:18-19; 2 Tim. 4:7). It requires courage and determination and a living faith, to stand aside from the evil and corruption which "is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4); but young people who are determined to set their faces resolutely towards following Christ to the glory of the kingdom will not find their confidence misplaced. Yahweh and His Son will see us through these present difficult times, if our trust and faith is in them, and if we strive to follow in the footsteps of our Master.

Finally, note the example of the Lord himself: he went through his entire life without *once* looking upon a woman in the sinful way described in this verse. It was because of his total dedication to manifesting the perfection of his Father's character that he could be described as "the word made flesh..." (Jn. 1:14).

VERSE 29

"And if thy right hand offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee"

The word "and" has been rendered "therefore" (Diag., Wey.); but whichever way the word is rendered there is an obvious connection with the previous verse. Reference is now made to the "right eye" — what we behold with our vision; and the "right hand" — the actions we perform. Obviously, the Lord was not suggesting the literal dismemberment of our bodies. It must be readily evident that such drastic action, in a physical sense, would not necessarily alter the state of mind of the individual, or affect their inner motives and desires.

The word "offend" signifies "to lay a snare for, set a trap for; hence to cause to stumble or fall...." (Bullinger). Hence: "...is causing thee to stumble" (Roth.); "...is a snare to you" (T.C.N.T.); "...leads you astray" (N.E.B.). And the use of this word "offend" indicates the Believer's ability to *discern*, because of his knowledge and understanding of the truth, that he is offending against the divine commandments. It is what the eye *observes* and transmits to the brain that is at issue. Yet, the Lord used this extreme language to indicate that no sacrifice should be regarded as being too great, in the cause of following Christ's example. Nothing must be permitted to imperil the disciple's moral standing before Yahweh. The way to eternal life may be easily jeopardised by an attitude

30 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.

31 It hath been said, ^m Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

of indifference towards sin, and towards the *cause* of sin. If our “eye” is responsible for causing us to become ensnared, the eye must be *closed* to the source of temptation. Act towards those temptations as though we were blind! (Note the powerful connection here with the previous verse).

In this regard, the Lord’s language in this place is little different to that used elsewhere: “mortify (lit. ‘put to death’) the deeds of the body...” (Rom. 8:13); “Mortify (lit. ‘to put to death’) therefore your members...” (Col. 3:5); “our old man is crucified...” (Rom. 6:6); “I am crucified with Christ...” (Gal. 2:20); “They that are Christ’s *have* crucified the flesh...” (Gal. 5:24).

The advice: “pluck it out...cut it off...” is certainly drastic. But drastic measures are needed to suppress the evil propensities of the flesh. The words represent a definite and irrecoverable course of action. Such an act requires absolute determination, and total dedication. What will come first in our lives: to serve the flesh, or to serve Christ? And there can be no half-measures or reservations about our decision to follow Christ.

“Cast it from thee”

This expression is repeated in v. 30. It is not sufficient to “pluck it out” and “cut it off...” — Evil which is produced through our flesh must be repudiated: “away with it...” (Wey.).

“It is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish”

The word “perish” is in the Middle Voice, indicating something we do for ourselves. It is a voluntary action, performed in our own best interests.

“And not that thy whole body should be cast into hell”

Gk. Gehenna. A symbol for total, irretrievable destruction. The conflict against sin is a warfare of faith, and is a life-and-death struggle.

VERSE 30

“If thy right hand offend thee”

In these two verses (Vv. 29-30) there is thus represented what we *see* and therefore what is registered on the *mind*, and the *actions* which we actually perform (cp. 7:24, where the Lord summarised his teaching in this discourse by referring to the vital importance of what we *hear* and what we *do*).

VERSE 31

“It hath been said”

See notes on v. 21.

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement”

This was the Rabbinical explanation of Deut. 24:1. But God’s view concerning this matter has been made plain: “He *hateth* putting away.” He counselled loyalty towards “the wife” of a man’s “youth” — not merely to preserve the marriage bond, but to ensure the continuation from generation to generation of a “Godly seed” (Mal. 2:13-15). Thus the marriage-question is intimately related to the doctrine of God-manifestation.

VERSE 32

32 But I say unto you, That ⁿ whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that ^o it hath been said by them of old time, ^p Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but ^q shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

“But I say unto you”

The disciples were now to listen intently to the Lord’s teaching upon this matter.

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery”

These words were intended to show the *evil result* which could accrue through a man putting-away his wife. A *husband* could become the cause of sin if he acted unwisely from a motive of self-righteousness, selfishness, or caprice.

If the woman had already become an adulteress, putting her away would not cause her to become what she was already. But if the wife was not guilty of fornication, the husband’s action in putting her away would soon make her into an adulteress when she turned to another man. If the wife was a proven adulteress, what should the husband do? The Law provided no form of putting-away for illicit acts of this nature committed after marriage; the only courses of action open to the husband were to either bring her forth and have her stoned to death, or, as an act of mercy, forgive her and refrain from exposing her guilt to others.

“There is no man which sinneth not” (2 Chron. 6:36; Prov. 20:9; 1 Jn. 1:8-9). Recognising, therefore, his *own* shortcomings and his own need of divine mercy, a husband should treat his wife in the same way in which he hopes Yahweh will treat him (1 Pet. 3:8).

“And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery”

Thus the line of guilt would be expanded to include another, in addition to the discarded wife. It should be observed that nowhere here does the Lord deal with the question of remarriage on the part of the husband. It is neither mentioned nor implied. His point was clearly made: Consider the effects of unwise actions in the putting-away of wives; husbands may well sin against their wives, rather than the wives against the husbands. And there must also be a manifestation of the element of forgiveness: “Forgive us our debts (or sins) *as we forgive* our debtors...” (Matt. 6:12).

And at the same time the husband should not demonstrate a harsh and unspiritual attitude, which would be more in keeping with the cold, unyielding attitude of legalism as practised by the champions of Judaism. The typical significance of the marriage-state should always be borne in mind by the servant of Yahweh: The husband typifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom, whilst the wife typifies the Ecclesia, the Bride of Christ. The various significant aspects of this relationship should be considered, in the light of the Lord’s words in these verses.

VERSE 33

“Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths”

“You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord” (J.B.). The reference is to the third commandment (Ex. 20:7) and Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:21. The Jews had learned to greatly abuse this commandment (Mat. 15:4-9, etc.).

The word rendered “forswear” means “to swear falsely.”

34 But I say unto you, 'Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is 'God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is 'the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

VERSE 34

“But I say unto you, swear not at all”

A clear-cut directive, without any element of a loophole. The over-riding principle is clear: the swearing of an oath did not guarantee that the person so swearing was being truthful. An honest individual will tell the truth without the need of an accompanying oath. The disciple of Christ must manifest honesty and integrity which is unimpeachable. Cp. Jas. 5:12.

“Neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne”

The Jews had become very skilful at contriving various classifications for oaths, relegating them varying degrees of respect. For instance, if one mentioned God or the Temple specifically this would carry, in their eyes, the greatest weight. All in all, it had become a most disgraceful and irreverent aspect of Jewish religious life.

This phrase, together with the first part of v. 35, appears to be a quotation from Isa. 66:1.

VERSE 35

“Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the Great King”

The last part of the verse is a quotation from Ps. 48:2. Some of the Jews thought it unwise to mention God specifically in oaths, so settled for swearing by holy things or places; but they failed to realise that they still implicated God in these actions. See Mat. 23:16-22.

VERSE 36

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black”

Even to swear by the head is to implicate God — because Yahweh created it! Man cannot change the colour of his hair — other than artificial means. And Christ’s usage of this expression was to cause his listeners to appreciate not only that God had created man, but that He exercises absolute dominion over him. In Vv 34-36 the Lord reminds us of the pointlessness and dishonesty of hypocritical religion. Men can behave very piously outwardly, and yet be corrupt within. If a person has integrity before God and man he does not have to go about proving it; his way of life is evidence of what is in his heart.

VERSE 37

“But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay”

“All you need to say is ‘yes’ if you mean yes, ‘no’ if you mean no” (J.B.). If a person is truthful, he *is* truthful, and that is the end of the matter. Events generally provide subsequent proof of whether the claim is true or false. If an individual acquires a reputation for honesty it is because he has been proven so. A statement does not need to be embellished with an oath to make it true.

“For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”

“And what goeth beyond these is of evil” (Roth.). Truth is self-sufficient. It does not require to be adorned with specious appendages. It is not necessary to add proof to truth, for truth is its own witness. Those who look beyond this straightforward principle will only

38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been
said, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth
for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, ¶ That ye re-
sist not evil: *but whosoever shall
smite thee on thy right cheek, turn
to him the other also.

do so from an evil motive. If we hold Yahweh in awe and reverence we will acknowledge the need to honour Him by speaking truthfully, and we will appreciate the consequences of failing to do so (1 Cor. 6:9; Prov. 19:5; 1 Jn 2:21; Rev. 22:15).

Vv. 38-42: HOW CHRIST'S DISCIPLES MUST REACT IN THE FACE OF EVIL TREATMENT WHICH MAY BE METED OUT TO THEM.

VERSE 38

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”

Quoted from Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21. The Law certainly stated this; and it must be borne in mind that without Law any society will degenerate into anarchy. The Law was “added because of transgressions” — Or: “It was a later addition, to make wrong-doing an offence, and to last till the coming of that ‘offspring’ to whom the promise had been made” (Gal. 3:19, T.C.N.T.). It must also be remembered that the Law provided a set of statutes by which law and order would be established and maintained for an entire nation. But Christ was not speaking to a nation. The principles of Godliness as set forth in the discourse on the Mount were addressed only to that class of people who would be prepared to separate from the evil environment of a Godless world, and dedicate their lives unto Yahweh. Thus the discourse on the Mount was never designed for society-at-large in this present dispensation.

The particular law to which the Lord here referred certainly provided for justice to be performed. But if handled in a wrong spirit, it would not allow for mercy. Now, those who would follow Christ must be prepared to adopt the lamb-like character of their Master; they must not resist evil, nor must they seek self-justification. They must await the time when Yahweh will vindicate them, walking by faith in the belief that “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). True justice and judgment can come only from Yahweh, for He alone is infallible in such matters; and the brethren of Christ must be prepared to suffer injustice, that Christ’s character might be developed within them. Only after Christ’s disciples have established their own obedience to the standards of the Christ-character will they be fit to administer justice and judgment in the Name of Yahweh (2 Cor. 10:6; Ps. 149).

VERSE 39

“But I say unto you”

Now follows the standard of behaviour that Christ requires from each one of his disciples.

“That ye resist not evil”

The word rendered “resist” relates to belligerent opposition. The Gk., *anthistemi* (from *anti*, meaning “against”; and *histemi*, meaning “to cause to stand”) means “to stand against, to set one’s self against...” In this regard, the disciples has Christ’s own example to follow (1 Pet. 2:19-23).

“Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

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

See Isa. 50:6-9; cp. Mat. 26:67-69; 27:26, 29. Unrestrained retaliation is a manifestation of flesh asserting itself. Much better for the flesh to be disciplined, guarding against any form of sin which might arise through a violent disposition and loss of self-control. It is suggested, particularly in times of war, that such conduct as this is cowardly. But it requires great courage and dedication to manifest this attitude in the face of violent attack.

VERSE 40

“If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also”

The previous verse has dealt with the disciple's reaction in the face of actual violence. Now the Lord speaks concerning matters where violence is not involved. This is a question of action which might be taken against a disciple's character. The word “will” in this verse is most important. It more correctly means “to desire” — thus, the R.V. renders: “.if any man would go to law with thee...” — in other words, settle the matter with him before it even comes to a case of meeting before a Magistrate (cp. 1 Cor. 6:7). The “coat” referred to here is a reference to an undergarment or tunic, whereas the word “cloke” refers to a more expensive outer garment.

If a man were to sue another for his undergarment it would indicate a state of abject poverty on the part of the one being sued; since he possesses nothing better, such as house or land or other assets. So to voluntarily give up the outer-garment would mean that the destitute one would be left with virtually nothing. The teaching is clear: if need be, we must be prepared to forfeit *all* we possess, in our undivided loyalty to Christ, and in the cause of developing his character within us.

VERSE 41

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain”

Verse 39 has spoken of the exercise of violence against a Saint: verse 40 deals with an attack upon one's character, or the legal processes used to dispossess a Saint. Now, the Lord speaks of those in authority who may be able to compel obedience to their demands. The word “compel” here is said to be of Persian origin, and meant “to press into service as a courier”, and then: “to force to act as a guide.” This was one of the indignities the Jews faced at the hands of their Roman oppressors in the times of Christ. Rome, at this time, represented the power and authority of government. The disciples of Christ were to co-operate with these forces, even to the point of unreasonable demands, so long as their loyalty to Christ did not suffer (Matt. 22:21; Acts 4:19; 5:29). See the case of Simon of Cyrene: Mat. 27:32. In so conforming, the brethren of Christ will quietly meditate upon the time when all human rule and authority will be put down, and *they*, the persecuted Saints, will live and *REIGN* with Christ; being no longer subject to the whims and demands of fleshly rulers. Thus, whilst they conform to the demands made upon them, their *faith* will carry them forward into the future when these trying conditions will no longer be in evidence (Hab. 2:4).

VERSE 42

42 Give to him that asketh thee,
and ^bfrom him that would borrow of
thee turn not thou away.

43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been
said, °Thou shalt love thy neighbour,
^dand hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, °Love your
enemies, bless them that curse you,
do good to them that hate you, and
pray ^ffor them which despitefully use
you, and persecute you;

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away”

The difference between these two words “asketh” and “borrow” is quite significant. The first word signifies “to entreat, beg, supplicate.... expresses a petition from an inferior to a superior...” (Bullinger). But the word for “borrow” has an altogether different meaning. In the active voice, the word means to *lend out* money; as positive action for personal gain. But when the word occurs in the Middle Voice, as in the case here, the implication is that such a person is *forced*, perhaps by some authority, to provide a loan against his will. Such “loans” were not unknown among oppressed peoples in those times. The Lord therefore called upon his disciples to respond in a kindly way and in a right spirit when called upon to provide for others in this way — whether through coercion or as an act of willing sacrifice (cp. Lev. 25:35; Deut. 15:8-11; Prov. 3:27-28).

Vv. 43-48: HOW DISCIPLES MUST POSITIVELY ACT TOWARDS OTHERS, THUS PRODUCING IN THEIR LIVES THE MORAL LIKENESS OF THEIR FATHER, WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

VERSE 43

“Ye have heard that it hath been said”

Once again the Lord was to draw attention to the way in which divine principles, as set forth in the word, had become corrupted through traditional interpretations of the Law which had developed over many centuries.

Vv. 38-42 have shown how we must *react* to the treatment that others might mete out to us. Now, Vv. 43-48 show how *we* should act *positively* towards others.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy”

The word of God never taught this. The A.V. margin appears to indicate that the second half of this clause might be taken from Deut. 23:6, but this is incorrect. There, the Law was dealing specifically with those who were enemies of *Yahweh*, and provided no grounds whatever for the exercise of personal animosity for personal reasons. See Ex. 23:4; Deut. 22:1-4; Prov. 24:17-18; 25:21).

Almost all of the 19th chapter of Leviticus deals with the question of obligations and responsibilities which the Israelite should show towards others.

The way the Lord linked these two phrases together conveys a most powerful lesson: The first clause has been correctly taken from Lev. 19:18; the second was an inference drawn from the first clause by the *natural* mind of man. When a clear and fundamental divine principle is united to a philosophy produced from the mind of the flesh, a perversion of divine truth will be the inevitable result.

VERSE 44

“But I say unto you”

Now follows the Lord’s teaching upon this question.

“Love your enemies”

A positive action. But observe that the words “you” or “your” occur five times in this verse. The emphasis is upon our relationships with our *personal* enemies. It should be understood that the Lord was not here



speaking of how we should react to Yahweh's enemies. The "love" spoken of here should not be confused with the sentimental, purely emotional idea of "love" which the world understands by this word. The Gk., *agapao*, signifies "a profound respect or reverence, based upon knowledge, and manifested by self-denial..." It is a form of love which is based entirely upon an understanding of the word and will of Almighty God, and therefore cannot be practised by anyone ignorant of divine truth. It is a love that will be manifested towards others because it is an attribute of Yahweh's character; it is a love that is God-based, God-directed, and God-honouring. Agape-love "rejoiceth *with* the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6, marg.) and therefore, when practised as Christ would have us do, will provide a practical demonstration of the outworking of the word of God in our lives. We will become "the word made flesh" to the extent that we follow Christ's own example. (Contrast Gal. 1:9; 5:12; Rev. 1:2, etc.).

"Bless them that curse you"

These are not attributes of character which are natural to man. They are, in fact, the very opposite. Thus to put these principles into action, as Christ himself did, requires that the "works" of the flesh be subdued and the "fruits of the spirit" be permitted to shine forth (Gal. 5:16-24). The word "bless" (Gk. *eulogeo*) is derived from two words: *Eu*, meaning "well" and *logos*, "a word, a speech, reason," etc. Thus, "to speak well" of someone. In other words, continue to treat them, and act towards them, as you would in the case of someone with whom you enjoyed a pleasant relationship.

This phrase, and the next, have been omitted by the R.V., Roth., Wey., T.C.N.T., Diag., and others; however, they do include this passage in Lk. 6:27-28.

"Do good to them that hate you"

Again, a positive action — but one which would, like the preceding instruction in this verse, require the exercising of humility towards the offending party and complete submission to the will of God. The greatest "good" we can do for anyone is to humbly guide them into the way of life.

"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you"

How would we pray in such a case? That the one transgressing divine principles might recognise the truth, and see in the Son of God the perfect example for human conduct. We might also pray that the trial should be removed from us — but, the primary objective of such a prayer must be the conversion of the sinner: "Pray for *them*..."

Yet, what if there should be no change in those who treat us as the Lord defines in this verse: those who are our "enemies," who "curse" us, who "hate" us, who "despitefully use and persecute" us? If such should prove the case, the Saint of God stands in a peculiar position: he must see these forms of trial as a blessing. God has permitted such trials to come upon us and has refrained from removing them so that our characters may be developed towards perfection, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith must be perfected under trial (Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10; 105:17-19; Zech. 13:9; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, etc.).

VERSE 45

"That"

45 That ye may be the children of
your Father which is in heaven: for
he maketh his sun to rise on the evil
and on the good, and sendeth rain on
the just and on the unjust.

Gk. *hopos*, "in order that, with emphasis on the manner and method...to the end that..." Occurs also in 5:16; 6:2,4,5,16,18. A most important word. The Lord was reminding his disciples that there was a grand *purpose* behind all these commandments and words of wisdom which he was delivering to them. It is not simply a question of men and women conforming to divine commandments because God will reject them if they do not; the purpose of the truth is, above all else, positive: that we might become manifestations of what the Lord Jesus was during the days of his flesh — and therefore, even though ever so imperfectly, we become manifestations of what Yahweh Himself is, and always has been. We can be recognised — from what we say and what we do — as sons and daughters of the Living God.

"Ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven"

The words "may be" are most important. The Gk., *ginomai*, implies "origin...to begin to be (suggesting origin)" (Vine). This is what we *will become* if we take the Lord Jesus Christ as our example, patterning our lives upon him, walking day by day according to those precepts and principles he has set before us. The phrase implies a transformation from what we *were* to what we *now become*, through the influence of the word of God affecting our lives.

Not "*the* Father" but "*your* Father..." The intimacy of each individual disciple's relationship to God has been stressed by the use of this particular word. And the word "children" is literally "sons" — a masculine word which embraces both men and women. Whatever their sex, they all become part of Christ's mystical Body, and thus through "the unity of the faith" become part of the "perfect man" in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13).

Consider such passages as Deut. 32:1-6, 15-20; Jn. 8:32-44).

"For"

Of this word, Bullinger wrote: "introduces that which rests on a patent fact..." (Gk. *oti*). In other words, we should learn and practise the precepts and principles the Lord taught his disciples because such an attitude will cause us to become the sons of God; and as such we must be prepared to manifest those ideals fully in our lives **BECAUSE OUR FATHER IS OUR EXAMPLE.**

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"

Yahweh is good and generous to all, in that He provides the necessities of life without partiality. God blesses those who curse Him, and sends rain and sunshine upon His enemies. Can we not endeavour to follow His example, by practising, in love and faith, those attributes of character which the Lord Jesus recommends to us in this section of the Word? The sun and the rain are the two sources from above which provide sustenance to the natural man. Similarly, we can equate the "sun" with the "light" which we should reveal to mankind (v. 14); and at the same time we extend the water of life to a perishing world (Jn. 4:14; 7:37-38).

VERSE 46

"If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans do the same?"

46 ^hFor if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

48 ⁱBe ye therefore perfect, even ^kas your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

“For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not?” (J.B.). Tax-gatherers, generally ruthless servants of an occupying power, were held in contempt by the general populace.

The R.V. margin has: “That is, collectors or renters of Roman taxes.” The Lord was making a very powerful point: it is *natural* to extend love and warmth (and even sacrifice) to those who manifest these same qualities towards us. But what the Lord demands of us transcends that which comes naturally; he requires that we reveal qualities which are *not* natural to man, but are reflections of the divine character. The disciple of Christ must be helpful, considerate, and thoughtful for all classes of society; particularly insofar that the Saints have been called to shine forth as “the light of the world,” and offer the saving power of the truth to all who will hear and receive it.

VERSE 47

“And if ye salute your brethren only”

From those with whom we have a close and intimate relationship, exercising agape-love towards them and they towards us, the Lord now turned his attention to those with whom we have a lesser relationship. The word “brethren” has been rendered from the Gk. adelphos, meaning “a brother” or “near kinsman.” God did not wait for us to learn to agape-love *Him* before He was prepared to show love for us: “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). And: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:9-10). If this is Yahweh’s way of dealing with others, should it not be ours also? It will be so, of course, if we are truly “the children” of our “Father” (v. 45).

“Do not even the Publicans?”

Some Gk. text have telones, “a tax-gatherer,” as in the previous verse; but other MSS. have ethniki, meaning “gentiles.” The latter word, it would appear, is to be preferred. And there must be an important reason for the Lord to have switched his contrast from the hated tax-gatherers to gentiles in a broad sense. Why? The answer lies in the difference between the agape-love of v. 46 and the comparatively lesser activity of saluting, or politely greeting and being kindly disposed towards people, as the word in v. 47 indicates. It appears that the Lord was saying, in effect: “all the world about you knows how to salute their brethren and they are ignorant of the Truth. But, as my disciples, you must realise that far more is required of you. You must manifest an attitude towards others which is based on far higher ideals than mere human warmth and friendliness.”

VERSE 48

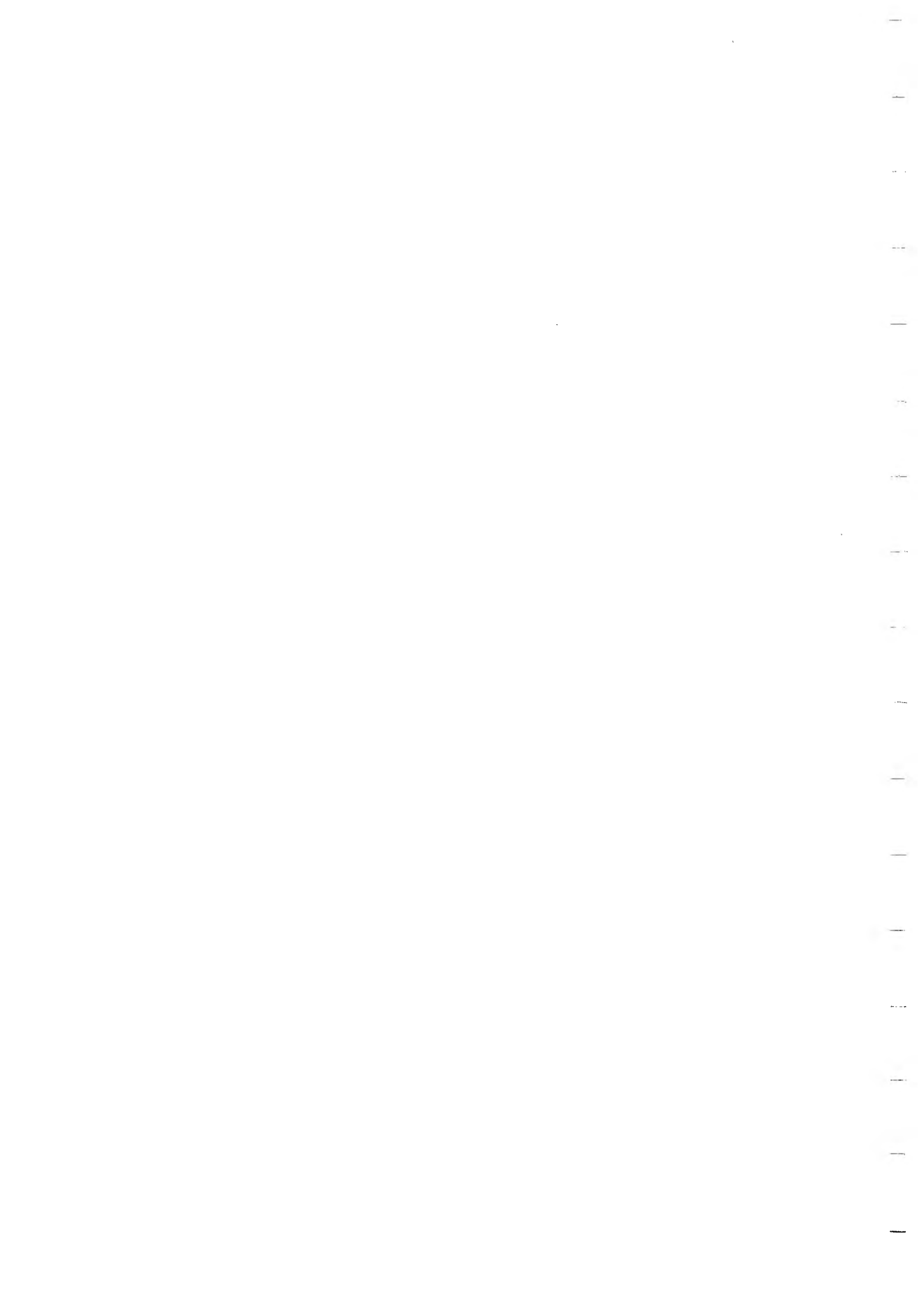
“Be ye therefore perfect”

The first three of these words, in the A.V., have been rendered from one Gk. word. When using this word of one’s self it means “I shall be...” In this context, it should be rendered “Ye shall be...” See Ex. 3:14.

The word "perfect" has been rendered from the Gk. *teleios*, which means "what has reached its end, term, or limit; hence complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was intended" (Bullinger). The word occurs twice in this chapter, telling us that we *must become* what Yahweh is now. We should "*learn*" what this means, seeing Christ came to call "sinners to repentance" (Mat. 8:13). True righteousness must become the way of life for Christ's disciples. It is a stated fact that except our "righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" we shall "in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (v. 20). The scribes and Pharisees were spiritually deficient. They did not have a true intellectual understanding of the principles of righteousness, and were therefore unable to manifest righteousness in a real and practical way. The grand objective of the truth is to change men and women mentally, morally, and physically, into manifestations of Yahweh. Thus, from being young in years, or young in the truth, we must strive to "grow up", as sons of our Father, to attain to a degree of spiritual maturity which will fit us for the kingdom.

The fundamental message to Christ's disciples, as set forth in the discourse on the Mount, is an amplification of the basic message to God's people which permeates the Old Testament scriptures: "*YE shall be holy; for I am holy..*" (Lev. 11:44-45, etc.).

"Try to live at peace with everyone, and to attain to that purity without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14, T.C.N.T.).



MATTHEW

CHAPTER SIX

- Vv 1- 4:** A warning against hypocrisy in alms-giving.
- Vv 5-15:** The correct purpose and spirit of acceptable prayer.
- Vv16-23:** God must be served from the heart, in keeping with the light of the truth.
- Vv24-32:** Warning against becoming over-anxious about the materialistic things of life — we cannot serve God and the flesh.
- Vv33-34:** The truth must motivate us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness — a cause to which we must be dedicated each and every day.

TAKE heed that ye do not your
²alms before men, to be seen of
them: otherwise ye have no reward
³of your Father which is in heaven.

CHAPTER 6

Vv 1-4: A WARNING AGAINST HYPOCRISY IN ALMS-GIVING

VERSE 1

“Take heed”

This word (Gk. *prosecho*) has been rendered “beware” seven times in the A.V. See Mat. 7:15; 10:17; 16:6, 11, 12, etc. It is evident that the Lord used the word in this place as a warning against unwise actions. The Jerusalem Bible has rendered it, aptly, “Be careful...” This warning was necessary and fully justified, in view of the weakness of the *nature* we bear; a nature which is prone toward evil rather than good; a nature which will incline us to act according to our fleshly desires rather than according to divine precepts, unless we are aware of the ever-present danger, and positively counteract the weaknesses which are produced by the flesh. Such counteraction can be produced only from “the wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:17).

“That ye do not your alms before men”

The Gk. texts vary. Some have *elcemosune*, meaning “pity, compassion; a work of mercy....” But most probably (according to Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and the Sinaiticus MSS) the word was *dikaiosune*, which has been rendered “righteousness” 94 times in the A.V. The R.V., which has “righteousness” is “according to the most authentic texts” (Vine.). The word signifies “the character or quality of being right or just” (Vine). But the Lord’s warning was to the effect that we should not confuse outward displays of apparent righteousness (such as manifested by the Pharisees) with true righteousness. The former resulted from fleshly pride, whereas the latter resulted from the outworking of divine principles held deeply and with integrity in the intellect of a true disciple. The Pharisees exhibited a pseudo-righteousness in regard to the giving of money (v. 2), prayer (v. 5), and fasting (v. 16). They failed to practise true righteousness because they sought material wealth out of a wrong motive (v. 19), they were full of darkness (v. 23), they served two masters (v. 24), they were engrossed in such questions as what they should eat and drink and what they should wear (v. 25), and they were concerned to maintain their present positions (v. 31). They were not, in short, *SEEKING first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And it was impossible that they should do so as long as they remained engrossed in the worship of *Self*.

“To be seen of men”

This was the root of Pharisal error. “Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men...” (N.E.B.); “...to be gazed at...” (Roth.); “...in order to be noticed...” (Moff.) The verb, *theamai*, is derived from *theoros*, “a spectator.” The desire of the Pharisee was to be seen; to be *seen* to be righteous. But such religion did not spring from a love of God and a desire to please Him, and was therefore a form of hypocrisy (v. 2).

“Otherwise ye have no reward”

This word occurs six times in the discourse on the Mount. It relates to “hire, wages, pay”. The Pharisee received *his* reward: the respect of *MEN!* What an empty, pointless, frivolous reward. They may have impressed men, but they did not impress God. The Saint in Christ,

2 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.

though, has higher ideals, based upon the deeply spiritual motive of desiring to honour his Father in heaven.

“Of your Father”

The A.V. margin, “with” is to be preferred. The allusion to God-manifestation is clear. A true son of God desires not only to please Yahweh, but eventually to become completely at one with Him.

VERSE 2

“When thou doest thine alms”

Use of the pronoun “thou” points directly at the responsibility of the disciple. He *must* perform “alms” — but here the word is different to that in verse 1. The Gk. eleemosune finds its place here (cp. v. 1). The “alms” to be enacted by Believers must be directed towards the welfare of others, and therefore are selfless so far as motive and objective are concerned. They show “pity” or “compassion” or “mercy” towards those in need of those blessings. This word has no true application if our actions are performed for self-glorification.

“Do not sound a trumpet before thee”

“do not announce it with a flourish of trumpets” (N.E.B.); “do not have it trumpeted before you” (J.B.). An ironical play-on-words, the meaning of which is explained by the next phrase.

“As the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets”

There were thirteen chests in the Temple, with trumpet-shaped openings for the depositing of money. They were called “Shopharoth” (“trumpets”). They were literally described as “trumpets” in the Talmud. It was possible to deposit large coins into the boxes in such a way as would make a loud noise, thus turning the heads of by-standers towards the one making the “offering.” Those who ostentatiously dropped money into the chests in this way were “blowing their own trumpets.”

The word “hypocrite” means, literally, “one who answers” and came to mean “one who plays a part, a play-actor.” An individual who practises such a religious performance begins by deceiving *others*, but ultimately becomes lost in self-deception. No one is able to deceive God.

The true disciple of Christ will constantly recall the challenging words of the apostle Paul: “Examine yourselves!” (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5) and will continually explore his motives and endeavour to maintain his integrity before God.

In sacrificing for Yahweh or for men, everything depends upon the *motive*.

“That they may have glory of men”

They reserved their most impressive performances for those occasions when they were prominently in the public eye. And they had but one deep-seated ambition: “to win men’s admiration” (J.B.). But all glory should be ascribed to God, and none whatever to flesh.

“Verily, I say unto you”

The word “verily” occurs six times in these three chapters, including 6:13, where it has been rendered “amen”. The word has been transliterated from Hebrew into both Gk. and English. (cp. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; 65:16; Ps. 19:7, etc). The word means “truth, faithful, sure, so be it.” The Lord used the word often, to introduce a particularly weighty or important statement.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth :

4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself ^b shall reward thee openly.

“They have their reward”

“They have received in full their reward” (Wey.). This is what they sought; this is what they *have* received; a “reward” during their own lifetime, but with no further hope beyond the grave. A fleshly ambition will bring a fleshly reward.

VERSE 3

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”

Again, the word “thou” points directly to the responsibilities incumbent upon one who would follow Christ. The phrase means: “Do not closely observe what you do for others; do not even think about what you have done, lest you be found guilty of pride, through dwelling upon your achievements.” Alms, when performed from a holy motive, are acts of mercy and compassion, not acts designed for self-justification. cp. Lk. 18:9-12.

VERSE 4

“That thine alms may be in secret”

Gk. *kruptos*, akin to *krupton*, “to hide.” Humility will cause this attitude on our part. Unpretentiously, we will “hide” our alms *from men*; for we know that nothing can be hidden from God. God observes all that we do, whether openly or modestly. But it is not necessary to display pretentiousness to draw God’s attention. Yahweh is pleased when the motive of *the heart* is right, and remains unimpressed with mere outward show.

“Shall reward thee”

The contrast now is between the reward which men can give and the reward which Yahweh will surely give to all who faithfully honour and serve Him. God will, indeed, “give it back to thee” (Roth.). In other words, nothing which is done out of a right spirit and correct motive will remain unrewarded, so far as Yahweh is concerned. There is a sure reward for all who serve God “in spirit and in truth.” Yet true followers of Christ do not strive to fulfil God’s will because of the rewards which have been promised, but because they love Yahweh and His Son, and seek, above all else, that God might be honoured and glorified. Paul told the Philippian Ecclesia that “fruit” would “abound” to their “account” (Phil. 4:17) because they had sacrificed on the apostle’s behalf. The brethren at Philippi, Paul suggested, had “invested” wisely in their dedication to the truth. They will receive their “reward” when Christ returns. The word for “reward” (Gk. *apodidomi*) has been used significantly in Mat. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12.

“Openly”

Omitted by the R.V., Roth., and others. The word would not really add anything to the previous statement. See Psa. 37:6.

Vv 5-15: THE CORRECT PURPOSE AND SPIRIT OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

VERSE 5

“And when thou prayest”

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.

The word for prayer, in the Gk., has the prefix “pros”, meaning “towards” or “in the direction of.” In this context the word speaks of private, intimate prayers, addressed by Believers *towards* God. The implication is that in this situation the mind of the individual is centred upon God, not upon self. Prayer is the means by which we establish intimate communion with our Heavenly Father. It is an awesome privilege, and can only be contemplated by mere mortals with an attitude of utter humility.

“The hypocrites...love to pray”

The word for “love” is not the selfless agape-love, but *phileo* — the type of love practised in a friendly relationship. The word represents “tender affection” (Vine) — and it is possible for individuals to feel this type of love *of themselves!* The word as it occurs here (*philousi*) is in the present indicative tense, and literally means “they *are* loving to pray...” or “they *are* taking pleasure in praying...” But the prefix “pros” is now pointing in another direction: the hypocrites were praying “towards” themselves. Their prayers were centred upon self, not upon God.

In the times of Christ, explicit times for prayer had been established, and even the form of prayer was often of a ritualistic concept. If, therefore, the Pharisees “happened” to be in a prominent place at prayer-time, they would be seen by many people.

“Standing”

There was nothing wrong in standing for the purpose of offering prayer. We follow the custom today, especially in our communal meetings. Christ did not condemn them for standing. It was the *motive* behind the action which he censured. The Pharisees stood to be seen of men.

“Synagogues and in the streets”

The most prominent places, where the largest crowds would be gathered or passing by.

“That they may be seen of men”

“that they may *shine* before men” (Roth.). The Gk. word, *phaino*, is in the Active Voice — they were busy working at it! The Lord had now dealt with two classes of people who would be seen to shine: his disciples were to “shine” before men (5:16, Gk., *lampo*); and the Pharisees would do likewise. But what a contrast in the two forms of light: one would be the light of Christ’s mental and moral likeness; the other would be the light of the flesh (cp. Prov. 26:12; Isa. 5:20-21; 8:20, etc.).

“They have their reward”

As in V. 2, “they have received in full their reward...” (Wey.). They have no other reward than this. Human pride produces a pathetic and pitiable result. “All flesh is grass, and all the *glory* of *man* as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away...” (Isa.40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24).

VERSE 6

“When thou prayest, enter thy closet”

“whenever” (Wey., T.C.N.T.) No particular set time or times is implied in the use of this word (cp. *occ.* v. 2, v. 5, v. 16). The Lord therefore implied that his disciples should pray when they felt the need

6 But thou, when thou prayest, °enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, °use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: °for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

for communion with their Father, and not according to the formal ritual of the Pharisees. Cp. Isa. 26:20; 2 Kings 4:33.

“Shut thy door”

A seeking after privacy. A deliberate action, as with the publicity-seeking Pharisee. But the action of Christ's disciple is in direct contrast to the action of the Pharisee, because his motive and intention is equally opposite to that of the Pharisee. See Christ's example: Mat. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Jn. 6:15.

“Pray to thy Father which is in secret”

“pray to your Father who is there in the secret place” (N.E.B., cp. J.B., Roth.). Prayer, apart from the occasions when the united Body meets as one, is a private affair because it is the exercise of an intimate communion between an individual and God. In following this custom, the Believer is merely practising what Yahweh Himself does: He remains invisible to the eyes of men, and yet is not beyond the reach of His true sons and daughters. The Father dwells in the heavens (1 Tim. 6:16; Acts 7:55-56; Deut. 10:14) and yet is everywhere present by His spirit (Ps. 139:7-12). A Believer may shut all the world out from the privacy of his room, yet Yahweh remains.

“Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee”

A reiteration of the points made in v. 4: Yahweh sees — from a position of secrecy — He will reward for faithfulness. It should be stressed that the word for “reward” in v. 4 and v. 6 (apodidomi) means “to give away *from one's self*,” and hence to “bestow.” This is the reward God will give to those who love and obey Him. But the word for “reward” in v. 5 and v. 2, concerning the “reward” the Pharisees received, is quite different (misthos) and simply means “hire, wages, pay.” The latter word was used in reference to the Saints in v. 1, but from v. 2 to v. 6 the Lord seems to develop the two words in contrast. The reward that the saint hopes to receive goes beyond simply “wages,” because it is something that will be sent forth *from* God. The words in v. 4 and v. 6 are therefore more meaningful and more personal than can possibly be conveyed by the other word.

“Openly”

Omit.

VERSE 7

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do”

“In your prayers do not go babbling on, like the heathen” (N.E.B.) “do not babble...” (J.B.). This word occurs nowhere else, Gk. battologeo, “to babble” (Bullinger). In this verse the Lord was not necessarily condemning prayers because of their length. After all, the Lord himself on occasions communed with his Father in prayer throughout the night (Lk. 6:12; cp. Mat. 26:36-44). The gentiles were known for haranguing their gods incessantly. They prattled laboriously, without reverence or mature thought. They prayed upon the inane principle that if they spoke loudly enough and long enough they would surely be heard. But the Lord was not being critical of the length of time spent in prayer, nor the inward fervour with which such prayers might be poured out to the Father. He condemned the mechanical repetition of set words, or thoughtless,

**8 Be not ye therefore like unto them:
for your Father knoweth what things
ye have need of, before ye ask him.**

insincere repetition. Prayer to Yahweh, as we have already seen, is an awesome privilege, and should be respected as such.

Prayer should not be entered upon lightly, and as a general rule not without prior thoughtful meditation.

“For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”

It is not the volume of words that will impress God; it is the motive of the heart, a true understanding on the part of the one offering prayer, and a genuine desire on the part of the offerer to see Yahweh honoured and glorified. Eloquence counts for little in the Father’s eyes. A disciple who is not fluent or expressive in his use of words, and who might even utter his prayer with a feeling of utter inadequacy, will be heard and answered if he has integrity in Yahweh’s eyes.

VERSE 8

“Be not ye therefore like unto them”

“Do not copy their example...” (T.C.N.T.): “Do not, then, imitate them...” (Wey.). We cannot claim to be God’s sons and daughters whilst at the same time mimicking the gentiles. These words carry a clear message of the need for Yahweh’s servants to be *different* to the world about them; especially in their personal worship of God. Two key words describe life in the truth: SEPARATION and DEDICATION. Without this two-fold application of divine principles we will not be pleasing to our Father; for He calls upon us to separate ourselves from the world and all forms of ungodliness (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 4:5-6) and dedicate our lives fully to Him (Matt. 22:37). We are therefore not to be “like unto” the gentile world, which knows not God and does not honour Him according to the precepts laid down in His word. We should most fully appreciate our high and lofty calling when either involved in a study of the word or communing with our Father in prayer. In either case we are reminded, by the exercise of our minds on such occasions, that he is the One who is highly exalted above us, and we are but the work of His hands who should become malleable clay so that He might form and mould us according to His will and His purpose.

The Gk. word which has been rendered “be like” is in the passive tense, and indicates that Believers must not passively accept gentile ways and standards. The disciple of Christ is to willingly *resist* these influences in his life, and to knowingly and positively pursue a way of life which is in harmony with the example set before him by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of”

The Lord was not referring to things like new motor cars, suits or dresses of the latest fashion, the fulfilment of our worldly ambitions. Certainly Yahweh is sympathetic to our mundane *needs* (not our wants), and we have been assured that He will provide if we walk by faith (Ps. 37:25, etc.). But our greatest needs are those provisions by which we may develop the character of His Son, and thus become fitted for an entrance into the kingdom. Prayer must not become an exercise in selfishness; in all that we pray for we should have uppermost in our minds the grandest objective of all: that Yahweh might be glorified.

To pray rightly and in a correct spirit is to plead the cause of righteousness.

“Before ye ask him”

9 After this manner therefore pray
ye: 'Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Why, then, pray at all? For one reason only: to demonstrate our faith, and our total acceptance of the precept that we must believe that God *“IS and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him...”* (Heb. 11:6). In this way we are not only demonstrating our filial love for our Father, and seeking oneness with Him, but also showing that we fervently desire the fulfilment of His purpose, as He does Himself. When we pray in this spirit we are acknowledging His power to provide, His power to fulfil, and our own helplessness without Him. In divine worship we are to humble ourselves and exalt the Father (1 Pet. 5:6-7; Mat. 23:12; Ps. 55:17, 22, etc.).

VERSE 9

“After this manner therefore pray ye”

The prayer that follows was not intended to be slavishly followed, as is done in the churches of christendom; it was Christ’s objective to set down a *pattern* and a guide for acceptable prayer. God will only be receptive to prayers of this nature by those who are in covenant relationship with Him, as the first two words of the prayer imply; and who worship Him *“in spirit and in truth”* (Jn. 4:23-24).

The prayer was divided into two parts: an introduction followed by seven petitions.

“Our Father”

These words can be used only by those who qualify as sons or daughters of the Living God. They have been begotten by Him, through the word of Truth (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:8; Rom. 8:14). We are characterised as sons or daughters of God not merely because we have learned and accepted *“first principles”* and been baptised, but because we are struggling to develop in our lives the character of the One whom we address as *“our Father...”* The opening two words of the prayer are tremendously exhortational; because they indicate not only what God *IS* but what we *should be...* If He is our Father, we must be His sons and daughters. And we are only His sons and daughters if we are a reflection of *what He is* (Mal. 1:6; 3:16-17). A true son or daughter of Yahweh will strive to become like their Father: Col. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:3.

In addressing Yahweh as *“our Father”* we are not only acknowledging Him as such, but we are accepting, humbly, a subordinate position, and confessing our willingness and readiness to submit to His will. This may even involve a sober acceptance of any chastisement which He may see fit to bring upon us, for reasons which would be to our ultimate advantage (Heb. 12:5-7). (Note that the prayer was addressed to One, and One only, thus dealing a death-blow to the doctrine of the trinity; for if there *was* a triune God, and each was *“co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial”* with the others, would it not be necessary for the prayer to begin: *“Our Fathers”*? How could a worshipper single out the Father for prayer, when there were two other Gods who were His equal in all respects? Such an approach to a triune God would be utterly disrespectful, to say the least).

“Which art in Heaven”

We not only acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being, but we also accept that there is a place where He literally dwells, in glory. He is enthroned in a particular part of the heavens (Josh. 2:11; 1 Kings 8:30, 32,

10 Thy kingdom come. ^s Thy will
be done in earth, ^h as *it is* in heaven.

34, 36, 39, 45, 49; Job 22:2; Ps. 11:4; 33:13; 110:1; Heb. 9:24, etc.).

“Hallowed be thy name”

This is the first of the seven petitions. The word “hallowed” (Gk. *hagiazō*) occurs 29 times in the N.T., and only twice has it been rendered “hallowed”; here, and in Luke’s account of “the Lord’s prayer” (Lk. 11:2). 26 times the word has been rendered “sanctify,” and once “holy.” Hence, “May thy name be held holy” (T.C.N.T.); “May thy name be kept holy” (Wey.). The word means “that which has been set apart, sanctified, made holy.” Yahweh’s Name expresses what He *is*, together with a revelation of His purpose; for His name means “He Who Will Be” or “He Who Will Become” (Ex. 3:14). He is a God who *is*, who *was*, and who *will be*. His purpose is to manifest Himself in a glorified multitude of individuals who are of Adam’s race. Christ was of Adam’s race and manifested perfect obedience to his Father’s will; he therefore became the forerunner of those who would strive to follow in his steps (Heb. 6:20; 1 Jn. 3:2). We are, in this present dispensation, being taken “out” of the gentiles to become a “people for His Name” (Acts 15:14). Israel had been called out of Egypt for this very purpose (Ex. 19:5-6) but had failed to honour that objective (Jer. 13:10-11), and therefore profaned His Name (Ezek. 36:20).

There is the possibility that we may be found guilty of the same violation. Knowing the truth, being baptised and attending meetings provides no guarantee of salvation. The Truth is not something to be trifled with or treated in an off-handed way. To have a hope of entering the kingdom we must be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), and must strive to live in a holy and righteous manner, as befitting those who have been called “sons” of God (1 Pet. 1:13-16; Eph. 5:1-2, etc.).

It is significant that the first of the seven petitions set forth in this prayer concerns the holiness of God’s Name, and that its holiness was to be recognised and revered by Yahweh’s people. (cp. Jn. 17:17, 21, 23, 26). We can only pray “Hallowed be thy Name” when we are prepared to subordinate our will, our minds and our actions to the will and purpose of Yahweh, as revealed in His Name; and to glorify Him accordingly (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:17-19, etc.).

VERSE 10

“Thy Kingdom come”

This is “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). It is tragic to consider that millions of people throughout the earth mouth this phrase, time after time, and yet remain ignorant of its meaning. What a privileged people we are to understand the “hope” that is set before Christ’s disciples! God’s kingdom existed upon earth in the past (1 Chron. 28:5; 2 Chron. 9:8; 13:8); but with Christ’s second coming God will fulfil “the promise made unto the fathers” (of Israel): Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:16-18; 2 Sam. 7:10-16. These promises all focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the “seed” promised, and therefore the One who will inherit the promises. But all who become his brethren, according to the principles of the Truth, will inherit with him: Gal. 3:29; 1 Cor. 15:23. God’s kingdom will be the restored kingdom of Israel, (Lk. 1:31-33; Mat. 19:28; Acts 1:6; 3:21) and will therefore be a divine political kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27;

11 Give us this day our 'daily bread.

Isa. 2:2-4; Rev. 11:15, etc.).

To pray "Thy Kingdom come" is to pray for a number of things, if we have a correct understanding of the Truth. We will be praying for:

- The return of Christ to the earth.
- The resurrection of his faithful disciples.
- The reward of eternal life for the faithful.
- The overthrow of all human governments.
- The restoration of Israel.
- The establishment of Christ on the throne of David, as king over Israel and over all the earth.
- The establishment of the kingdom throughout the whole world.
- The furtherance of the divine purpose, to fill all the earth with "the glory of Yahweh".

"Thy will be done in earth"

After the kingdom has been established, this stage of God's purpose will be further developed. But as we look towards this glorious future, with the eye of faith, it is pointless to pray fervently for this state to become a reality in the future if we are not striving to fulfil it now, in each one of us as an individual son or daughter of God. There is little purpose in praying for something in the future unless the principle means something to us *now* (Mat. 6:33; 7:21; 12:50; Rom. 6:6; Colos. 1:9-10; Eph. 6:6 etc.). God's "will" will be done in earth when Christ returns with the power and authority to take up his kingdom and reign. A revelation of the truth will elicit a dramatic response from the survivors of the divine judgments (Jer. 16:19), and they will learn to conform freely, of their own will, to divine ideals (Isa. 2:3; Ps. 72:11, etc.).

"As it is in heaven"

The Believer, as he prays, is to contemplate the perfection that exists in the presence of the Father. There is there, light and truth and glory and an awesome scene of utter holiness, righteousness and perfection. It is impossible for the mind of man to appreciate the reality of being in the presence of the Father's throne; but, with limited comprehension, we can contrast that state with the present state upon the earth ("the whole world lieth in wickedness" — 1 Jn. 5:19); and long for the time when a situation similar to that now existing in heaven will become a reality upon the earth. In heaven, the angels delight to perform God's will (Ps. 103:20-21; Neh. 9:6). It is our hope to be made "equal unto the angels" (Lk 20:36); and therefore, if we are admitted into the kingdom, it will be our delight and privilege to assist towards establishing upon earth the same state which now exists in heaven.

The R. V. captures this ideal, simply and beautifully; "As in heaven, so on earth."

VERSE 11

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Here was a statement which, to the Lord's immediate hearers would mean a great deal in a literal sense. In the times of Christ, there were virtually only two classes of people: the very rich and the very poor. The poor did not know, for much of their lives, where their next meal would come from. This state of affairs is almost impossible to imagine in this country in an age of affluence; but it was a very real situation in the time

12 And ^kforgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors.

of Christ. Thus, day by day, Christ's disciples must live BY FAITH, believing that God will provide for their needs. Bread was the staple diet of the poorer classes; so they were certainly not asking God for very much. Merely the basic essentials to life — a powerful lesson for us of this present generation, when so very often we expect so much. (Think upon this: compare our basic *needs* in life with our *desires* and our aims and objectives. See Prov. 30:8-9).

But whilst these words would have an important and very real meaning to the Lord's hearers, the expression has a far deeper signification. The word rendered "daily" is from the Gk. *epiousios*. The word occurs only twice: here, and in Luke's counterpart of the same prayer, Lk. 11:3. The key to the importance of the word is in the prefix, *epi*, which means "upon, to come upon" and therefore implies "to come from above." The phrase could be more literally translated: "give us this day our bread or sustenance which comes upon us from above..." The second part of the word, *ousios*, is most likely derived from *ousia*, meaning "goods" or "substance," and it has only ever been rendered in these two ways in the A.V. An allusion to the manna in the wilderness is not difficult to accept. But of the greatest importance is the symbolic significance of the manna. It typified the word of God descending from heaven for the spiritual growth and development of His sons and daughters (Mat. 4:4; Jn. 6:27, 32, 48-51, etc.). Therefore, the primary objective the Lord would have had in mind in this petition would have been the constant provision of SPIRITUAL FOOD whereby the disciples might be sustained unto life eternal.

VERSE 12

"And forgive us our debts"

The Gk. word for "forgive" (*aphiemi*) means "to send away, dismiss, set free" (Bullinger). An allusion to the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement seems too clear to be rejected (Lev. 16:20-22; cp. Isa. 53:6, 12). Forgiveness of sins and atonement are inexorably linked. Note John's usage of this same word in language highly suggestive of the Day of Atonement: 1 Jn. 1:9. The word for debts (Gk. *opheilema*) occurs only here and in Rom. 4:4.

Literally, "that which is legally due." That which is legally due to each one of us is death, because that is the wages paid by sin (Rom. 6:23). But through Christ's sacrifice we have the means whereby our sins might be forgiven. The word has been rendered in many ways: "shortcomings..." "offences..." "trespasses..." "debts..." This last is given in the J.B., N.E.B., Roth., R.V., etc, and is to be preferred. Whilst this is a petition which can only be truly offered in an attitude of abject humility, yet it is a petition of hope; because, as the disciple prays in this way, he is automatically acknowledging Yahweh's *power* and *willingness* to forgive sins, under the right terms and conditions. The petition expresses a need for divine grace and mercy. Anyone who is not in covenant-relationship with God through His Son — a state attained to through belief in the Truth and baptism — cannot offer this petition with any hope of his wishes being granted. God has provided the means by which sins can be forgiven; and individuals must conform to those requirements if they wish to inherit the kingdom.

13 ¹And lead us not into temptation,
but ^mdeliver us from evil: ⁿFor thine
is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever. Amen.

The parallel passage in Luke has the word "sins" (hamartia — "to miss the mark"). Matthew and Luke are not in conflict with each other; for sins are debts. Sin represents a short-coming on our part in our service to God. There are sins of omission as well as sins of commission, and any failure on our part must be regarded as a failure to honour our commitment to our Father.

"As we forgive our debtors"

Lit., "as we *have* forgiven our debtors...." (Diag., N.E.B.; cp. Roth., J.B., Moff., etc.). It has often been said that the Lord Jesus does not ask us to do anything he has not already done himself; and sometimes that principle must work in reverse: how can we ask God to do something for us which *we* have not *already* been prepared to do for others? If we desire to receive grace from Yahweh, we must be prepared to extend it ourselves. cp. Mat. 18:21-35.

VERSE 13

"And lead us not into temptation"

The word "lead" (Gk. eisago) is a combination of eis ("into") and ago ("to bear, bring, carry, lead"). The R.V. perhaps renders it best: "*bring us not...*" This is supported by Roth., Wey. and others. The phrase represents a ready admission on our part concerning the *weakness* of our nature. We dare not boast in our strength to meet trial and overcome it. In times of testing we face our greatest dangers. The word rendered "temptation" very often has the meaning of "trial" rather than "temptation" (See 1 Pet. 4:12). And there is a significant difference between the meanings of the two words. The word (peirasmos) has only ever been rendered "temptation" "trial" or "try", in the A.V. God does not tempt any man, in that He deliberately tries to induce them to sin (Jas. 1:13). Such a suggestion would be abhorrent to anyone who understands the perfection of the divine character. But He does put our faith to the *test*. And that is as it should be. If we say we have faith, God has every right to require proof of our fidelity. There is a positive purpose in bringing us into trial: and it is that "the trial" of our "faith" being "much more *precious* than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet. 1:6). At the same time, whilst we accept the inevitability of our faith being put to the test, we do not wish to fall into sin as a result of our trials. Though our Father might bring us into trial, we earnestly desire that He will help us to avoid sinning against Him. The idea of this petition has been reasonably captured, thus: "Abandon us not to trial, but preserve us from evil" (Diag.).

"But deliver us from evil"

The word "deliver" (Gk. rhuomai) means "to draw or snatch to one's self;" hence gen. "to draw or snatch from danger, to rescue, to deliver" (Bullinger). Yahweh's purpose in putting us to the test is to develop our character; thus, whilst we are to humbly accept the trials which might come upon us, we trust that He will snatch us away from the weaknesses of our sinful natures, strengthening us in our hour of need. We do not have the strength or the capacity to overcome sin, unaided, and must constantly throw ourselves upon our Heavenly Father, and the mercy which He will extend to those who love Him, and honour Him by striving

14 ° For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

15 But ^p if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

to walk in His ways (Eph. 2:8). The “evil” from which we ask God to deliver us may emanate from only two sources: our own hearts (Mark 7:21, etc.) or the godless environment of a wicked and apostate world (Jas. 4:4).

“For thine is the kingdom”

“Manuscript evidence for the doxology following the word ‘evil’ is now recognised as not adequately supported by original manuscripts.” (Footnote, “The New Testament from 26 Translations,” p. 22). The R. V., R.S. V., Roth., Wey., T.C.N.T., J.B., and others omit all words in this verse after “evil.” It has been suggested that all Jewish prayers of this nature ended in such a doxology as follows the word “evil” and that probably the words were added later to conform to the standard form of such a Jewish prayer. There is certainly nothing wrong with the doxology, as it quite clearly expresses what is the truth.

As we conclude our consideration of what has been termed “the Lord’s prayer,” let us consider the wise counsel of Eccles. 5:2-7. Before we can offer acceptable prayer we must acknowledge that it is Yahweh who is exalted above all, and we are mere creatures of the dust. He is highly exalted; we must become humble and lowly. We cannot, therefore, approach Him with an easy familiarity, or with casual indifference. Prayer must never become a mere mechanical exercise. We should concentrate carefully whilst offering our prayers, having our minds fully centred upon the One whom we call upon.

VERSE 14

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you”

“Forgive” is the same as in v. 12. “Trespasses” conveys another aspect of sin: the word (Gk. *paraptoma*) means “to fall away; to fall beside....” The word cannot be applied merely to the question of legal indebtedness; it is an all-embracing word and is descriptive of any form of trespass. Often in life we find that people let us down, or oppose us without foundation, or even betray us. But do we not, on occasions, treat God in this same way when we trespass against Him? It is a *natural* reaction to “hit back” (physically, or verbally, or even with mere aloof hostility) at those who have treated us in that way. But the Lord taught that it is *spiritual* to rise above such natural impulses. Evil inclination of the flesh should be subdued. Considerations that revolve around Self, or self-justification should be suppressed. The Believer must always, in any situation, think first and foremost of what the will of God would be. Nothing can be more vital than following in the footsteps of the Son of God. (cp. Jas. 2:13; Prov. 21:13; 2 Sam. 22:26-27).

VERSE 15

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”

This is a clear-cut statement, the magnitude of which should not be taken lightly. Without forgiveness of sins we cannot enter the kingdom of God. If we nurse bitter grudges against others, refusing to bend in mercy towards them, we may expect the same treatment from Christ at the judgment seat. We will be excluded from the kingdom. (This verse should

16 ¶ Moreover ^awhen 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.

provide an incentive for each of us to carefully consider our relationships with other people; and to manifest remedial attitudes towards others where such may be necessary. This question may well be one of life or death for us at the judgment).

Vv. 16-23: GOD MUST BE SERVED FROM THE HEART, IN KEEPING WITH THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH

VERSE 16

“When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance”

Fasting means to abstain from eating (Gk. *nesteuo*). The Pharisees had established a ritual of fasting regularly on the second and fifth days of each week; Mondays and Thursdays (Lk 18:12). These occasions were used for public display of piety and hypocritical display of “self-sacrifice.”

Fasting should have been a symbol of grief and sorrow and self-denial. In other words, a spiritually-minded Israelite would fast in recognition of his sins and the weakness of his nature, and that he might deny his fleshly desires to concentrate for a time upon a sober contemplation of the righteousness of Yahweh in contrast to the sinfulness of man. He would thus consider carefully his own urgent needs, and appreciate that only God could supply those needs. In an individual with this outlook and attitude there would be produced an overwhelming sense of inadequacy and humility — the very opposite to that produced in the Pharisees. Fasting that requires onlookers is nothing more than play-acting (as the word “hypocrites” can mean). The principle does not begin and end with fasting. What of ourselves? We may not fast, but what of the various spiritual activities we perform? Do we fulfil them to impress others, hoping that our brethren will see how “spiritual” we are? A gloomy or sorrowful outward appearance does not necessarily indicate that the individual is in an abased frame of mind. The only type of fasting that was acceptable to Yahweh was when an individual was truly contrite, and when they were clearly seen by God — as He looked *inward* upon their hearts — to be worshipping Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

“For they disfigure their faces that they might appear unto men to fast”

“for they darken their looks...” (Roth.) “...they look woe-begone...” (Moff.) “they make their faces unsightly so that other people may see that they are fasting...” (N.E.B.). “Disfigure” is the Gk. *aphanizo*, “to disappear;” and the word “appear” is the Gk. *phanio*, “to appear; to throw light upon...” Thus, to understand the Lord’s meaning in our own language, we would comprehend that he was saying: “They disappear that they might appear” or “they make themselves unsightly that they may be sighted...” There is an ironical play-on-words in the expression. They made themselves appear to be very physically repulsive to the eyes of their fellow-men, yet they acted in that way to win the admiration of others who imagined that they, the Pharisees, were really suffering great anguish of personal sacrifice. The motive of their hearts showed that they were not suffering for God, or for the good of their fellows, but merely for the advancement of their own esteem and glory. Thus all their efforts were in vain.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, ^ranoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 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.

VERSE 17

“But thou”

Christ indicated that his disciples were to act quite differently to the Pharisees, because their *motive* must be different.

“When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face”

Positive actions, not negative. This wording describes the attitude of one preparing for a feast, not a fast. “Dress and appear with dignity, as you would normally do,” was the Lord’s counsel. When the disciples fasted they were to do so with joy and gladness; and yet even this was to be an inner state, and might not be discerned by their fellow-men (2 Cor. 9:7; cp. Ex. 25:2; Lk. 16:15). Brethren were taught to *rejoice* because they had been considered worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41). Believers were called upon to manifest the light of the truth to their fellow-men (5:16), not hypocritical conduct which would be intended to bring recognition and glory to themselves rather than God.

VERSE 18

“That thou appear not unto men to fast”

There should be no deliberate outward show. Modesty and humility, if genuine within the heart of the individual, would cause the fulfilment of this requirement. The mind of the Believer would be centred upon God, not self.

“Thy Father..in secret”

It requires faith to believe this. Faith is not required when we are impressing other human beings, and when we *see* that we are impressing them. (Jn. 1:18; Heb. 11:6, 27; 1 Pet. 3:12).

“Shall reward thee”

“Trust also in Him and He will effectually work: so will He bring forth, as the light, thy righteousness, and thy vindication as the noonday” (Ps. 37:6, Roth.). The saint does not strive to walk in the ways of righteousness because of the reward he will ultimately receive. He must not be motivated by a desire for self-glorification. The individual strives to honour Yahweh because he has learned to love Him and longs for the time when “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of *YAHWEH...*” (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19). Men and women who manifest the attributes of God’s character *now* will do so to perfection in the Kingdom Age; thus whilst retaining their individuality (Mat. 8:11; Lk. 13:28) they will actually become manifestations of Yahweh Himself; for they will be “vindicated” as His true offspring, His sons and daughters whom He will be pleased to raise to positions of honour and glory and power to “reign” with Christ over all the earth (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9-10).

The Lord has now presented three examples of attitudes which should be manifested in divine worship:

GIVE ALMS in secret
PRAY in secret
FAST in secret

The overall principle is clear: “TRUTH” MUST BE “IN THE INWARD PARTS” — and this requires “a right spirit” WITHIN us... (Ps. 51:6, 10). “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart...” (1 Sam. 16:7).

19 ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :

20 ¶ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

VERSE 19

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth”

More correctly “Store up no treasure for yourselves on earth...” (Moff., cp. N.E.B., J.B., etc.). The Gk. words rendered “lay up” and “treasures” are closely related: *thesaurizo* and *thesaurus*. The former is the verb, the latter the noun. There is thus another play-upon-words: “Treasure up not treasures on earth...”

“Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”

Moth, rust and thieves all speak of the frailty of materialistic possessions. Paul spoke of “*uncertain riches*” (1 Tim. 6:17). These things remain uncertain, needless to say, not only because moth or rust might erode or corrode them away, or thieves steal them from us; but because we possess such things only as long as we live. And what if, this day, we die? (cp. Lk. 12:15-21; Isa. 50:9; 51:6-8). People who are so minded put trust and confidence in what they can see and touch; but sons and daughters of Yahweh put their confidence in a God they cannot see, and a hope that has not yet been realised; for “hope that is *seen* is not hope...” (Rom. 8:24).

VERSE 20

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”

That which we “store up” in heaven will be those attributes of character which we will have manifested, making us acceptable to Yahweh (Mal. 3:16). The rewards for faithfulness will be brought by Christ when he returns (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 22:12; cp. Ps. 31:19; 1 Pet. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:4). Part of the disposition of a true son or daughter of God is that they look upon the things associated with their God as “treasures” to be sought with zeal and dedication (Prov. 2:1-5; 15:6; 25:2; Heb. 11:26). These things become a “treasure” that may result in eternal life, and are therefore not to be compared with the materialistic possessions which one may labour to acquire during this life (Jas. 5:1-3).

VERSE 21

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”

These words constitute a monumental challenge, requiring that every disciple carefully examine himself to ascertain *where* his heart really lies. Herein is further proof of the fact that the true worship of Yahweh depends upon the attitude or disposition of the worshipper. It is compelling to realise that these phrases could be reversed, and still mean precisely the same thing: “Where your *heart* is, there will your treasure be also...” “Set your *mind* on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2, marg.). Our hearts will be drawn towards God if the things of the truth take first and foremost place in our lives. But if our heart really lies with the things of this present life, our worship of Yahweh will occupy only a part of the regular cycle of activities in which we are involved (Mat. 22:37-38). Let us also remember that, to the Hebrews, “the heart” represented the mental processes, and therefore the intellect. Every disciple must ask of himself or herself the question: In which *direction* is my *mind* primarily orientated?

22 "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 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!

VERSE 22

“The light of the body is the eye”

“The lamp of the body is the eye” (N.E.B., J.B., etc.). Gk. *luchnos*, “a portable hand-lamp.” The eye itself is not light; it is the light-conveyor. The Lord now proceeded to use the eye of the body as a symbol for man’s ability to “see” things which are of a spiritual nature.

“If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light”

The Gk., *haploos*, more literally means “simple,” and from the idea of simplicity the word came to mean “single” — another way of expressing something which is relatively uncomplicated. Hence, the phrase has been rendered “if your eyes are *sound....*” (N.E.B.): “unclouded...” (T.C.N.T.) “clear...” (Diag.). If our (spiritual) eye is centred upon the Truth, our lives will be filled with the power of the living word of God. The Lord was therefore speaking of the need not only to observe with *all the senses* the things of Yahweh, but to cause the indwelling light which would result from such observation, to direct our lives into the pathway that will lead to the kingdom. Man remains in darkness if he does not possess sight; similarly, man remains spiritually blind to the grace and mercy of God if he remains ignorant of the teaching of God’s word. Our spiritual eye must be single, and must not become complicated with the philosophies which originate from the flesh. This statement from the lips of the Lord was quite emphatic: Unless the eye is single, sound, clear and unclouded, we will *not* become “full” of the “light” of divine Truth. An eye which meets these definitions will not suffer the frustrations associated with *divided* loyalties, and will not experience the bewildering contradictions which arise when there is not a clear conviction of Truth.

VERSE 23

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of evil”

The language the Lord used in these two verses (22-23), could be described as extreme. He appears to be stating that we are either “full” of light, or we are “*full*” of evil. His words allow for no half-measures. And that is as it should be, in view of the fact that throughout this discourse he has been stressing the attributes of a particular class of person; there has been set before us his own moral excellence, which we are called upon to copy. This is the character of the Christ-man, which must be copied by all his disciples who constitute the Christ-Body. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (5:48). This is the only standard which is set before the Believer: the perfect standard of the Father’s own moral excellence, which was manifested in the Son. Christ’s disciples must strive towards that standard, and nothing less. Thus, when an individual is fully motivated in that direction, it can be said of him that his “whole body” is “full of light” because his “eye” is set fully upon the ways of Yahweh, to learn them and to walk in them. Our “whole body” becomes “full of evil” when we lose sight of divine truth and principles and when we think and walk after the ways of the flesh. (cp. Deut. 15:9; 28:54; Prov. 23:6-7; 28:22).

“If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness”

There are many philosophies which men insist upon as being “light.”

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.

But unless the light being radiated is the light of divine truth it is an artificial or synthetic light. Men who walk in such "light" are really in darkness. Their "light" is really self-deception (Ps 36:9; Job 24:13; Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:5). The "eye" by which we absorb knowledge must not become clouded, nor must anything be permitted to enter into our vision which would divert our gaze from the pure light of divine truth.

Vv. 24-32: WARNING AGAINST BECOMING OVER-ANXIOUS ABOUT
THE MATERIALISTIC THINGS OF LIFE — WE CANNOT SERVE
GOD AND THE FLESH

VERSE 24

"No man can serve two masters"

The word "serve" has been rendered from the Gk. *douleuo*, meaning "to serve as a slave." In view of the fact that a slave had no rights or privileges, it was impossible for such a person to be "owned" by more than one Master. Why did the Lord restrict the question to *two* Masters? Why not "numerous" Masters, or "many" Masters? The answer is: because we have a choice of only two Masters, Yahweh or sin (Rom. 6:16). This statement provides further evidence of the need to serve God with the *whole* heart and mind.

Either he will hate the one and love the other"

This must be the attitude of the individual who serves Yahweh rather than sin. The word "love" is the Gk. *agapao*, "a profound respect or reverence, based upon knowledge and manifested by self-denial." It is a word that can never rightly be applied to "love" of worldly things. The word "hate" here can be understood in a Hebraistic sense, the "hate" being used to demonstrate the depth of the love. Nevertheless, the word, in this context, may be understood as having a quite literal application. For when we learn to love God and keep His commandments so that He might be honoured, we also learn to develop a hearty hatred of sin, and all things which are opposed to Yahweh and His truth. As in the previous two verses, the Lord here demonstrated that there can be no half-measures, or half-heartedness, in dedicating one's life to God. We are to "hate" the "garment spotted by the flesh" — thus showing not only our repudiation of sin, but our whole-hearted loyalty to Yahweh. This statement in v. 24 appears to be based upon a prophecy concerning Christ's character, which said that he would *love* "righteousness" and *hate* "wickedness." And because Christ would manifest this character to perfection, Yahweh would anoint him "with the oil of gladness" *above* his "fellows" (Ps. 45:7). Cp. Mat. 10:37-38; Lk. 9:57-62.

"Or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other"

"he will attach himself to the one and think lightly of the other" (Wey.). The word rendered "hold" means precisely that; "to cling to..." The word only ever occurs in the Middle Voice. Thus the person who is a bond-slave to sin "clings" to it, in that it dominates the life of such an individual, ruling and controlling him. The word rendered "despise" is the Gk. *kataphroneo* (*kata* = "down"; *phroneo* = "to think" — thus, "to think down upon or against anyone"). The word occurs nine times in the N.T., and is always rendered "despise" in the A.V. The word expresses a

25 Therefore I say unto you, *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

general attitude of indifference or disdainful rejection, with *pride* at the root of the underlying motive.

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”

The disciple who will faithfully follow Christ must make a clear and definite commitment. We cannot be “owned” by sin and also by God. We give our allegiance to one or the other. The word “mammon” has been generally associated with riches. And whilst the word certainly had that meaning such a singular explanation of the word is somewhat inadequate because the Lord was speaking of far deeper things than merely riches. The word “mammon” (Gk. *mammonas*) was derived from a Chaldean or Hebrew word meaning “that in which one trusts, hence to be firm or steadfast” in anything (Vine, Bullinger). From this basic meaning it eventually came to stand for riches. It is evident that the Lord had the more basic idea of the word in mind. The question he implied was: What do his disciples really *trust* in? Do they live by faith, putting their trust and their confidence in the God whom they claim to worship? Or do they really only mouth their loyalty to Yahweh, whilst actually putting their *trust* and confidence in those things which are the products of the flesh? These are the fundamental contrasts set forth in these verses (19-24). A person who surrenders to a Master will become controlled and ruled by that Master. Which is better: to be ruled and controlled by Yahweh, thus producing within us that which *He* requires? Or to be ruled and controlled by the dictates of the flesh, thus producing that which is fit only for destruction? Surely, to ask is to answer. The Lord made his point with extreme care and clarity. And the individual who cannot appreciate the powerful point made in this verse is suffering from lack of spiritual vision, having his eyes clouded so that the truth is obscured (Vv. 22-23).

VERSE 25

“Therefore”

The disciples were to act upon the basis of what has been taught (Vv. 19-24) concerning the need for undivided loyalty towards Yahweh. And such an attitude towards God can only be effective and beneficial in its results if the individual is motivated by *true faith*. The Lord now proceeded to show his disciples that they must walk according to the principles set forth in these verses, not because of compulsion, but because they have learned to love and trust Yahweh, and therefore they were to appreciate that God could look down upon them and provide for all their needs. (“That is why I am telling you.....” J.B.).

“Take no thought for your life”

Trusting in mammon, or the flesh, is taking “thought” for our “life”. The expression “take no thought” now became a dominant one in the Lord’s exposition; for it occurs again in v. 27, 28, 31 and twice in v. 34. It means “to be full of anxiety which divides up and distracts the mind...to be anxious...” (Bullinger). We must, of course, labour to receive the necessities of life — but to become over-anxious about those things, or to become dominated by the objective of seeking after such materialistic things, is to lack faith and deny the truth.

“What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink”

The every-day affairs of life can become our obsession.

26 ^a 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?

“Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?”

“Is not life more precious than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Wey.). Food is provided to sustain life, *not* the other way around! How easy it is, in life, to get our priorities back to front! Similarly, clothing is needed that the body might be preserved, not the reverse! God has given us our lives, so therefore *He* must have first priority in ascertaining what the fundamental essentials of life really are; and the order in which they are to be respected. Preoccupation with those affairs of life which are not essential, is a form of covetousness — and the apostle described such an attitude as idolatry (Col. 3:5, where the word rendered “covetousness” means “a desire to have *more*”). One of the most destructive influences in the world today is the pursuit of materialism. It is strongly related to the decline in moral, religious and social standards. Materialism lies at the very root of many of the problems and challenges facing the brotherhood of Christ in these closing days of the gentiles. The “cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word” when such influences are permitted to gain the ascendancy in our aims, objectives, and general way of thinking. Dominated by such things, we then become “unfruitful” in the things of the truth (Mat. 13:22). Luke adds the word “pleasures,” and quotes the Lord as saying that these influences can prevent us from bring forth “fruit to perfection.” In the Olivet prophecy the Lord warned that the “cares of this life” could prevent us from having a clear vision of his second coming, and thus we may be caught unprepared for that momentous event.

VERSE 26

“Behold the fowls of the air”

“Observe intently the birds of the heaven” (Roth.).

“For they sow not neither do they reap”

Sowing and reaping is a predetermined exercise, resulting from prior planning and organisation. The fowls of the air certainly labour to produce their food, and to supply the needs of their offspring; but in what attitude do they do so? Whilst being industrious, they work only for the needs of each day, and so long as the daily need is met, they do not concern themselves beyond immediate necessities. Birds of the air do not suffer the neuroses which are common to mankind as a result of pressure, tension and anxieties. In observing the birds of the air, we are able to see that God provides not only for all their needs, but has also created an environment in which they can survive.

Yahweh has provided for us spiritually, in granting us an understanding of His word of Truth; can He not likewise provide for our daily necessities of life? “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Ps. 37:25). And together with the word of truth, He has also provided an environment in which we can spiritually survive, which is the Ecclesia.

“Yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them”

A remarkable statement, breathtaking in its sweeping implication: Yahweh has designed and balanced His entire creation, and has set in motion a set of laws and actions by which His creation can be provided for and sustained. As we consider, with awesome reverence, that Yahweh feeds “*them*”, should we not appreciate that He is able to do the same for

27 Which of you by taking thought
can add one cubit unto his stature?

28 And why take ye thought for rai-
ment? Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow; they toil not, nei-
ther do they spin:

us, both materially and spiritually? We should, in fact, be deeply impressed with these words; for Yahweh is not “heavenly Father” to the birds of the air, but He *is* to us, if we become His children. Would He not, therefore, exercise an even greater care for those who are his children than for unreasoning creatures of the creation? See Ps. 104:10-31.

“Are ye not much better than they?”

A statement to touch the conscience of every disciple. “Are not you of much greater value than they?” (Wey.). cp. Mat. 10:29-31. As our Father, He knows our needs, and we must have faith that He will provide. If our minds are settled and correctly orientated upon this point, we will be able to offer unto Him our undivided loyalty (Mal. 1:6; cp. 3:17).

VERSE 27

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

The word rendered “stature” more correctly relates to maturity or age (Gk. *helikia*); thus: “Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one cubit to the span of his life?” (J.B.). Rather than increasing the life-span, excessive worry concerning such a subject can only produce the opposite effect! It is futile for individuals to become concerned at the possibilities of extending their lives, for they can achieve nothing in that regard; and, in any event, in so worrying they would become distracted from their major objective, which *should* be to serve Yahweh. Only the power of the truth operating upon us can provide us with an extension of life; eternal life and divine nature, if we worship God faithfully in the spirit of the truth. But God must come first, and personal self-interest must be eliminated. See Ps. 39:5; 90:12; Lk. 12:24-26.

VERSE 28

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin”

The lilies of the field do not toil, nor do they spin; yet, as *passive* elements within the divine creative scheme of things they become objects of great beauty. Of this particular plant, (Gk. *krinon*) it has been said that it was “a flower of rich colour, probably including the *Gladiolus* and *Iris* species.” (Vine) This description would account for the lilies being associated with Solomon in his royal finery (v. 29). We are called upon to “consider” the lilies from this point of view (Gk. *katamanthano*, “to observe well, learn thoroughly, note accurately” — Bullinger). “How” do they “grow”? They grow because Yahweh provides for all their needs: sun, rain, earth, minerals, etc. They do not labour to beautify or better themselves, yet they appear in due season in all their glory because of the guiding hand of the Creator. In which cause are we investing our labour and becoming weary? If it is in the cause of our God and our King, we may “grow” in spiritual things, whilst our material needs are being met under the guiding hand of the One who has given us life. But if our endeavours are directed towards aims and objectives other than those things associated with Yahweh, we will not “grow” after the pattern of “the lilies of the field.”

VERSE 29

“And yet I say unto you”

29 And yet I say unto you, That
even Solomon in all his glory was
not arrayed like one of these.

30 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?

Here was the Lord's assessment of how we should view the lessons to be learned from the lilies of the field.

"That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"

Of course not. Because Solomon's glory, as King over Israel, was a man-made form of pomp and glorification (1 Sam. 8:5, 20). Solomon, "in all his regalia" (J.B.) was an example of the glory that man may create for himself — and yet, of what real value was such glory? Solomon himself found that it was "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc. 1:1-4; 2:11, etc.). Solomon's outward glory did not mean that he could not be inwardly corrupted (1 Kings 11:4), and therefore his fleshly glory was not a form of glory to produce fruit of lasting value. But when one of "these" lilies bursts forth in all its glory, it is a God-given beauty which is revealed. Thus, all fleshly aims and objectives are vain, because, for all the glory which they may appear to manifest, it is inevitable that the end result is the grave. We must be prepared to passively surrender our own will to God, permitting Him to work upon us, to shape and mould us according to His will, that the glory which may eventually be revealed in us will be recognised as being of divine origin. God is able to produce a glory in us which we cannot produce ourselves — as with the "lilies of the field."

VERSE 30

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you"

As the disciples listened to these words, a shadow of their future lives should have fallen upon them; for man is like the grass. "All flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away..." (1 Pet. 1:24; Isa. 40:6-8). Man should therefore not become obsessed with the needs of the immediate present (v. 25-29) but rather concerned with his *eternal* future. And although God clothes the grass of the field, the cycle ends with the disintegration of the grass. So with man. Yahweh may provide for his needs, but man is a corruptible creature. Therefore material needs are not man's only requirements. God will "clothe" us with much more than the needs for a normal human life-cycle; He will provide us with the means of attaining "faith" (see next phrase), which may bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

The "oven" mentioned here was a round earthen pot, heated by a fire *within* (Gk. eis; hence the Lord's words: "tomorrow is cast *into* the oven..."). These words should be regarded most soberly. For all the beauty of the grasses and plant-life, they are finally of value only for burning. Man, however, was created by God with far higher ideals in mind (Gen. 1:26, 28; cp. Ps. 8, etc.). And God will exhibit a special care and attention towards those who respond to His goodness (7:7-8).

"O ye of little faith"

A gentle rebuke; and yet it was necessary to remind these disciples that they had not yet come to a full understanding of the truth, and that they must yet do so (Jn 17:3). They had "little" faith because they had limited knowledge.

This word was used only by the Lord. It occurs four times in Matthew and once in Luke — and in each case he rebuked four different human

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But ^b seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you

weaknesses. See Mat. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk. 12:28.

VERSE 31

“Therefore”

That is, because of the conclusions to which you have been drawn from the statements made in Vv. 28-30.

“Take no thought”

A repetition of the statement in V. 25, 27, 28. i.e., “Do not become filled with anxiety which will divide up and distract your mind from the whole-hearted service you must render to Yahweh” (See Bullinger). We must *not* become anxious about these things, because if we walk by faith Yahweh will provide for our needs whilst we offer our bodies “a living sacrifice” unto Him (Rom. 12:1).

VERSE 32

“For after all these things do the gentiles seek”

A devastating statement. Disciples of Christ must whole-heartedly grasp the principle that there exists a huge gulf between the gentile world and Christ’s followers. The gulf is caused by the *difference* between the thinking of the flesh and the thinking of the spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). It is a real and not merely a theoretic difference, revealed in the way people think, speak and act. See Ps. 12; Eph. 4:17-23; 2 Thess. 1:7-10. The gentile world is dominated by a desire to “seek” after (lit. “to seek earnestly or continually”) these “things” for which motivation comes from the flesh. The disciple of Christ must be different: 1 Jn. 2:15-17. In the world, “success” is gauged by the extent of materialistic possessions and advantage; but in the family of God “success” depends entirely upon the individual being acceptable to Yahweh.

“For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”

Christ’s disciples *have* a “Heavenly Father” — but the gentile world does not. The Believer should thus humbly appreciate this unique relationship he has with the Great God of the universe. Further, a father *knows* the needs of his children (if he is a loving father, deeply and lovingly caring for the welfare of his offspring); and therefore his children must be prepared to exercise trust and confidence in the willingness and ability of their father to care for them.

Vv. 33-34: THE TRUTH MUST MOTIVATE US TO SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS — A CAUSE TO WHICH WE MUST BE DEDICATED EACH AND EVERY DAY

VERSE 33

“But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness”

Some things in life are important. Others are not. But even of those things which are important Christ’s disciples must have their priorities in the correct order. God will make available to us all things necessary for us to gain an entrance into His kingdom — but we must have the conviction and desire to “seek” His kingdom. The Believer must be able to pray, with fervour and sincerity: “Thy kingdom come...(v. 10).

We will not find the kingdom apart from righteousness. Without

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

“holiness” no man “shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). And the “fine linen” in which the apocalyptic Bride of Christ will be revealed “represents the *righteous acts* of the saints” (Rev. 19:8, Diag.). We are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6), thus displaying a disposition indicating a genuine desire to be identified with the perfect character of the One whom we desire to worship.

This must become the “first” objective of the Saint in Christ. Nothing else must be permitted to detract from the dedication of the Believer towards this cause. When we “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27) we learn to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) because we have come to recognise that “in” the flesh dwells “no good thing” (Rom. 7:18) and that God alone is the source of all righteousness.

See Prov. 2:1-9; 8:1, 20, 35; 12:28; 21:21; 2 Thess. 1:4-10; 2 Pet. 1:4-11, etc.).

The foundation upon which God’s kingdom will be established will be His own righteousness; and unless we are clearly identified with that, we will not be fit to administer the kingdom with Christ (2 Tim. 2:11-12; 4:7-8; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17-19; Rev. 5:9-10; 20:4).

“And all these things shall be added unto you”

Our faith will not only be rewarded at the coming of Christ, but will bring forth a ready response from God during our period of probation (1 Tim. 4:8; Ps. 37:4, 16, 19, 25, 37; Ps. 84:11; 112:1-4; Rev. 2:26-29; 3:21). We may fully trust in God to provide for all our necessities of life, even though He may, from time to time, see that trials are necessary for the development of our character.

VERSE 34

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow”

“so do not be anxious about tomorrow” (N.E.B.). If we accept Christ’s reasoning from v. 24 onward, we will not find it inconsistent to accept this summary of the attitude we should manifest towards day-to-day living. If we are rendering wholehearted service to our God, the everyday affairs of life will fall into their proper perspective. “*Now* is the accepted time... *Now* is the day of salvation” — not tomorrow (2 Cor. 6:2). Each day we must walk by faith, honouring our God and striving to walk in His ways. Thus each day must be faced as it comes, with this objective in view. “*Every day* I will bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever” (Ps. 145:2). “Lead me in thy truth...On thee do I wait all the *day*...My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise *all the day long*... My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness *all the day long*.... O how love I thy law! It is my meditation *all the day*” (Ps. 25:5; 35:28; 71:24; 119:97). Every day should be devoted to seeking “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” — because every day the Lord might come. If our minds are concerned with *tomorrow*, we will not be preparing for the Lord’s coming today. Therefore, “today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts...” (Heb. 3:15). With this disposition, the Saint in Christ will value each day as a further opportunity to worship the Most High God of Israel. “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice *all the day*: and in thy *righteousness* shall they be exalted...For Yahweh is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King” (Ps.



89:15-16, 18).

Strengthened through his faith, the Believer will learn to see the trials and pressures of life in their proper light, because through faith, the bond of union between the disciple and his God will become increasingly meaningful to the Believer and effective in his daily living.

“For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself”

Again the word rendered “thought” carries the idea of “anxiety which divides up and distracts the mind” (cp. V. 25, 27, 28, 31, here twice — Bullinger). Hence: “Tomorrow will bring its own anxieties” (Wey.). Each day the Saint will be faced with the attendant difficulties of getting through the day, walking by faith, and maintaining his integrity before God. Problems must be faced, the warfare against sin continued, and the truth lived in a positive way. This form of daily living is essential for the development of the character of the Believer. And, after all, that is the entire purpose of the truth in our lives: to cause us to conform to “the image” of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29). And this was the purpose of the discourse on the Mount: that we might have revealed to us the attributes which made up the character of the Son of God, that we might imitate those Godly characteristics.

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”

“Each day has troubles enough of its own” (N.E.B.) Obsession with the materialistic future will only bring engrossment with negative things, from the truth’s point of view. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble...” (Job. 14:1). Yahweh, in His abundant mercy, has provided us with the means of rising above the cares of our daily environment, that we might “see...the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” We have sufficient evil to face each day, without adding those burdens by becoming engrossed in worries and anxieties concerning the future. The evil propensities of our own nature must also be faced and countered by the influence of God’s word. This requires full-time dedication each day. The theme of the discourse on the Mount is devoted to describing the characteristics of an individual whose life is totally dedicated to fulfilling the will and the word of Yahweh.

MATTHEW

CHAPTER SEVEN

- Vv. 1- 5: Disciples must not pass unjust judgments against others, because all have weaknesses and faults.
- Vv. 6-12: Value and seek the way of the truth, and exhibit consideration for others.
- Vv. 13-20: There are only two ways: the broad way leading to destruction, and the narrow way leading to life—and the disposition of individuals may be recognised by the fruits they produce.
- Vv. 21-27: Not all professing disciples will be admitted to the kingdom, for they fall into two classes: the faithful and the unfaithful.
- Vv. 28-29: Conclusion: Jesus Christ taught with authority because he was the Son of God.

JUDGE ^anot, that ye be not
judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge,
ye shall be judged: ^band with what
measure ye mete, it shall be mea-
sured to you again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Vv. 1-5: DISCIPLES MUST NOT PASS UNJUST JUDGMENTS AGAINST OTHERS, BECAUSE ALL HAVE WEAKNESSES AND FAULTS.

VERSE 1

“Judge not that ye be not judged”

Gr. Krino, twice. “to divide, to separate, to make a distinction, come to a decision, to judge, pronounce final judgment ...” (Bull.).

And yet, in this same chapter the Lord has warned of the need to be able to pass judgment on certain issues which may be matters of life and death; such as the need to be able to recognise false brethren from true (v. 15-16). But there is no contradiction. In this first verse the Lord was counselling against making judgments based on human pride. In these words the Lord referred to a type of judgment which magnifies the faults of others whilst the accuser fails to recognise, in all humility, his own failures and weaknesses.

A person who passes such judgment remains blind to their own true position, and because pride remains the dominant motive in the accuser, he is unable to render wise spiritual assistance to others (V. 3; Jn. 8:15-16; Rom. 2:1-2). After sin had been introduced into the world, God began the work of reconciling humanity to Himself. God’s endeavours on behalf of mankind, then, have been designed to save, not to destroy (Jn. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). Thus, when disciples pass judgment upon others which is censoriously and negatively fault-finding, they are undermining the purpose of true religion. Judgment, especially in the sense of passing final judgment (such as is expressed in the meaning of the word which occurs twice in this verse), is a divine prerogative; and man must exercise great care in this regard. Man must “judge righteous judgment” (Jn. 7:24) — which means that he must only ever express himself on such matters when fully observing a situation from God’s point of view, and not from the reasoning of the flesh (i.e. Ex. 32:10, 19; 2 Pet. 2; Jude). The outworking of human pride in passing judgment against others must be avoided.

VERSE 2

“For with that judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged”

The word krino occurs twice more in this verse, and the word “judgment” has been rendered from the Gk. kríma, denoting “the result of the action signified by the verb krino” (Vine). “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged...” (R.S.V.). “Because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get” (J.B.).

“And with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again”

“And the measure you give will be the measure you get” (R.S.V.). The expression speaks of the degree of judgment meted out and carries an implied warning against severity. An individual who desires to see his brother redeemed will confess that he himself is also in need of redemption; and will therefore treat his brother with the degree of understanding and mercy which he trusts God will exercise towards *him*. Cp. Mark 4:21-24.

**3 ° And why beholdest thou the mote
that is in thy brother's eye, but con-
siderest not the beam that is in thine
own eye?**

A conscious awareness of our own sins and the weaknesses inherent in our nature will produce within us an acute perception to appreciate our need of divine mercy and the similar needs of others. We will therefore learn to exhibit an attitude of understanding towards our brethren in regard to these matters. Any "righteous judgment" which must be applied should have the end in view of bringing out the spiritual recovery of the erring brother (Mat. 18:14-15; Jas. 5:19-20).

If our attitude is such that we are ready to condemn whilst having no desire to identify with Yahweh's purpose — which is to bring about the salvation of our brother — we are motivated by purely fleshly intent, often out of a desire to establish our own justification. If we are not prepared to make every effort to help towards the redemption of our brethren, how can we expect God to recognise *our* need of salvation? "With the merciful" God will "show" Himself "merciful" — but "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy" (Ps. 18:25; Jas. 2:13).

VERSE 3

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

"Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye, and never notice the plank in your own?" (J.B.). The contrast here is quite dramatic: a readiness to "observe" a minor fault in one's brother, but an abysmal failure to realise the presence of a major fault in one's own life. A "plank," needless to say, would have the effect of making a person *blind*. Such an individual who finds fault upon this basis is suffering from self-delusion. He cannot correctly assess the standing of either his brother or himself, in the eyes of God. The word rendered "beholdest" does not imply a casual appraisal, but rather a close and careful scrutiny. Of this word (Gk. *blepo*) Bullinger has said that it "implies greater vividness, to express a more intent, earnest spiritual contemplation" than the word *horao*. But, of course, in the context now before us the "spiritual contemplation" is misguided.

A "splinter" in the eye causes distress and discomfort to the one suffering. The usage of this terminology should immediately make us aware of the need for us to experience a feeling of sympathy for the one in this state, rather than self-righteous hostility. Additionally, the vision of the one who suffers this situation would have his vision at least partly impaired, thus being unsure of his footing or of the manner in which he should walk. The true weakness of the accusing disciple is expressed in the words "considerest not" (Gk. *katanoeo*, "to perceive or discern distinctly or clearly..." — Bullinger). It is necessary that we understand, in a mature way, our own faults and weaknesses. And this is a state which can only be realised when *Self* is subject to intense self-examination in the light of the word of Truth, and in comparing our own character with the perfect character of the Son of God. A deep awareness of our own shortcomings, and a clear appreciation of our own need of divine mercy will engender within us a kindred warmth for our brethren and sisters. The various members of the Body (1 Cor. 12) are in need of one another, and together they must grow up into the head of the Body, which is Christ (Eph. 4:13-16). A recognition of the need for this spirit to be manifested and

4 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?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

cultivated will effectively remove the very real human weakness described by the Lord in these verses.

VERSE 4

“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?”

“How wilt thou?” (Gk. pos, with the indicative), is an “absolute question” (Bullinger) — hence, “how can you say to your brother” (R.S.V.); “how dare you say to your brother” (J.B.) The phrase describes a confrontation resulting from the attitude of the accuser. Thus, where a disciple has manifested weakness or folly and needs sympathetic consideration, he is challenged by a presumptuous fellow-disciple who displays little thought for the spiritual needs of his brother. Such a situation may arise when an attempt is made to correct the spiritual vision of a brother or sister without proper prior thought or consideration on the part of the one desiring to effect the operation. Such an ill-prepared undertaking could result in permanent damage to the one in need of such a delicate operation. The inability of the accuser to handle such a situation, in these circumstances, is due to his own lack of spiritual vision. The one who is so ready to correct his brother is actually operating with an even more impaired sight than the one he is so anxious to heal. It is easy to become obsessed with the failures of others whilst being conscious of our own virtues. See Mat. 18:10-17; Lk. 18:9-14; 2 Pet. 1:7-9. A disciple whose mind is moved by the word of God will have a genuine care for the flock of Christ and will exercise great concern in these matters.

“Let me pull out the mote”

Two stages in the development of folly on the part of a misguided disciple: Firstly, the making of an unwise judgment concerning a fellow-disciple, a judgment made upon the basis of an incorrect motive; and secondly, a forceful attempt to put the unwise judgment into action. The result could only prove disastrous. For both brethren.

To address a fellow-disciple in this aggrieved and self-righteous manner would be to fail to recognise one’s own failures; and therefore the entire operation would become negative and unproductive of good.

VERSE 5

“Thou hypocrite”

Gk. hypokrites, “one who answers, esp. on the stage, hence, one who plays a part...” (Bullinger). “...It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice...” (Vine). The word thus represents that which is not honest or true, and something performed with more than usual forcefulness to carry the charade through to a convincing conclusion. The Pharisees were like this. They made an impressive outward show, became indignant at any weakness on the part of others, were ostentatious in their religious exercises. And their motive in all these actions was to receive the esteem and honour of men.

“First cast out the beam out of thine own eye”

Gk. ekballo, “to throw at or hit, with any kind of missile...” (Bullinger, on the meaning of ballo; the prefix ek adds the idea of throwing out). Vine adds: “To throw, hurl, in contrast to striking...” The

6 ¶ Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

word thus denotes a determined, forceful action on the part of an enlightened disciple, to rid himself of pride and self-righteousness. He acknowledges his weaknesses and makes a wholehearted, resolute attempt to humbly pattern his life more exactly according to the example of the Son of God. Only then will he possess a fit disposition to be of spiritual help to his brethren. And it is essential that all Believers be in a position to extend such assistance: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are spiritual*, restore (Gk. *katartizo*, "make fully ready, put in full order; esp. of what is broken, refit, repair, restore" — continuous present tense, denoting consistent perseverance) such as one *in the spirit of meekness*; **CONSIDERING THYSELF, LEST THOU ALSO BE TEMPTED**" (Gal. 6:1, cp. v.2). ("Look to yourself" — Wey.). The "plank" of self-esteem and self-righteousness must be removed from the life of the Believer, so that he learns to consider the needs of others rather than his own virtues. When the vision is cleared of *Self*, the perfect character of the Son of God can be discerned, and imitated.

"Then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"

The Lord did not suggest that it was wrong to attempt to remove the "splinter" from the "eye" of a brother or sister who was suffering because of a lack of correct spiritual vision. The point of these verses is that the one desiring to assist must first be in a fit state of spiritual-mindedness; and then undertake any action from a selfless motive, and with the sole objective of assisting the rehabilitation of the one in need.

Vv 6-12: VALUE AND SEEK THE WAY OF THE TRUTH, AND EXHIBIT CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.

VERSE 6

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine"

Two metaphors involving unclean animals. Do not *give* (the word speaks of something given "freely, unforced" — Bullinger) the holy things of God to those who are of a hardened, fleshly disposition, refusing to become cleansed and sanctified by the "holy" word of God. Dogs were scavengers of the street. The term was used by the Jews to describe gentiles, and by the prophet of Israel to describe some of the worst characteristics of the Jewish nation (Isa, 56:9-11). Paul used the term to describe evil men (Phil. 3:2), a class who will be excluded from the kingdom of God (Rev. 22:15). The "holy" things of God must, when people come into contact with them, make those people holy also. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" is a demand which Yahweh makes upon all who hear His word (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16).

It may seem difficult to understand that the Lord should describe a certain class of human beings as "swine." But there are such, who wallow in the mire of the flesh and all forms of immorality and depravity. Like a sow wallowing in filth, they are contented with their lot, not desirous of raising the standards of either their philosophy or way of life. The Lord counselled against casting the precious pearl of divine truth among people who fit this description. The word "cast" has been rendered from the Gk. *ballo* (See note on v. 5). Usage of the word in this context is descriptive of

**7 ¶ • Ask, and it shall be given you;
seek, and ye shall find; knock, and
it shall be opened unto you:**

a disciple who “hurls” the truth about indiscriminately, not realising that contempt can be brought upon the name of Christ through such thoughtless “preaching” Cp. Prov. 9:6-8; 23:9.

This verse in no way contradicts the words of 5:14-16, which deals with the necessity for all disciples to manifest the truth in their lives, becoming the word made flesh, before the gaze of all men. The verse before us provides no excuse for failure to speak the truth, where suitable occasion warrants; for such failure on the part of Believers would indicate that *all* men and women are dogs or swine, even though investigation or initial conversation and observation had not provided proof of such an assessment. The word of God must be set before perishing humanity; but with discretion and caution and wisdom. The purpose of such preaching is that God might be glorified; we are therefore handling that which is “holy” and should manifest a fitting reverence for the word of God in our endeavours to set it before our fellow-men. Whilst it is quite wrong to deliberately manifest towards our brethren an attitude of fault-finding, the Lord was most careful to warn us against the opposite extreme. In all cases covered by Vv. 1-6, let love and wisdom, holiness and discretion, prevail. Peter appears to make a telling reference to this verse in his second epistle (2 Pet. 2:22).

“Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”

There are human beings who display these characteristics — not only towards Yahweh’s truth, but also towards those who uphold it. There is a very real danger that such individuals may not only treat the word of God with contempt, but may also resort to violence against Christ’s disciples. (Example: Acts 17:5-6). This verse graphically draws attention to the constant state of enmity which exists between the two seeds: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 110:1; Rom. 16:20).

VERSE 7

“Ask, and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find”

The text is in the continuing present: “Be asking, and it shall be given you, be seeking and ye shall find...” (Roth.). The Lord was not speaking of a “once only” attempt to understand the Truth and enter the kingdom; he was speaking of a lifetime of dedication to seeking, finding, and walking in the precepts of divine Truth.

Here, the Lord set forth a progression of ideas: ASK... SEEK... FIND... The development of these three principles will be rewarded accordingly: IT SHALL BE GIVEN.... YE SHALL FIND.... IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU...

To “ask” is to exercise the mental processes; to “seek” is to walk morally in the direction of the kingdom; to have it “opened” is to receive the reward of an eternal inheritance in the kingdom. These words may also be realistically applied to our walk in the Truth day by day in causing us to develop an enquiring mind towards the Truth because of its ability to transform us for the kingdom; to desire to manifest a life of Godliness, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ; and with this disposition a clear comprehension of the Truth will be “opened” up to us.

Of the word rendered “ask” (Gk. *aiteo*), Bullinger says it “implies a

8 For ^revery one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

distinction in position and circumstances between the parties, and expresses a petition from an inferior to a superior." This word occurs only once in chapter five, and once only in chapter six. But it now becomes a key word in the seventh chapter for it occurs no less than five times (v. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). None of the other words used in this verse feature so prominently; and without in anyway minimising the importance of the other words, it appears evident that the Lord was indicating that by far the most important element in seeking unity and oneness with the Creator is the basic *disposition* of the worshipper (Note the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, wherein he stressed that the conditions for divine worship rested not with the *place*, but with the *attitude* of the individual — Jn. 4:20-21, 23-24). The importance of this principle in divine worship was emphasised also by Yahweh much earlier in history: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13; cp. Deut. 6:4-6; 30:9-10; Ps. 119:2, 10, 58, 69, 145; Joel 2:12; Acts 8:37; Phil. 4:6-7, etc.).

The warm and comforting message of this verse is clear: If we *continue* to search for oneness and unity with our Creator, in the right spirit and with the correct disposition, **OUR SEARCH WILL BE BROUGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL AND REWARDING CONCLUSION**. In addition to the right spirit and correct disposition, the key to our hope for success lies in constant communion with our Heavenly Father, through His word and through prayer. Without a mature understanding of the word we cannot hope to survive the weaknesses of our flesh and the pressures of life (Eph. 4:13-15; Col. 1:9-10). And prayer must be seen as not merely a religious duty but as an exercise which can bring the blessings of Almighty God upon us. Then we shall partake of the "good things" which Yahweh holds in store for all His sons and daughters who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (v. 11; cp. Jn. 4:24).

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you"

Again the text is in the continuing present: "Be knocking, and it shall be opened unto you..." (Roth.). The analogy is a simple one, and yet is profoundly touching. Generally, one or two knocks on a door are sufficient to bring the householder to the door to admit his visitors — but here the implication is that although Yahweh will gladly and lovingly welcome us into His "house", and eventually into a state of complete union with Himself, He desires to be fully satisfied that we are really genuine in our desire to gain admission into such holy and awesome favours. We must be prepared to keep knocking on the door until the "Householder" is persuaded concerning our dedication and faithfulness and patience; then He will surely admit us. Here, then, is a call to "patient continuance in well doing" that we might learn "always to pray, and not to faint..." that we might continue to "seek for glory and honour and immortality...." (Rom. 2:7; Lk. 18:1).

VERSE 8

"For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"

These inspiring words declare a message of grace and fidelity: Yahweh is perfectly just and merciful in all His dealings with men. This statement concerns not simply the ultimate reward of acceptance into the

9 **Or what man is there of you,
whom if his son ask bread, will he
give him a stone?**

10 **Or if he ask a fish, will he give
him a serpent?**

kingdom and the bestowing of divine nature upon those found worthy; Christ speaks of our present standing before God. Individuals who manifest the disposition described in the previous verse will gain a strength of mind and character that will be modelled upon the character of the Father Himself, and His Son (5:48). They will attain to an intimate understanding of the Truth, in both its intellectual and practical aspects, and will thus establish a close relationship with Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:3). God is not the purely censorious type of Judge that men often are, in their dealings with one another (Vv. 1-5). He is a wise and loving Creator who can be fully trusted to respond to the needs of His faithful sons and daughters. "Behold, the eye of Yahweh is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy... Yahweh is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, in Truth..." (Ps. 33:18; 145:18).

VERSE 9

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?"

In these words, the Lord alluded to two things: the father-son relationship, and the practice of hurtful deception. Yahweh is our Father. And "like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:13). Because of the perfection of His own character, He will never deceive us in any matter; and would especially not do so in regard to our need for a continuing supply of the "bread" of life (Mat. 4:4). A son is here depicted as asking his father for bread — which is a confession of hunger on the part of the son. Would any true father so deceive his son as to provide him with a useless stone in the hour of his son's need? The Lord was virtually implying: "Not only will your Heavenly Father never practise deception upon you, but He will be ever aware of your needs and provide accordingly."

VERSE 10

"Of if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

Bread and fish provide a staple diet of the Galileans, so these two metaphors would make a strong impression upon the Lord's listeners. If their sons did not have either bread or fish they would virtually starve to death. Whilst a "stone" is a useless, inanimate thing, a serpent is a positively dangerous creature, which can only bring evil to mankind (Gen. 3:14-15; Rom. 16:20, etc.). In these two connected verses we should observe that the Lord did not describe a father who refused to give anything to his son, but rather, a father, who, in answer to the pleading of a hungry child, *made a show* of providing for the needs of the child; whilst knowing that he was cruelly deceiving the boy by giving him one object which was useless, and another which might well destroy him. In Yahweh, we have a Father who would only ever act towards us with perfect justice and mercy, and with our personal welfare very much to the fore. Note the way in which the full lesson to be learned from these two verses is pressed home in v. 12.

VERSE 11

"If ye, then being evil"

Imagine the disciples listening carefully to all that the Lord was

11 If ye then, ^h 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?

saying to them. In hearing and responding to “the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68) as they flowed forth from the lips of the Son of God, could it be said that these men and women were evil? Certainly not in the sense that they were depraved, or perverse creatures devoted to walking in the ways of sin. But there were two senses in which the Lord could correctly address his disciples in this way. The first of these were the fact that they were indeed sinners, every one of them (1 Jn. 1:8, 10, etc.). The second was that they — in common with all Adam’s posterity — possessed a nature prone towards evil. Christ himself was “made sin for us” in that he was born of an identical nature to ourselves (2 Cor. 5:21). Strictly, the word rendered “evil” in this verse (Gk. *poneros*, derived from *ponos*, ‘to labour’) “denotes evil that causes labour, pain, sorrow, malignant evil” (Vine); or that which *causes* “sorrow, pain...” (Bullinger). The word, in this context, therefore appears to relate to the works of the flesh, which are predominantly the out-working of the nature we bear. Hence, Weymouth has rendered the phrase: “imperfect as you are..” (Again, cp. the grand ideal of what the Truth has been designed to produce in us: 5:48).

“Know how to give good gifts unto your children”

In spite of their inherent weaknesses, and the sins that they had committed, these disciples had sufficient ability to carefully discriminate as to what was good or bad for their children. A loving parent with a keen consideration for the welfare of his child will exercise thought and wisdom in that direction, in spite of his own failings. But how is it possible to *compare* such a devoted parent, who is constantly striving against the weaknesses of his own nature, with the *moral excellence and perfection of character* which Yahweh possesses, and which He manifests for the *GOOD* of His children?

“How much more”

Gk. *mallon*, “very, very, much..” (Vine); “very, very much, exceedingly; more, more strongly; also denoting constant increase, more and more...” (Bullinger). Obviously a word with an extreme meaning, to contrast feeble man’s ability and willingness to assist his children with the ability and willingness of God to assist His children.

“Shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

The Lord here stressed the father-son relationship in a spiritual sense: and emphasised the wonder of such a relationship between God and ourselves by adding the phrase “which is in heaven...” Man, a creature of the dust, even though perhaps striving to assist his children, is of the earth and resides upon earth. But Yahweh sits enthroned in glory in heaven. How can we hope to compare God and man, so far as the attributes of fatherhood are concerned? Such a comparison is quite impossible. Where, then, should our full trust and confidence be placed? “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is *none* upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Ps. 73:25).

And what are the “good things” we should “ask” of Him? The word which has been rendered “good” is most interesting in this context. “The original idea of the word is so broad that it denotes in general, *skilled* either for good or evil...” (Bullinger). The Lord thus appears to have been laying heavy stress upon those things which God may accomplish for

12 Therefore all things ¹whatsoever
ye would that men should do to you,
do ye even so to them: for ²this is
the law and the prophets.

man, things for which man is insufficiently skilled to fulfil for himself. God — and God alone — can supply the needs of those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, who are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers; who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, who are reviled and persecuted... (5:3-11). He can provide every need for those who *seek* "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" — and who "take no thought for the morrow..." (6:33-34). Above all else, for those who have learned to develop these qualities of character, Yahweh can provide that which they need more than anything else: forgiveness for their sins, and release from the shackles of this earthly tabernacle into the glorious freedom and exaltation of divine nature.

As our Heavenly Father, Yahweh desires that we should become an extension of Himself, even to the point of causing us to become a part of what *He now is*. This is the purpose of our calling in the Truth. Yahweh, speaking to Moses of His ultimate purpose, said: "I Will Be Whom I Will Be" (Ex. 3:14) — meaning that He would become manifested in a glorified multitude of men and women who had become his sons and daughters in the most complete sense. And the Lord has here reminded us of that grand and awesome ideal: "Ye *shall be* PERFECT, even as your *Father* which is in heaven is perfect" (5:48).

Let us not leave our consideration of this verse without marking well the Lord's clear-cut reference to our own responsibilities in regard to these matters. We are to be of such a disposition, such a faith, and manifest the necessary element of dedication, as to *desire to attain* to the perfection of the divine character that Yahweh might be glorified in us. If we do not have the attitude which causes us to "ask" these things of God, there is no ground upon which He should be expected to bestow such glorious blessings upon us.

VERSE 12

"Therefore"

The Lord was now about to summarise all the lessons he had conveyed in Vv. 1-11.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"

"So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets" (J.B.). This verse has been termed "the golden rule" for daily living in our relationships with our fellow human beings. Those who have learned to love the Truth will desire to implement its principles in their own attitude towards others, and would therefore desire that others should act towards *them* in accordance with those same principles. Observe the implied emphasis upon the words "should do." The verse speaks of *actions* and *attitudes*. God, who is perfect in all that He does, will provide for the ultimate good of His children; should we not, therefore — if we claim to be genuine lovers of the Truth — manifest this same disposition towards others? The Lord was here speaking of the attitude which Believers must exhibit in their every-day lives. The emphasis is upon the practical application of the principles of the Truth. We should manifest towards others the same attitude which we pray that Yahweh will display towards us. This is often

13 ¶ ¹Enter 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:

best done by trying to place ourselves in the position of our brother or sister and endeavouring to correctly adjudge, upon the basis of the word, their needs; and then consider the best type of assistance we can render to them. With such a genuine concern for the welfare of others the possibilities of bitter, hypocritical judgments against others (Vv. 1-5) will be largely eradicated. Our efforts, then, must be directed towards bestowing upon others the "good things" which we ask Yahweh to confer upon us — that is, those "good things" which we, as weak mortal creatures are capable of extending towards others, because of our understanding of the Truth and the will of our God.

"For this is the law and the prophets"

The primary purpose of the Law and the Prophets was to teach men and women to become manifestations of their Creator, mentally and morally, so that they might be found, in due time, fit creatures to become like Him physically. (Gen. 1:26-28; cp. Ps. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:27, etc. Jer. 13:11; Mat. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34, etc.). Only by upholding and practising these principles can it ever be said of us that we are "not far from the kingdom of God." These issues — which are the issues of life and death — must be seen clearly, through the eye of faith and humility. They can *never* be seen or recognised through the eye of *self-esteem* (Vv. 1-5).

Vv. 13-20: THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS: THE BROAD WAY LEADING TO DESTRUCTION AND THE NARROW WAY LEADING TO LIFE — AND THE DISPOSITION OF INDIVIDUALS MAY BE RECOGNISED BY THE FRUITS THEY PRODUCE.

VERSE 13

"Enter ye in at the strait gate"

The subject of this discourse concerns the *means* whereby men and women might gain an entrance into God's kingdom. Therefore, these words relate, primarily, to finding the WAY which leads to eternal life. The verse unquestionably relates to a way of life which *leads* to the kingdom, in contrast to the natural way of the flesh which leads only to destruction.

Here is where the question of JUDGING becomes a vital issue (Cp. v. 1). Only a few will find the entrance which leads to the kingdom, because these things are "spiritually JUDGED" (1 Cor. 2:14, R.V.). It should be noted that the Lord was issuing a clear invitation: "Enter ye in..." This was not merely a call to *hear* the directions or instruction, but to *act* upon what has been learned in a most positive and decisive manner. Such an attitude requires not merely listening to Christ's words, but following him *into* that way which he himself walked so faithfully and so resolutely. If we follow Christ, as he has called us to do, we have the assurance that "an *entrance* shall be ministered" unto us "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11).

It must also be carefully observed that the Lord mentions only *one* "gate" by which we might enter into the way which leads to eternal life. There is only "one faith" (Eph. 4:5), and that is the gospel message preached by Christ and his apostles. To "enter" this "strait gate" requires that the Truth be understood mentally, and manifested morally. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and

Pharisees, ye shall in no case *enter* into the kingdom of heaven" (5:20, same word as in 7:13). The means of entrance into the way of life is indeed "strait" — the word (Gk. *stenos*, from which we have the English 'stenography', meaning 'narrow writing'). This gate is "strait" because "it runs counter to natural inclinations" (Vine). The word occurs only three times: here, v. 14, and Lk. 13:24. Note that in the latter passage the Lord said that it was necessary to AGONISE to "enter in at the strait gate" (A.V., "strive"; Gk. *agonizomai*). Hence, these words in 7:13 have been rendered: "Enter by the *narrow* gate" (J.B., Wey., N.E.B.). "Go in by the *small* gate" (T.C.N.T.). The way to life eternal has always been narrow, because it has been restricted by the confines which Yahweh has placed around that "way" (cp. Gen. 3:24; Rev. 2:7). It is for man to seek and find that "way," and then discipline his thinking and his actions to conform to God's requirements. Such a way of thought and action is not natural to man, and therefore he will discover that it is "through much tribulation (lit. 'pressure') that we shall "enter into the kingdom of God." Such 'pressure' results from the fact that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh..." (Acts 14:22; Gal. 5:17).

"For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"

Those who walk after the flesh do not subject themselves to the restrictions of heavenly commandments. They therefore have the entire compass of life before them; and without restraint, and unheeding of Christ's call, they develop a character which is the outworking of "the works of the flesh." The natural tendencies of human nature will automatically guide the thinking and actions of all who do not subject themselves to the will of Almighty God. And "the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23).

It should be remembered that these words were addressed specifically to Christ's disciples, and not to the world at large; therefore the Lord's followers must constantly examine themselves in the light of the word of God, so that they will be numbered among the "few" at the Judgment Seat, and not among the "many." Disciples must always bear in mind that they may be found in the latter category if they have not diligently hearkened unto the voice of the Good Shepherd, and followed in his ways (cp. Gen. 6:1-3, etc.).

It requires courage, matched to a real and living faith, to step aside from the "many" and take one's place resolutely among the "few," who show by their speech, their general attitude towards their fellow-men, and their dedication to the cause of Christ, that they have "been with Jesus" and that they have therefore "come out from among" the godless environment of a world that "lieth in wickedness" (Acts 4:13; 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Jn. 5:19).

It should be observed that this verse is, in effect, a summary of all that has gone before in this discourse. The Lord was stating that the path to true happiness and contentment and well-being will not be reached through that which appeals to the natural, carnal eye of man; but rather through a process of groaning and agonising to "enter" a narrow gate. The evil propensities of the flesh must be suppressed and subdued, that the characteristics of Yahweh might be manifested. This, in effect, is the "strait gate" through which all must pass who would find an entrance into the kingdom of God.

14 ² Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

VERSE 14

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life”

Note that “because” has been rendered “how” in the margin. The latter is correct. The Lord’s statement here was an emphatic, positive utterance, because he was speaking of the clear issues involving life and death from the *eternal* point of view. Christ’s disciples must face and accept the fact that all humanity falls into either one of two classes: there are only *two* ways (Vv. 13-14), *two* types of prophets (v. 15), *two* types of trees (Vv. 16-20), *two* classes to be brought before Christ at the Judgment Seat (Vv. 21-22), and *two* types of builders (Vv. 24-27). The Truth, therefore, must never be handled or treated lightly. Surely this verse is stressing the absolute necessity of a correct *intellectual* understanding of the Truth, apart from which it would be impossible to find the “strait gate” and the “narrow way,” by which the moral attributes of our Father’s character may be manifested in our lives, and our flesh disciplined to submit to the will of God.

The word “strait” is the same as in the previous verse, but now the Lord added the word “narrow” (Gk. *thlibo*, ‘to press.... i.e., hemmed in, like a mountain gorge; the way is rendered narrow by the divine conditions, which make it impossible for any to enter who think the entrance depends upon self-merit, or who still incline towards sin, or desire to continue in evil...’ — Vine).

The word has elsewhere been rendered “lest they *should throng him*” (Mark 3:9); “afflicted” (2 Cor. 1:6) and in two other passages “troubled” (2 Cor. 4:8) and in three other passages “suffer tribulation” (1 Thess. 3:4).

Graphically, then, the Lord has contrasted the easy path of self-gratification and self-indulgence which leads to eternal death, with the controlled, subordinated path which leads to everlasting life.

“Few there be that find it”

The word “find” indicates that here is a class of humanity who are prepared to *search*, and to continue searching until their goal has been attained.

As a final thought on these particular verses, let us appreciate that the Lord was not here calling for a life of asceticism, such as practised by numerous monastic orders, which involves vows of “poverty, chastity, and obedience.” This was the *outward* form of religious life which Christ condemned in the Pharisees. The *straitness* and narrowness of the way which leads to eternal life is fully described and defined in the word of God, and any additional self-imposed restrictions would be negative and futile. Positively, the Lord has called for a life of self-surrender to the will of Almighty God. Those who accept this sublime principle “find” the “strait gate,” and though it be “narrow” they will enter therein, and walk in the ways of God until they pass through the final stage of their spiritual development by being guided, lovingly and mercifully, to the “entrance” which will bring them into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11).

VERSE 15

“Beware of false prophets”

15 ¶ ^mBeware of false prophets,
ⁿwhich come to you in sheep's cloth-
ing, but inwardly they are ^oravening
wolves.

The Lord now uttered an explicit warning to the effect that the greatest danger facing the disciples would come from men who claimed to be religious! But the warning relates to a situation even more sinister than may be implied from the word “beware”; for the word (Gr. *prosecho*; derived from *pros*, meaning ‘to’ or ‘towards’ and *echo*, ‘to have, to hold’) defines the danger of forming a close and intimate association with those who are really enemies of the Truth. Such men (Gk. *pseudoprophetes*) are, in reality, not merely false prophets but false *teachers*, because the word (*prophetes*) defines “one who speaks forth openly before any one, a proclaimer of a divine message...” (Bullinger) or “an interpreter of the oracles...” (Vine). In the LLX this word does service for the Hebrew *naghi*, “meaning either one in whom the message from God springs forth or one to whom anything is secretly communicated” (Vine). The warning is clear: disciples cannot afford to relax their minds to the point where they no longer carefully weigh up what is said to them, by way of spiritual exposition or instruction. Every disciple must strive to become sufficiently mature in their understanding of the word of God that they are able to discern between truth and error, and to reject teaching or ideology which would subvert their faith (cp. Mal. 3:18).

“Which come to you in sheep’s clothing”

The Lord was very careful to supply an adequate description of the *type* of false teachers of whom the disciples should beware. Outwardly, they have all the appearances of being numbered among Christ’s flock. It is clear, therefore, that the Lord was not warning against the black-robed Cleric or the ornately robed Cardinal of apostate christendom; such men would be readily and promptly identified by Christ’s true disciples. The false teachers against whom the Lord here warned would not be so easy to identify or put to the proof. They were the false shepherds who would arise *within* the Ecclesial world (Acts 20:30; 2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2; Jude, etc.). True teachers of the one true gospel will speak “unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3); but false teachers are manifestly lacking in these aims and attributes.

“Inwardly they are ravening wolves”

“men who come to you in sheep’s fleece, but beneath that disguise they are ravenous wolves” (Wey.); “savage wolves” (N.E.B.). They profess to be numbered among Christ’s true brethren, and claim to speak on behalf of Christ; but the only result of their influence is to rend and destroy the Body of Christ. A savage wolf is motivated only by his own desire for more, to consume others that he himself might be satisfied. False teachers do “violence” to the Truth, and the real motive which moves them is that of pride and self-esteem. Further, in view of the context, it is implied that one of the hallmarks of a false teacher will be his attempts to make the “way” *broader*, through a failure to uphold sound doctrine and practice within the Brotherhood. He will prove to be a destroyer to all who place their trust and confidence in him. To tamper with divine Truth in the guise of liberality is to play the wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Observe that, whilst the Lord was not calling upon his disciples to automatically reject all who claimed to be teachers of the Truth, they should exercise an element of caution, and examine the “fruit” produced by the teachers, in the clear light of the word of Truth.

16 ^pYe shall know them by their
fruits. ^aDo men gather grapes of
thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so ^revery good tree bring-
eth forth good fruit; but a corrupt
tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

VERSE 16

“Ye shall know them by their fruits”

This is the one and only yard-stick the Lord has given us, whereby we might discern the true character and disposition of our fellow-men. The ripened “fruit” is presented here in contrast to the mere outward appearance indicated in V. 15. But even so, it is not until fruit is examined that an individual may ascertain whether the fruit is suitable for consumption or not. It is as though the Lord was counselling: “Don’t be content merely to gaze at the tree and accept it on its face value (as unwise brethren will do with “sheep”, v. 15); wait for the fruit to appear; examine what the tree PRODUCES, rather than the tree itself.”

“Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”

“Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles?” (N.E.B.). Now, the Lord presented the real point of the issue: when you examine the *fruit* you will be able to recognise the *tree* for its worth or otherwise! Thus, the lesson must be learned: what a man teaches, in the name of Christ, will prove his true position — not the works which he might perform for the purpose of impressing others.

It is a law of creation that all things bring forth after their own kind (Gen. 1:11-12, etc.). Similarly, the spirit-word can only bring forth the things of the spirit (Gal. 5:22; cp. 1 Pet. 1:23). And the flesh, having no good thing within it (Rom. 7:18; Jn. 6:63), can only produce a type of fruit which is totally unrelated to the things of God, and therefore of no value either to Yahweh or His sons and daughters.

Both the vine and fig tree have been used in Scripture, symbolically, to represent the Israel of God. The fruit that is produced thereby, as a result of the guiding hand of the husbandman, will be acceptable to Yahweh; but the fruit of “thorns” and “thistles” results only from the curse placed upon the earth, and therefore brings forth no honour or glory to the Creator (cp. Gen. 3:18; Isa. 7:23, etc.). Needless to say, the outward visible growth gives a clear testimony as to the true nature of that which is within.

VERSE 17

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”

The test which must be applied to a teacher of the Truth is whether or not his teaching conforms to the holy scriptures (1 Cor. 14:37, etc.). In these words the Lord stressed the principle that the fruit produced will surely prove conclusively the true nature of the tree itself. “That which is born out of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born out of the spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6; Lit. Gk.). The word rendered “corrupt” (Gk. *sapros*), more correctly indicates a tree that is rotting away, or decaying. Termed “the worthless tree” (Roth.); “a worthless tree” (Wey.); “a rotten tree” (J.B.). Obviously, the very worthlessness of such a tree requires its swift removal from the orchard; not only because it is useless, but because it may well harbour a disease which could infect other trees! In other words, those who remain unchanged or unenlightened by the spirit-word remain unsuitable for the Creator’s purpose (Num. 14:21), and therefore a danger to those whom Yahweh is endeavouring to nurture in His way. On the other hand, where there is “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6)

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

good fruit will be produced, not only in the character and inner thinking of the individual, but in the outworking of what is produced in such lives.

Remember that these words are still related to the “them” of v. 16.

VERSE 18

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit”

The divine laws which govern nature, that everything brings forth only “after their kind” (Gen. 1:11, 21) was now applied by the Lord to man’s spirituality, or lack of it. But the fuller implications in the Lord’s words are most important: if the character of the man is sound and spiritual, then the fruit which he brings forth *must* be in conformity with that character. It is what a man really is in character that will determine what sort of fruit he brings forth.

“Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit”

The natural is a type of the spiritual. If the fruits produced by those who claimed to be teachers of the truth (v. 15) was not soundly based upon the divine word, and openly manifested in their way of life, it was because their true character had not been founded upon the true principles of divine wisdom.

VERSE 19

“Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire”

There is a terrible finality about these words, which provide the first inkling in this discourse that everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ must inevitably face the Lord at the Judgment Seat.

Once again the Lord Jesus reminded his hearers that the word of God is not something to be trifled with or treated lightly. God has *one* purpose in those who are called to become His sons and daughters, and one only: that they might learn to become like their Heavenly Father; that they might develop, through the influence of His word, into the mental and moral likeness of the God whom they claim to worship. This is the doctrine of God-manifestation.

And if that singular divine purpose is not brought to a satisfactory fruition in individuals, they cease to have any part or value in the development of Yahweh’s purpose. They remain worthless, and fit only for destruction. “Fire” is often used in the scriptures as a symbol for divine judgment.

VERSE 20

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”

The word rendered “know” is the Gk. *epiginosko* (also occ. V.16) “to observe, fully perceive, notice attentively, discern, recognise... to discover, ascertain, determine...” (Vine). And how will the disciple be able to recognise fellow human beings with such unwavering accuracy? Only by one means: by their own knowledge and understanding of the Truth, and in particular the profound and wonderful principles the Lord has been teaching in this discourse. Whilst this statement is perfectly true as it stands, let us remember that the Lord has been teaching us that it is more important to test principles than persons; for when the principles for which an individual stands are examined and tested in the light of the Word, the true character of the individual will be revealed. The principles

**21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me,
'Lord, Lord, shall enter into the king-
dom of heaven; but he that doeth the
will of my Father which is in heaven.**

of a person are tested when we observe the “fruits” they have produced.

The sobering question which each of us must apply to ourselves is: do we have the necessary knowledge and discernment to apply this instruction of the Lord? And if not, do we appreciate the dangerous state in which we will remain until such deficiency has been remedied?

It is tragic to consider that, in the day of Judgment, there will be those who have allowed themselves to be deceived and seduced from the true pathway of the Truth, and will experience the horror of rejection by the one they had looked upon as their Lord and King. Too late they will realise that they have failed to test their spiritual guides in the light of the Word. The Lord was fully aware of the inevitability of this situation developing; and therefore this verse is filled with both pleading and compassion. The Lord expressed his concern for this urgent need which would be experienced by every one of us. Will we turn away from the authoritative voice of the Son of God? Or will we give diligent heed to his warning, that he might identify us, in the day of account, with those whose “fruit” will be acceptable to him?

Vv.21-27: NOT ALL PROFESSING DISCIPLES WILL BE ADMITTED
TO THE KINGDOM, FOR THEY FALL INTO TWO CLASSES:
THE FAITHFUL AND THE UNFAITHFUL

VERSE 21

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”

The Lord Jesus now told his disciples clearly that he would occupy the position of Judge over human-kind. The words “Lord, Lord” represent the fervent, submissive claim of one who considers himself to be the humble servant of the one whom he addresses. Such claims, in that day of account, will be examined in the light of the word of God; and Christ will carefully examine the “fruits” which have been produced in the life of each one who will stand before him for judgment. But this particular class of brother and sister will be found to have *professed* loyalty to a cause which they have not, in reality, upheld.

In a certain respect, with this verse the Lord has passed from the position of Teacher to Judge. It was inevitable that in a discourse which was intended to reveal and expound upon the Christ-character, the Lord should point out to his disciples that ultimately all claims to discipleship must be examined and either proved or disproved. And the basis upon which the evidence will be considered can be nothing other than the revealed will and word of God. Have they conformed to the pattern, or not? It is touching to observe from the wording of this verse that the Lord was not speaking from the standpoint of self-esteem, savouring the importance of his own exalted position; but rather giving full consideration to the fate of *those who would appear before him* for judgment. That was his great concern. And surely the Lord felt only sadness and sorrow at the prospect of having to say to some: “I never knew you; depart from me ...” (cp. Jn. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Throughout the course of this discourse the disciples had been taught that they must develop the qualities of RIGHTEOUSNESS (5:3-12), GODLINESS (5:13-16), FAITH (5:17-20), LOVE (5:21-48),

**22 Many will say to me in that day,
Lord, Lord, have we "not prophesied
in thy name? and in thy name have
cast out devils? and in thy name
done many wonderful works?**

PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING (6:1-18), MEEKNESS (6:19-34), HUMILITY (7:1-6), DEDICATION (7:7-14), FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT (7:15-20) and THE CHRIST-CHARACTER OVER-ALL (5:48; 7:21-27). All of these qualities are associated with *character* and *action*. Therefore, it must be a part of Christ's consummate purpose in his disciples that he should eventually examine each one, to see whether those attributes of character and action have been manifested to the satisfaction of Yahweh, according to Whose Mind Christ will pass final judgment.

To "enter into the kingdom of heaven" is the final goal and ultimate aspiration of those who are called to the Truth. Yet, how gravely these words of the Lord should be received, as he told his disciples that there would be those who — through their own folly — would experience the insufferable anguish of being *denied* an entrance into the kingdom. The only ones who will qualify for inheritance in the kingdom will be those who have done "the will" of the "Father."

"But he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven"

Observe how intimately the Lord related himself to Yahweh: "My Father..." He did not, at this point, say "your Father." The reason should be readily apparent: To support a claim to sonship, the claimant must be an extension of the Father. The Lord had already provided proof of the validity of his own claim during his lifetime, and would continue to do so; but his disciples had yet to learn to develop and manifest the qualities of character which would provide the necessary proof to match their claims to be sons of God.

To "do" the will of God necessitates, firstly, that the individual *knows* what the Will of God is. Thus, the Lord here alluded to the way in which the influence of the word of God must *mentally* and *morally* transform the life of the individual who desires to become a son or daughter of the Living God. Christ was here speaking of the doctrine of God-manifestation.

It is noteworthy that the Lord used the word "heaven" *twice* in this verse — not to denote the *place* where the kingdom will be established (for it will be upon the earth); but to emphasise the heavenly *origin* of those characters that will be found worthy to inherit the kingdom. The Lord has already taught us the principle to be remembered in prayer: "Thy *will* be done in *earth*, as it is in *heaven*..." (6:10). The immortalised glorified saints will provide upon earth an extension of the environment and harmony which now exists in heaven.

VERSE 22

"Many will say to me in that day"

They will *say* a great deal. A lot of fast-talking will be done at the Judgment Seat, in an endeavour to persuade the Lord, of the devotion and performances which this class will claim to have manifested during their time in the Truth. But words will achieve nothing. All that *could* have been said, or *could* have been done will have become PAST HISTORY by then. Many will be furiously racking their brains, asking themselves: "What can I say that will really impress the Lord?" But all to no avail. Everything will already be known to the Lord. The time of probation will have been completed. The next phase of God's purpose

23 And ^xthen will I profess unto
them, I never knew you: ^ydepart
from me, ye that work iniquity.

with his sons and daughters will have commenced: judgment.

“Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?”

“was it not in your name that we taught?” (T.C.N.T.). This class within the Ecclesia will claim to have upheld the *words* of Christ, and to have performed the *works* of faith — but both claims, from this class, will be rejected; for the true fruits will not be in evidence. The claim to have “cast out demons” will no doubt be used in an endeavour to prove the point that these brethren had *taught* the Truth, and thus *cleansed* others from their sins. **BUT WHAT WILL THEY HAVE DONE TO TRANSFORM THEIR OWN LIVES?**

“And in thy name done many wonderful works?”

“and in thy name performed many mighty works” (Wey.); “...many works of power...” (Roth.). The two English words “wonderful works” have been rendered from the one Gk. word “*dunamis*,” which primarily relates to POWER (Eng., “dynamo”). This is a term which will be used by this class of disciple at the Judgment Seat in an endeavour to justify themselves before Christ. They will claim to have used the Word mightily, and to have accomplished many apparently wonderful achievements. And it may well be that many of these brethren and sisters *will* have performed much of that which they will claim to have done. It is important to observe that Christ does not say that he will necessarily DENY the three claims made here. His contention against these disciples will be two-fold. The first has already been implied: They will not have “done the will” of the Father. The second is elaborated upon in the next verse.

VERSE 23

“And then will I profess unto them”

“Then I will tell them to their face” (N.E.B.) “Then I shall tell them to their faces” (J.B.) “And then I will tell them plainly” (Wey.).

They will listen in a state of horror and torment as the Lord pronounces his verdict of judgment against them. It will be the moment when, with flashes of anguish, these disciples will recognise their previous lack of comprehension as to what the Truth *should* have produced in their lives — but true enlightenment will have come too late. It will be the moment when the follies of the past will be revealed through the “fruit” which has been produced: thorns and thistles (v. 16). There will be a conscious realisation in the hearts of these brethren and sisters that they have not maintained the teaching of Christ, nor the example he had so patiently set before them.

“I never knew you”

“Knew” is the Gk. *ginosko*, of which Bullinger says: “It denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known, i.e., to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer one’s self to be determined thereby.” Bullinger renders this phrase: “I have never had a true and personal connection with you.”

Why should the Lord pronounce such a verdict against some? The answer has been partially given, in that they will not have performed “the will” of the Father. But this point was elaborated upon in the words which now followed.

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”

The Lord will refuse to recognise these professing-disciples as brethren. He will do so on the grounds that he will have had no intimate association with them. Why? These words are quoted from Ps. 6:8, but they are quoted in a most significant way; for the verse reads, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; FOR YAHWEH HATH HEARD THE VOICE OF MY WEEPING." It is not trivial or unimportant that the Lord omitted the second part of the verse. He did so simply because he will not be able to say this of the rejected, as he could say it of himself. In other words, the rejected will not have become "partakers of the sufferings" of Christ (2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Tim 1:8). A consideration of Ps. 6 will show that the Psalm spoke, prophetically, of the sufferings of Christ. The Psalm may be analysed in the following way:

Vv 1- 4: His prayer for divine help, and for release from the struggle against the forces of sin.

Vv 5- 7: The Lord's utter exhaustion in the conflict.

Vv 6- 8: A dramatic description of the tears shed by the Lord in the daily suffering he encountered in overcoming sin.

Vv 9-10: A concluding note of triumph; his prayers had been heard; victory was assured.

There was something quite profound in the Lord's reference to this Psalm at this stage of the discourse, as he drew his remarks towards a conclusion. The Psalm, in this context, is a reminder to Christ's disciples that he has "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Walking in the way of the Truth brought suffering to Christ, as he struggled against the propensities of his nature and the forces of sin which surrounded him. And his disciples must "follow his steps" and thereby become "partakers" of his "sufferings." Paul, with mature spiritual perception, expressed his own desire in these words: "That I may know (ginosko) him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death..." (Phil. 3:10). Paul will, in due time, inherit the kingdom (2 Tim. 4:6-8) because he learned to "fellowship" the "sufferings" of the Lord Jesus Christ by crucifying the flesh and positively manifesting the attributes of the Christ-character (Gal. 5:24). But, in contrast, consider those who will be rejected at the Judgment Seat. They will not have followed the example of Paul, who, in his turn, imitated the Son of God (1 Cor. 11:1, R.V.). The rejected will not be able to say: "For Yahweh hath heard the voice of my weeping," because, although they will have outwardly performed religious acts, they will have lightly esteemed "the reproach of Christ" (cp. Heb. 11:26).

We may be busily engaged in the performance of *works* of religion, but to *omit* a PERSONAL APPLICATION of the teachings of Christ from our way of life would be to deny ourselves the means of developing the true Christ-character. And if the Christ-character is not in process of development in the life of an individual there remains only one alternative: the works of iniquity. The words here (Gk. anomia) means "violation of law; non-observance or transgression of the law, whether unknown or wilfully violated; lawlessness" (Bullinger). Thus, whilst many of the rejected may certainly have been busy upon religious matters, even engaged upon the work of preaching to others, they will not have been personally disciplined by the influence of Christ's words. They will

24 ¶ 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:

therefore have progressed through life on the "broad way" which leads to destruction, whilst deluding themselves that they were negotiating the "narrow" way which they believed would lead them to life (Vv. 13-14). Their failure to develop the Christ-character will be due to one or more of three things:

IGNORANCE OF THE TRUTH
NEGLECT OF THE TRUTH
OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH

Therefore, the first essential quality necessary to guard against being found in this category is a sound and clear knowledge of the fundamental principles of divine Truth. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee (Gk. *ginosko*) the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

VERSE 24

"Therefore"

Of this word, Bullinger has written: "Therefore, then, marking the formal or logical inference..." In other words, the Lord was now about to speak concerning the *one means* by which his disciples could avoid the disastrous situation of being numbered among the rejected.

"Whosoever heareth these saying of mine and doeth them"

"Everyone, then, that listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it may be compared to a prudent man..." (T.C.N.T.). Herein is described the disposition of a true saint: one who listens attentively and intelligently to the instructions given by the Son of God, and then dedicates his life to manifesting those attributes of Godliness which he has learned from his Lord. This instruction presupposes a belief in the Lord Jesus as Son of God and Saviour. This particular commandment, therefore, must be fulfilled in the life of the Believer as the outworking of *faith*. This is important, because no works founded upon mere human endeavour can be of any spiritual value; but knowledge, and a way of life based upon faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, can produce a regeneration in the thinking processes and way of life of men and women, to transform them into the likeness of the one whom they accept in faith.

The Lord now brought this discourse to its conclusion by dramatically and graphically illustrating the fact that among his disciples there would be *two* classes of hearers — those who listen but do not really respond, and those who both hear and *do* what the Lord requires.

"I will liken him unto a wise man"

Out of knowledge and faith there must be manifested wisdom. It is significant that the Lord chose a word here (Gk. *sophos*) which means "understanding, thoughtful, PRACTICALLY wise, sensible, prudent" (Bullinger. Our emphasis). These attributes must become a part of the character of the individual who will inherit the kingdom.

"Which built his house upon a rock"

"which built his house upon *the* rock" (R.V. Various other translations also incorporate the definite article, including Roth, and the R.S.V. The Diag. lit. Gk. has: "a man prudent, who built *the* house of him upon *the* rock" — in both case above, our emphasis has been added).

This final analogy, then, is based upon the principle of house-building. The first lesson emerges clearly: *all* Christ's disciples are

25 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.

26 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:

BUSY “building” SOMETHING into their lives. The question here is: *How* are they building, and what will be the *result* of their efforts?

Wise builders, at the time of Christ, dug down through the topsoil until they came to solid rock — not a rare accomplishment in such a rocky land. The foundations for the house would then be set carefully upon the rocky base, and built up to ground level. When the house had been completed there would be little evidence to show outwardly just how deeply the foundations were laid in the ground. Here was a type of builder who was prepared to work long and hard, to labour industriously, with the intent that the “fruits” of his labour would be sure to last and therefore give him indefinite security.

Rock is solid, sure, and — in this context — immovable. A most apt symbol to represent things which are of divine origin, and therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ. Earth, on the other hand, is unstable as water, unreliable as a foundation, constantly shifting, and unable to resist the elements which may attack it — hence providing an adequate symbol for human nature. In the imagery which Christ here set before his disciples, the “wise” man is the one who will not place his confidence in flesh; and he will labour diligently to see that all fleshly foundations in his life are *removed*, so that he might build only upon Christ, the solid, immovable rock. Needless to say, untiring effort and patient, industrious action, is the only means whereby the individual might remove the “sand” in his search for the sound and solid foundation of “rock.”

VERSE 25

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not”

Individuals whose thoughts and actions are founded carefully and solidly upon divine principles will be able to meet the pressures and trials of life, and in spite of their personal weaknesses will be equipped to maintain their integrity before God. “Take heed *how*” you *build!* was the wise counsel of the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3:10).

“For it was founded upon a rock”

“*the* rock” (R.V., our emphasis). This was the only reason this “house” withstood the pressures which came upon it (cp. Acts 14:22, where the word “tribulation” is better rendered “pressure”).

VERSE 26

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not”

The Lord was not speaking concerning a disciple who refused to read the word or listen to the voice of Christ. He was describing a disciple whose life was not *built* upon the foundation of divine principles. Such a professing follower of Christ would therefore rely more upon the reasoning of his own fleshly mind rather than submitting to the guiding hand of his God. Human philosophy will never get anyone into the kingdom of God. This class of brother or sister does not follow the wise counsel of the Lord to seek the solid rock foundation. They either do not recognise their need or else they are not prepared to give the patient, industrious labour which is necessary before their “house” can be completed. In this parable we have set before us *two* men. Both claim to

27 And 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.

be disciples of Christ; and yet the differences between them are great. One is termed “a wise man” whilst the other is described as “a foolish man” (Gr. *moros*, “dull, not acute” (Bull.), “dull, sluggish..hence stupid, foolish” (Vine). One labours diligently in dedication to his cause; the other desires to make his work as simple and easy as possible, giving no careful thought to future security. Needless to say, the second of these two brethren would complete his “house” far quicker than his fellow-worker, and would therefore appear to have attained his objective far more ably than his brother. But to seek that solid foundation, which is Christ, and to build upon it the Christ-character, is the work of a life-time; it is a work which shall never come to completion until we die, or the Lord returns. The wise man in this parable did not really care HOW LONG it took him to erect his house, so long as it was established upon the best possible foundation.

“A foolish man, which built his house upon the sand”

“...the house of him upon the sand ...” (Diag. lit. Gk.). Again, a particular house built upon a particular foundation. This man reveals the characteristics of indifference, lack of thoughtful application to his needs, lack of interest in future security, no mature understanding of what is involved in successful house-building, a compromising attitude towards his declared purpose, an apathetic approach, and a desire to remain unconcerned with the fundamental essential principles which could have brought him success in his venture. In short, he had a task before him, but wished to remain as uninvolved as possible. He wished to complete his labour quickly and simply, to his *own* satisfaction.

VERSE 27

“And the rain fell”

The astonishingly weak base upon which this man had erected his house had not previously been apparent. He had completed his house, so he believed, and to all intents and appearances it looked sound and secure. But when pressure was brought to bear upon the construction, the weaknesses of design and workmanship was suddenly revealed, to the stark horror of the builder. His past foolishness was now openly revealed for all to see (cp. 2 Cor. 5:10, where the word “appear”, Gk. *phanaroo*, means “to make manifest”) — but it was now *too late* to remedy his past deficiencies; for *all* his work was brought crashing down to destruction.

“And it fell”

From the BEGINNING of the foolish man’s labour, this result was inevitable. He *commenced* to labour without a sound foundation, and never at any stage during his work did he discern — nor was he persuaded — to begin work again upon a more solid foundation.

“And great was the fall of it”

“...and disastrous was the fall” (Wey.); “...and mighty was the crash!” (Moff.); “...down it fell with a great crash” (N.E.B.). The destruction of the house was not partial but total. The house was completely destroyed because it had been undermined from the beginning of construction, and the deficiencies had never been remedied. The profound message here is clear: at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be no shades of grey — individuals will be revealed in colours of either black or white; because there will be only two possible verdicts which

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, ^a the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 ^b For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

could be passed: *LIFE* or *DEATH*. Either that which we are now labouring to build into our lives will survive, to inherit divine nature; or the sagacious Judge will decree that we be condemned to banishment from his presence, and death.

In this parable both men were builders; both were workers. Yet only one proceeded to build according to the “specifications” delivered to him by Christ. He continued to toil on, not dissuaded by the hard work and difficulties which confronted him. His body ached, he grew tired, but he continued to devote many long hours to the work, knowing that he must build upon principles of sound wisdom.

Vv 28-29: CONCLUSION: JESUS CHRIST TAUGHT WITH
AUTHORITY BECAUSE HE WAS THE SON OF GOD.

VERSE 28

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings”

Finally, he ceased speaking; and silence momentarily descended upon the assembled group, as they gave thought to the words which had been spoken.

“The people were astonished at his doctrine”

The word “astonished” (Gk. *ekplessomai*; from ‘ek,’ meaning ‘out of’ and ‘plesso,’ ‘to strike, to strike out’), means “to be driven out of one’s senses by a sudden shock, to be exceedingly struck in mind” (Bull.). Thus, “...the people were astounded at his teaching” (N.E.B.); “...with astonishment were the multitudes being struck at his teaching” (Roth.). The initial impact upon the minds of Christ’s hearers was stunning, leaving them speechless. This reaction would appear to indicate that these men and women were indeed disciples of the Lord, having exhibited the interest and determination to laboriously climb the mountain to hear the Son of God address them (cp. 5:1). Would people who were busily rushing unimpeded along a broad, wide way, be willing to allow themselves to be diverted, and then arduously climb a mountain to listen to the Son of God? Thus, these people sought to establish a relationship with the Lord. They began in this atmosphere of wonderment and respect for what he had taught them. But, of these early disciples, one might meditate upon the question: Upon what spiritual note did their lives *end*? And what of other disciples who have followed them, down through the ages? And, above all else, what of *ourselves*? “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith*” was the challenging question posed by Paul to the Corinthian Ecclesia (2 Cor. 13:5). Will the Lord, at his coming, classify us among the “wise” or the “foolish”? What are we doing with our lives? Are we making our “calling and election *sure*?” (2 Pet. 1:10). Or are we, like the “foolish” class set before us in this chapter, blithely manifesting a form of religiousness whilst failing to follow the wise counsel of our Lord, and continuing on the “broad way” that can only bring us to ultimate ruin?

VERSE 29

“For He taught them”

Gk. “to give instruction or direction” (Bull.) Lit. “...he was teaching them” How sublime are these words. This had been his entire purpose.

Like his Father, he did not desire that any should perish, and fervently wished to see Yahweh manifested in men and women who were being called to become His sons and daughters. "It is writtten in the prophets, and they shall be TAUGHT of God" (Jn. 6:45). It is impossible to pass through the strait gate and enter upon the narrow way which leads to life, *without* being taught of God. Hence, as Christ was fully equipped to teach these things, it could be truly said of him: "Never man spake like *this* man" (Jn. 7:46). How humbly we should count our blessings, considering that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us BY HIS SON, whom He hath appointed heir of all things..." (Heb. 1:1-2). Let us thank God that He sent His Son to *teach* us the way that leads to life eternal; and let us both *hear* and *do* those things which our Lord has taught us.

"As one having authority, and not as the scribes"

The R. V. has, more correctly, "*their* scribes" (Our emphasis). These people compared the Lord Jesus with their scribes. And the comparison was most illuminating. It was the consistent habit of the scribes to appeal repeatedly to the opinions of the distinguished Rabbis, and to the "traditional" interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, as it had come to be misunderstood by the Jewish religious Leaders. This process of teaching would be repetitious and inanely tedious. The highest boast of a scribe was that he never spoke, other than in the name of a respected Rabbi. A scribe's education began as early as his fifth year, and at thirteen he became a "son of the precepts" — or, bar-mitsvah. If considered to be suitable he became a disciple and continued in further training. At thirty he was accepted as a Teacher, and was given tablets and a key (cp. Mat. 16:19).

Christ's method of teaching was quite different: he spoke directly on behalf of *his* "Father" (v. 21); and this, in itself, was something that would have had a stunning effect upon the Lord's hearers. Christ had made his own authority quite clear: "*I* say unto you..." He could speak with this authority on only one basis: He was a perfect manifestation of the moral excellence of his Father.

EPILOGUE

How awesome and lofty are the principles of righteousness, as set forth in these three chapters of Matthew's gospel. There is no legalism here, such as demanded by the scribes and Pharisees. The "hearing" and "doing" of Christ's counsel is not merely intellectual knowledge and outward works. Represented in the Lord's teaching is the outworking of an inner disposition, that which will be manifested out of "an honest and good heart." The Lord has defined the character of those who will follow in his footsteps, because "having heard the word" they "keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15). This is the only form of righteousness which Yahweh delights to see manifested in the lives of His sons and daughters. It is utterly beyond the *natural* man to attain to such heights of spiritual development. Yet, these Godly principles are not beyond the reach of a spiritually-minded person, else they would not be demanded of Christ's followers. The ideal character must be clearly seen and recognised. And then imitated.

Christ is the perfect example of the word made flesh. And he must therefore become the standard towards which his disciples reach out. "Therefore, ye *shall be perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (5:48). And in their desire to become like their Lord, cries for help and strength will ascend to the throne on high from the hearts of the struggling disciples. Their pleas will not go unheeded: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you..." (7:7).

Understanding the utter futility of all fleshly reasoning or endeavour, the Son of God has striven to raise our minds upwards towards the glorious majesty of the One Who dwells in the heavens. God is only honoured when men and women recognise the perfection of His character, and strive to become what He now is. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (4:10).

May it be that the Lord's endeavours to cause us to see the strait gate and the narrow way which leads to life eternal will be humbly heeded by each one of us. With the apostle Peter, may we readily and meekly acknowledge: "Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* has the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68).

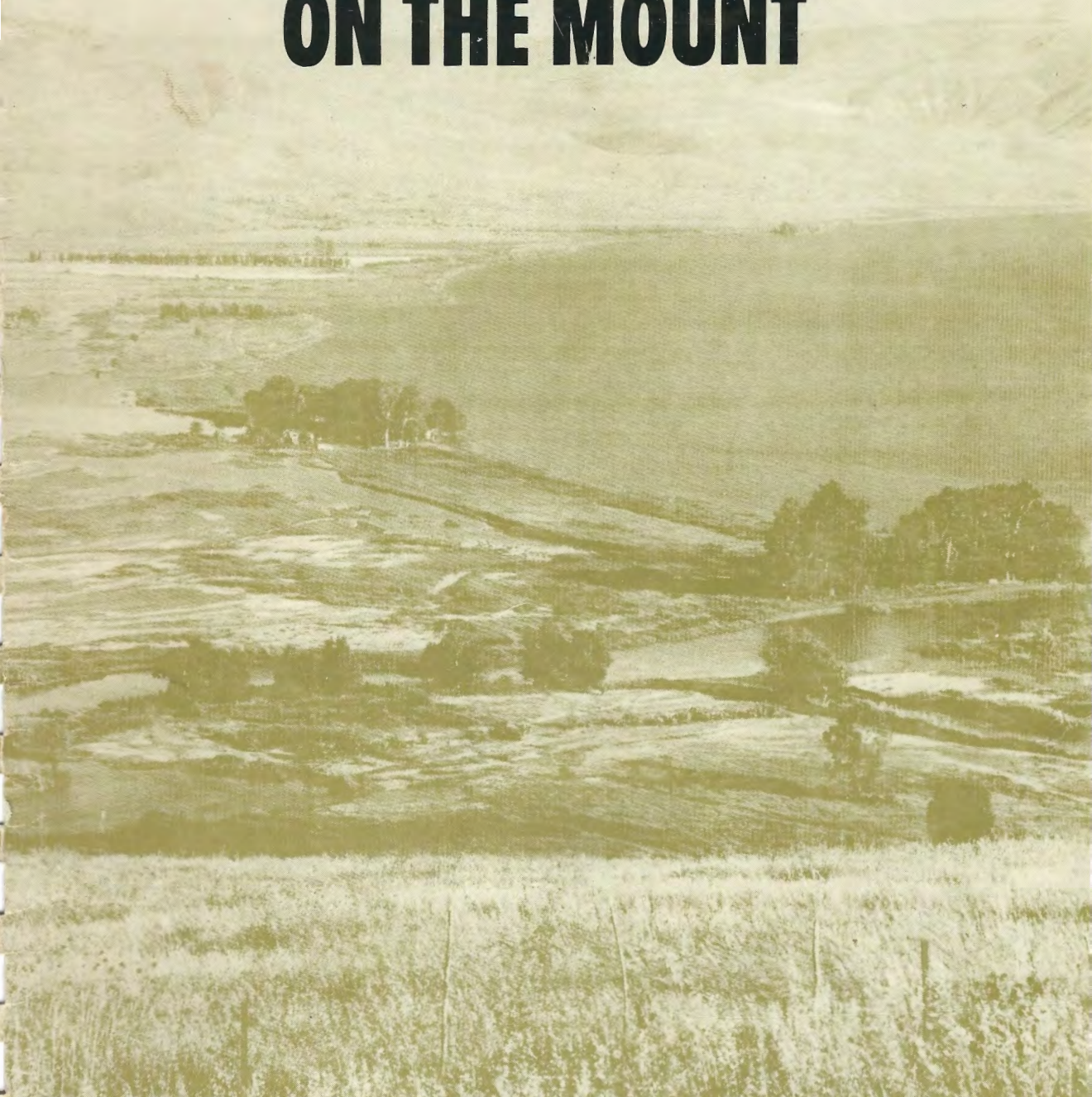
"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is..."

—1 Cor. 3:13

"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...."

R. DAVIS

THE LORD'S DISCOURSE ON THE MOUNT



NOTES PREPARED FOR
14th CHRISTADELPHIAN YOUTH CONFERENCE
PERTH, W. A. — 1977

FOREWORD

These notes have been prepared to assist you in your study of Matthew's gospel, chapters 5 to 7 — commonly known as "the Sermon on the Mount," but perhaps more appropriately described as "the Discourse on the Mount."

We want you to prepare carefully for the work of study which we hope to enjoy together upon the subject of these particular chapters.

Concerning the majestic teaching of these words of Christ, one Christadelphian Scholar has written: "He (Jesus) called upon his disciples to give practical expression to his teaching: oaths are to be avoided, evil is not to be resisted, love must be cultivated and manifested. He called upon his followers to look to the Father in heaven for their example, for He pours out His good gifts on good and evil alike, that He might draw all by His love. Such unadulterated love should be revealed by them if they would claim to be His children" (Mat. 5:33-48). (H. P. Mansfield, "The Story of the Bible," Vol. 8, p.157).

The Discourse on the Mount must probe deeply into the heart and conscience of all Believers who permit the words of the Lord to enter into their minds. The study is thus a most serious and sober one, for it sets forth the terms of discipleship, by which one might become a true follower of the Son of God.

Prepare your mind now. We suggest you to do so in the following manner:

1. Attune your mind to the Father and His word through the exercise of prayer, before the commencement of the study. Seek His blessing upon your endeavours to reach a deeper understanding of His word.
2. Read carefully through these 3 chapters of Matthew's gospel. Read the chapters in the A.V., and other translations also which you have found to be basically sound; such as Rotherham, Weymouth, Twentieth Century New Testament, R.S.V., etc. Read with care and reverence.
3. Examine the notes herewith provided, making particular note of points which you believe require more thorough emphasis or deeper exposition. Make your own additional notes; as many as you feel necessary.
4. Refer to other sources of exposition upon these chapters — with especial emphasis upon recognised Christadelphian expository works. You will find that many Christadelphian works contain important references to these chapters. For instance, "Elpis Israel," "Eureka," "The Law of Moses," "Law and Grace," and "Ministry of the Prophets — Isaiah" all make some references to these chapters in Matthew. So do quite a number of other Christadelphian writings. Use the Scriptural indexes, usually found at the back of Christadelphian books. Exercise extreme caution in considering the writings of non-Christadelphians; for the conception held by the Clergy and Theologians of Christendom upon these words of Christ generally leaves a great deal to be desired.
5. Use the left-hand pages of these notes to record your own comments.
6. Mark your Bibles upon these three chapters verse by verse, when you have a clear understanding of what each verse is teaching.
7. As you read and meditate upon the purpose of the forthcoming Conference and ask Yahweh's blessing upon all that is done thereat, for the elevation of His word and the honour and glory of His Name.

The Conference Committee

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. . . ."

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INTRODUCTION

The Discourse on the Mount is to be understood not merely as the teaching of the Son of God, setting forth those fundamental precepts by which he requires his disciples to live; the exposition must also be understood as a set of statutes by which the Son of God himself was prepared to live. In other words, these chapters in Matthew's gospel reveal the true and perfect character of Jesus Christ, in his relationship with both God and man.

The precepts and principles set forth in the discourse on the Mount were not intended for the world at large. The world, generally, neither understands nor acknowledges these ideals. These words were spoken and written for the benefit of those who would become the Body of Christ, the true Ecclesia. The Lord himself lived by these standards, remaining a sinless man. He was, therefore, "the word made flesh." Similarly, when the members of Christ's Body live by the same divine standards which the Lord Jesus set for himself, they, too, become "the word made flesh." Herein then, is the perfect character which all God's sons and daughters must strive to develop.

From beginning to end, the teaching of the Master in the discourse on the Mount establishes a set of precepts which are foreign to the natural inclinations of the flesh. Thus is emphasised the fact that, for men and women to be prepared for an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom of God they must crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts." They must learn to "walk in newness of life" according to the revelation of the Divine will, as seen in the perfect character of the Son of God, and revealed in the teaching of God's word (Gal. 5:24; Rom. 6:4; Mat. 4:4).

The discourse on the Mount deals primarily with *actions* and *attitudes*. In other words, the "word" must be "made flesh" in practical ways. Life in "the Truth" is not merely to believe certain doctrines and attend various Meetings. Life in "the Truth" is a *Way of life*; and therefore the teaching of the Son of God must be understood in terms of practical day-to-day living. Needless to say, the "truth" can only be lived in a practical way upon the basis of sound doctrinal understanding. Sound doctrine may thus become the foundation for sound conduct (Mat. 5:48; 6:22-24, 33; 7:13-16,29).

The discourse on the Mount leaves no room for hypocrisy in the life of the Believer. He must be prepared for his innermost thoughts and motives; his actions and his conduct to be probed by the unerringly accurate mind of the spirit, as revealed in the words of Christ.

Men and women brought into contact with the teaching of Christ will react in one of two ways: either they will reject his teaching and remain unwilling to apply themselves to following in his footsteps — in which event Christ's judgment upon them will be "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (7:23). Or, they will see his life and his teaching as the perfect example of God-manifestation in the flesh and, desiring to honour their Creator, they will humbly seek to imitate the character of their King; in which event, through hearing and doing "these sayings" Christ will define them as "wise" (7:24) and, therefore, they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Finally, it must be remembered throughout the course of these studies that the Body of Christ is one, not many. There was *one* set of Divine precepts and principles which resulted in the development of the perfect Christ-man, the singular Son of God. And it will be that same set of precepts and principles which will develop the Christ-Body, in the multitudinous sense. The grand objective of the Truth is that we should "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect *man*, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

That *one* Christ-character is set forth, in essence, in the discourse on the Mount.

BACKGROUND

The Lord had been baptised by John and publicly acknowledged by his Father to be the Son of God. He had then been led into the wilderness, by the guidance of the Spirit, to be tried. He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34).

Having come out of the wilderness he transferred his centre of activity from Nazareth to Capernaum. "From that time" he began to preach the gospel — or glad tidings — of the Kingdom of Heaven. He taught, preached, and healed (Mat. 4:17, 23). In these actions he demonstrated his desire to bring about the salvation of men and women, whilst at the same time providing the means whereby humankind might glorify their Creator.

His fame ("the report of him." R.V.) spread throughout Syria. He thus acquired "great multitudes" who became his followers — and his reputation as a great teacher and healer was clearly established.

Large numbers followed him from as far afield as the Galilee, Decapolis (a confederacy of ten towns, all east of Jordan save one) Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond Jordan. Considering the limited area in which the Lord had moved up to this time, this was a notable reputation to gain in such a comparatively short space of time.

Luke's gospel account, which records the Lord's life and ministry in chronological order, indicates that numerous important events took place between Matthew chapters 4 and 5, including events described in the first four chapters of both Luke and John (cp. Lk. 4:44).

It should be remembered that, at that time, in anticipation of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel, the Jewish people were in a state of expectancy, awaiting the appearance of Messiah (Lk. 3:15). The Lord began his ministry, therefore, against a background which provided a **suitable** setting for a major religious revival.

The glory of the Divine character had now come to tabernacle among men (Jn. 1:14) as "a light to lighten the gentiles" and to bring "glory" to God's people of "Israel" (Lk. 2:32). At that momentous epoch of history it could be truly and humbly said, by men and women of faith, that "light is come into the world" (Jn. 3:19).

With due reverence, let us draw near to "the light of the world," knowing that all who "follow" him will not "walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

MATTHEW

CHAPTER FIVE

- Vv 1-16:** Divine blessings to come upon those who respond to God's goodness by walking in the way of the Truth.
- Vv17-20:** Christ's commandments must be recognised as divine Truth, and must produce righteousness in the life of the Believer.
- Vv21-37:** Christ's teaching must be absorbed mentally, and manifested morally.
- Vv38-42:** How Christ's disciples must react in the face of evil treatment which may be meted out to them.
- Vv43-48:** How disciples must positively act towards others, thus producing in their lives the moral likeness of their Father, which is in heaven.

AND seeing the multitudes, * he went
up into a mountain: and when he
was set, his disciples came unto him:

2 And he opened his mouth, and
taught them, saying,

CHAPTER 5

Vv. 1-16 DIVINE BLESSING TO COME UPON THOSE WHO RESPOND TO GOD'S GOODNESS BY WALKING IN THE WAY OF THE TRUTH

VERSE 1

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain”

“Great multitudes” had begun to follow the Lord, from many areas (4:25). These people had separated themselves from their basic environment that they might follow Jesus of Nazareth and listen to his words. It is an exhortatory exercise to contemplate the question: How many of these folk, so keen to follow the Lord in his early ministry, remained faithful to the end? The true test of discipleship is not merely to listen to the teaching of Christ, but to absorb his doctrines, understand them clearly, accept them as a way of life, and then remain faithful to Christ and his cause until our life shall end, or the Lord returns (cp. Mat. 15:8; 20:16; 24:12; Jn. 6:59-69).

“And when He was set, his Disciples came unto Him”

Of the “multitudes” the Lord had seen assembled on the lower ground, only those who were “disciples” laboriously followed him up the mountain. (“Disciple” is the Gk., *mathetes*, which means “a learner”). Why did the Lord ascend “up into a mountain” at this time? There appears to be a profoundly symbolic motive behind his actions: he desired to draw men upward, toward Divine ideals and precepts. But this would require that they follow him, ascending to a plane of mental thought and moral action far above the level of the flesh. The Greek text includes the prefix “*pros*,” meaning “towards.” The wording indicates that his disciples drew closely towards him at this time, in an attitude of intimate oneness and friendship. Contrast the atmosphere — and attitude of the people — at the giving of the Law: Ex. 20:18-19; Deut. 5:23-27; Heb. 12:18-24). The Law taught men that they could not approach directly unto God, because of sin (Ex. 19:10-13); but now God has sent His own Son, to draw men and women unto Himself, upon the principle of Grace.

VERSE 2

“And He opened his mouth and taught them”

He was “full of grace and truth,” and he was “the word made flesh” (Jn. 1:14). No man ever born of woman was better qualified to set forth the power and beauty and infinite wisdom which is found only in the mind of Yahweh, the Great Creator. The words of the Lord were words of “spirit” and “life” (Jn. 6:63), and his teaching was therefore able to make men “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15-16; cp. Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Thess. 5:9).

The words which the Lord uttered as he taught his disciples did not represent his own philosophy of religion. The words he spoke were God's words — his teaching was entirely of Divine origin (Jn. 12:49-50; 14:10).

Matthew records that he “taught them, saying....” The fact that he “taught” them is an indication of his authority and qualification to do so — in contrast to the lack on the part of the people. They needed to be taught the truth. Teaching requires that the right words should be uttered, for the enlightenment of minds that would otherwise remain darkened. It behoves men and women in the presence — literally or

**3^b Blessed *are* the poor in spirit:
for their's is the kingdom of heaven.**

figuratively — of such a Great Teacher, to have receptive minds, ready to reason upon what is said, to accept the authority of the Teacher, and to absorb the wisdom he is endeavouring to implant in their minds. The effect of his teaching may be seen in the final words recorded concerning this discourse: 7:28-29.

VERSE 3

“Blessed”

Gk. makarios, lit., “happy” — derived from a root which indicates that which is large or lengthy. There appears therefore, to be a reference to a *continuing* state of happiness. The Truth — and only the Truth is capable of producing this. Contrast worldly ideals concerning true happiness: wealth, position, the enjoyments of life, etc. The only true and *lasting* happiness is that which is to be found in a true understanding of God and His word. (cp. Jn. 13:17).

“The poor in spirit”

This is a reference to Isa. 61:1-2; cp. Lk 4:16-20. This phrase defines the class of person who will be receptive to Christ’s teaching. *Only* “the poor in spirit” will inherit “the kingdom of heaven.” None can receive the kingdom who have not *first* received the gospel. And to receive the gospel they must manifest a particular attitude of mind: they must be “poor in spirit.” Of this word (Gk. ptochos), W.E. Vine says: “an adjective describing one who crouches and cowers....to cower down or hide oneself for fear...poverty-stricken, powerless to enrich...” The word was associated with the activities of destitute beggars. The word describes someone, says Bullinger, “having nothing at all.” In short, here is the class of person described in Isa. 66:2. Their disposition is one of utter humility before the greatness and majesty of the One True God; they recognise that of themselves they are nothing, and that “in” the “flesh” dwells “no good thing,” and therefore “the flesh profiteth nothing” (Rom. 7:18; Jn. 6:63). Recognising these conditions, they exhibit a poverty of spirit which causes them to tremble (“careth anxiously” — Roth., Isa. 66:2) for the word of God, as the only means whereby they might be delivered from sin and the death-stricken nature which they bear. The need for such an attitude had been clearly taught in the spirit of the Law: Lev. 16:29-31; cp. Jas. 4:6-9. If the Lord’s listeners appreciated the spirit of the Law they would have had little difficulty in grasping the principle he was setting before them.

In contrast to what the Lord taught here, the “spirit” of “the flesh” resists being “taught of God” (Jn. 6:45). The self-assertive spirit of the flesh must be crushed within the disciple of Christ, and their dependence upon the teaching of God’s word must become absolute. Yet, finally, that which begins as a poverty of spirit will end in riches of incredible grandeur: the riches of faith, leading to the reward of Divine nature, and the honour, glory and immortality which will be bestowed upon all who humbly walk before God in the spirit of the Truth (See Jn. 5:44).

“For their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven”

The Lord here used the present, possessive tense. How can it be said that disciples of Christ *now* possess the kingdom? Because of their covenant-relationship with God, through Christ. It is “their’s” because it has been promised to them. God’s word cannot fail, because His integrity

4 ° Blessed *are* they that mourn: for
they shall be comforted.

is unimpeachable. All those who follow the example of Christ, and who thereby truly walk in the way of the truth, will inherit the kingdom. The same principle now applies to Christ himself. He is said to have gone "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Lk. 19:12). He will not literally "receive" the kingdom until he returns to earth to establish it; yet, such is the certainty of the event that it has been described as having already taken place (Rom. 4:17; Mat. 25:21; 2 Pet. 1:11; Heb. 12:28).

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" occurs 32 times in Matthew, but not at all in any of the other gospel accounts. This is because Matthew's gospel presents Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the king over the coming kingdom — a kingdom which, though to be established upon the earth— is of Divine origin, and therefore "heavenly." The kingdom is to be a "heavenly one" because "*the God of heaven*" is the One who will establish it (cp. Phil. 3:20, Diag.; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 11:15, etc.). Those who are "poor in spirit" and who meet the spirit of the other requirements as set forth in this discourse, will receive an eternal inheritance in the kingdom when Christ returns to reign over all nations from Jerusalem (Isa. 2; Micah 4; Ps. 72; etc).

The terms "kingdom of heaven," kingdom of God," and "hope of Israel" are inter-changeable. "a kingdom is the dominion of a king.... A kingdom is not located in feeling, or in heart.... It must have a place, a locality, as well as a name." ("Elpis Israel," p. 221).

VERSE 4

"Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted"

This verse expresses the spirit of Isa. 61:1-3. The Lord describes a state of mind which is affected by the emotional and mental processes. Whilst we are to understand that there is great joy in the Truth (v.12), the disciple of Christ *mourns* daily. He mourns the absence of his Lord (Mat. 9:15), the weaknesses and failures of his own nature, the evil and Godless environment in which he must live until Christ returns.

We are also caused to mourn when we become partakers of the sufferings and afflictions of Christ. We crucify "the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24) and we "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

This is a state of mind, in contrast to the outward show manifested by hypocrites (6:16-18). This state of mind is an obvious extension of the attitude described in the previous verse.

To develop this state of mind, as the Lord would have us do, we must have a clear knowledge of the differences between good and evil, and an awareness of the differences between sin and righteousness. Yahweh Himself is "grieved" when He sees the wickedness of man (Gen. 6:6). We must, therefore, endeavour to behold and understand our own nature, and everything in life about us, from the standpoint of the Great Creator who would have us imitate His character in all respects. The majority of mankind are unable to "mourn" in this way, because they remain oblivious to sin and to its consequences, and do not understand the true nature of man. They, therefore, remain in ignorance concerning their real, desperate needs, and neither "mourn," nor become "poor in spirit" in the Scriptural sense. How privileged we are to be able to manifest these

5th Blessed *are* the meek: for °they shall inherit the earth.

qualities of character because our minds have been enlightened with the word of God.

Our Heavenly Father is able to provide comfort for those who mourn according to the spirit shown in this verse (2 Cor. 1:3-7; Ps. 38:6, etc.). The word “comforted” has been rendered from the Gk. *parakaleo*, meaning “To call to one’s side.” — In measure we have this “comfort” when we embrace the truth; but in the fullest sense our time of “comfort” will come when we are actually “called” to the “side” of the Lord, at his return, to remain ever near his comforting presence if found worthy at the Judgment Seat. True and complete comfort will come when all the evils and weaknesses which trouble us have been removed — when we look upon the “peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122), and rejoice in the restoration of Israel; when we see the peace and enlightenment which will flood the earth (Gen. 12:3), and the nations acknowledging “glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men” (Luke 2:14).

For those who will remain faithful to Yahweh, a great time of comfort is seen to dawn; “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain...” (Rev. 21:4).

VERSE 5

“Blessed are the meek”

These words are quoted from Ps. 37:11. (Note the context of Ps. 37 carefully. It is as though the Lord is saying: “If you wish to know the type of person who will *inherit* the kingdom, study Psalm 37.” It has been called “The Psalm of the Two Seeds” — the seed of the woman versus the seed of the serpent. The Psalm speaks of a class of person who struggles onward through life, resolutely resisting all attempts to draw them away from the true principles of Divine worship, that they might serve God alone and ultimately be received into His kingdom).

It is significant that the original Hebrew word for “meek” speaks of affliction. Rotherham has translated the word as “the patient oppressed ones...” They are oppressed by the influence of sin, both within and without; and they are constantly bowed down with a sense of humility in recognition of the weaknesses inherent in their nature. But they “patiently” endure, until, in God’s good time, they will be relieved of their burdens and will discover the joys and wonders of Divine nature.

The Gk., *praus*, eloquently describes a particular type of character: “meek, gentle, enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender of spirit...” (Bullinger). “It is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him... Meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness... simply because it is not occupied with self at all” (W.E.Vine). Cp. Num. 12:3; Ps. 22:26; 149:4; Jas. 3:14. Meekness is not weakness. It is, in fact, strength. It is practised when an individual humbly surrenders his self-will, to be replaced by the guiding influence of Yahweh and His word. “The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way” (Ps. 25:9). This is a state of character only attained to when the individual has permitted the purging and cleansing power of God’s word to bring him into subjection to

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger
and thirst after righteousness: ^ffor
they shall be filled.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: ^sfor they
shall obtain mercy.

the will of God (Eph. 5:26).

“For they shall inherit the earth”

V. 3 has indicated that they will possess the kingdom; now the Lord adds that they shall “inherit” it. See Heb. 6:12; 11:8; Acts 7:5; 20:32; Eph. 1:11,14,18; Gal. 3:18,29; Rev. 21:7. It is only heirs who receive an inheritance.

VERSE 6

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness”

The Lord did not say “Blessed are the righteous” — for none, apart from himself, would qualify for such a blessing. But those who maintain a *continuing* desire to pursue the qualities of righteousness will receive this blessing. Development in this direction is caused through the influence of the indwelling word of God.

The natural man “hungers” and “thirsts” only after those things which will sustain him, or gratify his fleshly desires. But Isaiah taught: “Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye...” (Isa. 55:1). Yet, the only people who will learn to “hunger” and “thirst” after *righteousness* will be those who have a knowledge of what righteousness means. “Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and draw from the breasts” — which is to say: those who have learned to develop towards maturity in the things of Divine truth and wisdom (Isa. 28:9 cp. Eph. 4:13).

It must always be remembered that righteousness comes only from God (Isa. 51:1-7; 54:17; Mat. 6:33). God’s righteousness has been revealed in the perfect character of His Son, and in the gospel (Jn. 1:14; Rom. 1:16-17). It is, therefore, necessary to gain a true understanding of the word of God, and to come to an intimate knowledge of God and His Son (Jn. 17:3). Without such understanding a person is unable to seek after righteousness.

“For they shall be filled”

“They shall be completely satisfied” (Wey.). This is an unconditional guarantee. Any person striving, with integrity before God, to live by the spirit of these words need never fear that Yahweh will forsake them or fail them (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5-6; Mat.7:7). The God of Israel is faithful to His word.

VERSE 7

“Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy”

A reference to Ps. 18:25, “With the merciful Thou wilt show thyself merciful...” Mercy is the first of Yahweh’s virtues (Ex. 34:5-7), and is therefore a vitally necessary characteristic to be manifested by all who would become His sons and daughters. The Lord’s later usage of Hos. 6:6 helps us to understand the importance of this attribute (See Matt. 9:13). God can only call “sinners to repentance” by showing *mercy* towards them in forgiving their sins — therefore, if God is prepared to do this for us we should be prepared to exercise the same attitude towards others who exhibit this same need. God exercises His mercy towards those who acknowledge their need, and seek His mercy through the means that He has provided.

8^h Blessed *are* the pure in heart:
for ¹they shall see God.

This statement is akin to the second greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:39, cited from Lev. 19:18).

We must always guard against righteousness turning into *self-righteousness*. As we pursue the cause of righteousness it is necessary to remember the two greatest commandments (Mat. 22:36-40). As we have responsibilities and obligations to God, so we do also to our fellows. To exercise mercy towards others is to acknowledge our own need of Divine mercy. The unenlightened Jews did not understand this matter and so condemned Christ's disciples (Mat. 12:7 — note the past tense; cp. Mic. 6:8). The final words, "shall obtain mercy," are in the passive tense. We cannot provide the mercy we need. Only God can do that. We must, therefore, humbly acknowledge, even at the Judgment Seat, that we have not *earned* eternal life. We will, if accepted by Christ, passively behold with wondering eyes and joyful heart, as the Lord pronounces our acceptance and transforms us to Divine nature.

VERSE 8

"Blessed are the pure in heart"

A reference to Ps. 24:4; cp. Ps. 18:26; 73:1. The heart represents the mind (Mat. 15:19; 12:35). The human heart (mind) is naturally biased towards evil (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:18-23), — but it can become purified upon the basis of faith (Acts 15:9; Ps. 51:10; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). The word "pure" has been rendered from the Gk. *Katharos*, meaning "pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject with which it is combined, free from every foreign admixture, whether good or bad; clean, and free from every stain, odour, colour, or any useless thing whatever; free from every false adornment..." (Bullinger). In short, this is a disposition of undivided loyalty to Yahweh and His truth — a state attained unto only through a clear knowledge of the truth, the exercise of faith, and a wholehearted dedication to Divine things. It is an attitude of mind described elsewhere by the Lord as "an honest and good heart" (Lk. 8:15). This disposition can only be achieved upon the foundation of self-surrender, when the individual gives up his life to God so that the purifying influence of God's word may change the naturally evil heart into a pure one. The candidate for the kingdom must, therefore, be humble and meek towards God, and must be teachable (cp. Lk. 10:27; 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:22, etc.).

This verse is of particular relevance to the Lord's overall discourse, because it brings us to the very inner core of the human being. The "heart" represents the human brain as the organ which governs man's thinking, emotions, feelings and desires. Man is ruled by what happens in his mind — therefore, a Divinely orientated disposition is essential for those who desire to inherit the kingdom.

"For they shall see God"

Concerning the word "see," Bullinger has written: "It denotes not the action of seeing, but the state of him and the affection of the mind of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented, to truly comprehend and know." This class of person will "see" God in the revelation of the Divine character — especially as manifested in His Son (Jn. 14:9-10; Heb. 1:3). But we shall also "see" the Father in the Son, at his return (1 Jn. 3:2-3) and also "see" the fulness and perfection of God when we are changed

**9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers : for
they shall be called the children of God.**

**10 * Blessed *are* they which are per-
secuted for righteousness' sake : for
their's is the kingdom of heaven.**

to His nature. See also Rev. 21:3; Heb. 12:14.

VERSE 9

“Blessed are the peace-makers”

“The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable...” (Jas. 3:17). James condemned “envying and strife,” which could only lead to disharmony within the Body, because nothing good comes from the flesh, or the works of the flesh. A spiritually-minded person who is poor in spirit (v.3), mourns (v.4), is meek (v.5), hungers and thirsts after righteousness (v. 6), is merciful (v. 7), and is pure of heart (v. 8), will never desire to cause disorder or disharmony among men. And it is only the “wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:17) that causes a person to develop this disposition in a Godly way. “Peace” is one of the fruits of the saints (Gal. 5:22). Therefore, true and worthwhile peace can only be established and maintained upon the basis of Divine Truth, a peace which results from the mind of man being in harmony with the mind of God. If the sinner will not become reconciled to God upon the basis of Divine Truth, he cannot hope to find peace with God (cp. Mat. 10:34; Eph. 2:14-17).

The most vital way in which Sons of God must endeavour to *make* peace, is by drawing men and women (whether within or without the Body) to the wisdom of Divine Truth, whereby they, together with us, may find peace and oneness with God, and with one another. Peace, upon any other basis, will be the product of the flesh and not the spirit, and therefore will provide no benefit of lasting value, to the glory of God.

Yahweh is “the God of peace” (Rom. 16:20), in that His purpose is to bring His creation into oneness and harmony with Himself. At present this purpose is being pursued with individuals (Acts 15:15), but after Christ’s return and the establishment of the kingdom, this work will be taken upon a world-wide scale (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8; Isa. 2:2-4; Ps. 72, etc). See “Elpis Israel,” pp. 110-114, and apply the principles revealed therein to ourselves, as individuals, in this present age.

The world at large will only find peace and oneness with God upon the same principles by which we, today, seek to attain to that state.

The word rendered “peace-makers” is derived from a most expressive word, in the Gk.: *eirene*, mean “peace, rest; in contrast with strife, and denoting the absence or end of strife....” (Bullinger).

“For they shall be called the children of God”

The two key Gk. words here are *kaleo* and *huios*, thus the phrase is better rendered: “they shall be acknowledged as sons of God” (Wey.). The grand objective of the truth is to bring men and women to a state of peace, or oneness, with their God. The “peace-makers” will become true sons of God because they will have manifested sufficient of the character of their Father to become identified with Him, in that their way of life will show them to be the off-spring of Yahweh.

VERSE 10

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”

The Lord Jesus was treated in this way (Jn. 5:16; 15:20), and his apostles also (1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:12) — because they manifested an attitude of dedicated loyalty to the *cause* of God’s

11 ¹Blessed are ye, when *men* shall
revile you, and persecute *you*, and
shall say all manner of ^mevil against
you ²falsely, for my sake.

righteousness. Whilst we are not to seek persecution at the hands of the world it may be that, because of our loyalty to Christ, the world rejects us. After all, the characteristics which we are studying, and which together make up the character of the Christ-Man, or Christ-Body, do not find acceptance with the world at large simply because Christ's character was not in accordance with the character of the flesh. And in view of the fact that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17), the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent must be very real. Although it is sometimes difficult to accept this state of affairs, it is needful to always remember that it is a situation which exists because God decreed it in the beginning (Gen. 3:15). Such a Divine verdict was pronounced, not with the object of creating disharmony among men, but rather causing men and women to realise that, to be acceptable to Yahweh they must repudiate the flesh and strive to walk in harmony with God. The "enmity" comes into existence when men *refuse* to either understand or obey the call to "worship" God "in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24).

Those who are fleshly minded reject those who endeavour to develop the disposition which is in accord with the Truth. See Jn. 7:7; 3:19.

Above all, in this expression, note that the Lord is speaking of those who are persecuted because they stand for the *cause* of righteousness.

"For their's is the Kingdom of Heaven"

A most interesting repetition — for the first time in this chapter — of the words concerning "the poor in spirit" (v.3). In both v. 3 and v. 10, it is said that "their's is the kingdom of heaven." There is an obvious link between these two verses: to be "poor in spirit" in the eyes of Yahweh requires renouncing the flesh — *and the world* (1 John 2:15-17). And the world does not like to be renounced! (cp. Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 12:10; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 4:13-16).

(See notes on v. 3).

VERSE 11

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you"

The word "revile" has been rendered from the Gk. oneidizo, in the active voice. It means "to defame, assail with opprobrious words, cast in one's teeth, reproach with anything" (Bullinger). The word "persecute" is the same as in v. 10, and occurs again in v. 12 and v. 44. Note the change from the general "they" to the more personal "ye". *The poor in spirit* will receive the kingdom; *they* that mourn will be comforted; *the meek* shall inherit the earth; *they* which hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled; *the merciful* shall obtain mercy; *the pure in heart* shall see God; *the peacemakers* shall be called sons of God; *they* which are persecuted will receive the kingdom. But now the Lord turns to the word "ye" — expressive of the things individuals must be prepared to suffer, and the responsibilities and obligations they must be prepared to accept, if they are to become, individually, true disciples of the Son of God. Not all Christ's disciples, down through the ages, have had to suffer the dreadful physical treatment which has been meted out to many, at the hands of a hostile world. Yet, the Lord told them, even in the midst of such physical sufferings, they could be aware of their "blessed" or happy state, because

**12^a Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:
for great is your reward in heaven:
for so persecuted they the prophets
which were before you.**

of their relationship to God through Christ. (cp. 1 Pet. 1:7; 4:14 etc.). Brethren may experience a state of happiness now, in this present evil age, as they humbly share in the sufferings of Christ, knowing that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ's cause. It requires a strong and unwavering conviction to make a stand when knowing that it could result in this type of evil treatment. This conviction was termed by Peter "a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). See Acts 5:41. Happiness under such circumstances as these comes not only through having faith and confidence in the Truth, but also through being able to see clearly, through the eye of faith, the glories of the future: Heb. 12:2; Rom. 8:18.

"And shall say all manner of evil against you falsely"

The cause of the wicked can never be right, so long as they continue to be governed by principles of the flesh. Thus, their condemnation of those who endeavour to follow Christ is false.

"For My sake"

This is the same as "righteousness' sake" (v. 10). The true disciple of the Lord acts as he does, not out of any sense of fierce loyalty to a philosophy or ideology, but because he knows that Christ's cause is the cause of true righteousness. Therefore, God is honoured when men and women remain loyal and faithful to the Truth, no matter what their circumstances might be.

VERSE 12

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad"

"Be joyful and triumphant" (Wey.) "accept it with gladness and exultation" (N.E.B.). This attitude of mind will only be manifested by those for whom the cause of righteousness transcends all other considerations. These are the same words used of the joy and exultation to be experienced by the approved Saints at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). That same fundamental attitude of mind is as essential during the time of probation as it will be fulsomely manifested in the day of glory.

"For great is your reward in heaven"

"...your reward is great in heaven" (Wey.) — That is where the reward is, at the moment, but Christ will return from heaven to bring the reward with him (Lk. 19:12; Jn. 14:2-3; Isa. 24:23). The reward is actually a "gift" and not payment for works performed (Rom. 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8, etc.). We are dependent upon Divine grace and mercy for salvation (Rom. 3:27-28; Gal. 2:21, etc.).

"For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you"

Tragically, the suffering of the prophets was, in the main, at the hands of their own people; those who were either ignorant of the Truth or hostile to it. The implication is that the faithful and true prophets accepted persecution in this spirit, and were therefore men who understood the spirit of the Truth. (For examples, see 1 Kings 18:17; Amos 7:12-13; Jer 37:13; Dan. 6:13, etc.). The words "which were before you" appear to be in the form of a challenge to Christ's disciples; it is as though the Lord was suggesting that the prophets had, in earlier generations, set an example worthy of emulation by those who would follow after them.

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: ^pbut 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 ^a Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

VERSE 13

“Ye are the salt of the earth”

Mention of salt would cause Christ’s listeners to think of “the salt of the covenant” (Lev. 2:13). Salt was used in all sacrifices under the Law, and was therefore to constantly remind them of their covenant-relationship with Yahweh.

The expression “salt of the covenant” clearly teaches this. Salt is known as a preservative, and therefore indicates the need to preserve Divinely-originated covenants; salt makes a fine antiseptic, and speaks of the means by which purity might be attained; and salt adds flavour to food when it is eaten. Disciples are described as “*the salt*” — which is to say, they must manifest in their way of life all that the “salt of the covenant” represented, as they sacrifice their lives in the service of their God (cp. Mark 9:49-50). The salt of true sacrifice and dedication to Yahweh will bring a state of humility which will result in the attainment of peace. True disciples must preserve the truth, and their allegiance to their covenant; and they must flavour all their dealings with God and man with the spirit of the Truth, that they might become purified thereby.

“But if the salt have lost his savour wherewith shall it be salted?”

“But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again?” (J.B.). This question constitutes a grave warning. When an individual has been converted to the truth, walking zealously and enthusiastically in the spirit of the Truth, such an attitude must be maintained. If one becomes indifferent to the Truth and displays a general attitude of casual insipidity, he may continue to believe he is offering himself to God as “a living sacrifice,” but the sacrifice will have become tasteless. The desire to become pure, whilst preserving the covenant, will have dissipated. This challenging question points to the need for a daily self-examination by every individual disciple. We must become aware of any slackening or lessening in our love for the cause of righteousness, and take prompt action to remedy any such deficiencies.

“It is good for nothing, but to be cast out”

The point of the question is pressed to its finality: if the distinctive spiritual qualities symbolised by salt are lost, with what can those qualities be replaced? The answer is: nothing. Either salt is useable and valuable, or it is useless. Those found in this state at the Judgment Seat will be rejected. (cp. Rev. 3:16).

VERSE 14

“Ye are the light of the world”

Two emphatic statements have now followed one upon the other: “Ye are the salt of the earth....Ye are the light of the world” Although there are many negative aspects to life in the Truth, the life of the Saint is, basically, a positive one. Israel had been chosen to reflect the light of the Divine glory (Num. 6:24-27; Isa 2:5; Jer. 13:11). Now, that responsibility was about to be passed on to Christ’s disciples. They were to follow in his footsteps (1 Pet. 2:21). And as he was the “light of the world” (Jn. 8:12), so they were to become reflections of their Lord and King (1 Pet. 2:9; Mat. 4:16; Lk. 1:79; Eph. 5:8-11; 1 Thess. 5:4-5 etc.). It should be observed that the Lord did not say: “You carry the light” but “You *are*

15 Neither do men ^rlight a candle,
and put it under ^sa bushel, but on a
candlestick; and it giveth light unto
all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before
men, ^rthat they may see your good
works, and ^rglorify your Father which
is in heaven.

the light..." This is the doctrine of God-manifestation. The character of the Father, which was perfectly revealed in the Son, must now become real and living in every disciple.

"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid"

It has been suggested that the Lord had in mind the city of Saphed, which was probably very near to the place where this discourse was delivered. But the Lord, by analogy, was speaking of his disciples. They were to be like a city set on the peak of a hill. They could not hope to hide away from their worldly environment, and would be closely observed by their contemporaries. If they proclaimed the truth, "all men" would "know" that they were Christ's "disciples" (Jn. 13:35) — therefore they must become manifestations of the pure light of Divine truth. This phrase represents a considerable challenge to the discipleship of those who would claim to follow Christ. Men and women, whether within the Body or without, must see the light of Christ's character in his disciples. The Believers cannot hide from the critical gaze of their fellows; yet their conduct must be artificial, to impress others; if they are truly "the light of the world" they will manifest Christ's character because they are dedicated to the cause of righteousness, rather than being motivated by human pride.

And most important of all: like a city on a hill we cannot hide from God. He is able to observe closely whether or not our claims to be disciples of Christ are matched by performance. Ultimately we are answerable to Him rather than to our fellow-men.

VERSE 15

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel"

"No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub" (J.B.) "...under a bowl..." (Moff.) "...under a meal-tub" (N.E.B.). Such would be a pointless action, on two counts. First, no light whatever would be seen, so light would become no more effective than darkness; secondly, beneath such a container, the light would become starved of oxygen, and within a short time would go out completely! The truth must be lived in a very practical way. The truth must not only be seen *in* us, it must shine forth *from* us. (See 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6-8, etc.).

"But on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house"

The word candlestick should be understood as meaning "lampstand" (Wey., Roth., J.B., etc.), as the word "candle" (above) should be rendered "lamp." These were lights that consumed oil.

Again the point is stressed: light must shine to serve some worthwhile purpose.

VERSE 16

"Let your light so shine before men"

The Lord now pressed home the challenge of the analogy to every individual disciple. Whilst remaining separate from the world in all its righteousness, they must not shrink from "declaring...the testimony of God" (1 Cor. 2:1), in thought, word and deed. Whilst they are not to be immodest, they must courageously exhibit Christ's characteristics in their daily lives.

17 ¶ "Think not that I am come to
destroy the law, or the prophets: I
am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

“That they may see your good works”

The Gk. word, *ergon*, can mean “the thing wrought” (Bullinger); in other words, something produced, and not merely works as such. The Lord is not referring to the works of law, such as filled the Judaisers with pride in their pious achievement. He spoke here of the works of righteousness which are produced upon the basis of faith. He did not say: “That they might see the *good worker*...” He spoke here of a character which has been developed in an individual — a character which should be recognised and acknowledged for its Godly integrity. “By works of law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16), but works of righteousness which are produced as the outworking of faith will bring the approbation of Christ the King, and his Father in heaven.

“And glorify your father which is in heaven”

We may endeavour to teach others the Truth — but if they observe that we understand it in theory whilst failing to live according to the principles we claim to stand for, they will reject both ourselves and our teaching. On the other hand, when the Truth is held forth, both by word and example, men and women may be drawn to acknowledge the power of the Truth, for they see it *working* in the one who is trying to persuade them to become a follower of Christ. But note how powerfully the Lord has drawn attention to two classes of humanity: there is the class who will revile, persecute, and say all manner of evil against Christ’s brethren, because they walk in the way of the Truth (Vv. 10-11), and there is the class who will humbly recognise the truth for its true worth and purpose.

Vv. 17-20 CHRIST’S COMMANDMENTS MUST BE RECOGNISED AS
DIVINE TRUTH, AND MUST PRODUCE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE
LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.

VERSE 17

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets”

The law and the prophets were not given to Israel that they might be destroyed, but rather that they might be fulfilled. Moses and the prophets “prophesied of the grace that should come...” (1 Peter 1:10). When the Lord Jesus appeared, “*full of grace and truth*” (Jn. 1:14), the hopes and aspirations of Moses and the prophets were vindicated. The Lord Jesus fulfilled his destiny in this regard by always doing the will of his Father. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me...” (Jn. 4:34; cp. 6:38; Ps. 40:7-8; Lk. 24:44, etc.).

“I am not come to destroy but to fulfil”

The revelation of Yahweh’s entire purpose had been enshrined in the message of “the Law and the Prophets” and Christ came into the world to carry that purpose forward. See Lk. 4:16-21.

Surely this phrase demonstrates the unity of God’s overall purpose, as declared in both Old and New Testaments. (Cp. Num. 14:21 with Ps. 72:18-19, Rev. 21:22-23). Jesus was the fulfilment of that which had been promised in both “the Law” and “the prophets” — he had then to fulfil those things required of him, to bring Yahweh’s grand purpose with the earth to fruition. No one could accuse the Lord of attempting to “destroy” the inspired Old Testament writings, substituting his own religious philosophy in its place.

18 For verily I say unto you, ²Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 ³Whosoever 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.

VERSE 18

“For verily I say unto you”

Gk. *amen*, meaning “true, certain, faithful” (Bullinger). This is a word which has been transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and English. See Heb. usage: Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; 65:16; Ps. 19:7; 111:7, etc. This passage has been rendered “I tell you truly” (Moff.), “In truth I tell you” (Wey.), “I tell you solemnly” (J.B.). The point about to be made must be understood with absolute clarity.

“Till heaven and earth pass”

The word “till” indicates that the “heaven and earth” *will* pass away. This appears to be an allusion to Isa. 51:6, 65:17. Remember the context of these terms in Isaiah’s writings: he had called upon the “heavens and earth” which then existed to “hear” the word of Yahweh, and respond thereto. That “heaven and earth” was the nation of Israel, both rulers and subjects (Isa. 1:2,10). Isaiah indicates that because the kingdom of Israel failed to “hear” the call of Yahweh, their kingdom would pass away, and God would create a “new” heavens and earth. This is Biblical symbology and is not to be taken literally. The “new heavens” are those who respond to the call of Yahweh to honour His word and His name, and walk in His ways. They will rule the earth with Christ in the Kingdom Age. The “new earth” will be the subjects of the Kingdom, instructed in the word of God and disciplined thereby. Thus, in this verse the Lord spoke prophetically of the final overthrow of Judah’s Commonwealth (Mat. 21:33-44).

“One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law”

The word “Jot” is from the Gk. *iota*, which is the equivalent of the Heb. letter “yod”, the smallest of the Hebrew letters; “tittle” (Gk. *kerasia*) means “a point” and refers to the pointing in the Hebrew language, as in English we “dot” our letter “i”. Thus the Lord is saying: “Not even the smallest letter or a single point of the Hebrew lettering will fail to find fulfilment.” Vv. 17-18 provide wonderful proof of the Lord’s belief in the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures.

“Till all be fulfilled”

“until all has taken place” (Wey.); “until its purpose is achieved” (J.B.). The Lord laid an awesome foundation here for the way in which his disciples must respect and reverence the Divinely inspired words of “the Law” and “the prophets” — they form a vital part of the Divine revelation to man, and must therefore continue to be treated with the veneration due to the word of Almighty God.

VERSE 19

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments”

The word “break” should be more correctly rendered as “loosen” or “relax.” the word has been rendered “relaxes” (Moff); “relax” (Roth.); “sets aside” (N.E.B.). A principle is here being propounded: Divine commandments must be treated as such, and must not be weakened. Through relaxing the clarity and standard of Divine commandments men may eventually conclude that sin may be justified (cp. Amos 5:6-7; contrast 2 Jn. v 6).

“And shall teach men so”

20 For I say unto you, That except
your righteousness shall exceed *the*
righteousness of the scribes and Pha-
risees, ye shall in no case enter into
the kingdom of heaven.

These few words constitute a very sober exhortation. If we begin to “relax” the power and clarity of the commandments in our own lives, it will be only a matter of time before we begin to justify our attitude, and thereby teach *others* to adopt the same inferior standards which we ourselves have now espoused. The message is clear: there must be no compromise with Divine principles and Divine commandments.

“He shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven”

The word “least” is in contrast to the word “great,” in this verse. One who relaxes the commandments and teaches others to do likewise, will not be honoured in the Kingdom. He will be “least-esteemed”, as the phrase has been rendered. See Lk. 16:10.

“But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven”

Such will be held in the highest esteem, and receive a place of honour in the Kingdom. It is necessary to have a clear and sound knowledge before it is possible to “do” and “teach” the commandments of God. The two greatest commandments epitomise all others (Mat. 22:36-40). They show that Christ has set before us the formula of life whereby we might fulfil all our obligations and responsibilities to God, whilst at the same time discharging our duty to our fellow-men. The Truth is so beautifully designed and balanced that it allows for this two-fold commitment, without one aspect coming into conflict with the other.

VERSE 20

“For I say into you”

“I tell you” (N.E.B.); “I assure you” (Wey.). Again, the Lord stressed his authority to teach in this way, whilst at the same time implying the importance to be placed upon the essential value of his words (7:28-29).

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The Pharisees could never hope to fulfil righteousness, because their attempts to do so were based upon the principle of law rather than faith and grace. The Law showed every man — save one — to be a sinner, and never told them they would become righteous through law (Gal.2:16, 21; 3:18, 21, etc.). Christ’s disciples were to avoid the religious hypocrisy practised by the Pharisees (Matt. 23:2-3). There is only one way by which the Believer has any hope of striving towards the objective set forth in this verse, and that is to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. See 2 Pet. 1:1-11; 1 Pet. 2:21. The words “ye shall *not* enter” are emphatic. A person who does not walk in the way of righteousness will not inherit the Kingdom. Again, the Lord emphasised the doctrine of God-manifestation in the flesh. A legalistic approach to the Truth will never put an individual into the correct frame of mind wherein they might hope to follow Christ (Mat. 19:16-17).

Vv. 21-37: CHRIST’S TEACHING MUST BE ABSORBED MENTALLY,
AND MANIFESTED MORALLY

VERSE 21

“Ye have heard that it was said”

21 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said
²by them of old time, ^aThou shalt not
kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be
in danger of the judgment:

22 But I say unto you, That ^bwhoso-
ever is angry with his brother without
a cause shall be in danger of the judg-
ment: and whosoever shall say to his
brother, ³° Raca, shall be in danger of
the council: but whosoever shall say,
Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

“You have learned that our forefathers were told....” (N.E.B); “You have heard that it was said to the ancients....” (Wey.); “You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors...” (J.B.). These various renderings indicate that the Lord had in mind not merely the teaching of the Law, but the way in which it had been interpreted by the religious Leaders of his own time. Such men, in the times of Christ, although influential with the people, did not understand the spirit of the Truth.

“By them of old time”

See marg. “by” should be rendered “to”.

“Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment”

Quoted from Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17, and referring to Ex. 21:12. This was the straight-forward legalistic way in which the Jewish teachers understood and expounded these passages of Scripture. But the same Law which said “thou shalt not kill” also said: “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart...” (Lev. 19:17, cp. 1 Jn. 2:9-11). What was to be gained by coming down heavily in favour of a merely legalistic approach towards one commandment, whilst totally ignoring the true spirit of another? God’s word was not designed to be treated in such a fashion.

VERSE 22

“But I say unto you”

The statement which now follows is not to be understood as Christ’s teaching in *opposition* to the Law, but as the *true spirit* of the Law, as seen through the eyes of Yahweh. For the Lord Jesus spoke on behalf of Yahweh (Heb. 1:1-2).

“Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”

The idea of the word rendered “without a cause” is that of yielding to rashness or passion; hence: “every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment....” (Roth.). Unless we restrain the evil impulses of the flesh we will produce in our lives “the works of the flesh” rather than “the fruit of the spirit” (Gal. 5:19-26). If unrestrained by the influence of Christ’s example, we will not be “the light of the world” (v. 14), but will, in effect, manifest the same darkness (of mind) that the Lord condemned (Jn. 3:19). The word “judgment,” in both v. 21 and here, is rendered from the Gk. *krisis*. It is said to apply, in this context, to the Jewish civil court (the equivalent to a Lower Court, in Australian terms). cp. Deut. 16:18. Thus, the degree of God’s judgment is shown under this analogy.

“Whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council”

“Raca” was a common term in those times, to denote not merely anger but insolent contempt. The word is also said to mean “empty-headed,” and therefore represents an accusation alleging a man to be brainless or an idiot. The word “council” here has been rendered from the Gk. *sunedrion*, meaning “a settling together” (Vine), or “a sitting together, a council....” (Bullinger). The word was here applied to the Sanhedrin, and referred to a higher form of Court than the previous case.

“But whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-fire”

**23 Therefore 'if thou bring thy gift to
the altar, and there rememberest that
thy brother hath ought against thee ;**

Hell-fire”

“Thou fool” is the equivalent of debasing a man’s integrity and character. The term would charge a person with being “dull, sluggish, stupid, foolish...morally worthless, a scoundrel...” This Gk. word (*moros*) “scorns” a person’s “heart and character” (*Vine*). There are, then, expressed in this verse, three degrees of reproach or detestation which we might level against others; each more intense than the previous one, and each bringing a more serious form of Court judgment. The word “hell-fire” is the Gk. *Gehenna*; so the Lord was stating that such extreme hatred leaves the unjustifiable accuser worthy to be “burned” in utter destruction.

It must be clearly understood that these various degrees of malevolence are all *the product of the flesh*, and not the spirit. There is such a thing as “righteous anger” (*Mark 3:5*; cp. *Jn. 3:36*), but the true test as to whether anger is based upon a righteous cause, is the aim and objective of the anger, and the reason for its manifestation. If anger is the outworking of fleshly impulses or reactions, or is in any sense an attempt to establish personal self-justification, it will be an ungodly form of anger, and therefore unjustifiable.

Obviously, the Lord was drawing attention to the fact that the root of all evil is found in the heart of man (*Mark 7:21-23*); therefore the disciple of Christ must carefully guard his innermost thoughts and emotions, and ponder his motives in all that he says and does.

VERSE 23

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee”

The Gk. *doron*, was used to denote a sacrifice. “...bearing thy gift towards the altar...” (*Roth.*)

There is a clear link with the previous verse, i.e., “What sort of a relationship do you have with your brethren? As you make your way towards Yahweh’s altar, indulge in deep and careful self-examination.” It has been claimed that this verse is speaking of a situation wherein the offerer, although guiltless of any crime against a brother, has a brother who holds something against him; and that, although the offerer is innocent of the alleged transgression, he must leave the altar and make an attempt at reconciliation with his misguided brother. This is not implied by the wording. The implication is that the offerer is guilty of some wrong-doing against a brother; and the conscience of the offerer, under self-examination as he approaches the altar, is awakened to the need of the moment, which is to rectify his wrong-doing. “...you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you...” (*N.E.B.*); “...some ground of complaint against thee...” (*Knox*); “...your brother has any grievance against you...” (*Moff.*); “...you remember that your brother has a grievance against you...” (*Wey.*)

The servant of God, in this present age, has an altar through which he might worship Yahweh — and that altar is Christ (*Heb. 13:10*). How holy is every act of divine worship. How careful we must be, as to our state of mind when we draw near to Yahweh.

VERSE 24

“Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be

24 °Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 †Agree with thine adversary quickly, ‡whiles 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.

reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"

Vv. 21-24 deal most eloquently with certain aspects of the question of fellowship. To have fellowship with the Father, it is necessary to "walk in the light" of His Truth (1 Jn. 1:5-7) — which is to say: we must walk according to His revealed will. However, in addition to desiring fellowship with the Father, the Truth requires that we seek to walk in harmony or fellowship with one another, upon the basis of a mutual acceptance of the One Faith. Therefore, human or personal differences — as referred to here — must be settled, so that true unity and oneness may be re-established upon a spiritual basis.

The Gk. word for "reconciled" occurs only in this place. It means "to change one's own feelings towards another, so that he changes his...." (Bullinger). A beautiful meaning to a wonderful word, which, when put into practice can repair much sorrow and heartache. But it requires that the spirit of the Truth must work in *both* parties to achieve this unifying result. (Note carefully Ps. 66:13-18).

We must appreciate that this verse is not dealing with the question of reconciliation with a brother who has become doctrinally unsound, or who is walking in a disorderly way. The formula for handling such a situation as that has been set down in Matt. 18:15-17, where it should be noted that the words "against thee" (v. 15) do not appear in the original text.

VERSE 25

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him"

The illustration is drawn from the legal process which a creditor would institute to receive payment of an outstanding debt. The analogy suggests that it is better to make an arrangement with one's creditor whilst on the way to the Court rather than face the judgment of the Magistrate, which would probably involve not only repayments of the debt but also appropriate prison sentence. "Be ready for a reconciliation with your opponent, even when you meet him on your way to Court; for fear he should hand you over to the judge, and the judge to his officer, and so you should be thrown into prison..." (T.C.N.T.).

To willingly "settle" with one's creditor without being forced to do so must be seen as an act of humility — and this provides the key to understanding the message of this verse. If we were to be brought before Yahweh — who is not only the Judge, but the One to whom we are always in debt, we would be tried, convicted, condemned. Because of sin. God, in His abundant mercy, extends to us the offer of settling out of Court. "If thou, Yahweh, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared" (Ps. 130:3-4). It is desirable to be of the same mind as David: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts" (Ps. 119:63). Yahweh, through His Son, has provided the means whereby we might escape from the power of sin. See 2 Cor. 6:2.

The verse also obviously has a literal meaning, indicating that when we are at fault, and shown the error of our ways, we should immediately be prepared to be reconciled to our brother and to the principles of the Truth, in a spirit of humility and wisdom. This verse leaves no room for self-defence or self-justification when we have been shown that we have

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27 ¶ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, ^hThou shalt not commit adultery :

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever ⁱlooketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

departed from divine principles.

VERSE 26

“Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing”

“Believe me, you will not get out of there until you have paid the last farthing due” (T.C.N.T.). If we remain stiff-necked and proud, refusing to humble ourselves in face of the evidence raised against us, we will arrive before the Judge from whom we may expect to receive the justice due to us. Justice is exact and unrelenting, as the word “farthing” indicates. The word represents the quadrans, the smallest Roman coin of the period. Only mercy can save us from the otherwise inevitable sentence which justice would demand. These two verses (Vv 25-26) are intended to cause us to look inwardly upon ourselves, examining our true attitudes and motive in regard to the Truth. Are we willing to settle out of Court, exercising conscience, wisdom and humility? Or will we resolutely defend our wrong-doings and a way of life not in harmony with the truth, resulting inevitably in our being brought before the Judge to receive only justice and not mercy?

VERSE 27

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time”

See note on v. 21.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”

Jewish religious leaders who endeavoured to interpret the Law were more concerned with external practices rather than the inner state of a person's heart. But anyone seeking the true spirit of the Law would see that the Law constantly tested the motives and convictions of the heart, and the true inward state of mind of the individual. For instance: “I had not known lust,” wrote the apostle Paul, “except the Law had said, “Thou shalt not covet”” (Rom. 7:7, quoted from Ex. 20:17). Whilst lust (that is, inordinate or unlawful desire) may well be displayed in outward action, there is no question but that it is a *state of mind*, before any action can result.

VERSE 28

“Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”

The devastating word here is “already”. Without making any move whatsoever, a man in such a case as this has become a convicted sinner. The tragic fall of David provides a compelling illustration of the precise accuracy of the Lord's words here. When did David commit the sin which involved Bathsheba? When he “walked upon the roof of the king's house” and “SAW a woman....” (2 Sam. 11:2, cp. v.4). And David was later to acknowledge that his troubles had begun through the giving over of his mind to adulterous thoughts: “Create in me a *clean heart*, O God; and renew a *right spirit* within me” (Ps. 51:10). “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence; for *out of it* are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). To the Hebrews, the heart represented the mental processes, and therefore the intellect. Yahweh is to be loved with *all* the heart (Deut. 6:5; Mat. 22:37), therefore all thoughts and desires should be directed towards Him, so that the

29 ¹And if thy right eye ⁴offend thee,
¹pluck 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.

disciples of Christ will become purified in their mental and moral attitudes and actions. We are called upon to bring "into captivity every *mind* (lit. Gk.) to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

This verse makes a particularly strong appeal to young people in these present evil times. Young folk today are growing up in what is termed "the permissive society," wherein moral standards of the past are little known or respected. Young people throughout the world are being corrupted and degraded because the pressures of their environment invite them to conform to the "generally accepted standards." Movies, television, music, entertainment in general, literature, fashion, the advertising industry, and even the English language, is being used powerfully to destroy moral standards and principles. Young people who desire to be in the kingdom of God should avoid contact with every worldly environment which will undermine their faith and the moral standards which the word of God requires of them. It must always be remembered that God's saints are a people at war, during this present dispensation; for they must be involved wholeheartedly in the *warfare of faith* (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Rom. 6:13, see margin.; 1 Tim. 1:18-19; 2 Tim. 4:7). It requires courage and determination and a living faith, to stand aside from the evil and corruption which "is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4); but young people who are determined to set their faces resolutely towards following Christ to the glory of the kingdom will not find their confidence misplaced. Yahweh and His Son will see us through these present difficult times, if our trust and faith is in them, and if we strive to follow in the footsteps of our Master.

Finally, note the example of the Lord himself: he went through his entire life without *once* looking upon a woman in the sinful way described in this verse. It was because of his total dedication to manifesting the perfection of his Father's character that he could be described as "the word made flesh..." (Jn. 1:14).

VERSE 29

"And if thy right hand offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee"

The word "and" has been rendered "therefore" (Diag., Wey.); but whichever way the word is rendered there is an obvious connection with the previous verse. Reference is now made to the "right eye" — what we behold with our vision; and the "right hand" — the actions we perform. Obviously, the Lord was not suggesting the literal dismemberment of our bodies. It must be readily evident that such drastic action, in a physical sense, would not necessarily alter the state of mind of the individual, or affect their inner motives and desires.

The word "offend" signifies "to lay a snare for, set a trap for; hence to cause to stumble or fall...." (Bullinger). Hence: "...is causing thee to stumble" (Roth.); "...is a snare to you" (T.C.N.T.); "...leads you astray" (N.E.B.). And the use of this word "offend" indicates the Believer's ability to *discern*, because of his knowledge and understanding of the truth, that he is offending against the divine commandments. It is what the eye *observes* and transmits to the brain that is at issue. Yet, the Lord used this extreme language to indicate that no sacrifice should be regarded as being too great, in the cause of following Christ's example. Nothing must be permitted to imperil the disciple's moral standing before Yahweh. The way to eternal life may be easily jeopardised by an attitude

30 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.

31 It hath been said, ^m Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

of indifference towards sin, and towards the *cause* of sin. If our “eye” is responsible for causing us to become ensnared, the eye must be *closed* to the source of temptation. Act towards those temptations as though we were blind! (Note the powerful connection here with the previous verse).

In this regard, the Lord’s language in this place is little different to that used elsewhere: “mortify (lit. ‘put to death’) the deeds of the body...” (Rom. 8:13); “Mortify (lit. ‘to put to death’) therefore your members...” (Col. 3:5); “our old man is crucified...” (Rom. 6:6); “I am crucified with Christ...” (Gal. 2:20); “They that are Christ’s *have* crucified the flesh...” (Gal. 5:24).

The advice: “pluck it out...cut it off...” is certainly drastic. But drastic measures are needed to suppress the evil propensities of the flesh. The words represent a definite and irrecoverable course of action. Such an act requires absolute determination, and total dedication. What will come first in our lives: to serve the flesh, or to serve Christ? And there can be no half-measures or reservations about our decision to follow Christ.

“Cast it from thee”

This expression is repeated in v. 30. It is not sufficient to “pluck it out” and “cut it off...” — Evil which is produced through our flesh must be repudiated: “away with it...” (Wey.).

“It is profitable for thee that one of thy members perish”

The word “perish” is in the Middle Voice, indicating something we do for ourselves. It is a voluntary action, performed in our own best interests.

“And not that thy whole body should be cast into hell”

Gk. Gehenna. A symbol for total, irretrievable destruction. The conflict against sin is a warfare of faith, and is a life-and-death struggle.

VERSE 30

“If thy right hand offend thee”

In these two verses (Vv. 29-30) there is thus represented what we *see* and therefore what is registered on the *mind*, and the *actions* which we actually perform (cp. 7:24, where the Lord summarised his teaching in this discourse by referring to the vital importance of what we *hear* and what we *do*).

VERSE 31

“It hath been said”

See notes on v. 21.

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement”

This was the Rabbinical explanation of Deut. 24:1. But God’s view concerning this matter has been made plain: “He *hateth* putting away.” He counselled loyalty towards “the wife” of a man’s “youth” — not merely to preserve the marriage bond, but to ensure the continuation from generation to generation of a “Godly seed” (Mal. 2:13-15). Thus the marriage-question is intimately related to the doctrine of God-manifestation.

VERSE 32

32 But I say unto you, That ⁿ whoso-
ever shall put away his wife, saving
for the cause of fornication, causeth
her to commit adultery: and whoso-
ever shall marry her that is divorced
committeth adultery.

33 ¶ Again, ye have heard that ^oit
hath been said by them of old time,
^pThou shalt not forswear thyself, but
^qshalt perform unto the Lord thine
oaths:

“But I say unto you”

The disciples were now to listen intently to the Lord’s teaching upon this matter.

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery”

These words were intended to show the *evil result* which could accrue through a man putting-away his wife. A *husband* could become the cause of sin if he acted unwisely from a motive of self-righteousness, selfishness, or caprice.

If the woman had already become an adulteress, putting her away would not cause her to become what she was already. But if the wife was not guilty of fornication, the husband’s action in putting her away would soon make her into an adulteress when she turned to another man. If the wife was a proven adulteress, what should the husband do? The Law provided no form of putting-away for illicit acts of this nature committed after marriage; the only courses of action open to the husband were to either bring her forth and have her stoned to death, or, as an act of mercy, forgive her and refrain from exposing her guilt to others.

“There is no man which sinneth not” (2 Chron. 6:36; Prov. 20:9; 1 Jn. 1:8-9). Recognising, therefore, his *own* shortcomings and his own need of divine mercy, a husband should treat his wife in the same way in which he hopes Yahweh will treat him (1 Pet. 3:8).

“And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery”

Thus the line of guilt would be expanded to include another, in addition to the discarded wife. It should be observed that nowhere here does the Lord deal with the question of remarriage on the part of the husband. It is neither mentioned nor implied. His point was clearly made: Consider the effects of unwise actions in the putting-away of wives; husbands may well sin against their wives, rather than the wives against the husbands. And there must also be a manifestation of the element of forgiveness: “Forgive us our debts (or sins) *as we forgive our debtors...*”(Matt. 6:12).

And at the same time the husband should not demonstrate a harsh and unspiritual attitude, which would be more in keeping with the cold, unyielding attitude of legalism as practised by the champions of Judaism. The typical significance of the marriage-state should always be borne in mind by the servant of Yahweh: The husband typifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bridegroom, whilst the wife typifies the Ecclesia, the Bride of Christ. The various significant aspects of this relationship should be considered, in the light of the Lord’s words in these verses.

VERSE 33

“Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths”

“You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord” (J.B.). The reference is to the third commandment (Ex. 20:7) and Lev. 19:12; Deut. 23:21. The Jews had learned to greatly abuse this commandment (Mat. 15:4-9, etc.).

The word rendered “forswear” means “to swear falsely.”

34 But I say unto you, 'Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is 'God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is 'the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 " But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

VERSE 34

“But I say unto you, swear not at all”

A clear-cut directive, without any element of a loophole. The over-riding principle is clear: the swearing of an oath did not guarantee that the person so swearing was being truthful. An honest individual will tell the truth without the need of an accompanying oath. The disciple of Christ must manifest honesty and integrity which is unimpeachable. Cp. Jas. 5:12.

“Neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne”

The Jews had become very skilful at contriving various classifications for oaths, relegating them varying degrees of respect. For instance, if one mentioned God or the Temple specifically this would carry, in their eyes, the greatest weight. All in all, it had become a most disgraceful and irreverent aspect of Jewish religious life.

This phrase, together with the first part of v. 35, appears to be a quotation from Isa. 66:1.

VERSE 35

“Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem for it is the city of the Great King”

The last part of the verse is a quotation from Ps. 48:2. Some of the Jews thought it unwise to mention God specifically in oaths, so settled for swearing by holy things or places; but they failed to realise that they still implicated God in these actions. See Mat. 23:16-22.

VERSE 36

“Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black”

Even to swear by the head is to implicate God — because Yahweh created it! Man cannot change the colour of his hair — other than artificial means. And Christ’s usage of this expression was to cause his listeners to appreciate not only that God had created man, but that He exercises absolute dominion over him. In Vv 34-36 the Lord reminds us of the pointlessness and dishonesty of hypocritical religion. Men can behave very piously outwardly, and yet be corrupt within. If a person has integrity before God and man he does not have to go about proving it; his way of life is evidence of what is in his heart.

VERSE 37

“But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay”

“All you need to say is ‘yes’ if you mean yes, ‘no’ if you mean no” (J.B.). If a person is truthful, he *is* truthful, and that is the end of the matter. Events generally provide subsequent proof of whether the claim is true or false. If an individual acquires a reputation for honesty it is because he has been proven so. A statement does not need to be embellished with an oath to make it true.

“For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil”

“And what goeth beyond these is of evil” (Roth.). Truth is self-sufficient. It does not require to be adorned with specious appendages. It is not necessary to add proof to truth, for truth is its own witness. Those who look beyond this straightforward principle will only

38 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been
said, *An eye for an eye, and a tooth
for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, ¶ That ye re-
sist not evil: *but whosoever shall
smite thee on thy right cheek, turn
to him the other also.

do so from an evil motive. If we hold Yahweh in awe and reverence we will acknowledge the need to honour Him by speaking truthfully, and we will appreciate the consequences of failing to do so (1 Cor. 6:9; Prov. 19:5; 1 Jn 2:21; Rev. 22:15).

Vv. 38-42: HOW CHRIST'S DISCIPLES MUST REACT IN THE FACE OF EVIL TREATMENT WHICH MAY BE METED OUT TO THEM.

VERSE 38

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”

Quoted from Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21. The Law certainly stated this; and it must be borne in mind that without Law any society will degenerate into anarchy. The Law was “added because of transgressions” — Or: “It was a later addition, to make wrong-doing an offence, and to last till the coming of that ‘offspring’ to whom the promise had been made” (Gal. 3:19, T.C.N.T.). It must also be remembered that the Law provided a set of statutes by which law and order would be established and maintained for an entire nation. But Christ was not speaking to a nation. The principles of Godliness as set forth in the discourse on the Mount were addressed only to that class of people who would be prepared to separate from the evil environment of a Godless world, and dedicate their lives unto Yahweh. Thus the discourse on the Mount was never designed for society-at-large in this present dispensation.

The particular law to which the Lord here referred certainly provided for justice to be performed. But if handled in a wrong spirit, it would not allow for mercy. Now, those who would follow Christ must be prepared to adopt the lamb-like character of their Master; they must not resist evil, nor must they seek self-justification. They must await the time when Yahweh will vindicate them, walking by faith in the belief that “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12:19; Deut. 32:35). True justice and judgment can come only from Yahweh, for He alone is infallible in such matters; and the brethren of Christ must be prepared to suffer injustice, that Christ’s character might be developed within them. Only after Christ’s disciples have established their own obedience to the standards of the Christ-character will they be fit to administer justice and judgment in the Name of Yahweh (2 Cor. 10:6; Ps. 149).

VERSE 39

“But I say unto you”

Now follows the standard of behaviour that Christ requires from each one of his disciples.

“That ye resist not evil”

The word rendered “resist” relates to belligerent opposition. The Gk., anthistemi (from anti, meaning “against”; and histemi, meaning “to cause to stand”) means “to stand against, to set one’s self against...” In this regard, the disciples has Christ’s own example to follow (1 Pet. 2:19-23).

“Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

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

See Isa. 50:6-9; cp. Mat. 26:67-69; 27:26, 29. Unrestrained retaliation is a manifestation of flesh asserting itself. Much better for the flesh to be disciplined, guarding against any form of sin which might arise through a violent disposition and loss of self-control. It is suggested, particularly in times of war, that such conduct as this is cowardly. But it requires great courage and dedication to manifest this attitude in the face of violent attack.

VERSE 40

“If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also”

The previous verse has dealt with the disciple’s reaction in the face of actual violence. Now the Lord speaks concerning matters where violence is not involved. This is a question of action which might be taken against a disciple’s character. The word “will” in this verse is most important. It more correctly means “to desire” — thus, the R.V. renders: “. . .if any man would go to law with thee...” — in other words, settle the matter with him before it even comes to a case of meeting before a Magistrate (cp. 1 Cor. 6:7). The “coat” referred to here is a reference to an undergarment or tunic, whereas the word “cloke” refers to a more expensive outer garment.

If a man were to sue another for his undergarment it would indicate a state of abject poverty on the part of the one being sued; since he possesses nothing better, such as house or land or other assets. So to voluntarily give up the outer-garment would mean that the destitute one would be left with virtually nothing. The teaching is clear: if need be, we must be prepared to forfeit *all* we possess, in our undivided loyalty to Christ, and in the cause of developing his character within us.

VERSE 41

“And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain”

Verse 39 has spoken of the exercise of violence against a Saint: verse 40 deals with an attack upon one’s character, or the legal processes used to dispossess a Saint. Now, the Lord speaks of those in authority who may be able to compel obedience to their demands. The word “compel” here is said to be of Persian origin, and meant “to press into service as a courier”, and then: “to force to act as a guide.” This was one of the indignities the Jews faced at the hands of their Roman oppressors in the times of Christ. Rome, at this time, represented the power and authority of government. The disciples of Christ were to co-operate with these forces, even to the point of unreasonable demands, so long as their loyalty to Christ did not suffer (Matt. 22:21; Acts 4:19; 5:29). See the case of Simon of Cyrene: Mat. 27:32. In so conforming, the brethren of Christ will quietly meditate upon the time when all human rule and authority will be put down, and *they*, the persecuted Saints, will live and *REIGN* with Christ; being no longer subject to the whims and demands of fleshly rulers. Thus, whilst they conform to the demands made upon them, their *faith* will carry them forward into the future when these trying conditions will no longer be in evidence (Hab. 2:4).

VERSE 42

42 Give to him that asketh thee,
and ^bfrom him that would borrow of
thee turn not thou away.

43 ¶ Ye have heard that it hath been
said, °Thou shalt love thy neighbour,
^aand hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, °Love your
enemies, bless them that curse you,
do good to them that hate you, and
pray ^ffor them which despitefully use
you, and persecute you;

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away”

The difference between these two words “asketh” and “borrow” is quite significant. The first word signifies “to entreat, beg, supplicate...expresses a petition from an inferior to a superior...” (Bullinger). But the word for “borrow” has an altogether different meaning. In the active voice, the word means to *lend out* money; as positive action for personal gain. But when the word occurs in the Middle Voice, as in the case here, the implication is that such a person is *forced*, perhaps by some authority, to provide a loan against his will. Such “loans” were not unknown among oppressed peoples in those times. The Lord therefore called upon his disciples to respond in a kindly way and in a right spirit when called upon to provide for others in this way — whether through coercion or as an act of willing sacrifice (cp. Lev. 25:35; Deut. 15:8-11; Prov. 3:27-28).

Vv. 43-48: HOW DISCIPLES MUST POSITIVELY ACT TOWARDS OTHERS, THUS PRODUCING IN THEIR LIVES THE MORAL LIKENESS OF THEIR FATHER, WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.

VERSE 43

“Ye have heard that it hath been said”

Once again the Lord was to draw attention to the way in which divine principles, as set forth in the word, had become corrupted through traditional interpretations of the Law which had developed over many centuries.

Vv. 38-42 have shown how we must *react* to the treatment that others might mete out to us. Now, Vv. 43-48 show how *we* should act *positively* towards others.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy”

The word of God never taught this. The A.V. margin appears to indicate that the second half of this clause might be taken from Deut. 23:6, but this is incorrect. There, the Law was dealing specifically with those who were enemies of *Yahweh*, and provided no grounds whatever for the exercise of personal animosity for personal reasons. See Ex. 23:4; Deut. 22:1-4; Prov. 24:17-18; 25:21).

Almost all of the 19th chapter of Leviticus deals with the question of obligations and responsibilities which the Israelite should show towards others.

The way the Lord linked these two phrases together conveys a most powerful lesson: The first clause has been correctly taken from Lev. 19:18; the second was an inference drawn from the first clause by the *natural* mind of man. When a clear and fundamental divine principle is united to a philosophy produced from the mind of the flesh, a perversion of divine truth will be the inevitable result.

VERSE 44

“But I say unto you”

Now follows the Lord’s teaching upon this question.

“Love your enemies”

A positive action. But observe that the words “you” or “your” occur five times in this verse. The emphasis is upon our relationships with our *personal* enemies. It should be understood that the Lord was not here



speaking of how we should react to Yahweh's enemies. The "love" spoken of here should not be confused with the sentimental, purely emotional idea of "love" which the world understands by this word. The Gk., *agapao*, signifies "a profound respect or reverence, based upon knowledge, and manifested by self-denial..." It is a form of love which is based entirely upon an understanding of the word and will of Almighty God, and therefore cannot be practised by anyone ignorant of divine truth. It is a love that will be manifested towards others because it is an attribute of Yahweh's character; it is a love that is God-based, God-directed, and God-honouring. Agape-love "rejoiceth *with* the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6, marg.) and therefore, when practised as Christ would have us do, will provide a practical demonstration of the outworking of the word of God in our lives. We will become "the word made flesh" to the extent that we follow Christ's own example. (Contrast Gal. 1:9; 5:12; Rev. 1:2, etc.).

"Bless them that curse you"

These are not attributes of character which are natural to man. They are, in fact, the very opposite. Thus to put these principles into action, as Christ himself did, requires that the "works" of the flesh be subdued and the "fruits of the spirit" be permitted to shine forth (Gal. 5:16-24). The word "bless" (Gk. *eulogeo*) is derived from two words: *Eu*, meaning "well" and *logos*, "a word, a speech, reason," etc. Thus, "to speak well" of someone. In other words, continue to treat them, and act towards them, as you would in the case of someone with whom you enjoyed a pleasant relationship.

This phrase, and the next, have been omitted by the R.V., Roth., Wey., T.C.N.T., Diag., and others; however, they do include this passage in Lk. 6:27-28.

"Do good to them that hate you"

Again, a positive action — but one which would, like the preceding instruction in this verse, require the exercising of humility towards the offending party and complete submission to the will of God. The greatest "good" we can do for anyone is to humbly guide them into the way of life.

"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you"

How would we pray in such a case? That the one transgressing divine principles might recognise the truth, and see in the Son of God the perfect example for human conduct. We might also pray that the trial should be removed from us — but, the primary objective of such a prayer must be the conversion of the sinner: "Pray for *them*..."

Yet, what if there should be no change in those who treat us as the Lord defines in this verse: those who are our "enemies," who "curse" us, who "hate" us, who "despitefully use and persecute" us? If such should prove the case, the Saint of God stands in a peculiar position: he must see these forms of trial as a blessing. God has permitted such trials to come upon us and has refrained from removing them so that our characters may be developed towards perfection, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith must be perfected under trial (Job 23:10; Ps. 66:10; 105:17-19; Zech. 13:9; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, etc.).

VERSE 45

"That"

45 That ye may be the children of
your Father which is in heaven: for
he maketh his sun to rise on the evil
and on the good, and sendeth rain on
the just and on the unjust.

Gk. *hopos*, "in order that, with emphasis on the manner and method...to the end that..." Occurs also in 5:16; 6:2,4,5,16,18. A most important word. The Lord was reminding his disciples that there was a grand *purpose* behind all these commandments and words of wisdom which he was delivering to them. It is not simply a question of men and women conforming to divine commandments because God will reject them if they do not; the purpose of the truth is, above all else, positive: that we might become manifestations of what the Lord Jesus was during the days of his flesh — and therefore, even though ever so imperfectly, we become manifestations of what Yahweh Himself is, and always has been. We can be recognised — from what we say and what we do — as sons and daughters of the Living God.

"Ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven"

The words "may be" are most important. The Gk., *ginomai*, implies "origin...to begin to be (suggesting origin)" (Vine). This is what we *will become* if we take the Lord Jesus Christ as our example, patterning our lives upon him, walking day by day according to those precepts and principles he has set before us. The phrase implies a transformation from what we *were* to what we *now become*, through the influence of the word of God affecting our lives.

Not "*the* Father" but "*your* Father..." The intimacy of each individual disciple's relationship to God has been stressed by the use of this particular word. And the word "children" is literally "sons" — a masculine word which embraces both men and women. Whatever their sex, they all become part of Christ's mystical Body, and thus through "the unity of the faith" become part of the "perfect man" in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13).

Consider such passages as Deut. 32:1-6, 15-20; Jn. 8:32-44).

"For"

Of this word, Bullinger wrote: "introduces that which rests on a patent fact..." (Gk. *oti*). In other words, we should learn and practise the precepts and principles the Lord taught his disciples because such an attitude will cause us to become the sons of God; and as such we must be prepared to manifest those ideals fully in our lives **BECAUSE OUR FATHER IS OUR EXAMPLE.**

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"

Yahweh is good and generous to all, in that He provides the necessities of life without partiality. God blesses those who curse Him, and sends rain and sunshine upon His enemies. Can we not endeavour to follow His example, by practising, in love and faith, those attributes of character which the Lord Jesus recommends to us in this section of the Word? The sun and the rain are the two sources from above which provide sustenance to the natural man. Similarly, we can equate the "sun" with the "light" which we should reveal to mankind (v. 14); and at the same time we extend the water of life to a perishing world (Jn. 4:14; 7:37-38).

VERSE 46

"If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans do the same?"

46 ^h For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

48 ⁱ Be ye therefore perfect, even ^k as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

“For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not?” (J.B.). Tax-gatherers, generally ruthless servants of an occupying power, were held in contempt by the general populace.

The R.V. margin has: “That is, collectors or renters of Roman taxes.” The Lord was making a very powerful point: it is *natural* to extend love and warmth (and even sacrifice) to those who manifest these same qualities towards us. But what the Lord demands of us transcends that which comes naturally; he requires that we reveal qualities which are *not* natural to man, but are reflections of the divine character. The disciple of Christ must be helpful, considerate, and thoughtful for all classes of society; particularly insofar that the Saints have been called to shine forth as “the light of the world,” and offer the saving power of the truth to all who will hear and receive it.

VERSE 47

“And if ye salute your brethren only”

From those with whom we have a close and intimate relationship, exercising agape-love towards them and they towards us, the Lord now turned his attention to those with whom we have a lesser relationship. The word “brethren” has been rendered from the Gk. adelphos, meaning “a brother” or “near kinsman.” God did not wait for us to learn to agape-love *Him* before He was prepared to show love for us: “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). And: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:9-10). If this is Yahweh’s way of dealing with others, should it not be ours also? It will be so, of course, if we are truly “the children” of our “Father” (v. 45).

“Do not even the Publicans?”

Some Gk. text have telones, “a tax-gatherer,” as in the previous verse; but other MSS. have ethniki, meaning “gentiles.” The latter word, it would appear, is to be preferred. And there must be an important reason for the Lord to have switched his contrast from the hated tax-gatherers to gentiles in a broad sense. Why? The answer lies in the difference between the agape-love of v. 46 and the comparatively lesser activity of saluting, or politely greeting and being kindly disposed towards people, as the word in v. 47 indicates. It appears that the Lord was saying, in effect: “all the world about you knows how to salute their brethren and they are ignorant of the Truth. But, as my disciples, you must realise that far more is required of you. You must manifest an attitude towards others which is based on far higher ideals than mere human warmth and friendliness.”

VERSE 48

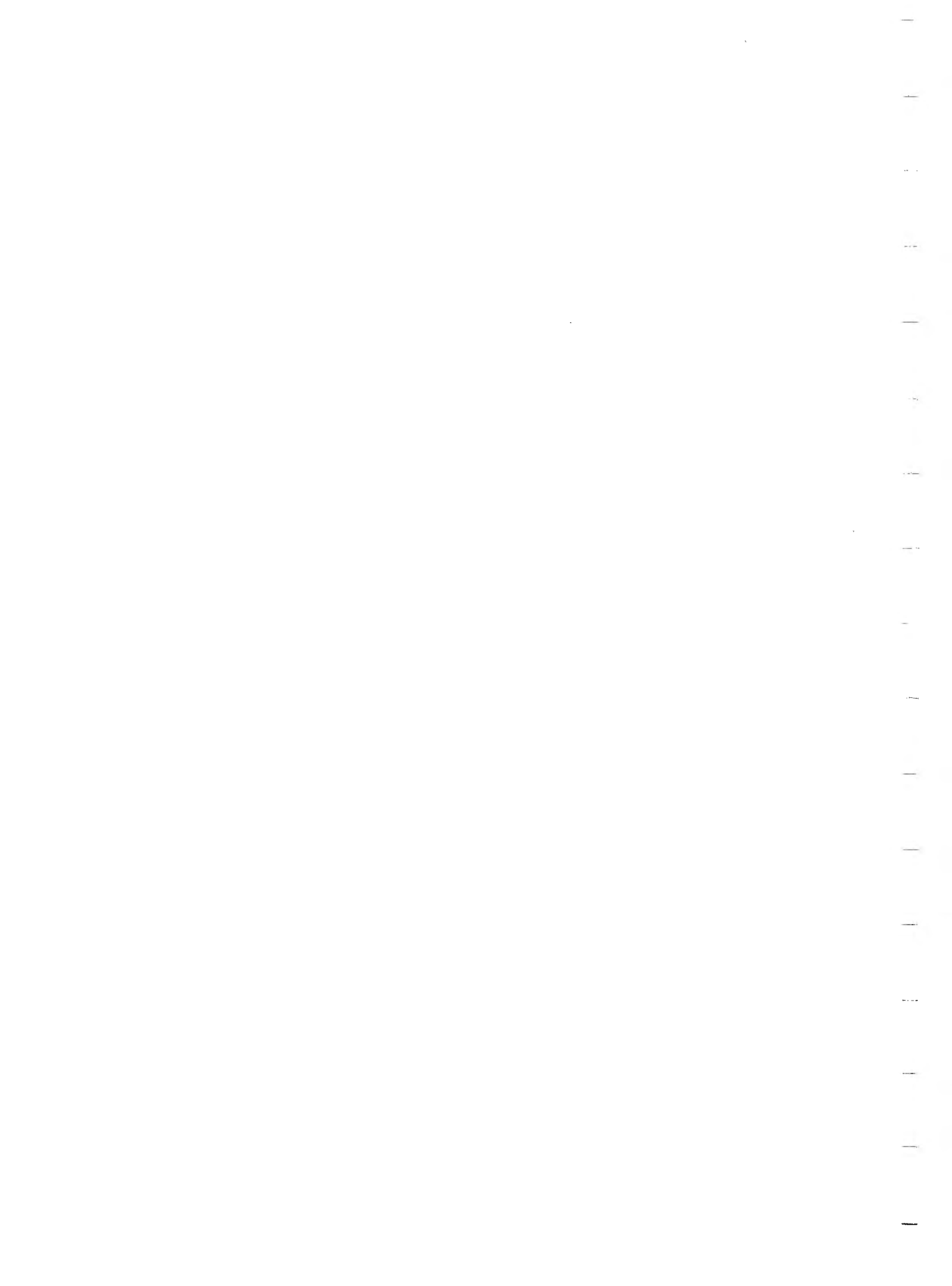
“Be ye therefore perfect”

The first three of these words, in the A.V., have been rendered from one Gk. word. When using this word of one’s self it means “I shall be...” In this context, it should be rendered “Ye shall be...” See Ex. 3:14.

The word “perfect” has been rendered from the Gk. *teleios*, which means “what has reached its end, term, or limit; hence complete, perfect, full, wanting nothing, with special reference to the end for which it was intended” (Bullinger). The word occurs twice in this chapter, telling us that we *must become* what Yahweh is now. We should “*learn*” what this means, seeing Christ came to call “sinners to repentance” (Mat. 8:13). True righteousness must become the way of life for Christ’s disciples. It is a stated fact that except our “righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” we shall “in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (v. 20). The scribes and Pharisees were spiritually deficient. They did not have a true intellectual understanding of the principles of righteousness, and were therefore unable to manifest righteousness in a real and practical way. The grand objective of the truth is to change men and women mentally, morally, and physically, into manifestations of Yahweh. Thus, from being young in years, or young in the truth, we must strive to “grow up”, as sons of our Father, to attain to a degree of spiritual maturity which will fit us for the kingdom.

The fundamental message to Christ’s disciples, as set forth in the discourse on the Mount, is an amplification of the basic message to God’s people which permeates the Old Testament scriptures: “*YE shall be holy; for I am holy..*” (Lev. 11:44-45, etc.).

“Try to live at peace with everyone, and to attain to that purity without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, T.C.N.T.).



MATTHEW

CHAPTER SIX

- Vv 1- 4: A warning against hypocrisy in alms-giving.
- Vv 5-15: The correct purpose and spirit of acceptable prayer.
- Vv16-23: God must be served from the heart, in keeping with the light of the truth.
- Vv24-32: Warning against becoming over-anxious about the materialistic things of life — we cannot serve God and the flesh.
- Vv33-34: The truth must motivate us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness — a cause to which we must be dedicated each and every day.

TAKE heed that ye do not your
²alms before men, to be seen of
them: otherwise ye have no reward
³of your Father which is in heaven.

CHAPTER 6

Vv 1-4: A WARNING AGAINST HYPOCRISY IN ALMS-GIVING

VERSE 1

“Take heed”

This word (Gk. prosecho) has been rendered “beware” seven times in the A.V. See Mat. 7:15; 10:17; 16:6, 11, 12, etc. It is evident that the Lord used the word in this place as a warning against unwise actions. The Jerusalem Bible has rendered it, aptly, “Be careful...” This warning was necessary and fully justified, in view of the weakness of the *nature* we bear; a nature which is prone toward evil rather than good; a nature which will incline us to act according to our fleshly desires rather than according to divine precepts, unless we are aware of the ever-present danger, and positively counteract the weaknesses which are produced by the flesh. Such counteraction can be produced only from “the wisdom that is from above” (Jas. 3:17).

“That ye do not your alms before men”

The Gk. texts vary. Some have *elcemosune*, meaning “pity, compassion; a work of mercy....” But most probably (according to Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and the Sinaiticus MSS) the word was *dikaiousune*, which has been rendered “righteousness” 94 times in the A.V. The R.V., which has “righteousness” is “according to the most authentic texts” (Vine.). The word signifies “the character or quality of being right or just” (Vine). But the Lord’s warning was to the effect that we should not confuse outward displays of apparent righteousness (such as manifested by the Pharisees) with true righteousness. The former resulted from fleshly pride, whereas the latter resulted from the outworking of divine principles held deeply and with integrity in the intellect of a true disciple. The Pharisees exhibited a pseudo-righteousness in regard to the giving of money (v. 2), prayer (v. 5), and fasting (v. 16). They failed to practise true righteousness because they sought material wealth out of a wrong motive (v. 19), they were full of darkness (v. 23), they served two masters (v. 24), they were engrossed in such questions as what they should eat and drink and what they should wear (v. 25), and they were concerned to maintain their present positions (v. 31). They were not, in short, *SEEKING first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And it was impossible that they should do so as long as they remained engrossed in the worship of *Self*.

“To be seen of men”

This was the root of Pharisal error. “Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men...” (N.E.B.); “...to be gazed at...” (Roth.); “...in order to be noticed...” (Moff.) The verb, *theamai*, is derived from *theoros*, “a spectator.” The desire of the Pharisee was to be seen; to be *seen* to be righteous. But such religion did not spring from a love of God and a desire to please Him, and was therefore a form of hypocrisy (v. 2).

“Otherwise ye have no reward”

This word occurs six times in the discourse on the Mount. It relates to “hire, wages, pay”. The Pharisee received *his* reward: the respect of *MEN!* What an empty, pointless, frivolous reward. They may have impressed men, but they did not impress God. The Saint in Christ,

2 Therefore ^awhen thou doest *thine* alms, ⁴do 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.

though, has higher ideals, based upon the deeply spiritual motive of desiring to honour his Father in heaven.

“Of your Father”

The A.V. margin, “with” is to be preferred. The allusion to God-manifestation is clear. A true son of God desires not only to please Yahweh, but eventually to become completely at one with Him.

VERSE 2

“When thou doest thine alms”

Use of the pronoun “thou” points directly at the responsibility of the disciple. He *must* perform “alms” — but here the word is different to that in verse 1. The Gk. eleemosune finds its place here (cp. v. 1). The “alms” to be enacted by Believers must be directed towards the welfare of others, and therefore are selfless so far as motive and objective are concerned. They show “pity” or “compassion” or “mercy” towards those in need of those blessings. This word has no true application if our actions are performed for self-glorification.

“Do not sound a trumpet before thee”

“do not announce it with a flourish of trumpets” (N.E.B.); “do not have it trumpeted before you” (J.B.). An ironical play-on-words, the meaning of which is explained by the next phrase.

“As the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets”

There were thirteen chests in the Temple, with trumpet-shaped openings for the depositing of money. They were called “Shopharoth” (“trumpets”). They were literally described as “trumpets” in the Talmud. It was possible to deposit large coins into the boxes in such a way as would make a loud noise, thus turning the heads of by-standers towards the one making the “offering.” Those who ostentatiously dropped money into the chests in this way were “blowing their own trumpets.”

The word “hypocrite” means, literally, “one who answers” and came to mean “one who plays a part, a play-actor.” An individual who practises such a religious performance begins by deceiving *others*, but ultimately becomes lost in self-deception. No one is able to deceive God.

The true disciple of Christ will constantly recall the challenging words of the apostle Paul: “Examine yourselves!” (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5) and will continually explore his motives and endeavour to maintain his integrity before God.

In sacrificing for Yahweh or for men, everything depends upon the *motive*.

“That they may have glory of men”

They reserved their most impressive performances for those occasions when they were prominently in the public eye. And they had but one deep-seated ambition: “to win men’s admiration” (J.B.). But all glory should be ascribed to God, and none whatever to flesh.

“Verily, I say unto you”

The word “verily” occurs six times in these three chapters, including 6:13, where it has been rendered “amen”. The word has been transliterated from Hebrew into both Gk. and English. (cp. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; 65:16; Ps. 19:7, etc). The word means “truth, faithful, sure, so be it.” The Lord used the word often, to introduce a particularly weighty or important statement.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not
thy left hand know what thy right
hand doeth:

4 That thine alms may be in secret:
and thy Father which seeth in secret
himself ^b shall reward thee openly.

“They have their reward”

“They have received in full their reward” (Wey.). This is what they sought; this is what they *have* received; a “reward” during their own lifetime, but with no further hope beyond the grave. A fleshly ambition will bring a fleshly reward.

VERSE 3

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”

Again, the word “thou” points directly to the responsibilities incumbent upon one who would follow Christ. The phrase means: “Do not closely observe what you do for others; do not even think about what you have done, lest you be found guilty of pride, through dwelling upon your achievements.” Alms, when performed from a holy motive, are acts of mercy and compassion, not acts designed for self-justification. cp. Lk. 18:9-12.

VERSE 4

“That thine alms may be in secret”

Gk. *kruptos*, akin to *krupton*, “to hide.” Humility will cause this attitude on our part. Unpretentiously, we will “hide” our alms *from men*; for we know that nothing can be hidden from God. God observes all that we do, whether openly or modestly. But it is not necessary to display pretentiousness to draw God’s attention. Yahweh is pleased when the motive of *the heart* is right, and remains unimpressed with mere outward show.

“Shall reward thee”

The contrast now is between the reward which men can give and the reward which Yahweh will surely give to all who faithfully honour and serve Him. God will, indeed, “give it back to thee” (Roth.). In other words, nothing which is done out of a right spirit and correct motive will remain unrewarded, so far as Yahweh is concerned. There is a sure reward for all who serve God “in spirit and in truth.” Yet true followers of Christ do not strive to fulfil God’s will because of the rewards which have been promised, but because they love Yahweh and His Son, and seek, above all else, that God might be honoured and glorified. Paul told the Philippian Ecclesia that “fruit” would “abound” to their “account” (Phil. 4:17) because they had sacrificed on the apostle’s behalf. The brethren at Philippi, Paul suggested, had “invested” wisely in their dedication to the truth. They will receive their “reward” when Christ returns. The word for “reward” (Gk. *apodidomi*) has been used significantly in Mat. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12.

“Openly”

Omitted by the R.V., Roth., and others. The word would not really add anything to the previous statement. See Psa. 37:6.

Vv 5-15: THE CORRECT PURPOSE AND SPIRIT OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

VERSE 5

“And when thou prayest”

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.

The word for prayer, in the Gk., has the prefix “pros”, meaning “towards” or “in the direction of.” In this context the word speaks of private, intimate prayers, addressed by Believers *towards* God. The implication is that in this situation the mind of the individual is centred upon God, not upon self. Prayer is the means by which we establish intimate communion with our Heavenly Father. It is an awesome privilege, and can only be contemplated by mere mortals with an attitude of utter humility.

“The hypocrites...love to pray”

The word for “love” is not the selfless agape-love, but *phileo* — the type of love practised in a friendly relationship. The word represents “tender affection” (Vine) — and it is possible for individuals to feel this type of love *of themselves!* The word as it occurs here (*philousi*) is in the present indicative tense, and literally means “they *are* loving to pray...” or “they *are* taking pleasure in praying...” But the prefix “pros” is now pointing in another direction: the hypocrites were praying “towards” themselves. Their prayers were centred upon self, not upon God.

In the times of Christ, explicit times for prayer had been established, and even the form of prayer was often of a ritualistic concept. If, therefore, the Pharisees “happened” to be in a prominent place at prayer-time, they would be seen by many people.

“Standing”

There was nothing wrong in standing for the purpose of offering prayer. We follow the custom today, especially in our communal meetings. Christ did not condemn them for standing. It was the *motive* behind the action which he censured. The Pharisees stood to be seen of men.

“Synagogues and in the streets”

The most prominent places, where the largest crowds would be gathered or passing by.

“That they may be seen of men”

“that they may *shine* before men” (Roth.). The Gk. word, *phaino*, is in the Active Voice — they were busy working at it! The Lord had now dealt with two classes of people who would be seen to shine: his disciples were to “shine” before men (5:16, Gk., *lampo*); and the Pharisees would do likewise. But what a contrast in the two forms of light: one would be the light of Christ’s mental and moral likeness; the other would be the light of the flesh (cp. Prov. 26:12; Isa. 5:20-21; 8:20, etc.).

“They have their reward”

As in V. 2, “they have received in full their reward...” (Wey.). They have no other reward than this. Human pride produces a pathetic and pitiable result. “All flesh is grass, and all the *glory* of *man* as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away...” (Isa.40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24).

VERSE 6

“When thou prayest, enter thy closet”

“whenever” (Wey., T.C.N.T.) No particular set time or times is implied in the use of this word (cp. *occ.* v. 2, v. 5, v. 16). The Lord therefore implied that his disciples should pray when they felt the need

6 But thou, when thou prayest, °enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, ^duse not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: °for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

for communion with their Father, and not according to the formal ritual of the Pharisees. Cp. Isa. 26:20; 2 Kings 4:33.

“Shut thy door”

A seeking after privacy. A deliberate action, as with the publicity-seeking Pharisee. But the action of Christ's disciple is in direct contrast to the action of the Pharisee, because his motive and intention is equally opposite to that of the Pharisee. See Christ's example: Mat. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Jn. 6:15.

“Pray to thy Father which is in secret”

“pray to your Father who is there in the secret place” (N.E.B., cp. J.B., Roth.). Prayer, apart from the occasions when the united Body meets as one, is a private affair because it is the exercise of an intimate communion between an individual and God. In following this custom, the Believer is merely practising what Yahweh Himself does: He remains invisible to the eyes of men, and yet is not beyond the reach of His true sons and daughters. The Father dwells in the heavens (1 Tim. 6:16; Acts 7:55-56; Deut. 10:14) and yet is everywhere present by His spirit (Ps. 139:7-12). A Believer may shut all the world out from the privacy of his room, yet Yahweh remains.

“Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee”

A reiteration of the points made in v. 4: Yahweh sees — from a position of secrecy — He will reward for faithfulness. It should be stressed that the word for “reward” in v. 4 and v. 6 (apodidomi) means “to give away *from one's self*,” and hence to “bestow.” This is the reward God will give to those who love and obey Him. But the word for “reward” in v. 5 and v. 2, concerning the “reward” the Pharisees received, is quite different (misthos) and simply means “hire, wages, pay.” The latter word was used in reference to the Saints in v. 1, but from v. 2 to v. 6 the Lord seems to develop the two words in contrast. The reward that the saint hopes to receive goes beyond simply “wages,” because it is something that will be sent forth *from* God. The words in v. 4 and v. 6 are therefore more meaningful and more personal than can possibly be conveyed by the other word.

“Openly”

Omit.

VERSE 7

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do”

“In your prayers do not go babbling on, like the heathen” (N.E.B.) “do not babble...” (J.B.). This word occurs nowhere else, Gk. battologeo, “to babble” (Bullinger). In this verse the Lord was not necessarily condemning prayers because of their length. After all, the Lord himself on occasions communed with his Father in prayer throughout the night (Lk. 6:12; cp. Mat. 26:36-44). The gentiles were known for haranguing their gods incessantly. They prattled laboriously, without reverence or mature thought. They prayed upon the inane principle that if they spoke loudly enough and long enough they would surely be heard. But the Lord was not being critical of the length of time spent in prayer, nor the inward fervour with which such prayers might be poured out to the Father. He condemned the mechanical repetition of set words, or thoughtless,

**8 Be not ye therefore like unto them:
for your Father knoweth what things
ye have need of, before ye ask him.**

insincere repetition. Prayer to Yahweh, as we have already seen, is an awesome privilege, and should be respected as such.

Prayer should not be entered upon lightly, and as a general rule not without prior thoughtful meditation.

“For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking”

It is not the volume of words that will impress God; it is the motive of the heart, a true understanding on the part of the one offering prayer, and a genuine desire on the part of the offerer to see Yahweh honoured and glorified. Eloquence counts for little in the Father’s eyes. A disciple who is not fluent or expressive in his use of words, and who might even utter his prayer with a feeling of utter inadequacy, will be heard and answered if he has integrity in Yahweh’s eyes.

VERSE 8

“Be not ye therefore like unto them”

“Do not copy their example...” (T.C.N.T.): “Do not, then, imitate them...” (Wey.). We cannot claim to be God’s sons and daughters whilst at the same time mimicking the gentiles. These words carry a clear message of the need for Yahweh’s servants to be *different* to the world about them; especially in their personal worship of God. Two key words describe life in the truth: SEPARATION and DEDICATION. Without this two-fold application of divine principles we will not be pleasing to our Father; for He calls upon us to separate ourselves from the world and all forms of ungodliness (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 4:5-6) and dedicate our lives fully to Him (Matt. 22:37). We are therefore not to be “like unto” the gentile world, which knows not God and does not honour Him according to the precepts laid down in His word. We should most fully appreciate our high and lofty calling when either involved in a study of the word or communing with our Father in prayer. In either case we are reminded, by the exercise of our minds on such occasions, that he is the One who is highly exalted above us, and we are but the work of His hands who should become malleable clay so that He might form and mould us according to His will and His purpose.

The Gk. word which has been rendered “be like” is in the passive tense, and indicates that Believers must not passively accept gentile ways and standards. The disciple of Christ is to willingly *resist* these influences in his life, and to knowingly and positively pursue a way of life which is in harmony with the example set before him by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of”

The Lord was not referring to things like new motor cars, suits or dresses of the latest fashion, the fulfilment of our worldly ambitions. Certainly Yahweh is sympathetic to our mundane *needs* (not our wants), and we have been assured that He will provide if we walk by faith (Ps. 37:25, etc.). But our greatest needs are those provisions by which we may develop the character of His Son, and thus become fitted for an entrance into the kingdom. Prayer must not become an exercise in selfishness; in all that we pray for we should have uppermost in our minds the grandest objective of all: that Yahweh might be glorified.

To pray rightly and in a correct spirit is to plead the cause of righteousness.

“Before ye ask him”

9 After this manner therefore pray
ye: 'Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

Why, then, pray at all? For one reason only: to demonstrate our faith, and our total acceptance of the precept that we must believe that God *“IS and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him...”* (Heb. 11:6). In this way we are not only demonstrating our filial love for our Father, and seeking oneness with Him, but also showing that we fervently desire the fulfilment of His purpose, as He does Himself. When we pray in this spirit we are acknowledging His power to provide, His power to fulfil, and our own helplessness without Him. In divine worship we are to humble ourselves and exalt the Father (1 Pet. 5:6-7; Mat. 23:12; Ps. 55:17, 22, etc.).

VERSE 9

“After this manner therefore pray ye”

The prayer that follows was not intended to be slavishly followed, as is done in the churches of christendom; it was Christ’s objective to set down a *pattern* and a guide for acceptable prayer. God will only be receptive to prayers of this nature by those who are in covenant relationship with Him, as the first two words of the prayer imply; and who worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:23-24).

The prayer was divided into two parts: an introduction followed by seven petitions.

“Our Father”

These words can be used only by those who qualify as sons or daughters of the Living God. They have been begotten by Him, through the word of Truth (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:8; Rom. 8:14). We are characterised as sons or daughters of God not merely because we have learned and accepted “first principles” and been baptised, but because we are struggling to develop in our lives the character of the One whom we address as “our Father...” The opening two words of the prayer are tremendously exhortational; because they indicate not only what God *IS* but what we *should be...* If He is our Father, we must be His sons and daughters. And we are only His sons and daughters if we are a reflection of *what He is* (Mal. 1:6; 3:16-17). A true son or daughter of Yahweh will strive to become like their Father: Col. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:3.

In addressing Yahweh as “our Father” we are not only acknowledging Him as such, but we are accepting, humbly, a subordinate position, and confessing our willingness and readiness to submit to His will. This may even involve a sober acceptance of any chastisement which He may see fit to bring upon us, for reasons which would be to our ultimate advantage (Heb. 12:5-7). (Note that the prayer was addressed to One, and One only, thus dealing a death-blow to the doctrine of the trinity; for if there *was* a triune God, and each was “co-equal, co-eternal, and co-substantial” with the others, would it not be necessary for the prayer to begin: “Our Fathers”? How could a worshipper single out the Father for prayer, when there were two other Gods who were His equal in all respects? Such an approach to a triune God would be utterly disrespectful, to say the least).

“Which art in Heaven”

We not only acknowledge that there is a Supreme Being, but we also accept that there is a place where He literally dwells, in glory. He is enthroned in a particular part of the heavens (Josh. 2:11; 1 Kings 8:30, 32,

10 Thy kingdom come. ^sThy will
be done in earth, ^has *it is* in heaven.

34, 36, 39, 45, 49; Job 22:2; Ps. 11:4; 33:13; 110:1; Heb. 9:24, etc.).

“Hallowed be thy name”

This is the first of the seven petitions. The word “hallowed” (Gk. *hagiazo*) occurs 29 times in the N.T., and only twice has it been rendered “hallowed”; here, and in Luke’s account of “the Lord’s prayer” (Lk. 11:2). 26 times the word has been rendered “sanctify,” and once “holy.” Hence, “May thy name be held holy” (T.C.N.T.); “May thy name be kept holy” (Wey.). The word means “that which has been set apart, sanctified, made holy.” Yahweh’s Name expresses what He *is*, together with a revelation of His purpose; for His name means “He Who Will Be” or “He Who Will Become” (Ex. 3:14). He is a God who *is*, who *was*, and who *will be*. His purpose is to manifest Himself in a glorified multitude of individuals who are of Adam’s race. Christ was of Adam’s race and manifested perfect obedience to his Father’s will; he therefore became the forerunner of those who would strive to follow in his steps (Heb. 6:20; 1 Jn. 3:2). We are, in this present dispensation, being taken “out” of the gentiles to become a “people for His Name” (Acts 15:14). Israel had been called out of Egypt for this very purpose (Ex. 19:5-6) but had failed to honour that objective (Jer. 13:10-11), and therefore profaned His Name (Ezek. 36:20).

There is the possibility that we may be found guilty of the same violation. Knowing the truth, being baptised and attending meetings provides no guarantee of salvation. The Truth is not something to be trifled with or treated in an off-handed way. To have a hope of entering the kingdom we must be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), and must strive to live in a holy and righteous manner, as befitting those who have been called “sons” of God (1 Pet. 1:13-16; Eph. 5:1-2, etc.).

It is significant that the first of the seven petitions set forth in this prayer concerns the holiness of God’s Name, and that its holiness was to be recognised and revered by Yahweh’s people. (cp. Jn. 17:17, 21, 23, 26). We can only pray “Hallowed be thy Name” when we are prepared to subordinate our will, our minds and our actions to the will and purpose of Yahweh, as revealed in His Name; and to glorify Him accordingly (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:17-19, etc.).

VERSE 10

“Thy Kingdom come”

This is “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). It is tragic to consider that millions of people throughout the earth mouth this phrase, time after time, and yet remain ignorant of its meaning. What a privileged people we are to understand the “hope” that is set before Christ’s disciples! God’s kingdom existed upon earth in the past (1 Chron. 28:5; 2 Chron. 9:8; 13:8); but with Christ’s second coming God will fulfil “the promise made unto the fathers” (of Israel): Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:16-18; 2 Sam. 7:10-16. These promises all focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the “seed” promised, and therefore the One who will inherit the promises. But all who become his brethren, according to the principles of the Truth, will inherit with him: Gal. 3:29; 1 Cor. 15:23. God’s kingdom will be the restored kingdom of Israel, (Lk. 1:31-33; Mat. 19:28; Acts 1:6; 3:21) and will therefore be a divine political kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 27;

11 Give us this day our 'daily bread.

Isa. 2:2-4; Rev. 11:15, etc.).

To pray “Thy Kingdom come” is to pray for a number of things, if we have a correct understanding of the Truth. We will be praying for:

- The return of Christ to the earth.
- The resurrection of his faithful disciples.
- The reward of eternal life for the faithful.
- The overthrow of all human governments.
- The restoration of Israel.
- The establishment of Christ on the throne of David, as king over Israel and over all the earth.
- The establishment of the kingdom throughout the whole world.
- The furtherance of the divine purpose, to fill all the earth with “the glory of Yahweh”.

“Thy will be done in earth”

After the kingdom has been established, this stage of God’s purpose will be further developed. But as we look towards this glorious future, with the eye of faith, it is pointless to pray fervently for this state to become a reality in the future if *we* are not striving to fulfil it now, in each one of us as an individual son or daughter of God. There is little purpose in praying for something in the future unless the principle means something to us *now* (Mat. 6:33; 7:21; 12:50; Rom. 6:6; Colos. 1:9-10; Eph. 6:6 etc.). God’s “will” will be done in earth when Christ returns with the power and authority to take up his kingdom and reign. A revelation of the truth will elicit a dramatic response from the survivors of the divine judgments (Jer. 16:19), and they will learn to conform freely, of their own will, to divine ideals (Isa. 2:3; Ps. 72:11, etc.).

“As it is in heaven”

The Believer, as he prays, is to contemplate the perfection that exists in the presence of the Father. There is there, light and truth and glory and an awesome scene of utter holiness, righteousness and perfection. It is impossible for the mind of man to appreciate the reality of being in the presence of the Father’s throne; but, with limited comprehension, we can contrast that state with the present state upon the earth (“the whole world lieth in wickedness” — 1 Jn. 5:19); and long for the time when a situation similar to that now existing in heaven will become a reality upon the earth. In heaven, the angels delight to perform God’s will (Ps. 103:20-21; Neh. 9:6). It is our hope to be made “equal unto the angels” (Lk 20:36); and therefore, if we are admitted into the kingdom, it will be our delight and privilege to assist towards establishing upon earth the same state which now exists in heaven.

The R.V. captures this ideal, simply and beautifully; “As in heaven, so on earth.”

VERSE 11

“Give us this day our daily bread”

Here was a statement which, to the Lord’s immediate hearers would mean a great deal in a literal sense. In the times of Christ, there were virtually only two classes of people: the very rich and the very poor. The poor did not know, for much of their lives, where their next meal would come from. This state of affairs is almost impossible to imagine in this country in an age of affluence; but it was a very real situation in the time

12 And ^hforgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors.

of Christ. Thus, day by day, Christ's disciples must live BY FAITH, believing that God will provide for their needs. Bread was the staple diet of the poorer classes; so they were certainly not asking God for very much. Merely the basic essentials to life — a powerful lesson for us of this present generation, when so very often we expect so much. (Think upon this: compare our basic *needs* in life with our *desires* and our aims and objectives. See Prov. 30:8-9).

But whilst these words would have an important and very real meaning to the Lord's hearers, the expression has a far deeper signification. The word rendered "daily" is from the Gk. *epiousios*. The word occurs only twice: here, and in Luke's counterpart of the same prayer, Lk. 11:3. The key to the importance of the word is in the prefix, *epi*, which means "upon, to come upon" and therefore implies "to come from above." The phrase could be more literally translated: "give us this day our bread or sustenance which comes upon us from above..." The second part of the word, *ousios*, is most likely derived from *ousia*, meaning "goods" or "substance," and it has only ever been rendered in these two ways in the A.V. An allusion to the manna in the wilderness is not difficult to accept. But of the greatest importance is the symbolic significance of the manna. It typified the word of God descending from heaven for the spiritual growth and development of His sons and daughters (Mat. 4:4; Jn. 6:27, 32, 48-51, etc.). Therefore, the primary objective the Lord would have had in mind in this petition would have been the constant provision of SPIRITUAL FOOD whereby the disciples might be sustained unto life eternal.

VERSE 12

"And forgive us our debts"

The Gk. word for "forgive" (*aphiemi*) means "to send away, dismiss, set free" (Bullinger). An allusion to the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement seems too clear to be rejected (Lev. 16:20-22; cp. Isa. 53:6, 12). Forgiveness of sins and atonement are inexorably linked. Note John's usage of this same word in language highly suggestive of the Day of Atonement: 1 Jn. 1:9. The word for debts (Gk. *opheilema*) occurs only here and in Rom. 4:4.

Literally, "that which is legally due." That which is legally due to each one of us is death, because that is the wages paid by sin (Rom. 6:23). But through Christ's sacrifice we have the means whereby our sins might be forgiven. The word has been rendered in many ways: "shortcomings..." "offences..." "trespasses..." "debts..." This last is given in the J.B., N.E.B., Roth., R.V., etc, and is to be preferred. Whilst this is a petition which can only be truly offered in an attitude of abject humility, yet it is a petition of hope; because, as the disciple prays in this way, he is automatically acknowledging Yahweh's *power* and *willingness* to forgive sins, under the right terms and conditions. The petition expresses a need for divine grace and mercy. Anyone who is not in covenant-relationship with God through His Son — a state attained to through belief in the Truth and baptism — cannot offer this petition with any hope of his wishes being granted. God has provided the means by which sins can be forgiven; and individuals must conform to those requirements if they wish to inherit the kingdom.

13 ¹And lead us not into temptation,
but ²deliver us from evil: ³For thine
is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever. Amen.

The parallel passage in Luke has the word "sins" (hamartia — "to miss the mark"). Matthew and Luke are not in conflict with each other; for sins are debts. Sin represents a short-coming on our part in our service to God. There are sins of omission as well as sins of commission, and any failure on our part must be regarded as a failure to honour our commitment to our Father.

"As we forgive our debtors"

Lit., "as we *have* forgiven our debtors...." (Diag., N.E.B.; cp. Roth., J.B., Moff., etc.). It has often been said that the Lord Jesus does not ask us to do anything he has not already done himself; and sometimes that principle must work in reverse: how can we ask God to do something for us which *we* have not *already* been prepared to do for others? If we desire to receive grace from Yahweh, we must be prepared to extend it ourselves. cp. Mat. 18:21-35.

VERSE 13

"And lead us not into temptation"

The word "lead" (Gk. eisago) is a combination of eis ("into") and ago ("to bear, bring, carry, lead"). The R.V. perhaps renders it best: "*bring* us not..." This is supported by Roth., Wey. and others. The phrase represents a ready admission on our part concerning the *weakness* of our nature. We dare not boast in our strength to meet trial and overcome it. In times of testing we face our greatest dangers. The word rendered "temptation" very often has the meaning of "trial" rather than "temptation" (See 1 Pet. 4:12). And there is a significant difference between the meanings of the two words. The word (peirasmos) has only ever been rendered "temptation" "trial" or "try", in the A.V. God does not tempt any man, in that He deliberately tries to induce them to sin (Jas. 1:13). Such a suggestion would be abhorrent to anyone who understands the perfection of the divine character. But He does put our faith to the *test*. And that is as it should be. If we say we have faith, God has every right to require proof of our fidelity. There is a positive purpose in bringing us into trial: and it is that "the trial" of our "faith" being "much more *precious* than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..." (1 Pet. 1:6). At the same time, whilst we accept the inevitability of our faith being put to the test, we do not wish to fall into sin as a result of our trials. Though our Father might bring us into trial, we earnestly desire that He will help us to avoid sinning against Him. The idea of this petition has been reasonably captured, thus: "Abandon us not to trial, but preserve us from evil" (Diag.).

"But deliver us from evil"

The word "deliver" (Gk. rhuomai) means "to draw or snatch to one's self;" hence gen. "to draw or snatch from danger, to rescue, to deliver" (Bullinger). Yahweh's purpose in putting us to the test is to develop our character; thus, whilst we are to humbly accept the trials which might come upon us, we trust that He will snatch us away from the weaknesses of our sinful natures, strengthening us in our hour of need. We do not have the strength or the capacity to overcome sin, unaided, and must constantly throw ourselves upon our Heavenly Father, and the mercy which He will extend to those who love Him, and honour Him by striving

14 ° For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you :

15 But ^p if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

to walk in His ways (Eph. 2:8). The "evil" from which we ask God to deliver us may emanate from only two sources: our own hearts (Mark 7:21, etc.) or the godless environment of a wicked and apostate world (Jas. 4:4).

"For thine is the kingdom"

"Manuscript evidence for the doxology following the word 'evil' is now recognised as not adequately supported by original manuscripts." (Footnote, "The New Testament from 26 Translations," p. 22). The R.V., R.S.V., Roth., Wey., T.C.N.T., J.B., and others omit all words in this verse after "evil." It has been suggested that all Jewish prayers of this nature ended in such a doxology as follows the word "evil" and that probably the words were added later to conform to the standard form of such a Jewish prayer. There is certainly nothing wrong with the doxology, as it quite clearly expresses what is the truth.

As we conclude our consideration of what has been termed "the Lord's prayer," let us consider the wise counsel of Eccles. 5:2-7. Before we can offer acceptable prayer we must acknowledge that it is Yahweh who is exalted above all, and we are mere creatures of the dust. He is highly exalted; we must become humble and lowly. We cannot, therefore, approach Him with an easy familiarity, or with casual indifference. Prayer must never become a mere mechanical exercise. We should concentrate carefully whilst offering our prayers, having our minds fully centred upon the One whom we call upon.

VERSE 14

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you"

"Forgive" is the same as in v. 12. "Trespasses" conveys another aspect of sin: the word (Gk. *paraptoma*) means "to fall away; to fall beside...." The word cannot be applied merely to the question of legal indebtedness; it is an all-embracing word and is descriptive of any form of trespass. Often in life we find that people let us down, or oppose us without foundation, or even betray us. But do we not, on occasions, treat God in this same way when we trespass against Him? It is a *natural* reaction to "hit back" (physically, or verbally, or even with mere aloof hostility) at those who have treated us in that way. But the Lord taught that it is *spiritual* to rise above such natural impulses. Evil inclination of the flesh should be subdued. Considerations that revolve around Self, or self-justification should be suppressed. The Believer must always, in any situation, think first and foremost of what the will of God would be. Nothing can be more vital than following in the footsteps of the Son of God. (cp. Jas. 2:13; Prov. 21:13; 2 Sam. 22:26-27).

VERSE 15

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"

This is a clear-cut statement, the magnitude of which should not be taken lightly. Without forgiveness of sins we cannot enter the kingdom of God. If we nurse bitter grudges against others, refusing to bend in mercy towards them, we may expect the same treatment from Christ at the judgment seat. We will be excluded from the kingdom. (This verse should

16 ¶ Moreover ^awhen 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.

provide an incentive for each of us to carefully consider our relationships with other people; and to manifest remedial attitudes towards others where such may be necessary. This question may well be one of life or death for us at the judgment).

Vv. 16-23: GOD MUST BE SERVED FROM THE HEART, IN KEEPING WITH THE LIGHT OF THE TRUTH

VERSE 16

“When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance”

Fasting means to abstain from eating (Gk. *nesteuo*). The Pharisees had established a ritual of fasting regularly on the second and fifth days of each week; Mondays and Thursdays (Lk 18:12). These occasions were used for public display of piety and hypocritical display of “self-sacrifice.”

Fasting should have been a symbol of grief and sorrow and self-denial. In other words, a spiritually-minded Israelite would fast in recognition of his sins and the weakness of his nature, and that he might deny his fleshly desires to concentrate for a time upon a sober contemplation of the righteousness of Yahweh in contrast to the sinfulness of man. He would thus consider carefully his own urgent needs, and appreciate that only God could supply those needs. In an individual with this outlook and attitude there would be produced an overwhelming sense of inadequacy and humility — the very opposite to that produced in the Pharisees. Fasting that requires onlookers is nothing more than play-acting (as the word “hypocrites” can mean). The principle does not begin and end with fasting. What of ourselves? We may not fast, but what of the various spiritual activities we perform? Do we fulfil them to impress others, hoping that our brethren will see how “spiritual” we are? A gloomy or sorrowful outward appearance does not necessarily indicate that the individual is in an abased frame of mind. The only type of fasting that was acceptable to Yahweh was when an individual was truly contrite, and when they were clearly seen by God — as He looked *inward* upon their hearts — to be worshipping Him “in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

“For they disfigure their faces that they might appear unto men to fast”

“for they darken their looks...” (Roth.) “...they look woe-be-gone...” (Moff.) “they make their faces unsightly so that other people may see that they are fasting...” (N.E.B.). “Disfigure” is the Gk. *aphanizo*, “to disappear;” and the word “appear” is the Gk. *phanio*, “to appear; to throw light upon...” Thus, to understand the Lord’s meaning in our own language, we would comprehend that he was saying: “They disappear that they might appear” or “they make themselves unsightly that they may be sighted...” There is an ironical play-on-words in the expression. They made themselves appear to be very physically repulsive to the eyes of their fellow-men, yet they acted in that way to win the admiration of others who imagined that they, the Pharisees, were really suffering great anguish of personal sacrifice. The motive of their hearts showed that they were not suffering for God, or for the good of their fellows, but merely for the advancement of their own esteem and glory. Thus all their efforts were in vain.

17 But thou, when thou fastest, ^ranoint thine head, and wash thy face;

18 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.

VERSE 17

“But thou”

Christ indicated that his disciples were to act quite differently to the Pharisees, because their *motive* must be different.

“When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face”

Positive actions, not negative. This wording describes the attitude of one preparing for a feast, not a fast. “Dress and appear with dignity, as you would normally do,” was the Lord’s counsel. When the disciples fasted they were to do so with joy and gladness; and yet even this was to be an inner state, and might not be discerned by their fellow-men (2 Cor. 9:7; cp. Ex. 25:2; Lk. 16:15). Brethren were taught to *rejoice* because they had been considered worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41). Believers were called upon to manifest the light of the truth to their fellow-men (5:16), not hypocritical conduct which would be intended to bring recognition and glory to themselves rather than God.

VERSE 18

“That thou appear not unto men to fast”

There should be no deliberate outward show. Modesty and humility, if genuine within the heart of the individual, would cause the fulfilment of this requirement. The mind of the Believer would be centred upon God, not self.

“Thy Father..in secret”

It requires faith to believe this. Faith is not required when we are impressing other human beings, and when we *see* that we are impressing them. (Jn. 1:18; Heb. 11:6, 27; 1 Pet. 3:12).

“Shall reward thee”

“Trust also in Him and He will effectually work: so will He bring forth, as the light, thy righteousness, and thy vindication as the noonday” (Ps. 37:6, Roth.). The saint does not strive to walk in the ways of righteousness because of the reward he will ultimately receive. He must not be motivated by a desire for self-glorification. The individual strives to honour Yahweh because he has learned to love Him and longs for the time when “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of YAHWEH...” (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19). Men and women who manifest the attributes of God’s character *now* will do so to perfection in the Kingdom Age; thus whilst retaining their individuality (Mat. 8:11; Lk. 13:28) they will actually become manifestations of Yahweh Himself; for they will be “vindicated” as His true offspring, His sons and daughters whom He will be pleased to raise to positions of honour and glory and power to “reign” with Christ over all the earth (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9-10).

The Lord has now presented three examples of attitudes which should be manifested in divine worship:

GIVE ALMS in secret
PRAY in secret
FAST in secret

The overall principle is clear: “TRUTH” MUST BE “IN THE INWARD PARTS” — and this requires “a right spirit” WITHIN us... (Ps. 51:6, 10). “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looketh on the heart...” (1 Sam. 16:7).

19 ¶ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal :

20 ¶ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal :

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

VERSE 19

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth”

More correctly “Store up no treasure for yourselves on earth...” (Moff., cp. N.E.B., J.B., etc.). The Gk. words rendered “lay up” and “treasures” are closely related: *thesaurizo* and *thesaurus*. The former is the verb, the latter the noun. There is thus another play-upon-words: “Treasure up not treasures on earth...”

“Where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal”

Moth, rust and thieves all speak of the frailty of materialistic possessions. Paul spoke of “*uncertain riches*” (1 Tim. 6:17). These things remain uncertain, needless to say, not only because moth or rust might erode or corrode them away, or thieves steal them from us; but because we possess such things only as long as we live. And what if, this day, we die? (cp. Lk. 12:15-21; Isa. 50:9; 51:6-8). People who are so minded put trust and confidence in what they can see and touch; but sons and daughters of Yahweh put their confidence in a God they cannot see, and a hope that has not yet been realised; for “hope that is *seen* is not hope...” (Rom. 8:24).

VERSE 20

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”

That which we “store up” in heaven will be those attributes of character which we will have manifested, making us acceptable to Yahweh (Mal. 3:16). The rewards for faithfulness will be brought by Christ when he returns (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 22:12; cp. Ps. 31:19; 1 Pet. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:4). Part of the disposition of a true son or daughter of God is that they look upon the things associated with their God as “treasures” to be sought with zeal and dedication (Prov. 2:1-5; 15:6; 25:2; Heb. 11:26). These things become a “treasure” that may result in eternal life, and are therefore not to be compared with the materialistic possessions which one may labour to acquire during this life (Jas. 5:1-3).

VERSE 21

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”

These words constitute a monumental challenge, requiring that every disciple carefully examine himself to ascertain *where* his heart really lies. Herein is further proof of the fact that the true worship of Yahweh depends upon the attitude or disposition of the worshipper. It is compelling to realise that these phrases could be reversed, and still mean precisely the same thing: “Where your *heart* is, there will your treasure be also...” “Set your *mind* on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2, marg.). Our hearts will be drawn towards God if the things of the truth take first and foremost place in our lives. But if our heart really lies with the things of this present life, our worship of Yahweh will occupy only a part of the regular cycle of activities in which we are involved (Mat. 22:37-38). Let us also remember that, to the Hebrews, “the heart” represented the mental processes, and therefore the intellect. Every disciple must ask of himself or herself the question: In which *direction* is my *mind* primarily orientated?

22 "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 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!

VERSE 22

“The light of the body is the eye”

“The lamp of the body is the eye” (N.E.B., J.B., etc.). Gk. *luchnos*, “a portable hand-lamp.” The eye itself is not light; it is the light-conveyor. The Lord now proceeded to use the eye of the body as a symbol for man’s ability to “see” things which are of a spiritual nature.

“If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light”

The Gk., *haploos*, more literally means “simple,” and from the idea of simplicity the word came to mean “single” — another way of expressing something which is relatively uncomplicated. Hence, the phrase has been rendered “if your eyes are *sound...*” (N.E.B.): “unclouded...” (T.C.N.T.) “clear...” (Diag.). If our (spiritual) eye is centred upon the Truth, our lives will be filled with the power of the living word of God. The Lord was therefore speaking of the need not only to observe with *all the senses* the things of Yahweh, but to cause the indwelling light which would result from such observation, to direct our lives into the pathway that will lead to the kingdom. Man remains in darkness if he does not possess sight; similarly, man remains spiritually blind to the grace and mercy of God if he remains ignorant of the teaching of God’s word. Our spiritual eye must be single, and must not become complicated with the philosophies which originate from the flesh. This statement from the lips of the Lord was quite emphatic: Unless the eye is single, sound, clear and unclouded, we will *not* become “full” of the “light” of divine Truth. An eye which meets these definitions will not suffer the frustrations associated with *divided* loyalties, and will not experience the bewildering contradictions which arise when there is not a clear conviction of Truth.

VERSE 23

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of evil”

The language the Lord used in these two verses (22-23), could be described as extreme. He appears to be stating that we are either “full” of light, or we are “*full*” of evil. His words allow for no half-measures. And that is as it should be, in view of the fact that throughout this discourse he has been stressing the attributes of a particular class of person; there has been set before us his own moral excellence, which we are called upon to copy. This is the character of the Christ-man, which must be copied by all his disciples who constitute the Christ-Body. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (5:48). This is the only standard which is set before the Believer: the perfect standard of the Father’s own moral excellence, which was manifested in the Son. Christ’s disciples must strive towards that standard, and nothing less. Thus, when an individual is fully motivated in that direction, it can be said of him that his “whole body” is “full of light” because his “eye” is set fully upon the ways of Yahweh, to learn them and to walk in them. Our “whole body” becomes “full of evil” when we lose sight of divine truth and principles and when we think and walk after the ways of the flesh. (cp. Deut. 15:9; 28:54; Prov. 23:6-7; 28:22).

“If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness”

There are many philosophies which men insist upon as being “light.”

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.

But unless the light being radiated is the light of divine truth it is an artificial or synthetic light. Men who walk in such "light" are really in darkness. Their "light" is really self-deception (Ps 36:9; Job 24:13; Jn. 3:19; 1 Jn. 1:5). The "eye" by which we absorb knowledge must not become clouded, nor must anything be permitted to enter into our vision which would divert our gaze from the pure light of divine truth.

Vv. 24-32: WARNING AGAINST BECOMING OVER-ANXIOUS ABOUT
THE MATERIALISTIC THINGS OF LIFE — WE CANNOT SERVE
GOD AND THE FLESH

VERSE 24

"No man can serve two masters"

The word "serve" has been rendered from the Gk. *douleuo*, meaning "to serve as a slave." In view of the fact that a slave had no rights or privileges, it was impossible for such a person to be "owned" by more than one Master. Why did the Lord restrict the question to *two* Masters? Why not "numerous" Masters, or "many" Masters? The answer is: because we have a choice of only two Masters, Yahweh or sin (Rom. 6:16). This statement provides further evidence of the need to serve God with the *whole* heart and mind.

Either he will hate the one and love the other"

This must be the attitude of the individual who serves Yahweh rather than sin. The word "love" is the Gk. *agapao*, "a profound respect or reverence, based upon knowledge and manifested by self-denial." It is a word that can never rightly be applied to "love" of worldly things. The word "hate" here can be understood in a Hebraistic sense, the "hate" being used to demonstrate the depth of the love. Nevertheless, the word, in this context, may be understood as having a quite literal application. For when we learn to love God and keep His commandments so that He might be honoured, we also learn to develop a hearty hatred of sin, and all things which are opposed to Yahweh and His truth. As in the previous two verses, the Lord here demonstrated that there can be no half-measures, or half-heartedness, in dedicating one's life to God. We are to "hate" the "garment spotted by the flesh" — thus showing not only our repudiation of sin, but our whole-hearted loyalty to Yahweh. This statement in v. 24 appears to be based upon a prophecy concerning Christ's character, which said that he would *love* "righteousness" and *hate* "wickedness." And because Christ would manifest this character to perfection, Yahweh would anoint him "with the oil of gladness" *above* his "fellows" (Ps. 45:7). Cp. Mat. 10:37-38; Lk. 9:57-62.

"Or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other"

"he will attach himself to the one and think lightly of the other" (Wey.). The word rendered "hold" means precisely that; "to cling to..." The word only ever occurs in the Middle Voice. Thus the person who is a bond-slave to sin "clings" to it, in that it dominates the life of such an individual, ruling and controlling him. The word rendered "despise" is the Gk. *kataphroneo* (*kata* = "down"; *phroneo* = "to think" — thus, "to think down upon or against anyone"). The word occurs nine times in the N.T., and is always rendered "despise" in the A.V. The word expresses a

25 Therefore I say unto you, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

general attitude of indifference or disdainful rejection, with *pride* at the root of the underlying motive.

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”

The disciple who will faithfully follow Christ must make a clear and definite commitment. We cannot be “owned” by sin and also by God. We give our allegiance to one or the other. The word “mammon” has been generally associated with riches. And whilst the word certainly had that meaning such a singular explanation of the word is somewhat inadequate because the Lord was speaking of far deeper things than merely riches. The word “mammon” (Gk. *mammonas*) was derived from a Chaldean or Hebrew word meaning “that in which one trusts, hence to be firm or steadfast” in anything (Vine, Bullinger). From this basic meaning it eventually came to stand for riches. It is evident that the Lord had the more basic idea of the word in mind. The question he implied was: What do his disciples really *trust* in? Do they live by faith, putting their trust and their confidence in the God whom they claim to worship? Or do they really only mouth their loyalty to Yahweh, whilst actually putting their *trust* and confidence in those things which are the products of the flesh? These are the fundamental contrasts set forth in these verses (19-24). A person who surrenders to a Master will become controlled and ruled by that Master. Which is better: to be ruled and controlled by Yahweh, thus producing within us that which *He* requires? Or to be ruled and controlled by the dictates of the flesh, thus producing that which is fit only for destruction? Surely, to ask is to answer. The Lord made his point with extreme care and clarity. And the individual who cannot appreciate the powerful point made in this verse is suffering from lack of spiritual vision, having his eyes clouded so that the truth is obscured (Vv. 22-23).

VERSE 25

“Therefore”

The disciples were to act upon the basis of what has been taught (Vv. 19-24) concerning the need for undivided loyalty towards Yahweh. And such an attitude towards God can only be effective and beneficial in its results if the individual is motivated by *true faith*. The Lord now proceeded to show his disciples that they must walk according to the principles set forth in these verses, not because of compulsion, but because they have learned to love and trust Yahweh, and therefore they were to appreciate that God could look down upon them and provide for all their needs. (“That is why I am telling you.....” J.B.).

“Take no thought for your life”

Trusting in mammon, or the flesh, is taking “thought” for our “life”. The expression “take no thought” now became a dominant one in the Lord’s exposition; for it occurs again in v. 27, 28, 31 and twice in v. 34. It means “to be full of anxiety which divides up and distracts the mind...to be anxious...” (Bullinger). We must, of course, labour to receive the necessities of life — but to become over-anxious about those things, or to become dominated by the objective of seeking after such materialistic things, is to lack faith and deny the truth.

“What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink”

The every-day affairs of life can become our obsession.

26 ^a 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?

“Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?”

“Is not life more precious than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Wey.). Food is provided to sustain life, *not* the other way around! How easy it is, in life, to get our priorities back to front! Similarly, clothing is needed that the body might be preserved, not the reverse! God has given us our lives, so therefore *He* must have first priority in ascertaining what the fundamental essentials of life really are; and the order in which they are to be respected. Preoccupation with those affairs of life which are not essential, is a form of covetousness — and the apostle described such an attitude as idolatry (Col. 3:5, where the word rendered “covetousness” means “a desire to have *more*”). One of the most destructive influences in the world today is the pursuit of materialism. It is strongly related to the decline in moral, religious and social standards. Materialism lies at the very root of many of the problems and challenges facing the brotherhood of Christ in these closing days of the gentiles. The “cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word” when such influences are permitted to gain the ascendancy in our aims, objectives, and general way of thinking. Dominated by such things, we then become “unfruitful” in the things of the truth (Mat. 13:22). Luke adds the word “pleasures,” and quotes the Lord as saying that these influences can prevent us from bring forth “fruit to perfection.” In the Olivet prophecy the Lord warned that the “cares of this life” could prevent us from having a clear vision of his second coming, and thus we may be caught unprepared for that momentous event.

VERSE 26

“Behold the fowls of the air”

“Observe intently the birds of the heaven” (Roth.).

“For they sow not neither do they reap”

Sowing and reaping is a predetermined exercise, resulting from prior planning and organisation. The fowls of the air certainly labour to produce their food, and to supply the needs of their offspring; but in what attitude do they do so? Whilst being industrious, they work only for the needs of each day, and so long as the daily need is met, they do not concern themselves beyond immediate necessities. Birds of the air do not suffer the neuroses which are common to mankind as a result of pressure, tension and anxieties. In observing the birds of the air, we are able to see that God provides not only for all their needs, but has also created an environment in which they can survive.

Yahweh has provided for us spiritually, in granting us an understanding of His word of Truth; can He not likewise provide for our daily necessities of life? “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread” (Ps. 37:25). And together with the word of truth, He has also provided an environment in which we can spiritually survive, which is the Ecclesia.

“Yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them”

A remarkable statement, breathtaking in its sweeping implication: Yahweh has designed and balanced His entire creation, and has set in motion a set of laws and actions by which His creation can be provided for and sustained. As we consider, with awesome reverence, that Yahweh feeds “*them*”, should we not appreciate that He is able to do the same for

**27 Which of you by taking thought
can add one cubit unto his stature?**

**28 And why take ye thought for rai-
ment? Consider the lilies of the field,
how they grow; they toil not, nei-
ther do they spin:**

us, both materially and spiritually? We should, in fact, be deeply impressed with these words; for Yahweh is not “heavenly Father” to the birds of the air, but He *is* to us, if we become His children. Would He not, therefore, exercise an even greater care for those who are his children than for unreasoning creatures of the creation? See Ps. 104:10-31.

“Are ye not much better than they?”

A statement to touch the conscience of every disciple. “Are not you of much greater value than they?” (Wey.). cp. Mat. 10:29-31. As our Father, He knows our needs, and we must have faith that He will provide. If our minds are settled and correctly orientated upon this point, we will be able to offer unto Him our undivided loyalty (Mal. 1:6; cp. 3:17).

VERSE 27

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

The word rendered “stature” more correctly relates to maturity or age (Gk. *helikia*); thus: “Can any of you, for all his worrying, add one cubit to the span of his life?” (J.B.). Rather than increasing the life-span, excessive worry concerning such a subject can only produce the opposite effect! It is futile for individuals to become concerned at the possibilities of extending their lives, for they can achieve nothing in that regard; and, in any event, in so worrying they would become distracted from their major objective, which *should* be to serve Yahweh. Only the power of the truth operating upon us can provide us with an extension of life; eternal life and divine nature, if we worship God faithfully in the spirit of the truth. But God must come first, and personal self-interest must be eliminated. See Ps. 39:5; 90:12; Lk. 12:24-26.

VERSE 28

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin”

The lilies of the field do not toil, nor do they spin; yet, as *passive* elements within the divine creative scheme of things they become objects of great beauty. Of this particular plant, (Gk. *krinon*) it has been said that it was “a flower of rich colour, probably including the *Gladiolus* and *Iris* species.” (Vine) This description would account for the lilies being associated with Solomon in his royal finery (v. 29). We are called upon to “consider” the lilies from this point of view (Gk. *katamanthano*, “to observe well, learn thoroughly, note accurately” — Bullinger). “How” do they “grow”? They grow because Yahweh provides for all their needs: sun, rain, earth, minerals, etc. They do not labour to beautify or better themselves, yet they appear in due season in all their glory because of the guiding hand of the Creator. In which cause are we investing our labour and becoming weary? If it is in the cause of our God and our King, we may “grow” in spiritual things, whilst our material needs are being met under the guiding hand of the One who has given us life. But if our endeavours are directed towards aims and objectives other than those things associated with Yahweh, we will not “grow” after the pattern of “the lilies of the field.”

VERSE 29

“And yet I say unto you”

29 And yet I say unto you, That
even Solomon in all his glory was
not arrayed like one of these.

30 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?

Here was the Lord's assessment of how we should view the lessons to be learned from the lilies of the field.

"That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"

Of course not. Because Solomon's glory, as King over Israel, was a man-made form of pomp and glorification (1 Sam. 8:5, 20). Solomon, "in all his regalia" (J.B.) was an example of the glory that man may create for himself — and yet, of what real value was such glory? Solomon himself found that it was "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecc. 1:1-4; 2:11, etc.). Solomon's outward glory did not mean that he could not be inwardly corrupted (1 Kings 11:4), and therefore his fleshly glory was not a form of glory to produce fruit of lasting value. But when one of "these" lilies bursts forth in all its glory, it is a God-given beauty which is revealed. Thus, all fleshly aims and objectives are vain, because, for all the glory which they may appear to manifest, it is inevitable that the end result is the grave. We must be prepared to passively surrender our own will to God, permitting Him to work upon us, to shape and mould us according to His will, that the glory which may eventually be revealed in us will be recognised as being of divine origin. God is able to produce a glory in us which we cannot produce ourselves — as with the "lilies of the field."

VERSE 30

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you"

As the disciples listened to these words, a shadow of their future lives should have fallen upon them; for man is like the grass. "All flesh is as the grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away..." (1 Pet. 1:24; Isa. 40:6-8). Man should therefore not become obsessed with the needs of the immediate present (v. 25-29) but rather concerned with his *eternal* future. And although God clothes the grass of the field, the cycle ends with the disintegration of the grass. So with man. Yahweh may provide for his needs, but man is a corruptible creature. Therefore material needs are not man's only requirements. God will "clothe" us with much more than the needs for a normal human life-cycle; He will provide us with the means of attaining "faith" (see next phrase), which may bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

The "oven" mentioned here was a round earthen pot, heated by a fire *within* (Gk. eis; hence the Lord's words: "tomorrow is cast *into* the oven..."). These words should be regarded most soberly. For all the beauty of the grasses and plant-life, they are finally of value only for burning. Man, however, was created by God with far higher ideals in mind (Gen. 1:26, 28; cp. Ps. 8, etc.). And God will exhibit a special care and attention towards those who respond to His goodness (7:7-8).

"O ye of little faith"

A gentle rebuke; and yet it was necessary to remind these disciples that they had not yet come to a full understanding of the truth, and that they must yet do so (Jn 17:3). They had "little" faith because they had limited knowledge.

This word was used only by the Lord. It occurs four times in Matthew and once in Luke — and in each case he rebuked four different human

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But ^bseek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you

weaknesses. See Mat. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk. 12:28.

VERSE 31

“Therefore”

That is, because of the conclusions to which you have been drawn from the statements made in Vv. 28-30.

“Take no thought”

A repetition of the statement in V. 25, 27, 28. i.e., “Do not become filled with anxiety which will divide up and distract your mind from the whole-hearted service you must render to Yahweh” (See Bullinger). We must *not* become anxious about these things, because if we walk by faith Yahweh will provide for our needs whilst we offer our bodies “a living sacrifice” unto Him (Rom. 12:1).

VERSE 32

“For after all these things do the gentiles seek”

A devastating statement. Disciples of Christ must whole-heartedly grasp the principle that there exists a huge gulf between the gentile world and Christ’s followers. The gulf is caused by the *difference* between the thinking of the flesh and the thinking of the spirit (Gal. 5:16-25). It is a real and not merely a theoretic difference, revealed in the way people think, speak and act. See Ps. 12; Eph. 4:17-23; 2 Thess. 1:7-10. The gentile world is dominated by a desire to “seek” after (lit. “to seek earnestly or continually”) these “things” for which motivation comes from the flesh. The disciple of Christ must be different: 1 Jn. 2:15-17. In the world, “success” is gauged by the extent of materialistic possessions and advantage; but in the family of God “success” depends entirely upon the individual being acceptable to Yahweh.

“For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”

Christ’s disciples *have* a “Heavenly Father” — but the gentile world does not. The Believer should thus humbly appreciate this unique relationship he has with the Great God of the universe. Further, a father *knows* the needs of his children (if he is a loving father, deeply and lovingly caring for the welfare of his offspring); and therefore his children must be prepared to exercise trust and confidence in the willingness and ability of their father to care for them.

Vv. 33-34: THE TRUTH MUST MOTIVATE US TO SEEK THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS — A CAUSE TO WHICH WE MUST BE DEDICATED EACH AND EVERY DAY

VERSE 33

“But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness”

Some things in life are important. Others are not. But even of those things which are important Christ’s disciples must have their priorities in the correct order. God will make available to us all things necessary for us to gain an entrance into His kingdom — but we must have the conviction and desire to “seek” His kingdom. The Believer must be able to pray, with fervour and sincerity: “Thy kingdom come...(v. 10).

We will not find the kingdom apart from righteousness. Without

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

“holiness” no man “shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). And the “fine linen” in which the apocalyptic Bride of Christ will be revealed “represents the *righteous acts* of the saints” (Rev. 19:8, Diag.). We are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6), thus displaying a disposition indicating a genuine desire to be identified with the perfect character of the One whom we desire to worship.

This must become the “first” objective of the Saint in Christ. Nothing else must be permitted to detract from the dedication of the Believer towards this cause. When we “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27) we learn to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) because we have come to recognise that “in” the flesh dwells “no good thing” (Rom. 7:18) and that God alone is the source of all righteousness.

See Prov. 2:1-9; 8:1, 20, 35; 12:28; 21:21; 2 Thess. 1:4-10; 2 Pet. 1:4-11, etc.).

The foundation upon which God’s kingdom will be established will be His own righteousness; and unless we are clearly identified with that, we will not be fit to administer the kingdom with Christ (2 Tim. 2:11-12; 4:7-8; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17-19; Rev. 5:9-10; 20:4).

“And all these things shall be added unto you”

Our faith will not only be rewarded at the coming of Christ, but will bring forth a ready response from God during our period of probation (1 Tim. 4:8; Ps. 37:4, 16, 19, 25, 37; Ps. 84:11; 112:1-4; Rev. 2:26-29; 3:21). We may fully trust in God to provide for all our necessities of life, even though He may, from time to time, see that trials are necessary for the development of our character.

VERSE 34

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow”

“so do not be anxious about tomorrow” (N.E.B.). If we accept Christ’s reasoning from v. 24 onward, we will not find it inconsistent to accept this summary of the attitude we should manifest towards day-to-day living. If we are rendering wholehearted service to our God, the everyday affairs of life will fall into their proper perspective. “*Now* is the accepted time... *Now* is the day of salvation” — not tomorrow (2 Cor. 6:2). Each day we must walk by faith, honouring our God and striving to walk in His ways. Thus each day must be faced as it comes, with this objective in view. “*Every day* I will bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever” (Ps. 145:2). “Lead me in thy truth...On thee do I wait all the *day*...My tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise *all the day long*... My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness *all the day long*.... O how love I thy law! It is my meditation *all the day*” (Ps. 25:5; 35:28; 71:24; 119:97). Every day should be devoted to seeking “the kingdom of God and His righteousness” — because every day the Lord might come. If our minds are concerned with *tomorrow*, we will not be preparing for the Lord’s coming today. Therefore, “today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts...” (Heb. 3:15). With this disposition, the Saint in Christ will value each day as a further opportunity to worship the Most High God of Israel. “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Yahweh, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice *all the day*: and in thy *righteousness* shall they be exalted...For Yahweh is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our King” (Ps.



89:15-16, 18).

Strengthened through his faith, the Believer will learn to see the trials and pressures of life in their proper light, because through faith, the bond of union between the disciple and his God will become increasingly meaningful to the Believer and effective in his daily living.

“For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself”

Again the word rendered “thought” carries the idea of “anxiety which divides up and distracts the mind” (cp. V. 25, 27, 28, 31, here twice — Bullinger). Hence: “Tomorrow will bring its own anxieties” (Wey.). Each day the Saint will be faced with the attendant difficulties of getting through the day, walking by faith, and maintaining his integrity before God. Problems must be faced, the warfare against sin continued, and the truth lived in a positive way. This form of daily living is essential for the development of the character of the Believer. And, after all, that is the entire purpose of the truth in our lives: to cause us to conform to “the image” of God’s Son (Rom. 8:29). And this was the purpose of the discourse on the Mount: that we might have revealed to us the attributes which made up the character of the Son of God, that we might imitate those Godly characteristics.

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”

“Each day has troubles enough of its own” (N.E.B.) Obsession with the materialistic future will only bring engrossment with negative things, from the truth’s point of view. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble...” (Job. 14:1). Yahweh, in His abundant mercy, has provided us with the means of rising above the cares of our daily environment, that we might “see...the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” We have sufficient evil to face each day, without adding those burdens by becoming engrossed in worries and anxieties concerning the future. The evil propensities of our own nature must also be faced and countered by the influence of God’s word. This requires full-time dedication each day. The theme of the discourse on the Mount is devoted to describing the characteristics of an individual whose life is totally dedicated to fulfilling the will and the word of Yahweh.

MATTHEW

CHAPTER SEVEN

- Vv. 1- 5: Disciples must not pass unjust judgments against others, because all have weaknesses and faults.
- Vv. 6-12: Value and seek the way of the truth, and exhibit consideration for others.
- Vv. 13-20: There are only two ways: the broad way leading to destruction, and the narrow way leading to life—and the disposition of individuals may be recognised by the fruits they produce.
- Vv. 21-27: Not all professing disciples will be admitted to the kingdom, for they fall into two classes: the faithful and the unfaithful.
- Vv. 28-29: Conclusion: Jesus Christ taught with authority because he was the Son of God.

JUDGE ^anot, that ye be not
judged.

2 For with what judgment ye judge,
ye shall be judged: ^band with what
measure ye mete, it shall be mea-
sured to you again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Vv. 1-5: DISCIPLES MUST NOT PASS UNJUST JUDGMENTS AGAINST OTHERS, BECAUSE ALL HAVE WEAKNESSES AND FAULTS.

VERSE 1

“Judge not that ye be not judged”

Gr. Krino, twice. “to divide, to separate, to make a distinction, come to a decision, to judge, pronounce final judgment ...” (Bull.).

And yet, in this same chapter the Lord has warned of the need to be able to pass judgment on certain issues which may be matters of life and death; such as the need to be able to recognise false brethren from true (v. 15-16). But there is no contradiction. In this first verse the Lord was counselling against making judgments based on human pride. In these words the Lord referred to a type of judgment which magnifies the faults of others whilst the accuser fails to recognise, in all humility, his own failures and weaknesses.

A person who passes such judgment remains blind to their own true position, and because pride remains the dominant motive in the accuser, he is unable to render wise spiritual assistance to others (V. 3; Jn. 8:15-16; Rom. 2:1-2). After sin had been introduced into the world, God began the work of reconciling humanity to Himself. God’s endeavours on behalf of mankind, then, have been designed to save, not to destroy (Jn. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). Thus, when disciples pass judgment upon others which is censoriously and negatively fault-finding, they are undermining the purpose of true religion. Judgment, especially in the sense of passing final judgment (such as is expressed in the meaning of the word which occurs twice in this verse), is a divine prerogative; and man must exercise great care in this regard. Man must “judge righteous judgment” (Jn. 7:24) — which means that he must only ever express himself on such matters when fully observing a situation from God’s point of view, and not from the reasoning of the flesh (i.e. Ex. 32:10, 19; 2 Pet. 2; Jude). The outworking of human pride in passing judgment against others must be avoided.

VERSE 2

“For with that judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged”

The word krino occurs twice more in this verse, and the word “judgment” has been rendered from the Gk. krima, denoting “the result of the action signified by the verb krino” (Vine). “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged...” (R.S.V.). “Because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get” (J.B.).

“And with what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you again”

“And the measure you give will be the measure you get” (R.S.V.). The expression speaks of the degree of judgment meted out and carries an implied warning against severity. An individual who desires to see his brother redeemed will confess that he himself is also in need of redemption; and will therefore treat his brother with the degree of understanding and mercy which he trusts God will exercise towards *him*. Cp. Mark 4:21-24.

3 ° And why beholdest thou the mote
that is in thy brother's eye, but con-
siderest not the beam that is in thine
own eye?

A conscious awareness of our own sins and the weaknesses inherent in our nature will produce within us an acute perception to appreciate our need of divine mercy and the similar needs of others. We will therefore learn to exhibit an attitude of understanding towards our brethren in regard to these matters. Any "righteous judgment" which must be applied should have the end in view of bringing out the spiritual recovery of the erring brother (Mat. 18:14-15; Jas. 5:19-20).

If our attitude is such that we are ready to condemn whilst having no desire to identify with Yahweh's purpose — which is to bring about the salvation of our brother — we are motivated by purely fleshly intent, often out of a desire to establish our own justification. If we are not prepared to make every effort to help towards the redemption of our brethren, how can we expect God to recognise *our* need of salvation? "With the merciful" God will "show" Himself "merciful" — but "he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy" (Ps. 18:25; Jas. 2:13).

VERSE 3

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

"Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye, and never notice the plank in your own?" (J.B.). The contrast here is quite dramatic: a readiness to "observe" a minor fault in one's brother, but an abysmal failure to realise the presence of a major fault in one's own life. A "plank," needless to say, would have the effect of making a person *blind*. Such an individual who finds fault upon this basis is suffering from self-delusion. He cannot correctly assess the standing of either his brother or himself, in the eyes of God. The word rendered "beholdest" does not imply a casual appraisal, but rather a close and careful scrutiny. Of this word (Gk. blepo) Bullinger has said that it "implies greater vividness, to express a more intent, earnest spiritual contemplation" than the word horao. But, of course, in the context now before us the "spiritual contemplation" is misguided.

A "splinter" in the eye causes distress and discomfort to the one suffering. The usage of this terminology should immediately make us aware of the need for us to experience a feeling of sympathy for the one in this state, rather than self-righteous hostility. Additionally, the vision of the one who suffers this situation would have his vision at least partly impaired, thus being unsure of his footing or of the manner in which he should walk. The true weakness of the accusing disciple is expressed in the words "considerest not" (Gk. katanoeo, "to perceive or discern distinctly or clearly..." — Bullinger). It is necessary that we understand, in a mature way, our own faults and weaknesses. And this is a state which can only be realised when *Self* is subject to intense self-examination in the light of the word of Truth, and in comparing our own character with the perfect character of the Son of God. A deep awareness of our own shortcomings, and a clear appreciation of our own need of divine mercy will engender within us a kindred warmth for our brethren and sisters. The various members of the Body (1 Cor. 12) are in need of one another, and together they must grow up into the head of the Body, which is Christ (Eph. 4:13-16). A recognition of the need for this spirit to be manifested and

4 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?

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

cultivated will effectively remove the very real human weakness described by the Lord in these verses.

VERSE 4

“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?”

“How wilt thou?” (Gk. pos, with the indicative), is an “absolute question” (Bullinger) — hence, “how can you say to your brother” (R.S.V.); “how dare you say to your brother” (J.B.) The phrase describes a confrontation resulting from the attitude of the accuser. Thus, where a disciple has manifested weakness or folly and needs sympathetic consideration, he is challenged by a presumptuous fellow-disciple who displays little thought for the spiritual needs of his brother. Such a situation may arise when an attempt is made to correct the spiritual vision of a brother or sister without proper prior thought or consideration on the part of the one desiring to effect the operation. Such an ill-prepared undertaking could result in permanent damage to the one in need of such a delicate operation. The inability of the accuser to handle such a situation, in these circumstances, is due to his own lack of spiritual vision. The one who is so ready to correct his brother is actually operating with an even more impaired sight than the one he is so anxious to heal. It is easy to become obsessed with the failures of others whilst being conscious of our own virtues. See Mat. 18:10-17; Lk. 18:9-14; 2 Pet. 1:7-9. A disciple whose mind is moved by the word of God will have a genuine care for the flock of Christ and will exercise great concern in these matters.

“Let me pull out the mote”

Two stages in the development of folly on the part of a misguided disciple: Firstly, the making of an unwise judgment concerning a fellow-disciple, a judgment made upon the basis of an incorrect motive; and secondly, a forceful attempt to put the unwise judgment into action. The result could only prove disastrous. For both brethren.

To address a fellow-disciple in this aggrieved and self-righteous manner would be to fail to recognise one’s own failures; and therefore the entire operation would become negative and unproductive of good.

VERSE 5

“Thou hypocrite”

Gk. hupokrites, “one who answers, esp. on the stage, hence, one who plays a part...” (Bullinger). “...It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice...” (Vine). The word thus represents that which is not honest or true, and something performed with more than usual forcefulness to carry the charade through to a convincing conclusion. The Pharisees were like this. They made an impressive outward show, became indignant at any weakness on the part of others, were ostentatious in their religious exercises. And their motive in all these actions was to receive the esteem and honour of men.

“First cast out the beam out of thine own eye”

Gk. ekballo, “to throw at or hit, with any kind of missile...” (Bullinger, on the meaning of ballo; the prefix ek adds the idea of throwing out). Vine adds: “To throw, hurl, in contrast to striking...” The

6 ¶ ^aGive not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

word thus denotes a determined, forceful action on the part of an enlightened disciple, to rid himself of pride and self-righteousness. He acknowledges his weaknesses and makes a wholehearted, resolute attempt to humbly pattern his life more exactly according to the example of the Son of God. Only then will he possess a fit disposition to be of spiritual help to his brethren. And it is essential that all Believers be in a position to extend such assistance: "If a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye which are spiritual*, restore (Gk. *katartizo*, "make fully ready, put in full order; esp. of what is broken, refit, repair, restore" — continuous present tense, denoting consistent perseverance) such as one *in the spirit of meekness*; **CONSIDERING THYSELF, LEST THOU ALSO BE TEMPTED"** (Gal. 6:1, cp. v.2). ("Look to yourself" — Wey.). The "plank" of self-esteem and self-righteousness must be removed from the life of the Believer, so that he learns to consider the needs of others rather than his own virtues. When the vision is cleared of *Self*, the perfect character of the Son of God can be discerned, and imitated.

"Then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"

The Lord did not suggest that it was wrong to attempt to remove the "splinter" from the "eye" of a brother or sister who was suffering because of a lack of correct spiritual vision. The point of these verses is that the one desiring to assist must first be in a fit state of spiritual-mindedness; and then undertake any action from a selfless motive, and with the sole objective of assisting the rehabilitation of the one in need.

Vv 6-12: VALUE AND SEEK THE WAY OF THE TRUTH, AND EXHIBIT CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.

VERSE 6

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine"

Two metaphors involving unclean animals. Do not *give* (the word speaks of something given "freely, unforced" — Bullinger) the holy things of God to those who are of a hardened, fleshly disposition, refusing to become cleansed and sanctified by the "holy" word of God. Dogs were scavengers of the street. The term was used by the Jews to describe gentiles, and by the prophet of Israel to describe some of the worst characteristics of the Jewish nation (Isa, 56:9-11). Paul used the term to describe evil men (Phil. 3:2), a class who will be excluded from the kingdom of God (Rev. 22:15). The "holy" things of God must, when people come into contact with them, make those people holy also. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" is a demand which Yahweh makes upon all who hear His word (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:16).

It may seem difficult to understand that the Lord should describe a certain class of human beings as "swine." But there are such, who wallow in the mire of the flesh and all forms of immorality and depravity. Like a sow wallowing in filth, they are contented with their lot, not desirous of raising the standards of either their philosophy or way of life. The Lord counselled against casting the precious pearl of divine truth among people who fit this description. The word "cast" has been rendered from the Gk. *ballo* (See note on v. 5). Usage of the word in this context is descriptive of

**7 ¶ ° Ask, and it shall be given you ;
seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and
it shall be opened unto you :**

a disciple who “hurls” the truth about indiscriminately, not realising that contempt can be brought upon the name of Christ through such thoughtless “preaching” Cp. Prov. 9:6-8; 23:9.

This verse in no way contradicts the words of 5:14-16, which deals with the necessity for all disciples to manifest the truth in their lives, becoming the word made flesh, before the gaze of all men. The verse before us provides no excuse for failure to speak the truth, where suitable occasion warrants; for such failure on the part of Believers would indicate that *all* men and women are dogs or swine, even though investigation or initial conversation and observation had not provided proof of such an assessment. The word of God must be set before perishing humanity; but with discretion and caution and wisdom. The purpose of such preaching is that God might be glorified; we are therefore handling that which is “holy” and should manifest a fitting reverence for the word of God in our endeavours to set it before our fellow-men. Whilst it is quite wrong to deliberately manifest towards our brethren an attitude of fault-finding, the Lord was most careful to warn us against the opposite extreme. In all cases covered by Vv. 1-6, let love and wisdom, holiness and discretion, prevail. Peter appears to make a telling reference to this verse in his second epistle (2 Pet. 2:22).

“Lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”

There are human beings who display these characteristics — not only towards Yahweh’s truth, but also towards those who uphold it. There is a very real danger that such individuals may not only treat the word of God with contempt, but may also resort to violence against Christ’s disciples. (Example: Acts 17:5-6). This verse graphically draws attention to the constant state of enmity which exists between the two seeds: the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 110:1; Rom. 16:20).

VERSE 7

“Ask, and it shall be given; seek and ye shall find”

The text is in the continuing present: “Be asking, and it shall be given you, be seeking and ye shall find...” (Roth.). The Lord was not speaking of a “once only” attempt to understand the Truth and enter the kingdom; he was speaking of a lifetime of dedication to seeking, finding, and walking in the precepts of divine Truth.

Here, the Lord set forth a progression of ideas: ASK... SEEK... FIND... The development of these three principles will be rewarded accordingly: IT SHALL BE GIVEN.... YE SHALL FIND.... IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU...

To “ask” is to exercise the mental processes; to “seek” is to walk morally in the direction of the kingdom; to have it “opened” is to receive the reward of an eternal inheritance in the kingdom. These words may also be realistically applied to our walk in the Truth day by day in causing us to develop an enquiring mind towards the Truth because of its ability to transform us for the kingdom; to desire to manifest a life of Godliness, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ; and with this disposition a clear comprehension of the Truth will be “opened” up to us.

Of the word rendered “ask” (Gk. aiteo), Bullinger says it “implies a

8 For ^revery one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

distinction in position and circumstances between the parties, and expresses a petition from an inferior to a superior." This word occurs only once in chapter five, and once only in chapter six. But it now becomes a key word in the seventh chapter for it occurs no less than five times (v. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). None of the other words used in this verse feature so prominently; and without in anyway minimising the importance of the other words, it appears evident that the Lord was indicating that by far the most important element in seeking unity and oneness with the Creator is the basic *disposition* of the worshipper (Note the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, wherein he stressed that the conditions for divine worship rested not with the *place*, but with the *attitude* of the individual — Jn. 4:20-21, 23-24). The importance of this principle in divine worship was emphasised also by Yahweh much earlier in history: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me *with all your heart*" (Jer. 29:13; cp. Deut. 6:4-6; 30:9-10; Ps. 119:2, 10, 58, 69, 145; Joel 2:12; Acts 8:37; Phil. 4:6-7, etc.).

The warm and comforting message of this verse is clear: If we *continue* to search for oneness and unity with our Creator, in the right spirit and with the correct disposition, **OUR SEARCH WILL BE BROUGHT TO A SUCCESSFUL AND REWARDING CONCLUSION**. In addition to the right spirit and correct disposition, the key to our hope for success lies in constant communion with our Heavenly Father, through His word and through prayer. Without a mature understanding of the word we cannot hope to survive the weaknesses of our flesh and the pressures of life (Eph. 4:13-15; Col. 1:9-10). And prayer must be seen as not merely a religious duty but as an exercise which can bring the blessings of Almighty God upon us. Then we shall partake of the "good things" which Yahweh holds in store for all His sons and daughters who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (v. 11; cp. Jn. 4:24).

"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you"

Again the text is in the continuing present: "Be knocking, and it shall be opened unto you..." (Roth.). The analogy is a simple one, and yet is profoundly touching. Generally, one or two knocks on a door are sufficient to bring the householder to the door to admit his visitors — but here the implication is that although Yahweh will gladly and lovingly welcome us into His "house", and eventually into a state of complete union with Himself, He desires to be fully satisfied that we are really genuine in our desire to gain admission into such holy and awesome favours. We must be prepared to keep knocking on the door until the "Householder" is persuaded concerning our dedication and faithfulness and patience; then He will surely admit us. Here, then, is a call to "patient continuance in well doing" that we might learn "always to pray, and not to faint..." that we might continue to "seek for glory and honour and immortality...." (Rom. 2:7; Lk. 18:1).

VERSE 8

"For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"

These inspiring words declare a message of grace and fidelity: Yahweh is perfectly just and merciful in all His dealings with men. This statement concerns not simply the ultimate reward of acceptance into the

9 "Or what man is there of you,
whom if his son ask bread, will he
give him a stone?"

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give
him a serpent?"

kingdom and the bestowing of divine nature upon those found worthy; Christ speaks of our present standing before God. Individuals who manifest the disposition described in the previous verse will gain a strength of mind and character that will be modelled upon the character of the Father Himself, and His Son (5:48). They will attain to an intimate understanding of the Truth, in both its intellectual and practical aspects, and will thus establish a close relationship with Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 17:3). God is not the purely censorious type of Judge that men often are, in their dealings with one another (Vv. 1-5). He is a wise and loving Creator who can be fully trusted to respond to the needs of His faithful sons and daughters. "Behold, the eye of Yahweh is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy...Yahweh is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, in Truth..." (Ps. 33:18; 145:18).

VERSE 9

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will give him a stone?"

In these words, the Lord alluded to two things: the father-son relationship, and the practice of hurtful deception. Yahweh is our Father. And "like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahweh pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:13). Because of the perfection of His own character, He will never deceive us in any matter; and would especially not do so in regard to our need for a continuing supply of the "bread" of life (Mat. 4:4). A son is here depicted as asking his father for bread — which is a confession of hunger on the part of the son. Would any true father so deceive his son as to provide him with a useless stone in the hour of his son's need? The Lord was virtually implying: "Not only will your Heavenly Father never practise deception upon you, but He will be ever aware of your needs and provide accordingly."

VERSE 10

"Of if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

Bread and fish provide a staple diet of the Galileans, so these two metaphors would make a strong impression upon the Lord's listeners. If their sons did not have either bread or fish they would virtually starve to death. Whilst a "stone" is a useless, inanimate thing, a serpent is a positively dangerous creature, which can only bring evil to mankind (Gen. 3:14-15; Rom. 16:20, etc.). In these two connected verses we should observe that the Lord did not describe a father who refused to give anything to his son, but rather, a father, who, in answer to the pleading of a hungry child, *made a show* of providing for the needs of the child; whilst knowing that he was cruelly deceiving the boy by giving him one object which was useless, and another which might well destroy him. In Yahweh, we have a Father who would only ever act towards us with perfect justice and mercy, and with our personal welfare very much to the fore. Note the way in which the full lesson to be learned from these two verses is pressed home in v. 12.

VERSE 11

"If ye, then being evil"

Imagine the disciples listening carefully to all that the Lord was

11 If ye then, ^h 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?

saying to them. In hearing and responding to “the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68) as they flowed forth from the lips of the Son of God, could it be said that these men and women were evil? Certainly not in the sense that they were depraved, or perverse creatures devoted to walking in the ways of sin. But there were two senses in which the Lord could correctly address his disciples in this way. The first of these were the fact that they were indeed sinners, every one of them (1 Jn. 1:8, 10, etc.). The second was that they — in common with all Adam’s posterity — possessed a nature prone towards evil. Christ himself was “made sin for us” in that he was born of an identical nature to ourselves (2 Cor. 5:21). Strictly, the word rendered “evil” in this verse (Gk. *poneros*, derived from *ponos*, ‘to labour’) “denotes evil that causes labour, pain, sorrow, malignant evil” (Vine); or that which *causes* “sorrow, pain...” (Bullinger). The word, in this context, therefore appears to relate to the works of the flesh, which are predominantly the out-working of the nature we bear. Hence, Weymouth has rendered the phrase: “imperfect as you are..” (Again, cp. the grand ideal of what the Truth has been designed to produce in us: 5:48).

“Know how to give good gifts unto your children”

In spite of their inherent weaknesses, and the sins that they had committed, these disciples had sufficient ability to carefully discriminate as to what was good or bad for their children. A loving parent with a keen consideration for the welfare of his child will exercise thought and wisdom in that direction, in spite of his own failings. But how is it possible to *compare* such a devoted parent, who is constantly striving against the weaknesses of his own nature, with the *moral excellence and perfection of character* which Yahweh possesses, and which He manifests for the *GOOD* of His children?

“How much more”

Gk. *mallon*, “very, very, much..” (Vine); “very, very much, exceedingly; more, more strongly; also denoting constant increase, more and more...” (Bullinger). Obviously a word with an extreme meaning, to contrast feeble man’s ability and willingness to assist his children with the ability and willingness of God to assist His children.

“Shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

The Lord here stressed the father-son relationship in a spiritual sense: and emphasised the wonder of such a relationship between God and ourselves by adding the phrase “which is in heaven...” Man, a creature of the dust, even though perhaps striving to assist his children, is of the earth and resides upon earth. But Yahweh sits enthroned in glory in heaven. How can we hope to compare God and man, so far as the attributes of fatherhood are concerned? Such a comparison is quite impossible. Where, then, should our full trust and confidence be placed? “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is *none* upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Ps. 73:25).

And what are the “good things” we should “ask” of Him? The word which has been rendered “good” is most interesting in this context. “The original idea of the word is so broad that it denotes in general, *skilled* either for good or evil...” (Bullinger). The Lord thus appears to have been laying heavy stress upon those things which God may accomplish for

12 Therefore all things ¹whatsoever
ye would that men should do to you,
do ye even so to them: for ²this is
the law and the prophets.

man, things for which man is insufficiently skilled to fulfil for himself. God — and God alone — can supply the needs of those who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS, who are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers; who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, who are reviled and persecuted... (5:3-11). He can provide every need for those who *seek* "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" — and who "take no thought for the morrow..." (6:33-34). Above all else, for those who have learned to develop these qualities of character, Yahweh can provide that which they need more than anything else: forgiveness for their sins, and release from the shackles of this earthly tabernacle into the glorious freedom and exaltation of divine nature.

As our Heavenly Father, Yahweh desires that we should become an extension of Himself, even to the point of causing us to become a part of what *He now is*. This is the purpose of our calling in the Truth. Yahweh, speaking to Moses of His ultimate purpose, said: "I Will Be Whom I Will Be" (Ex. 3:14) — meaning that He would become manifested in a glorified multitude of men and women who had become his sons and daughters in the most complete sense. And the Lord has here reminded us of that grand and awesome ideal: "*Ye shall be PERFECT, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*" (5:48).

Let us not leave our consideration of this verse without marking well the Lord's clear-cut reference to our own responsibilities in regard to these matters. We are to be of such a disposition, such a faith, and manifest the necessary element of dedication, as to *desire to attain* to the perfection of the divine character that Yahweh might be glorified in us. If we do not have the attitude which causes us to "ask" these things of God, there is no ground upon which He should be expected to bestow such glorious blessings upon us.

VERSE 12

"Therefore"

The Lord was now about to summarise all the lessons he had conveyed in Vv. 1-11.

"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them"

"So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and the Prophets" (J.B.). This verse has been termed "the golden rule" for daily living in our relationships with our fellow human beings. Those who have learned to love the Truth will desire to implement its principles in their own attitude towards others, and would therefore desire that others should act towards *them* in accordance with those same principles. Observe the implied emphasis upon the words "should do." The verse speaks of *actions* and *attitudes*. God, who is perfect in all that He does, will provide for the ultimate good of His children; should we not, therefore — if we claim to be genuine lovers of the Truth — manifest this same disposition towards others? The Lord was here speaking of the attitude which Believers must exhibit in their every-day lives. The emphasis is upon the practical application of the principles of the Truth. We should manifest towards others the same attitude which we pray that Yahweh will display towards us. This is often

13 ¶ ¹Enter 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:

best done by trying to place ourselves in the position of our brother or sister and endeavouring to correctly adjudge, upon the basis of the word, their needs; and then consider the best type of assistance we can render to them. With such a genuine concern for the welfare of others the possibilities of bitter, hypocritical judgments against others (Vv. 1-5) will be largely eradicated. Our efforts, then, must be directed towards bestowing upon others the "good things" which we ask Yahweh to confer upon us — that is, those "good things" which we, as weak mortal creatures are capable of extending towards others, because of our understanding of the Truth and the will of our God.

"For this is the law and the prophets"

The primary purpose of the Law and the Prophets was to teach men and women to become manifestations of their Creator, mentally and morally, so that they might be found, in due time, fit creatures to become like Him physically. (Gen. 1:26-28; cp. Ps. 8:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:27, etc. Jer. 13:11; Mat. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34, etc.). Only by upholding and practising these principles can it ever be said of us that we are "not far from the kingdom of God." These issues — which are the issues of life and death — must be seen clearly, through the eye of faith and humility. They can *never* be seen or recognised through the eye of *self-esteem* (Vv. 1-5).

Vv. 13-20: THERE ARE ONLY TWO WAYS: THE BROAD WAY LEADING TO DESTRUCTION AND THE NARROW WAY LEADING TO LIFE — AND THE DISPOSITION OF INDIVIDUALS MAY BE RECOGNISED BY THE FRUITS THEY PRODUCE.

VERSE 13

"Enter ye in at the strait gate"

The subject of this discourse concerns the *means* whereby men and women might gain an entrance into God's kingdom. Therefore, these words relate, primarily, to finding the WAY which leads to eternal life. The verse unquestionably relates to a way of life which *leads* to the kingdom, in contrast to the natural way of the flesh which leads only to destruction.

Here is where the question of JUDGING becomes a vital issue (Cp. v. 1). Only a few will find the entrance which leads to the kingdom, because these things are "spiritually JUDGED" (1 Cor. 2:14, R.V.). It should be noted that the Lord was issuing a clear invitation: "Enter ye in..." This was not merely a call to *hear* the directions or instruction, but to *act* upon what has been learned in a most positive and decisive manner. Such an attitude requires not merely listening to Christ's words, but following him *into* that way which he himself walked so faithfully and so resolutely. If we follow Christ, as he has called us to do, we have the assurance that "an *entrance* shall be ministered" unto us "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11).

It must also be carefully observed that the Lord mentions only *one* "gate" by which we might enter into the way which leads to eternal life. There is only "one faith" (Eph. 4:5), and that is the gospel message preached by Christ and his apostles. To "enter" this "strait gate" requires that the Truth be understood mentally, and manifested morally. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and

Pharisees, ye shall in no case *enter* into the kingdom of heaven" (5:20, same word as in 7:13). The means of entrance into the way of life is indeed "strait" — the word (Gk. *stenos*, from which we have the English 'stenography', meaning 'narrow writing'). This gate is "strait" because "it runs counter to natural inclinations" (Vine). The word occurs only three times: here, v. 14, and Lk. 13:24. Note that in the latter passage the Lord said that it was necessary to AGONISE to "enter in at the strait gate" (A.V., "strive"; Gk. *agonizomai*). Hence, these words in 7:13 have been rendered: "Enter by the *narrow* gate" (J.B., Wey., N.E.B.). "Go in by the *small* gate" (T.C.N.T.). The way to life eternal has always been narrow, because it has been restricted by the confines which Yahweh has placed around that "way" (cp. Gen. 3:24; Rev. 2:7). It is for man to seek and find that "way," and then discipline his thinking and his actions to conform to God's requirements. Such a way of thought and action is not natural to man, and therefore he will discover that it is "through much tribulation (lit. 'pressure') that we shall "enter into the kingdom of God." Such 'pressure' results from the fact that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh..." (Acts 14:22; Gal. 5:17).

"For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"

Those who walk after the flesh do not subject themselves to the restrictions of heavenly commandments. They therefore have the entire compass of life before them; and without restraint, and unheeding of Christ's call, they develop a character which is the outworking of "the works of the flesh." The natural tendencies of human nature will automatically guide the thinking and actions of all who do not subject themselves to the will of Almighty God. And "the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23).

It should be remembered that these words were addressed specifically to Christ's disciples, and not to the world at large; therefore the Lord's followers must constantly examine themselves in the light of the word of God, so that they will be numbered among the "few" at the Judgment Seat, and not among the "many." Disciples must always bear in mind that they may be found in the latter category if they have not diligently hearkened unto the voice of the Good Shepherd, and followed in his ways (cp. Gen. 6:1-3, etc.).

It requires courage, matched to a real and living faith, to step aside from the "many" and take one's place resolutely among the "few," who show by their speech, their general attitude towards their fellow-men, and their dedication to the cause of Christ, that they have "been with Jesus" and that they have therefore "come out from among" the godless environment of a world that "lieth in wickedness" (Acts 4:13; 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Jn. 5:19).

It should be observed that this verse is, in effect, a summary of all that has gone before in this discourse. The Lord was stating that the path to true happiness and contentment and well-being will not be reached through that which appeals to the natural, carnal eye of man; but rather through a process of groaning and agonising to "enter" a narrow gate. The evil propensities of the flesh must be suppressed and subdued, that the characteristics of Yahweh might be manifested. This, in effect, is the "strait gate" through which all must pass who would find an entrance into the kingdom of God.

14 ²Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

VERSE 14

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life”

Note that “because” has been rendered “how” in the margin. The latter is correct. The Lord’s statement here was an emphatic, positive utterance, because he was speaking of the clear issues involving life and death from the *eternal* point of view. Christ’s disciples must face and accept the fact that all humanity falls into either one of two classes: there are only *two* ways (Vv. 13-14), *two* types of prophets (v. 15), *two* types of trees (Vv. 16-20), *two* classes to be brought before Christ at the Judgment Seat (Vv. 21-22), and *two* types of builders (Vv. 24-27). The Truth, therefore, must never be handled or treated lightly. Surely this verse is stressing the absolute necessity of a correct *intellectual* understanding of the Truth, apart from which it would be impossible to find the “strait gate” and the “narrow way,” by which the moral attributes of our Father’s character may be manifested in our lives, and our flesh disciplined to submit to the will of God.

The word “strait” is the same as in the previous verse, but now the Lord added the word “narrow” (Gk. *thlibo*, ‘to press... i.e., hemmed in, like a mountain gorge; the way is rendered narrow by the divine conditions, which make it impossible for any to enter who think the entrance depends upon self-merit, or who still incline towards sin, or desire to continue in evil...’ — Vine).

The word has elsewhere been rendered “lest they *should* throng him” (Mark 3:9); “afflicted” (2 Cor. 1:6) and in two other passages “troubled” (2 Cor. 4:8) and in three other passages “suffer tribulation” (1 Thess. 3:4).

Graphically, then, the Lord has contrasted the easy path of self-gratification and self-indulgence which leads to eternal death, with the controlled, subordinated path which leads to everlasting life.

“Few there be that find it”

The word “find” indicates that here is a class of humanity who are prepared to *search*, and to continue searching until their goal has been attained.

As a final thought on these particular verses, let us appreciate that the Lord was not here calling for a life of asceticism, such as practised by numerous monastic orders, which involves vows of “poverty, chastity, and obedience.” This was the *outward* form of religious life which Christ condemned in the Pharisees. The straitness and narrowness of the way which leads to eternal life is fully described and defined in the word of God, and any additional self-imposed restrictions would be negative and futile. Positively, the Lord has called for a life of self-surrender to the will of Almighty God. Those who accept this sublime principle “find” the “strait gate,” and though it be “narrow” they will enter therein, and walk in the ways of God until they pass through the final stage of their spiritual development by being guided, lovingly and mercifully, to the “entrance” which will bring them into “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11).

VERSE 15

“Beware of false prophets”

15 ¶ ^mBeware of false prophets,
ⁿwhich come to you in sheep's cloth-
ing, but inwardly they are °ravening
wolves.

The Lord now uttered an explicit warning to the effect that the greatest danger facing the disciples would come from men who claimed to be religious! But the warning relates to a situation even more sinister than may be implied from the word “beware”; for the word (Gr. *prosecho*; derived from *pros*, meaning ‘to’ or ‘towards’ and *echo*, ‘to have, to hold’) defines the danger of forming a close and intimate association with those who are really enemies of the Truth. Such men (Gk. *pseudoprophetes*) are, in reality, not merely false prophets but false *teachers*, because the word (*prophetes*) defines “one who speaks forth openly before any one, a proclaimer of a divine message...” (Bullinger) or “an interpreter of the oracles...” (Vine). In the LLX this word does service for the Hebrew *naghi*, “meaning either one in whom the message from God springs forth or one to whom anything is secretly communicated” (Vine). The warning is clear: disciples cannot afford to relax their minds to the point where they no longer carefully weigh up what is said to them, by way of spiritual exposition or instruction. Every disciple must strive to become sufficiently mature in their understanding of the word of God that they are able to discern between truth and error, and to reject teaching or ideology which would subvert their faith (cp. Mal. 3:18).

“Which come to you in sheep’s clothing”

The Lord was very careful to supply an adequate description of the *type* of false teachers of whom the disciples should beware. Outwardly, they have all the appearances of being numbered among Christ’s flock. It is clear, therefore, that the Lord was not warning against the black-robed Cleric or the ornately robed Cardinal of apostate christendom; such men would be readily and promptly identified by Christ’s true disciples. The false teachers against whom the Lord here warned would not be so easy to identify or put to the proof. They were the false shepherds who would arise *within* the Ecclesial world (Acts 20:30; 2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2; Jude, etc.). True teachers of the one true gospel will speak “unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3); but false teachers are manifestly lacking in these aims and attributes.

“Inwardly they are ravening wolves”

“men who come to you in sheep’s fleece, but beneath that disguise they are ravenous wolves” (Wey.); “savage wolves” (N.E.B.). They profess to be numbered among Christ’s true brethren, and claim to speak on behalf of Christ; but the only result of their influence is to rend and destroy the Body of Christ. A savage wolf is motivated only by his own desire for more, to consume others that he himself might be satisfied. False teachers do “violence” to the Truth, and the real motive which moves them is that of pride and self-esteem. Further, in view of the context, it is implied that one of the hallmarks of a false teacher will be his attempts to make the “way” *broader*, through a failure to uphold sound doctrine and practice within the Brotherhood. He will prove to be a destroyer to all who place their trust and confidence in him. To tamper with divine Truth in the guise of liberality is to play the wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Observe that, whilst the Lord was not calling upon his disciples to automatically reject all who claimed to be teachers of the Truth, they should exercise an element of caution, and examine the “fruit” produced by the teachers, in the clear light of the word of Truth.

16 ^pYe shall know them by their
fruits. ^qDo men gather grapes of
thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so ^revery good tree bring-
eth forth good fruit; but a corrupt
tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

VERSE 16

“Ye shall know them by their fruits”

This is the one and only yard-stick the Lord has given us, whereby we might discern the true character and disposition of our fellow-men. The ripened “fruit” is presented here in contrast to the mere outward appearance indicated in V. 15. But even so, it is not until fruit is examined that an individual may ascertain whether the fruit is suitable for consumption or not. It is as though the Lord was counselling: “Don’t be content merely to gaze at the tree and accept it on its face value (as unwise brethren will do with “sheep”, v. 15); wait for the fruit to appear; examine what the tree PRODUCES, rather than the tree itself.”

“Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”

“Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles?” (N.E.B.). Now, the Lord presented the real point of the issue: when you examine the *fruit* you will be able to recognise the *tree* for its worth or otherwise! Thus, the lesson must be learned: what a man teaches, in the name of Christ, will prove his true position — not the works which he might perform for the purpose of impressing others.

It is a law of creation that all things bring forth after their own kind (Gen. 1:11-12, etc.). Similarly, the spirit-word can only bring forth the things of the spirit (Gal. 5:22; cp. 1 Pet. 1:23). And the flesh, having no good thing within it (Rom. 7:18; Jn. 6:63), can only produce a type of fruit which is totally unrelated to the things of God, and therefore of no value either to Yahweh or His sons and daughters.

Both the vine and fig tree have been used in Scripture, symbolically, to represent the Israel of God. The fruit that is produced thereby, as a result of the guiding hand of the husbandman, will be acceptable to Yahweh; but the fruit of “thorns” and “thistles” results only from the curse placed upon the earth, and therefore brings forth no honour or glory to the Creator (cp. Gen. 3:18; Isa. 7:23, etc.). Needless to say, the outward visible growth gives a clear testimony as to the true nature of that which is within.

VERSE 17

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”

The test which must be applied to a teacher of the Truth is whether or not his teaching conforms to the holy scriptures (1 Cor. 14:37, etc.). In these words the Lord stressed the principle that the fruit produced will surely prove conclusively the true nature of the tree itself. “That which is born out of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born out of the spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6; Lit. Gk.). The word rendered “corrupt” (Gk. *sapros*), more correctly indicates a tree that is rotting away, or decaying. Termed “the worthless tree” (Roth.); “a worthless tree” (Wey.); “a rotten tree” (J.B.). Obviously, the very worthlessness of such a tree requires its swift removal from the orchard; not only because it is useless, but because it may well harbour a disease which could infect other trees! In other words, those who remain unchanged or unenlightened by the spirit-word remain unsuitable for the Creator’s purpose (Num. 14:21), and therefore a danger to those whom Yahweh is endeavouring to nurture in His way. On the other hand, where there is “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6)

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

good fruit will be produced, not only in the character and inner thinking of the individual, but in the outworking of what is produced in such lives.

Remember that these words are still related to the "them" of v. 16.

VERSE 18

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit"

The divine laws which govern nature, that everything brings forth only "after their kind" (Gen. 1:11, 21) was now applied by the Lord to man's spirituality, or lack of it. But the fuller implications in the Lord's words are most important: if the character of the man is sound and spiritual, then the fruit which he brings forth *must* be in conformity with that character. It is what a man really is in character that will determine what sort of fruit he brings forth.

"Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit"

The natural is a type of the spiritual. If the fruits produced by those who claimed to be teachers of the truth (v. 15) was not soundly based upon the divine word, and openly manifested in their way of life, it was because their true character had not been founded upon the true principles of divine wisdom.

VERSE 19

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire"

There is a terrible finality about these words, which provide the first inkling in this discourse that everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ must inevitably face the Lord at the Judgment Seat.

Once again the Lord Jesus reminded his hearers that the word of God is not something to be trifled with or treated lightly. God has *one* purpose in those who are called to become His sons and daughters, and one only: that they might learn to become like their Heavenly Father; that they might develop, through the influence of His word, into the mental and moral likeness of the God whom they claim to worship. This is the doctrine of God-manifestation.

And if that singular divine purpose is not brought to a satisfactory fruition in individuals, they cease to have any part or value in the development of Yahweh's purpose. They remain worthless, and fit only for destruction. "Fire" is often used in the scriptures as a symbol for divine judgment.

VERSE 20

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"

The word rendered "know" is the Gk. *epiginosko* (also occ. V.16) "to observe, fully perceive, notice attentively, discern, recognise... to discover, ascertain, determine..." (Vine). And how will the disciple be able to recognise fellow human beings with such unwavering accuracy? Only by one means: by their own knowledge and understanding of the Truth, and in particular the profound and wonderful principles the Lord has been teaching in this discourse. Whilst this statement is perfectly true as it stands, let us remember that the Lord has been teaching us that it is more important to test principles than persons; for when the principles for which an individual stands are examined and tested in the light of the Word, the true character of the individual will be revealed. The principles

**21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me,
'Lord, Lord, shall enter into the king-
dom of heaven; but he that doeth the
will of my Father which is in heaven.**

of a person are tested when we observe the “fruits” they have produced.

The sobering question which each of us must apply to ourselves is: do we have the necessary knowledge and discernment to apply this instruction of the Lord? And if not, do we appreciate the dangerous state in which we will remain until such deficiency has been remedied?

It is tragic to consider that, in the day of Judgment, there will be those who have allowed themselves to be deceived and seduced from the true pathway of the Truth, and will experience the horror of rejection by the one they had looked upon as their Lord and King. Too late they will realise that they have failed to test their spiritual guides in the light of the Word. The Lord was fully aware of the inevitability of this situation developing; and therefore this verse is filled with both pleading and compassion. The Lord expressed his concern for this urgent need which would be experienced by every one of us. Will we turn away from the authoritative voice of the Son of God? Or will we give diligent heed to his warning, that he might identify us, in the day of account, with those whose “fruit” will be acceptable to him?

Vv.21-27: NOT ALL PROFESSING DISCIPLES WILL BE ADMITTED
TO THE KINGDOM, FOR THEY FALL INTO TWO CLASSES:
THE FAITHFUL AND THE UNFAITHFUL

VERSE 21

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”

The Lord Jesus now told his disciples clearly that he would occupy the position of Judge over human-kind. The words “Lord, Lord” represent the fervent, submissive claim of one who considers himself to be the humble servant of the one whom he addresses. Such claims, in that day of account, will be examined in the light of the word of God; and Christ will carefully examine the “fruits” which have been produced in the life of each one who will stand before him for judgment. But this particular class of brother and sister will be found to have *professed* loyalty to a cause which they have not, in reality, upheld.

In a certain respect, with this verse the Lord has passed from the position of Teacher to Judge. It was inevitable that in a discourse which was intended to reveal and expound upon the Christ-character, the Lord should point out to his disciples that ultimately all claims to discipleship must be examined and either proved or disproved. And the basis upon which the evidence will be considered can be nothing other than the revealed will and word of God. Have they conformed to the pattern, or not? It is touching to observe from the wording of this verse that the Lord was not speaking from the standpoint of self-esteem, savouring the importance of his own exalted position; but rather giving full consideration to the fate of *those who would appear before him* for judgment. That was his great concern. And surely the Lord felt only sadness and sorrow at the prospect of having to say to some: “I never knew you; depart from me ...” (cp. Jn. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9).

Throughout the course of this discourse the disciples had been taught that they must develop the qualities of RIGHTEOUSNESS (5:3-12), GODLINESS (5:13-16), FAITH (5:17-20), LOVE (5:21-48),

22 Many will say to me in that day,
Lord, Lord, have we "not prophesied
in thy name? and in thy name have
cast out devils? and in thy name
done many wonderful works?

PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING (6:1-18), MEEKNESS (6:19-34), HUMILITY (7:1-6), DEDICATION (7:7-14), FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT (7:15-20) and THE CHRIST-CHARACTER OVER-ALL (5:48; 7:21-27). All of these qualities are associated with *character* and *action*. Therefore, it must be a part of Christ's consummate purpose in his disciples that he should eventually examine each one, to see whether those attributes of character and action have been manifested to the satisfaction of Yahweh, according to Whose Mind Christ will pass final judgment.

To "enter into the kingdom of heaven" is the final goal and ultimate aspiration of those who are called to the Truth. Yet, how gravely these words of the Lord should be received, as he told his disciples that there would be those who — through their own folly — would experience the insufferable anguish of being *denied* an entrance into the kingdom. The only ones who will qualify for inheritance in the kingdom will be those who have done "the will" of the "Father."

"But he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven"

Observe how intimately the Lord related himself to Yahweh: "My Father..." He did not, at this point, say "your Father." The reason should be readily apparent: To support a claim to sonship, the claimant must be an extension of the Father. The Lord had already provided proof of the validity of his own claim during his lifetime, and would continue to do so; but his disciples had yet to learn to develop and manifest the qualities of character which would provide the necessary proof to match their claims to be sons of God.

To "do" the will of God necessitates, firstly, that the individual *knows* what the Will of God is. Thus, the Lord here alluded to the way in which the influence of the word of God must *mentally* and *morally* transform the life of the individual who desires to become a son or daughter of the Living God. Christ was here speaking of the doctrine of God-manifestation.

It is noteworthy that the Lord used the word "heaven" *twice* in this verse — not to denote the *place* where the kingdom will be established (for it will be upon the earth); but to emphasise the heavenly *origin* of those characters that will be found worthy to inherit the kingdom. The Lord has already taught us the principle to be remembered in prayer: "Thy *will* be done in *earth*, as it is in *heaven*..." (6:10). The immortalised glorified saints will provide upon earth an extension of the environment and harmony which now exists in heaven.

VERSE 22

"Many will say to me in that day"

They will *say* a great deal. A lot of fast-talking will be done at the Judgment Seat, in an endeavour to persuade the Lord, of the devotion and performances which this class will claim to have manifested during their time in the Truth. But words will achieve nothing. All that *could* have been said, or *could* have been done will have become PAST HISTORY by then. Many will be furiously racking their brains, asking themselves: "What can I say that will really impress the Lord?" But all to no avail. Everything will already be known to the Lord. The time of probation will have been completed. The next phase of God's purpose

23 And ^xthen will I profess unto
them, I never knew you: ^ydepart
from me, ye that work iniquity.

with his sons and daughters will have commenced: judgment.

“Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils?”

“was it not in your name that we taught?” (T.C.N.T.). This class within the Ecclesia will claim to have upheld the *words* of Christ, and to have performed the *works* of faith — but both claims, from this class, will be rejected; for the true fruits will not be in evidence. The claim to have “cast out demons” will no doubt be used in an endeavour to prove the point that these brethren had *taught* the Truth, and thus *cleansed* others from their sins. **BUT WHAT WILL THEY HAVE DONE TO TRANSFORM THEIR OWN LIVES?**

“And in thy name done many wonderful works?”

“and in thy name performed many mighty works” (Wey.); “...many works of power...” (Roth.). The two English words “wonderful works” have been rendered from the one Gk. word “*dunamis*,” which primarily relates to POWER (Eng., “dynamo”). This is a term which will be used by this class of disciple at the Judgment Seat in an endeavour to justify themselves before Christ. They will claim to have used the Word mightily, and to have accomplished many apparently wonderful achievements. And it may well be that many of these brethren and sisters *will* have performed much of that which they will claim to have done. It is important to observe that Christ does not say that he will necessarily DENY the three claims made here. His contention against these disciples will be two-fold. The first has already been implied: They will not have “done the will” of the Father. The second is elaborated upon in the next verse.

VERSE 23

“And then will I profess unto them”

“Then I will tell them to their face” (N.E.B.) “Then I shall tell them to their faces” (J.B.) “And then I will tell them plainly” (Wey.).

They will listen in a state of horror and torment as the Lord pronounces his verdict of judgment against them. It will be the moment when, with flashes of anguish, these disciples will recognise their previous lack of comprehension as to what the Truth *should* have produced in their lives — but true enlightenment will have come too late. It will be the moment when the follies of the past will be revealed through the “fruit” which has been produced: thorns and thistles (v. 16). There will be a conscious realisation in the hearts of these brethren and sisters that they have not maintained the teaching of Christ, nor the example he had so patiently set before them.

“I never knew you”

“Knew” is the Gk. *ginosko*, of which Bullinger says: “It denotes a personal and true relation between the person knowing and the object known, i.e., to be influenced by one’s knowledge of the object, to suffer one’s self to be determined thereby.” Bullinger renders this phrase: “I have never had a true and personal connection with you.”

Why should the Lord pronounce such a verdict against some? The answer has been partially given, in that they will not have performed “the will” of the Father. But this point was elaborated upon in the words which now followed.

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity”

The Lord will refuse to recognise these professing-disciples as brethren. He will do so on the grounds that he will have had no intimate association with them. Why? These words are quoted from Ps. 6:8, but they are quoted in a most significant way; for the verse reads, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; FOR YAHWEH HATH HEARD THE VOICE OF MY WEEPING." It is not trivial or unimportant that the Lord omitted the second part of the verse. He did so simply because he will not be able to say this of the rejected, as he could say it of himself. In other words, the rejected will not have become "partakers of the sufferings" of Christ (2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13; 2 Tim 1:8). A consideration of Ps. 6 will show that the Psalm spoke, prophetically, of the sufferings of Christ. The Psalm may be analysed in the following way:

Vv 1- 4: His prayer for divine help, and for release from the struggle against the forces of sin.

Vv 5- 7: The Lord's utter exhaustion in the conflict.

Vv 6- 8: A dramatic description of the tears shed by the Lord in the daily suffering he encountered in overcoming sin.

Vv 9-10: A concluding note of triumph; his prayers had been heard; victory was assured.

There was something quite profound in the Lord's reference to this Psalm at this stage of the discourse, as he drew his remarks towards a conclusion. The Psalm, in this context, is a reminder to Christ's disciples that he has "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Walking in the way of the Truth brought suffering to Christ, as he struggled against the propensities of his nature and the forces of sin which surrounded him. And his disciples must "follow his steps" and thereby become "partakers" of his "sufferings." Paul, with mature spiritual perception, expressed his own desire in these words: "That I may know (ginosko) him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death..." (Phil. 3:10). Paul will, in due time, inherit the kingdom (2 Tim. 4:6-8) because he learned to "fellowship" the "sufferings" of the Lord Jesus Christ by crucifying the flesh and positively manifesting the attributes of the Christ-character (Gal. 5:24). But, in contrast, consider those who will be rejected at the Judgment Seat. They will not have followed the example of Paul, who, in his turn, imitated the Son of God (1 Cor. 11:1, R.V.). The rejected will not be able to say: "For Yahweh hath heard the voice of my weeping," because, although they will have outwardly performed religious acts, they will have lightly esteemed "the reproach of Christ" (cp. Heb. 11:26).

We may be busily engaged in the performance of *works* of religion, but to *omit* a PERSONAL APPLICATION of the teachings of Christ from our way of life would be to deny ourselves the means of developing the true Christ-character. And if the Christ-character is not in process of development in the life of an individual there remains only one alternative: the works of iniquity. The words here (Gk. anomia) means "violation of law; non-observance or transgression of the law, whether unknown or wilfully violated; lawlessness" (Bullinger). Thus, whilst many of the rejected may certainly have been busy upon religious matters, even engaged upon the work of preaching to others, they will not have been personally disciplined by the influence of Christ's words. They will

24 ¶ 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:

therefore have progressed through life on the "broad way" which leads to destruction, whilst deluding themselves that they were negotiating the "narrow" way which they believed would lead them to life (Vv. 13-14). Their failure to develop the Christ-character will be due to one or more of three things:

IGNORANCE OF THE TRUTH
NEGLECT OF THE TRUTH
OPPOSITION TO THE TRUTH

Therefore, the first essential quality necessary to guard against being found in this category is a sound and clear knowledge of the fundamental principles of divine Truth. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee (Gk. *ginosko*) the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:3).

VERSE 24

"Therefore"

Of this word, Bullinger has written: "Therefore, then, marking the formal or logical inference..." In other words, the Lord was now about to speak concerning the *one means* by which his disciples could avoid the disastrous situation of being numbered among the rejected.

"Whosoever heareth these saying of mine and doeth them"

"Everyone, then, that listens to this teaching of mine and acts upon it may be compared to a prudent man..." (T.C.N.T.). Herein is described the disposition of a true saint: one who listens attentively and intelligently to the instructions given by the Son of God, and then dedicates his life to manifesting those attributes of Godliness which he has learned from his Lord. This instruction presupposes a belief in the Lord Jesus as Son of God and Saviour. This particular commandment, therefore, must be fulfilled in the life of the Believer as the outworking of *faith*. This is important, because no works founded upon mere human endeavour can be of any spiritual value; but knowledge, and a way of life based upon faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, can produce a regeneration in the thinking processes and way of life of men and women, to transform them into the likeness of the one whom they accept in faith.

The Lord now brought this discourse to its conclusion by dramatically and graphically illustrating the fact that among his disciples there would be *two* classes of hearers — those who listen but do not really respond, and those who both hear and *do* what the Lord requires.

"I will liken him unto a wise man"

Out of knowledge and faith there must be manifested wisdom. It is significant that the Lord chose a word here (Gk. *sophos*) which means "understanding, thoughtful, PRACTICALLY wise, sensible, prudent" (Bullinger. Our emphasis). These attributes must become a part of the character of the individual who will inherit the kingdom.

"Which built his house upon a rock"

"which built his house upon *the* rock" (R.V. Various other translations also incorporate the definite article, including Roth, and the R.S.V. The Diag. lit. Gk. has: "a man prudent, who built *the* house of him upon *the* rock" — in both case above, our emphasis has been added).

This final analogy, then, is based upon the principle of house-building. The first lesson emerges clearly: *all* Christ's disciples are

25 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.

26 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:

BUSY “building” SOMETHING into their lives. The question here is: *How* are they building, and what will be the *result* of their efforts?

Wise builders, at the time of Christ, dug down through the topsoil until they came to solid rock — not a rare accomplishment in such a rocky land. The foundations for the house would then be set carefully upon the rocky base, and built up to ground level. When the house had been completed there would be little evidence to show outwardly just how deeply the foundations were laid in the ground. Here was a type of builder who was prepared to work long and hard, to labour industriously, with the intent that the “fruits” of his labour would be sure to last and therefore give him indefinite security.

Rock is solid, sure, and — in this context — immovable. A most apt symbol to represent things which are of divine origin, and therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ. Earth, on the other hand, is unstable as water, unreliable as a foundation, constantly shifting, and unable to resist the elements which may attack it — hence providing an adequate symbol for human nature. In the imagery which Christ here set before his disciples, the “wise” man is the one who will not place his confidence in flesh; and he will labour diligently to see that all fleshly foundations in his life are *removed*, so that he might build only upon Christ, the solid, immovable rock. Needless to say, untiring effort and patient, industrious action, is the only means whereby the individual might remove the “sand” in his search for the sound and solid foundation of “rock.”

VERSE 25

“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not”

Individuals whose thoughts and actions are founded carefully and solidly upon divine principles will be able to meet the pressures and trials of life, and in spite of their personal weaknesses will be equipped to maintain their integrity before God. “Take heed *how*” you *build!* was the wise counsel of the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3:10).

“For it was founded upon a rock”

“*the rock*” (R.V., our emphasis). This was the only reason this “house” withstood the pressures which came upon it (cp. Acts 14:22, where the word “tribulation” is better rendered “pressure”).

VERSE 26

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not”

The Lord was not speaking concerning a disciple who refused to read the word or listen to the voice of Christ. He was describing a disciple whose life was not *built* upon the foundation of divine principles. Such a professing follower of Christ would therefore rely more upon the reasoning of his own fleshly mind rather than submitting to the guiding hand of his God. Human philosophy will never get anyone into the kingdom of God. This class of brother or sister does not follow the wise counsel of the Lord to seek the solid rock foundation. They either do not recognise their need or else they are not prepared to give the patient, industrious labour which is necessary before their “house” can be completed. In this parable we have set before us *two* men. Both claim to

27 And 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.

be disciples of Christ; and yet the differences between them are great. One is termed “a wise man” whilst the other is described as “a foolish man” (Gr. *moros*, “dull, not acute” (Bull.), “dull, sluggish..hence stupid, foolish” (Vine). One labours diligently in dedication to his cause; the other desires to make his work as simple and easy as possible, giving no careful thought to future security. Needless to say, the second of these two brethren would complete his “house” far quicker than his fellow-worker, and would therefore appear to have attained his objective far more ably than his brother. But to seek that solid foundation, which is Christ, and to build upon it the Christ-character, is the work of a life-time; it is a work which shall never come to completion until we die, or the Lord returns. The wise man in this parable did not really care HOW LONG it took him to erect his house, so long as it was established upon the best possible foundation.

“A foolish man, which built his house upon the sand”

“...the house of him upon the sand ...” (Diag. lit. Gk.). Again, a particular house built upon a particular foundation. This man reveals the characteristics of indifference, lack of thoughtful application to his needs, lack of interest in future security, no mature understanding of what is involved in successful house-building, a compromising attitude towards his declared purpose, an apathetic approach, and a desire to remain unconcerned with the fundamental essential principles which could have brought him success in his venture. In short, he had a task before him, but wished to remain as uninvolved as possible. He wished to complete his labour quickly and simply, to his *own* satisfaction.

VERSE 27

“And the rain fell”

The astonishingly weak base upon which this man had erected his house had not previously been apparent. He had completed his house, so he believed, and to all intents and appearances it looked sound and secure. But when pressure was brought to bear upon the construction, the weaknesses of design and workmanship was suddenly revealed, to the stark horror of the builder. His past foolishness was now openly revealed for all to see (cp. 2 Cor. 5:10, where the word “appear”, Gk. *phanaroo*, means “to make manifest”) — but it was now *too late* to remedy his past deficiencies; for *all* his work was brought crashing down to destruction.

“And it fell”

From the BEGINNING of the foolish man’s labour, this result was inevitable. He *commenced* to labour without a sound foundation, and never at any stage during his work did he discern — nor was he persuaded — to begin work again upon a more solid foundation.

“And great was the fall of it”

“...and disastrous was the fall” (Wey.); “...and mighty was the crash!” (Moff.); “...down it fell with a great crash” (N.E.B.). The destruction of the house was not partial but total. The house was completely destroyed because it had been undermined from the beginning of construction, and the deficiencies had never been remedied. The profound message here is clear: at the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be no shades of grey — individuals will be revealed in colours of either black or white; because there will be only two possible verdicts which

28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, ^a the people were astonished at his doctrine:

29 ^b For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

could be passed: *LIFE* or *DEATH*. Either that which we are now labouring to build into our lives will survive, to inherit divine nature; or the sagacious Judge will decree that we be condemned to banishment from his presence, and death.

In this parable both men were builders; both were workers. Yet only one proceeded to build according to the “specifications” delivered to him by Christ. He continued to toil on, not dissuaded by the hard work and difficulties which confronted him. His body ached, he grew tired, but he continued to devote many long hours to the work, knowing that he must build upon principles of sound wisdom.

Vv 28-29: CONCLUSION: JESUS CHRIST TAUGHT WITH
AUTHORITY BECAUSE HE WAS THE SON OF GOD.

VERSE 28

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings”

Finally, he ceased speaking; and silence momentarily descended upon the assembled group, as they gave thought to the words which had been spoken.

“The people were astonished at his doctrine”

The word “astonished” (Gk. *ekplessomai*; from ‘ek,’ meaning ‘out of’ and ‘plesso,’ ‘to strike, to strike out’), means “to be driven out of one’s senses by a sudden shock, to be exceedingly struck in mind” (Bull.). Thus, “...the people were astounded at his teaching” (N.E.B.); “...with astonishment were the multitudes being struck at his teaching” (Roth.). The initial impact upon the minds of Christ’s hearers was stunning, leaving them speechless. This reaction would appear to indicate that these men and women were indeed disciples of the Lord, having exhibited the interest and determination to laboriously climb the mountain to hear the Son of God address them (cp. 5:1). Would people who were busily rushing unimpeded along a broad, wide way, be willing to allow themselves to be diverted, and then arduously climb a mountain to listen to the Son of God? Thus, these people sought to establish a relationship with the Lord. They began in this atmosphere of wonderment and respect for what he had taught them. But, of these early disciples, one might meditate upon the question: Upon what spiritual note did their lives *end*? And what of other disciples who have followed them, down through the ages? And, above all else, what of *ourselves*? “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith*” was the challenging question posed by Paul to the Corinthian Ecclesia (2 Cor. 13:5). Will the Lord, at his coming, classify us among the “wise” or the “foolish”? What are we doing with our lives? Are we making our “calling and election *sure*?” (2 Pet. 1:10). Or are we, like the “foolish” class set before us in this chapter, blithely manifesting a form of religiousness whilst failing to follow the wise counsel of our Lord, and continuing on the “broad way” that can only bring us to ultimate ruin?

VERSE 29

“For He taught them”

Gk. “to give instruction or direction” (Bull.) Lit. “...he was teaching them” How sublime are these words. This had been his entire purpose.

Like his Father, he did not desire that any should perish, and fervently wished to see Yahweh manifested in men and women who were being called to become His sons and daughters. "It is writtten in the prophets, and they shall be TAUGHT of God" (Jn. 6:45). It is impossible to pass through the strait gate and enter upon the narrow way which leads to life, *without* being taught of God. Hence, as Christ was fully equipped to teach these things, it could be truly said of him: "Never man spake like *this* man" (Jn. 7:46). How humbly we should count our blessings, considering that "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us BY HIS SON, whom He hath appointed heir of all things..." (Heb. 1:1-2). Let us thank God that He sent His Son to *teach* us the way that leads to life eternal; and let us both *hear* and *do* those things which our Lord has taught us.

"As one having authority, and not as the scribes"

The R. V. has, more correctly, "*their* scribes" (Our emphasis). These people compared the Lord Jesus with their scribes. And the comparison was most illuminating. It was the consistent habit of the scribes to appeal repeatedly to the opinions of the distinguished Rabbis, and to the "traditional" interpretation of the Law and the Prophets, as it had come to be misunderstood by the Jewish religious Leaders. This process of teaching would be repetitious and inanely tedious. The highest boast of a scribe was that he never spoke, other than in the name of a respected Rabbi. A scribe's education began as early as his fifth year, and at thirteen he became a "son of the precepts" — or, bar-mitsvah. If considered to be suitable he became a disciple and continued in further training. At thirty he was accepted as a Teacher, and was given tablets and a key (cp. Mat. 16:19).

Christ's method of teaching was quite different: he spoke directly on behalf of *his* "Father" (v. 21); and this, in itself, was something that would have had a stunning effect upon the Lord's hearers. Christ had made his own authority quite clear: "*I* say unto you..." He could speak with this authority on only one basis: He was a perfect manifestation of the moral excellence of his Father.

EPILOGUE

How awesome and lofty are the principles of righteousness, as set forth in these three chapters of Matthew's gospel. There is no legalism here, such as demanded by the scribes and Pharisees. The "hearing" and "doing" of Christ's counsel is not merely intellectual knowledge and outward works. Represented in the Lord's teaching is the outworking of an inner disposition, that which will be manifested out of "an honest and good heart." The Lord has defined the character of those who will follow in his footsteps, because "having heard the word" they "keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Lk. 8:15). This is the only form of righteousness which Yahweh delights to see manifested in the lives of His sons and daughters. It is utterly beyond the *natural* man to attain to such heights of spiritual development. Yet, these Godly principles are not beyond the reach of a spiritually-minded person, else they would not be demanded of Christ's followers. The ideal character must be clearly seen and recognised. And then imitated.

Christ is the perfect example of the word made flesh. And he must therefore become the standard towards which his disciples reach out. "Therefore, ye *shall be perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (5:48). And in their desire to become like their Lord, cries for help and strength will ascend to the throne on high from the hearts of the struggling disciples. Their pleas will not go unheeded: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you..." (7:7).

Understanding the utter futility of all fleshly reasoning or endeavour, the Son of God has striven to raise our minds upwards towards the glorious majesty of the One Who dwells in the heavens. God is only honoured when men and women recognise the perfection of His character, and strive to become what He now is. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (4:10).

May it be that the Lord's endeavours to cause us to see the strait gate and the narrow way which leads to life eternal will be humbly heeded by each one of us. With the apostle Peter, may we readily and meekly acknowledge: "Lord, to whom shall we go? *Thou* has the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is..."

—1 Cor. 3:13

"Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...."