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INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE AND THOUGHT OF THE BIBLE

NEW TESTAMENT

STUDY GUIDE

by

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## I. Origin and Dates of the New Testament Writings

In 90 A.D. a council of Rabbis at the town of Jamnia in Palestine fixed the Old Testament canon largely as we now have it.

The primary sources for the life and teachings of Jesus are the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and to some extent, the letters of Paul. Why did the early church come to accept these literary sources? What are their characteristics of authorship and dates of composition, and to what extent may we rely on them as authentic sources? A study of the life and teachings of Jesus presupposes such questions as these, concerning the nature, and general trustworthiness of the primary documents. Specifically, for our introductory purposes, we shall consider briefly two problems: how did the early church come to have a New Testament canon which it regarded as authoritative scripture? and what are the sources of the Synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke? These three Gospels are called "Synoptic" because they all present the incidents of the life and ministry, and the thought of Jesus, in very similar terms. The Gospel of John differs from them in a number of significant details, both as to the life and interpretive outlook.

### A. The New Testament Canon

1. The need for a canon: Why did need for an authoritative Christian Scripture arise? In the growing competition of writings, it became urgent to find a basis upon which the early church could counter fantasy and heresy. For example, there were the following prominent influences: --
  - a) Gnostic heresies, one form of which said that Christ had not really lived as a flesh and blood man, but was a ghost or phantom who had appeared to the Apostles.
  - b) Apocryphal Gospels, which were circulating fanciful stories in connection with the life of Jesus, e.g. Ballou p. 1256.
  - c) Marcion's Bible, 150 A.D., which ruled out all the Old Testament and included only Paul's letters and Mark Luke

It became "imperative to have some standard by which the teaching of the church could be regulated."<sup>1</sup>

2. The process of selection. By what process were our present New Testament books selected as Holy Scripture? Irenaeus's principles, 180 A.D., were a second century formulation of canons of excellence, trustworthiness, and authority that might guide the early churches in their evaluation of numerous documents circulated among them. A document must have:
  - a) The tradition of an apostle as its author, or someone closely associated with the apostles.

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1. E. F. Scott: The Literature of the New Testament, Columbia University Press 1940, page 289

- b) Must contain nothing contrary to the rule of faith, e.g. that expressed in the early sermons of Peter and other apostles, as reported, e.g., by the Book of Acts, emphasizing Jesus' death, resurrection, and saviorhood.
- c) Must be supported by one or more of the leading churches.

These rules of selection represented the effort of <sup>Ignatius</sup> a thoughtful leader of the 2nd Century church, to bring principles of rationality to bear upon the problem of the authenticity and value of early writings.

Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria (293-373 A.D.) published his famous Easter Letter, 367 A.D., enumerating the present books of the New Testament and declaring that henceforth they would be the authoritative body of Christian Scripture. By what authority did Athanasius make his list? His opinion reflected the good judgment of the church at large. Among numbers of disputed books, he selected those which, by common agreement, had come to be regarded as best. The NT Scriptures were an empirical growth: in the early competition of writings those established themselves which appealed most deeply to the experiences of the early Christian heart, will, and intellect. "The selection was made unconsciously ~~by~~ <sup>by</sup> the mind of the church at large...The church, in the end, selected those writings which had already selected themselves...It was by their intrinsic worth that the writings won their place."<sup>2</sup>

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B. The Sources and Trustworthiness of the Synoptic Method

3. The Synoptic Problem. What are the conclusions of modern Biblical scholarship as to the composition and general dates of the Synoptic Gospels? A study of this question is called the Synoptic Problem. Briefly stated, such a study observes the similarity between Matthew, Mark, and Luke and seeks to discover their historic relationships, concerning matters of authorship and relative dates of writing. In pursuing this it discovers the sources upon which these Gospels are based. E. F. Scott has expressed the findings of modern Biblical scholarship relative to the Synoptic Problem in these terms: "The Gospels, as actual compositions...may be late, but they are made out of materials which had existed long before."<sup>3</sup> Contemporary scholarship points to the introductory paragraph of the Gospel of Luke as a first important clue leading to the above summary. Careful reading of Luke 1:1-4 <sup>4</sup> reveals the following significant data: --

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2. Scott, op. cit., page <sup>292-</sup>293

3. Scott, op. cit., page 19

4. "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." Luke 1:1-4 (RSV)

- a) The author tells us that a number of writings, ("many have undertaken to compile a narrative") existed previously to his own composition, i.e. the Gospel of Luke, v. 1, and the implication is that he is basing his own writing upon them. By Luke's comment, then, we are certain that the literary codification of Jesus' life had already begun by the time Luke writes.
- b) Luke suggests that he himself was not an eyewitness to these events, but that he is attempting to be a conscientious transmitter of the information that came to him, which he believes had its origin with "eyewitnesses," v. 2.
- c) He further says that he has studied his sources closely; that he has now revised them into a more orderly account; and he affirms his faith in them that they are true.

This introduction states Luke's purposes in writing his Gospel. Part of his intent resembles what we would call today that of an "historian," a recorder, a transmitter. The first point above indicates that he uses existing documents, and such a method is the first principle of valid historical writing. His other intention is to be an interpreter, or theologian, as were the other Gospel authors. We must conclude, then, that in the light of his own set of values and commitment to the Christian movement, Luke tries to be a trustworthy reporter of the accounts that came to him.

4. The Documents to which Luke alludes. Where are these earlier written materials of which Luke speaks? Are they extant anywhere; can we find them? Some of these sources are quoted in our present Gospels. In order to locate these source documents we have to examine a scientific kind of book called a "Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels,"<sup>5</sup> published in three columns with the texts of Matthew and Luke on either side and that of Mark in the center. The arrangement discloses how Matthew and Luke resemble Mark; resemble each other, and how they differ from Mark, and finally from each other. An analysis of the following diagram will reveal why Mark is placed in the middle and how scholars conclude that Mark is the oldest of the three Gospels.

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	
Virtually all Mk., word for word is found in Mtt. and Lk.	Mk.	Mk.	Mk.	1.
About 1/6 of Mtt. and Lk is constituted by "Q," another source than Mk, and not appearing in Mk. (except possibly in fragmentary form).	Qm		Ql	2.
<i>materials unique to</i> →	Mtt.			3.
" →			Lk.	4.

5. E.g. Burton and Goodspeed: A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, Scribner's, 1929.

What conclusions may we draw from an analysis of the Harmony?

- (1) Mark is the oldest of these three Gospels. Obviously, had Mark copied from Matthew and Luke he would have most certainly used the extra material they had, in order to round out and enrich his own report. Accordingly, the simpler and shorter document, that of Mark, argues for its priority in time; Matthew and Luke write later, using Mark as their primary source. The Mark material emphasizes the life, or ministry or "acts" of Jesus, and to less extent the sayings.
- (2) The symbol "Q" comes from the German word "quelle," meaning "source." Q seems to be itself older than Mark, because as many <sup>6</sup> modern scholars believe, Mark to some extent seems to use Q, or a version of Q. Q was a written source, and had circulated as such when it came to the hand of Matthew and Luke. We know this because the Q material, frequently word for word, appears the same in Matthew and Luke. Prominently characterizing "Q" are the sayings of Jesus, such as, The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew and to a considerable extent in Luke (Burton and Goodspeed, Harmony page 42-43.)
- (3) Reading across each level of the diagram above and down the entire picture at the same time, we discover that we have increased our sources by one. The four sources now are:

Mark, Q, the Lukan source, the Matthian source.

When we ask, To what extent may we trust the Gospel record as to its general historicity or authenticity, concerning the main features of Jesus' life and teachings? our confidence is supported by the discovery: (1) that the Synoptics are based on earlier accounts -- there were a variety of sources; (2) some of which at least we know to have been fixed in writing (e.g. Q, Mark, and some of the latter's sources<sup>7</sup>); (3) with all of them basically agreeing as to the main features of the life and teachings. Prof. Amos Wilder of Harvard University concludes: "In this way our ultimate sources are not the synoptic Gospels, but their principal sources, Mark and Q, both representing oral tradition slowly taking shape in the 40's and early 50's, tested by continual repetition before eye-witnesses and subject to their criticism. So behind the most important parts of our Synoptic Gospels stand not three, but twelve, even hundreds of eye-witnesses. It is true that the earliest form of this tradition was later subject to some unconscious shaping, especially perhaps in the process of being written down."<sup>8</sup>

5. The Formation and dates of the New Testament Literature. If we divide the first century of the Christian movement into three "generations" of the classic span of thirty years each; and ask what may have been the primary

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6. E.g. see Burton and Goodspeed, sp. cit. pp. 43, 77 for suggestions of Q in Mark.

7. For a detailed study of the Sources of Mark, the student should consult the "Introduction" to a standard modern commentary, such as H. Branscomb: The Gospel of Mark, in the Moffatt Commentary series, published by Harper and Brothers.

8. From class syllabus, Andover Newton c. 1940.

literary interests of each of these periods in the developing church, the following arrangement has sometimes been suggested as a convenient way to indicate the dates of the New Testament literature:<sup>9</sup>

1st generation, 30 - 60 A.D. Primary interest in: --

- a) Preservation of Jesus "sayings," e.g.  
"Q," Sermon on the Mount material, etc.  
"Lk" source on the Parables.
- b) Report of the main incidents of his "life," e.g.  
Mark's sources, both written and oral  
Accounts of the "passion" week: --  
 -Jerusalem ministry, trial, death, resurrection
- c) Circulation of the letters of the missionary movement, i.e. Paul's letters written at firsthand, the dates of many of which can be ascertained quite accurately, e.g.: --  
 -Galations, 49-51 A.D.  
 -1st Corinthians, 54-57 A.D.  
 -Romans, 57 A.D.

2nd generation, 60 - 90 A.D. Primary interest represented by the effort to preserve contact with the past by collecting and writing the accounts of Jesus as Messiah and Savior (recall Luke's introduction, Luke 1:1-4): --

- a) Mark c. 70-85 A.D.
- b) Luke - Acts c. 85-95 A.D.
- c) Matthew c. 90-95 A.D.

Another major concern of this generation must have been to speak to the growing problem of persecution, e.g. Revelation.

3rd generation, 90 - 120 A.D. -- Primary interests: (1) to interpret Christianity in the light of Gentile (Greek) philosophy, and (2) to speak to important problems of the early church as a growing institution, e.g.: --

- a) John's Gospel and First Letter
- b) II - III John, II Peter, Jude

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9. For detailed discussion of the establishing of these dates a standard modern commentary may be consulted, such as, The Interpreter's Bible, or other standard works such as E. F. Scott, op. cit.

Study Questions

1. Why did an authoritative scripture come to be needed?
2. By what process and persons were our present New Testament books finally selected? What final date? How do you evaluate the discovery that the NT was canonized as Holy Scripture by a rather natural process?
3. Why is Luke 1:1-4 an important record in the study of the origin of the Gospels?
4. Where, and what are, the earlier writings to which Luke refers in his introduction? What is the Synoptic problem and what is its importance?
5. Of what significance are these sources in establishing the general historicity of Jesus?

C. The Origin and Purposes of the Synoptic Gospels: Determination of dates and authorships, and resume of their contents as books.

Mark

1. Dating the Gospel: We reviewed above the reasoning that has lead scholarship to regard Mark as the oldest of the three Synoptics. In the effort to determine the period, 70 A.D. to 85 A.D., from which this Gospel came, modern students have based their conclusions on two general points.

The first is the testimony of the 2nd century Church Fathers, Papias and Irenaeus. According to the ancient church historian, Eusebius (4th century), Papias, writing about 140 A.D. reported the words of a certain "elder" who had transmitted to him information concerning former days in the church. Papias quoted the elder as saying that Mark "did not hear the Lord or accompany him, but was later...a companion of Peter." Irenaeus, writing about 174-189 A.D., in his work Against the Heresies, tells us that Mark did not compose his book until after the death of Peter and Paul. This testimony of the early church itself makes plain that Mark was not an eye-witness to the life of Jesus, and that he did not compose his work until several decades at least after the crucifixion.<sup>9a</sup>

Relying then on this early church testimony at these points, and adding to it a church tradition that Peter and Paul were martyred about 64 A.D. during Nero's persecution, we conclude that the writing of Mark's Gospel would have come sometime subsequent to that date.

The second level of reasoning in ascertaining Mark's date is somewhat more conjectural. It is, however, that the book itself, and historic circumstances, suggest 70 A.D., or soon thereafter, as the likely time of the composition of Mark. In the year 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem, in retaliation to a Jewish uprising. Through Christian eyes this event must have seemed like a divine judgment upon the city which had rejected the Savior. It would also seem to have been the fulfillment of a prediction of Jesus, Mk 13:1-2. Sometime soon after 70 A.D. would have been an opportune time, then, to begin to tell the story of Jesus in the more precise form of Mark's Gospel than earlier oral and written fragmentary accounts had presented.

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9a The ancient commentaries read as follows.

Papias: "And the elder spoke as follows: Mark, who had become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately but not in order all that he remembered concerning the Lord's sayings or doings. For he did not hear the Lord or accompany him, but was later, as I said, a companion of Peter, who offered his instructions as the occasion required, without attempting to frame an ordered account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no mistake when he wrote some things as he recalled them. For he was intent on one aim, - not to leave out or falsify anything whatever of the things he had heard." From E.F. Scott, op. cit. p. 55.

Irenaeus: "Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the Church in Rome. After their death, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing those things which Peter had preached; and Luke, an attendant of Paul, recorded in a book the gospel which Paul had declared. Afterward John...published his Gospel while staying in Ephesus in Asia." From B. Harvie Branscomb, op. cit., p. xv.

We know from Luke's introduction that the latter author wrote his Gospel sometime within the second generation, i.e. probably between 85-95 A.D., and sometime after Mark wrote his tract. Luke accordingly establishes an upper limit of about 85 A.D. for the writing of Mark,

2. Authorship of Mark: Tradition has held that this was the Gospel according to Mark: so the title of the oldest manuscripts are best translated.<sup>9b</sup> Who was this "Mark" of the 1st century church?

A man by that name is mentioned in a number of places in the NT: Acts 12:12 15:37; Col. 4:10; II Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24; I Pet. 5:13. From these casual references we conclude that he must have been a secondary figure. St. Paul even calls him faint-hearted, Acts 15:37. That the Gospel undoubtedly goes back to the person mentioned in these places seems a reasonable assumption; it is often pointed out that the early church would not have attributed this important document to such a relatively obscure figure, unless he had really had something to do with its origin.

We recall that the "elder" of Papias' quotation said that Mark was not an eye-witness to Jesus. The Papias fragment, however, indicates that Mark was associated with Peter, declaring that Mark wrote down Peter's reminiscences. (I. Pet. 5:13 would indicate a similar tradition). Acts 12:12 indicates that Mark's mother belonged to the primitive church at Jerusalem, and that early Christian meetings were held in her house. From this and the references in the letters of Paul, (the earliest of our NT writings) we conclude that Mark was an associate of first generation Christians and possibly of some eye-witnesses. In the following quotations two New Testament scholars summarize in what sense and to what degree Peter and Mark may have been the sources of the Gospel of Mark.

"While Peter figures prominently in a number of the narratives, there is no impression of freshness and exactness of detail such as to suggest an immediate personal source. While some of the stories doubtless go back to Peter ultimately, they have had a considerable history before they were incorporated in the Gospel"<sup>9c</sup>

"Whatever it may have been in its original form, the Gospel as we now have it is composite, like the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Indeed it may fairly be doubted whether Mark was its author in anything but a qualified sense. It is the Gospel 'according to Mark,' based, that is to say, on the collection of notes which Mark drew up from his memories of Peter's conversation. This contribution of Mark forms the nucleus and the most valuable element in the Gospel, but after it left Mark's hands it underwent a process of editing and expansion."<sup>9d</sup>

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9b Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, op. cit. p. 3

9c Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, op. cit., p xxii

9d Scott, The Literature of the New Testament, op. cit, p 58

3. Structure and Purpose of Mark: The composite nature and sources of the Gospel are indicated by the following general structural facts:

- The presence of doublets, e.g. the two accounts of the feeding of the multitudes, 6:30-44 and 8:1-10.
- The rough way the various episodes are put together by vague connectives such as: "after that"  
"a few days after"  
"Then it came to pass"  
suggests that the Gospel is constructed out of bits of existing tradition, which the author assembles to give some appearance of coherency and order.
- Evidence of editing in the abrupt ending of 16:8. An editor has attached 16:9-10, not found in earliest manuscripts, in an effort to round off an otherwise incomplete work. The Gospel never tells of a meeting of Jesus with the disciples in Galilee after the resurrection, as was predicted in 14:28 and 16:8.

Some of the sources of the Gospel are:

1. Possible reminiscences of Peter jotted down by Mark, as the tradition above cited suggests.
2. An edition of Q, or part of Q, containing sayings of Jesus?<sup>e</sup>
3. A Passion narrative, compact and detailed.
4. An apocalypse, Mark Ch. 13, which the reference to the "reader" in 13:14 suggests was a written source.

What was the purpose of Mark's Gospel? It is evident that the Gospel was written to a Gentile community, by the pains the author takes to translate Aramaic words for his readers, and to explain Jewish customs, e.g. Mk 3:17; 5:41; 7:34.

I Pet. 5:13 indicates that the author of this letter is writing from Rome ("Babylon"), with Mark in attendance with him there. It is highly probable, then, that Mark addresses his Gospel to the Christian community in Rome. Furthermore, it would have taken a prominent church such as the one at Rome to support a book that otherwise might have been superseded, since it was so short, and was referred to a relatively obscure figure as author. Such is the evidence that has led many scholars to conclude Mark's Gospel was addressed to the Christian community at Rome.

The author is mainly interested in portraying the "life" of Jesus, giving an account of his activity or ministry in Galilee and finally in Jerusalem. Compared to Matthew and Luke very little of the sayings of Jesus are recorded in Mark.

Over and above his role as transmitter of what he believed to be the events in the life of Jesus, the author is basically a theologian: the main purpose of Mark's Gospel is theological or religious. The author writes to

<sup>9e</sup> See e.g. Burton & Goodspeed Harmony, op. cit. p. 43-4, 46-7, 51, 54, 77  
For a detailed discussion of Mark's sources see Branscomb, op. cit. p. xxiii & d

give an account of Jesus as the Messiah and why the Messiah was rejected. He writes in defense of a crucified Messiah. More pointedly, Mark paints Jesus as the apocalyptic "Son of Man." Matthew follows Mark closely in this portrayal while Luke, we believe, modifies this view in certain important respects (see our subsequent discussion of the idea of the Messiahship as told by the various Gospels).

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### Matthew

1. Authorship and date: Tradition has attributed this Gospel to Matthew, the taxgatherer, 9:9. However, in Mk 2:14 and Lk 5:27 the taxgatherer is called "Levi". This Gospel itself does not say who its author is. Irenaeus told us that "Matthew wrote in the Hebrew language, but the book itself was written in Greek, and is based on earlier documents also written in Greek, for

example, Mark and Q. Scott concludes "That Matthew was personally so obscure is a point in favor of the belief that he had something to do with the Gospel", but that we can hardly say more than "that he had drawn up some brief document which served as the nucleus of the later work"<sup>9f</sup> What are the reasons for believing that Matthew, as we now have it, probably dates from a time between 90 to 95 A.D.?

- (1.) Internal evidence like such expressions as "unto this day" (27:8; 28:15) imply a considerable lapse of time between the original events and their report in Matthew.
- (2.) This Gospel echoes the end-century disappointment concerning the long delay of the expected return of Christ (24:48; 25:5).
- (3.) It alludes to persecutions, which became particularly acute toward the end of the century (5:11; 10:18; 25:36, 39).
- (4.) It mentions the church, which implies that the latter was a going institution by the time the author wrote, (16:18; 18:17).
- (5.) It uses Mark as a source, which scholarship generally dates between 70 and 85 A.D.

2. Contents and Purpose: The plan of this Gospel is ingeniously but artificially arranged. For example, the Sermon on the Mount material, collected in Matthew, Chs. 5-7, Luke contains in widely scattered places. Matthew's Sermon may be a composite of many sermons of Jesus. We may notice the compositional character of Matthew possibly best by tracing the transitional words, "And when Jesus had finished these sayings", which are repeated five times and thus seem to mark the division of the book on a five-fold basis (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Could this scheme be a conscious reflection of the Five Books of Moses, implying that Christianity is the New Law which replaces

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<sup>9f</sup> E. F. Scott, Literature of the NT, op. cit. p 66-67.

the old? Jesus is presented mainly as Teacher up to Caesarea Philippi (16:13f); after that as Savior with "our attention...fixed on the great work which he is to accomplish by his death" <sup>9g</sup> In contrast to Mark, which emphasizes Jesus's work, Matthew lays stress on Jesus as Teacher, as well as Messiah and Savior.

In addition to the general plan and purpose of the book discussed above, note the following things:

- (1.) Matthew emphasizes the mission of Jesus as foretold in OT prophecy, repeating the phrase "that the scripture might be fulfilled" many times.
- (2.) He emphasizes Jesus's teaching in contrast to the ancient Law.
- (3.) He attempts to relate the teachings of Jesus to the needs, circumstances, and practices of the church, 5:27-32; 18:10-14; 5:25-26; 7:12; 18:15-22; 10:17-36; 16:24-28.
- (4.) There is a Jewish emphasis, e.g. 5:17-19; 15:24; 23:3, which appears in some contrast to the point that Jesus's message is universal, 5:43f; 8:11-12; 12:21; 21:33-43; 25:42f; 28:19-20. How may these two aspects be reconciled? Scott says that Matthew wanted to include both points, namely, that Christianity had a message to both Jewish and Gentile groups. Scott concludes that Matthew's "inconsistency is deliberate...He believes that within the one church there is room for all types of disciples -- for those who would cling to the Law and for those who have discarded it...This catholicity of spirit has made Matthew the representative Gospel, and is also our best guarantee that it has preserved the facts with fidelity. Matthew is not a partisan on one side or another, and makes no attempt to keep anything back or to smooth away contradictions. He puts on record all the different testimonies, assured that they all are necessary towards a full understanding of the life of Christ."<sup>9h</sup>
- (5.) Recall that Matthew relies on Mark and Q as major sources, to which he has added his own special material, and that he follows Mark closely in presenting Jesus as the apocalyptic "Son of Man."

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#### Luke

1. Authorship and Date. Recall our study of Luke's introduction, 1:1-4, where the author informs us that he uses previously existing sources and documents. Some of these we discovered to be Mark and "Q", and the special Lukan source, "L".

Tradition assigns this Gospel to Luke, whom Paul mentions as his com-

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9g Ibid. p 71

9h Ibid p 75

panion, and as a physician, Col. 4:14. Also bear in mind that the author of Luke and Acts are the same person, as Lk 1:3 and Acts 1:1 make clear by the reference to "Theophilus," the person to whom the books are addressed. Since Luke must have been written after Mark, modern scholarship has placed the writing of Luke-Acts between 85-95 A.D.

## 2. Contents and Purposes of Luke's Gospel:

(1.) To put together into a more comprehensive account, 1:1f, all of the sources about Jesus's life that had come to him, including Mark, Q, and the special Lukan source including many of the great parables. Luke takes the liberty to edit and correct Mark where he believes greater historical accuracy (and sometimes literary effect) warrants it, e.g.-

- Luke omits the feeding of the 4000 of Mk 8:1f, our best evidence that this incident is a duplicate of the feeding of the 5000.
- He omits the details of John the Baptist's death, Mk 6:18f (which sounds legendary in character), Lk 3:19-20; 9:7-9.
- We will subsequently notice Luke's more realistic rendering of Jesus's important reply to the high priest at the trial, Lk 22:27-29, Mk 14:61-62 <sup>91</sup>

(2.) In addition to presenting Jesus as God's Son and Messiah, Luke is interested in presenting Jesus's character or biography on its sympathetic and humane side -- Jesus's compassion and kindness to the weak and the erring, e.g.:-

- The story of Zaccheus, the tax collector, Lk 19:5
- The sinful woman, Lk 7:36f
- The poor, outcast Lazarus, Lk 16:11f
- The faith and goodness of the well-to-do, 8:2-3; 19:1-10; 7:1f
- Interest in family life, Mary and Martha, 10:38f.

(3.) The story in Acts very specifically continues Luke's interest in the world-wide scope of the Gospel, revealed in the portrayal of Jesus's universally humanitarian character: he reports how Jesus rose above the Law, recognizes faith in publicans and Samaritans, and how Gentiles were drawn to him.

(4.) Luke writes also to meet official Roman criticism that the Gospel was a political movement; Luke takes pains to stress that Jesus was a teacher and healer. It is in Luke and Acts that we have Jesus set forth as God's Messiah of suffering service, described by II Isaiah, e.g. Lk 4:16f; 22:27, 37. Finally in Luke we have it stressed that the Kingdom of God, is in its central meaning a quality of individual mind and heart, e.g. 13:20; 17:20, in contrast to the more radical apocalyptic ideas of the Kingdom only as future, transcendent reality. To be sure, Luke is "eschatological" and "apocalyptic" in its outlook but in a significantly modified sense, we believe, when compared to Mark and Matthew. (See our subsequent discussion and notations on these points).

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<sup>91</sup> Note also such striking variations from Mark as the centurion's comment at the Cross, Lk 23:47 vs. Mk 15:39 and Matt. 27:54.

Study Questions

1. What were the main literary interests of each of the first three generations of early Christians?
2. Why did an authoritative scripture come to be needed?
3. By what process and persons were our present New Testament books finally selected? What final date? How do you evaluate the discovery that the NT was canonized as Holy Scripture by a rather natural process?
4. What are the main historical questions we must ask in order to chart our course clearly for studying the problem of the origin and significance of a NT book?
5. Why is Luke 1:1-4 an important record in the study of the origin of the Gospels? What, especially, does Luke's introduction clarify about the author as an eye-witness or not to the events in Jesus's ministry?
6. Where, and what are, the earlier writings to which Luke refers in his introduction? What is the Synoptic problem and what is its importance?
7. Of what significance are these sources in establishing the general historicity of Jesus? In what sense may we call Luke an "historian?" What are his ultimate purposes or perspectives as a writer?
8. Who was Mark? Was he an eye-witness to the events he reports in the Gospel bearing his name? What reasoning has been offered that the core of this Gospel does come from the Mark mentioned in the Book of Acts and elsewhere in the NT? In what sense must we qualify the view that the book as we now have it in its entirety comes from the "Mark" of the tradition?
9. What are the main sources of Mark's Gospel? To what community, very likely, was the Gospel addressed? By what line of reasoning can we arrive at this conclusion? What is the over-all purpose and outlook of Mark's Gospel.
10. What is the significance of the comments by the 2nd century church leaders, Irenaeus and Papias, regarding the origin of Mark's Gospel?
11. What general evidence discloses that the Gospel according to Matthew is a document coming from the later portion of the first century?

PART TWOThe Historical Background of Jesus' Ministry

Assignment:-

1:RSV:

Rulers, Parties, Taxation, Priests

- Mtt. 2:1, 16, 22..... Herod the Great; tradition of his cruelty; his son Archelaus at time of Jesus's birth.
- Lk. 3:1-2..... Pontius Pilate as Roman governor of Judea at time of Jesus's ministry; Herods Antipas and Philip as tetrarchs of Galilee and Decapolis regions; reference to the high priestly system under Annas and Caiaphas.
- Mk. 3:6; 11:15-16; 12:13-17, 18-23; 41-44 Herodians and Pharisees as parties; Roman taxation; Temple dues and the Temple wealth; Sadducees; commercialization of Temple.
- Mtt. 17:24 and Ex. 30:13-16..... Temple taxation
- Mtt. 11:12 and Jhn. 6:15..... The Zealot party, men of "violence" who would take the Kingdom "by force."

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The Two Concepts of Religion

- Amos 5:21-24.  
Hosea 6:6-8..... The concept of religion as ethical righteousness.  
Micah 6:6-8  
Isaiah 1:11-17  
Jeremiah 7:1-12
- Ez. 44:4-9, 15-27..... Formalized religion in Ezekiel as fountain of the Pharisees' philosophy of religion. (Review also pp. 126-130 of this Guide).  
46:1-10
- Mtt. 23:1-27..... Jesus's condemnation of Pharisaic extremists.
- Mtt. 22:34..... Jesus' friendly relations with Pharisees. Jesus not opposed to the Jewish law. Pharisees friends of early Christians. (Review particularly pp 132-134 of this Guide: a Jewish historian on the Pharisees)  
5:17-18
- Mk. 12:34  
Lk 7:36  
11:37  
13:31  
Jhn 3:31  
Acts 5:33-38
-

Three Concepts of the Messiah or Deliverer

II Sam. 7:8-16..... The tradition and concept of a  
 Isaiah 9:2-9 political type Messiah, "Son of  
     11:1-6, 10, 12, 14-15 David" and Ideal King. (Review this  
     2:2f Guide p. 74-75).  
 Psalm 2; 89:3-4, 19-29, 36-37  
     132  
 Ezekiel 37:24-25  
 Psalms of Solomon, c. 63B, in  
     C. Barrett, NT Background, Selected Documents. p. 248

Isaiah 42:1-4..... The tradition and concept of a  
     53:1-6 "Suffering Servant," whose methods  
     61:1-2 are not military or political power,  
 Lk 4:16-22 but long-suffering, gentleness and  
     persuasion. (Review this Guide  
     pp. 104f.)

Joel 2:30-3:21..... Apocalyptic thought and the tradition  
 Daniel 7:1-2, 9-10, 13-14 and concept of a supernatural,  
     heavenly deliverer, the "Son of Man."  
     (Review this Guide p. 16Cf)

See also extra-biblical books  
 in Barrett, op. cit. p 235-253.  
 Apocalyptic Writings from the  
 1st Century B.C. through 1st  
 Century A.D.

    4 Ezra 13:1-11, 51-52

    I Enoch 45:3-4;

        46:1-4;

        48:23;

        62:5-7;

    Assumption of Moses 10

2. Study Guide NT: Part Two
  - A. The Political, Economic, and Religious Situation
  - B. Types of Jewish Reaction to Rome
 Study Questions on Part Two

## II. The Historical Background of Jesus' Ministry

### A. The Political and Economic Situation:

1. Roman domination. For many centuries the Jewish nation in Palestine had lain under the heel of foreign overlords:
 

-Assyrian conquest of Israel and threat to Judah	721-610 B.C.
-Chaldean (Babylonian)	597-538 B.C.
-Persian	538-332 B.C.
-Greek and Syriac Hellenistic	332-166 B.C.
-(Maccabean period of precarious independence)	166-63 B.C.
-Roman	63 B.C.

Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 64 B.C. Although the Roman administration, in the application of principles of law and justice, attempted in some respects to be a humane one, it was resented by the freedom loving Jewish nation. To cushion their overlordship, the Romans permitted the Jewish dynasty of the Herods, father and three sons, to rule as puppet kings.

2. The Ambitions and Cruelties of the Herods:

-Herod the Great.	40-4 B.C.
-Archelaus, Judea-Samaria.	4 B.C. - 6 A.D.
-Philip, Decapolis region.	4 B.C. - 34 A.D.
-Antipas, Galilee and Perea.	4 B.C. - 39 A.D.

3. A succession of Roman governors ruled Judea after Archelaus was deposed in 6 A.D. Pontius Pilate was governor between 26 and 36 A.D., the time of Jesus' ministry. For twenty-odd years Judea had felt the direct weight of Rome.
4. The principal economic problem was the over-taxation of the people by various authorities. The pretentious building activities of the Herods (e.g. Herod the Great's new Temple; the costly Hellenistic cities of Sapphoris and Tiberias of Herod Antipas) were financed by levies upon the people. In addition to this, Roman taxes were raised by local Jewish appointees (the tax collectors or "publicans" mentioned in the NT), who practiced extortion in the exercise of this function. Lastly, there were the Temple taxes or tithes commanded by the Jewish law. The wealth and power of the priestly caste, the Sadducees, or the temple rulers in Jerusalem stood in great contrast to the humble situation of the poor, the artisans, farmers, fisher folk. The picture is reflected in the Gospels in such parables as the Widow's mite, or in the incident of Jesus driving the money changers from the temple. By this act he indicated his opposition to the commercial debasement of religion.

## B. The Religious Situation:

The religious circumstances of Jesus' day were characterized by two main concerns, one, an emphasis by leading groups on ceremonial observance as constituting the indispensable heart of religion; and, two, various types of Messianic hope.

1. The growing emphasis on keeping the Law or Torah, since Ezekiel's time (Ezekiel chapters 40-46; Ezra, Nehemiah). Christians have customarily called this aspect of the religion of the time the outlook of the Pharisees, and have described the chief "sins" of such "legalistic religion" as: --

- "undue emphasis upon the external observance of the Sabbath,"
- "the importance attached to the distinction between the clean and the unclean" (foods, people, ablutions),
- "hypocritical assumption of special holiness: in prayer, alms-giving, and fasting."<sup>10</sup>

At its extreme, such religion attempted to keep every minute rule that tradition had built up around the Torah or Law of Moses. As a group the Pharisees felt that the coming of the Messiah depended on the literal keeping of the law. Jesus was opposed to a legalistic religion of seemingly mere form, rather than genuine ethical substance, "a burden grievous to be borne," he said, Mtt. 23:4 (Ballou 1134, 40)

However, in order to see the controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees in broadest perspective, it should be kept in mind that opinion differed widely among Jewish teachers as to the scope of one's duties in keeping the law; and between the Pharisees as a whole and the Sadducees as a group. It may have been the narrower or more conservative school of Pharisees, that of Shemmai, in contrast to the liberal more progressive school of Hillel, against which the criticisms of the New Testament are mainly directed. In defense of the Pharisees of that time, Jewish scholars indicate that as a whole they were the progressive group in Judaism as opposed to the Sadducees, or Temple authorities. In addition to its severe criticism, the New Testament suggests that Jesus was, upon occasion, friendly with Pharisees and Scribes:

Mark 12:34; Matthew 22:34 - He said that some were not far from the kingdom, i.e. those who shared his deeper spiritual sensitivity and discernment.

Luke 7:36; 11:37 - Had fellowship with the Pharisees at dinner.  
13:31 - Warned by them that Herod was seeking his life.

John 3:31 - Came to him for teaching.

Matthew 5:17-18 - Jesus not opposed to the law.

Acts 5:33-38 - Pharisees friends of early Christians.

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10. An Introduction to the Study of the Bible, by James Anderson, et.al.  
Published by the College of Wooster, page 150

Concerning the Pharisees and the problem of the New Testament presentation, Kaufman Kohler, noted Jewish scholar wrote the following:<sup>11</sup>

"No true estimate of the character of the Pharisees can be obtained from the New Testament writings, which take a polemical attitude toward them...nor from Josephus, who, writing for the Roman readers and in view of the Messianic expectations of the Pharisees, represents the latter as a philosophic sect."

"The Pharisees formed a league or brotherhood of their own (haburah), admitting only those who, in the presence of three members, pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, to the avoidance of closer association with the 'Am Ha-Harez' (the ignorant and careless boor), to the scrupulous payment of tithes and other imposts due to the priests, the Levite and to the poor, and to a conscientious regard for vows and for other peoples' property."

Their progressive qualities and emphases:

- Asserted "the principles of religious democracy and progress" against the Sadducees or Temple rulers. Emphasized "the priestly sanctity of the whole people of Israel."
- "The very institution of the synagogue for communion, worship and instruction was a Pharisaic declaration of the principle that the Torah is 'the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob'" (Deut. 33:3).
- Less rigid in the execution of justice than the Sadducees, e.g. interpreted lex talionis to mean "due compensation with money" -- whereas Sadducees interpreted lex talionis literally.
- Liberalized and deepened the spiritual significance of the Festivals e.g. Relative to the Day of Atonement, "the Pharisees wrested the power of atoning for the sins of the people from the high priests (see Lev. 16:30) and transferred it to the day itself, so that atonement was effected even without sacrifice and priest, provided there was genuine repentance."
- Liberalized Sabbath practices, e.g. made allowance for carrying things (Jer. 17:21-4): extended the definition of 'place' to include a mile radius (old rule: could not leave your place on the Sabbath, Ex. 16:29). "..."their object was to render the Sabbath a 'delight' (Is. 48:13), a day of social and spiritual joy and elevation rather than a day of gloom."
- Strengthened the position of women in the home "against the caprice of the husband," by introducing the marriage document. Women after childbirth could return to the household without protracted isolation for weeks, even months, as prescribed (Lev. 12:4-7; 15:19-24)"...the Hillelites, and

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11. Excerpts from The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. IX, ed Isidore Singer, Funk and Wagnalls Company. 1905 p. 661-666. Heb: "Peruishim"; Aramaic: "Perisha" (the singular of "Perishaya") "denotes 'one who separated himself,' or keeps away from persons or things impure, in order to attain the degree of holiness and righteousness required in those who would commune with God..." Gk: Pharisaioi

especially Akiba, in being more lenient in matters of divorce, had in view the welfare and peace of the home, which should be based upon affection..."

-Stressed learning: The Sadducean part represented "the interests of the Temple, while the former, /the Pharissic party/ were concerned that the spiritual life of the people should be centered in the Torah and the Synagogue. While the Sadducean priesthood prided itself upon its aristocracy of blood...the Pharisees created an aristocracy of learning instead, declaring a bastard who is a student of the Law to be higher in rank than an ignorant high priest.

#### Aspects of their philosophy:

-"The aim and object of the Law, according to Pharisaic principles, are in the training of man to a full realization of his responsibility to God and to the consecration of life by the performance of its manifold duties..." (664).

-people to deal with one another "according to the dictates of love."

-acceptance of God's kingship: implies acceptance of God's special decrees; also commandments "dictated by reason and the human conscience."

-the avoidance of sin.

-the fulfillment of God's commandments "without expectation of reward."

-stressed "Be holy as the Lord your God is holy" (Lev. 19:2) -- the imitation of God as an ultimate sanction for ethics (cp. Jesus).

-"Love thy neighbor as thyself" is declared by them to be the principal law.

"It is a slanderous misrepresentation of the Pharisees to state that they 'divorced morality and religion', when everywhere virtue, probity, and benevolence are declared by them to be the essence of the Law..." (665).

#### Evaluation of the Pharisees:

"Still, the very air of sanctity surrounding the life of the Pharisees often led to abuses..."

"...they added new restrictions to the Biblical law in order to keep the people at a safe distance from forbidden ground: as they termed it, 'they made a fence around the law'...Thus they forbade the people to drink wine or eat with the heathen, in order to prevent associations which might lead either to intermarriage or idolatry...After they had determined the kinds of work prohibited on the Sabbath they forbade the use of many things on the Sabbath on the ground that their use might lead to some prohibited labor...It was here that the foundation was laid of that system of rabbinic law which piled statute on statute until often the real purpose of the Law was lost sight of..." (664).

"An ancient baraita enumerates seven classes of Pharisees, of which five consist of either eccentric fools or hypocrites: (1) 'the shoulder Pharisee,' who wears, as it were, his good actions ostentatiously upon his shoulder; (2) 'the wait-a-little Pharisee' who ever says 'Wait a little' until I have performed the good act awaiting me; (3) 'the bruised Pharisee,' who in order to avoid looking at woman runs against the wall so as to bruise himself and bleed; (4) 'the pestle Pharisee,' who walks with head down like the pestle in the mortar; (5) 'the ever-reckoning Pharisee,' who says 'Let me know what good I may do to counteract my neglect; (6) 'the God-fearing Pharisee,' after the manner of Job; (8) 'the God-loving Pharisee,' after the manner of Abraham...R. Joshua b. Hannaniah, at the beginning of the second century, calls eccentric Pharisees 'destroyers of the world'...and the term 'Pharisaic plagues' is frequently used by the leaders of the time."

"It is such types of Pharisees that Jesus had in view when hurling his scathing words of condemnation against the Pharisees, whom he denounced as 'hypocrites'... 'offspring of vipers'... 'whited sepulchres'... 'blind guides'... He himself tells his disciples to do as the Scribes and Pharisees who sit on Moses seat bid them do, but he blames them for not acting in the right spirit...for pretentiousness in many...things (Mtt. 23:27). Exactly so are hypocrites censured in the Midrash (Pes. R xxii ed. Friedmann, p. 111), 'wearing tefillin and zizit (phylacteries and fringes), they harbor evil intentions in their breasts. Otherwise the Pharisees appear as friends of Jesus (Luke 7:37, 13:31) and of early Christians (Acts 5:38; 29:9)."

Only in regard to intercourse with the unclean and unwashed multitude, with the 'am-haarez,' the publican, and the sinner, did Jesus differ widely from the Pharisees (Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30; 7:39; 11:39; 15:2; 19:7). In regard to the main doctrine he fully agreed with them, as the old version (Mark 12:28-34) still has it. Owing, however, to the hostile attitude taken toward the Pharisaic schools by Pauline Christianity, especially in the time of the emperor Hadrian, 'Pharisees' was inserted in the Gospels wherever the high priests and Sadducees or Herodians were originally mentioned as the persecutors of Jesus (see New Testament), and a false impression, which still prevails in Christian circles and among all Christian writers was created concerning the Pharisees..."

"...Jewish life was regulated by the teaching of the Pharisees; the whole history of Judaism was reconstructed from the Pharisaic point of view, and a new aspect was given to the Sanhedrian of the past. A new chain of tradition supplanted the older, priestly tradition...Pharisaism shaped the character of Judaism and the life and thought of the Jew for all the future. True, it gave the Jewish religion a legalistic tendency and made 'separatism' its chief characteristic; yet only thus were the pure monotheistic faith, the ethical ideal, and the intellectual and spiritual character of the Jew preserved in the midst of the downfall of the old world and the deluge of barbarism which swept over the medieval world."

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2. The types of Messianic hope present another important aspect of the religious situation in Jesus' day. The people of Israel had long believed that they would win a victory over their enemies, the succession of foreign oppressors, and that an age of righteousness and peace would finally come, not only for

themselves, but, in its best expectation, for the world and mankind as a whole. Their Messiah would be God's agent in bringing in the new day. There was difference of opinion, however, as to what kind of Messiah he would be. The word "Messiah" means one who is especially "anointed," or appointed of God to do a task.<sup>12</sup>

In general terms, we find two predominate views of the Messiah in Jesus' time: first, the Messiah as "Son of David" or a political figure; and second, the apocalyptic or heavenly "Son of Man" conception. In addition to these, a third concept, that of the suffering "Servant" of Yahweh, was present in the literary tradition of the Old Testament. Although this third view may not have been held by any particular group--save possibly by Jesus himself in relation to the Son of Man idea--it constitutes for some modern students an important clue to Jesus' self-interpretation, and to his historic significance.

The central questions, however, of historical importance and of New Testament scholarship, are whether Jesus associated his work, or himself, with any of these views, and, if so, with which one, or which combination, and in what sense or meaning? How these questions are answered will influence the interpretation of Jesus' "ethics," that is, his teaching as to the "Kingdom of God," its nature and requirements. Modern scholars differ in their points of view. Presently we endeavor to outline the main possibilities. In the meanwhile we should describe more fully what the three views were. Judging from Old Testament material and extra-Biblical sources of late Old Testament times, we discuss these views in the probable order of their historical appearance:--

- (1) The idea of a political or kingly Messiah, a descendant or "Son of David," who would lead Jewish armies in victory over the Romans, and set up a world-wide kingdom of righteousness and peace under the leadership of Israel. He would be a man especially endued of God, with power to overthrow Israel's enemies, to rule in righteousness and justice and do away with all human evils. He would be part military leader, royal judge, and ethical teacher, a divine or semi-divine king of the messianic age. Some of the prophets envisaged this age to come on earth as the outcome of historic time. It would be a day of universal peace, plenty, and justice. (I Isaiah, Micah--Ballou 959). In some quarters, the outlook in Jesus' time had corrupted this broader vision into an emphasis on vindictive punishment of Israel's enemies under the victory of a military messiah.
- (2) The Messiah as a Servant of God, who, by his suffering for righteousness sake, would be an agent of salvation in the world. We find this understanding of the Messiah in the "Servant" passages of Second Isaiah (notably chapters 41-53). Such personage would, by long suffering, gentle persuasion, by teaching and example of loving sacrifice, bring Israel's message of ethical monotheism, with its concern for justice and brotherhood, to the world.

Biblical scholarship is divided as to whether the Second Isaiah intended the portrait of the long-suffering "servant" in chapter 53 to be that of an individual, or simply the personification of Israel, the nation, now living in exile and captivity. Israel,

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12. Heb. "Mashiach;" Aramaic; "Meshicha;" Grecized form "Messias," (Encyclopedia of Religion; ed. Ferm, Philosophical Library, p. 485)

the nation, is so portrayed a number of times in the Servant poems of Second Isaiah prior to chapter 53. Be this as it may, the idea of messiahship as primarily gentle-service, rather than military or political power, constitutes the main point, and is found as a significant element in the Gospel picture of Jesus.

- (3) The apocalyptic Son of Man. The Greek word "apokalyptein" means to "unveil" or "uncover." Apocalyptic writings purport to unveil, that is, to reveal the time of the end. This type of literature flourished in Israel in the last two centuries before Jesus, and into the Christian era. It was characterized by cryptic, symbolic figures of speech, such as those encountered in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and in Revelation in the New Testament. As the most noted Biblical examples of apocalypse, a study of the book of Daniel or of Revelation, will disclose that they were written at a time of persecution by the foreign power, in the case of Daniel that of the Syrio-Greek ruler Antiochus IV, about 168 B.C.; Revelation suggests one of the Roman persecutions of the late 1st century A.D., perhaps that of the Emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.). The over-all purpose of such books was to inspire courage and hope in a persecuted people, by proclaiming that the end of their suffering was near, and a time of glorious deliverance at hand, by God's supernatural intervention in the affairs of men. God's angelic, messianic agent, or "Son of Man," would appear on the clouds of heaven to perform this work. (Daniel chapter 7, Ballou pp. 1022-1023). Accordingly, in this view the Messiah was to be a supernatural hero, a transcendent being, to whom divine powers were delegated. Other important features of apocalyptic thought and writing are the following: ---

- Israel would have opportunity to take vengeance on her foreign enemies, who would be overthrown by the Son of Man.
- Cosmic signs and dire portents would indicate the end of this world age, such as: stars would fall,  
moon would turn to blood,  
sun would be darkened,  
supernatural beasts would come out of the sea,  
human calamities and distresses would increase.
- A new, immortal age would be issued in, in which the old world would be supernaturally transformed, history ended, the dead resurrected to stand at the Last Judgment, presided over by God himself, "the Ancient of Days."

Though the Jews may have developed apocalyptic ideas on their own, many scholars believe it to be likely that they borrowed some of these conceptions from the highly apocalyptic religion of the Zoroastrians, or Persians, under whose rule they had lived for two centuries. In any case, there were many apocalyptic books in late Old Testament and early Christian times. In addition to Daniel, the books of Joel and Zechariah are prominent expressions of apocalypse in the canonized Old Testament. Moreover, many non-Biblical or non-canonical apocalyptic tracts were written in this period. Among these were: ---

- The Book of Enoch, c. 64 B.C.
- The Assumption of Moses, c. 1 century A.D.
- II Esdras (4th Extra), c. 1 century A.D.
- The Apocalypse of Baruch, 2nd Century A.D.

Such names in their titles as "Enoch" "Moses," etc., indicate that many of these books were written as pseudonymous works. Many scholars believe that such is the nature of the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. (Apocalyptic writings have been collected in the Oxford Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, edited by Charles.)

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Discussion of Apocalypse brings to the fore the use of another, associated term, eschatology. Eschatology ("eschatos": the furthest, last) is any doctrine of the last times, or the outcome, or end of history. We have just reviewed apocalyptic eschatology, and prior to that the messianic-political type of eschatology of the Son of David tradition.

We have stated that the chief problem of New Testament scholarship is to determine, if possible, with which concept of the messiah and his "kingdom" Jesus may have associated his work and life; or with which combination, or modification of concepts. Did Jesus have specific or particular eschatological views? What eschatological hope formed the background of his ethical teaching, and his preaching of the kingdom of heaven? Some such question as this states the problem of the Gospels in broadest terms, so far as modern scholarship's effort to come to understand the historical Jesus is concerned.

Phrased in its most critical way the specific issue is: was Jesus an "apocalyptic" prophet, that is, a preacher avowing the apocalyptic type of closure to historic or mundane affairs? The attempt to answer this question, or indication of the several ways in which it has been answered in contemporary times, constitutes the underlying duty of any effort to present an interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus. The following summary anticipates our type of resolution to this problem.

- C. Types of Jewish Reaction to Rome and the Central Concern of the Christian Movement
1. Compromise and Collaboration with Rome: the policy of the Sadducees and Herodians. The Sadducees, who derived their name as the heirs of Zadok, high priest in David's time, included the priestly rulers or temple powers, and other wealthy, commercial and aristocratic groups. Secure economically, they did not desire change. Accordingly they were indifferent to messianic and apocalyptic hopes, but rather supported the house of Herod. They embraced a more conservative view of the Torah than the Pharisees by ruling out the oral tradition and insisting on the letter of the written law.
  2. Revolt against Rome: advocated by the "Zealot" party. This group were political direct-actionists, who wanted no compromise, such as Sadducees and Herodians were making. On the other hand, they wanted no waiting for

signs from heaven, such as the apocalyptists expected. They said, rather, "Let someone arise to command them, in the spirit and valor of David of old, and they would hail him 'Son of David' Messiah--and rally...to his standard..."<sup>13</sup> They exemplified one side of the political materialism that dominated the day. The Sadducees and the apocalyptists each expressed other sides of the current materialistic outlook.

3. Apocalyptic intervention from the skies: the apocalyptists looked for the descent of super-natural, divine armies (cp. Joel 3) that would break the Gentile yoke; or for the appearance of the Son of Man on the clouds, whose supernatural power, in the form of a flaming breath (cp. 4 Ezra 13) would destroy Israel's enemies. Some of the apocalyptic literature expressed a spirit of vengeance, taking delight in the expected destruction and punishment of the Gentiles (cp. Assumption of Moses 10). The apocalyptic literature was not all of the same value. Some of it breathed a larger and more universal outlook in the ideal of the conversion of the Gentiles (e.g. Daniel 4, and 1 Enoch 48).<sup>14</sup>

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As a group the Pharisees shared the view that the Roman yoke could be broken only by a direct intervention of God. Accordingly, they adopted a policy of watchful waiting, stressing in the meanwhile strict observance of the Law. Some of them believed that if the Law could be kept perfectly for just one day throughout Judaism the messiah and the ideal kingdom would come.

4. Announcement of the kingdom as a present, and presently fulfilled ethical and spiritual reality, which all men may enter now: the program of Jesus. Professor Amos Wilder has trenchantly summarized the several points of view: "The Zealot said, Win the kingdom; the Pharisee, await it; and Jesus said, Enter it."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus essentially revived the universal ethical outlook upon religion of the great 8th to 6th century B.C. Prophets, (e.g. Ballou 943 D, 949 C, 954 C, 956A). He rejected the popular political conception of the Messiah, and although he embraced the eschatological outlook of his day (that is, the belief that the end of the Age was imminent or near), he came to view his mission in the spirit of the Suffering Servant ideal of II Isaiah, as passages like Luke 4:16-22 (Ballou 1063 C), suggest. He apparently used, but spiritualized apocalyptic ideas, including the Son of Man terminology; this he relates to, or re-evaluates in terms of a suffering service role, e.g. Mark 8:31; 10:45 (Ballou 1091 C; Mtt. 20:26-27).

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13. Walter Bell Denny: The Career and Significance of Jesus, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1939, p. 74.  
 14. See for examples of this literature, C. K. Barrett: The New Testament Background: Selected Documents, Macmillan, New York, 1957, p. 227f.  
 15. Andover Newton, Theological School, 1939-1941.

Scholarship is divided as to the exact relationship to each other, and the place in the life and thought of the real or "historic Jesus," of these ideas or roles of suffering service, the Isaianic Servant, and the apocalyptic Son of Man. The Gospels do not give us a perfectly clear picture. We shall presently outline the major differences of view concerning this central problem of New Testament scholarship. Suffice it for the moment to summarize in two ways what for many Christians may be regarded as the overall reaction and significance of the Christian movement.

First, in the words of Steven Liberty: The "clash of political forces and aspirations bade fair to bring disaster upon the religious future of mankind through the extinction of the national faith of the Jews...It was through political aims and theories that, to the outside observer, human wilfulness appeared just then to make hopeless the progress of true religion--on the one side the great governmental ambition of Rome that would listen to no spiritual authority in limitation of its absolute control, on the other the...Judaism...which more and more identified the nation with a policy of obstinate intransigence."<sup>16</sup>

Second, as expressed by the noted 19th Century theologian, Albrecht Ritschl: "Jesus...introduced a new religion,...by setting free the lordship of...God from national and political limitations, as well as from the expectation of material well-being, and by advancing...for mankind.. a spiritual and ethical union, which at once corresponds to the spirituality of God, and denotes the...end of spiritual creatures."<sup>17</sup>

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It should be said, of course, that the deepening spirituality of Judaism itself, in the growing Synagogue culture which was maturing at that time, outside the Christian movement, was in its right a significant force in the advancement of the ideals just expressed.

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#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Give a sketch of the main political situation and problem of Jesus' day. Of the economic situation.
2. Describe and state the significance of the Pharisaic emphasis on keeping the Law as one main aspect of the religious situation in Jesus' day.
3. Describe the types of Messianic hope as the second main phase of the religious situation, and indicate main OT passages which describe these views of the Messiah. What does the Hebrew word "messiah" mean?
4. What was the main content of apocalyptic thought as a whole and two prominent places in the OT which contain these views?
5. Give a sketch of the four main types of Jewish reaction to Rome.

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16. The Political Relations of Christ's Ministry, Oxford, 1916. p. 31.

17. The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation. T and T Clark, Edinburgh, 1902 p. 455).

## PART THREE

The Life of Jesus according to the Synoptic Tradition

## Assignment:-

## 1. RSV

- Mk. 8:38-9:1 ..... Jesus' eschatological expectation: the  
 13:26-30                    problem of the historical Jesus.  
 14:62
- Lk. 9:26-27  
 21:27-32  
 22:67-9  
 Mtt.10:23
- Mk. 1:1-13 ..... Period of Preparation: John the Baptist;  
 Lk. 3:7-18                    Baptism; Temptation  
 Mtt. 3:13-17  
 Lk. 4:1-14
- Mk. 1:14-45 ..... Ministry opens in Galilee with announcement  
 of the Kingdom, authoritative teaching,  
 works of power.
- 2:1-3:6..... Controversies with Scribes and Pharisees  
 begin.
- 3:7-5:43 ..... Jesus' popularity in contrast to official  
 opposition; typical parables of the Kingdom,  
 etc.

## 2. Study Guide, NT: Part Three:-

- A. The Problem of the Historical Jesus  
 B. Mark's Outline of the Life  
 C. The Period of Preparation and Beginning of the Ministry  
 -- a short commentary on Mark chs. 1-5.

## Study Questions

### III. The Life of Jesus According to the Synoptic Tradition

#### A. Mark's Outline:

1. The Period of Preparation: (Mk. 1:1-13) John the Baptist; the Baptism; the Temptation.
2. The Ministry in Galilee: Mk 1:14-8:26.
  - (1) Announcement of the Kingdom; teaches with authority; works of power: Mk. 1:14-45.
  - (2) Controversies with Scribes and Pharisees begin: Mk. 2:1-36.
  - (3) Jesus' popularity in contrast to official opposition: Mk. 3:7-5:43.
  - (4) Mounting crisis: popular confusion; mounting opposition: Mk. 6:1-8:26. Withdrawal from immediate vicinity of Capernaum and Nazareth, 7:24.
3. The Retirement with Disciples for Re-examination of Effect and Purpose of His Mission: Mk 8:27-10:52.
  - (5) Peter's Confession at Caesarea Philippi; consequences of Messiahship and discipleship; the Transfiguration: Mk. 8:27-9:13.
  - (6) Journey to Jerusalem: Mk. 9:14-10:52.
4. The Jerusalem Ministry: Mk, chs. 11-16.
  - (7) Jesus' final challenge to the nation: Mk. 11-13. Entry; cleansing of the Temple; Conflict with the authorities; the Forecast of Doom.
  - (8) The Passion "Week": Mk. 14-16. Last Supper; Gethsemane; Trial; Crucifixion, the Resurrection.

## B. The Problem of the Historical Jesus

Before we attempt to outline the basic teachings of Jesus, we should realize that he taught with eschatological expectation. That is, he anticipated the imminent consummation of the Age, the coming of the kingdom by the power of God, as the vindication of his preaching the message of the kingdom, and of himself as its spokesman under God. In a number of places he is reported as announcing that the end would come before "this generation" would "pass away" (e.g. Mark 9:1; 13:30; 15:62; Lk. 22:67-9; Mtt, 10:23).

This historic circumstance, that, characteristic of his time, he announced the end of "history" as coming soon, interjects into his ethical teachings or gospel of the kingdom a tension which modern studies should acknowledge.

The critical, historical issue, however, is that the end of this world did not come, as he and many of his contemporaries expected. The problem, then, of his life for modern Christian scholarship, for historical science, psychology, philosophy, theology, and faith--centers in the question: What aspects of his teachings contain (or may be interpolated without undue distortion as containing) universal perspectives and values that transcend the specific apocalyptic outlook or setting of his own day and circumstance? Do his words speak with some validity for subsequent times? Moreover, for Christians particularly, what light or shadow might the first century eschatological expectation, in which Jesus apparently shared, cast upon Christian faith in his role as the Divine Son and Savior?

To answer these questions fully now would take us deeply into a study of the New Testament teaching about Jesus' views of his own person, as various modern interpretations have considered this problem. We presently analyze contemporary views of the "messiahship" - particularly as it relates to the apparent references of Jesus to himself as "Son of Man" and to the expected parousia, or coming of this figure in power on high; and other matters involving his use of apocalyptic thought and terms.

It must suffice for the present to state that some of Jesus utterances about himself as messenger of the kingdom, and the relationship of men to him, or the requirements of "discipleship," are cast in the "crisis" (Wilder) expectation of the imminent parousia, and take on a quality of "crisis ethic." Particularly a crisis doctrine of discipleship appears, as his mission to evangelize the nation approaches failure, and he himself faces martyrdom.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, while much of his teaching is invested with such "eschatological tension" (and all of it should no doubt be initially viewed against this background) other phases of his teaching seem more universal and timeless. He himself refused to calculate the time of the parousia, and he sometimes spoke of the qualities of the new age in spiritual rather than in literal or material way (Lk. 17:20-21; Mk. 12:24). He often depicted the kingdom in the parable and simile of real-life situations. It is in his true-to-life pictures or parabolic sayings, and in his frequently direct announcement of principles of the kingdom, as a present force here and now, where Christians have found the abiding values of his teaching.

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18. Amos N. Wilder: Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, Harper, 1950.

The tone of many of Jesus utterances, their note of ageless wisdom that appeals directly to mind and heart, to experience, reason, and aspiration, suggests that he was speaking of God and Man in terms relevant to life as such on any plane in both its personal and social needs. In such clues the faith of the expositor finds in Jesus' sayings an understanding of life, in its religious dimensions, that transcends the particular apocalyptic outlook of the first century. This analyst is in agreement with the form of interpretation which believes that, as we study the Gospel record closely, we hear Jesus speaking with a genuine concern for historical reality and the problems of this world, with a gradual lifting of vision toward eschatological and transcendental themes.<sup>19</sup>

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19. e.g. Wilder, op. cit.

C. The Period of Preparation and the Beginning of the Ministry in Galilee:  
a brief commentary

1. John the Baptist, Mk 1:1-8. The term "Gospel" here means, not the book or writing, but the good news of the Kingdom of God. Compare St. Paul.

Mark's repetition of the prophecy from Isaiah 40:3, reflects the early Christian view of John as the forerunner of Christ. It points to the early Christian use of Old Testament "prophecy" as clairvoyant prediction of events then taking place. More important it shows that the Christian movement was associated with the deeper spiritual insight of Second Isaiah (See Lk 4:16f) regarding the nature and character of the Kingdom, in contrast to the political and radical apocalyptic types of messianism current in Jesus's day. Apparently Mark used the Sptuagint or ancient Greek translation of Isaiah.

According to Mark, John the Baptist was primarily a moral preacher of repentance, Mk 1:2-8 reflecting in this emphasis the ethical preaching of the great 8th to 6th century B.E. prophets of the Old Testament. In coming to John, Jesus associated himself with this line of thought. Luke's special source also indicates John as an ethical preacher, Lk 3:10-14. It is interesting to observe that the Luke version adds more of the Isaiah 40 quotation, concluding with "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Lk 3:6), reflecting the ethical universalism of the great prophets.

But Mtt and Lk add to the picture, from the Q source, that John was an apocalyptic type prophet of divine wrath and the day of judgment. In Mtt 3:11-12 and Lk 3:16-17 he is reported as speaking of an unquenchable fire for the wicked. One of the questions of the New Testament analysis is whether Jesus adopts apocalyptic ideas in the literal form of the contemporary apocalypticism of his day. Our study will attempt to throw some light on this question as we proceed.

Jesus differed from John markedly in an important personality aspect. John was an ascetic type religious leader, Mk 1:6, clothed in rough garb and eating plain food, whereas Jesus was not an ascetic, Mtt 11:18 (Lk 7:33), except in the one respect that he remained unmarried.

2. The Baptism, Mk 1:9-11. The expression "in those days" suggests that the original event and the written record is separated by a considerable lapse of time. The purpose of Mark here is clearly Christological; that is to say the report represents what Christians came to think about Jesus, namely, that he was appointed from the beginning of his ministry to a messianic office.

We may be certain that there was a real baptism event, for the greater figure, Jesus, as the early Christians would have regarded him, came to and was baptized by the lesser figure, John. Moreover, that John's baptism was a baptism of "repentance" (v.4), to which Jesus submitted indicates further that the early church did not invent this story, but that it must be based on fact.<sup>19a</sup> What transpired at the baptism?

The scene indicates that Jesus had a profoundly moving experience or sense of calling, just prior to his ministry; the Baptism records his sense of Divine approval, and the conviction of his call to serve.<sup>19b</sup>

<sup>19a</sup> Branscomb, op. cit. p 16

<sup>19b</sup> Branscomb, op. cit. p 20

Mark's account of the baptism implies that the experience was subjective in nature. Mark's report is that Jesus sees the dove and that the voice speaks to him, while that others saw or heard is not mentioned. Mark's account is in some contrast to the more objective features of the event which Matthew and Luke give (Harmon 15); in these later Gospels the voice spoke to those standing by, and that the dove appeared in bodily form is emphasized, Mtt 3:17; Lk 3:22. Branscomb concludes that in Mark's account "we are farther up-stream in a constantly flowing and enlarging tradition."<sup>19c</sup>

Note that the heavenly voice speaks the language of Scripture, here Ps 2:7; the last phrase suggests, Is 42:1. The Western Text of Luke's version quotes the whole of Is 2:7, adding "today I have begotten you." (Lk 3:22).

Whichever of the two interpretations one may accept, namely either that the opening of the heavens and the descent of the Spirit was a literal supernatural manifestation; or, to believe that behind the report of "the heavens opened" and "the Spirit descending" lay perhaps, a sudden parting of clouds and a flashing down of sun rays, suggesting the presence of the supernatural to those who witnessed the baptism and passed on the account, the light phenomena and figure in any case may stand for Jesus's prophetic-type inspiration concerning the Kingdom of love which he was about to preach. Note John 1:4f; I John 1:5-7; Acts 2:3-4; 26:18, 23; II Cor. 4:6, 18; 5:7 where light phenomena and light are a figure of speech standing for Christian experience.

3. The Temptation, Mk 1:12-13 and Lk 4:1-13. Contemplating a new work, Jesus quite naturally would have become emotionally involved in a period of self-examination, testing of motives, i.e. of "temptation." Periods of self-examination, planning, and decision are common in every life. This event shows the real humanity of Jesus: he was subject to temptation as all men, to intellectual and moral pondering and searching for the Divine Will for his life.

As given in Mtt and Lk the event reflects Jesus's rejection of the temptation to become a political type of leader or messiah, Lk 4:5-8 (John 6:15); the temptation to put material goods and aims ahead of spiritual goods and aims, Lk 4:3-4. There comes a time in all life when the decision must be made whether we as men are to devote our talents to the increase of personal material power, or to the service of others in love and self-giving.

Finally Jesus rejects the temptation to use the miraculous for display, Lk 4:9-13, as was expected of Messianic claimants. Mk 8:11-12 \*

The Ministry in Galilee, Mk 1:14-8:26. Announcement of the Kingdom of God, its imminent arrival and ethical character; Jesus teaches with authority; his works of power, Mk 1:14-45. Note the imperativeness in Jesus's appeal in behalf of the Kingdom, and his hope that men might accept it. "The time is fulfilled"; it is a matter of urgency that men accept the message of the Kingdom. That it is imminent in time or here and now present, implies that it is immanent in the circumstances of life and history; it may be entered or experienced immediately, upon "repentance," that is to say, moral cleansing and renewal. The Gospel is the good news, the blessedness of life in harmony with the Will of God. (We shall study Jesus' idea of the kingdom of heaven in further detail presently).

<sup>19c</sup> Ibid. p 18.

\* That the temptation story is a literary construction is suggested by its use of quotations from the Old Testament: Lk. 4:2 and 4:4 reflect Deut. 9:9 and I Kgs. 19:8; Lk 4:4 is a direct quotation from Deut 8:3.

Jesus points to the necessity of "repentance" in human life and affairs as a normal and fundamental moral attitude, if there is to be change for the better, for growth, or progress in human affairs. Review carefully our discussion of this area of moral experience, p. 176-177 in the OT section of this study, where we pointed out that extreme or morbid interpretations of the role of "pride" and the need of "repentance" in human life should be avoided and are essentially foreign to the main scriptural teaching in both old and New Testaments. That Jesus did not mean that all men are subject to a need for "repentance, in some absolutistic or morbid sense seems clear in his references to the righteous who need no repentance, Mk 2:17, Lk 15:7,31, Mtt 25:21-23, 37, as well as by his generally optimistic but realistic philosophy of man and human life, for review of which we refer to our subsequent discussion on the basic teachings of Jesus.

In the selection of the disciples we are reminded how any great movement needs men to carry it through

Mark's reference to his entering the synagogue in his own region to teach, Mk1:21-22, should be read with Lk 4:16-20 where the report is that Jesus at the opening of his ministry looks to the Isaianic suffering service tradition for his inspiration and ideal.

The Kingdom comes with power in the healings and exorcisms. (We later interpret Jesus's miracles in considerable detail). Note thus far the belief of his time in which Jesus shared, that demonic spirits are the causes of disease; further, that the healings seem a consequence or corollary to his moral ministry Mk 2:5-12. He is anxious first to heal the mind, and heart and soul; physical blessing and restoration may follow - as so often true in the cases of psychoneurotic disease .

## 2. Controversies with Scribes and Pharisees begin, Mk 2:1-3:6

In the healing of the paralytic, 2:1-12, some of the Scribes present become offended at Jesus's claim to forgive sins. Yet there seems nothing strange in Jesus's act here: we too must often forgive sins, if we expect to be forgiven!

At the dinner in Levi's house, 2:13-17, they are offended by his association with "sinners", and his disregard of their distinction between "clean" and "unclean" types of things and persons. Jesus himself rebukes their caste attitude toward those considered inferior or unworthy, disclosing on his part a democratic sympathy lacking in some of the religious authorities of the day. The "I came" reflects his sense of mission.

Another issue arose over fasting, 2:18-20, and the ritual washing of hands (Mk 7:1-8). The Scribes and Pharisees were offended by his failure to keep the feasts and other regulations. It is possible that 2:19-20 reflects the later asceticism of the early church'.

The next issue develops over Sabbath observance: they are offended at his violation of the Sabbath by permitting his disciples to pluck grain on that day, 2:23-28, and by his healing work on the Sabbath day, 3:1-6. Jesus point here is that human need should come before observance of the law; he cautions against letting the law become an abstract and absolutistic tyrant. In connection with a similar point later on he taught that the "abstract law of the validity of oaths should give way before the law commanding respect and care of parents" or persons, Mk 7:9-13.<sup>19e</sup> We have already pointed

<sup>19e</sup> Branscomb, op cit., p 124

out how the more liberal Pharisees themselves were busy loosening up and interpreting the law in ways to make it serve human need.

The plot against him forms, 2:6; 3:6 -- their minds were closed. Note the strange bedfellows, Pharisees with Herodians. How often cheap political maneuvers have undone worthy men and worthy causes. Jesus was now becoming conscious of their intransigent spirit; accordingly Mark has appropriately reported the sayings on the separation of the new from the old at this place, 2:21-22. Jesus evidently foresaw that his message would change and burst the old order.

3. Jesus's popularity in contrast to official opposition, Mk 3:7-5:43.  
Main incidents are:-

The crowds that come from a distance reveal Jesus's initial popularity, 3:7-12. Note Mark's theory of the Messianic Secret, as modern scholars refer to it, 3:12, also 1:25; that is, since the unclean spirits are supernatural beings they would know of Jesus's supernatural origin and nature! This reflects the supernaturalist Christology of Mark and the early church.

By appointing the twelve, 3:13-19, to go out to preach, he organizes his movement more carefully and widens his activity.

The attitude of his family is hostile, 3:20-21, 31-35. (Moffatt translates "family" in 3:21, where "friends" in RSV) Mk 6:3-4 should also be studied here, with Mtt 13:55-56 and Lk 4:22. Evidently Jesus' family and neighbors in his home town of Nazareth were not impressed with him as supernatural messenger. The pointed questions, Who are my brothers and mother? 3:31-35, reveal at once Jesus's universalism and the simplicity of his appeal. All or any may be followers of him and within his fellowship, who do "the will of God." What do such passages as Mk 3:35 and Mtt 6:10 mean? In its larger context Jesus is here carrying on and stressing the fundamental Hebraic ethical idealism and personalism. Practically, the saying "Whoever does the will of God" means that whenever we love and respect persons we do God's will; for personality is, not only God's own highest nature and being, but in our finite cases represents his highest work in creation. (Note I Cor 9:5 where St. Paul refers to Jesus Brothers.)

He is accused of sorcery by his enemies, 3:22-29, and replies that this is blasphemy, and unforgivable. What does he mean by the sin that is unforgivable or "eternal"? What Jesus may mean here is the sin of calling good evil and evil good; wilfull and malicious perversion or misuse of the truth, calling error truth and truth error. Classic modern examples have been the Nazi race theory, or Senator Joseph McCarthy's false and malicious accusation for political advantage. The wilfull disregard or misuse of the truth does constitute something psychologically hopeless or "unforgivable," as long as a person persists in such an attitude. It is Jesus's way of emphasizing Moses Fundamental 9th Commandment against deceptive word and action: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." A personality that is deceitful is corrupt at the core. Such personality can never be trusted, and itself establishes the "unforgivable" quality of its own evil so long as its deceptive intentions persist. Luccock in the Interpreter's Bible reminds us that "We are peculiarly exposed to this sin whenever we become primarily the defenders of some advantage"<sup>19d</sup> We tender a note of caution, however; Jesus does not mean here that God is unwilling to forgive even this central most sin of personality, upon the condition of genuine repentance and desire for

salvation and new life. In Mtt 18:21-22 and Lk 17:3-4 he declares that God's readiness to forgive is unlimited if forgiveness is sincerely sought. (See our subsequent study of Jesus's conception of Judgment, p. ).

In Mk 4:1-34 we have typical parables of the Kingdom of Heaven. We pause at this point to analyze briefly the nature of Jesus' parables and the problem of how to understand them. They are the frequent form of address by which he conveys his moral teachings. Immediately following this present discussion of Mark's parables of growth we shall analyze more fully Jesus's moral and eschatological teachings as a whole. As we read these parables bear in mind the following points:-

(1) In treating them guard against two tendencies: One, the tendency to accept entirely without qualification, the interpretation that the gospel authors sometimes put upon them, in terms of the outlook of later times and the needs of the early church. For example, Mark's theory of the parables in 4:10-12 presents considerable difficulty. According to him they are secret or esoteric utterances used in order to withhold the secret of the Kingdom from those outside the inner or initiated group; the parables were meant to be riddles designed to hide the truth from hearers! This interpretation sounds as if it comes from a time later in the first century, when Christianity was being interpreted in some quarters as a kind of "mystery religion", like other mystery religions current in the Roman empire. In any case, Mark's view of the intention of the parables is totally unlike Jesus's intention for them.

The latter's purpose in speaking in parables we may gather by a careful study of his attitude and utterances as a whole. For instance, present in this same passage is Jesus's declaration that the parables are told in order to simplify and clarify the message, not to obscure and hide it from the hearers. Contrast 4:9, 13, 21-24, 33 with verses 10-12. Mk 4:12 is a quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10 an ironical statement of the prophet meaning that although he is speaking quite clearly and plainly, the people in their moral obtuseness will not hear or head. The parallel passage in Mtt 13:12-13, where the quotation is given more fully, points this out.

Another probable example of an editorial interpretation of the parables by the gospel authors is their explanation sometimes along allegorical lines, as Mk 4:14-20 (or Mtt 13:1f) suggests. This interpretation makes the parable of the sower, Mk 4:3-9, an allegory, which reflects missionary problems of the early church. That is to say, Mark's explanation of the parable refers to the practical difficulties that the early evangelists encountered in keeping newly converted pagans within the fold: each difficulty that Jesus utters is interpreted as a particular difficulty met by the early missionary. This is not to claim, of course, that Jesus may not have used allegory occasionally (and even here he may have anticipated such problems as Mark relates in 4:14f). Allegory however, with its usual double meaning is not typical of Jesus's parables as a whole. Rather they were plainly intended to convey a message as directly and simply as possible, in the artistic way of using examples from human life precisely in order that his hearers could see the point immediately.

- The second tendency which we must guard against in studying the parables is to modernize them too greatly. We are prone to read into them too readily modern concepts and problems. For example, Mk 4:26-29 has sometimes been interpreted, in the idea of the growing seed, as teaching the modern doctrine of evolution and the idea of inevitable or automatic human progress. Actually, what the parable teaches is that we may be confident of the Divine purpose in history, in spite of its slow growth toward fulfillment.

(2) Putting the matter positively, now, the purpose of the parables is to elucidate and make clear, not to obscure. Usually they seek to bring to light one main point, though corollary implications may be present too. The parable

is a kind of logical or homilectic scaffolding: when we once grasp the point, the parable itself has served its purpose, and may in a sense be torn down and discarded. A parable is a fictional story designed to teach a moral or religious truth. Parables are true in Moral or Teaching, not in historic fact. There need not have been a specific "Good Samaritan" whom Jesus had in mind when he told the story. The story does, however -- and this is its largest intention -- convey a universal ideal principle, or truth of life, that should apply to all life anywhere any time.

(3) Finally keep in mind that Jesus's parables contain homely, every-day examples. They are realistic. They are not idealized portraits. They tell how men actually are and think and do. They are not portraits of ideal people but pictures of real men. Indeed, we may question the motives of some of the characters of the parables, e.g. Mtt 13:44 about the man who finds a treasure hidden in a field, buys it without telling the owner. The point of this parable is, not that we ought to do likewise in a similar circumstance, but that we ought to desire the kingdom of heaven as strongly as the man desired that treasure, quite as the accompanying parable of the pearl of great price makes clear, Mtt 13:45-46. Jesus is simply citing here what men have often done who find treasures, commending their singleness of purpose and devotion as the quality with which the work of the kingdom should be pursued.

Or consider the parable of the Prodigal Son, Lk 15:10f, who goes home partly out of economic need. The parable does not teach that economic need is the sole basis of human action and history -- it is not a good Communist parable! (Though it might indeed suggest that economic need is an important factor in life's decisions and should therefore be taken into account!). Rather, what the parable mainly teaches is ethical repentance -- "Father, I have sinned against thee" -- and the father's forgiving love, outgoing and healing, which is God's love for men. Another example of the realism of Jesus's parables is the nobleman who slays the rebellious servants, Lk 19:27. This parable relates simply what rulers do sometimes to rebellious subjects. It is designed to inspire its hearers with an urgency to accept the kingdom, to be faithful stewards, and to emphasize the dire consequences in life if one fails to accept it and is not faithful. It is not a parable advocating political autocracy and tyranny! (Actually there are two parables involved in this lengthy passage, Lk 19:11-27). Jesus teaches by what men actually do as readily as by what they ought to do.

What now is the teaching of the three parables in Mark 4:1-34, commonly called the parables of growth? They all have a similar message, and perhaps it is clearest to state their teaching briefly in the following order:

The Seed Growing of Itself, suggests that the whole cosmic order is moving toward realization of the kingdom. It utters Jesus's belief in a divine purpose, within and behind, life and history, and that that purpose will surely come to pass, perhaps soon. It is a parable of hope, optimism, and encouragement about life, if it can become suffused with God's love.

The Mustard Seed, 4:30-32, suggests that the final fruits or scope of the kingdom cannot be measured by the small, present beginnings, in the few disciples.

The Sower, 4:3-9, is likewise a parable of encouragement, intending to teach that "Though much of their labor be in vain, they need not be discouraged"

These high parables of growth suggest that the kingdom is immanent in the circumstances of life and history -- it is a welling-up, a flowering or a fulfillment of the work of the Spirit here and now. (Compare Mk 1:15; Lk 17:2--21)

and our later summary of the idea of the kingdom p 149f)

Mk 4:24 reflects Jesus synthesis of ethics and religion, like the 8th century B.C. prophets, Amos, et al. Branscomb suggests that verse 25 possibly reflects originally a cynical proverb. But as used here by Jesus it would mean that "to him who has" accepted the truth of this ethical kingdom, which Jesus is proclaiming, as his own truth for life, to him "will more be given"; that is, blessing and satisfaction will follow upon the acceptance of God's kingdom of love. On the other hand, life will frustrate all the more those who reject the kingdom.

This is in no sense a parable glorifying acquisitiveness. Indeed, the verse preceding emphasized giving, not acquisition.

Quieting of the storm, 4:35-41 and further healings, Mk 5. Did the ravings of the Gerasene demoniac frighten the swine? Note in the case of the woman with the flow of blood that Jesus asks a question seeking information: "Who touched me?". Apparently Jesus was not in some automatic and previous way omniscient. Observe further the emphasis that her faith has made her well. (See our later analysis and interpretation of Jesus's miracles).

Study Questions for Part Three

1. State clearly the "problem" of the historical Jesus so far as our contemporary evaluation of the outlook on history in his day is concerned.
2. What is the main significance of John the Baptist's message as revealing the nature of the movement with which Jesus associated himself? What aspect of John's message raises a problem concerning Jesus' outlook?
3. How may we be sure that there was a real baptism event? How do Matthew and Luke differ from Mark in the report of this event? What would have been the main psychological content of the event for Jesus?
4. State the general significance of the temptation experience. According to Luke's account what three specific temptations are rejected by Jesus?
5. What did Jesus mean by the declaration that the kingdom of God was at hand? Evaluate the importance, and the problem, of an attitude of repentance as necessary to human well-being.
6. Read Mk 1:34; 3:10-12; 6:13 and John 9:1-3. What two theories of the origin of disease do verses like these imply for Jesus's time? In which of these views does Jesus share; with which does he differ?
7. Explain the offenses which turned some Scribes and Pharisees against Jesus. What was the issue in Jesus' mind regarding human need as over against the ceremonial law?
8. What is Mark's theory of the "Messianic secret"?
9. What were the attitude of Jesus's family toward him in his home town of Nazareth? What was the significance of Jesus' reply to his own question about who are my brothers, etc. Mk 3:35?
10. What did Jesus mean by the unforgivable or "eternal" sin of Mk 3:22-29?
11. Against what two tendencies must we guard in treating Jesus's parables? Illustrate from the report of the parables in Mk 4. What seems to be Mark's theory of the parables in this chapter? Upon what verses do we base our conclusion that Mark's theory seems wrong?
12. What is the main a) purpose, b) technique of the parables?
13. Give the general teaching of each of the three parables of "growth" in Mk 4.
14. What is the probable meaning of Mk 4:24-25?
15. For your study begin to fix in your mind the outline of Jesus's ministry, p 141.1 of this Guide.

PART FOURThe Basic Teachings of Jesus

## Assignment:-

1. RSV: Mtt 5:43; 6:26, 30; 7:12...  
 10:29-31; 20:1-16  
 Mk 8:35-37; 10:43-5; 12:30-  
 31  
 (1st John 4:21)

Jesus's concept of Man:  
 the Sacredness of Personality

To the above references add:  
 Lk 10:25-37; 15:1-32  
 (Jhn 3:16-17; 14:15-15:14;  
 17:20-23)  
 (1st John chs 2-4)

His concept of God and Christian  
 Love: Agape or Altruistic Love

Mk 3:31-35; 4:26-32; 12:13-17  
 Lk 13:20; 17:20-37; 19:11-26  
 Mtt 20:1-16; 25:1-13; 6:9-13;  
 9:16-17; 13:33, 44-45

Typical parables and sayings on  
 the nature of the Kingdom of  
 Heaven. Implications for human  
 social life.

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Mtt Chs. 5-7...

The Sermon on the Mount

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Read carefully the passages indicated on pages  
 in this Guide for Jesus's concept of Salvation, Judgment and Destiny.

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Also the passages indicated in the section on the Interpretation of  
 the Miracles, pages

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## 2. Study Guide, Part Four:-

- A. Jesus concept of Man
- B. The Concept of God and Christian Love
- C. The Kingdom of Heaven
- D. Salvation and Destiny
- E. The Sermon on the Mount--a short commentary
- F. An Interpretation of the Miracles

Study Questions

#### IV. The Basic Teachings of Jesus

As systematized in one possible way, the basic teachings of Jesus encompass four major themes: his view of men; his view of God as the loving Father, and love as the substance of morality; his view of human duty, or ethics, in the society of fellowship, or the "kingdom of heaven"; and, as a summarizing theme, his concept of salvation and destiny. In addition to these themes, regarding life and reality as a whole, there is Jesus' view of himself as God's messenger of the kingdom. We will consider these teachings in this order, reserving for a separate section the last mentioned, presented as the problem or idea of Jesus' messiahship.

##### A. Jesus' Concept of Man / Human Nature

1. Fundamental to Jesus' outlook was his belief in the sacredness of human personality, its supremacy in value and being, derived from his Jewish heritage. In Fosdick's trenchant phraseology the distinctive Hebrew-Christian outlook emphasized "personality as boundless in value and possibility" and expressed the faith "that God and his universe are pledged to the satisfaction of personality's inherent promise."<sup>20</sup> True to his Jewish inheritance, Jesus possessed an optimistic view that man and life are good. His affirmation of the sacredness of human personality is asserted in such passages as the following:

Matthew 5:43---Love enemies.

Ballou 1123-9

6: 26, 30---You are of more value than the birds  
and grass of the field.

Ballou 1127

7: 12----The Golden Rule

10: 29-31---You of more value than many sparrows;  
the hairs of your head are numbered

Ballou 1130

20: 1-10---Parable of the laborers and the hours.

Ballou 1166

16: 25-----The Great Paradox

Ballou 1133, 1091

20: 26-27

Luke 10:25-37---The great Commandment, and parable of  
the good Samaritan: love God and  
neighbor as thyself.<sup>21</sup>

Ballou 1171

Mark 2: 27----- Man takes precedence over sacred  
institutions e.g. the Sabbath.

Ballou 1073

2. Jesus often thought of men as being like "wandering sheep" who need guidance.<sup>22</sup> This evaluation is suggested by the familiar parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:5f) and, in John's gospel, by the figure of Jesus himself as the Good Shepherd.

20. Guide to Understanding the Bible, op. cit., p. 97

21. Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18.

22. As phrased by Wesley G. Nicholson

Jesus enjoins repentance at the beginning of his ministry (Mark 1:15), and it is reported that he forgives the sins of people who came to him needing help. This does not mean, however, that Jesus believed that all men were abject, gross, or depraved sinners. Like Jeremiah (31: 29) and Ezekiel (chap. 18) he did not seem to believe in inherited "original sin." His sayings, as "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mark 10: 14, Kg.J.); or, "It is not the will of my Father, who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Mtt. 18: 14), suggests his positive or optimistic outlook on human nature in its original state. In the incident of the healing of the blind man in John 9: 3, he is reported as saying, in direct answer to the question whether the man had sinned, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents." Furthermore, there are those passages where, in quite natural way, he assumes that many men are "righteous":

Mark 2: 17----Came not to call the righteous but sinners.

Luke 15:7-----The 99 righteous who need no repentance.

Matthew 25:31, 37---The quiet, unassuming righteous who were not aware of their virtue.

5:18-The Beatitudes.

5:45-God's sun shines on the just and the unjust.

In enjoining repentance Jesus points to the sound psychological principle of being willing to change our mind, to remake values that guide us, indeed to acknowledge past mistakes and sins, if they have occurred, and to resolve toward renovation and improvement. Such attitude of mind makes moral growth possible.

That the need, and the experience, of renovation and growth is normative for most human life may be the implication of Jesus' saying in the Q document (Mtt 7:11) where, in the larger context of affirming God's forgiving and bestowing love, in contrast to imperfect humanity, he is reported as saying: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?" (The New English Bible and Smith-Goodspeed translate: "bad as you are"). Indeed in the famous saying in Mark 10:18 Jesus apparently included himself among "imperfect" men.

3. One summarizing affirmation is certain: Jesus, like his prophetic forefathers, believed in human moral freedom, and appealed to men's inherent possibility to be righteous. This all-encompassing outlook embraces his parables and teachings.<sup>23</sup> He believed that human life could become predominantly, or characteristically free from sin, Matthew 5:38-48, 13-16. In addition to saying that God's nature as love, and his own example, were present to inspire men in the quest for the good life, he suggested that, men's reasons--as native impulse--could guide them, Matthew 7:24-27; 9:13; 12:7; Luke 12:57. Jesus put his faith in all kinds and conditions of men. He excluded none from his society or assistance, not even official outcasts such as publicans or harlots. The often quoted interpretation in John's Gospel, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" has summarized for Christian faith Jesus' understanding of men in the positive terms here set forth.

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23. E.g. The Great Commandment, The Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:25-27, etc.

## B. Christian Love

In this section we will suggest some of the central concerns and perspectives of the Christian ethic. These are, the idea of God as loving heavenly Father; the Christian understanding of love as Agape, the New Testament term that has come to summarize the "Christian ethic," in much contemporary Christian discourse, and the place or role of the self in the society or fellowship of selves, which is the kingdom of God.

1. The Fatherhood of God: Jesus carried over from his Jewish background and reemphasized the belief in God as a Father, concerned for, loving, and forgiving men "their trespasses," if men in a like spirit of loving concern forgave one another's trespasses--to cite the familiar translation of the Lord's prayer. The phraseology, God as "Father," appears in the Old Testament and in other Jewish literature of the late Old Testament age.<sup>24</sup> In the book of the prophet Hosea in the Old Testament God is tenderly depicted as a father in his relation to Israel, "my son." The expression translated "mercy" or "steadfast love" is chesed, a Hebrew counterpart for the New Testament agape.<sup>25</sup>

In the New Testament, the phrase describing God as "Father" appears a number of times, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount (Mtt. 5-7, Ballou 1123-29), and, in that context, with love, or agape as descriptive of the fatherly nature of God.<sup>26</sup>

Inspiration for the moral life is here described as flowing from this quality or nature of the divine reality (Mtt. 5:44-48, Ballou 1125D). Central to the religious experience of Jesus was an intense (and for Christians regarded as unique) reliance upon, and fellowship with, God as the Heavenly Father of Love.

2. Agape Love: Christian love is the love for another, or for others. It is respect for persons activated, into out-going, self giving service, which may call for varying degrees of self-denial or self sacrifice in our human relationships. However, rather than some inflexible "law" or demand, it is the spirit of willingness to serve, to yield, "to wash one another's feet," in joy and in freedom.<sup>27</sup> The English expression "altruism" sometimes means a kind of dry, distinterested duty; as we use it below, however, we will mean by it Christian love, or the dynamic love of persons.

In varying syntactical forms within the New Testament, the Greek word "agape" often means this active love of persons, and is translated "love."<sup>28</sup> In much contemporary Christian discourse it summarizes the Christian ethic. Both the term and the idea are found in such well known places as the following:

Matthew 5:44-48: Love enemies, etc.....Ballou 1125  
                   22:37-40: Great Commandment.....Ballou 1171 (Lk. 10:25-37)  
                   Luke 10:25-37: Good Samaritan.....Ballou 1171

24. Psalm 68:5, 103:13; Ecclesiasticus 23:21; Book of Jubilees 1:24-5
25. Hosea 11:1; 6:6; 10:12; 12:6. See also Hosea 11:4 and 14:4 for the idea of outgoing, serving, and forgiving love.
26. "...I say to you, Love( agapete ) your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven...", Mtt. 5:44
27. Agape is not "other" than justice, but includes or relates to justice, as that spirit which sometimes calls for arbitration or harmonization of sincere conflicts in interest.
28. In the New Testament, forms of Agape are used in varying senses, for

Luke 15:1-3: The lost Sheep.....Ballou 1173  
 John's Gospel, Ch. 15: Greater love hath no man...Ballou 1158  
 (I. Cor. Ch. 13: St. Paul's hymn to love.....Ballou 1201-2  
 Gal. 2:20 & Eph. 5:2: Christ's love in under-  
 going suffering and death  
 First John 4:7-12: .....Ballou 1231-32)

We may summarize the Christian agape in simplest terms as Giving Love: it seeks realization or fulfillment of other's interests and needs. It is altruism in highest meaning.

Christian writers today have found it convenient to contrast the New Testament Agape with another common meaning of the word "love," also having a Greek original, "Eros," found in Plato's beautiful dialogue Symposium. In that writing we have a moving depiction of the self, seeking self-realization or self-fulfillment in the highest terms of one's quest for spiritual values: truth, beauty, and the good. Taking this theme as our own we may let Eros stand for Craving Love, which seeks self-realization or fulfillment of one's own interests in some form. Eros may encompass the range of cravings from the desire to satisfy bodily or physical appetites to the satisfaction of higher spiritual needs. To speak of love for candy, to satisfy one's sweet tooth; or love of music, to satisfy aesthetic craving; or love for friendship; or love of knowledge is to speak of "eros" on various planes. In addition to love for the opposite sex, or erotic craving, as we say in English, eros in Plato's dialogue stands for the full range of values for the self. As giving love may be expressed by the classic term Altruism, so craving love may be summarized by the expression Egoism.

Are altruism and egoism opposing and contradictory impulses or principles? That the "tension" of ethical life arises in the problem of the relationship between altruism and egoism is plain. That giving love, agape, should sometimes take precedence over craving love, or eros, may also be suggested by the Judeo-Christian ethic. But does this mean that one's self or personal being, in one's own interests and needs, is in some unalterable or irreconcilable way opposed to other selves or persons in their interests or needs? Does agape conflict with eros? Are love for others and love of self mutually exclusive? What does the New Testament teach about such central concerns of the ethical life? How does it resolve the tension between altruism and egoism? What is the place or role of the self, in one's relation to other selves, in being? This is the ethical problem.

There is considerable controversy among theologians as to precisely what Christian love, or agape means, relative to the role or the place of the self in the ethical relationship. Some discussion among contemporary writers, suggests that the Gospel rules out the self and its claims--or at least much argument tends toward a negative view of the rights, needs or place of the self. For example it is said that there is no place for self love in the Gospel<sup>29</sup>; or that in some way Jesus did not really mean in the great commandment, "Love thy neighbor as

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example, not only to show the classic "love for enemies" (Mtt. 5:44) or God's love toward men (Rom. 5:8), but also to state utilitarian love (Mtt. 5:40), and even love as enjoyment of life for the self, i.e. in an "eros" sense. In Mtt. 22:37, the great Commandment, the one term Agapeseis covers love for God, for oneself and for neighbors.

29. cp. George F. Thomas: Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, Scribners, 1955, p. 55-57, but also p. 78-79! And see Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, I, 1953, Westminster Press

thyself."<sup>30</sup> Or it has been argued that Christian ethical motivation is not based on the infinite worth of personality<sup>31</sup>—but rather that agape means to love another even though he be "worthless."

Other Christian opinion insists that the self is described in the Gospel as having and playing a legitimate role in being; that the largest aspect of Christian teaching is the worthfulness of all persons; that all persons mutually share a right to existence, one's self as well as the other, and that the Christian Gospel of love solves the tension between the altruistic and the egoistic impulses.<sup>32</sup>

According to such view the solution to the ethical problem may be suggested by Jesus' famous "paradoxical" utterance itself, where he expressed the principle: "whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life will save it." (Mk, 8:35; Mtt. 16:25, Ballou 1133D). The problem is to interpret what the losing of the self means. Does it mean self-abnegation and the obliteration of the self, its reduction to zero, or its complete erasure? Does Jesus mean that desire, or the impulse to live, intrinsic to personality or selfhood, is evil and should be destroyed? Actually the great paradox has its parallel or alternative phrasing where, if we may join the two sayings, losing the self is defined as the dedication of self in service, (Mk 10:42-45; Mtt. 20:26-27; Ballou 1091C): "...whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant (KJ Mtt. 20:26-27). Jesus teaching here seems to be that a full-orbed motive for life would be one of dedicated self-giving in service looking to the needs of others, concern for them and their welfare, over and above and beyond mere concern for one self. That Jesus did not mean, by such sayings as the great paradox, to rule out legitimate self-interests, seems affirmed in the Great Commandment, or in the Golden Rule, where the self is expressly included as having rightful place in the ethical relationship. If one insists on terminology or the letter, in the phraseology of the Great Commandment, agape expressly includes the idea of legitimate self-esteem, self-regard, or "love of self" along with love of neighbor.<sup>33</sup>

The Christian Gospel is a gospel of self-realization for all selves inclusively. Indeed, it is not an ethic of self-realization in an exclusive or "selfish" sense. Jesus' ethical teachings in their full context suggests that agape is psychologically satisfying, whereas eros alone or by itself, as a sole motive for life, would be self-defeating. Live life in terms of a hypothetical eros alone, that is, in terms of self-seeking, deaf to, or heedless of other lives around us, and we will miss the secret of life, or that very self-realization which we legitimately crave. Live life, however, in the spirit of agape, and we not only serve and help others to fulfill their lives, but we find highest joy, and fulfill our own lives in the highest way, by so living--this, in our view, is the meaning of Jesus' paradoxical utterance. The total outlook of Jesus teaching and the New Testament (as does the Old Testament in its highest reaches of thought),--as mankind searches for the solution to the ethical problem--is found in the fellowship that agape establishes, or tends to secure.

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30. cp. Rudolf Bultmann: Jesus and the Word, Scribners, 1958, p. 114-119

31. cp. Paul Ramsey: Basic Christian Ethics, Scribners, 1950, p. 94

32. For forceful statements of this view see Josiah Royce: The Religious Philosophy of Josiah Royce. (ed. S.G. Brown) Syracuse Univ. Press, 1952, p. 146-7. Albert C. Knudson: Basic Issues in Christian Thought, Abingdon, 1950, p. 191 and A. C. Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics, Abingdon, 1943, p. 178

33. See note 28

Psychological reality seems to be this: that the love and respect that others have for one's self is the highest form of self-realization. Agape achieves this; eros alone or by itself, does not. When one reaches out toward another, in the spirit of agape, that is, to love him and serve his interests and needs, over and beyond one's own--when the other realizes that his life and welfare is your concern too--confidence and friendship are established. Then, as a product of this relationship, when one stands in love and fellowship with others, one experiences full or highest well-being or joy or happiness. We know this in our deeper human friendships. Agape does not rule out legitimate ranges of eros; it simply says that life lived solely in terms of eros, will not complete its destiny in fellowship; whereas in agape we find life's highest satisfactions.

Life is a proper mixture of eros and agape, with agape a more inclusive statement of motive, indicating the design of others desire to live along with the self, and in the highest sense, together in fellowship.

True, agape should over-reach in its aim just the closer circle of one's more intimate friends--to include all and sundry and even those who may be antagonistic, or one's enemies, as Jesus says (Mtt. 5:46). It is active good will toward all men as sacred in their persons. In his saying in Matthew 5:46--"if you love those who love you, what reward have you?"--Jesus seems to mean that love should be more, or reach beyond, or rise higher than, bare utilitarian or mutual or market love--the love and service of others only if they love and serve in return.

3. The Self in the teachings of Jesus: Such passages as the following emphasize or suggest the right to personal life, fulfillment or self-realization as included in the meaning of agape and the kingdom of heaven. This theme is an extension of the primary New Testament teaching of the sacredness of personality.

Mtt 5:3f	--The Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who," etc.	Ballou	1123D
6:32-33	--On anxiety and trust, and recognition that God affirms our need for material security.	"	1127C
7:7-12	--Ask and it will be given you, and Golden Rule.	"	1128A
25:21	--The faithful servant in parable of the talents to enter into the joy of the master	"	1170B
Mk 12:30-31	--The Great Commandment: Love neighbor as self	"	1138A
8:35;	--He that loses life in service will find it.	"	1133D
10:42-45			
Mtt 16:25; 20:26-27		"	1091C
Lk 6:38	--Give and it shall be given you.		
Act 20:35	--It is more blessed to give than to receive.		
Jhn 16:24	--That your joy may be full.		
10:10	--That men may have life abundantly.		
Mtt 5:23	--Passages including the idea of justice, acknowledging men's fundamental right to selfhood, fair play, and the principle of arbitration and adjustment between persons.		
Lk 18:2-16			
Mtt 7:6	--The defense of one's person, values, and accomplishments against heedless, unjust, or malicious attack or abuse.		

- (Rom. 12:6, 18 --Acknowledgment of personality differences or "gifts," and personality conflicts and problems, setting limits to comradeship.)
- Mk. 3:14  
Mk 9:2f  
14:33f --Where Jesus selects the disciples so that they would be near him, and passages which expressed his need for fellowship with special friends.

We may conclude by saying that there is an explicit doctrine of "rewards" in the Gospel, which emphasizes the self. (Mtt. 5:3, 8, 10; 6: 4,6; 10:42; Lk. 6:35; 11:28; Mk. 9:47).

Christianity has two ultimate objectives, an objective of motive, and an objective of results. Its objective of motive is Agape; its objective of results is the Kingdom, or Fellowship. Each of these may be transposed and become means and result for the other. In stressing agape we must not forget that one ultimate objective of the Christian ethic is fellowship, and fellowship implies oneself and one's fulfillment as well as the other self and his fulfillment. Agape is the means to fellowship. We should expect to experience a sense of well-being, or personal fulfillment (or "self-realization") in doing any right or duty, including Agape. (Mtt. 5:1f; Acts 20:35; Lk. 6:38; Mtt. 25:21, 7:7-12). The Agape-Fellowship polarity of the Christian ethic means the self-realization of all selves in a bond of serving love to each other. The Christian ethic, of course, is not self-realizational in the sense of realizing the self in exclusion of, or at the expense of others.

The Christian metaphysics and Christian ethics includes oneself as well as other selves. The ultimacy of personality in being and value is the cardinal motif--all persons, everywhere included, one's own as well as another are sacred. The problem of Christian ethics is to solve the "tension" between the legitimate claims of one's own "ego" and those of another. Fellowship solves this tension and agape creates fellowship. The motive of agape is to love the other person, in his material and spiritual need, first, in the sense that it transcends thought of material reward for oneself, or even of the reward of winning friendship. One may not win friendship in some particular isolated case; but he must still love in agape. However, the facts usually are that friendship and fellowship are established; accordingly agape tends to solve the deepest need of the self as a by-product of its activity. Usually agape establishes the earthly fellowship with men, as the normal outcome of the moral laws of the universe. Agape always establishes the fellowship with God.

Self-love is an express aspect of Christian ethics, if it means one's self-respect, and one's self-acceptance as a sacred person along with other persons, created as such by God. Agape does not mean self-denial or self-abnegation, or self annihilation in some morbid or extreme sense. (This would rather be the ethics of extreme philosophic Hinduism or Buddhism.) Jesus' highest ethical teachings include the self: The Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12, The Great Paradox, Mark 8:35; 10:43-44, The Great Commandment, Mark 12:30-31. It is a mistake to say that Christian ethics is not self-realizational in the highest sense advanced in our preceding discussion, or that Christian ethics rules out self-love, in the terms expressed above: i.e. as legitimate self esteem, central to stable personality. It would indeed rule out self-realization or self-love in some inordinate sense that would exclude others from fellowship with the self, or that would seek to dominate others and to live at their expense, in the true meaning of "selfishness" or sinfulness.

Furthermore, for there to be love, there has to be one who loves, i.e., one's self or one's own person. For others to be served there must be a self or oneself

who serves. Therefore, love itself implies one's self or one's own person and establishes it in value and in being. The concept of service implies two selves, one's own and the other. The Christian ideal of self-forgetfulness or self-sacrifice does not mean to destroy the self, but to let the self become completely outgoing and loving as God's own self is. Consciousness lies at the heart of the idea of the self. The difference between Christian self-consciousness and pagan or utilitarian self-consciousness or selfhood is that the latter is dominated by consciousness of one's own needs; whereas Christian selfhood is dominated by consciousness of the needs of others over and above and beyond mere concern with the needs of the self, but not exclusive of God's ultimate aim of the establishment of all selves in fellowship. Christian consciousness does not deny the legitimate claim and right of oneself to existence, or question the value of self-existence, as the Eastern religions in some respects seem to do.

Agape includes the self. The Christian ethic is like an eclipse: it has two foci. One focus is self-realizational in the highest form of fellowship--the focus which is the self. However, the other focus, the focus centering on another life, is absolutely essential, if the focus of the self is to be realized or to have legitimate meaning and status. Likewise the other person is commanded to focus on us in agape, to establish us. There could be no focus of agape, or the love and service, and establishment of the other, for the sake of the other, if there were not the focus of the self who serves and establishes, and is likewise a focus to receive the agape of the other. The outer curve of the ellipse itself is the society or fellowship established by these two principles, both selves going out to each other in agape, as the moral gravitation by which these foci are maintained in being. The Christian ethic is inter-self-realizational.

### C. The Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus' ethical ideas come to a focus in the phrase, kingdom of heaven. We cannot here trace exhaustively his teaching concerning this figure of speech. We suggest the following outline as indication of the main points. The passages cited range beyond contexts where the phrase "kingdom" is specifically used. Rather our effort is to look at the teaching in an over-all interpretative way, which this phrase suggests. The final two points acknowledge the important historic fact which must be considered in stating Jesus view of the kingdom, namely, its eschatological framework. Finally the allusions under point 3 to "political" and "economic" concerns imply interpolation of such sayings to modern experience. We present here an outline to guide the reader into a complex theme.

1. The Kingdom begins as individual in quality, quiet, unobtrusive, noticed by those with spiritual discernment--an immanent, spiritual force or power: Agape.

Mt 5:3f	--Beatitudes	Ballou 1123D
Lk 13:20; Mt 13:33, 44	-- leaven, treasure hid	" 1164D
Lk 17:20-21	--within or among you	
Mk 4:26f, 9	--mustard seed, Kingdom as growth	" 1164D (Mt 13:3)
	--who has ears to hear, let him hear.	
Lk 10:25	--coordinate expression, "eternal Life"	
Mt 11:20		

Mk 22:21-22 --though quiet, spiritual, individual and inward, would finally  
 Lk 11:20 burst and transform the old order, is irresistible, spiritual  
 power. (A point which may have come later in the ministry)

2. It is to be realized in a measure here and now on earth--by the instrumentality  
 of God's Spirit of love working in and through men; is a present activity.

Mt 5-7	--Sermon on Mount	Ballou 1123f
5:13f	--Ye are salt of earth, light of world	" 1124A
6:10	--Will be done on earth (Lord's Prayer)	" 1126C
7:24-27	--House on a Rock	" 1128D
Lk 10:25-37	--Good Samaritan	" 1171
Mt 25:14-30	--The Talents	" 1169-70
25:31f	--Since ye did it unto the least of these	" 1143-44

3. It has a social or universal outcome--to include all worthy men, not  
 just Israel.

Mk 3:31-35	--Whoever does God's Will is my brother	
12:9	--vineyard to be taken from unworthy tenants and given to others	
Lk 10:25-37	--Good Samaritan, any person in need is one's neighbor	
Mt 8:11-12	--Many to come from east and west to sit at table in the Kingdom	
13:38	--The field is the world	
21:43	--The Kingdom to be given to nations more worthy of it	
Mk 12:13-17	--Tribute money to Caesar: the Kingdom's "political" implications	Ballou 1102 (Mt 22:15)
Mt 20:1-16	--Laborers and Hours: Kingdom's "economic" implications	" 1166

i.e. The Kingdom is a Fellowship of persons: the aim, end, or objective, of the  
 Christian ethic:-

Mt 5:3-16,	--Beatitudes	Ballou 1123f
38-48	--Love enemies, etc	"
6:19-34	-- Love of men before material goods	"
7:1-14	--Judge not, Golden Rule etc.	
8:11	--the Kingdom's banquet	
25:1-13	--the wedding guests and Virgins	" 1169
Mk 2:13-17	--meal with publicans and sinners in Levi's house	" 1070 (Lk. 5:29)
10:14	--Suffer the little children to come	" 1091
Lk 15:11-32	--Prodigal Son	" 1173
14:15-24	--Banquet for the poor and outcasts	"
17:20	--Kgd. among you	
Rom 12:1-21	--(Christian virtue)	" 1194
1st John	-- " "	" 1229-32

4. Its final victory or consummation lies in the future (possibly ultimately a transcendent Heavenly future, miraculous, ineffable, glorious) an outcome which Jesus may have anticipated soon. Possibly he came to think of it more as a future realization, then a present possibility, as his tragic career moved toward its end, and the Kingdom seemed to be hindered by the stubborn opposition of men:--

Mk 9:1; 14:25; 13:32-37 (a parable of watchfulness)

Lk 19:11

Mt 8:11; 13:24-30 (parable of the harvest)

25:1-13 (wise and foolish virgins)

Ballou 1169B

In any case, Jesus left the fulfillment of the kingdom up to the Father's plan and will, strictly refusing to suggest when it might be, saying that only the Father knew, not even the Son.

Mk 8:11; 4:26-27; 13:32-33

Lk 17:20; 19:11; 11:16-20

Mt 25:13

In the meanwhile, men are to realize the Kingdom in their ethical action here and now.

Mt 5-7 --The Sermon on the Mount

Ballou 1123f

Jesus' teaching that the kingdom was in real sense already present eventually lessened the tension of expectation in the church and helped Christian history to look toward a stable growth beyond the specific eschatological hope of the earliest decades.<sup>34</sup>

5. The Kingdom will judge men, if they do not accept it--it is urgent:--

Mk 12:9

Lk 17:22f

Mt 8:12; 13:24-30; 21:43; 25:1-46

Ballou 1142:44

1169-70

But it brings judgment on all evil men, who reject it, Israelite and others; it is not merely apocalyptic judgment on Israel's national enemies.

In sum, Jesus' expression 'The kingdom of heaven' defined the good life as fellowship or society. The kingdom idea and his teachings on the sacredness of personality and love are mutually implicated. The kingdom, in most general sense, means that one finds love and fulfillment of personality, and true "righteousness," only in the best social relationships; and suggests the reciprocal point that respect for personality and love lie at the foundation of all good society.

The social implications of the Kingdom. From the standpoint of our contemporary interest in social ethics, it should be acknowledged that Jesus does not say in specific terms what an ideal political or economic order would be. He was not a political or economic philosopher. Christian interpreters believe, however, that his great sayings and parables are filled with basic principles of ethics, founded in the love commandment, which by implication, are ringingly democratic. His

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<sup>34</sup>. Compare Noss, op cit. p. 572

ethical utterances would make tyranny and slavery impossible. The nearest we hear him speak to the express problem of the state and to economic society, are found in two sayings, perhaps, the tribute money to Caesar (Ballou 1102) and the parable of the laborers and the hours (Ballou 1166).

Far from implying that Christianity is passive, or indifferent to type of political order, we may interpolate from the discussion about the tax that it is a teaching bursting against totalitarian philosophy. In addition to acknowledging a duty to Caesar, or the state, Jesus suggests here that we owe ultimate allegiance to God, over and above Caesar. The deepest implication of this saying is that the duties and rights of individuality and personality transcend those of the state--ultimate matters of conscience are for individuals before their God to decide, not for Caesars to decide!

The laborers and the hours parable, over and beyond its basic idea concerning the lavish grace and love of God, in the kingdom fellowship, in contrast to the ordinary prudential and calculating relationships of men, suggests a message for economic order. It is that economic society should minister to human need; that "industry shall exist for man, and not man for industry."<sup>34a</sup> More basic than profit motive even, or conjointly with it and humanizing it, the principle of respect for, and service of persons is the larger motive for economic life and relationships, as it should be for all human relationships.

### Jesus' Concept of Salvation and Destiny

1. His prophetic outlook. If we may define salvation, in general way, as a condition of "good" or "well-being" for life free from evil that may beset it, then Jesus' view of salvation would be a state of joyous sonship to, or fellowship with God, the heavenly Father, in a life of love, neighborliness, social conscience and "oneness" of moral purpose, expressed as the "kingdom of heaven" and as "eternal life." On its negative side, the evil from which freedom is sought, would be the "sins," with their practical consequences, which might beset us--evil, aggressive life heedless of others, inordinate self-centeredness, and selfish pride, to continue in which is a state of "darkness," judgment, and apartness from God.<sup>35</sup>

Typical passages which throw light on Jesus' view of salvation would be the following:

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Mk. 1:14 | "Repent and believe in the gospel."   |
| 3:35     | "Whoever does the will of God is my brother."   |
| 8:35     | "Whoever loses his life...will save it."  |
| 2:5      | "My Son, your sins are forgiven."   |
| 5:34     | "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."  |
| Lk. 7:50 | "Your faith hath made you well; go in peace."   |
| 10:25-37 | In reply to the lawyer who asked: "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he repeated the parable of the Good Samaritan and then said: "Go do likewise." |
| 15:32    | Speaks of the Lost Son who repented and returned to his father.   |

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<sup>34a</sup> George Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, Harper, 1928, p. 161

<sup>35</sup> Mtt. 6:23 cp, also Mtt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 11:34-36; 22:53.

- Mtt. 5:7 Sermon on Mt.: Whoever does and hears, his words will stand like a house upon the rock. (7:24)
- 6:14 "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you."
- 22:47-50 Love God and your neighbor as yourself, thus fulfilling "all the law and the prophets."
- 25:40 "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."
- Jn. 13:14-17 "You also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you... If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."
- 14:15-- John's Gospel emphasizes ethical action or the practice of Jesus
- 15:14 commandments whereby the believer may become "one" with him and with God.

In sum, Jesus has a thoroughly prophetic concept of salvation.<sup>36</sup> To the question, What shall a man do "to inherit eternal life?," Jesus replied in the simplest ethical terms: repent, love and serve thy neighbor, honor and love God.<sup>37</sup>

2. The sanctions of his ethic and program. For what ultimate reasons does Jesus appeal to men to enter the Kingdom of God? What are the final sources of authority of his ethic and plan of salvation? Jesus emphasizes four sanctions primarily. The first three of these Prof. Amos Wilder calls the "fundamental sanctions" while the fourth in its transcendental aspects he terms a "formal" sanction, the nature of which Jesus could anticipate only by symbolic expressions suggested by the apocalyptic thought forms of his day.<sup>38</sup>

- (1) The appeal to reason and common sense; to moral truth, and the innate moral possibility of men:<sup>39</sup>  
Mtt. 7:24-27; 9:13; 12:7; Lk. 12:57
- (2) The appeal to the nature of God as Love; this is the ultimate sanction;  
Mtt. 5:45; 48; 7:21; 10:8b; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 6:35-36; 15:3-24  
(I John 4:7-21)

In Lk. 15:7 and 23:43 it is evident that God to Jesus was interested in repentance, not in punishment. (I John 4:18) *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear"*

36. See analysis of the OT concept of salvation, p. 103-105
37. Recall our discussion of "repentance" under Jesus' concept of man, page 143, and the distinction between normative and inordinate or excessive "pride" in the discussion of "sin" in the OT section of this Guide, page 99-100. We should distinguish between normal and necessary "pride" or self-respect, basic to stable personality, and inordinate or "selfish pride" that hinders love and fellowship with others. Doubtless most human beings would do well to acknowledge a tendency toward self-centeredness and inordinate pride of which we should be willing to divest ourselves, or "repent," with the help of Divine grace, if we are to get along with people in the best way, and fulfill the spirit of the kingdom.
38. Eschatology and Ethics in the Teachings of Jesus, op cit esp. pages 116f
39. "And why do you not judge for yourself what is right?" (Lk. 12:57)  
"Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man,...."etc. (Mtt. 7:24)  
"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mtt. 9:13: cp 12:7)

- (3) The authority and example of Jesus himself:  
Mtt. 7:24; 10:38; 16:24; 25:40; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23; 14:23; John 13:14-17;  
17:20-21
- (4) The appeal to consequences, i.e. to reward and judgment here, and here-  
after: Jesus broadens and deepens moral motive by the power of an  
endless life, as Bacon has expressed it, relative to the belief in a  
hereafter. He measures things temporal by comparison with things  
eternal:  
Mtt. 5:12-16; 5:29-30; 7:14; 18:7-10; Lk. 10:25; 23:43; John Chaps. 14-15

The appeal to consequences may be summarized as the appeal of the blessedness of life when in harmony with the will of God. The Beatitudes are typical. The appeal to consequences on its this-worldly or practical side are expressed, perhaps most succinctly, in the Sermon on the Mount, in those words describing the Christian, or Christian life, as "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," whose "good works" are to shine forth as the enlightening and transforming influence.

Jesus ethical teaching as a "social ethics" or a "social gospel" is of course, more a matter of contemporary interpretation of the basic gospel of love, than an express doctrine of the 1st Century New Testament records. Many, however, in modern times believe that the sayings and parables profoundly imply a social gospel, based on the love commandment, emphasizing human dignity, freedom, justice, and democracy. Such would be the widest practical consequence of the kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

3. Jesus on himself as an instrument of salvation. The following resume anticipates the discussion of the messiahship in our next section. Suffice it here to say, as the messenger of God's kingdom of love and brotherhood, he came to think of himself in quite a normal way--just as any teacher or prophet might do--as an instrument of moral salvation. He realized that he was helping men to become citizens of the kingdom, that he was serving and saving them by his own living example, his forgiving attitude, his healing power (Mk. 2:5; 10:43-45; Lk. 11:20).

The famous saying reported in John's Gospel, 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me," is often interpreted in negative, narrow, or exclusive terms. Actually the larger context of John's gospel suggests that this saying can be understood rather with a positive, inclusive meaning. In these central chapters of the New Testament Christology, John 14-15, the love commandment defines the way, the truth, the life, and the union with the Father. Verses 15, 21, 23 of chapter 14 and verses 7-17 of chapter 15 breathe a liberating inclusive spirit, rather than a confining, exclusive one (Ballou 1154-1158):-

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments...He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him...If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him...If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will...As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: abide in my love. If you

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40. e.g. Walter Rauschenbush: The Social Teachings of Jesus  
" " " A Theology of the Social Gospel  
John C. Bennett: Christianity and Communism

keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love...This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you...This I command you, to love one another" (RSV)

The author of John's Gospel began his interpretation of Jesus in terms of Greek metaphysical doctrine. He describes Jesus as the "word" (or "logos;") that is, the rational, formative, moral power of God that goes forth to create the worlds. He spoke of Jesus as "full of grace and truth;" and as "The true light that enlightens every man..." (1:9, 14). Such terms, and those quoted above suggest moral rationality and an inclusive universalism, to the effect that the life of love and moral truth, expressed in Jesus, is the only ultimate way men anywhere, find salvation--it includes any or all who live this "way" this "truth" this "life." As suggested in John, Christians may have the faith that Jesus utters and exemplifies, the moral truth by which all men come to God, if they wish to come. The statement of the way the truth and the life is found in the general context about keeping his commandments--that is, living life as he enjoins in agape--if we would become "one" with him and the Father. This might include those not technically disciples, a point in fact, which John 10:16 suggests, where we read.. "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold"; though, indeed, the ultimate aim in John's outlook is to bring them also, that "they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd."

In the meanwhile, however, there is the "other...fold." Christianity may be interpreted as historically flexible and inclusive. It need not be viewed as having a "built in intransigence."<sup>41</sup> What, in its institutional details, the ultimate unity of religious faith for mankind may be in the far reaches of the historical future, no one may presently say. We may believe, however, that such faith will not be greatly different from the highest we already know in the Christian agape and its counter parts in the other world religions.

The spirit of universalism and religious inclusiveness is also present in the Synoptic Gospels themselves.

Indeed, these Gospels contain the record of an increasing call by Jesus to personal discipleship to him as his historic career moved toward martyrdom--as the issues between him and the religious opposition were drawn ever more sharp and he felt the need for uncompromising support, commitment and loyalty on the part of his followers. In this historic circumstance, we have the report that he enjoined his followers to give up personal ties for the sake of the mission; that he even described the commitment to discipleship in terms of "self hatred" that is, the hating of, or turning of one's back upon the things dear to one's self and one's family, ties that might temporize the effect of the mission. To follow him will be to "renounce all" that one has, to bear one's "own cross," and to meet with persecutions.<sup>42</sup>

While recognizing this aspect of drastic summons, reflecting the historic crisis as Jesus felt it--to the effect that commitment to the kingdom came to be

41. Confining terms which this analyst heard one denominational representative use.

42. Luke 14:26-33; Mk. 10:29; Lk. 11:23--"he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

commitment to himself, or loyalty to his person; we should consider such sayings in the total context of the record. They certainly make clear that Jesus expected thoroughgoing and radical changes of disposition and life on the part of all who repented at his preaching.<sup>43</sup> But confession or discipleship did not mean that all were necessarily to follow in his personal or immediate company as did the Twelve, and others who were specially summoned. There was Zacchaeus, the tax-collector, who continued in his own calling. We mention again the lawyer who asked the way to eternal life, for whom Jesus spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan, and then said go, do as the Samaritan had done. Many were healed or helped of whom we hear no further--a leper, a paralytic, a centurion, Jairus, the Syrophenician woman. Men may continue in their own vocations, with their varied gifts and callings, as Paul, writing within the first generation of Christians, interpreted the message.<sup>44</sup>

The Synoptics bear record that "whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mk. 3:31) When asked by the disciples whether the man who was casting out demons in his name, but who was not following them, should be restrained, he said: "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us." (Mk. 9:39-40) And concluding this point at the moment, concerning the spirit of universalism which we find in the Synoptics, we may cite his words reported in Matthew 8:11-12: "Many shall come from the east and the west to sit at the table in the Kingdom of Heaven."

As a major point of theology we reserve for fuller treatment presently the meaning of his death in the Christian concept of salvation. It must suffice here to state in general terms what the approaching death may have meant to Jesus as he faced martyrdom. After it became clear that the conflict with the religious authorities might result in apprehension and death, Jesus began to connect his message and work with his suffering and death, and trusted that God would vindicate the kingdom in, through, by, or beyond his death--as the climactic event of his total life of self-giving and service. To anticipate what we discuss more fully later, in Lk. 4:17; 22:27, 37 he associates himself with the Isaianic suffering servant. In Lk 13:33 he speaks of his death as the perishing of "a prophet." Though it is difficult to formulate exactly what Jesus' theology came to be in the late hours of his life, we might safely conjecture that, with such Isaianic passages in mind, he may well have come to look upon his death as an occasion God would use to disclose some deepest meaning of his suffering and sacrifice, as Mark 10:45 or Mark 14:22 imply.

4. Jesus conception of judgment. In treating this element of Jesus teaching, bear in mind that he shared in the main eschatological thought form of his day--that God would soon end this world age and usher in the consummation of the kingdom. Also recall the prominent aspects of his teaching on the blessedness or joy of life in accepting the kingdom as expressing the positive spirit of his appeal.

He is reported, however, as also using such negative or warning terminology as the following concerning the judgment, hell and perdition: "eternal" or "unquenchable fire," the "furnace of fire," "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," "where their worm does not die," a "place of torment," "cast into hell," "eternal punishment."<sup>45</sup>

43. Wilder, op. cit. p. 109

44. St. Paul, Romans 12:4-8

45. Mk. 9:43-49; Mtt. 5:29; 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; 41, 46; Lk. 13:38; 16:19-31; 17-22

Note also that he speaks of perdition or the judgment as "outer darkness," the place where "both soul and body are destroyed," as being swallowed up by the sea.<sup>46</sup> How may we evaluate these sayings?

Firstly, we may conclude that Jesus believed that failure to live the message of the kingdom would bring judgment or distress. To live heedless of persons and of love will make for unhappiness of spirit on the subjective plane and discord and conflict on the social plane. Failure to heed the moral laws of our world will bring its judgment. The son in the parable of the Prodigal met his retribution for his life of too self-indulgent pleasure when he found himself living with the swine. Jesus anticipated that the nation would be destroyed, if it continued to reject the kingdom of love he had announced, Mk. 13:3 (recall pages 137-138). Such is his concept of judgment on the natural or historic plane. What is his belief relative to the transcendent or eschatological aspect of judgment?

Secondly, references to torment, hell fire, and eternal punishment, such as in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31) and the Last judgment (Mtt. 25), were traditional descriptions. The idea of hell, or (in the Greek) Gehenna, (Mk. 9:48) had its actual counterpart in the refuse dump outside Jerusalem, where fires were kept perpetually burning. The Greek expression Gehenna comes from the Hebrew Ge Hinnom. It was in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where, in earlier times, the Israelites had sacrificed children on fiery altars to Molech. This came to be a place of abomination and refuse.<sup>47</sup> The scene in the parable of the Last Judgment where sheep are separated from the goats, and a sharp division is made, is in form like typical apocalyptic thought. We have noted that Jesus uses apocalyptic thought forms but we are also observing that he transcends much of their grosser element. He suffuses or spiritualizes apocalyptic terms and concepts, and seems to employ some of them in metaphorical ways.<sup>48</sup> To what extent Jesus was an apocalypticist, in contrast to possible other interpretations, we have yet to examine.

Thirdly, the idea of a literal, eternal fire of torment, a vindictive, non-remedial punishment seems utterly contrary to Jesus' conception of the forgiving love of God. (Some commentators feel that such places as Mtt. 25:46 may be the Gospelists rather than the historic Jesus speaking.)<sup>48a</sup> In any case, Jesus seems to teach in many places that personality is never totally lost or worthless, but that God's love is always prepared to go out to the sinner. Such hope is suggested in the great parables: the Prodigal son, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, etc. The references to eternal punishment must be considered alongside such passages as Mtt. 7:7-11; 18:21-22; Lk. 17:3-4, sayings that announce the immediate response of God to the sincere

46. Mtt. 6:23; 8:12; 22:13, 25:30; Lk. 11:35; 22:53; Mk. 9:42.

47. An Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Ferm., p. 295. Note the repetition of the wording of Is. 66:24 in the report in Mk. 9:48; and that Mtt. and Lk. omit 9:48.

48. Mk. 8:31; 10:45--as in the lowly and suffering role of the "Son of Man." Mk. 12:18-27--as in his opinion concerning condition of life in the "resurrection."

Lk. 11:20; 17:20--where the divine kingdom is announced in its aspect as a present reality in their midst.

Lk. 12:49--where the expression "to cast fire upon the earth" is a metaphor for the natural divisions that his message and movement would create among men.

48a. Eg. Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 7, Abingdon Press, 1951, p. 566; The Abingdon Bible Commentary, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1929, p. 992.

seeker, and the divine forgiveness seventy times seven. This metaphor stresses the indefinite or infinite quality of God's desire and readiness to forgive, in response to true repentance.

The important thing for Jesus was salvation from the personal condition or "sin" that may lead to "hell" or a state of separation from God, and the fellowship of the kingdom. Fosdick has said that the main point of the parables of judgment was to define "the qualities of character that are eternally disapproved by God,"<sup>49</sup> so long as such attitudes and qualities remain. The principal teaching of these parables, e.g. that of Dives and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31) is not to announce the eternal nature of hell so much as to stress the importance of making our decisions for the Good here and now; that life has its important issues, which must be decided freely and on their own merits by free personality, without compulsion by the supernatural; and that there is some irrevocableness or finality about our decisions.

Hugo Gressman in 1918 found some parallel to the Dives and Lazarus theme in Rabbinical literature, and its possible source in an Egyptian tale, which recounted a reversal of conditions for a rich man and poor man after death.<sup>50</sup> This fact suggests that Jesus used a traditional story. Is it necessary to believe that Jesus endorsed the imagery of the story, in some total or literal sense, any more than he endorsed the grudging attitude of the unjust judge, or the authoritarianism of the nobleman who became a king, characters in two other parables?<sup>50a</sup> The nature of many of the parables is that they are graphic figures of speech--not anecdotes of literal happenings--designed to teach important qualities of spirit that characterize the kingdom of heaven, and the urgency of its appeal, under the eschatological thought form or tension which Jesus accepted and felt. For inspiration for the characters and circumstances which he depicted in the imaginative stories which are his parables, he no doubt often drew from familiar real life situations, in their varied color and experience.

In any case, the irrevocableness of the award and the unforgiving nature of God as implied in the parable may be balanced by the sayings on the unlimited character of the divine disposition to forgive. Recall also Lk. 15:7, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents," etc.; Mtt. 5:44, "I say to you Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven," and the Luke version of this saying: "love your enemies...and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (6:35-36)

Fourthly, Jesus' references to hell as an objective place of eternal "fire" (Mk. 9:48; Mtt. 5:22; 13:42; 25:41) stand in contrast, if they are taken literally, to his references to judgment as "outer darkness" and a subjective state of soul (Mtt. 6:23; 8:12; 22:13; 25:30); and to his objection to the belief of the Sadducees that material conditions obtain in the after life (Mk. 12:18). In one place the wording is that the soul is "destroyed" in hell, Mtt. 10:28; in another that the judgment of those who reject truth

49. Guide to Understanding the Bible, op. cit., p. 283

50. References to this source: William Manson: The Gospel of Luke, Moffatt New Testament Commentary, Harper, p. 190; The Interpreters Bible, Vol. 8 p. 289; Hillyer H. Straton, The Parables of Jesus, Eerdmans, 1959, p. 187.

50a. Hillyer H. Straton, *Ib.* p. 189. Lk. 18:1-8; Lk. 19:12-27.

and love would be like being swallowed up by the sea, Mk. 9:42. These and the idea of outer darkness may suggest that "hell" in Jesus thought meant the annihilation of unworthy personal life. In any case, it is obvious that such expressions as "fire" and "outer darkness" are metaphors, symbolic of a possible truth about the condition of souls in an after life, who, by their own choice, are unprepared to enter the fellowship of God's kingdom.

We conclude that such judgment or perdition could only be conditional, if we trust Jesus' conception of God as Agape love, which would forgive seventy times seven, even the soul standing apart who might turn to Him for forgiveness and acceptance.<sup>51</sup> The larger note of the Gospel is that "perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18). Jesus appealed fundamentally to the blessedness of life in fellowship with God as the inducement to men to enter the kingdom. The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount are typical.<sup>52</sup>

The uniqueness of Jesus as teacher and man in Christian faith. Fosdick has well summarized that the uniqueness of Jesus as teacher lay in the "selective attention"<sup>53a</sup> with which he treated the great themes of his heritage, or the intensity with which he focused upon the theme of the sacredness of human personality, and Agape love as the essence of moral reality, reflecting the Divine Fatherhood.

For Christians, he has also been regarded as unique in himself as expressive of the Divine Reality. Our task, as we look at the problem of the messiahship, is to illuminate this area of understanding, both from the perspective, as an historic fact, of what Jesus may have thought about himself--in so far as this issue may be clarified from the accounts in the gospels--and what the New Testament authors or interpreters of his life thought about him or came to think about him within the framework of theological evaluation.

51. It is interesting that there is the idea of hell as purgatory in I Peter 3:19, 4:6 where the tradition is that Jesus, between his crucifixion and resurrection, preached the message of repentance to the souls in hell, signifying that early Christians were not constrained by belief in irrevocable judgment. In St. Paul there is the suggestion of belief in a universal salvation, I Cor. 15:28; Eph. 1:23. The Fatherly God of Jesus seemed concerned about repentance and renovation of character rather than punishment and retribution, Lk. 15:7; 23:43; Mtt. 9:13.

52. Mtt. 5:16; 48; 9:13; 10:8b; 12:7; Lk. 6:35-36, 12:57.

53a. Guide to Understanding the Bible, op. cit., p. 42.

Appendix on :-

Mark 9:48. "...where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched".

RSV translators indicate in note n.: "verses 44 and 46 (which are identical with verse 48) are omitted by the best ancient authorities". The KJV repeated the clause in a verse 44 and 46, revealing apparently that there was variation in the use of this clause as among ancient manuscripts.

Neither Luke nor Matthew repeat this phrase (see Burton and Goodspeed: Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, p. 131). We know from source criticism that Matthew and Luke used Mark almost in its entirety between them. Were the authors of these gospels using some other (proto-Mark?) version that did not have this saying? Or, if they were using a Mark source from which our modern versions come, why did they omit it? The suggestion is that Jesus may not have used this figure of speech, one current in his time. In any case, the following further commentary:-

Frederick C. Grant on Mark 9:48:-

It is doubtful, on the basis of the MS evidence, if vss. 44 and 46 (KJV) are authentic; but from a literary point of view they are quite as appropriate as vs. 48 is. The early Christian who gave the series its present arrangement may very well have quoted Isa. 66:24 at the end of each of the three warnings. That the substance of the section goes back to Jesus is scarcely to be doubted. (Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7., p. 793)

In any case, we see that the phrase "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" is a traditional one. Is. 66:24 reads: "And they shall go forth and look on the dead bodies of the men that have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

B. Harvie Branscomb:-

"The striking description in verse 48 is taken bodily from the last verse of Isaiah (lxvi. 24), where the prophet declares that those who shall worship Jehovah in the re-made Jerusalem of the last days shall 'go forth and look upon the dead bodies of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die neither shall the fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh'. The figure is of vermin and the fire perpetually destroying the refuse of the city. There is no thought of an eternal torture of living beings. Nor is any such doctrine implied in the citation of the passage by Mark." (The Gospel of Mark, Moffatt Commentary, p. 174)

Mark 9:49. "For every one will be salted with fire".

*Burton Goodspeed, Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, p. 131*  
Branscomb: "Fire is a frequent figure for trials and persecutions... The meaning of the verse is either, Everyone will be saved through the discipline of trials, or, Everyone who will be saved will have to pass through the fire of the last judgment. This last would be analogous to the thought of I Cor. iii. 12ff. The terseness of the expression rather favours a reference to the common theme of Christian sufferings and discipline". (Ib. p. 174).

Rabbinic reference to the extinction of unworthy souls:-

"The wicked of Israel in their bodies, and the wicked of the nations of the world in their bodies go down to Gehenna and are punished in it for twelve months. After twelve months their souls become extinct, and their bodies are burned up, and hell casts them out, and they turn to ashes" (Tos. Sanhedrin 13<sup>3</sup>). Harry Emerson Fosdick quotes this source and comments "It may be, therefore, that in similar fashion -- true to the analogy of what went on in the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem -- Jesus meant to picture the 'fire' as 'eternal', but not the refuse which was being consumed. Nevertheless, however one may interpret his use of 'Gehenna,' Jesus' judgment on sin and on sinners was fearfully stern".

(The Man from Nazareth, As His Contemporaries Saw Him, Harper, 1949. 1965) 1133

E. The Sermon on the Mount: Mtt 5-7  
A Short Commentary

Historic views. There have been five principal types of interpretations of the Sermon.<sup>53b</sup> 1. Matthew himself presents Jesus as the new lawgiver, who does not replace Moses of old, but who adds to the ancient authority of Moses a new interpretive authority of his own.

"Matthew has more or less consciously set Jesus over against Moses as a new lawgiver: The new law for the church is set over against the old law of God's people, not as abolishing but fulfilling it. Corroboration for this view is found in the study of Matthew's Gospel as a whole."<sup>53c</sup>

2. Interpreters of the Middle Ages considered the sermon a drastic summons to perfection which only the members of the monastic community could possibly fulfill.

3. In Reformation thought the sermon was regarded as a counsel of perfection which nobody can meet fully, and accordingly, in their incapacity to obey, men can only fall back on justification by faith to resolve the difficulty.

4. The 19th century liberal view emphasized the Sermon as a discourse on attitudes and inner disposition. It was rationalistic and personalistic, and believed that Jesus's main import in these words concerned the "development of moral personality,"<sup>53d</sup> and looked primarily to the ideal of what we should strive to be or become, rather than to be overly concerned with what we actually do or don't get done, in life's passage. Describing this view of the Sermon Wilder says:

"The last thing that Jesus intended, so it was held, was to put a new yoke on his followers, only just emancipated from the yoke of the Jewish law. He was concerned with spiritual freedom. His teachings bear therefore upon what we should be rather than on what we do. This means also that we should make ample allowance for his use of figurative language and paradox."<sup>53e</sup>

5. More recently eschatological interpretations have held prominence. Such views hold that the framework or background premise of the Sermon (allegedly Jesus's view of his own words) is the belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God or the New Age. Albert Schweitzer called the Sermon an "interim ethics": Jesus' belief in the immediate appearance of the kingdom of God best explains "the radical formulation" of the Sermon's requirements; the commandments are signs of "the eternal kingdom and its total claim," urging us "on toward the divine likeness."<sup>53f</sup>

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53b See Amos N. Wilder, "The Sermon on the Mount," Interpreters Bible. op.cit. Vol. VII, p. 160-164.

53c Ibid. p. 160.

53d Ibid. p 161.

53e Ibid. p 161.

53f Ibid. p 161: Wilder on the similar views of Schweitzer and Dibelius.

Indeed the Sermon must necessarily be accepted as having in part the quality of an eschatological discourse, much as these authorities claim. However, if so, Wilder calls our attention to this very fact, as the clue whereby we may, indeed we must, interpret the Sermon, in a dimension larger than its 1st century-eschatological-apocalyptic hope, if it is to carry a message through the ages to us today.

Since Jesus's outlook was conditioned by the special 1st century circumstances, i.e. the eschatological type of hope--which are not our circumstances-- we are free to interpret the Sermon as best we may. "The imperatives of Jesus are presented in a religious context and a very particular one, belief in the imminent new age, the kingdom of God which was 'at hand'...The Sermon on the Mount is directed to those who have already begun to enter into the new age and who have begun to share its new powers... We are left, however, with the question of the meaning of these moral demands for us...Jesus's words were conditioned by special circumstances and a special outlook. We therefore face a task of reinterpretation."53g

When the present day interpreter finds it necessary to apply these demands, "he is aware not only of the difficulty of the operation but also of the freedom that must be exercised."53h We commend to the student Prof. Wilder's insight--it is one way that meaningful interpretation for our times may proceed. Indeed, accepting this clue, we would add, however, that much of the so called and often maligned. 19th century liberal view may be applied, or reapplied to the sermon. Indeed, we believe that the sermon itself implies some aspects of the liberal view. That side of Jesus's thought which was not solely cast in apocalyptic or eschatological categories i.e. his patently more universalistic teaching, has inspired the liberal view. We refer again to our comments on an earlier page relative to the universalistic dimension of Jesus's thought (p 140-141)

Accordingly we take the Sermon to be a combination of emphasis on inward disposition and outward performance, on motive or intention and on means and results. Much of its natural purpose seems to be how life may be lived here and now, or centered on the "development of moral personality" in the here and now. This is not to deny that the Sermon is associated with the eschatological note in the proclamation of the kingdom. But the doctrine of the kingdom is not totally eschatological -- its eschatological note must be included along with its other emphasis, which we have already reviewed. The Sermon itself is not framed totally in a "new age" emphasis. Though reward in heaven is mentioned in a prominent way at the close of the Beatitudes, it is followed by emphasis on practical effort here and now, 5:13, 14. We have a this-worldly orientation in the Sermon as well as an other-worldly or "new age" perspective. "The meek...shall inherit the earth," 5:5. "The merciful...shall obtain mercy", 5:7. "Peacemakers" are blessed. The children of the kingdom are "the salt of the earth," 5:13; "the light of the world" which "gives light to all in the house", 5:14-15. They are to let their "light so shine before men, that they may see" their "good works," 5:16. They are to pray that the Father's "will

53g Ibid: p 162-163.

53h (see next page) Ibid. p. 162

be done on earth as it is in heaven," 6:10; that "daily bread" be given; that strength be granted to withstand temptation; that forgiveness be granted as we forgive others, 6:11-13. We are not to be inordinately anxious for material things and security, but the "heavenly Father knows that" we "need" all these things; that today's own practical problems confront us with sufficient demand, so that we shouldn't be overly or inordinately anxious about tomorrow's practical concerns. They will inevitably arise and at that time we should then have concern, 6:32-34. The Golden Rule plainly announces an attitude or philosophy that will tend to harmonize life with life here and now, and is proclaimed as "the law and the prophets", 7:12. The children of the kingdom are enjoined to bear "good fruit," and to do "on earth" "the will of" the "Father who is in heaven," 7:17, 21. The Sermon closes with the injunction that he who hears the words and does them is "like a wise man who built his house upon the rock," 7:24. In addition no doubt to an eschatological theme, it seems to announce principles that will guide life here and now, with the hope that thereby the Father's highest will may be done on earth.

In conclusion therefore, to these introductory remarks about the Sermon it may be most helpful to bear in mind the two perspectives. In interpreting the Sermon we must first realize that it speaks to a particular situation of Jesus's own day and circumstances. In agreement with its times, it no doubt contains an eschatological dimension; but in considerable disagreement with its age it represents Jesus spiritualized view of the kingdom of Heaven in contrast, on the one hand, to the more materialistic notions of the apocalypticists and Zealots, and on the other, to the narrower views of what constitutes life's righteousness as entertained by some of the Pharisees. In the second place, stemming from this latter purpose, the Sermon burgeons, we believe, with a universal message for any age and circumstances. As the liberal perspective asserted, it is plainly a great discourse on personality as the central meaning of existence, and as giving clue to the value of existence, and to the nature or source of existence as a whole. In brief, it says that one's own, along with other personality, must be treated as a supreme value. Underlying this ethic is the theological belief that God, the source of all being, is Personal. In the Sermon Jesus addresses God as "Father." By this personalized reference to the deity, Jesus emphasized again for the prophetic tradition the idea of God as loving, personal Being, who stands creatively behind, and gives redemptively to our own persons their supreme value, and provides us with life's opportunity to live and grow according to his loving purposes.

1. The Beatitudes<sup>53i</sup> (Mtt 5:3-16) depict Christian character. Verses 3-6 review virtues of the individual. Smith - Goodspeed translate "poor in spirit" by "those who feel their spiritual need" suggesting proper humility or modesty, the absence of false pride, arrogant or complacent self-satisfaction, as the first characteristic of the members of the kingdom. Luke has "blessed are you poor," by which Jesus may have had specifically in mind the Amhaarez despised by some of the lordly Pharisees, as the example of the type of modesty with which he wished to contrast their superiority. Those "who mourn" possibly means those who have an alive and sensitive conscience, who are keenly perceptive, in addition to those righteous who may be abused or neglected, and who mourn as the personal recipients of evil. Jesus hardly means the glum or the gloomy! "The meek" may mean those who are characteristically gentle in spirit as opposed to the pugracious or the aggressive. It would not mean the supine or the grovelling. Jesus himself was a strong or forthright character. On a number of occasions he called for a stand, and deliberate, positive action (Mk 11:15-19). He made enemies! In "Blessed are

<sup>53h</sup> Ibid. p 162.

<sup>53i</sup> The above outline for the Sermon was suggested by H. C. King, The Ethics of Jesus, p 195f.

those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" Jesus again reveals his basic optimism about human life and its moral destiny.

In verses 7-12 we have portrayed Christian personality in relation to other life. And so blessed are the "merciful;" and the "pure in heart," The latter are those who strive to be free in conscience, who are sincere, without deceit in relation to others or themselves, who try to live in veracity, fidelity, honesty, and integrity. Perception of truth, and the telling and living of truth is the central mark of stable personality and the cardinal social virtue. To put it negatively those who do not dissemble "perceive God", come nearest to knowing or sharing what God in His own Spiritual reality is as Truth. "Peacemakers" he calls "sons of God". Healers of discord are universally admired. Christians should be forever at the task of making peace wherever it may be possible. In the reference to the persecuted on his "account" he undoubtedly foresaw the time when his movement would meet with hostility, and was endeavoring to prepare his disciples for it. Christian character in its effort to bring the kingdom is often called to sacrifice and to suffering.

Note again that the Beatitudes stress Jesus positive outlook upon the self, its legitimate stance in being, and its destiny. His beatitudes point to the inward psychological blessing, the self-assurance by the self about itself, as its rightful destiny, in its sense of joy and moral fulfillment in attempting to do God's will.

Verses 12-16 refer to the "rewards" of the kingdom, and begin with announcement of ultimate reward in Heaven. But the statement about a final reward as lying in heaven, indeed the vision of a transcendent, and perhaps even of an early eschatological destiny of the 1st century motif, should not distract our attention from Jesus's other emphasis in this same context. It is plain that rewards begin to accrue here and now in the practical effects that the righteousness of life, as above portrayed, brings: "in the peace and harmony of social life. That the reward is practical and earthly as well as ultimately heavenly the next verses, 13-16, particularly emphasize: You are "the salt" of the earth, the "light of the world." Jesus announces here that it is indeed this very Christian character which is the best hope of the world. We note his emphasis specifically on "good works," v. 16. Christianity is not an ascetical, or otherworldly religion, or an apocalyptic religion of world destruction. Its ethic, above all, aims "to distribute blessing",<sup>53j</sup> in the immediate and practical opportunity, whether some ultimate historic end be near or far. Indeed, however soon or late, the end or outcome will be well, as is attested in the Great Prayer later on in the Sermon.

While we are mentioning rewards we should point out that "reward" in the Christian ethic is not a matter of strict "bookkeeping"--<sup>53k</sup> payment for a certain measure of righteousness. This is too commercial or mechanical. God's love, which gives the reward, is boundless in its outgoing or giving character. Thus rewards are identical for all, whether repentant sinner or ascetic saint: Mtt 20:1-16; 25:21,23; and are out of all proportion to "service" rendered, Mtt 19:29; 25:21, 23.

<sup>53j</sup> Theodore H. Robinson, Moffatt NT Commentary, The Gospel of Matthew, p 33  
Harper & Bros.

<sup>53k</sup> Interpreters Bible, VII p. 288.

2. The righteousness of the kingdom in contrast to the interpretation and practice of Pharisees. In Mtt 5:17-6:34 Jesus's stresses the inward springs of righteousness. Inner attitude, motive or intention is the key to spiritual health and moral virtue. Some of the Pharisees, he thought, were living on the plane of mere duty, or outward conformity to laws and customs. But were their hearts in it? Jesus wanted to lift ethics from this plane of mere duty and utility to that of dynamic intention, desire, and love. The saying "...Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees" means that men are not to do right because some law or custom above them demands it, but because a Divine Love within impells them. Thus the law is not abolished, 5:17, but "fulfilled." Loving desire is the psychological guarantee that ethical law will be carried out.

Moving into greater detail, what main problems does this section of the sermon present? What are the highlights of the message?

Human life and the problem of anger. v. 21f. As the main point of these words, I believe that Jesus is here calling attention to the danger of prolonged anger, which may become hatred. Recall again his main emphasis on the interior life -- or inner attitudes as the essence or fount of virtue. Prolonged anger and hatred may lead to murder!

Human beings get angry naturally, as a normal response to people or forces whom they believe may assail them. Normative anger is the working of the natural instincts of self-preservation, founded in the biological and psychological will-to-live, which has been created within us by God, as the central mark or impulse of finite individuality, in its sense of personal value and right to life. Accordingly Jesus is no doubt warning here of excessive, inordinate, or, as above said, prolonged anger and continued hatred -- rather than what we have just distinguished here as normative anger.

Precisely in this connection we note that some of the ancient reports of this saying had included "everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be liable to judgment." Furthermore, the time factor suggested in the expression "shall be in danger of" lends support to the theory here presented about the saying. Finally, moving from the words themselves into the known life of Jesus as elsewhere on record, we have it reported that he himself became angry upon occasion -- at the Pharisees; at the money changers, whom he drove from the Temple, and, in John's Gospel, with a whip of small cords! In the scene with the Syrophonecian woman, which we study later in our continued review of Mark's Gospel, Jesus expressed anger because his own compatriots were not receiving his message, Mk 7:27. There is then a place for normative anger, and righteous indignation. Jesus is not criticizing these, we believe. He is saying, however, as consummate psychological wisdom, that we must watch over and control our angers and not let them run away with us. Modern psychiatry deals, so often with cases of mental and emotional illness based on the problem of "repressed anger". The ideal wisdom implied in Jesus' teaching, then, is the reining in and reduction of anger in the first place, so that the need or tendency to suppress it will not arise.

Accompanying the problem of anger is the temptation to "insult" our brother and call him the "fool." Jesus therefore warns that in so doing we tread perilously close to breaking the fundamental commandment of respect or regard for the sanctity of the person of our neighbor. He does not, as we shall later see, mean that we may not find it necessary upon occasion, to offer judicious or constructive criticism of a neighbor in some circumstances.

In vv 23-24 Jesus announces that God is interested in making human relationships the sign of right relationship with Him: ethics is internal to, and lies at the heart of true religion. In this point, of course, Jesus teaching recalls Amos' concept of religion. The rest of the paragraph realistically reminds us that the rigid, unforgiving spirit will often meet in life with a strict and just accountability at the bar of the courts, when disputes have to be taken that far.

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The lustful look. In Mtt 5:27-30 we are in the depths of the inner life of intention and motive, which Jesus's "Sermon" so specifically illuminates and challenges. The saying concerning the lustful look refers to the thought of intention, that is, thoughts at the level, or depth, of decisions of will leading on to actions. One translation has "looketh...to lust" (KJ); another "looks at a woman with desire" (Smith-Goodspeed) Perhaps such renderings connote the more precise meaning than the RSV. Jesus is here then thinking of the lustful look at its point of decision or emergence into action, where committing the deed would be imminent, if the opportunity arose in some specific case. He would not be speaking here of fleeting, imaginary thoughts that inadvertently come and go -- which pass in one ear of the mind and as quickly out the other! After all he himself was imagining adultery, in uttering this very prohibition.

Imagination itself, of course, as a psychological quality or power, is neutral; is indeed indispensable to man as a higher, free, moral being. It is the very spring of his creative powers as responsible spiritual person. By our imaginations we foresee the possible good in life as well as the possible evil. Jesus's saying, however, is a warning against lingering lustful or any other "evil" thought of imagination, lest it become intention and finally action. ("Lust" may have the more general meaning of over-emphasis on any merely material value".) If Jesus's words here be read too narrowly or literally, then nearly every human male that ever was -- and probably half the females -- would be condemned, out of hand, as adulterers. We do not believe that Jesus -- himself no ascetic, except in the one respect that he remained unmarried, but who nevertheless so far as others were concerned, regards marriage and the sexual side of life positively or favorably--had such a constricted meaning in mind.

The plucking out of the eye reference, vv 29-30, is an example of Jesus's use of hyperbole or heightened figure of speech, in order to emphasize the need for careful personal, moral discipline. See 6:3 and 7:3-5 for examples of hyperbole again: obviously the beam or the log spoken of as in one's eye could not be taken literally.

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Jesus on marriage and divorce, and a Christian philosophy of divorce. In 5:31-32, Jesus's pronouncement about divorce must be understood against the background of the old Mosaic rule, Deut. 24:1-4 which made it too easy for a man to dismiss a wife. I.e. Jesus utters these words to give greater protection to women than was then customary. It is an injunction in the spirit of the highest liberal feminism, securing the rights of womanhood, in terms of a more permanent status as wife and mother.

In general moral teaching, the saying emphasizes the need for sexual fidelity in marriage. It suggests caution in entering marriage, and utter sincerity and fidelity in marriage. "Much is here implied. Jesus teaches Christians to renounce utterly any entering into marriage with the back door left

open: "We can always get out of it if it doesn't work" 531

There are difficulties in the present phraseology. E.g. Why would it "make her an adulteress"? The logic would have been clearer had it read, "makes him an adulterer", as in fact it does read in the repeat of this saying in Mtt 19:9 (Mk 10:3-12). The last phrase implies that women cannot divorce on any grounds, whereas the first phrase gives grounds for divorce, namely "unchastity." (Actually in ancient Jewish society women could not divorce, but could make their husbands divorce them in certain circumstances, e.g. if he were diseased).

We suggest that this seems a too brief and too ambiguous report for a full philosophy of divorce; the main spirit, however, of the saying is wise and true: marriage should not be lightly or too hastily entered, nor too easily broken. St. Paul presents a broader basis for a Christian philosophy of divorce, I Cor. 7:1-16. Note St. Paul's positive understanding of sexual faithfulness in marriage, 7:3-4. Justice as well as love would suggest that St. Paul's wife or husband "who is an unbeliever" would cover cases of hopeless incompatibility.

Formal oaths, 5:33-37, are not necessary, if one is, at all times, perfectly sincere, or truthful in his speech. In fact, an oath implies that unless one gives an oath, he would not be truthful! Whereas integrity at all times is the first mark of character. No need of oaths then! This sentiment, of course, states the ideal of a Christian society, reaching far beyond what has in fact been attained in the circumstances of courts and judicial procedure, where formal oaths seem necessary as a practical way to call attention to witnesses the need of absolute accuracy and impartiality in the reporting of alleged facts and incidents germane to litigation, if justice is to be attained.

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What did Jesus mean by the "perfection" of God as the standard of life, Mtt 5:38-48? Here we have his consummate understanding of the various possible levels of human ethics and types or ranges of justice:

(1) First and lowest in the scale is the law of retaliation, Lex Talionis, v. 38, the old barbaric, but positive code, which kept the peace in a rough and ready way.

(2) Next is life on the basis of utilitarian reward, --love and help of others, if they love and help in return, v. 46.

(3) Third in the hierarchy of possible ethical relationship is life in terms of duty: to go with a person one mile is to go out of duty. To give a coat as payment of a court fine is to give out of duty to the judgment rendered, 40-42. But lifemust press on above duty.

(4) Accordingly to go two miles is to go out of love. Love and respect for persons exceeding duty (Agape) is the highest mode of human relationship, v. 40-41, 44.

Did Jesus mean that each higher level of ethical relationship as we proceed from (1) through (4) is to cancel or rule out as illegitimate the preceding stage or step? We can't know. To be sure, he is stating the ideal at level (4).

It is not a judicial cancelling or condemning of the lower levels, we believe, that Jesus had in mind here. Rather the fact, or our human experience is, that where indeed each higher stage can prevail the lower or lesser mode of relationship has been or is absorbed or transmuted into the higher, so that the lower is no longer relevant or needed. Thus the law of utilitarian reward absorbs that of retaliation; duty transmutes reward; and love fulfills or accomplishes all that duty demands or desired. Where However, each higher ideal fails we have, as a matter of practical life, to fall back upon the rougher type of security that the next lower level of human relationship provides. That Jesus did not condemn duty or reward as legitimate motives of the ethical life is borne out by many of the parables and sayings, where the values of a duty motive, or of a reward motive are positively enshrined.

In sum this great paragraph gives us hope in life. The passage assumes that life can be morally triumphant on the whole. It expresses Jesus's optimism about life's possibilities.

He states that Agape is the Divine love and that God's nature is the ultimate sanction or reason for the moral life, for moral effort. But what is the "perfection" of God in verse 48: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"? The Matthew line is brief and abstract. Rather the Luke version of the saying illuminates Jesus's thought better for us. It reads:

"..love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return (or despairing of no man): and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:35-36 RSV)

Therefore in Luke's report of the Q saying we have the perfection of God rendered as the Divine mercy. The perfection of God then is not some rigid static or absolute standard of perfection, an ideal pattern we have to fit, before we can be called Christian. The "perfection of God" would refer to the Personal Loving source of being, and to imitate Him would mean that our own basic and full motive or purpose should be outgoing and serving mercy, like God's.

The Christian life is growth. In the Letter of James we have the idea that Christian perfection is steadfastness of loving intention, purpose or effort with which we meet the "various trials" of life. Christian perfection is dynamic process; rather than a final or fixed attainment. Paul makes this clear in his great passage in Philippians 3:13-15:

"Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead; I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you."

A wise psychiatrist once said that being a Christian is not like selection to the Phi Beta Kappa society, for which a candidate has first to attain academic excellence or "perfection" before he can qualify. We should not suppose that our errors, mistakes, or sins of the past disqualify us. The Christian life means that we should make effort to change where called for, to grow. In this connection we are reminded of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican at prayer, Lk 18:10. The former thought that he had attained and was perfect, whereas the latter, realizing his own imperfections, yet having the desire to change, was more justified in the estimate of God. A wise theologian wrote concerning the Christian moral process:

"The quest after sinlessness is, therefore, not an attempt to get rid of the metaphysical "roots of sin," nor does it require complete compliance with all the detailed requirements of an external standard of absolute purity. It is rather such a whole-hearted devotion to the fundamental Christian principles of love and holiness as will save one from deliberate violations of them. Violations may now and then occur, but where they are few and not of a serious nature, the moral quality of the life is determined by its obedience rather than by its lapses, and in such a case we may speak of a relative sinlessness. Such a sinlessness is a constituent element in the Christian moral ideal." 53m

Turning the other cheek. "Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," 5:39.

Was Jesus a pacifist? In our view this saying suggests the ideal attitude for normal human situations, the best way to try to apply the principle of respect for persons in personal situations. To make this interpretation clear we might, if necessary, stress the "one" who is evil, v. 44. This verse does not tell us not to resist impersonal evil forces; i.e. it does not say that we should not resist evil as such. This verse must be considered beside Mk 11:15 where Jesus used force against entrenched evil; or beside Luke 22:38 where he permitted the disciples to be armed with "two swords" in the eleventh hour. The sequel to this injunction to the disciples, that they had best go armed into the night of his arrest, is reported in Mtt 26:52. After one of them had indeed smitten off the ear of a servant of the high priest, the passage contains the famous line, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." It utters, of course, the timeless truth that a vengeful or brutal policy cannot in the long run succeed; but it does not help us to answer the immediate question. That issue we believe is left inconclusive in the Sermon. We cannot but believe, however, that Jesus would have indeed resisted something like the Nazi tyranny, of our time, had he been living in our circumstances, though, characteristically he would have chosen <sup>no</sup> doubt a way of non-violent resistant suffering, had he been a German, an inevitable martyr's death.

In any case, the major truth holds for the saying that the way of love must take precedence over the way of force. The way of love must come to prevail so universally that the way of military preparedness will not be necessary. 53n

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This passage as a whole in 6:1-18, emphasizing virtue as inner intention, contrasts the unostentatious method of giving charity, praying and fasting with the practice of some of the Pharisees, who hypocritically performed such works for outward effect or show.

The Lord's Prayer 6:7-11, is a succinct statement of the Hebraic philosophy of religion:

- Affirming that God is personal Father, v. 9;
- That there is a divine purpose or meaning to existence and human history, v. 10;
- That this purpose is to be achieved in a measure upon earth, v. 10;
- That men are to help it to come to pass. v 10; and
- That there is a personal or individual providence for each of us, partially understood as God's help of us in leading the moral life, v. 11-13.

53n The saying in Mtt 10:34, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," refers to the divisions he realizes his work will cause, as is clear by the context. It is of course, not a bellicose statement.

53m A. C. Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics*, Abingdon-Colesbury, 1943, p. 153.

On material values and anxiety, 6:19-34. These verses speak to the central problem of human life in its struggle for physical security. The main teaching is that "his kingdom and his righteousness," or the love of men, is to come before the acquisition of things as our chief concern, or as the statement of our full orbed motive. Recall our discussion of this and related themes under the heading "Christian Love", p 144f.

This passage does not teach asceticism; nor does it deny our need for physical things and physical security. Rather it teaches that we must replace anxiety with trust, v. 30, as our characteristic approach to life. Here indeed we probably have the hardest of Jesus's commandments to fulfill. Yet modern psychiatry knows how imperative it is for a healthy mind to try to live without immoderate anxiety. Indeed we must be concerned, Jesus here allows, about life's problems and evils, but it is possible, and we should endeavor, not to be inordinately anxious. Jesus does not literally mean, v. ., 19f, 25f, 34, that we should be idle and expect God miraculously to clothe and feed us. He uses hyperbole again here as in the former passage. The very last verse of the passage, v. 34 makes this clear, and says in effect: Don't worry about an unknown future, for today has its problems and troubles of a practical sort that we should be concerned about, but not immoderately. Do not try to do tomorrow's duties today. Jesus does not mean, however, that we should not make plans for the future, as a matter of practical everyday concern. He is not advocating a life of idle vagabondage. Indeed his parable of the foolish virgins who took no extra oil for their lamps to the marriage feast, reveals his positive attitude toward that side of life concerned with provisions and future contingencies. We may reemphasize that Jesus's message is not life-denying and ascetical, but life-affirming in every practical way.

His teaching on anxiety, however, in its full dimensions here is consummate wisdom. The passage implies that anxiety is not itself sin or sinful; as some may suppose. Reinhold Niebuhr in our time has most brilliantly discussed the problem of anxiety in the light of Christian values. He reminds us that because man has an acute sense of imagination, he can anticipate the perils of life -- unlike the animals -- and may strive for security at the expense of others. Anxiety is naturally rooted in our human imagination and is a creative impulse. It may, however, be the "occasion" for sin, since excessive anxiety for physical security may lead to aggression on other life, as we seek to hedge ourselves about with material values at their expense.<sup>530</sup> Here it is the part of religious wisdom to allay inordinate anxiety and replace it with trust and hope.

### 3. The sacred reverence for personality, Mtt 7:1-14.

The problem of critical evaluation of other human beings vv 1-14. Jesus begins this section by saying that one should judge or purge oneself of evils and hypocrisy, rather than engage so glibly, as we often do, in criticism of others. Censorious judgment is our commonest human sin. Particularly does this practice ill become us when we so often are blind to our own faults.

Yet in verse 7 he enjoins us to be aware of defective attitudes and conduct in others; and prepared to protect one's own person against abuse by others, and the advantage that they may take of us out of ignorant and/or malicious or "swinish" motives. In many of our official duties we are called upon to evaluate other people. This is a legitimate and proper duty, only we perform it with circumspection, humility, and cautious faithful consideration of all facts and evidence as we are able to gather, in order to understand them.

The secret of life, 7:7-14. This instructive passage begins: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." For what is one to ask; and at what door are we to knock? What do these cryptic words of Jesus mean? The context makes it clear that they express God's interest in the welfare of persons, as objects of supreme value, and His outgoing love toward them. Accordingly, if we seek to understand life and human relationships in these divine terms, of the sacredness of persons; and seek to serve them, as God Himself seeks our own and all human welfare -- we find the secret of life. It opens unto us. The answer to life's highest joy and satisfaction is given. This is, of course, no paltry material reward that is guaranteed here, but rather spiritual fulfillment in the sense of gaining highest satisfaction in life. Yet how can we love and serve others without doing so materially? Therefore, in this type of Christian Ethics, all are, in the end, universally blessed materially, through the service of each for all.

Verse 11 -- "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? -- suggests a philosophy of Providence. The reality and medium of a Divine Providence for the Christian is precisely the "good gifts" and the "good things" established materially in the kingdom of love by the Christian spirit itself. . . Through them and in them, i. e. Providence of the Father may work. Jesus sparse words here do not elaborate a philosophy of Providence quite as we have done. But the fuller context of this and his teachings as a whole permit an interpolation of this kind, of words no doubt originally meant more simply to enjoin faith in the good outworking of life under God.

Recall our comment about the words "You...who are evil." This is no across the board doctrine of the inherent sinfulness of man, but rather an acknowledgment that men sometimes can be mean and miserly, as suggested in the Smith-Goodspeed and the New English translations, "bad as you <sup>are</sup> ~~evil~~", that is, we believe, he means to say bad as you may be. A similar exegesis is suggested by Moffatt where he renders this expression by "Well, if for all your evil..." etc. (Recall our full discussion of Jesus' concept of man on pages 142-143f).

The paragraph is summarized and climaxed by the Golden Rule v. 12. The Golden Rule formulates the idea of reverence for personality, your own and others. The idea is less ambiguously rendered as the Great Commandment, Mt 22:34-40. The Great Commandment implies: that we must reverence personality with the same intensity that God as Creator reverences and loves persons.

An important addendum to the secret of life is the narrow gate, v. 13-14. No doubt in these lines there is the basic eschatological note that the way Jesus is leading them, in opposition to so much that they had taken for granted, is hard; and that they must be willing to follow through the straitened defile and leave much on the broader easier-going way behind -- as he calls them to a particular and irrevocable commitment to him and his cause. But the more universal message is that Jesus is calling men to a particular role as persons, namely to become citizens of a spiritual kingdom of love. These words then, like the others of the Sermon, may be interpolated broadly. They remind us that we must concentrate in life -- fix our attention on some one good and major goal and work toward it; for this is the way personality is made, by focusing life, by realizing one or a few great ideas out of many possibilities. We help this process in choosing a major course at college; a life's profession or work; a life's partner. The late, great Josiah Royce wrote powerfully on this theme, in his studies of selfhood, and of the process whereby we come into realized selfhood or meaningful personal being. He said "Individuality...is the expression of selective interest" and "Individuality is a category of the satisfied

will" 53p What we know as our spiritual being, he said, is the process of our ideas focussing themselves into concrete activity through will or purposive activity. Being is an idea willing its individuality. Jesus' saying about the narrow gate through which we must pass suggests a similar understanding of spiritual life and its growth.

4. The closing observations of the Sermon are found 7:15-29. Here he tells us that sincerity and productiveness are the tests of Christian personality. He refers again to "the will of God" as our ultimate ethical standard, the doing of which qualifies us for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. Here is stressed ethical action over the mere profession of his name as the real test of discipleship -- the constant challenge to Christians and the churches, lest they become spiritually lazy, complacent and inactive.

In the parable of the House Built upon a Rock we are confronted with Jesus's sense of the absolute nature of his teachings: they are the truth for life. Note the emphasis on doing the words, carrying his principles out in ethical action, as the clue to salvation. If he also means here by the floods and the storm that an apocalyptic closure of time is near at hand, the paragraph would have had a peculiar urgency for himself and for his hearers. And though this element, if it be there, has been dissolved away for us today in terms of a specific theory of history to which we can no longer subscribe, there are storms enough of circumstance in our own experience -- often apocalyptic in proportion in our 20th century times -- which beat in upon our lives to test the truth of many of these words.

A closing observation. The Sermon gets peculiarly at the essence of moral virtue as inner loving intention or motive. The Sermon also in many places stresses works. The full formula of moral virtue or action is, of course, the quality of inner intention or motive, plus works. Works comprehend two things: the means we employ to bring about our good works and the consequences to which means lead on. Often poor means are selected; frequently action miscarries and ends up in bad consequences. But a loving motive will tend to assure the best means, and the best consequences.

Questions for Part Four: The Basic Teachings of Jesus

1. State four major themes in Jesus's teachings, and familiarize yourself with major passages that bring each out. What is his view of man? of God?
2. Do you think the law of respect for persons is a basic moral law? If your answer is affirmative, what would you mean by "basic"? In what sense may this be called universal law?
3. Explain clearly the Christian concept of love as Agape. How does it contrast with love as Eros? In your view are agape and eros mutually exclusive? What psychological truth seems to lie behind Jesus's Great Paradox, Mk 8:35? What place does Jesus give to the self in the ethical relationship.
4. What are the several levels of ethical relationships or justice as suggested by Mtt 5:38-48. Do you think a particular level need cancel out those below it?
5. What in general terms does Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God. How does it relate to the principles of respect for persons and agape?
6. What are the several principal features or characteristics of the Kingdom? Refer to scriptures that bear these out?
7. Explain what Jesus means by God's Will as ultimate ethical standard.
8. Be prepared to explain the meaning or main point of the various sections of the Sermon on the Mount.
9. Do you think virtue should be defined by "inner motive"? What is the relation between inner motive and outward ethical act?
10. Give examples of the use of hyperbole in the Sermon on the Mount.
11. How is the Lord's Prayer a summary of Hebraic philosophy?
12. Analyze carefully the full meaning of Mtt 6:19-34.
13. In the thought of Jesus state what salvation is from; what it is to or for; and by what it is conditioned. Familiarize yourself with NT passages that bring this idea of salvation out.
14. Analyze carefully Jesus's full concept of judgment; cite his various figures of speech concerning "perdition." What questions do you have about the analysis of this problem in the preceding discussion?
15. In what terms does Jesus think of himself as an instrument of salvation? (For further detail on this point we will later note questions on the idea of Jesus's Messiahship).

F. An Interpretation of Jesus' Miracles<sup>53a</sup>

The student should read carefully the following passages:

- Mk 2:3-11; 3:22-27.....Jesus's healing works: identifies  
8:11-13 his authority with his moral  
Lk 4:9-13; 11:20, 29f message; repudiates use of "signs";  
17:20 his healing works evidence that the  
Kingdom comes with power.
- Mk 1:34; 4:34; 3:10..... Limits and conditions of his  
5:24-34; 6:1-5 healing power.  
Lk 7:21
- Mk 4:35-41; 6:30-44, 45-52...The nature miracles as reported  
11:12-14 by Mark.

In considering and evaluating the account of Jesus's miracles, it is helpful to divide the subject into the healings and the nature miracles.

Most of the miracles reported of Jesus were healing miracles. The important following things should be noted according to the NT report:

1. According to the Synoptics he refused to give miraculous proof for his authority. At an early stage we read how he rejected the use of miracle for display, the Temptation, Lk 4:9-13. Note particularly Mk 8:11-13; Lk 11:29f, where he identifies his authority with his moral message, and repudiates miracle as a "sign." The "sign" of Jonah meant to him that the latter prophet preached a moral message of repentance to the people of Nineveh; so would Jesus to the men of Israel in his time. His hearers could accept him or reject him on the basis of his moral appeal.

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<sup>53a</sup>We suggest the following further reading on the problem of the miracles:  
Walter Bell Denny: The Career and Significance of Jesus, Thomas  
Nelson & Sons, 1939, New York. Ch. XIII.

Harvey Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark - Moffatt Commentary, op. cit.  
p. 30-36.

The Abingdon Bible Commentary, op. cit.  
p. 921-929

George A. Gordon: Religion and Miracle  
p. 83-95

Even in Mark 2:3-11 his moral message and ministry precede his healing ministry. His authority does not rest on his works of power; rather his works of power follow as a corollary of his moral authority.

Some interpreters feel that there may be a conflict of tradition between:

Mk 2:3-11; Lk 11:20

and Mk 8:12; Lk 11:29; Mtt 12:28  
17.20

where the miracles seemed to be "significant evidence to Jesus of the dawning of God's power" and "an authentication of His mission and an indication that the reign of evil was at an end."<sup>53r</sup>

where Jesus seems flatly to refuse to give any sign "to this generation"-- wording which sounds pretty conclusive or final.

2. If he performed cures, then, he regarded them as evidence or revelation that the kingdom had come with power, or as corollaries to his moral authority, rather than as tests of his authority, Mk 3:22-27; Lk 11:20.

3. The record makes plain that he was limited in his power to heal. Observe Mk 1:34; 3:10 where it says that he cured "many", not all (note mention of the "all" in 3:10 who had diseases but only the "many" were cured); also in this connection we cite Lk 7:21. Note especially Mk 6:1-5 where it says "he could do no mighty work" in his home neighborhood but cured only "a few sick" folk. We should point out also that his cures depended on the faith of those healed, Mk 5:24-34. Evidently, Jesus's power to heal depended upon a relationship of confidence between himself and the sick, a standard kind of relation which modern physicians and psychiatrists must have with their patients.

Such are the main facts of the record itself. How may we evaluate these reports? We may believe, without stretching credulity too far, that Jesus performed cures. Even his enemies admitted it, Mk 3:22. Is this added proof that his ministry was having some sort of unusual effect? In any case, we draw a few observations:

Our faith may be made easier by the fact that some of the people cured seemed to be suffering from what we would call today forms of psychological hysteria, Mk 1:23; 5:24-34, comparable to hysterical blindness, deafness, paralysis, etc., that psychiatrists treat today. We have already suggested the psychological character of some of Jesus's cures at least, by the evidence that faith was necessary on the part of those healed.

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<sup>53r</sup> Harvey Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, op.cit. p. 71-72.

Such cures would be rendered all the more easy in that day and time, when it was the general belief that disease was caused by demonic spirits, over which a powerful holyman, as Jesus in the popular thought would have been regarded, might have control.

Yet we should probably say that Jesus had a more than ordinary power over men. It is not incredible that he worked healing in the minds, and possibly the bodies of people, to an unusual extent or degree for his day and time.

On broadest philosophical level, we recall the close relationship of mind to body, and the place of mental attitude in the successful treatment of disease, as a generally acknowledged medical fact. Doctors have long known that people who want to get well frequently do; while those who lack the will to live frequently do not. It is a common place of medical experience that much physical suffering roots in psychological disturbance. Jesus worked primarily on the minds and attitudes of persons, healing their spirits first. There is much evidence for faith healing of some kinds of illness today (this is the source and strength of the Christian Science movement and other faith healing emphases in Christian denominations). Perhaps we have not explored this whole possibility enough in our modern scientific age. However, we should also acknowledge, by way of caution, that some alleged faith healers of our time have naively exploited a sacred dimension of the religious mission, which when properly employed conjointly with legitimate medical science, has proved of aid to that science.

The NT expression "nightly work," which is associated with Jesus's ministry, e.g. in Mark 6:5, comes from the Greek "dynamis," which means generally "power." Taking a clue from this meaning of the word, it is plain that Jesus' ministry was having an unusual effect or "power," apparently in the assistance of some people toward healing. We need not, however, transliterate this "dynamis" or mighty work into the traditional notion of "miracle," as an act done contrary to the laws of nature, or in suspension of those laws. This observation leads us into the problem of the nature miracles reported of Jesus.

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We may interpret the reports of the nature miracles in two ways:

First, all of them are subject to edifying moral interpretation, with the possibility of seeing behind them natural events that become elaborated by the growing tradition into the marvelous or the legendary. The moral meaning of the nature miracle stories are of inestimable value. According to Mark, the earliest version of the life of Jesus among the four Gospels, there are only four nature miracles, strictly speaking, reported of Jesus. The supernatural signs at the Baptism, and likewise at the Transfiguration, are not strictly miracles of or by Jesus. Recall our discussion of the Baptismal account in Mark in contrast to the heightening of this account toward the miraculous as found in Luke

and Matthew, and the possible natural explanation of the phenomena at the Baptism, p. Presently we will discuss the Transfiguration and later on the Resurrection and the Virginal Birth reports as important problems in this area of the miraculous life as a whole, as told by the Gospel reporters. But we return now to the first level of the problem concerning the miraculous works, which it is said Jesus performed himself upon nature, and repeat that in the oldest Gospel there are but four nature miracles reported. Let us consider each in turn as we come upon them in the story:

Mk 4:35-41: the stilling of the storm on Galilee. Jesus' original utterance may have been addressed to the disciples rather than to the waves, when he said "Peace, be still." Thus indeed, he does so address the disciples in v. 40. He may have meant the words for them, to quiet their fears. Or the ship may have rounded a promontory into a quiet bay sheltered from the wind. The lake of Galilee is famous for the sudden rising and passing of storms.

Mk 6:30-44: feeding of the 5000 (duplicated in the feeding of the 4000, Mk 8:1-10) is a lesson in sharing.<sup>53s</sup> When the disciples brought out and shared what they had, others in the multitude caught on and did likewise. Here may be the real event behind the account of the multiplication of the loaves. It is not likely that multitudes would go some distance into the country to hear a great evangelist, and to spend a good part of the day, without taking provisions.

Mk 6:45-52: walking on the water. Possibly when they saw him walking "on" or "along" the water, that is, along the shore, they were comforted by the realization that he was near -- again their fears left them. Or the morning mists might have given the illusion that he was walking on the water-- is some such natural interpretation possible? Such a naturalistic explanation is strengthened by the Johannine tradition, John 6: 21, where in conclusion to John's version of the story it says, "immediately the boat was at the land."

Mk 11:12-14: cursing of the Fig Tree. This is obviously legend because it is contrary to the character of Jesus. Furthermore, to accept the report literally would call into question his good sense, in cursing a tree for not bearing its figs out of season, as the story relates!

The cursing of such a tree would be like the act of a conjurer, devoid of moral meaning. Such performances Jesus strictly avoided, Mk 8:11-13.

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<sup>53s</sup> That the second feeding of a multitude found in Mark is simply a duplicate account of one, original such tradition is borne out by the facts that Luke, coming upon this account in Mark, as he was transcribing the later Gospel, simply omits it, plus the curious little anecdote in the account of the second feeding in Mark that the disciples wondered how they could feed so large a multitude. Why would they have wondered at all, had there been a preceding miraculous feeding of 5000?

It reminds us of the legendary tale in the non-canonical Gospel of Thomas concerning how the child Jesus conjured clay pigeons into life.

The report may reflect an event the original nature of which tradition has obscured. Could the story refer, not to an act of Jesus, but to one of his parables, which Lk 13:6-9 reports, about a barren fig tree? The teaching of this parable is quite clear, positive, and in keeping with Jesus's character. It is that God loves, and is patient with, those who are slow to respond, but that they will be finally cast off, if they do not respond. It is a parable emphasizing human freedom, and the fact that life without fruit is worthless -- futile leaves (words) without fruit (acts). It teaches that mere lip service to the Gospel is not enough, that the Gospel requires ethical action. Some have claimed that the cursing of the fig tree has allegorical meaning, e.g. the rejection of Judaism for its lack of spiritual and ethical fruit; or the fall of Jerusalem. Mark's explanation, 11:20-25, that the incident is a demonstration of the power of faith is not clear. Indeed, Jesus's stress on the need for an attitude of forgiveness in 11:25, in contrast to the impulsive, unforgiving spirit depicted of him by the cursing of the tree incident, is striking. Plainly incidents have been put together here out of context with the fig tree story.

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The student might ask at this point, but what of the reports concerning the raising of the "dead," as performed by Jesus--are not these "nature miracles" of the most stupendous sort with which we have to reckon as we trace faithfully the Gospel accounts? Actually, they should be considered as part of the tradition dealing with the healings, but we will treat them at this place. There is no account of the raising of Lazarus, after being dead four days, in the Synoptics, the earlier and presumably more authentic sources for the life of Jesus. The Lazarus story, along with the magical feat of turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana, also reported solely in John, must be regarded as John's seizure of legendary traditions about the marvelous in connection with Jesus' "mighty works" which had ample time to come into circulation by the end-century period when John wrote his book. (Recall how in the Synoptics Jesus refused to perform magical signs!)

What we do have in the Synoptics is two accounts, the raising of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:21-24, 35-39; and the raising of the widow's son in Luke 7:11-17. In the case of the former story, the report is that Jesus said the girl was not dead but asleep, and Matthew and Luke in their transcription of the account from Mark give the report in this way too. Apparently, then, we have here the record, if authentic, of a resuscitation of some kind performed by Jesus, a healing, not the raising of a girl from the dead. This kind of healing was known in the tradition, e.g. I Kings 17:17f. In the unique report in Luke of the raising of the widow's son we have evidently something similar, not a raising from the dead. Luke 7:11-17 tells us that the raising took place immediately after death, that is, we would say the supposed death of the boy, while the body, it says, "was carried out" (Lk 7:12). If this account be based on fact, it could again have been the case of an apparent death, and resuscitation, as the Jairus' daughter incident makes clear.

Second, of course, concerning the nature miracle stories there has been the literal type of interpretation of traditional Christianity. If one wishes to rationalize such a standpoint--apart from the sheer acceptance of the nature miracles on faith--he would have to claim that the Divine Spirit, which he believes Jesus' life and thought and deed expressed, was in full command of "nature" and her "laws," to such an extent as to make these supernatural events take place as the gospel authors report and mean them, that is to say, as supernatural signs of the Divine power working in Jesus. If such a position be taken, it is confronted with that other part of the record, appearing a number of times in the case of the healings, that Jesus' power was limited. The latter part of the record seems the more authentic aspect to us--it depicts him as not an omnipotent conjurer.

If the nature miracles be true, they would simply be extra evidence. Jesus' moral personality, and its power over men's lives, would remain the chief criterion for Christians of the Divine character of his message and life. Were there no nature miracles reported, there would still remain Jesus, the Christ, moral teacher and Savior for the many who have followed in his way.

Part FiveContinuation of Jesus' Ministry: Crisis, Retirement,  
and Journey to Jerusalem

Mark chs. 6-10

Commentary Continued

Assignment

1. RSV Mk 6:1-8:26.....Mounting crisis and withdrawal  
from Capernaum and Nazareth.
- 8:27-10:52.....Retirement with his disciples  
for reexamination of effect and  
purpose of his mission. The  
transfiguration. Journey to  
Jerusalem.
2. Study Guide p.

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We return now to the story of Jesus' "life" or ministry where we left off on page        prior to our study of his teachings.

In Mk 6:1-8:25 we read of mounting crisis in the ministry, of popular confusion, increasing opposition, and a popular misunderstanding and rejection of his message. This scene ends in his withdrawal from the immediate vicinity of Capernaum and Nazareth and a north Palestinian wandering out of the territory of the Jews for a brief period. The major incidents are the following:

Rejection at Nazareth, 6:1-6. His neighbors and family are not impressed with him as a supernatural messenger. Does this mark the beginning of a popular rejection? We have observed that this scene also reveals that his healings were limited and that faith was necessary on the part of those healed.

Mission of the Twelve, 6:7-13. This passage reveals that Jesus thought of his mission as national in scope; he undertakes to arouse the nation as a whole by sending his disciples out over the country to preach his message of the spiritual Kingdom of God.

Political authorities, in Herod Antipas, begin to be alarmed, 6:14-29. Herod does not want any native movements to get too far; this may be the political cause behind the beheading of John the Baptist.

In 6:14-16 and 30-44 we observe the height of his popularity, the frenzy and expectancy of the crowds, v 31, 55. He impresses the people as one of the great prophets, v. 14-16. The feeding of the 5000, v. 30-44, as we have already observed may be interpreted as a lesson in sharing what one has, of love and service to one's neighbor.

Recall our discussion of the incident of his walking on the water 6:54-52 p.

The dispute over the ritual washing of hands, 7:1-8, 14-23, brings out Jesus's ethic of inner intention, in contrast to the externalistic and formalistic extreme of some of the Pharisees regarding distinction between the "clean" and the "unclean."

The reference to honoring mother and father, 7:9-13, raises another point at issue with the Pharisees. It had been a rule of Pharisaic tradition that once an oath had been made it should at all costs be kept (in general a worthy principle). But here Jesus criticizes some of them for having such a rigid sense of responsibility to the tradition or law that they loose sense of pressing human need. Keeping the law and the traditions must give way, if necessary, he says, to human interests and needs: "the abstract law of the validity of oaths should give way before the law commanding respect and care for parents."<sup>53t</sup> Jesus's ethic was centered in the principle of personal-ity, and here again he is affirming that human need must stand above legal rule, as many of the Pharisees and Rabbis had also proclaimed in their traditional willingness to reinterpret and modify the original law of Moses, at many places, as we have long since seen, in order to make it fit the pressing and changing needs of men.

Healing of the Syrophenician girl, 7:24-30. Note first that Jesus has now left his home territory, probably to escape Herod, and journeys to the north, 7:24. How may we explain his reference to the non-Jewish woman as a "dog"? What about this seeming insult -- was Jesus a narrow-minded nationalist? This is an ironical saying to teach his nationalistic and intolerant countrymen the incompatibility of their kind of narrow nationalism, and racial prejudice, with the universal outlook of the Kingdom of Heaven. By this saying it is evident that Jesus intended his mission to be to his own people first. Accordingly, it is a sharp expression of regret, even of temper, in terms of common speech or slang, that his own people were not accepting him. It is a soliloquy, addressed to his own nation or people, not to the woman personally. This slip of speech shows that Jesus had a very human, even impulsive side. What he may have been thinking was something like the following: "My own people have rejected me, but here this woman, traditionally called a dog, has accepted me." Originally, did he mean the words for himself, but in the heat of disappointment, absent-mindedly utter them aloud?

That Jesus did not intend to be intolerant by the words is abundantly clear in his universalistic teaching as a whole, which emphasized love, brotherhood, forgiveness of enemies, God's universal Fatherhood, etc. Recall the following passages emphasizing Jesus's world outlook:

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<sup>53t</sup>Branscomb, Gospel of Mark, op. cit. p. 124

- The Good Samaritan, Lk 10:30-37
  - Gentile Centurion's servant healed, Mtt 8:5-13
  - Cleansing of the lepers, of whom the only grateful one was a Samaritan, Lk 17:11-19
  - Identifies his own message with that of II Isaiah, who had a world outlook, Lk 4:16f.
  - In cleansing the Temple he challenges the nation to remember its world mission, Mk 11:17
  - In addition to these, see Mtt 5:43; 12:21; 21:33-43; 25:32f; 28:19, 20.
- In sum, Jesus had "a world outlook combined with a patriotism of the noblest sort."<sup>53u</sup> We may suspect that he wanted to save Israel first, so that she might save the world.

The feeding of the 4000, Mk 8:1f, is probably a duplicate of the feeding of the 5000. Would such a question as 8:4 have been asked, had Jesus just recently miraculously fed a similar multitude? We recall that Luke omits this second feeding episode from his version of the life.

Mark's account of the demand for a sign, 8:11-13, must be read with Luke's version, 11:16, 29f. What was the sign of "Jonah"? The incident stresses Jesus's refusal to lay claim to the messianic office as popularly conceived -- his refusal to prove his authority by a miracle. In the Luke version it is clear that his authority rests upon his moral message, which is the "sign of Jonah." (Recall our comment in the section on the miracles, ante.) Furthermore, the refusal to give a "sign" suggests particularly his refusal to identify himself with the apocalyptic notion of the messiah, whose coming, it was supposed, would be preceded by many signs, Luke 17:20-24.

The "leaven of the Pharisees and Herod," 8:15, is not clear in Mark. Luke 12:1 says that Jesus meant hypocrisy by this saying.

Likewise, 8:19-21 is vague. Does he mean here that he can supply their spiritual deficiencies, just as he has supplied their material needs in the cases of the feedings?

In the curing of the blind man 8:22-26, we have an instance of healing as a gradual process rather than an instantaneous effect, suggesting again the limitation of Jesus' powers, but nevertheless their effectiveness, as a natural charismatic endowment, with people suffering from hysterical disorders. This story parallels in a number of interesting details the healing of the deaf stammerer in 7:32, which suggests psychological disturbance as root of the trouble. Spittle was regarded by both Jews and Gentiles as having healing powers. There is a well known story that the Emperor Vespasian cured a blind man by this means in Alexandria. Also Hellenistic stories of healings resemble this one of the blind man, and that of the deaf stammerer, in a number of respects, suggesting the development, if not the origin, of these stories in Hellenistic circles.<sup>53v</sup>

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<sup>53u</sup>Walter Bell Denny, Career and Significance of Jesus, op. cit. p. 195.

<sup>53v</sup>Harvey Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, op. cit. p. 133-135, & 141-142

Let us summarize at this place the two-fold nature of the opposition which was rising against Jesus by this time in his ministry: The religious opposition was represented by those Scribes and Pharisees, who were opposed to Jesus's presumption in pronouncing forgiveness of sins, his disregard of the law and orthodox regulation, his disregard of religious caste, i.e. his association with tax-gatherers and "sinners." In sum, these types of opponents were against what we would call, in modern terms, Jesus' liberal reformation.

The political and economic phase of the opposition was represented by the Herodians, Sadducees or Temple Authorities, and the Zealots. (Review our previous discussion of these parties and interests.) Some of the Pharisees, according to the Christian record, helped to incite the Herodians against Jesus, Mk 3:6, by alleging that he was treasonable to Rome, Mk 12:13-17. The house of Herod on its own part feared his power over the people, Mk 6:14f. The Sadducees, or Temple Authorities in Jerusalem, represented by Annas and Caiaphas (at various times high priests at Jerusalem) exercised great economic power over the people through the institution of Temple taxation. Jesus's simple message against ostentation and pride, to, and in behalf of, the poorer, common man would naturally irritate this stronghold of wealth, privilege, and corruption. (We analyze later the incident of Jesus driving the money changers out of the Temple.) The zealots turned against him because he would not become their political messiah, Jhn 6:15; Mtt 11:12. The people as a whole were more or less blinded by this type of political expectation, and could not understand Jesus's deeper message of the spiritual Kingdom.

We are now prepared to consider the high questions involved in the crisis phase of his ministry. These center in his own developing estimate of his purpose and mission, as messenger of God's spiritual Kingdom.

Our scene opens with Jesus' retirement with his disciples to a place outside his native province, for reexamination of the effect his work was having and of the role he himself had undertaken as messenger of the Kingdom, Mk 8:27-10:52. As the larger picture, we read of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi; Jesus's announcement of certain consequences which will follow from his "messiahship" and their discipleship; the Transfiguration; and the journey to Jerusalem. This section raises the following major questions: What is meant by Peter's confession, "You are the Christ," 8:29? What is meant by a messiah who would "suffer many things," 8:31, and who "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," 10:45? What did Jesus mean by the expression, "Son of Man," in the Mark report, 8:31;9:1? Did he use this term as current apocalyptic thought understood it? Did he apply the term to himself?

The next major section of our study will endeavor to introduce to the student several types of answer to these difficult questions. We will there deal first with the problems as the Gospel records themselves lay them open, and thence move toward a constructive synthesis. Before launching, however, upon this task, we look briefly at the incidents of the Transfiguration and the Journey to Jerusalem.

The Transfiguration, Mk 9:2-8, continues Mark's main theme: Jesus's divine sonship, which is now attested by these supernatural phenomena. Recall the similar events reported at the Baptism.

Frederick Grant has stated well what the account would have meant to the readers of the early church.<sup>53w</sup> It is "a Christophany, a manifestation of the Son of God in his true nature, as he will be seen on the last day, and as he appears now 'at the right hand of power', Mk 14:62; Acts 7:55," and doubtless also, as he will appear in his second return to earth, which the early church considered to be imminent. Suggested further are the themes, symbolized by the figures of Moses and Elijah, that the revelation in Christ is superior to the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah).

What was the original event, assuming that the scene has a basis in fact? It has been pointed out that in the Greek the word transfigured is "metamorphosed," and can mean "a change of form, an effulgence from within, not a mere 'flood of glory' from without."<sup>53x</sup> This idea of interior effulgence, or light shining outward, is suggested also in the Matthew version where it reads, his face "shone like the sun" (17:2). Could the emanation of light depicted by the Gospel accounts--understand, of course, in them to be a supernatural manifestation--be a clue to a more universal meaning, and possibly even to the original event itself, conceived in more natural or psychological terms? Could the original event have been a new and sudden, deeper awareness on the part of the disciples of the significance of Jesus's teaching, and of Jesus himself as a person? His personality, in the eyes of the disciples, begins now to "glow" with the living reality of God's love that he was proclaiming and living himself. Often we suddenly see friends, sweethearts, members of our families in new and glowing light, when their true, or deeper persons, by some act of kindness, sacrifice, and love, is disclosed to us in a new radiance. In any case, the disciples' experience was the awareness of the supremacy of Jesus' type of moral personality in the universe. The experience established their belief that his kind of life has supreme and eternal value. Jesus' friendship was disclosing ultimate realms of spirit to them, in its abiding and absolute quality.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah may refer to the common hypothesis that Jesus was one of the great prophets returned, Mk 6:15; but in the present account it has come down to us as the actual appearance of such prophets at a special occasion to substantiate Jesus's claim to messiahship.

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The Journey to Jerusalem, Mk 9:14-10:52. The two principal points in this episode are Jesus's efforts (1) to prepare his disciples for his death; and (2) to teach them about the responsibilities of discipleship, or what they must do in order to follow him. The Journey itself has been called a parable in action.

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<sup>53w</sup>Interpreter's Bible, op. cit. Vol. VII, p. 775.

<sup>53x</sup> Ibid. p. 775, See also Mk 16:12; II Peter 1:16-18.

He now prepares his disciples for the martyr's death, which he foresees is inevitable, 9:31-32; 10:32-34. They continue to misunderstand his mission as a suffering Messiah, 9:32.

Conscious of his inevitable martyrdom, Jesus believes nevertheless that there will be a Divine purpose even in his death, should it occur, which God will use to vindicate his cause in some great way. Being certain of a Divine meaning to history, and of Divine purpose or providence in individual life, we would expect him to come to see his own possible death as a part of God's purpose too. Accordingly he looks at that eventuality with hope and trust, believing that even his death would not foreshorten the Divine plan; his mission and message would be victorious somehow through and beyond his death. Recall our previous discussion of Jesus's concept of himself as an instrument of salvation and our subsequent discussion on the meaning of his death.

The rising "after three days," 8:31; 9:31; 10:34. Hosea 6:2, referring to Yahweh's restoration of Israel, uses the expression "after two days," and "on the third he will raise us up." This OT passage indicates a Biblical usage of the expression as meaning, after a brief interval of time. Mtt and Lk parallels have changed the Markan "after three days" to "on the third day" (Lk 9:22). "This," says William Manson, "is doubtless a case in which the original prediction of Jesus has been conformed to the later events in which it was fulfilled."<sup>53y</sup> The Luke and Matthew change suggests that either Mark or Jesus meant the phrase in the general sense of Hosea 6:2. The phrase need not be understood as a literal, clairvoyant prediction of Jesus. It may simply express the general hope we have above described.

Jesus's teaching about following him, while they are proceeding to Jerusalem, is an epitomy of his ethical teachings, and doctrine of salvation, which we have already considered in some detail. Note the Sermon on the Mount material in 9:42-10:9. Jesus's concept of salvation is summarized in the incident of the rich young man who asks, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 10:19. Jesus's reply to the rich young man teaches that the values of ethical conduct and service must take precedence over material values, 10:17, 22-25. The rich young ruler incident also reflects the heightening crisis, as Jesus became more concerned about developing a special following whose keener, personal dedication to him and his cause could be relied upon to carry on, come what may, if and when his own leadership might cease. Note the repetition of the Great Paradox, 8:35; 9:35; 10:31, 43-44. Jesus's conception of outgoing love, Agape, is the heart of his message here.

In our later discussion on the meaning of his death we analyze the words, to give his life "a ransom for many," Mk 10:45. See page 177.

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<sup>53y</sup>The Gospel of Luke, Moffatt Commentary, Harper, 1930. p. 109-110.

## Study Questions

1. What is your reaction to the Biblical passages on the limits and conditions of Jesus's healing power?
2. What is the importance of the sign of Jonah, Lk 11:29-32 concerning the basis of Jesus's authority?
3. Give a resume of the interpretation of the miracles presented in this Study Guide and evaluate for yourself. What questions do you raise about the point of view expressed?
4. Be prepared to analyze the incidents in Mk 6:1-8:26. Why may we suppose Jesus left his home neighborhood and wandered to the north? What do you make of his calling the Phoenician woman a "dog," 7:24f?
5. Give a resume of the types of opposition that were closing against Jesus in this phase of his ministry?
6. What is the general teaching of the Transfiguration?
7. State the significance of the journey to Jerusalem and be prepared to explain its incidents.

Part SixThe New Testament and Concepts of Jesus' Messiahship,  
Death and Resurrection

## The Basic Issues of Christian Theology

## The Conclusion of the Ministry

AssignmentThe Messiahship

1. RSV      Lk    9:26-27. . . . . The Eschatological note in Luke.  
              17:20-26  
              21:31-32  
              22:67- 9  
              (with Mk  
              14:60-64)
- Lk    4:16-19. . . . . The tradition of Jesus as  
                  22:24-27, 37                    fulfilling the role of suffering  
              Mk    6:4                                    service.  
                  8:31  
                  10:42-45  
              Acts 3:13, 26  
                  4:27,30
- Lk    11:20. . . . . The Divine will and purposes  
                  7:22-23                    as expressed in his "works."
- Jhn 10:25, 31, 32, 37-38  
                  14:10-11
- Romans 1:1-4 . . . . . St. Paul and St. John on the  
              Ephesians 3:16-19                    meaning of Jesus' Messiahship  
   through the indwelling of the  
              Jhn    Chs. 14-15                    Divine Love, and the fellow-  
                  10:30                                    ship and salvation of the  
                  17:21,26                    believer in love.

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Commentary continued:

The Jerusalem Ministry

Mk 11-13

Passion and Resurrection

Mk 14-16

The Death

Mk	8:31; 9:1; 14:21 . . . . .	Reported words of Jesus
Lk	22:27, 37 13:33	relative to his Death.
Mk	14:35-36	
Jhn	10:15, 17-18	
Mk	10:45 14:22-25 15:34	
Lk	23:46	
Rom	Chs. 3 & 5; 8:3. . . . .	St. Paul philosophizing on
Col	1:19; 2:6, 13b	the Death.
II Cor	5:14, 17, 19, 21 6:2-7	
Eph	1:5	
Gal	3:10-13	

The Resurrection

Mk	14:26-28 . . . . .	The empty tomb tradition.
	15:42-16:8 16:9-19	
Acts	26:12-23 . . . . .	St. Paul and the Resurrection
I Cor	Ch. 15	as mystical or spiritual.
Rom	8:9	
Col	2:12-13	
Eph	5:14	

## 2. Study Guide

- A. The Problem of the Messiahship, p. 160
- B. The Jerusalem Ministry  
Passion and Resurrection.  
Mk 11-16. Commentary concluded p.
- C. The Meaning of Jesus' Death on the Cross p.
- D. The Problem of the Resurrection p.
- E. The Virgin Birth Stories p.

V. The New Testament and Concepts of Jesus' Messiahship, Death, and Resurrection:  
Basic Issues in Christian Theology

A. The Problem of the Messiahship

The reader may recall our discussion on the types of messianic hope in Israel in Jesus' day, p. 134-139, and our preview of the type of role which we believe he represented, p. 138. Also recall our statement of the problem of the historical Jesus p. 140-141.

1. The critical historical question is how to evaluate the apocalyptic element in the gospels at those express points where Jesus is reported as claiming to be the supernatural "Son of man," who is to appear immediately upon the clouds of Heaven?

William Manson in his study, Christ's View of the Kingdom of God, points out the several possible ways modern thought has treated the apocalyptic element in the Gospels.

First, it is possible to look at the apocalyptic element or terminology in Jesus' teaching as incidental, a mere husk, that may be stripped away and more or less ignored. This type of evaluation is strengthened by the recent opening up of the apocalyptic writings of the later Jewish period, which reveal that many of the eschatological ideas in the Gospels were not original to Christianity. Furthermore, there is the possibility that the apocalyptic element represents the interpretation of the evangelists, or Gospel authors themselves in the early church, rather than that of the historic Jesus. According to this view the evangelists interpreted Jesus in the light of the apocalyptic ideas predominant in their time.

Indeed, there appears to be without doubt a heightening of ideas in the record in the direction of an interpretation of Jesus as apocalyptic Son of man, a development suggested by a close comparison of the Synoptic Gospels in some places.<sup>53</sup> Harvie Branscomb believes that the title in its apocalyptic sense was applied to Jesus by the early church, and presents a strong argument to support this view.<sup>54</sup>

The tendency of interpretation in this direction, then, may be to say that the message of the historic Jesus was centered on ethical and spiritual teaching; and to conclude that, as he may have thought of his mission as being in some way especially appointed, it was a "Messiahship of service" to which he was called.<sup>55</sup>

The second possibility is represented by Schweitzer's classic affirmation that the apocalyptic element is all-essential, the very kernel of the Gospel story. In his famous study, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, (1906) Schweitzer announced that the man of Nazareth was a radical apocalyptic thinker and prophet, who deliberately allowed himself to be martyred, believing that God would vindicate him by causing a metamorphosis of his person into that of the transcendent Son of man.<sup>56</sup> This interpretation

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53. E.g. Burton and Goodspeed: Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, op. cit., p. 118-21, 187, 241, 226, 247-249.

54. The Gospel of Mark, Harper, p. 146-149.

55. So Branscomb, *Ib.* p. 153.

56. Chapters XIX-XX.

relies on such passages as Mk. 13:26, 30; 14:61-62; Mtt. 10-23. In an eloquent portrayal Schweitzer says that the historical Jesus threw himself against the wheel of history and was crushed by it! Christianity, however, continues as a historical force because of the "spiritual" power of love that Jesus has released into the hearts of men.<sup>57</sup>

We have already presented in outline the possibility of a third point of view.<sup>58</sup> It has been ably expressed in similar vein by three respected scholars in the following memorable summaries:

"The truth is...that in Jesus' mind the two conceptions were really one (ethics and eschatology). Religious thought always moves around two foci, that of experience on the one hand, and that of hope on the other. On the one hand there is no religious faith which does not include the sense of Divine forces already at work to produce a present salvation which does not involve the sense of deficit, a something wanting, which has still to be looked for from the skies. The religious conception always turns on these two factors, experience and hope, ethic and eschatology...The complexity of the Gospel data is however due to this that in Jesus' teaching we see a process going on by which apocalyptic ideas are being translated into terms of present and living reality... Jesus, in proclaiming the kingdom of God, and applying to Himself the title 'Son of Man,' was taking up apocalyptic ideas, and giving His Gospel an initial relation to apocalyptic hopes...Apocalyptic supplied the form, therefore, in which Jesus announced His specific message. ...In the sense of having and possessing God Himself He had the assurance that God's idea for humanity could not be long hindered. He had only to reveal God to men, and the Kingdom would have come...The Gospel of Jesus, by presenting the Kingdom as something already cast like a seed into the ground, breaks through the moulds of apocalyptic thought, and diffuses itself in the world as a religion of realized redemption...The teaching of Jesus, therefore, will not be compressed within the limits of an apocalyptic doctrine of the Kingdom..."<sup>59</sup>

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57. More recently, Rudolf Bultman, accepting the apocalyptic school of interpretation initiated by Johannes Weiss (1882), and carried in one direction by Schweitzer, believes that the only way to save Jesus for the modern scientific world is by a radical process of "de-mythologizing" the New Testament apocalyptic picture. That is, "de-mythologizing" would divest the New Testament of its plainly eschatological setting and message--as irrelevant to modern scientific ears--and reinterpret it in terms of the contemporary existentialist philosophy of man. The main drift of Bultmann's view is that "Jesus Christ" as savior, the core of the divine "word" in the Gospel, is relevant to modern man personally in his need as "sinner"--whose soul may be renewed in vertical or subjective dimensions by God's acting through the power of this "faith," a supreme mystery of renewal hidden in the depths of being. Modern scientific man need not, indeed cannot, accept the eschatological framework of thought of the First Century when the New Testament was written. See Rudolf Bultmann: Jesus Christ and Mythology, Scribner, 1958.

"De-mythologizing," however, is not understood by Bultmann as a process of "rationalizing" or "naturalizing" or "ethicizing" the New Testament message, as a former humanistic and liberal Biblical interpretation and theology supposed was possible. The similarity of Bultmann's view to Barth's and to Niebuhr's, and his opposition to "liberal Christologies" (though not to contemporary Biblical criticism) is evident.

58. See p. 138, 140-141.

59. William Manson: Christ's View of the Kingdom of God, T & T Clark, Edenburg, 1918, excerpts from pp. 60-101.

"The use of apocalyptic terms whether by Jewish writers or by Jesus in no way indicates an exclusively otherworldly outlook. Allowance for the symbolic character of these forecasts allows us to see that their concern is in part with the this worldly future of man. Those elements that appear to set a term to the life of this world are in part transparent and disclose in mythical form a future of men under divine judgment and grace, indeed, but not transplanted to other conditions of existence. It is not claimed that Man's deepest intimation of a finally transcendent destiny is absent from apocalyptic, but that this is joined in it with equally compelling intimations of divine operation in the social-historical future. What form this latter would take would only be suggested by imaginative terms, and these merge imperceptibly into the imaginative terms with which the final goal of existence is described." 60

"He believed that the day of God's rule was near at hand...But there are differences from apocalypticism that are...significant. Jesus had none of the hopeless pessimism of the apocalyptists...True, it was God and not man that was to bring the kingdom; but man had something to do. He must repent...The beginnings of the kingdom were here...Satan's kingdom was already being overthrown (Lk. 11:20; 10:18; Mt. 11:4, 5, 25-30)... And one other difference; the apocalyptists were always anxiously scanning the heavens for signs, and calculating times and periods. Jesus left this all with God... ..The emphasis of Jesus is upon the moral character of God. God's relations with men are primarily personal and ethical. Hence the rule of the inner spirit.

"Did the kingdom of God, then, mean for Jesus simply something individual and subjective: That does not follow from the position taken above...The spirit is one of good will, expressed actively in service, and the final test of its presence is just this service (Mk. 9:35; 10:42-45; Mt. 25:31-46). We are dealing here, then, not with mere inner emotion or mystical experience, but pre-eminently with a social spirit that can be expressed only in human relations. The goods of the Kingdom which God gives are conquest of evil, forgiveness of sins, the vision of God, the gift of the spirit-- in a word the gift of life (Lk 11:20; 24:47; Mt. 5:8; Mk. 10:17f). Such gifts cannot be passively received. They make searching demand. And that demand Jesus makes plain. He calls men to repentance, to utter change of heart and devotion of life...The will of God becomes not something passively accepted, but actively practiced." 61

In debate concerning Jesus' relation to apocalyptic thought students have pointed out certain striking contrasts between his views, as expressed in much of the Gospel materials, and the outlook of some of the apocalyptic tracts of the late Old Testament and New Testament periods, such as:---

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60. Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, op. cit., p. 53.  
See also p. 133.
61. Harris Franklin Rall, in The Abingdom Bible Commentary, p. 911-913.

Apocalyptic:  
e.g. Joel, Enoch  
literature 62

World situation hopeless.

God must end the world order  
abruptly, catastrophically.

Kingdom possible only in heaven  
after world is dissolved by fire.

Son of Man to take vengeance on  
Israel's enemies.

A wrathful God to blot out sinners.

Extravagant imagery.

The end calculated by  
cosmic signs.<sup>67</sup>

Jesus' Teaching:

World situation not hopeless:  
Jesus earnestly expects or  
hopes that his message might  
be accepted of men, right up  
to the end: His appeals for  
repentance, Gethsemane prayer.

Parables of the Kingdom as  
growth and <sup>as</sup> inward and  
spiritual.<sup>63</sup>

Kingdom possible on earth,  
God's will to be done on earth;  
his message and work is in  
behalf of a present redemption<sup>64</sup>

Jesus teaching that the King-  
dom is to include any men who  
do God's will.<sup>65</sup>

Jesus belief that God is love,  
anxious to save sinners.<sup>66</sup>

Teaches by natural life-like  
examples. e.g. the parables.

His announcements that the  
time of the end cannot be  
forecast.<sup>68</sup>

If Mark 8:31 or 10:45 is authentic, it is clear that Jesus uses the term 'Son of Man' in a sense unlike apocalyptic thought--Jesus has spiritualized the concept: (1) the Son of man is already here in himself; he is not a future figure to come; (2) he is a dying Son of man, a suffering Son of man, not an omnipotent, supernatural destroyer of the Gentiles,<sup>69</sup> sinners, and an evil world.<sup>70</sup> He was a "Son of man" who "came not to be served but to serve."<sup>71</sup>

62. Joel, 2:30-3:21; C. K. Barrett, The New Testament Background, Selected Documents, op. cit, p. 235-253.

63. Mk. 4:20f; Lk. 11:20; 17:20-21; 19:11.

64. Mk. 10:25-37; 19:11-26; Mtt. 6:12, 7:24; 20:1-16; Lk. 4:16-19.

65. Mk. 3:31; 12:9; Lk. 10:25-37; Mtt. 8:11-12; 13:38; 21:43.

66. Lk. 15:1-32.

67. Mk. Ch. 13.

68. Lk. 11:16f; 17:20-21; Mk. 8:11-13.

69. Barret, op. cit. 242, Assumption of Moses 10, where, not a Son of man, but "the Eternal God alone...will appear to punish the Gentiles," that Israel can be "happy," "exult," and see its "enemies in Gehenna, and... recognize them and rejoice."

70. *Ib.* p. 236, where--in 1 Enoch, 48, 69, the Son of man is to destroy "sinners"; and similarly spoken of the supernatural "man" who "flew with the clouds of heaven" in 4 Ezra 13. Compare Daniel 7.

71. Mk. 10:45. There is also the possibility that Jesus uses the term "Son of man" not of himself, but of another personality, eg. Lk. 9:26-27; 17:24.

2. A messiahship of Service. Regardless of his express use or not of the Son of man terminology, many scholars of our day believe that Jesus assumed and emphasized, more or less consciously, his role as a "messiah" or spokesman of service, inspired possibly by the Suffering Servant ideal of the Second Isaiah. The value of this interpretation, if true, is that it would depict the historical Jesus as a personality who was more in touch with human reality as we know it. It would understand him in terms less extreme than the apocalyptic interpretation; it views him as a prophet for the ages, and less a child of the first century. Is it a true interpretation? Did Jesus identify himself with the Suffering Servant theme of the Great Isaiah (Chapt. 53); or in what way or to what extent might Jesus, in the last tragic hours of his life, have taken comfort in this theme? Scholarly opinion is open;<sup>72</sup> the individual student will have to decide the issue for himself, on the basis of the evidence as he may see it.

We here attempt to throw light on the problem in the following way.

Much of the liberal tradition in New Testament interpretation has believed that the historic Jesus, if he claimed to have a special role at all, associated his life and work primarily with a message of suffering service.

However, in a number of places Mark emphasizes Jesus as the "Son of man" in the highapocalyptic sense, eg. 13:26; 14:62--who declared he would return on the clouds of heaven before his own generation would pass away. Matthew, whom you will recall used Mark as one of his sources, follows the latter quite closely in such a presentation. Yet even Mark reports that Jesus refused to lay claim to the Messianic office as popularly conceived (8:11-13).<sup>73</sup> Jesus refusal to give a "sign" in this passage suggests particularly the refusal to identify himself with the full apocalyptic notion of the messiah, whose coming, it was supposed, would be preceded by many signs.<sup>74</sup> We also recall how Mark cites Jesus as a lowly and suffering "Son of man."

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72. Eg. for a significant defense of the Suffering Servant interpretation see John Wick Bowman: The Intention of Jesus, Westminster Press, 1943. Also R. H. Strachan: "The Gospel in the New Testament," Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7, p. 15; Vincent Taylor, "The Life and Ministry of Jesus," Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7, p. 117; Harvey Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, op. cit., p. 145-158.

For criticism of the view that Jesus identified himself with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah see Clarence T. Craig, "The Identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant," Journal of Religion, XXIV, 1944; p. 240-45; C. T. Craig, "The Teachings of Jesus, The Proclamation of the Kingdom," Interpreters Bible, Vol. 7, p. 149.

Craig cites James Moffat, The Theology of the Gospels, 1912; C. J. Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, 1943; A. E. J. Rawlinson, The New Testament Doctrine of Christ, 1926; Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, 1938; C. C. Torrey, "The Influence of II Isaiah in the Gospels and Acts" (Journal of Biblical Literature, 1929, p. 249-61) as supporting the Suffering Servant thesis; and K. Lake, The Beginnings of Christianity; F. Burkitt, Christian Beginnings, 1924, as opposed to the identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant figure.

73. See parallels in Lk. 11:16, 29F; 17:20-1.

74. This contrasts, of course, with the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13.

Although Luke, like Matthew and Mark, includes the eschatological view of the kingdom as awaiting a future, heavenly or transcendent consummation, this writer believes that the third Gospel presents Jesus in a number of places in a modified apocalyptic light.<sup>74a</sup> Along with his eschatological concept of the kingdom, to be sure, Luke sets Jesus forth significantly as fulfilling a role described in two passages which come from the Second Isaiah.

In Luke 22:37 Jesus is reported as directly quoting from Isaiah 53:12, the heart of the Suffering Servant passages, the line which says that "he (the Servant) was reckoned with transgressors." According to Luke Jesus appropriates the sentiment of this Isaianic line as descriptive of his own destiny. Since this particular quotation from Isaiah is not found in Matthew or Mark, its presence in Luke suggests a trend in this Gospel toward interpreting Jesus in the Suffering Servant light.

Scholarship is divided as to whether Jesus' quotation in Luke 4:10-19, from Isaiah 61:1-2, in which he identifies his role as that (or being like that) of the speaker in Isaiah--is a Servant passage. Many, however, have so identified the speaker in the opening lines of the ~~first~~<sup>61<sup>st</sup></sup> chapter of Isaiah.<sup>75</sup> However these finer points of scholarship may be settled, the tradition of Jesus as fulfilling the role of a messenger or a prophet of suffering service is strong in the New Testament.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, within the very traditions which declared him to be "Son of man," we have seen the central and new note that he is a serving and suffering Son of man. Luke has captured this spirit of Jesus, as the humble server of men, in the question, put to his disciples:

"For which is greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves?  
Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one  
who serves." (22: 27)

Again a trend in Luke stressing Jesus as servant, or server, may be observed in the fact that this particular question and its reply, does not have its exact parallel in Matthew and Mark,<sup>77</sup> though it is immediately preceded by the Markan source: "let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves." (22:26). This latter saying is found in all three Synoptics.

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74a. One such significant place is the trial scene, which we shall presently examine.

75. George Adam Smith, who believes that it is an open question, but sides with those who view the speaker as "the prophet" rather than "the Servant" of chapter 53, mentions Driver, Box and others who hold to the Servant interpretation of Isaiah 61:1-2, The Book of Isaiah, vol. II, Harper, p. 472, note. So, it seems to me, is the effect of Rogers' view, who sides for the prophet interpretation but says the message reflects the imagery of the suffering servant, Abingdon Bible Commentary, op. cit. p. 672. William Manson apparently sides with the Servant interpretation, along with the Jewish scholar Montefiore, The Gospel of Luke, Moffatt NT Commentary, Harper, p. 41. Craig, in the article before cited, says that Isaiah 61:1-3 is not a servant passage (p. 244).

76. In addition to the possible interpretation of Lk. 4:16-19 and 22:37 in this light, there are Luke 22:24-27; Mk. 6:4; 8:31; 10:42-25; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30.

77. See Burton and Goodspeed, A Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, op. cit. p. 240.

Our point here is that, whereas Mark (in which Matthew follows Mark) presents us with a high apocalyptic Christology (to be sure not without its servant note too), Luke gives us more clearly a servant Christology. Perhaps the place of critical difference between the two Gospels, concerning Jesus' role as messenger of the kingdom, is found in the two versions of the trial scene:

Mk. 14:60-64

"And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' And Jesus said, 'I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' And the high priest tore his mantle, and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?' And they all condemned him as deserving death."

Lk. 22:66-71

"When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council, and they said, 'If you are the Christ, tell us.' But he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.' And they all said, 'Are you the Son of God, then?' And he said to them, 'You say that I am.' And they said, 'What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.'"

As one ponders these reports for clues which may throw light on what the historic Jesus believed about himself, one notices, as we have already suggested, that the Mark version is a clearly apocalyptic one: it seems to say that Jesus is the Son of man and that they (in their day) will see the Son of man coming. Luke, however, writes more cautiously. If Luke's version is apocalyptic in some respects it is modified. For one thing, Jesus' reply, to the high priest is not an outright affirmation as it is in Mark, but is ambiguous. To the question in Luke, "If you are the Christ, tell us," he replies, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer;" and farther on he says "You say that I am." For another; he says that the Son of man will be vindicated by the power of God, not that they will see him come.

Do we have here a significant difference and a clue that leads us to believe Luke is presenting us with a more historic account than Mark? In any case, the differences between the two accounts, and Luke's ambiguity, keeps the possibility open of answering the foregoing question in the affirmative. Luke's ambiguous answer suggests that Jesus may have been signifying that they would not understand him in his true role as a messenger of suffering service. Why should they? They had not so understood him all along. Why now could any one expect them to understand in this late hour? Luke makes clear, of course, that Jesus in some sense claimed to fulfill a messianic role, and also that the kingdom would be realized, no doubt soon, as an act of God.<sup>78</sup>

In aligning, however, the career of Jesus with the suffering messenger, or the suffering servant interpretation, it is undoubtedly wise to view the

78. Luke includes in his over-all presentation the view that the "suffering servant" would ultimately be triumphant in the indefinite (but possibly near) future as the exalted "Son of man": Lk. 9:26-27; (12:9); 22:29-30, 69. But note various details: Lk 21:31 reads "the kingdom of God is

issue with the caution and realism of C.T. Craig. In his article, "The Identification of Jesus with the Suffering Servant,"<sup>79</sup> in which he criticizes the view that Jesus specifically made this identification, he suggests that Jesus was a sufferer, not because he consciously or deliberately chose to fulfill the role of the Isaianic Servant, but rather because events shaped themselves with this significance for his life. Craig's conclusion bears repeating:

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near" rather than, as in the Mark and Matthew versions, "he is near," Mk 13:29, Mtt. 24:33. Lk. 9:27 and 22:29-30 refer again to the exalted "kingdom" without the "Son of man" references that appear in the parallels in Mtt. 16:27 and 19:28-29. Lk 21:27 and 17:23-24 refer to the coming of the "Son of man," "in a cloud with power and great glory" and "as the lightning flashes," -- apocalyptic ideas. But observe that Lk. 21:27 is an exact borrowing of Mk. 13:26; that Lk., chapter 21, parallels Mk, chapter 13, concerning the signs by which we may predict the kingdom's advent and seem contradictory to Lk. 17:20. (Many scholars commonly agree that Mk. 13 was a written source, an apocalyptic tract, which Mark used among other sources--see Branscomb, Gospel of Mark, op. cit., p. 231f). In Luke's version, however, of the "little apocalypse" appears the significant commentary (not present in Mk. 13 or the parallel in Mtt. 24) that "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," after which, following Mark's wording very closely, Luke speaks of the cosmic "signs" and the coming of the Son of man. Luke's version here seems to extend the event of the appearance into the indefinite future, and compares favorably with the announcement in Lk. 17:20, 23 and 19:11 that the consummation cannot be predicted, although he does say in 21:32 that "this generation will not pass away till all has taken place," following Mark 13:30.

In conclusion, therefore, we may say that at least in some places Luke seems definitely to qualify the common apocalyptic expectation that the end would be "immediately"; or that the time of its coming could be calculated exactly (in these matters recall Paul's counsel in the Second Letter to the Thessalonians). Recall also that the Gospel authors are second generation editors of materials representing various traditions, and that what we find in their books is a faithful reporting or composit of several accounts of the events and the sayings. The student should examine closely for himself a Harmony such as Burton's and Goodspeed's at such places as:

Lk. 9:27	with	Mk. 9:1	and	Mtt. 16:28
18:29 & 22:30				19:28
21:31 & 22: 29-30		13:29		24:33
22:67f	with	14:62f	and	26:64f
23:47		15:39		27:54

We cite also Clarence T. Craig's analysis of Luke's enforcement of the eschatological message of Jesus (Interpreters Bible, VII, p. 147):

- 12:49 -- had come "to cast fire upon the earth."
- 51-53 -- and bring a sharp division among men.
- 54-56 -- the people of that generation could not read the signs of the times--otherwise they would get right with their neighbors.
- 57-59 -- soon they would face the judge and it would be too late.
- 13: 1-9 -- judgment would come as suddenly as the tower of Siloam fell on the eighteen.
- 23-25 - they should strive to enter the narrow gate for soon the door would be shut.

"How did Jesus discover that his own career, which I believe was in some way messianic, was to involve suffering? Surely not from a book, but from the actual situation in which he lived. Men may choose to be a supreme servant of their fellow-men. That choice Jesus certainly made. It is not proved by individual verses, but by his whole life-career. That this service should involve suffering depended not upon himself, but upon the reaction of others to his mission. Though he appears to have been driven into retirement from Galilee, and though he doubtless suffered much mental anguish from the failure of his people to repent, he underwent no special physical suffering up to the time of his arrest. What occasion would he have had to say to himself or any one else, 'I intend to be the Suffering Servant of the Book of Isaiah'? He was a 'suffering servant' because of the turn which events took, not because it was a role which he could have deliberately chosen.

"It is conceivable, of course, that, as the probability increased that his ministry would end in death, he may have found comfort in this chapter in Isaiah. The meaning of his death, if it came, would be like that of the Servant portrayed there.....

"To the early Christians, who had to overcome the shame of the cross, it was exceedingly important to show the fulfilment of predictions in the scriptures. But why should that type of apologetic be continued in the twentieth century? The true moral grandeur of Jesus is seen, not in his following a path predetermined in a book, but in choosing what seemed to be the will of God in the confidence that God would use such obedience in his own way to his glory. Therefore, it seems to me to be irrelevant to claim that Jesus combined the figures of Suffering servant and the Danielic Son of man. That he identified himself in some way with the coming Son of man I find an inescapable conclusion. If that Son of man had to share in suffering, what was that but a participation in the messianic woes which must, according to tradition, precede the ultimate deliverance. Beyond that, I do not see how we can affirm more than that the secret of his mission lay in his own realization of the will of God. With true insight the author to the Hebrews applied to Jesus the words, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will.' (Heb. 10:5-9) The discovery of what that involved was not mediated by any one passage of scripture, but by his own oneness with the Father amidst the critical scene in which he was called to work." (p. 244-5)<sup>79</sup>

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Note, however, concerning 12:49 S. MacLean Gilmour's comment, "In the light of vss. 51-53 it is evident that Luke thinks of it as the fire of conflict that will compel men to align themselves for or against the Messiah" (Interpreters Bible, Vol. VIII p. 235). The saying then in Luke is a figure of speech, like its Matthean counterpart "a sword" (Mtt. 10:34) in which Jesus recognizes the inevitability of conflict between his movement and the old order. I Peter 4:12 speaks of the fire of persecution; could Jesus have had this in mind in using the expression "fire"? Is this reference then, a good illustration of the way he used apocalyptic terms and thought forms as high metaphors of real experience and real events, current or expected?

79. Clarence T. Craig, op. cit. note 72, p. 244-245.

## B. The Jerusalem Ministry

### Jesus's Final Challenge to the Nation Mk Chs. 11-13

The Entry, 11:1-10. A group of Passover pilgrims recognize Jesus, and hail him, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," 11:9, and "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that is coming," 11:10. Note the signs of theological development in the transmission of the story. Heightening Mark's source, Luke's Gospel reads, "Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord," Lk 19:38. And John's Gospel, the last to be written, adds, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel," Jhn 12:13. In the same story of the entry, the report in Matthew reads that he was hailed as "son of David" and as "the prophet Jesus from Nazareth," Mtt 21:9,11.

Mtt 21:5 and Jhn 12:15 look upon the event of entry on a colt as the fulfillment of prophecy (Is 62:11; Zech 9:9). Does Jesus's knowledge of the colt, and his directions about obtaining it, indicate that he had an "underground" in Jerusalem, persons there who were in sympathy and ready to help him? Mk 11:3, 6 indicate that the people in charge of the colt knew and sympathized with Jesus.

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Recall our discussion on the cursing of the fig tree as a legendary account, Mk 11:12-14, p. In the context of the fig tree Mark has put the section on faith and prayer, 11:22-25. We will comment about these verses here and then return to the challenge to the nation theme, commenced in verses 15-18.

Here is a challenge to put more faith and prayer behind the belief that mountains of evil may be removed. Too often we shrink from the belief that such mountains may be moved. We do not believe that Jesus is talking here about removing literal mountains magically by prayer. Recall again the sayings in which he refused to assume the role of a conjurer who would perform "signs." Do we not have here again his keen use of hyperbole? He is doubtless talking about prayer for help and strength to remove the moral mountains we face in life, personally and socially. It does indeed take great spiritual resources, prayer and faith, to get things done or moved in the material world. All great material accomplishments rest upon much faith and prayer, the building of a college; the founding of a nation; establishment of a United Nations and the solving of the problem of war; the overcoming of racial antipathy and segregation in the U. S.; the getting of an education; the making of a happy marriage; the building of a professional life. Indeed, the primary ethical meaning, or content, of prayer is brought out in his stress on forgiveness in V. 25. A loving pre-disposition in ourselves is the clue or prerequisite to the possibility of removing the mountains of prejudice, or ignorance, or inordinate self-concern that separate us from others.

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The cleansing of the Temple, Mk 11:15-19. Jesus protests the secularization and commercialization of religion, subordinating religion to profit-making.

In 11:18 the chief priests and Sadducean hierarchy seek to destroy him because he challenged their business racket and their economic privilege. There is the possibility that Jesus is referring to extortion and graft in the "den of robbers" expression. In sum, this stirring scene depicts Jesus in action against social and economic abuse; it reveals his role, to some dramatic extent, as reformer of evil conditions as well as teacher of light and truth.

Finally the importance of the scene is that Jesus is not here attempting to overthrow merely a corrupt local institution, but he was "challenging the nation to remember its world mission"<sup>79a</sup> Mk 11:17. The description of the Temple as a house of prayer "for all nations" refers also, no doubt, to the fact that it had a special court for Gentiles.

The conflict with the authorities, Mk 11:27-12:44. Here we have a series of scenes depicting Jesus's debate with the authorities.

His reply to "chief priests, scribes and elders," 11:27-33, reveals his skill in debate: He poses a question to counter a question, a good rabbinical technique. He does not merely defend his position, but he presses the attack intellectually.

The general implication of the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, 12:1-12, is that by this time he was definitely regarding himself as God's special messenger whom the nation was rejecting; and that, although they were not accepting his message, it would ultimately be victorious--that God might use other means than the Jewish nation to accomplish it. It is one of the places--there are several--where Jesus realized that his message would have revolutionary effect in changing the old religious order. The parable concerns, like the parable of the fig tree in Luke, the failure of stewardship, and its consequences.

Some scholars believe that in its present form this parable is an interpolation of the later church: It is an allegory of Jesus as the rejected messiah. Allegory, however, was not the characteristic form of Jesus's teachings. Recall our discussion of the purpose and method of the parables. Be that as it may, here verses 10-11 do indeed suggest the later experience and perspective of the church: i.e. as a successful Christian movement. Is verse 9 an allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A. D.?

Reply to "Pharisees and Herodians," Mk 12:13-17. What is the meaning of the tribute money to Caesar? Recall our brief reference to this scene on page 152. Bear in mind that it is not just a clever evasion. The questioners intended to trap Jesus by a clear-cut either-or problem. If he had said directly pay the tax he would have lost the popular support; on the other hand, if he had said don't pay it, they could have denounced him to the governmental authorities as a revolutionary. He skillfully changes the situation to a both-and problem. And by his reply to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's he was saying that the tax was small, a denarius, paid once a year to the Roman government -- "Pay it, then; it's of small moment." The full force of Jesus's brilliant implication comes out in the rest of the answer: "Render...to God the things that are God's." In other words, to pay God what is due him is everything, "duty, service, obedience, worship."<sup>79b</sup>

Jesus declares here by implication that the important things are not for Caesars or dictators to decide; but the more

<sup>79a</sup> Walter Denny. Career and Significance of Jesus, op. cit. p.

<sup>79b</sup> Frederick Grant, Interpreters Bible, op. cit., Vol. VII. 842.

important things of life are for individual conscience to decide. This is therefore a teaching bursting against totalitarian philosophy: We owe ultimate allegiance to God, not to Caesar! This is one of the few places doubtless where we catch Jesus's thinking in political dimensions.

Reply to the "Sadducees" concerning the resurrection, 12:18-27. Many of the Sadducees were the sophisticated materialists of the day; they did not believe in a "resurrection" or in an after life and immortality. They ask Jesus this question as a logical trick. Jesus replies by showing that materialistic and apocalyptic conceptions of the after life are shallow and untrue. "Resurrection" from the dead, or immortality, is a non-material, or spiritual experience or state, 12:25.

A basic problem in philosophy of religion concerns the idea of immortality. How may we believe in immortality? Jesus' reply, at least, focuses on the main point. Faith in immortality rests upon faith in God's power as sufficient to provide further opportunity for life, verse, 24. If one has basic faith in God, faith in immortality is a corollary. Verses 26-27 are a type of rabbinical argument from Scripture to prove the reality of an after life.

Reply to the scribe about the Great Commandment, 12:28-34. We are now familiar with the full force of this commandment from our study of Jesus's ethical teaching. In I John 4:21 we have the ethical connection between the two levels of the Great Commandment stated.

Christ as David's Lord, 12:35-37. The origin and circumstance of this cryptic saying are obscure. What is the meaning of the quotation of Psalm 110.1, either by Jesus or the evangelist, for the purpose of proving that the Messiah is David's Lord? The original, royal psalm, simply promises victory to Israel's king. The first line is an invitation to "my lord," i.e. the king, by Israel's God, i.e. "The Lord," to ascend the throne. Later tradition interpreted it as a psalm of David to honor the Messiah--the sense in which the quotation is given here. What the words do clarify is that Jesus and the Christian tradition came to oppose the political conception of the Messiah, the "Son of David," nationalistic, or royalist conception current in his day. Beyond this point it is hard to say what was positively meant. Some commentary believes the reference indicated that the early church, and possibly Jesus himself, viewed the Messiah as the transcendent heavenly Son of Man.<sup>79c</sup> If they are Jesus's words, he seems to be talking about "the Christ," that is, the Messiah, in third person terms, as somebody other than himself.

Is this not then a veiled reference by Jesus to his own transcendent divinity? It is probably more accurate to say that, in its present form, it seems to be an early church emphasis on Christ as more than just "son of David," i.e. more than ordinary man. The saying is a Christian affirmation about Christ as the transcendent or divine figure, as he came to be regarded by the early church. It is significant to note that Peter is reported as quoting this saying in Acts 2:34, but not as Jesus's words!<sup>79d</sup> In Mark 12:35-37 and Acts 2:34 on Christ's priority to David, in St. Paul's discussion in Colossians, and the Johannine Logos theology, we trace the rise

<sup>79c</sup> Compare Interpreters Bible, VII, p. 849.

<sup>79d</sup> The Acts reference, and others in the NT to the Ps 110.1 lines that do not attribute them to Jesus, suggests to Branscomb that the quotation may be discounted as coming from Jesus, Gospel of Mark, op. cit. p. 222-225. See also Heb. 1:13; 10:13.

of the doctrine of the "pre-existence" of Christ. The only way in which the old "pre-existence" theology can have viable meaning or significance for modern Christianity would be to say that the qualities of Jesus's moral personality, or his type of moral consciousness, with its content of love Agape, expressed the eternal, or abiding moral quality or purposes of God. In essence this is what St. Paul and St. John meant in their "pre-existence" doctrine.

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The Apocalyptic Discourse, Mark 13, a forecast of doom. In appraising Mark 13, we should distinguish between a possible forecast of doom uttered by Jesus himself, enshrined in the first few verses of Mk 13, and a later, more elaborate apocalyptic tract, in which the original words were caught up and transmitted. In any case, many scholars have pointed out peculiarities of Mark 13 as a chapter. We suggest the following four points as guides to understanding this chapter.

1. Verses 1 - 2, the forecast of the destruction of the Temple may be Jesus's authentic utterance. Later on at the trial scene, 14:58, they accuse him of saying that the Temple will be destroyed. Jesus was keenly alert to the political dangers of the day. He cautioned against following in the insurrectionary program of the Zealots, and could foresee precisely the disastrous outcome that such a program might have if the nation went that way, as in fact came about in 70 A.D. Also, possibly Jesus was considering how the Temple, though magnificent as a building in terms of physical quantity and grandure, had as an institution failed men spiritually, and could be only subject to a divine judgment, much as Micah in 3:12 and Jeremiah in 9:11 of their books had predicted the destruction of the earlier temple.

2. Much of the detail of the rest of the discourse seems not in character with Jesus teaching about the Kingdom elsewhere expressed. In V. 6-8, 14-20, 24-47 all is apocalyptic; the victory of the heavenly Son of Man over the regimented forces of evil; whereas Jesus usually emphasized the spiritual and individual aspect of the Kingdom. To point up the rather glaring contrasts between the conception here presented and Jesus's view of the Kingdom elsewhere stated:

Apocalyptic Discourse, Mk 13

Mk 13:4f: Jesus willingly indicates the signs that will precede the coming of the Kingdom.

vs. Jesus's Teaching of the Kingdom

Mk 8:11 and esp. Lk 17:20: "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (i.e. now present); or alternative trans. "within you" (i.e. indicating its spiritual, subjective nature). Indeed in this very chapter we have this point stressed V.32.

Mk 13:24f: Kingdom to come as abrupt, cataclysmic event.

Mk 4:26-30: Kingdom comes unobtrusively, quietly, even as matter of slow growth, emphasizing again the spiritual and individual aspect of the Kingdom.

Mk 13:30, where the present generation is to witness the Parousia, the coming of the Son of Man in the Apocalyptic sense.

Lk 17:22-3; 19:11, where we read that the present generation "will not see it", i.e. witness, the Parousia "immediately", as was expected. Indeed do these lines suggest that the present generation will not witness it at all?

Such parables and sayings of general watchfulness as Mk 13:32-37 (contrast with 13:4f), Lk 17:22-37; and Lk 19:11-27 frankly warn against speculation about when the kingdom will be finally fulfilled. These parables enjoin watchfulness, constant vigilance in keeping the requirements of the kingdom, because we do not know when God will call us to an accounting. These sayings illustrate how Jesus may have used some apocalyptic thought forms, but in less precise anticipation than the popular thinking of his day. In any case, the sayings listed in the right hand column seem in marked contrast to those in the left hand list.

3. Mark seems to use a written apocalyptic tract, with all the earmarks of apocalyptic literature:

The Reference to "the reader" in 13:14 strongly suggests written material which he is transcribing.

There is present the esoteric idiom or code; "let the reader understand"--that is, those who know the code will understand what "desolating sacrilege" means. It refers probably to the statue of the Roman Emperor Caligula erected in the Temple in Jerusalem 40 A.D. This parallels the erection of statue or altar to Zeus in Temple 168 B.C. by Antiochus IV, which prompted the writing of the Book of Daniel, 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. (Luke interprets the "desolating sacrilege" as the siege of Jerusalem, 70 A.D., 21:20).

It is obviously written in a time of persecution and tribulation, Mk 13:12-19, probably that of Caligula in c. 40 A.D., or Nero's c. 64 A.D. Luke's hint in 21:24 suggests that this apocalyptic material was written around 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Verse 13:30 of Mark foresees the immediate end of the age. Accordingly, if these are the authentic words of Jesus, and if they refer to verses 3-27, rather than to verse 2, then he was indeed a first century visionary, who expected to return soon on the clouds as the Son of Man, as Schweitzer claims. If they are the words of Jesus in this sense, no such historic event, of course, of this kind took place.

Recall, however, our discussion of Luke's general modification of Mark's apocalypticism, pp. 147-149. At two points--one of them following the apocalyptic tract source itself from Mark-- Luke has changed Mark's references to an immediate appearance of the Son of Man into an appearance or coming rather of the kingdom of heaven, Mk 13:29; 14:60-64 vs. Lk 21:29; 22:66-71. Luke extends the Parousia into the indefinite future, "until

the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," Lk 21:24, with V. 27, 32. Also Luke's version of the apocalyptic discourse can be read as anticipating or reporting the historic Roman "vengeance" of 70 A.D., Luke 21:22,24.

Was it then these more historic facts, to which Luke alludes, that Jesus had in mind, by anticipation, in some original discourse with his disciples? Could then the discourse in Mk 13 represent an apocalyptic overcast of some original words referring more simply to an anticipated destruction of the Temple by the Romans, as above suggested? In that case, verses 30 and following, if read immediately after verse 2, would enshrine a more realistic, and perhaps an original saying. The meaning then would be that the present generation would witness the destruction of the Temple, which actually took place about 35 years later.

Luke of course makes clear, and in this general point he agrees with Mark, that Jesus also anticipated the consummation of the Age, in an early but an indefinite or undefined future, as we have pointed out.

At any rate, a further indication that Mark 13 is an apocalyptic tract is revealed in the announcement that the "elect" are to be saved 13:20,22. The idea that some are "elect" while others are not is characteristic of apocalyptic thought. In Jesus's sayings elsewhere, however, there is not a doctrine of the elect and the non-elect; rather all and sundry may be "saved," if they repent. All may "go and do likewise," following in the way of the Good Samaritan, in order to find "eternal life"--it is up to them, to each and every individual in God's eyes. There is inherent promise in all personality. Jesus above all was critical of the special sin of some of the Pharisees in designating some people as religiously outcaste, or beyond the pole, such as publicans, harlots, and the Amhaarez.

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4. Undoubtedly, authentic teachings of Jesus do seem to shine up through the apocalyptic overcast of Chapter 13. For example, Verses 32-37 enjoin watchfulness, and enshrine Jesus's anticipation of the consummation, characteristic of his sayings elsewhere.

Furthermore, Verse 13:31--"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"--pointedly transcend in their sentiment the lower-key apocalyptic materialism of his day. Jesus does not think in terms of literal "kingdoms," whether the earthly or "Davidic" sort, or the supernatural "Apocalyptic" kind; but in terms of eternal spiritual truths and values upon which any kingdom must be founded.

The Passion Week

Mk Chs. 14-16

We consider the main scenes of these chapters. The words of Jesus concerning his death uttered in some of these scenes we will here treat briefly, anticipating our further summary in the following section on the meaning of his death. Some of these materials we have already reviewed in our previous discussion of the messiahship, especially in connection with the trial scene.

The Anointing at Bethany, 14:3-9. Read here also Lk 7:36-50, the parallel passage. Jesus's statement in Mk 14:7, "You always have the poor with you..." could be interpreted as his support of a reactionary social philosophy; since poverty is perennial nothing can be done about it; or poverty prompts our charitable instincts and works, and thus promotes meritorious character in the giver. Interpretations as these are certainly at variance with Jesus's great interest in the poor (Mk 10:21), and the laboring class (Mtt 25:31f; 20:1-16). He himself was a carpenter; his disciples were fishermen; he criticized ostentatious wealth and contributions (Mk 12:41-42). What then seems to be the true meaning of Jesus's words about the poor in this context? Read Luke's parallel for assistance.

The woman's devotion had touched Jesus deeply--her use of an expensive oil symbolized her gratitude and love, the giving of her very self in the most concrete way she could devise. Lk 7:37 implies that the woman was a prostitute whom Jesus had befriended, and inspired to lead a changed life. Jesus resented Simon's criticism which had shamed the woman, slighting her sincerity, honor, and devotion. Simon had failed to perceive the real issue involved; whereas the woman had perceived the deeper message of the Kingdom, the message of love and forgiveness, had felt its power in her own life, and was one of the few who recognized in Jesus himself personally the living expression of God's Agape. Simon had not discerned any of these things, but mouths an obvious platitude about the poor. He completely misses the point of the woman's action. Accordingly, Jesus replies to the immediate situation; he is not condoning poverty, but is rebuking Simon's lack of discernment. (Recall his reply to the Syrophenician woman, Mk 7:24f).

Indeed Halford Luccock, in the Interpreters Bible comments, "The devotion represented by the breaking of the alabaster box, the outgoing of affection and honor for Christ, has been the source of the greatest help to the poor the world has ever known. It works out in a paradox: If we see life only in terms of denarii which ought to be better distributed, and grow blind to the intangibles--like 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart'--soon there will not be very many denarii to distribute!"<sup>79e</sup> In brief, Jesus rebukes the secular, market mind that sees all and weighs all only in terms of dollars and cents and loses sight of values associated with the intangible qualities of the spirit.

Finally this passage must be understood in light of the Markan Christology, v. 7-8: the whole interest now centers on Jesus's person as the suffering Messiah.

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<sup>79e</sup>Interpreter's Bible. op. cit. Vol VII, p. 870.

The Last Supper, Mk 14:10-25. Jesus had made previous preparation for the Passover in the house of friends in Jerusalem. He became aware of Judas's treachery either through information or by Judas's bearing.

What was Judas's treachery? Had he gone over to the point of view of the Scribes and Pharisees? Was he a political zealot? Was it simple avarice? We can only conjecture an answer to these questions.

Verse 21, "For the Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!", raises a good many theological problems. Some types of theology would interpret this verse as teaching the divine necessity of Jesus's death, that it was necessitated or inevitable that Jesus die, in order for a pre-arranged and predetermined Divine plan to be fulfilled. Let us see in what sense Jesus's death may have become inevitable, without being "necessary" in some absolute, pre-destined way that would have denied his own free choice.

The simplest meaning of the verse is that Jesus is now fully aware of his inevitable martyrdom, as the natural or logical consequence of the stand he was freely taking, and the teaching he was proclaiming.

The implication of the story is also that Judas, his betrayer, acted freely. That Judas was free not to choose to betray Jesus is implied by the moral condemnation of the "woe to that man." Only free agents are subjects of moral condemnation. Jesus and Judas cannot be reduced to unthinking, unfree puppets, acting out a prescribed drama, authored by God. We here refer the reader to our further comments on this scene, p. Such a view would rob their respective actions of any moral meaning.

In the meanwhile, we conclude that not the divine necessity, but the divine use or utility of Jesus's death may be the deepest meaning of this passage. Jesus believes that God will use his death for some larger saving work, which he could, of course, but imperfectly foresee or describe.

The last part of verse 21, "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born" reflects Jesus's natural indignation at the betrayal of his Kingdom, and of himself as its messenger, by an intimate friend, who betrays thereby the highest and best interests of Israel. How could the betrayer be so blind? This, therefore, is not a pronouncement of vengeance; it seems to be Jesus anguished, even bitter cry of disappointment that a follower had turned against him. Notice that Jesus does not say what will happen to the betrayer. Mk 8:42, as we have already seen, suggests what the fate of the betrayer of truth is: being thrown into the sea suggests a total swallowing up and stoppage of life and influence--the betrayer of truth forfeits his very right to existence. (Recall our discussion of Jesus's conception of judgment).

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For discussion of the words concerning the giving of his "body" and his "blood" in sacrifice, vv. 22-24, we call attention to our subsequent analysis in our treatment of the atonement, p. 177. As

preview to what we there say, the reference to "covenant" evidently reflects Exodus 24:8. The covenant at Sinai, where the blood which was thrown over the people, was declared by Moses to be a seal, or dramatic symbol, of their fidelity to Yahweh, whom they had just accepted as their God. Jesus, then, may have meant that the shedding of his blood would be his last, supreme act of fidelity to God and the Kingdom of heaven.

Some ancient manuscripts of Mark have the expression "new covenant," in which case the reference would be to Jeremiah 31:31f that speaks of the law or covenant as written upon their hearts. If "new covenant" was the original wording, then Jesus's saying here emphasizes interior knowledge of the moral law as the secret of salvation.

Verse 25, drinking wine anew in God's kingdom, reflects eschatological or apocalyptic ideas about the messianic banquet at the end of the world. Possibly Jesus utilizes this idea to stress "His faith that the separation would be but temporary."<sup>79f</sup>

After supper they proceed to the Mount of Olives. Jesus anticipates their defection in the last fearful hours and speaks of being "raised up." Peter insists that he will not fall away or deny him. Recall our previous discussion on the references to his being raised after "three days" p. 159.25. Mark 14:28 contains the announcement that after he is raised up he will go before them "to Galilee." But nowhere in Mark's Gospel do we have a record of an appearance of Jesus, after the resurrection, in Galilee, unless, of course, we suppose that the original lost ending of Mark contained such an account. (Mtt 20:26-29 and John 21:1-24 describe appearances in Galilee).

#### Gethsemane, Mk 14:26-41.

This scene presents an historical difficulty: Who could have reported it, and the words of the prayer? Could Peter, James, or John? But the account is that they were asleep and at some distance. Could Jesus have told them of his prayer--was there time for this? Could he have cried out aloud, in his anguish, the thoughts of his prayer, so that they heard? Before he went aside they were aware that he was "greatly distressed and troubled", and he told them that he was "very sorrowful." They no doubt saw him fall on his knees in prayer. Writing afterwards, in light of the subsequent event of the Crucifixion, it would not have been greatly difficult for our source writer to figure out the main content of the prayer. However the prayer became known to the authors of the Gospels, it is true to Jesus's spirit and outlook. (The hypothesis that 14:51 refers to Mark himself who was eavesdropping on Jesus's privacy seems fanciful).

Why was Jesus burdened with "this crushing sorrow"? Martyrs have often gone serenely to their death. Was it "a sorrow over the mystery of God's plan"? Why would his life and mission have to issue in the apparent disaster of the cross? Here is one possibility. Another is that it was "a sorrow over the response of hatred to his life of love, the frustration of having his destiny unfulfilled."<sup>79g</sup>

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<sup>79f</sup>Branscomb, Gospel of Mark, Harper, op. cit. p.264.

<sup>79g</sup>Halford E. Luccock, Interpreters Bible VII, op. cit. p. 882.

Although sorrow is a dominant note of the prayer, there is also hope that there will be ultimate meaning in his death, that it will serve some good purpose in God's fulfillment, however inscrutable and hidden the meaning may be at the moment. The whole scene illustrates Jesus's humanity and freedom, yet his ultimate surrender to the Divine will that would be accomplished by his own free decision. As Christians have looked beyond the scene along the Christian perspective they have believed that God used Jesus's surrender for the disclosure of His saving love.

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The trial, Mk 14:53-15:15. Review our consideration of the scene before the high priest, Mk 14:61-62, p. 148, at the point of difference between the apocalyptic Christology of Mark and the modified (and possibly more realistic) view of Luke. Mark's version of Jesus's reply seems to be a combination of Ps. 110:1 and Dan. 7:13, which when put together "formulates the early Christian belief in Jesus as the apocalyptic Son of Man."<sup>79h</sup> We have then in these verses the climax of Mark's Christology. The words are true in so far as they reveal that Jesus made some kind of claim to messiahship. The significant differences in Luke's report gives us the freedom to believe that Jesus's reply may not have been so radically apocalyptic as the Markan picture, but was couched, rather, in terms of himself as a servant who was suffering, as we have previously argued.

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The Crucifixion and Resurrection we now proceed to discuss in our next two sections of this study, as major topics in Christian theology.

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<sup>79h</sup> Branscomb. Gospel of Mark, op. cit. p. 280.

3. The understanding of Jesus as Divine in Christian Thought. Our discussion now enters an area of theological evaluation centering in the question: within Christian thought what meaning may the term "divine" have as applied to Jesus' life or person?

a. The traditional Christian view reflects the over-all outlook of the Synoptic Gospels, and the Gospel of John. The authors of Mark, Luke and Matthew, believe (1.) that Jesus is the Messiah, who came to proclaim the good news of the ethical and eschatological kingdom of righteousness; (2.) who performed mighty acts (or miracles) to prove his authority (or perhaps more precisely described, to show that his ministry had come with power);<sup>79a</sup> (3.) who was rejected, crucified, and yet rose triumphant; (4.) whose death, and victory over the grave, performed a work of salvation for men. (5.) They emphasize or assume that God was active in him in a special way, without explaining at length in what philosophic or metaphysical terms this is to be conceived. Such reports as the Baptism, Peters' Confession at Caesarea Philippi, and the Transfiguration illustrate the way the Synoptics set Jesus forth as Son of God, Savior, Messiah, who was, more or less, conscious of such a role from the beginning of his ministry. The synoptics emphasize his miracles, above all his resurrection, and imply that his death has a special significance in the salvation of men.

In extension of the somewhat more realistic or historical picture painted by the Synoptics, concerning some of these details, John's Gospel heightens the evidence of the miracles and the portrayal of Jesus as a supernatural being. In the very opening of John Jesus is announced to be a pre-existent divine being, one with the creative Logos of God. John depicts him as fully omniscient, and as proclaiming himself to be the way to eternal life, through whom men may find union with God.

Traditional, "conservative" Christianity has emphasized the portrayal of Jesus in John's Gospel as an entirely supernatural being. Fundamentalist sects today take the Markan account of Jesus as apocalyptic Son of Man, who is to appear on the clouds of heaven, and interpret it into a doctrine of the "Second Coming" of Jesus--that is to say, he is to appear yet again in the future history of the world.

b. The more "liberal" or historically minded Christianity recognizes a difference between what Jesus may have thought about himself and the over-all highly theological presentation or evaluation of the four gospels. Liberal Christianity approaches the problem in the manner of our previous discussion of the messiahship, in which we reviewed the hypothesis that Jesus believed himself to be a messenger of suffering service. Its literary and historic assumptions are that the Gospels as we now have them are not kinds of stenographic reports written by people who stood at Jesus' elbow. But rather that the Gospels are fairly late, compositions of the second generation period, though they are compiled out of

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79a. See our discussion of the miracles, page . The Synoptics report that Jesus refused to give miraculous proof of his authority, Mk. 8:11-13; Lk. 11:29f; 4:9-13. Rather his acts of healing in his ministry attest that the kingdom had come with power, Mk 2:3-11; Lk. 11:20. Even in Mk. 2:3-11 his moral message and ministry precede his healing ministry.

earlier documents and sources.<sup>80</sup> The liberal perspective on the literature believes it finds evidences of growth in the traditions about Jesus. It is willing therefore to say that every detail of the stories in the several sources need not be taken as literal history. As late first century writings, coming after 70 A.D., there was time for the legendary and the imaginary to have crept into the picture; above all, time for a possible early Christian interpretation of Jesus as apocalyptic Messiah to have made its stamp upon the record. Having several sources behind them, however, we have also observed that the Gospels include the suffering service concept, and we have interpreted this as alternative to, or in addition to, the portrayal of Jesus as a person preoccupied with apocalyptic hopes.

Furthermore, a realistic type of appraisal of the life of Jesus finds evidence for growth or development in his own sense of mission, as his ministry moved toward its tragic climax, and triumph, on the Cross. The tradition of the temptation suggests an early inner struggle within himself, a resolution of conflicts and a setting of his face toward a prophetic ministry. His retirement to Caesarea Philippi, after his Galilean ministry had stirred up opposition in the authorities and some confusion among the people, and the record of his pointed questions to his nearest friends about the meaning of himself in relation to his message, suggest a maturing, personal idea of his own life and work.

In any case, stated somewhat negatively, the thought of Jesus as a kind of celestial play-actor, who assumes the role of a suffering human being, as if wearing a mask, without really entering fully and seriously into the life of humanity, may happily be abandoned. Such would be an artificial view, which the

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80. We should, of course, consider the possibility that Mark or Luke--if these names are used to refer to the authors of the books bearing them, or to the primary sources of these works--were younger "first generation" personalities who, at an earlier day, had some contact with eyewitness groups, as both early traditions and some evidence in the New Testament outside these books suggests. Our present Mark or Luke as we now have them were written in the second generation period. Though the issue remains in some dispute, many modern scholars indeed assign our present Luke-Acts work to "Luke", the physician and companion of Paul (Col. 4:14), and believe he was the author of the striking "We" diary passages of Acts, as well as the first person author of the prefaces to Luke and Acts.

synoptic Gospels themselves do not contain.<sup>81</sup> The New Testament portrays him as a man "tempted in all things as we" but, in the ultimate Christian evaluation, "without sin" (Hebrews). He listed himself, however, with the rest of imperfect humanity and submitted to John's baptism of repentance.<sup>82</sup> In any case, all Christians may join in thinking of him as "divine" (if we are inclined to use this adjective of him) by his own moral victory in trying to live fully God's will, in the message and life of Agape. This indeed is the deeper image in which all four Gospels, and St. Paul, do present him.

c. Where all Christian may join: Assuming that Jesus had a sense of special mission, which the tradition has called "messianic," what reported words of his disclose his belief concerning how God's Spirit was working in or through him? What was the quality of such level of consciousness with him? Some of the New Testament phraseology itself remains our best clue to this question. On the meaning of his messiahship and the idea of the divine quality of his life the New Testament is simpler and more appealing in its insights than later churchly formulations, such as that of the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

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81. The Gospels portray Jesus as conscious of himself as living under the finite limitations of human life:

1. His physical experience was human or normal: capacity for pain, privation, fatigue, need of sleep, thirst, tears--his body of flesh and blood.
2. His moral or emotional experience was human or normal: his clear sense of duty, courage, fidelity, patience, indignation and temper, even fear and temptation: "Why call me good, none good but God," Mk. 10:18; Gethsemane.
3. His intellectual experience was human or normal: he was not omniscient.
  - NT says he grew in stature and in wisdom
  - "Of that day or hour knoweth no man...neither the Son", Mk. 13:32.
  - Asked questions to elicit information:
    - regarding site of Lazarus's tomb
    - asked who touched him when woman with issue of blood, etc.
    - number of loaves
    - name of the demented Gadarene.
  - Lacked modern scientific knowledge: believed in the demon possession theory of disease, and in the imminent end of the historic age. Jesus may have had an extraordinary range of discernment beyond the usual, but the record indicates that he was not omniscient.
4. His religious life was normal:
  - habit of prayer to the Father.
  - simple faith in the Father's guidance.
  - his search for and desire to do God's will.
  - his sense of obedience and duty when God's will was found.
5. His healings limited, depended on faith of patient--he was not omnipotent.

82. Mark 10:18

In our analysis we shall include the philosophic reflections of John, author of the Fourth Gospel. Along side his artificial depiction, of Jesus as entirely supernatural being (an emphasis which some Christians will continue to make) St. John has given the Christian tradition at once its most natural and profoundest insights into the significance of Jesus and the meaning of his life.

We find in the New Testament records the following primary points which help to illumine for Christians the quality of Jesus's life as "divine":

(1.) Jesus emphasized his "works" of love as expressing the Father's Will and purposes:

"But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Lk. 11:20).

"The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me...I and the Father are one...I have shown you many good works from the Father...If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:25, 31, 32, 37-38).

"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me, that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves." (John 14: 10-11).

Luke's saying above is the nearest Jesus comes in the Synoptics to describing how God is working in him.<sup>82a</sup> We find no formulation beyond this point, but the insight is clear and relatively simple. God's spirit was in the truth of his thoughts and the righteousness of his deeds. He proclaimed his message of the kingdom, in parables, sermons, and neighborly deeds, as God's will and work expressed among men. As we might phrase it today, his own "moral personality" in thought and action was to him a medium or expression of God's will.

Though the author of John's Gospels depicts Jesus with the aura of a supernatural being, the above essential and simpler insight--or the emphasis on the works--is not lost in John, as the above quotation, and those to follow suggest.

We are reminded that the belief of Jesus at this point appears to be quite like that of his spiritual forefathers among the great prophets of Israel. Relative to the way God is present in, and works through, life, Micah phrased it: "I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin." (3:8). Or as Jeremiah said, speaking no doubt of king Josiah: "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord." (22:16) Second

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82a. Note also the similar saying in Luke 7:22-3, where in reply to the question of John's disciples as to whether he is the messenger of the kingdom Jesus replies: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who takes no offense in me."

Isaiah, from whom incidentally Jesus quoted the following words according to Luke, phrased it this way: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed...". (Is. 60:1-2; Lk. 4:18).

Christians have called Jesus divine by the love content of his life. We may profitably listen to the formula of St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, where he speaks of Jesus as God's "Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." (1:3). Here the suggestion is that he is God's Son by the power of his life of love, or "holiness," and that this quality of his nature is attested in power by the resurrection.

Writing a generation after Paul, the author of John's Gospel stresses the same point, we believe, in his central chapters 14-15, which should be read in their entirety. We see the main point we are endeavoring to make in the following:

"I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him...If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him....Abide in me and I in you...He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you...As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love...This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you...This I command you, to love one another."

We recall the saying, reported in John, "I and the Father are one" (10:30). It is clear by the context, above reviewed, that a moral oneness of will, purposes, and action is meant. Jesus's moral purposes and values were the same as the eternal moral purposes of God.<sup>82b</sup>

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82b. Such may be the quality for modern Christians of the ancient theology of Christ's pre-existence expressed in John 8:42, 58. "...I proceeded and came forth from God; I come not of my own accord, but he sent me....Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." Is it John's view that Jesus identified himself with God in some "metaphysical" totality or unity? Characteristically in John's Gospel, Jesus addresses God as his "Father," as if a more ultimate source of being than himself. In the Lord's Prayer reported in the synoptics it is "Our Father."

(2.) Our second major consideration, is to note Jesus's sayings that if others practice his commandments, they too may become "one" with him and God-- the content or quality of the Divine Life may be shared by all!<sup>83</sup> Speaking of the high, moral mysticism expressed by the above passages, Harold De Wolf writes, "It is not metaphysical unity that he (Jesus) is asking. It is a unity of the most intimate sharing in understanding purpose, and love."<sup>84</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr has phrased it in a magnificent paragraph:

"The God of Christian revelation is not disengaged from, but engaged in, the world by His most majestic attributes; it is consequently not the highest perfection for men to achieve a unity of being from which all natural and historical vitalities have been substracted. The highest unity is a harmony of love in which the self relates itself in its freedom to other selves in their freedom under the will of God".  
(Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II, p. 94-95).

In John's Gospel Jesus says in the great prayer,

"...They may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, So that they also may be in us, so That the world may believe that thou hast sent me...the love with which thou has loved me may be in them, and I in them." (17:21, 26).

Such is the formulation of St. John concerning the divine nature in Jesus, and we have seen that the author of the Fourth Gospel includes also the possibility of other men sharing in the divine life.

This concept of the immanence of the divine life and power in moral terms, not only in Christ, but also in his followers, was beautifully stated again by St. Paul, or a Pauline disciple, in Ephesians:

"...Be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the Love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God." (3:16-19).

(3.) Our third point concerns the philosophical, psychological or metaphysical question for modern Christians: in what sense may personalities experience "union"? Only a dynamic theory of personality as intellectual and moral energy can answer such a question. Persons may experience "union" in two ways, (a) in the common awareness of truth on the intellectual plane, and (b) in the quality and direction of will on the moral and active level. We have just reviewed how St. John described the union of Christ with God -- and of his followers too with himself and the Father -- in the profound moral sense of union indicated by our second way just mentioned. Relative to the first mode of union or sharing of life, was John referring to our common awareness of truth on the intellectual level when he wrote such words as: "...the Spirit of truth...dwells with you, and will be in you...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...."? (14:17; 16:13).

83. See also 1st John 3:25; 4:7, 11, 12, 16.

84. Theology of the Living Church, Harpers, 1953, p. 237.

Persons conjoin when they share values together. The values which Jesus conceived and the purposes which he sought to realize were the abiding values and purposes of God -- such is one way of describing the heart of Christian faith and commitment concerning "the Incarnation".<sup>85</sup>

### B. The Meaning of Jesus' Death on the Cross

Beyond his teachings on such themes as the nature of God, Man, and the Good Life, the three chief aims of Christian theology have been to interpret Jesus' person as "Messiah" or the divine son; to understand the saving efficacy or power expressed in his death on the Cross; and to accept his "Resurrection" as reality. We continue with a brief consideration of the last two of these theological issues.

1. The outlook of the New Testament as a whole. In the apt summary of George B. Stevens, the first Christians, and the New Testament as a whole, "clothed the death of Christ with saving significance".<sup>86</sup> Though there is in the New Testament writings, primarily in Paul's letters and the Hebrews, some conscious attempt to elaborate a theory of the Atonement, on the whole St. Paul, St. John, and other New Testament authors stress the point that Christ's death has a saving significance, without explaining exactly how it saves. The problem parallels their emphasis that God was in Christ, without telling expressly, in some metaphysical theory, how this was possible.

Such conscious theorizing as we find in St. Paul develops along two lines. One of these suggests a "penalistic" or "juridical" concept of the Atonement (elaborated in the later penal, legalistic, and juridical theories of the church); and the other has often been called the "revelational" theory, and the "moral" or "moral influence" theory. We shall presently refer to this second possibility as the "moral-energy" view. In our opinion, it is the predominating outlook of the Pauline letters, and of the other NT authors, where they refer to the significance of the death.

Prior to summarizing these two theories, however, we should recall Jesus' concept of salvation in the setting of his over-all teaching, and, expressly for our present purpose, consider his reported words relative to his death or impending martyrdom.

2. His concept of salvation was discussed on pages 152-153. Recall his thoroughly prophetic view. To the question: What shall a man do "to inherit eternal life", he replied in the simplest ethical terms: repent, love and serve

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85. For this mode of interpretation of "The Incarnation", see Arthur Cushman McGiffert: Christianity as History and Faith, Scribner's, 1934, p. 110-130, 178-182. Also Wm. Newton Clarke: An Outline of Christian Theology, Scribner's, 1898, 19-?, 295-297. Also Hugh Ross Mackintosh's searching treatise: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, Scribner's, 1912.

86. G. B. Stevens: The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, Scribner's, 1917 (?), p. 58.

thy neighbor, honor and love God. Review also our discussion of the concept of himself as an instrument of salvation, pages 154-156, where we said that "...as the messenger of God's kingdom of love and brotherhood, he came to think of himself in quite a normal way -- just as any teacher or prophet might do -- as an instrument of moral salvation. He realized that he was helping men to become citizens of the kingdom, that he was serving them and saving them by his own living example, his forgiving attitude, his healing power".

Beyond this we may "state by way of conjecture what the approaching death may have meant to Jesus as he faced martyrdom. After it became clear that the conflict with the religious authorities might result in apprehension and death, Jesus began to connect his message and work with his suffering and death, and trusted that God would vindicate the kingdom in, through, by, or beyond his death -- as the climactic event of his total life of self-giving and service".

3. Words of Jesus relative to his death. Without intending to present an exhaustive commentary, we shall pursue this topic by confining ourselves to the Synoptic tradition as based on Mark, the center of the historian's material about Jesus.

In Mk 8:31; 9:1; and 14:21, we find references to his impending martyrdom, and expressions of trust that the Kingdom would triumph in spite of his death. The martyrdom loomed as the inevitable result of the free decisions he had made. "For the Son of man goes as it is written of him..." (Mk 14:21) may simply mean -- if Jesus had Is. 53 in mind here -- that he realized his role as servant would end in suffering and death, as described of the innocent sufferer of Is. 53. This suffering role Jesus himself seemed to be fulfilling -- not as a predestinated outcome of a clairvoyant prediction, but as a natural fulfillment of the type of life that he had freely chosen. The suffering outcome of such a life would be inevitable in his time and circumstance in Israel. Moffatt translates this passage, "The Son of man goes the road that the scripture has described for him". In other words, the prophecy is "descriptive" of what will happen to the kind of obedience Jesus exemplified. It need not be understood as "prescriptive" of the end of Jesus's life in some kind of mechanical, predetermined way.

Jesus did not die by a mechanical fate, or an unalterable Divine "predestination" -- he died rather as the consequence of the type of life he himself freely chose, Mk 14:35-36; Jh 10:15, 17-18. The parallel passage to Mk 14:21, in Luke 22:22, says, "as it has been determined", which may reflect predestinationist ideas of the early church. But even here in Luke, "determined" need not be taken in any mechanical sense: it can mean, as it often does, the natural outcome of free choice. (Clairvoyant and predestination ideas would, no doubt, be aspects of a conservative interpretation).

Recall that Lk 4:17f and 22:27, 37 associate Jesus with the suffering service ideal of Second Isaiah. Lk 22:27 may even suggest his conscious fulfillment of the Suffering Servant role of Is. 53. Luke's "reckoned with transgressors" (a quotation of Is. 53:12) seems a natural reference to the fact that he was being classified as a criminal in the late hours of his life. This verse in Luke of itself does not elaborate any special theory of the Atonement; if the latter had been in Jesus's or Luke's mind they could have better quoted Is. 53:10 or the last part of v.12. Lk 13:33 refers to his death as the perishing of "a prophet".

Mk 10:45 - "to give life a ransom for many": The passage does not say to whom a ransom is paid (as, for example, to God, or, as one ancient theory had it, to Satan); neither does I Tim. 2:5-6, which uses the ransom expression. It may simply mean here that his life is given for many, that is, in behalf of many. "Ransom" may mean that release is brought to captives, and the simplest meaning of the saying is that by his death he brings release to those in sin (the main point elaborated by St. Paul in Romans Chs. 3 and 5). His death is to be effective in saving men from the captivity of sin. "This saying does not formulate a theology of the Atonement, but it is one of the data upon which any theology of the Atonement must rest" (Inter. Bible VII 819). The Luke version of the saying in Luke 22:27 omits "ransom".<sup>87</sup>

Mk 14:22-25 -- "My body...and my blood": There is no special theory of the Atonement formulated here. The natural explanation of the passage would be that the references to bread and wine as "body" and "blood" are symbolic in meaning, since Jesus real body, or flesh and blood, was standing there officiating at the supper. Our clue, then, from the circumstance itself, is to interpret the reference to blood shed and body broken as symbolic expressions of the loving, sacrificing kind of life that does indeed save our human situation from sin and evil. The passage as a whole, of course, may reflect the sacramental and theological interests of the early church, to the effect that there is saving efficacy in Christ's death. See I Cor. 11:25. (Exodus 24:8: where "covenant" is symbolical; or, if Jesus meant Jeremiah's new covenant, Jer. 31:31 suggests that the interior knowledge of moral law is the way of salvation).<sup>88</sup>

Mk 15: 34 -- the cry on the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is a quotation of Psalms 22:1, a description of some ancient sufferer in the last moments of life. Jesus's repetition of a line which was no doubt familiar to him would represent a natural cry of despair, perplexity, and loneliness over the tragic outcome of his efforts to win the nation; it is not necessarily a cry of dereliction or abandonment by God (as some theories might suppose). In a cry reported in Luke 23:46 -- "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" -- Jesus sensed that he was not abandoned by God. Mk 15:34 expresses Jesus's feeling of "Loneliness and perplexity over the betrayal, the desertion, and the Cross".<sup>89</sup>

Our conclusion: the implication of the Gospels is that Jesus's death constitutes a means of delivering men from sin, or symbolizes some way in which they are delivered. The problem is, What way? What theory may be constructed from the sparse sayings above mentioned, and the references particularly from Paul's letters on the subject? We have mentioned the two possibilities in our introduction above, as the legal or judicial type theory on the one hand, and the moral-energy or revelational understanding of Christ's death on the other. We now outline the substance of these two views.

87. See Burton & Goodspeed: Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, op. cit., p. 191.

88. See pages where we present the Roman Catholic view of the Eucharist.

89. INTERPRETERS BIBLE, op. cit., Vol VII, p. 906b.

4. The two main theories of the Atonement of Christ:

- (1.) Penal or Legalistic Theory<sup>90</sup> It has been said that Jesus's death is a kind of ransom paid to God (or to the Devil, in the crudest form of the theory). Christ's suffering and death are a penalty or punishment (which really should be exacted from men because of their sin) but which Christ assumes in our place, or which God lays on Christ in our place.

Resumé: Its Leading Ideas -

- a.) The Divine Wrath is emphasized.
- b.) Requires a penalty (of hell?) or "punishment" for man's sin.
- c.) Removal of the penalty is necessary.
- d.) Christ's sacrifice ("shed blood") is a literal, human sacrifice that appeases the Divine wrath. (Compare OT animal sacrifices).
- e.) Man is hopelessly corrupt and helpless; is saved by prevenient, irresistible grace (automatic grace); is a passive spectator of something that is done for him.

Sum: removal of a penal judgment and its requirement of punishment.

- (2.) Revelational and Moral-Energy Theory<sup>91</sup> This view may also be interpreted from the Pauline scriptures, e.g. Rom. 3&5; and to its advocates represents the dominant side of Paul's thought, and the over-all teaching of the NT, in so far as it suggests a theory of the Atonement. The principal theme of the moral energy theory is that Christ's death reveals God's full Agape, which removes -- not a legal debt or judicial penalty of some kind -- but the actual power and presence of sin in men's lives. In other words, God's love, acting to forgive and to empower is the "grace" and "redemption...in Christ" of which Paul speaks in Romans 3:25.

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90. For classic expressions of this point of view see such sources as Irenaeus (2nd century), Henry Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, Oxford, 1947, p. 43; Rufinus of Aquileia (5th century), Ib., p. 49; St. Anselm (11th century) Cur Deus Homo, Open Court, 1944, p. 207; St. Thomas Aquinas (13th century), Selected Writings, Everyman Library, Dutton, 1943, p. 253. Luther, Hugh T. Kerr: A Compend of Luther's Theology, Westminster, 1943, p. 52. Calvin, Institutes, Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, Vol. I, p. 552, 554.

The classic theories of the Atonement have been variously described as the Ransom to Satan theory (Irenaeus, Rufinus); the Feudal Honor theory (Anselm); the Penal theory (Aquinas, Luther, Calvin); the Governmental theory (Hugo Grotius, 17th century).

91. A history of the moral theory may be traced from the New Testament, through Peter Abelard (11th century), the Socinians (16th century), to various modern interpreters.

For representative discussion of the history and types of theory of the Atonement see L. Harold DeWolf, A Theology of the Living Church, Harper, 1953, Chap. 31; George B. Stevens, The Christian Doctrine of Salvation, op. cit.

For penetrating discussion of such classic problems of the Atonement as the relation of "law" to "love" in God's attitude and the idea of the Cross as representing "satisfaction" for God, see William Newton Clark, An Outline of Christian Theology, Scribner's, 1898, p. 326-29; 347-48.

Resumé: Its Leading Ideas -

- a.) Divine Love (Agape) is predominating point.
- b.) The condition or situation of human sin, failure, shortcoming.
- c.) Removal of "sin" and its power and influence over us, and its result, consequences or "judgment" in "death".
- d.) Christ's Sacrifice ("shed blood") reveals and releases the love-energy of God. The shed blood terminology is a symbolical expression of the Divine or Self-sacrificing love that removes sin; and expresses God's suffering concern for sin.
- e.) Man morally free--may receive the Divine grace as Agape flowing through his life; is an active participant in a process of renewal.

Sum: removal of actual sin in life through God's real Love-energy. The Divine "wrath" or "judgment" is expressed concretely in life and history when men fail to let God's Agape flow through them. The judgments of which Paul speaks in Romans 5:16, which are removed, are "sin" and "death". See the following passages:

- Rom: 3:21f; 5:5-8, 12, 17b, 21b; 8:3, 35, 39
- Col. 1:19; 2:6, 13b
- II Cor. 5:14, 17, 19, 21; 6:2-7
- Eph. 1:5
- Gal. 3:10-13 (where Christ's death removes the "curse of the law," not God's curse).

In Rom. 8:3 and II Cor. 5:21 where Paul speaks of Christ as entering into man's sinful state he seems to mean something like this: "Christ by God's will so identified himself with sinful men that in some way, Paul senses, he became involved with their sin; he helped them not by standing aloof and giving them directions as to what they should do, but by entering so completely into their situation that he stood in their place, shared their lot, and grappled with the problem for them".<sup>92</sup>

5. The universal or practical meaning of Jesus's death to Christians. The Christian Cross has been the sign of God's Grace, His forgiveness, understanding, and bearing love. We make decisions; sometimes well-meaning and innocent of evil, or hurtful intent; sometimes out of hasty spite or malice; and sometimes out of seeking pleasure or security in a too self-centered or inordinate way. In any case, we come to realize our decisions might have been other or better than they were. But it is too late now to change them. We have to go on in faith that God has understood and understands; bears their consequences whatever they may have been; that He overpasses in His love and mercy; that He forgives where necessary. An experience of "repentance" may be a factor in such realization -- recall our previous discussions of repentance, pages 97, 99, 143.

Our decisions are made from the standpoint of our finitude, our ignorance, and our sometimes heedless blunders; our sometimes too self-centered desires and passions. To know of, feel, believe, the sustaining and understanding, bearing, forgiving love and grace of God has been a type of experience of utmost value to religious souls. And we have seen its parallels in other religions we have studied.

92. Interpreters Bible, op. cit., Vol. 10, p. 344.

### C. The Problem of the Resurrection

Climactic in Christian faith has been the affirmation that Christ "rose from the dead". What meaning may this have for modern Christians, as also for those who may observe Christianity and Christian belief from the outside? We shall look at various meanings that the resurrection belief has had, ranging from the most objective or "bodily" understanding of the resurrection to more subjective or "mystical" forms of belief, including denial that the resurrection was "reality" in any sense. In attempting this we shall indicate the particular philosophic stance or values of each point of view. The topic may be helpfully divided into the following three basic questions: (1) How far does the historical evidence concerning a "real" resurrection reach -- i.e. what is the basis of the historic, common-place Christian faith that Jesus actually "rose", in some terms, from the dead? (2) What was the historic fact -- both from the standpoint of the particular meaning or meanings it may have had to the first generation Christians; (in so far as New Testament study helps to gather these meanings) and from the perspective of historians, psychologists, philosophers, or scientists in our own times as they reflect on the New Testament report of the event and its possible meanings? (3) What universal meaning or significance, at the level of religious emotion, may the accounts of the resurrection in the New Testament have to all generations of Christians of any time? Some such questions would state, we believe, as a kind of semantical prolegomena, the problems that this topic would raise for a contemporary, scientific age.

1. How far does the historical evidence reach? What is the basis of common-place Christian faith in the resurrection? The main "fact" that generations of Christians have commonly acknowledged (whether consciously or unwittingly) is that the disciples believed in the risen Lord; the New Testament report is that they believed the personality of Jesus had triumphed over death.

The passion narratives of the four Gospels agree in the over-all point that Jesus rose from a tomb. Though the Gospel presentations differ in many details, they all emphasize the empty tomb. What we read in Matthew 28:2-6 is puzzling, and presents a problem to those who must necessarily view these accounts in too "literal" a way. By the order of the events (and the time sequence) implied in these verses, Jesus would have arisen prior to the rolling away of the stone by the angel! Do such problems suggest that some elements of these accounts are legendary accretions? In any case, bear in mind that the final Gospel authors or editors, according to much modern Biblical scholarship, were not eye-witnesses to the original events, but relied on others testimony, as we found by the introduction to Luke's Gospel. The best evidence, therefore, for Christians is not necessarily the empty tomb stories of the four Gospels, although those who would emphasize the "bodily" resurrection idea would rely primarily on these stories.

The best evidence that the early Christians had an "experience" of the risen Lord, is found rather in St. Paul's testimony. His letters are the oldest, first hand records that we have in the New Testament, having been written within the "first generation" period. In I Corinthians 15:1-8 he explains that some of the disciples, and last he himself, had an experience of the risen Lord. In Galatians he writes that he had had a conference with Simon Peter and James, Jesus' brother, in an immediate confrontation within the inner circle or immediate associates of Jesus; and from this eye-witness group he may have heard the resurrection story. Of course, from the standpoint of historic or scientific interest the problem is, What kind of experience is Paul speaking of in I Cor. 15?

Later on in that great chapter -- philosophizing about the meaning of resurrection and immortality -- he explains that "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God. In any case, Paul's testimony in that chapter implies that the experience was of unique kind in his belief; and, since he does not differentiate between his own type of experience and that of the original disciples whom he names, we gather that he meant to say his own experience was like their's in quality.

Here is where common-place Christian faith stands. Christian faith has rested on the testimony of honorable men like Paul, and the unknown authors or sources of the passion narratives of the Gospels, however much a type of critical "scientific" attitude may regard these first Christians as mistaken or deluded. The inquiry from this point on is to ask, What form might such an experience have taken; or, more broadly phrased, What was the basis in fact that gave rise to the resurrection story? At this level of inquiry, in the effort to say from a scientific or philosophic standpoint, What happened? We must grant that our replies remain conjectural or hypothetical, though we shall see that some clues in the New Testament, largely those of St. Paul, suggest that a "mystical-moral" type theory is possibly the one most scientifically credible. In any case, beyond recognizing the possibility that the resurrection may not have taken place in any "real" sense, -- both from the standpoint of the religious agnostic, as well as those who regard it as a high, but indispensable "Myth" of the faith -- the following constructive presentation of various alternative views is premised on the assumption that existence is other than what a radical "naturalism" or lower key "materialism" say it is, relative to the place and significance of such qualities or energies as "mind", "spirit" or "persons" in our world.

2. What was the historic fact? We suggest several interpretations in an effort to analyze philosophically what may have happened.<sup>93</sup>

Two types of negatively critical theory are possible, concerning the origin of the story. One is that the announcement of Christ's resurrection was based on the possibility that the body was removed (see Mtt. 28:11f) and that some of the disciples, coming upon the empty tomb, proclaimed the Easter Miracle. If some such events were the facts, however, we would still be puzzled by the record that the disciples themselves were astonished by the news of the resurrection. Though they tended not to believe in it at first themselves, they came to be convinced, according to the records. Would just an "empty tomb", without a real "appearance" in some sense, have been convincing, even to them?

Another negatively critical view would be to classify the resurrection as a "subjective" visionary experience of emotionally ever-wrought or distraught people; that the story had its origin in the report particularly of one (Mary Magdalene) or a few hysterical women. (All four Gospels report that the experience involved initially certain women members of the apostolic group). The evaluation here would be that the story is untrustworthy because it originates in an hallucinatory or pathological belief. However, the element in the record, particularly that of Paul, that the experience took place with many people, would tend to weaken this type of interpretation -- unless, indeed, modern psychiatry can demonstrate in some way that mass halucination of visions of ghosts is possible and has in fact occurred.

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93. See Charles Gore: Commentary on the Holy Bible, article on the Resurrection for an interesting analysis of theories of the resurrection.

Beyond this, of course, the critic could move out further into the meaning of "hallucination", as covering other types of emotional beliefs or commitments, which are not true in fact, such as, for example, strong political, racial, or other religious beliefs that people hold sincerely, or fanatically, as true. This point claims that the first Christians came to believe in the resurrection simply because they wanted to believe in it, or had to believe in it; it affirmed values for them of a vital, indispensable, life and death character. This kind of perspective becomes a positive mode of interpretation as we move into the outlook that the resurrection may best be evaluated as "high myth", our next possibility.

The following are three main modes of belief about the resurrection as viewed within a positive Christian faith.

(1.) The first of these we have just mentioned: the concept of the resurrection as "high myth", created by the imagination of the early church, teaching its belief in the supremacy of personal values in the universe; or in immortality; but above all announcing the necessity of "eschatological" or "religious faith", that is, in the spiritual nature and destiny of man under God -- and this apart from any possible scientific or empirical "proof" of such truths. The resurrection is symbolic truth; not scientific or historical truth. It is the essence of Christian "faith", which indeed transcends all mere historic or scientific claim or validation. It needs no such validation. The resurrection has the quality of the other great "myths" of the Bible, such as the Fall of Man; the Miracles; the Divinity of Christ, His Resurrection and Ascension; the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; the apocalyptic closure of Time and the descent of the Messianic Kingdom from the heavens.

Bultmann's version of the mythological character of the New Testament stresses the eschatological or apocalyptic world-view of the myths.<sup>94</sup> He claims that we may -- indeed we must -- "demythologize" such materials as found in the Hebrew Christian scripture, if it is to speak to our scientific age; not by eliminating them, or attempting to rationalize them in some scientific or quasi-scientific way. Such exegesis will never succeed, much less appeal to modern man in his existential need. The "mythological" world-view of the New Testament was one thing; our modern, prosaic, scientific age entirely another. For the Bible to speak to modern men its myths must be demythologized. It is to be held that the great myths of the Bible are ways that God, through the ancient mind, spoke to man of truth, not scientific, but spiritual, -- relating to the spiritual illness of man as sinner. Such myths invoke within man a response of "faith", in the spiritual dimensions of reality, particularly in God's mercy and forgiveness. According to this view, these myths speak to man in his broken and separated state, announcing that there is a way for the healing of distraught humanity; for reunion and ultimate peace with God.

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94. See page 161, note 57. Bultmann believes that such a process of "demythologizing" began indeed with the Pauline and Johannine interpretations themselves. See his Jesus Christ and Mythology, Scribner's, 1958, p. 14-18; 32-40.

It is not our purpose here to criticize at length Bultmann's school of New Testament interpretation, or his "existentialist" or "Neo-Orthodox" type of theology, except to state that his position seems, to us, to over-stress the apocalyptic or other-worldly aspect of New Testament thought, at the expense of its realistic side. Our present study has attempted to point out the latter in many ways, while indeed recognizing the eschatological framework of the New Testament world-view.<sup>95</sup> Indeed the major of these "realistic" aspects of the New Testament seems to us to be its prevailing note, that, in the case of the resurrection particularly, something "real" happened! At least generations of Christians have so read the material. Such a subtle, "mythological" interpretation as Bultmann's, however true in some respects it may be, will not entirely eliminate this impression of many readers of the New Testament. The basis of that impression of reality we have discussed in our first point above. We now continue with a further analysis of the basic issue, What was the historic fact that gave rise to the resurrection story? How far may we probe such a question?

(2.) The classic belief has been that Jesus appeared in some physically visible way -- in other words, it has been belief in a "bodily resurrection". This could be conceived as a physical bodily presence in some literal way; or, no doubt, as a more tenuous, "ghostly", or "objective vision". On the one hand, the reports in the Gospels are that the risen Lord ate fish, was handled by the disciples, etc. Yet even in the material left to us in the Gospel accounts there remain problems, if we interpret these events in a too literal "bodily" way. It also says that he appeared in the midst of them, the doors being shut, and that he disappears -- i.e. the resurrection Christ passed unseen through doors and material walls. How was this possible, if the resurrection were "bodily" in the ordinary sense? If belief that Jesus appeared in some physically, or objectively visible way is to continue, no doubt Westcot's type of interpretation, in terms of philosophical idealism, would be helpful.

"Matter is, so far as I can see, only the manifestation of force, life in the widest sense, under the conditions of time and space. It has in itself no existence". When Jesus "entered into another form of existence under new conditions His life found a new embodiment".<sup>96</sup>

A more general way to state the same thing, based on a religious interpretation of our world, without committing ourselves so completely to the belief that matter "has no existence", would be to say that the material aspect, the laws and forms of nature, are ultimately dependent on, and subject to, the Divine Will. Thus the resurrection, if in some real sense "bodily", could be explained in terms of the direct operation of the Divine Will, as God saw fit to cause the experience, which the disciples had of the risen Lord, to take some objective form.<sup>97</sup>

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95. For forceful criticism of Bultmann see Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teachings of Jesus, op. cit., p. 139-140, 191-192.

96. From the Hibbert Journal, July, 1904.

97. The event so interpreted would resemble, of course, the idea of "miracle" in classic sense.

(3.) A third possibility is the "mystical" interpretation, or, as it is sometimes expressed (though this may be yet another issue) the "spiritual resurrection". That is to say, the original disciples may have experienced subjectively, but in reality, the presence of the Christ -- particularly as a morally empowering Spirit. (The concept of the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit are interrelated problems in the New Testament).

When St. Paul described the resurrection as a universal experience he, and other New Testament sources, speak of it as a spiritual experience.

We should acknowledge, however, that careful reading of the New Testament on the resurrection leaves the modern investigator with a possible unresolvable question. It is to ask, Is "the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth" the same thing as "the resurrection power of the universal spiritual Christ"? The latter concept is portrayed in St. Paul, and elsewhere to some extent, in the New Testament. This writer is inclined to think that these issues are logically different, and therefore possibly historically different; and that "the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth", conceived as the one unique, unrepeated event that occurred to an historic man of the first century and to certain of his immediate followers, can be accepted by modern Christians only on "faith", resting on the testimony primarily of St. Paul in the first portion of the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians. St. Paul's beautiful passages, however, on the "spiritual resurrection" of the universal Christ, rising, or resurrected, in the hearts of believers, though it may be a related, may also be interpreted as a separate or distinct matter.

In any case, our point is to suggest that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth may have been an historically unique, but subjective type of "mystical experience" (which may be differentiated from a "subjective" hallucinatory experience). Assuming the validity of some mystical experience, the resurrection, as such a phenomenon, could be understood as a real or genuine act of God. Thus our present explanation would view the matter in more natural terms than a too simple "bodily" or "physical resurrection" theory may do, which, when pressed, may couch in a view of miracle untenable to some modern minds. If such were the event, the theory would stress God's use of "subjective", "psychological laws", or principles, acting within the mental and psychic level of reality; and specifically, from and through what we today call the subconscious mind. The Resurrection may or may not have employed objective or material laws of light, sound, and body; it must necessarily have employed spiritual or mental laws of thought, evaluation, and love. We may favorably compare modern theories of mysticism along this line. Specifically, we have in mind William James' now noted effort to explain mystical experience, in terms similar to the above, in his well known Varieties of Religious Experience.<sup>98</sup> What, in general terms, is mystical experience, (and the reports by mystics the world over resemble each other)? Rare, high moments of exaltation, when men feel the Divine presence, as sustaining, living Reality, bringing peace, courage, pardon, if need be, new joy, new insight, new power to the receptive soul. Could the early Christians' experience of the resurrection have taken this form, a sense of the mystic presence of the Divine to their minds, expressed through the particular personality of the one who had loved them so much, and whom they were coming to love more and more and to trust as "Messiah" and "God's Son"?

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98. See especially the last chapter of this work. Compare also Sandoy's Christologies Ancient and Modern (1910), cited Hugh Ross Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, op. cit.

The preceding paragraph represents, of course, a speculative theory. What we do have, however, from the New Testament, as some support of it, is St. Paul's and St. John's explanation of the resurrection in similar subjective terms, as a new ethical power that the holy Spirit was giving to their lives. In any case, they believed "resurrection" to be a universal experience, which all and sundry may share at any time.

We mentioned above that St. Paul's and St. John's interpretation of the resurrection represented, according to Bultmann, an early type of "demythologizing" process. Not denying this possibility, and acknowledging a strong temptation of going in the direction which Bultmann offers, we nevertheless submit, along another line, the preceding theory of an original "mystical" experience, which had the quality of reality and truth for the early Christians; and that such a theory may be suggested, to some extent at least, by St. Paul's "spiritual resurrection" philosophy. Accordingly, we may now profitably move to a third level of interest, as announced earlier in our discussion, and in so doing we review Paul's spiritual resurrection concept as possible evidence for a mystical resurrection theory.

### 3. What is the universal meaning or significance of the resurrection story?

In St. Paul's and St. John's writings we have the expression "resurrection" used to describe the new Christian experience itself, in its transformed and transforming life; "resurrection" is explained, at least in its universal significance, as the new found, personal, moral experience and power of the indwelling mind of the Christ. These authors were bold to interpret resurrection in the context of affirming that Christ is a contemporary living Presence (to be sure at God's "right hand in the heavenly places"), but also as a universal Spirit of mind, a quality of personal and moral life, dwelling in the believer. From the Pauline circle of epistles, through Acts, to the Johannine material in some of the most sweeping and exalted expression of moral mysticism in the Hebrew-Christian Bible, we may trace this use of the concept "resurrection", and resurrection "light".<sup>99</sup>

The following are typical such passages:

"But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you...But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness", Rom. 8:9f.

"And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses....God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses", Col. 2:12-13.

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99. I. Cor. 15; II Cor. 4:6-18; 5:7; Rom. 2:10-11; 8:9f; 12:2; Col. 2:9-14; 3:1-3; Eph. 1:16-21; 2:1; 5:14; Phil. 2:1-6

Acts 26:12-23 -- written by the author of Luke-Acts concerning Paul's conversion experience of the risen Christ on the Damascus Road.

Gospel of John 5:24; 11:25-26; I John 3:14, 24; 4:16

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light", Eph. 5:14.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life", Jhn 5:24.

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die", Jhn 11:25-6.

"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death", I Jhn 3:14.

As we read these materials, we have the impression that such terms are mystical expressions, purporting on one level of meaning, in the mind of the authors, to explain a totality of experience, including a unique event, "the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth"; on a further level of use in their minds, such terms seem to be figures of speech, or symbolic expressions, referring to the disciples' new found life "in Christ". We cannot perfectly say whether these two apparent meanings should be absolutely joined in some way, or how much the idea of the resurrection as "universal experience" is to be kept distinct from the idea of resurrection as a particular experience of Jesus. If we press the idea of their unity, or sameness, we underscore, I believe, the concept of the resurrection as "mystical", as previously described; if we press the concept of the separateness of these impressions, we possibly move in the direction of Bultmann's views. In any case, for the generations of Christian believers the universal experience has been the relevant one to their own lives; belief in the particular Easter experience of Jesus and his disciples could only be left to faith.

Such passages on "resurrection" point up an over-all theme of the New Testament concerning life after death, namely, that immortality does not wait upon death, but begins here and now as "eternal life". We may close this section on the Christian understanding of the life, teachings, and significance of Jesus, with two memorable quotations concerning the resurrection, which we present without comment. F. S. Turner wrote:

"It seems to me that the first and the imperative need is to experience this resurrection and that those who have experienced this will need no other proof of the resurrection of the Lord. When the human soul has accepted the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, has followed the Master to Gethsemane and Calvary, has entered into the meaning of the crucifixion and closed with it as his own death to sin and rising again into the new life of the children of God, then the resurrection of the Lord is to him the natural and necessary consequence of His death... ..after He was raised from the dead, what prevented His showing Himself alive to Annas and Caiaphas, to Pilate and Herod? Could He not have visited the Pretorium, and the palace, and have taught in the temple daily as before the crucifixion? Could He not have presented Himself before the assembled Sanhedran and have compelled belief in His resurrection? Nothing of this kind happened, so far as the history tells... The reasonable and right inference is that it was not the will of God to force proof of the fact upon minds of unbelievers, but, on the contrary, only to reveal the risen Savior to those who trusted and loved Him before the crucifixion".100

George A. Gordon said:

"Take Peter as an example of the believer in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Which is the greater witness to Peter that his Lord is alive and at the right hand of God, the fact that on several mysterious occasions he saw Jesus after his passion with the eye of flesh, or the fact that Jesus has given him out of the unseen a new mind, a new heart, a new character, a life in which the grace of the Lord is the prevailing power? Which is the greater witness to the reality of the risen Lord, the sense of Peter, or the soul of Peter made like the soul of his master?" Or consider Paul, "In the reality of the earthly Jesus he believed on testimony; in the reality of the heavenly Jesus he believed on experience".<sup>101</sup>

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101. George A. Gordon: Religion and Miracle, Houghton, Mifflin, 1909, p. 112-18.

Questions on the Jerusalem Ministry

1. Be prepared to analyze the main incidents from Mk 11:1 and following to the end of Mark.
2. What may have been the true incident about a fig tree that did not bear fruit? How do we know?
3. Mk 11:20-25. Do you think faith and prayer are effective in life? Can you name different kinds of prayer? In what way does a modern "scientific world view" affect belief in prayer as to its possibility and nature?
4. What to you is faith? What kind of faith does the natural scientist exercise in his work? What is the main meaning of religious faith? Of Christian faith? Is faith "reasonable" or "unreasonable" to you?
5. What is the significance of the cleansing of the Temple scene as Jesus's climactic act?
6. Explain carefully the significance of Jesus's reply about the tribute money to Caesar. By implication what kind of political philosophy is here set forth? Mk 12:13-17.
7. Upon what did Jesus's faith in immortality rest, Mk 12:18-27? What ethical reasoning lies behind the faith in immortality? What is your concept of immortality?
8. In Hebraic and Christian philosophy how is love of God basic to love of neighbor, Mk 12:28-34?
9. What in the "little apocalypse" of Mk ch. 13, concerning signs which foretell the coming of the kingdom, and descriptions of its nature, contrasts to Jesus's sayings elsewhere reported about the kingdom? How do you reconcile Mk 13:4,24 with Mk 13:32-36?
10. Indicate the verses in Mk 13 that earmark it as typical apocalyptic literature having the following characteristics:
  - written in an esoteric idiom or code.
  - indicative of a persecution.
  - belief in the imminent end of the world.
  - salvation of the elect.
  - Son of Man to come on clouds.
11. What is the problem, and how may it be resolved, of Mark's report of the anointing at Bethany, Mk 14:3-9?
12. What are two possible interpretations of the prophecy that the "Son of Man must go as it is written of him," Mk 14:21? Which do you prefer and why? Distinguish between these two types of theological ideas: The predestined "necessity of Jesus's death," or the "divine utility or use of Jesus's death."

13. How does the context of Mark 14:22-25 suggest that the reference to "my body" and "my blood" are symbolical expressions? What do they symbolize?
14. To what two "covenants" may 14:24 refer? In each case what is the meaning of the reference to covenant?
15. What is the problem and main significance of the prayer in Gethsemane?
16. Explain carefully the contrasts in the Markan and Lukan reports of Jesus's reply to the high priest at the trial, as to whether he was the Christ, Mk 14:61-62 and Lk 22:67-69. If Mark's account be the true one, what intellectual difficulty is presented by 14:63?
17. Analyze carefully the significance of Jesus's cry on the cross, Mk 15:34. Of what Old Testament passage is it a quotation? How does this knowledge help us to interpret its meaning? How does the "second cry," alluded to in Mark 15:37, and apparently reported in Lk 23:46, indicate that Jesus did not believe the Father had abandoned him or laid a "curse" upon him?
18. Explain the two theories of the meaning of Jesus's death; had you considered that there were two theories? Are there problems in your mind about either one or both of these theories?
19. Upon what earliest historic report does Christian faith in the resurrection rest?
20. In what ways does the NT itself suggest alternative explanations of the resurrection?
21. In addition, perhaps, to the unique experience of the immediate disciples, in what terms does the NT say all Christians may experience "resurrection"?

E. The Virgin Birth Stories

## Assignment:

1. RSV Mtt 1:1, 15, 18-25 . . . . . The Virgin Birth narratives.  
 2:1-23  
 Lk 1:5-2:52
- Mk 3:20-21; 6:1-6 . . . . . His family does not understand  
 Mtt 13:53-58 him, but takes offense at him;  
 Jesus says his own kin and  
 household do not honor him.
- Lk 3:22 footnote k . . . . . Western Text's report of the  
 Rom. 1:1-4 Baptism; Paul's concept of  
 Jesus's origin and why  
 "Son of God."
- Mk 1:14-15 . . . . . Jesus's, John's, Peter's, and  
 Mtt 5:1-11; 7:24-27 Paul's formula of the condi-  
 Jhn 14:15-23 tions of Christian discipleship.  
 1st Jhn 3:10, 14, 17, 24; 4:12, 16  
 Acts 3:12, 19, 26  
 Rom. 8:14  
 Philip. 2:1-5

2. Study Guide, p. 190-

3. Suggested reading:

W. B. Denny, The Career and Significance of Jesus  
 Ch. III, The Birth of Jesus (a liberal interpretation).

Charles Gore, A New Commentary on the Holy Scriptures  
 pp. 315-320, The Virgin Birth of Our Lord (a conservative  
 interpretation).

Vincent Taylor, The Virgin Birth

The Virgin Birth as an issue. Some people have said that one cannot be a Christian unless he believes in the Virgin Birth. They have tended to say that salvation depends upon this belief; or that the idea that Christ was divine depends upon it.

Others have just as firmly announced that they cannot be an intelligent Christian, if they have to believe in the Virgin Birth! They have said that this belief is flatly contrary to the modern scientific conception of the universe; and cannot be accepted by modern Christians. Need present day Christians make the Virgin Birth doctrine a test of faith or belief? We point out presently that the NT itself does not impress this doctrine upon the Christian as a test of his faith or commitment. What possible symbolic truth the doctrine may enshrine for Christians of all stripes we shall also suggest.

Traditions concerning Jesus's birth in the Biblical record:

Mtt and Lk as we now have them enshrine the Virgin Birth stories. There is, however, evidence of an older strata, even in these Gospels that may not have known of a VB tradition. This evidence follows:

(1) The geneologies of Jesus's ancestry in both Mtt and Lk concern Joseph, not Mary (Mtt ch. 1, Lk ch. 3). Mtt 1:16 seems to conflict with Mtt 1:1. Does Mtt 1:16 suggest a later editing of an earlier geneological account of Jesus's natural ancestry through Joseph?

(2) How may we explain Lk 2:33, 48-50 in light of the annunciation of the angel to Mary, Lk 1:26f? Would Mary have been surprised at anything strange her virginally born son would do?

(3) Note the natural references to both parents in such verses as Lk 2:33,48 and elsewhere. See also John 1:45; 6:42, where Joseph is called Jesus's father.

(4) All three synoptic Gospels, Mk 3:20-21 and 6:3-4 and their parallels in Mtt and Lk, indicate that Jesus's neighbors in his home town of Nazareth did not know of a miraculous birth, and moreover that his own family were offended at him; they were worried about his sanity, and even rejected him (at least for the time being). Jesus's response to this was that, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own family or house".

(5) The ancient Western Text of the Gospel of Luke at the account of Jesus's baptism adds to the divine voice the words, "this day I have begotten thee," Lk 3:22. The significance of this is that there was the tradition, at an early time, that the divine quality of Jesus's life as messiah did not come by virtue of a virginal birth, but by a later experience of adoption by God, when Jesus committed his life to the kingdom of heaven as preached by John the Baptist.

Paul's letters (the oldest of the NT documents), Mark (the oldest complete Gospel), The Gospel of John, and the rest of the NT are silent about a Virgin Birth. Romans 1:3 and Gal. 4:4 strongly imply that, as far as Paul was concerned, he thought of Jesus's birth as natural. His formula in Rom. 1:3, as to why we may believe that Jesus was son of God concerns Jesus's "holiness," i.e. his life of love and service; and the resurrection. A Virgin Birth is not made the condition of such belief. In Philippians 2:1f

and elsewhere in Paul, Christian discipleship is defined by having the mind of Christ in oneself, not by believing in a Virginal Birth.

In sum, nowhere does Jesus himself, in his recorded words, or Paul, or Peter (as recorded in his sermons in Acts) mention, or make the Virgin Birth a condition for, or the sign of, belief in the Saviorhood of Christ; or for accepting him or becoming a Christian. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mtt 5-7) sets forth the conditions for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven; the Beatitudes are typical; but nowhere is Virgin Birth mentioned. Jesus's formula for Christian faith in Mark 1:14 is "repentance"; in John 14:15, 21; 15:7, 10 it is doing his (Jesus's) ethical commands, Rom. 8:14. We conclude that we should not make belief in the Virgin Birth a condition of church membership or the test of faith, any more than Jesus or Paul, Peter, or John did.

A symbolic truth embodied in the Virgin Birth stories of Mtt and Lk has often been expressed, namely that they announce the belief that God was specially active in Christ, or that God was revealed in a special way in him. In other levels of the NT thought and record it is described that God revealed Himself in the Mind and Character of Jesus, Hebrews 8:6, 10; Philippians 2:1f, Rom. 1:3. Accordingly, whether Jesus had a natural or supernatural birth would be somewhat beside the point. Jesus had to overcome temptation just like everyone else. The Scripture makes this plain in a number of places: The Temptation accounts in all three Synoptic Gospels reveal that Jesus had an inner moral struggle with himself. Mark reports that Jesus said "Why call me good, there is none good but God," 10:18. The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus was "tempted as we," 2:18; 4:15, but adds "without sin." The real sign, then, even for the original Christians was that Jesus was Son of God by virtue of his decision to resist temptation and his commitment to live the principles of the Kingdom which he was preaching; that is to say, by an act of his mind, rather than through some status of his body. Had he been born of a virgin, and succumbed in the Temptation, his virginally born body would have done him no good!

As we phrased it previously, Christians believe that Jesus was divine by the love content of his life. Indeed most deeply, it is this point that the stories in Mtt and Lk wish to make. Thus these transcendently beautiful stories may retain their traditional place in the Christian Scripture. Perhaps belief in the Virgin Birth is a fitting conclusion to Christology, rather than a necessary premise (Wilder).

We may surmise the philosophy lying behind the Virgin Birth story -- why was it told? Mainly as a supreme tribute to Jesus by members of the early Christian community, as we have just suggested.

Actually, however, belief in the Virgin Birth was based on a dualistic philosophy, or the ascetical idea that things bodily or material are evil--specifically that sex is evil. Such a notion is contrary, however, to the basic Hebrew philosophy about the material world and the bodily side of existence, as we have a number of times pointed out.

Another related reason why the story was told was to exempt Jesus from contamination by "original sin," thought to be transmitted from Adam through the human line. The problem here, however, is that Jesus would have been contaminated through Mary, his human mother, as much as through Joseph. This is why a branch of the Christian Church recently propounded the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary herself, i.e. the theory that

Mary was born of Anna, her mother in such a way as to be without sin.

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Study Questions on Part Three, Section A.

1. According to St. Paul in Rom. 1:1-4, why do Christians believe that Jesus is "Son of God" or divine?
2. Read the last group of Biblical assignments on page 190. What are the conditions laid down by various disciples and by Jesus himself that would mark a man as a "disciple" or follower of Jesus or a "Christian"?
3. In the eyes of Christian faith in what over-all sense may the Virgin Birth stories be taken as symbolically true?

Part SevenThe Christian Message in the First Century

## Reading Assignment:

1. RSV Acts 1:1-11 . . . . . Dedication and introduction.  
 1:12-8:40. . . . . Early Christian activity in  
 Jerusalem.  
 9:1-30 . . . . . Various accounts of the conversion  
 22:4-16 of Paul.  
 26:9-18
- 9:31-11:30 . . . . . Growth of the church in Palestine.
- 13:1-14:28 . . . . . Paul's first missionary journey.  
 15:1-35. . . . . Paul's Jerusalem conference with  
 Peter, Jesus's brother, James,  
 and others -- the first Christian  
 "Council of Churches."
- 15:36-18:22. . . . . The second journey.  
 18:23-21:26. . . . . The third journey.  
 21:27-28:31. . . . . Paul's arrest and trip to Rome.
- Galatians 1:6-10 . . . . . The Jewish Christian party  
 disrupting his work.  
 11-16a . . . . . Defense of his Apostleship.  
 1:16b-2:2. . . . . Early movements. Relationship  
 with the other Apostles, Peter, etc.  
 2:2-14 . . . . . The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15)  
 2:15-6:18. . . . . Christianity a religion of the  
 inner heart, not of ritual  
 formality; Paul's governing ideas  
 and terms.
- Romans Chs. 1-8 . . . . . The stages of life possible to men.  
 9-11 . . . . . The problem of election and  
 predestination.  
 12-16. . . . . A compendium of Christian ethics.

## 2. Study Guide:

- A. The Early Spread of Christianity: Acts, its origin and purpose.
- B. The Work and Thought of St. Paul: Galatians, Romans.

A. The Early Spread of Christianity:

The Book of Acts: Its Origin and Purpose

Author and Date: Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1 indicate that these books are by the same author.

A question about the authorship comes to light as we study the Book of Acts. We note that the following passages, 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28, are written in the first person plural, "we," revealing that these sections were originally a travel diary from the pen of someone in Paul's company. Was that person the "Luke" whom Paul mentions as his companion and physician in Col. 4:14, and also the author largely responsible for the Third Gospel? Tradition has so believed. Though there is the possibility that Luke, the companion of Paul, is responsible only for the diary, which some later author-editor incorporated into the final work, numbers of scholars believe there is little reason for doubting that Luke himself, Paul's companion, is the principal author of Acts and incorporates his own diary in the life-like way suggested.<sup>102</sup> While favoring this view of the "Lukan" authorship of Acts, in a context discussing the significance of the common authorship of Luke - Acts, E. F. Scott writes:

"With regard to the Gospel, the personality of the author matters comparatively little, for we know in any case he belonged to a later generation and knew the life of Jesus only through documents. But the value of the book of Acts, as history, depends very largely on whether the author was acquainted with the men he writes of and had taken a personal part in the events."<sup>103</sup>

It is true that the "we" passages of Acts nowhere mention their author by name as "Luke," or any other person mentioned in the NT. Scott summarizes the case for the Lukan authorship in the following terms:

"Luke was presumably a young and vigorous man when Paul chose him as a traveling companion and, if he was about thirty when Paul died, in 62 or 64 A.D., he would still have been under seventy when the century ended. The Gospel and Acts were ascribed to him by the general voice of the church as far back as we can trace them, and from all that we know of him he was just the man who may have been their author. He was a member of that Gentile church for which they were written; he was a physician, and therefore a man of good education; he was a friend and admirer of the Apostle Paul. Add to all this the practical certainty that he was the writer of the travel diary, which can be shown by every test to be entirely uniform with the work as a whole."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Some have believed, against the tradition, that the principal author of Luke-Acts was not Luke, the companion of Paul, Windisch. See discussion, S. MacLean Gilmour, following Windisch, Interpreters Bible, Vol. VIII, p. 10-16. In favor of the Lukan authorship of the entire two-volume work see G.H.C. Macgregor, Interpreters Bible, Vol IX, p. 19-21, discussing various hypothesis.

<sup>103</sup>E.F. Scott: The Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 88-89.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid. p. 91-92.

Acts is based on sources written and oral. In addition to the "we" passages suggesting a written diary, the presence of doublets in chs. 2-5 strongly implies parallel written sources for some of this material. Recall that the common author of Luke-Acts tells us in Lk 1:1-4 that he is relying on a number of sources.

We have already mentioned that Luke-Acts was written between 85 and 95 A.D. Very likely Acts was written in retrospect upon the career of St. Paul, whose death occurred about 64 A. D. probably during Nero's persecution, Acts 20:38. It is also evident that the Christian movement had become empire wide by the time the book was written; this suggests the situation toward the end of the first century. (It is unlikely that Acts is a second century work, owing to the fact that it seems to know nothing of Paul's letters. These would have not been in general circulation until the second century.)

The Purpose of Acts: Not the doings of the Apostles so much as "the expansion of Christianity through the energy of the Spirit...from humble beginnings to a world-wide power" are the terms which have stated well the main purpose of Acts.<sup>105</sup> The divisions of the assigned reading indicate this descriptive purpose. About 3/6 of the material of the book is devoted to Paul; 2/6 to Peter, and 1/6 to the rest of the Apostles together.

Like Luke, Acts desires to show that Christianity was not politically dangerous. The author puts the Roman authorities in a favorable light. The account abruptly ends before Paul's condemnation and presumed execution by the Roman authority. Does this suggest that the author was confused by the adverse decision of the Roman government?

#### Importance and Problems of the Book of Acts

Outside of Paul's letters (which are the first and oldest writings of the NT) the Book of Acts is our main account of the primitive Christian age. Among many important details we select the following for clarification:

Acts 2:38-39 makes clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the new sense of love, forgiveness, and brotherhood that comes as a consequence of repentance and conversion, and that this gift is clearly associated with the rite of water baptism. The Holy Spirit is manifested in the ebullient joy of "glossolalia," or "speaking with tongues," the bubbling forth of joy concerning the new life and hope in Christ.

The modern Pentecostal sects interpret the "glossolalia" of Acts as meaning a miraculous speaking in other languages not known or understood by the speakers themselves. Actually, there were many languages spoken in the Roman world, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, the common language of Palestine, etc. It would have been quite natural for the new converts to Christianity, representing various nationalities, to express their joy in their new-found faith by ecstatic utterance in their native tongue. From this possibility the tradition may have grown that they spoke in other or unknown tongues.

The author reports miraculous happenings in the early days of the apostolic missions. It was natural for a mind of the first century "to look for the miraculous, just as we now assume that everything must arise from natural causes."<sup>106</sup> The miracles reported in Acts may be interpreted in the ways suggested for the miracles of the Gospels, p.

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<sup>105</sup> Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 95, 98.

<sup>106</sup> E. F. Scott, The Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 101.

Another problem concerns the differences between the report in Acts and the testimony of Paul about his own life and work. For example, Acts portrays Paul's relations with the inner, original group of Apostles as a smooth and harmonious one, whereas we have it in the second chapter of Galatians by Paul himself that his relationship with Peter and the others was by no means so amicable as Acts suggests in chapter 15. Preference, of course, must be given to Paul's first-hand account in the letters. The general harmony, however, between Paul and Acts is more significant than the discrepancies between them. Many of the allusions in Paul's Epistles are made more intelligible through the study of Acts. Paul's letters do not describe his actual journeys in detail; we have to rely on the remarkable account in Acts for the over-all history of the journeys.

We are now ready to study St. Paul's first-hand account of Christianity in its earliest years.

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## B. The Work and Thought of St. Paul:

### The Historical Background of Paul's Ministry

Before the conversion: Paul was born in the city of Tarsus in southern Asia Minor. This place of birth made him a Roman citizen. He was evidently proud of his citizenship, and he always respected the Roman government, Acts 21:39; Rom. 13:1.

He was educated a Rabbi at the feet of one of the great rabbinical teachers of his day, Gamaliel, Acts 22:3. Paul's written style and modes of thought are cumbered with the prolix logic and historical allusions of the Rabbinical method. This makes the reading of his letters in places difficult. He never quite frees himself in some respects from his Pharisaic background. In Rom. 5:1f. we have already noted his partially legalistic understanding of Christ's death, accompanying the freer, moral-energy ideas centered in love-mysticism, which characterizes his over-all view of the Atonement.

Before his conversion he was a radical Pharisee, even a persecutor of Christians, a fanatic, Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1; Gal. 1:13. His very anti-Christian fanaticism would indicate an inner conflict perturbing his mind and heart. Eventually a more generous outlook, at first suppressed, finally burst to the fore. Trained in the righteousness of the Pharisees, and desiring righteousness above all else, such a spirit would finally revolt against the persecution of those whose righteousness of love and sympathy exceeded his own. His conversion came as the climax and resolution of this inner struggle, and doubtless had been in preparation subconsciously for many months, possibly even for some years prior to the Damascus road experience.

The Damascus Road: Romans 7:1f clarifies that his vision and conversion came as the culmination of an intense subjective struggle and psychological preparation.

The ultimate historical content of Paul's vision lies with the original mystery of the Resurrection experience itself to the early Apostles. In I Cor. 15:1-11, the earliest and most authentic account of the Resurrection, Paul classifies his own experience for us at first hand, as having the unique quality which it had for the other immediate disciples, I Cor. 15:8; 9:1. In Gal. 1:18 he tells us of a visit with the Apostle Peter and others at Jerusalem, at which time he may have heard a report of the Resurrection, reflected in I Cor. 15. We have already discussed Paul's moral-mystical type interpretation of the Resurrection, p. .

Acts presents several accounts of Paul's vision of his Lord and conversion on the Damascus Road, 9:1-6; 22:3-10; 26:1-20. Some of the details of these accounts differ. For example:

9:3-7 says that the "light" shown round about him; that those with him heard the voice but saw no one, v. 7.

22:9 says that those with him did not hear the voice, which spoke only to him, but did see the light. This order and emphasis is again repeated in 26:13-14.

These reports in Acts suggest that the vision was subjective in quality. In the one case he alone heard the voice; in the other, he alone saw the light. Furthermore, in Acts itself, we catch the clue, elaborated in his own letters at first hand, concerning the nature of the "light", and what it meant to him. In Acts 23:18, 23 the word light is used in a figurative way, symbolizing the new moral or spiritual "seeing", vision, or understanding that Christianity at heart is. This meaning of "light" is presented again, as we have already noted, in the discussion of the Resurrection, by Paul himself in IICor. 4:5-6, 10b, 11b, 18; 5:7.

The importance of the vision is that Paul "saw...a light", and that, deepest for him, by his own description it meant a spiritual type of "seeing", with subjective results that transformed his life. Recall our discussion of theories of the Resurrection, and our interpretation that the original event to the Apostles and to Paul may possibly best be explained in terms of mystical experience. In any case, the "light" was effective only because there had been preparation in his mind and heart. What, then, did Paul "see", which so radically affected his life and the life of the western world as a consequence? Some of the things he saw were:

- (1) Jesus himself in a new light as Israel's Messiah, and Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism, Rom. 1:16.
- (2) He saw Israel's religion in a new light: as a religion primarily of love and grace rather than of duty and law, I Cor. 13.
- (3) He saw himself in a new light: as the instrument of this love. He found in himself a new freedom and a new power, Rom. 8.

May we not say that Paul's vision was real and came from God just as certainly as we believe that God reveals himself to the minds and hearts of men in the thoughts of men? We do not have to view Paul's vision as remote and strange. Actually it was something more commonplace and universal than unusual. It may have been a unique experience only by way of degree, rather than in kind. Visions of perceiving things, problems, and situations in a new liberating light are commonplace; a sudden burst of truth and insight in answer to a problem; the perceiving of another person in a sudden new light of love and affection; the conceiving and significance of one's work in a new light of certainty and confidence; the disclosure of new grounds for faith in God in the light of inspiration that the life of Christ itself may convey to the searching mind of his follower. All men tread their Damascus roads with their significant visions. Quimby says: "Paul's conversion is not to be estimated by the exciting phenomena upon the Damascus Road. It is to be judged by its fruits. And what fruits! A new character, the far missionary journeys, the many churches founded, and the immortal letters!"<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Paul for Everyone, Macmillan, 1949, p. 24.

The world in Paul's day. We should recall four major facts of the Roman world of the first century that will help us to understand Paul and his letters.

(1) There was a world government -- Rome and her military constabulary. The Roman government permitted a good deal of local freedom among the peoples she had conquered. So long as taxes were paid, local customs, laws, religious beliefs were allowed. There were special privileges of citizenship for certain localities, e.g. for Tarsus where Paul was born. Another consequence of Roman rule was world peace, an imposed peace, to be sure, but one which facilitated freedom of movement and trade. This fact made Paul's missionary journeys possible by ship and land. Piracy on the seas and brigandage on the highways were suppressed. World travel was accordingly possible and facilitated by the great Roman roads connecting principal centers of habitation.

(2) There was a world language, Greek. Paul spoke and wrote Greek fluently. He could speak to foreigners in the lands he visited in their own tongue. Our New Testament books were written in Greek.

(3) There was a world-wide religious restlessness and searching. The old Greek and Roman civic religions were in decay. Thoughtful men did not take the belief in gods and goddesses, the old pantheons of Homer or Numa seriously. The anthropomorphic figures of Zeus, Athena, or Jupiter were no longer convincing objects of worship. The childish and often immoral legends of the gods could not fill man's hunger for faith in a God of supreme moral goodness.

There were the great philosophical schools, Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and others. These systems satisfied a few intellectuals, but they could not be understood or appreciated by the rank and file of men in the Roman world.

Another aspect of life and faith in the Roman world were the "mystery religions". These went by numerous names, taken from legendary and mythological figures. For example, there were the cults of Cybele and Attis, Isis and Horus, Mythra, Orpheus, and many others. These were mainly "mysteries" because of their often secret initiation rites. Some were vulgar in thought and practice, reminiscent of the Baalistic fertility religion. Others were relatively high-minded, ethical faiths, that appealed to the finer instincts of men. For example Mythraism was a derivative of the highly ethical monotheistic Zoroastrianism of the Persians. Many of these religions paved the way for Christianity in their doctrines of personal salvation by a personal "Savior", the forgiveness of sins, their belief in immortality and their baptismal rites. Their saviors, however, were the mythological heroes of primeval days, like Mythra, the sun god, who died and rose again according to the belief, some time in the dim past. This interesting similarity with the central Christian theme of a dying and rising Savior were associated with the fertility sequences of nature's seasons, illustrated by the Orpheus legend. The mysteries, however, could not eventually compete in prospective converts' minds with Christianity's teaching concerning an actual man who had lived and risen in their own time.

Another similarity, and contrast, which helps us to understand why Christianity eventually supplanted the mystery cults lay in the area of ritual and ceremony. The Taurobolium of the cult of Cybele

and Attis was a baptismal purgation bath in the warm blood of a newly slaughtered bull. Tradition has it that the Vatican now stands where the last taurobolium rite took place in Roman times.

In addition to the mysteries, there were many astrological and demonological superstitions, stemming from paganism and also from Persian and Jewish apocalypticism. Paul himself believed in the "powers of darkness" that ruled the air, Col. 1:13; Eph. 6:12; Rom. 8:38; Eph. 3:10. He speaks in a number of places of Christianity and Christ as a "mystery", e.g. Rom. 11:25; 16:25; I Cor 2:7; Eph. 3:3-9, etc. Was this his way of assisting Christianity to compete successfully with the mystery religions?

(4) Accompanying the superstitions of the Roman world, was the fact of the cheapness and degradation of life for the masses. Life was full of fear for the common people, fear of the Roman authority, of the demons, of the magical powers of the stars and astrological forces. There was increasing poverty, and slavery was universal and heartless. "Barbarian cruelties, universal vice, absurd idolatries, benumbing superstitions, terrifying demonologies, and brutal slavery made daily life a torment. For these ills the old, the stated religions offered no relief. The Roman world lay ready for any message presenting itself as good news with hope and power."<sup>108</sup>

(5) The final fact of the Roman world, which at once helped and hindered Paul, as he believed, was the Jewish Diaspora, which had long since taken the enlightened religion of the Jews out into that world. Presently we shall see how Paul's letters are the record of the initial conflict between Judaism and Christianity.

Of course, stated in its largest light, the leavening and redeeming influence of spiritual Judaism in the Synagogue institution, and in the ethical teachings and discipline of the great Rabbis, had not only prepared the way for Christianity; but would, along with her, work its spiritual and material uplift in western civilization. We should mention, of course, along with these civilizing influences of the Judaeo-Christian religion, those stemming from the great Greek and Roman philosophies, from the Roman jurists, and later from spiritual Islam.

In sum, speaking from a Christian perspective, one may believe that God had prepared in remarkable ways, in the historical situation, for the coming and spread of Christianity, as                      a necessary addition to spiritual Judaism, for performing the work of civilization and humane progress in the west.

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Let us now look at the situation within Paul's churches in the Roman world. What were the practical problems with which he had to deal in the mission field, and to which he speaks                      in his letters to his churches? We must indicate these problems in

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<sup>108</sup>Quimby, Ib. p. 39.

order to understand the many allusions with which his letters are filled. There are five principal concerns which Paul is constantly mentioning

(1) The scattered condition of the churches -- at Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, roughly representing distances between Boston, Detroit, Chicago, and St. Paul -- constituted a major problem. Accordingly St. Paul responds by emphasizing the unity of this scattered body of Christians. His great figure of speech for the unity of the church was "the Body of Christ". Out of Paul's emphasis on the unity of Christians was to grow the idea of the larger unity and equality of humanity, that has become one of the major social and political ideals of the modern democratic world, Gal. 3:26-29.

(2) The tendency of the first Christians to stand aloof from the world of practical every-day life, to interpret Christianity as an other-worldly religion, primarily concerned with waiting for the apocalyptic return of Christ on the clouds of heaven: to this problem of the expected immediate return of Christ Paul speaks, particularly in the Thessalonian letters.

Since they expected the immediate return of Christ, some of the early Christians had asked, Why bother to work or earn a living, or be concerned with unbelievers and the world? Paul replied that Christians should continue with their day to day practical duties in the world and to stop worrying and speculating about when Christ would return. Be prepared for him at any time; in the meanwhile, however, get out into the world and convert it to Christ. Accordingly, instead of letting Christianity remain primarily an individualistic, other-worldly, or mystical religion, Paul helped it to become a practical, social minded movement, which attempted to make the present world a better place in which to live by transforming it through the ideal of Christian love, Rom. 8:18f.

(3) There were numerous ethical problems about which he spoke. To counter excessive Greek individualism he urged, "bear ye one another's burdens". To counter the prevailing low standards of sexual morality he enjoined faithfulness in marriage, I Cor. 7:1-5f. Christianity is not an ascetical or celibate religion as some had supposed, but it does insist upon discipline of the sexual life. He does not attack the institution of slavery as such, but sets forth the principles of love and brotherhood which would eventually bring the slave system down, Gal. 3:26-29; Philemon 16. Paul said that Christians should respect the authority of the Roman state; it was ordained of God to keep peace and order. He said that it made no difference whether Christians ate meat that had been slaughtered in the market places with pagan rites, provided such eating did not confuse others as to Christian standards of life and thought.

(4) There were many intellectual and theological problems with which his converts were concerned. Paul had to meet the philosophic, speculative interests of the Gentile mind in the Graeco-Roman world. Though intellectualist speculation is not the heart of religion, Paul's brilliant intellect sets forth Christianity in strongest intellectual light. He reasons with the "Gnostics", or technical speculators of the day, who like the followers of the mystery religions had many strange theories; he said that Christianity was itself the true and superior "gnosis" or "knowledge", I Cor. 1:17-24.

(5) Finally he faced the special Jewish Problem. The new converts wanted to know whether they were to keep all the laws of Moses as the Pharisees commanded. Is circumcision necessary? Could Christians eat with pagan Gentiles?, etc. Paul taught that Christianity was not such a legalistic religion. He bitterly fought the tendency toward an arid, formalized conception of the new faith; rather he insisted that it was a religion of ethical freedom. The Jewish-Christian party had followed Paul around undermining his work in the Gentile cities. Much of his time and energy was spent in repairing this damage, as his Galatian letter shows. This was the first "conservative-liberal" fight in the church, and Paul was the liberal, as Jesus had been before him. Wilder summarizes that Paul made a "frontal attack" on the Gentile world while "defending his rear" against the Jewish-Christian party, which insisted; that the traditional Jewish ceremonial observances should be kept.

#### Establishing Main Dates in the Career of Paul

We may trace his journeys by noting the following passages in Acts, letting the city of Jerusalem be the base point:

1st Journey:	Acts: 12:25; 13:1-4, 13; 14:1, 24-26; 15:1-4
2nd "	15:1-4, 30, 35; 16:1, 5-6, 8-12; 17:1, 14; 18:1, 8
3rd "	18:22; 19:1, 21; 20:1-2, 16, 36; 21:1, 7-8, 17
4th "	to Rome, Acts 27:1f.

Acts Ch. 18 mentions three important incidents which help us to fix at least one sure date for Paul's life. By interpolation from this date, several others may be reasonably established. These incidents are the following:

a) Paul was in Corinth, on the Greek peninsula, toward the end of his second journey, Acts 18:1.

b) Acts 18:2 tells us this was during the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius; and 18:12 tells us that it was when Gallio was pro-consul (or governor) of the province of Achaia in Greece, where the city of Athens was situated.

c) Archeologists have found at the city of Delphi in Greece an inscription of a letter by the Emperor Claudius which mentions that Gallio was pro-consul and governor at a date that would correspond to 52-53 A. D. Accordingly, Paul was in Corinth on his second journey at this time. Reading backwards from allusions that Paul makes in his letters (see Galatians) his conversion may be put at about 31-33 A. D. Finally there is the tradition of his martyrdom about 64 A. D. From the 52-53 A. D. date in Corinth the dates of writing of most of his letters may be fairly determined. See below on Galatians and Romans for example.

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The following pages present a brief study of his letter to the

Galatians, and to the Romans. In Galatians matters of central historical importance concerning the life and thought of Paul come to light. The book of Romans is of central doctrinal importance; it is the most systematic and possibly the greatest of his letters. Galatians and Romans will introduce the student to the major terms and thought forms of St. Paul. Bear in mind that his letters are the earliest and most historically authentic of our Christian writings -- the first person record of one of history's great personalities.

### Galatians

Place, date, and purpose of writing. Paul . . . was . . . either at Corinth on the 2nd journey or at Ephesus on the 3rd journey when he wrote Galatians. He had passed through "Galatia" twice; therefore alternative dates have been suggested:

49-51 A.D. on 2nd journey, i.e. c. 51 A.D. (Wilder)

52-55 A.D. on 3rd journey, i.e. c. 53 A.D. (E. F. Scott)

Paul wrote this letter to the converts in the province of "Galatia", that is specifically the towns of Pisidian Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, etc. (cities in what is now the southern coast of modern Turkey). Christian sympathizers with the Jewish law had followed in his wake after one of these journeys casting confusion among his converts about the great issues of freedom or the law. Paul defends his Apostleship and Christian freedom against this Jewish conservatism; the letter is a declaration of Christian freedom from Judaism. It records the parting of the ways of the two faiths. Henceforth Christianity was to be an independent religion and no longer a Jewish sect.

The controversy. The struggle with Judaism is revealed in the issues which arose at the Jerusalem conference, reported in Acts 15 and Galatians 1 and 2:

Acts 15 gives it out that all was smooth going between Peter and Paul at the council. Recall, however, that Acts was written a generation after Paul, and that part of its purpose was to heal, as far as possible, the Jewish-Gentile conflict.

Paul's account in Galatians 2 brings into sharper historical focus the issues he raised with the Apostles. In order to resolve their differences, it was decided that Peter and his faction would preach to the Jews; while he, Paul, would missionize the Gentiles. It was indeed an historic verdict; the commission to Paul assured that Christianity would become a world religion. Note Peter's wavering on the issue of the necessity of circumcision, 2:11-14, and Paul's criticism of him for it.

The message. The following summarize Paul's main points in the Galatians letter and his over-all interpretation of Christianity:

- (1) Christianity is a religion of the inner heart and disposition, not of ritual formality, 2:15-21, especially verse 16.
- (2) He interprets Christianity as ethical mysticism, emphasizing the union with Christ: "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (2:20)

- (3) He stresses the freedom and equality of men because of their common sonship to God. Not only religious freedom from outmoded ceremonialism is meant here; the wider implications of this great passage look toward ultimate political freedom among men, and international fellowship, 3:28.

Many of Paul's governing ideas and terms appear in Galatians. We present below a list of major examples with a brief commentary which will assist the reader to understand his thought.

Grace. Gal. 1:3; 2:21. "Grace is love in motion, love making its arrival in the experience of men."<sup>109</sup> "It is God's love poured forth and in its present action for the redemption of the world."<sup>109a</sup> Paul's term "grace" seems to be equivalent to "agape".

Faith. Gal. 2:16; 3:23. "Faith is the attitude, on man's part, which corresponds to grace; it is the disposition to accept God's gracious gift."<sup>110</sup> It is the gift God's love as a new power, shown forth in, and released by, Christ's life and death. By this gift we are enabled to live the life of love, joy, peace, and neighborliness as a spontaneous desire on our part, rather than out of fear or compulsion, as Paul believed was true under the law.

Christ who lives in me. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 12:2; Philip. 2:1-2. Here we have Paul's idea of the "mystical union of personalities."<sup>111</sup> We may suggest that spiritual union of personalities known in the commonplace love experiences helps to explain Paul's concept of the believers' mystical union with Christ on the cosmic scale, Philip. 2:1-2. The way minds are shared is, of course, through a common awareness of truth, and a common love. "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

Justification, Gal. 2:16, 21, is the result of the action of grace in the faith-union with Christ; it is the knowledge, or personal assurance, that a new moral life has been found to be possible, above perfunctory fulfillment of the "works of the law".

The flesh. Gal. 5:16f. A metaphor for the entire sinful side of human nature ~~to it is not alone a reference to the body and its passions.~~ The "flesh" includes evil disposition of mind or spirit. Paul was not a dualist or ascetic, who looked upon physical matter and the human body as inherently evil, Col. 2:18, 21-23. In his thought, rather, physical nature and the body are to be restored to a proper perfection, or made whole, along with the mind, I Thess. 5:19-23; Rom. 8:23.

<sup>109</sup>C. A. A. Scott: St Paul, the Man and the Teacher, Cambridge U.P. 1936, p. 110

<sup>109a</sup>John Line: Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Fern op. cit. p. 310.

<sup>110</sup>G. B. Stevens: Theology of the New Testament, Scribners 1903; p. 419.

<sup>111</sup>C. A. A. Scott, op. cit. p. 112.

The Spirit, Gal. 5:17, is the life of love and good will, as opposed to the life of enmity and selfishness (i.e. of the flesh). Conversion for Paul means that both mind and body are to be made whole, or restored to their rightful destiny by the Divine Love, or by the mind of Christ: thus for Paul life's process is a change from:

<u>The old man</u>	to	<u>the new man in Christ</u>
i.e. mind and		i.e. mind and body in a
body in a		transformed state
corrupted state		of "the spirit".
of "the flesh"		

Law. Gal. 3:19f; 5:14; Rom. 5:19. The old Jewish Law was an interim plan, established by Moses until Christ. It was a necessary provision in order to keep unrighteousness checked; it was a "tutor" until the time of the Christian grace and Love. Because law is compulsive, it is inferior to Love and grace.

Works. Gal. 2:16; Rom. 12:9-21. Paul emphasizes works of love and grace, rather than the old (i.e. the ceremonial) works of the law. Love and grace perform their own new work; they fulfill the older works of the law, Gal. 5:14; 6:2.

### Romans

Place, Date, and Purpose of writing. This chief of Paul's epistles was probably written from Corinth (15:26) at the end of the third journey (15:25), c. 57 A. D. He addresses it to the church at Rome, 1:7, which he tells us had been founded by someone else, 15:20, 22-23.

The Letter is a missionary manifesto in which Paul reviews his entire theological position. Christianity is the new religion, to which all men can conform. Christianity is a transformed and fulfilled Judaism. He defends Judaism in Romans. In Galatians he wants to show the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity. In Romans he endeavors to explain their connection. Apparently he wanted to heal some breach which had developed between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome, and had Gentile readers mainly in mind, 1:13. The letter also had a further practical purpose. Paul wanted to win the sympathy and the backing of the important Roman congregation, relative to a plan he had of carrying Christianity to the west, to Spain, 15:24-28. He was indeed hoping to make his mission truly world-wide!

An outline of the Message. In chapters 1 to 8 he describes the stages of life possible to men.

First there is a natural or debased stage, without either Jewish law or Christian grace, 1:17-2:16. On this level men use their higher powers of mind to corrupt life toward sensualistic and selfish ends. Here we have a description of much pagan, Roman life of the day.

Second, there is the next stage or dispensation, that of the Jewish law, 2:17-3:20, which has checked wickedness and has been a guide for men. (Likewise for Paul, as we have observed elsewhere, Rome's legal system had in an analogous way been doing for the Romans what Israel's law had done for the Jews.)

The final stage is that of Christian Grace or Faith, or perfect freedom, to which all men can attain, wrought by the transforming power of the Christ, or Christian love, 3:21-8:39. The life and death of Christ has revealed this love and turns it loose upon the world, 3:21-5:21. (We note Paul's literal interpretation of the Fall of Man here.)

The new kind of Christian life is personally brought about by the transformation of the mind through the mind of Christ, 6:1-8:17. Finally he looks in hope toward the salvation of society, and the whole created order, when this love becomes universal, 8:18f. Paul here envisages a mystical rapture of the entire cosmic order, and seems to be thinking of an immortality, not only of the spirit, but of the bodily or material realm as well, when it becomes renewed, commences to glow, and is maintained without "decay" by the power of God. No more striking description of a personal immortality -- relative to conditions which would be necessary to sustain it, i. e. conditions analogous to our present bodily existence, -- were ever penned than this.

Chs. 9-11 treat the problem of election and predestination -- how will Israel fit into God's plan of redemption? Paul does not answer the question clearly, but he does see great historic good or purpose coming out of Israel's "trespass" in rejecting Christ. It is through this rejection that "salvation has come to the Gentiles," or the whole world, i. e. through his, Paul's preaching.

Chs 12-16 are a beautiful Summary of Christian Ethics. Man's mind may be transformed or renewed by power from above, the power of love, so that life may "be aglow with the Spirit", 12:2, 11.

We may summarize Paul's accomplishments by saying first that his work represented the first great expansion of Christianity, and that it won Europe for Judaeo-Christian civilization. In Rom. 15:24-28 we read that Paul wanted to carry his work as far west as Spain, revealing the sweep of his missionary vision to win the entire world to Christ. He was martyred in Rome before he could realize this ambition.

Second he made Christianity independent of Judaism. Galatians summarizes his position and emphasizes the break with Judaism. Romans is more synoptic, holding that Christianity is the new religion to which all men can conform, pagan and Jew alike, if they would. It affirms that Christianity is the fulfillment of the best in Judaism.

Third, he intellectualized Christianity for the world. Though we must recognize that some of Paul's thought forms are archaic, and do not fit modern problems and needs, he was in the main faithful to the meaning and implications of Jesus's teaching concerning the ethical Kingdom of God's love. What Jesus supremely expressed in his own life, and taught superbly in his parables, Paul put into philosophical or intellectual terms. Although in the main he had a practical historical and religious type of mind rather than an abstract or metaphysical one, the great themes of Christian thought which Paul laid down become standard in the doctrine of the church. For example, he gave Christ the cosmic place he has held ever since in Christian values, Colossians.

Paul discussed in many places the meaning of Christ's death as the supreme revelation of God's love and the climactic act of the release of that love as power into the lives of men.

He reemphasized and put in Christian light the prophetic doctrine of man as a free being, who, when he sins, needs the Divine forgiveness and may receive the Divine help or grace to live the life of neighborliness

and love. The Pauline letter of Ephesians either written by the great missionary himself or by a disciple, describes Christ as the normative, true or ideal man, and sets before the Christian consciousness an inspiring hope in what man may become.

He formulated Christian ethics and believed that Christian love can be a practical transforming force in human life and history, Rom. 8:35f; I Cor. 13.

He described Christian mysticism, or religious experience in the simple psychological terms of the "mind of Christ" dwelling ethically in the believer. The indwelling of this mind was the assurance of our salvation or acceptance by God, and fellowship with him, Rom 8:27; 11:34; 12:16; 15:16; I Cor. 1:10; 2:16; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:27; 2:5; 4:2.

Paul, along with Jesus and many other contemporaries, shared in the eschatological hope of his times. In his thought Jesus had definitely been, or would come again, as the apocalyptic Son of Man, as the second Thessalonian letter makes clear; and this event would take place soon, if we may trust Philippians 4:5. In the meanwhile, however, he cautioned the Thessalonians to continue in their daily occupations and refrain from scanning the skies too much in the great expectation. This practical instruction, along with the great themes just reviewed, with their more universal or timeless appeal, reminiscent of Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of heaven as at hand, performed for Christianity the necessary leveling down of the apocalyptic hope, and the reconstruction of the faith into the historic and social force it was destined to become.

Questions on St. Paul

1. State the main biographical data of Paul before his conversion, which help us to understand the nature and significance of this event.
2. What is the significance of "light" as a figure used in Acts 26:18, 23, and in II Cor. 4:5-6; 5:7, as descriptive of Paul's conversion?
3. In the realm of Christian values what did Paul "see" in the Damascus Road experience?
4. What were the main features of the world situation in Paul's day that help us to understand allusions in his letters?
5. What were main specific problems within his congregations on the mission field that aid in our understanding various references in his letters?
6. Establish the one sure date for the life of Paul.
7. What was his main purpose in writing to the Galatians?
8. Why is Galatians historically an important document? What does it reveal concerning Paul's relation to the other disciples?
9. Explain main Pauline terms.
10. What is his purpose in writing Romans?
11. What is the sequence and development of his thought in Chs. 1-8? Do you think he accurately describes the main ethical stages possible to men? Are there criticisms you would make of his analysis?
12. What is your estimate of both the possibility and the value of Paul's concept of religion as "the mind of Christ in us"? Romans 12-16 and elsewhere.
13. Do you think Christian life and love can save society and transform history as the mystic philosophy of Paul in Romans 8:18f. may inspire Christians to believe? Can you formulate a Christian Philosophy of history for our time?

C. The Johannine Interpretation of Jesus, Christianity, and History

Reading assignment:

1. RSV The Gospel of John

- Ch. 1:1-18..... Christ as the Divine Logos or Word  
 13:1-17:26..... John's concept of salvation: the  
 moral oneness of Christ's followers  
 with him and the Father in love.

The 1st Letter of John

- Chs. 1-5..... What is eternal life? or, self-giving  
 love as the sign of the believer's  
 union with God.

2. Study Guide p. .... The Johannine Writings - the idea  
 of the Divine Personality in Christ.

3. RSV Revelation

- Chs. 1-4..... Preliminary letters.  
 12-13..... The dragon and the beast: Satan  
 and his Roman emperor who is persecuting  
 the Christians.  
 19-22..... The return of Christ as apocalyptic  
 Son of Man, the binding of Satan,  
 the millennium, the last judgment,  
 the supernatural transformation of  
 the cosmic order as the consummation  
 of history.

4. Study Guide p. .... The Final Victory of Good over Evil  
 (Christian apocalypse).

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Although John's Gospel is historically less accurate than the Synoptics concerning Jesus' life, it has remained for many Christians the profoundest of the Gospels from the standpoint of interpretive truth about that life. C. K. Barrett has called the unknown author of John's Gospel "perhaps the greatest theologian in all the history of the church".<sup>111a</sup> The First Letter of John likewise carries on this developed interpretation of Jesus.

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<sup>111a</sup> Quoted by Reginald H. Fuller in The New Testament in Current Study, Scribners, 1962, p. 109, from Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1955.

We now turn to a resume of the historical background  
and thought of these books.<sup>111b</sup>

The Fourth Gospel is a product of the third generation of Christians (c. 100-125). By this time an increasing problem was the reinterpretation of Christianity in order to meet the challenge of Hellenistic philosophy since Christianity was now largely Gentile. This is the background of the Fourth Gospel and the First Letter of John. The Gospel, and even more specifically the First Letter of John, were written to combat certain aspects of Hellenistic philosophy embodied in the Gnostic heresies. We shall refer again to the Gnostic problem in connection with the First Letter later in this chapter. Another problem the third generation faced was the organization of church life. This issue is reflected in such NT writings as II and III John (compare the Pastoral Letters: I and II Timothy and Titus on matters of church organization). We have seen how the main interest of the first generation of Christians (c. 30-65) was one of enthusiastic preaching of the Gospel -- that is, the Good News of Jesus and salvation. The main interest of the second generation (c. 65-100) was to preserve contact with the past by codifying the precious memories of Christ's life and teachings in the specific literary forms of the Synoptic Gospels.

JOHN'S GOSPEL IN COMPARISON WITH THE SYNOPTICS. We do not have to read far before noting differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptics. Recall that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are termed Synoptics because they give a common view of the life of Jesus. The Synoptics purport to be more like biographies -- realistic, objective, and, in a broad sense, historical. Recall again the intention of Luke as announced in Lk. 1:1-4: "...it seemed good ... to write an orderly account for you... that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed." John's intention is more dramatic. His Gospel is like a drama based on Jesus' life. It is highly reflective or interpretive, theological, doctrinal, and apologetic in its main thought form. Clement of Alexandria (150-213 A. D.) suggested that John supplemented the Synoptics with an allegorical interpretation of Christ.

In the following important passage John sums up his purpose in writing of Jesus: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:30-31). In spite of the over-all differences (outlined in greater detail below) we must not forget that John and the Synoptics are one in the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord. The main contrast between them might be said to be that the Synoptics present the extrovertive side of the Lord's nature -- his gracious deeds and his wonderful words -- while the Gospel of John gives us the mystical, introvertive side. The following outline suggests the main specific differences:

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<sup>111b</sup>For an excellent resume of recent Johannine scholarship, see R. H. Fuller, *Ib.* Chapter VII.

The Synoptics

1. Part of the aim of the Synoptics was to provide reliable information about Jesus' life and teachings, e. g. Lk. 1:1-4, plus explaining why he was a crucified Messiah (Mark).
2. Jesus' life begins on a human plane with a birth, Mtt and Lk.
3. Ministry centers in Galilee.
4. Theme of Jesus' teachings is the Kingdom of God: e. g. Mtt. 5-7, Lk 6:20-38. Evidence of development in his own understanding of his life and mission.
5. The form of Jesus' teachings are brief sayings and many times parables.
6. Jesus' performance of miracles conditioned by people's faith, were described as limited, and as corollaries of his moral message.

John's Gospel

1. The aim of John is to enable the reader to believe in Christ (20:31) and mystically participate in Christ and God.
2. Begins on a divine plane: <sup>X</sup>preexists with the Father.
3. Centers in Jerusalem.
4. The theme is Jesus' own life-giving divinity (Jh Chs 14-17). Proclaims himself as the way to eternal life. Depicted from the first as fully omniscient being: no development of his life.
5. Jesus' teachings are presented as lengthy discourses in John, and as allegories, 15:1f.
6. Uses miracles to induce faith -- miraculous element heightened.

PLACE OF ORIGIN AND DATE. Much ancient tradition places the origin of the book at Ephesus. This is possible, since that city on the west coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was an important center of the Hellenistic culture that has influenced the thought of the book to a considerable extent. Moreover there is some possible dependence of John upon the Synoptics. Given these considerations Scott says, "it can hardly have been written before the close of the first century, for the author shows acquaintance with the Gospel of Luke.... (It) most probably belongs to the first decade of the second century. All the peculiarities of its teaching are found, on closer examination to fit in with its origin about that time".<sup>112</sup> Who could be responsible for this partially Hellenistic, semi-philosophical, mystical Gospel?

AUTHORSHIP. What the Gospel itself says does not get us very far. It mentions one who bore "witness" (traditionally referred to as the Witness) to some of the events recorded in this Gospel's account of Jesus (see 19:35 and 21:24). Further the book in several places mentions a disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23, 25; 19:26, 27; 20:2; 21:7, 20), and identifies the Witness with this Beloved Disciple (21:20, 24). When we read these passages and especially 21:24 we get the impression that someone else is speaking or writing about the Beloved Disciple-Witness. The difference

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<sup>112</sup>

G. F. Scott, Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 235.

between the "we" and the "his" in v. 21:24 makes this clear. For this reason a person other than the Beloved Disciple-Witness has been postulated as the main author of the Gospel of John. He is referred to as the Evangelist. Some Biblical scholars feel that a third editor or Redactor, as he is called, must be postulated in order to account for certain aspects of the Gospel which do not seem to be the work of the Evangelist. For example, the Redactor may be responsible for adding chapter 21, since 20:31 seems to be a natural ending to the Gospel. (It is interesting to note that Chapter 21 verse 25 is omitted by the oldest Mss: Codex Sinaiticus.) Forgoing further details, the conclusion of many scholars is that this gospel, as we now have it, is a derivative or composite work coming down from earlier sources, with at least two people responsible for it and possibly three. Of these, the second, the Evangelist, seems to be most important. What now of this larger fact? Can we penetrate farther back in an effort to identify these hypothetical authors?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify these personalities. The close acquaintance of this gospel with the life of Jesus -- chiefly the geographic knowledge, the order and account of the events in the Passion, and other details -- suggests an early source, close to apostolic circles. Tradition says that John the Apostle is responsible for the book and is the Beloved Disciple-Witness to which it alludes. Some have speculated that Lazarus, who is a prominent personality in the Gospel, or even Joseph of Arimathea, may have been the Beloved Disciple-Witness. Scott says, "Most scholars would now admit that whoever wrote the book had access to some good sources of information; but... there is no ground for concluding that he was...the Apostle John".<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the marked difference between the more "realistic" account of Jesus' life as found in the Synoptics and John's Gospel casts doubt on the theory that John, or any other immediate disciple, wrote it. Would John the Apostle, one of the three friends most intimately acquainted with the life of Jesus, have left us an account which varies so markedly in thought and detail as a whole from that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? "Certainly," says Scott, "we can well conceive of John in his old age as pondering over the wonderful things he had witnessed and discerning in them, as he could not do at the time, a deep spiritual significance. But the light in which they are viewed is that of Hellenistic theology. Would John, to whom Paul refers in Galatians as one of the 'pillars' (Gal. 2:9) of Jewish Christianity, have turned in his old age to those foreign speculations? At the time of the council of Jerusalem, when he looked so doubtfully on Paul's teaching, he must have been a man considerably over forty, and the complete change in his whole mental attitude is difficult to conceive."<sup>114</sup>

The principal problem of authorship is to identify the Evangelist. The suggestion has been made that a John the Elder, who lived at Ephesus in the latter part of the first century may be the Evangelist. The connection is made by the similarity in thought and structure between the Gospel of John and the Letters of John, which some scholars believe are by the same man. Second and Third John specifically claim to be by this Elder (see II and III John 1:1). Just who the Elder was, however,

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<sup>113</sup>E. F. Scott, Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 242

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

is an indefinite matter. Macgregor concludes, "It appears to the Present Writer that the special characteristics of the Gospel are best explained by the supposition that the Evangelist, not himself an eyewitness of the historical Jesus (or possibly a witness only during his closing days), but rather one whose concern was to interpret to his own age the significance of Jesus in men's experience, had before him the written memoirs of an actual eye-witness, which he incorporated in his own work, leaving upon the whole the unmistakable stamp of his own individuality, yet retaining something of the vivid touch of the earlier narrative, whereby he adds life and vigour and colour to his own masterpiece. The material of the Gospel did not spring into being in a day. It passed through a formative period before it finally became crystalized, a single gem with many facets in the mind of that 'poet of strong powers of thought' who gave it to the world."<sup>115</sup> A previously cited authority concludes, "When all...has been taken into account two things appear to stand out as indubitable -- that the Gospel, in spite of minor inconsistencies, is a homogeneous work, and that it everywhere bears the stamp of the highest genius.... One thing is certain, that this unknown genius had penetrated in a marvelous manner into the inmost mind of Jesus."<sup>116</sup>

As our final point about the authorship of the Johannine Gospel, and indeed about many Biblical books, we should like to stress the wisdom of distinguishing between the problem of authorship on the one hand, and the value of the Gospel on the other. Again we turn to Macgregor for a wise distinction. "Have we not been apt to overestimate the importance of the question of our Gospel's authorship? Is the Gospel the less precious if John the son of Zebedee had no part in its composition? One recalls the oft-quoted words of Thiersch: 'If there were a great picture which tradition had affirmed to be painted by Raphael, and it was proved not to have been painted by Raphael, but by some otherwise unknown artist, the world would have not one great painting the less, but one great painter the more.' Whoever wrote it, the Fourth Gospel will always be the Holy of Holies of Christian literature. Whoever Witness, Evangelist, Redactor may have been, to all three the world owes its gratitude for the book which is, as Luther puts it, the 'chiefest of the Gospels, unique, tender and true!'"<sup>117</sup>

The purpose of Hohn's Gospel is stated by the author in 20:30-31. The Gospel is like a drama with a theological and moral message. An analysis of this verse brings to light a three-fold purpose: (1) The over-all dramatic form is suggested in the line: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written..." (2) The theological or doctrinal message is stated: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." In other words, John wants to explain why we may believe that Jesus was the Messiah, indeed how the Divine Personality was revealed in him as the Christ. (3) A mystical, religious, and moral effect follows for all who believe: "...and that believing you may have life in his name"

<sup>115</sup> G. H. C. Macgregor, The Gospel of John, Harper, Moffatt Commentary, xli.

<sup>116</sup> E. F. Scott, Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 245-6.

<sup>117</sup> G. H. C. Macgregor, The Gospel of John, op. cit. p. lxvii-lxviii.

that is, receive and share "eternal life" with him and become "one" with God (see 10:10 and 15:1-7) and thereby express, even as disciples, the same kind of divine life exemplified in Christ.

The structure of the book in the light of this purpose. We may outline the Johannine dramatic form in the following way: Act One (chs. 1-6); Jesus appears. Men begin to take sides, for and against him. His followers are the followers of light; his enemies, of darkness. Act Two (chs. 7-12): the children of darkness become ever more hostile and finally reject him. His own people advance to a stronger faith. Act Three (chs. 13-20): both love and hatred reach their climax. The hostile world crucifies him. He rises triumphantly the third day. This dramatic form is a kind of scaffolding for the development of John's theological and doctrinal themes. The main implied issue for the author is, What proof do we have that Jesus was the Son of God? John brings to the answer of this question several types of evidence. First, in the narrative portions of the book we have the evidence of the testimony of persons: for example, the Witness (above); John the Baptist (1:6, 7, 15) and the witness of other dramatis personae. Second, there is the evidence of Jesus' mighty signs (2:11). Third, there is the evidence of prophecies fulfilled (7:38; 12:38). Fourth, in the long discourses or theological portions of the book we have the intellectual and moral witness -- the witness of the reader's own experience concerning the truth about the religious and moral life as expressed in Christ (1:9; 3:16-21; chs. 14, 15). In other words, the life of Jesus, expressing the highest that Christians know morally, has the effect of expressing perfectly the Will of God, and they themselves can test this in their own experience. In any case, such a way to put the theme may indicate the profoundest aspect of John's Gospel and furnish the clue to its timeless appeal. Christians have traditionally believed that it reveals the deepest truth about Jesus as the Christ, in his resurrected or universal presence as spiritual reality affecting transformation in the believer's own life, John 5:24, 11:25-26. Along with Paul, the author of the Fourth Gospel understood his Lord's significance in a vital, mystic, and life transforming way.

SUMMARY OF THE TEACHING: (1) Christ as the logos. In the quasi-philosophic language of Jewish Hellenistic circles, the Prologue of the Gospel explains

that Christ is the Divine logos. Logos is the Greek term translated into English as "Word" (1:1). In ancient philosophy the divine logos or word represented the spirit of God in its creative contact with the world. In John's prologue, Christ is identified with God's spirit as creator of the world in the highest cosmic sense, and in the body of the Gospel as the intimate creator of life in the sense of life's moral renewer and savior -- the giver of eternal life. It has been aptly said that "logos is used by John as a name of Christ, the Word of God, i. e., the expression or manifestation of his thoughts to man".<sup>118</sup> Perhaps in its largest sense, then, logos identified Christ with the Divine Reason or truth that created the world. What could this have meant to John's generation in practical terms? We suggest that it meant that in Christ highest moral reason

<sup>118</sup> George Ricker Berry, Greek-English New Testament Lexicon, p. 60, in The Interlinear Greek New Testament, Hinds and Nobles, New York, 1897.

or intelligence is found. His type of life, if universally appropriated or received, is the kind that will make for harmony and good will among men. It is thus supremely "reasonable" because supremely effective if put into practice. In sum, Christ's life is thought to be a revelation of the Eternal Moral Mind behind our world and to express the personal power of that mind to enter all life directly and change it. We may believe that it is something like this which John wished mainly to say in his Gospel, and prompted him to refer to Jesus as the Divine logos, "full of grace and truth", 1:14.<sup>119</sup>

(2) Christ as Truth. An expression, alternative to Christ as the Divine logos, or Word, or Reason, is Christ as the Truth. Truth (aletheia) is referred to many times in this gospel. The word suggests moral enlightenment. By sharing in Christ's life, one shares in the truth, in the Divine Life (see especially chs. 13-17). These chapters emphasize that in doing the things Christ said and following in the way he walked, his followers come to know the truth and share in it. In so doing they come to know and experience God. Indeed this expresses "religious experience" for many Christians in one of its most meaningful aspects. In the possibility of sharing moral truth John teaches that all men can express the same kind of life and thought, at least to a degree, that Christ expressed supremely. This for him seems to be the practical way to understand the Christian conception of union with Christ. The union is conceived in terms of one of the commonest facts of life: that many minds can share and express the same truth.

Let us analyze the term truth a bit further in connection with Johannine thought. First in experience there is sentient truth -- color, sound, and all the qualities that compose the practical world. Then, there is scientific truth or the understanding of relationships in the physical world at a level deeper than the immediacy of sense and quality. Finally there is moral truth. Truth, in its moral meaning, is knowledge of the fact that the universe supports a personal and social order. By personal and social order we mean the awareness of oneself as the immediate example of "personal"; and one's awareness of the relationships between himself and others that will make for their mutual well-being and harmony. Knowledge, of course, is ultimately tested by "experience", and truth on its highest moral plane is a felt relationship between personal beings. It represents not only abstract relationships in thought, but personal relationships in life. Truth is not only something that we see with intellectual assent (the stress of the Greek side), but something which commissions our total will and life (the stress of the Hebrew-Christian side). Truth is moral fullness. The Gospel of John stresses this full aspect of truth when it speaks of Jesus "the Way and Truth and Life" (14:6). The truth of Christ is the love relationship set up between those in whom his personal spirit dwells. In profound way John, and after him Augustine and other Christian Fathers, and theologians of our own times, have employed the term truth as a symbol of the creative power and presence of God in life. This Hebraic-Christian, personalistic conception of truth was expressed poetically, mystically, and powerfully by St. Augustine in the words: "Behold and see, if thou canst, O soul...God is truth... in such a way as the heart sees, when it is said, He is truth. Ask not what is truth; for immediately

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Logos is identified with various meanings and is variously translated in the New Testament; among these we find, "truth", John 17:17 (see Mark 8:38) and "reason", Acts 18:14.

the darkness of corporeal images...will put themselves in the way, and will disturb that calm which at the first twinkling shone forth to thee, when I said truth. See that thou remainest, if thou canst, in that first twinkling with which thou art dazzled, as it were, by a flash, when it is said to thee Truth".<sup>120</sup>

(3) God as Love. The central aspect of the philosophy of union with God through the moral truth about life that Christ reveals is love. The Hebrew-Christian idea of love defines what is meant by "moral truth". In the thought of John it is God's love which sends Christ into the world to teach and thus save the world (3:16, 17; 13:12-15; 14:20, 21; 15:9-17; 17: 20-26). The word for love usually used in the Greek NT is agape. Agape love is the divine love that goes and serves. There are other meanings to the English word love, such as desire, the love that seeks satisfaction of one's physical or aesthetic appetites, as we may say, one "loves" music. Love in the NT sense, however, is on the higher moral plane. It is summed up in the idea of out-going or unselfish service rather than the seeking or longing for something entirely for self-satisfaction. This latter kind of love we have referred to the Greek expression eros. Recall our earlier discussion of these themes in the teachings of Jesus.

(4) Eternal Life. The thought of the Gospel culminates in this concept. The reason Christ has come into the world as an expression of the divine purpose, is to give eternal life to men (3:16; 5:24). Eternal life is a quality of Christ-like personlaity. The Gospel declares that there is nothing more powerful, creative ef harmony among persons, that is, "eternal" in its truth and effectiveness, than the love which Christ teaches and morally commissions. Personality, when charged by and expressing this love, is the energy that is most real and creative in the universe. It is one with the energy of God and accordingly is self-disclosed as "eternal" in quality. Eternal life in John's Gospel is not a state which one strives after or attains, but rather it is the energy one finds already there and welling up when the love union with Christ is realized. In any case, the eternal quality of life in Christ is the principal message of this Gospel (14:2).

Salvation in the Fourth Gospel is not entirely individualistic. John 3:16 is often quoted, while 3:17 and 12:47 are overlooked: "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (3:17). Thus, in addition to an individualistic and transcendental motif, we have intimated in this gospel an historical motif regarding salvation. References to the world that Christ has come to save are significant (3:17; 6:33, 51; 10:11, 15; 12:47; 17:18, 21), as are allusions to the origin of the historical Christian movement in the church (15:16; 17:18; 20:21; 21:11-18). In this gospel the purpose of God in saving individuals and bestowing upon them eternal life is not so that individuals may escape from their duties in the world. But rather their duties are to go out and evangelize the world, letting their quality of life be a blessing in the world as they try to win it to the Christ and his Way. By coming into the world the Divine Personality has set the example in Christ himself (10:11.15). Here Jesus warns that the task is

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<sup>120</sup> On the Trinity, VIII, 2.

difficult, and that in so far as the world at large may not heed the message, it is judged (1:5; 3:19; 12:35).

Such then are the larger philosophic themes of John's Gospel.<sup>120a</sup> There is also the central doctrinal phase of his message, which should not be overlooked while we review the contents of his book. It is perhaps summed up in the often quoted words which John reports of Jesus. "No one comes to the Father, but by ~~me~~ through me" (14:6). The imperativeness of telling the Christian story in that early day, as even now for Christians, is expressed by these words in the sense that no one can really find life's fulfillment if that quality of spirit and love that possessed Christ does not truly abide with him. Again recall our previous discussion on page        where we presented the narrower and the broader interpretation of these words.

Finally, we should mention such other figures of speech as the bread, the vine, and the door. John employs these in order to stress the mystical union with Christ. These, however, along with Jesus' constant reference to himself as the only way, have as their background the conception of union through the oneness of moral life. Johannine mysticism is personalistic and ethical. In sum, individuals are saved for eternal life. If, however, the chief appeal is for individual salvation in the Gospel, the practical issue is that Christ's love, made effective in the lives of his followers, is the sure way to *social* human harmony while we remain here.

FIRST LETTER OF JOHN. A further problem of the third generation of Christians was how to deal with a growing heresy? The First Letter

<sup>120a</sup> When, of course, we refer to the "philosophic themes" of John's Gospel we do not mean that he was an abstract or academic philosopher in the sense that Plato was. The Johannine author was an "evangelist", as were the other gospel authors, and St. Paul, interested primarily in presenting his version of the kerygma, or the good news of salvation as found in Christ. Perhaps, as some recent commentators believe, he does this with Hellenistic and/or oriental Gnosticisms more in mind than Platonic or Stoic rationalism.

Nevertheless, whether in some respects Platonic, Stoic, or "Gnostic" in background, the Johannine author indeed "rationalized" Christianity in the simplest true-to-life, or religious terms possible, in his love theology. Whatever else, it may have been, and from whatever other obscure sources his thought may have sprung, that theology was fundamentally Hebraic. Eversince his writing, the Christian ages have found profoundest psychological and philosophic power in his words. They have interpreted them to be sure in ways most meaningful to themselves in their own thought patterns and circumstances. It is in this spirit of philosophic freedom (exercised indeed by John himself) that the above discussion attempts to review the Johannine material meaningfully for the modern student.

of John is a reply to that phase of the Gnostic heresies known as Docetism, which taught that Christ had not come with a human body but was simply a ghostly apparition who had appeared on earth (I Jn. 1:1-5; 2:22; 4:2b; and II Jn. 7). The philosophic dualism behind such teaching was that only "spirit" is good, while all physical "matter" or reality is evil. Thus Christ could not have had a physical body according to this way of evaluating the world. The Gnostic heresies were in full swing about the year 100, and, although they varied in the details of their teachings, such dualistic philosophy was a common point of view among them.

If the rise of the Gnostic controversy is a clue, the general date of the First Letter is the same as that of the Gospel, about 100-125. If, however, I Jn. 1:1-5 means that a literal eye-witness to the events in the Lord's life is speaking or writing, this would make the author very old or force an earlier date for the writing. Consequently the literal interpretation of 1:1-5 presents itself in connection with the question of date and authorship.

**AUTHOR.** Actually the author is unknown, unless he be the Elder named in II and III John, who we have suggested may be the possible "Evangelist" and author of John's Gospel. No name is designated in I John. In style and thought, however, the three Letters of John are closely related in themselves and to the Fourth Gospel. It is widely accepted that these writings have a common source. Is this source an eye-witness to the Lord's life as the words of I Jn. 1:1-5 upon first reading may suggest?

Easton says, "Much the most natural interpretation of I Jn. 1:1-3 is to understand him as claiming membership in the authoritative band of eye-witnesses of Jesus' earthly life."<sup>121</sup> Modern scholars are divided, however, over the nature of the "witnessing" or "testifying" reported in this striking introduction to I John. In addition to the literal interpretation, some investigators point out that the expression "which we have looked upon and touched with our hands..." (1:1) could have a figurative meaning. It may indicate either a strongly mystical, supersensuous type of "seeing" such as may accompany certain forms of religious experience, or have simply a rhetorical meaning to the effect that the author wishes to announce his allegiance to the Christian cause in as graphic a way as possible. Even so ancient an authority as Origen (third century) said, "No one is so foolish as not to see that the word hands is taken figuratively, as when John says, Our hands have handled"<sup>122</sup> In another place the author of I John himself suggests that his witnessing is of this more general character -- a type of testimony which can be common to all believers in all ages,

"He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (I Jn. 5:10). The author of the First Letter of John wishes his message to have universal scope and force. Whoever he was, and whether he himself was an actual eye-witness or not, he is saying in effect that all men can be witnesses to the new life in Christ: "He who has the Son has life" (I Jn. 5:12).

<sup>121</sup> Burton Scott Easton, Abingdon Commentary, op. cit. p. 1352

<sup>122</sup> Quoted by James Moffatt, An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament, Scribners 1929, p. 595.

The First Epistle of John carries us to the peak of New Testament thought on its interpretive side. The main theme of the letter centers in the question, What is eternal life, and how can we be sure of it (I Jn. 5:13)? Beyond the doctrinal undercurrent about requirement of belief in Jesus as the Christ come from God, John sets forth his theme in the very broadest terms.

1. As all life needs an environment, so eternal life has its environment. According to John, Divine Love is such an environment -- it is like a light in which we are to live and move and have our being: "This is the message...God is light and in him is no darkness at all...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1:5, 7). See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are (3:1). God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (4:16).

2. After the description of the environment into which life is born and is nourished the generation and character of such life is next described. Thus eternal life commences as a begetting, just as physical life begins. In 3:9-10, it is said: "No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God. By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother."

The practical sign of those who are begotten of God and share divine, and thus eternal life, is a life of loving activity in fulfillment of the commandments of Christ: "And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure...."

.... We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love remains in death.... Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth.... All who keep his commandments abide in him and he in them (3:3, 9-11, 14, 18, 19, 24). The following verses bring out even more strongly that those who "acknowledge" Christ (4:15) and love God are those who do Christ's commands: "And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (4:21). "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (5:1-3). "And this is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love" (II Jn. 6). The nature of this love is unselfish -- it is agape. When love is unselfish or outgoing it "is perfected in us" -- the self is truly realized (4:12, see vv. 17, 18). God as manifested in Christ is himself the great example of how our love ought to be out-going: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.... We love, because he first loved us" (4:7, 11, 19).

3. The necessity of a religious basis for ethics is affirmed in 5:2: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments". Knowing and loving God is the incentive behind the love of neighbors. The idea is that ethics must have its cosmic reference and sanction in a personal God whose nature is outgoing love. Practically speaking, the teaching of the book is: if love is to be effective in persuading men to live according to it, rather than to some lesser standard, love must be regarded as cosmic, that is as the ultimate law or energy which first creates and then harmonizes this world of personal being. Men cannot violate the law of gravity; if a man willfully steps off a high place he will break his neck. No more can he violate the universal law of love which governs life. Or stated positively, if we cooperate with nature's laws we live; likewise, if we cooperate with the Spirit's law of love we live on the highest plane of spiritual and personal well-being. In this sense love has the character and force of a cosmic principle, of the "will of God" (2:17). The law of love was in supreme command of the life of Christ. Therefore, in so far as Christians share its power with him, they believe that in a sense, they "possess" and have the Christ. He is not just example in a sentimental or figurative sense. But the same power and secret of life can be really theirs too, for its common source is God (2:24; 3:5; 4:12, 13). Christianity is not only "ethics", but it is mystical religion; its ethics are given life and power by the Divine energy. Perhaps the verses that best summarize the thought of John at this height are these: "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.... And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life. I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.... And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." (5:9, 11, 12, 13, 20).

The union of man with God through Christ in love has been called Christianity's ethical mysticism. No doubt the author was more of a "mystic" than the average man, and what he means by the felt union of God's presence under the inspiration of the life of Christ may have been something more real to him than is given to the average believer. But the possession of the mystic is only an exalted degree of what is common in such simple experiences as having and cherishing a friend in a feeling of oneness, seeing and possessing the same truth together as some new fact or purpose inspires two lives in a joint endeavor, or knowing and being possessed commonly by beauty.

4. The final teaching of I John concerns the power of the new life in God's love. It is the power to be "victorious over the world" (5:4, 18). He insists on the great vista and perspective of eternity, for a common place fact is that the glory of this life here on earth is "passing" (2:15-17). We do indeed overcome or rise above the world in a life of personal beauty and calm -- but more truly by laying down our lives "for our Brothers" (3:16). Our supreme inspiration is that God himself through Christ has come into the world to do this (4:9). After all the purpose and power of outgoing love is to take an evil situation and transform it for the better. The message of the First Letter may be concluded in the little verse: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (4:18).

*a sermon  
here?*

To complete our study of the Johannine literature we mention the historic significance of II and III John. These two letters reflect the need for a local and official ministry at the beginning of the second century in contrast to the earlier system of church "government" by itinerant missionaries. In the Second Letter the Elder appeals to a church against certain wandering teachers; in the Third Letter he supports such teachers who were his own colleagues. Thus in these two letters we can trace the beginnings of the church's sense of need for an official organization. Scott concludes,

"We can plainly see, as we thus compare the two documents, that the old system had become unworkable. It was necessary for the church to organize itself afresh, on the basis of a local and official ministry."<sup>123</sup>

The modest content of these books suggest that the early church preserved them because they were regarded as the work of some honored teacher. Since II and III John contain many expressions that we find in the Fourth Gospel and I John, Biblical scholarship has frequently assigned these writings to the authorship of the Gospel and the First Letter.

THE FINAL VICTORY OF GOOD OVER EVIL:  
REVELATION -- NEW TESTAMENT APOCALYPTIC

Scott says of Revelation, "Instead of being the most mysterious of New Testament books, it is, in fact, the simplest; for it does not move, like the Gospels and Epistles, in regions of profound religious thought, and any secrets it contains are mainly of the nature of historical puzzles".<sup>125</sup> We approach this book reverently and intelligently. It contains much moral and spiritual truth about life, and is inspiring when understood in its true historical setting. The problem is to get at the true purpose of the author in writing it. But before we endeavor to discover what its true purpose and significance is, let us mention the various types of interpretation to which the Book of Revelation had been subjected in the past.

**TYPES OF INTERPRETATION:** First, there has been the secret-writing view. Revelation has been thought to be a magical book of occult knowledge, with which it might be better not to meddle. For instance, there are its mystic symbols: bowls, beasts, seals, candle sticks, etc. There are cryptic numbers: 666, 144, 000, etc. What do such things mean? If it is such an entirely mysterious book, whose essential meaning remains hidden, it by no means stands alone in this category. There are many apocalyptic writings such as Daniel, Enoch, and others which we have discussed in this study. Granted the difficulty of Revelation's style, if we accept such a secret-writing view, we give up our attempt to understand apocalyptic writings.

Second, there is the allegorical view. Allegory is "the veiled presentation, in a figurative story, of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated." Ancient church fathers such as Origin, Augustine, and others interpreted the book in this form. For example, each vision, or cryptic allusion, was thought to be a symbol of some profounder aspect of religious faith; for example, the white horse which descends from heaven (19:11ff) has been said to represent "the pure light of knowledge which reveals heaven to believers".<sup>126</sup> Such interpretations may be edifying; but of course there is no end to the possible allegorical meanings which man has derived from the book, and anybody is free to devise his own allegorical meaning. Allegorizing carries us farther and farther away from the original meaning of the author. Beneath the imagery, and aside from the allegory, this book seems to be about actual events in a real history. We shall see more fully how these events are worked into an imaginative description of the end of the world, thought by the author to be near at hand.

This brings up the third, most controversial attitude toward the Book of Revelation. For want of a better name we may call this the predictive view -- a viewpoint which many people nowadays, and down through the ages, have accepted. In this conception Revelation

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<sup>125</sup>E. F. Scott, Literature of the New Testament, op. cit. p. 276.

<sup>126</sup>F. Bertram Clogg: Abingdon Commentary, op. cit. p. 1364.

is an exact prediction of the major events and catastrophies of history (including those of our modern period) which have occurred or will happen. Particularly, it is believed, if the information in the book is rightly read, we find that the main intention of the author is to explain to future generations just how and when the end of the world is to come. In our own day many Fundamentalist groups have pressed this interpretation of Revelation.<sup>127</sup>

We may doubt that such a view of Revelation represents the true meaning of the book, simply because its proponents differ so widely as to which allusion fits which event of our western history. For instance, "the beast" or Anti-christ has been identified in the course of Christian history with the followers of Mohammad, with the Papacy, with the Kaiser, and with Hitler. Which identification are we to accept? Upon whose authority? If Revelation is an exact disclosure of future events, as this predictive school holds, it would require another such revelation to each present-day interpreter to divine the correct meaning! We may appropriately ask, therefore, whether Revelation is a diagram of future history in any such detailed sense, a specific message to any specific age other than the one in which it was written? It does indeed express broad truths about life and history, which can be applied to all ages, and all generations of men in their struggle with evil. We will see below in what sense it does refer to the future. The predictive view, however, if correct, would make human history a mechanical unfolding of a predetermined divine plan. Yet elsewhere in the Bible it is taught that man is a free, spiritual creature, responsible in large part for his own deeds and destiny. Indeed, the predictive view of Revelation would contradict the essential teaching of the third chapter of Genesis, on the freedom of man, or the teaching of Jesus in the incident of the rich young ruler who was left to decide for himself whether he would follow the Master or not. Let us now proceed to the view which many contemporary scholars hold.

The fourth possibility, we may term the historical interpretation. That is to say, the Book of Revelation was written primarily for its own times. Indeed, the book itself tells us that this is the correct view of it as a writing. The future, or end of the world of which it speaks, is regarded in the book itself as near, as at hand to the time the author writes. See, for example, 1:1b, 3b; 22:10; 12, 20. In one sense the book is a letter; the author writes to seven churches of his day, at Ephesus and other places. We know that the Apostle Paul helped to establish some of these churches. In sum, the author says that the prophecies contained in the book are coming to pass "soon", and he bids his own generation to "listen". The message is to them: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (3:22). "...Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." (22:10). But before we examine what the message is, we shall speak of authorship.

AUTHORSHIP. Tradition says that John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, is the writer of Revelation. Much modern scholarship believes that tradition is in error at this point. For one thing, could the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John, writings so different in

<sup>127</sup>For example, see Pittingill, Simple Studies in Revelation, for the predictive or dispensational interpretation.

purpose and style from Revelation, be by the same author? There is a very early tradition that Revelation and the Fourth Gospel are not by the same author. Dionysius of Alexandria about the middle of the third century held this view. If we accept the Apostolic authorship of Revelation we are confronted with the difficulty that the John of this book never calls himself the Apostle, but rather refers to himself as "a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets" (22:9). In this connection, it is interesting to note that Paul refers to a prophet, among early Christians, as a personage of inferior position to that of an Apostle (I Cor. 12:28). More telling than this, John of Revelation speaks of the Apostles of the Lamb (that is, of Christ) in the third person (Rev. 21:14). This would suggest that he himself was not an Apostle. We can confidently say that he was neither John the Apostle, nor John the author of the Fourth Gospel. We may safely say his name was John, that he seems to have had a position of respect or authority among the Asian churches, and that he was an exile during a time of persecution. A Jew in background, he was a literary and religious genius, inspired truly with a vision of the ultimate victory of good over evil under divine forces at work in history. Revelation has the following outline:

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|---|------------|
| 1. Preliminary letters  | chs. 1-3   |
| 2. Messianic woes   | chs. 4-10  |
| 3. Appearance of the beast or anti-christ                     | chs. 12-14 |
| 4. Anti-christ brings another series of woes                  | chs. 15-18 |
| 5. Anti-christ and Satan made captive and brought to judgment | chs. 19-20 |
| 6. The new heaven and the new earth                           | chs. 21-22 |

**HISTORICAL SETTING.** What was the occasion and the purpose of this book? To comprehend its message we must recognize that its predictions agree with events that were occurring in the church, or in the Roman Empire, at the closing period of the first century. Note in this connection Revelation 6:9-11:

"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been."

By this passage we are led to believe that at the time the author wrote some dire persecution of the Christians was still going on. People are being killed for their faith. The time sense is now, that is, as he writes. Thus Revelation is, like Daniel, a tract of the times calling for fortitude of believers under persecution.

It runs true to its basic nature as apocalyptic writing, i.e., a work appearing at a great crisis and "time of troubles" when the very existence of the religious movement it supports (Christianity) is threatened by hostile forces. Specifically, the book was called forth by the crisis of Caesar-worship, which was beginning to be enforced on the church in Asia Minor. We pause to consider the problem of emperor worship, and the refusal of Christians to comply, as the cause of the persecution alluded to, and the main reason why the book was written.

At the close of the first century B.C. Julius and Augustus Caesars had permitted emperor worship to be instituted as a political

expediency. It applied more to the provinces than to Rome. Such worship was mild in form, being chiefly a kind of reverence or respect paid to the symbol of the emperor. A ceremony focused in the office of the emperor, was needed, it was thought, to take the place of the old state religion of Rome (that of Numa) in order to call attention to the new imperial venture and weld the polygot culture of the empire more firmly together. The emperor Caligula (37-41) set up an imperial statue in the Holy place of the Temple at Jerusalem, to which the Jews were supposed to make obeisance. It may be that the reference to "the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be" of Mk. 13:14 and Mt. 24:15 is the Biblical allusion to this act of Caligula's. (Recall also a similar situation at an earlier day, Dan. 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. Mk. ch. 13 is often called the "little apocalypse" of the Gospels.) Nero (64-68) experimented further with the enforcement of emperor worship, but it was not until the reign of Vespasian (69-79) that this new cult began to be enforced rigidly. This emperor ordered his magistrates to treat the Christians as criminals, if they refused to pay homage to the symbol of the emperor at designated shrines. The policy was continued under Domitian (81-96), during whose reign an empire-wide persecution of Christians took place, which reached its height in the year 95. This date is thought by most commentators to be the date of the Book of Revelation. There is some possibility, however, that it may have been written during Nero's persecution in Rome about 64, when, according to one tradition, the Apostle Paul was beheaded.

Why was the advent of emperor worship such a terrible crisis for the early church? In accordance with its general policy of toleration for all religions, the empire at an earlier date had permitted Christianity to exist along with numerous other cults without persecution. Paul had found the Roman power friendly and even praised it (Romans, ch. 13). Furthermore, the early Christians, by the simple expedient of remaining aloof as much as possible from pagan society, had stayed uncontaminated from it and succeeded for the most part in not being molested by the authorities. For example, they had refused to buy meat in the public markets which had been offered in connection with slaughtering rites to the idols of other religions (I Cor, ch. 8). With, however, such tactics of avoidance, they could not circumvent the universal duty of emperor worship. On the one side the state cult was an empire-wide movement, and on the other Christianity was rapidly becoming such too. The two forces met head on. This was the first great clash of the Christian church with the power of the state -- the spirit of love and humanity versus totalitarianism and brutality. Nothing could be more abominable or blasphemous to Christians, with their heritage of Hebrew monotheism, than to be made to worship a human being. This to them would be the worst kind of idolatry. Because the Christians had been cut off from the Jewish community and appeared as a separate movement they lost the immunity accorded the Jews in these matters.

We find, therefore, that the author of the apocalypse of the New Testament employs the same kind of figures of speech as the Book of Daniel in order to refer to the power of the state and its diabolical practices, without openly and directly mentioning it. Recall that a main technique of apocalyptic writing was to speak in an esoteric idiom or code intelligible only to the underground movement to which it was addressed. By this device it could avoid arousing the suspicions of the contemporary Gestapo. Thus John of Revelation calls the state-power a "beast", and seems to identify it finally with a specific ruler or emperor whom he plainly calls "a certain man" (13:18 Smith-Goodspeed

translation). That emperor worship is the specific background of the persecution mentioned in Revelation as brought out clearly in chapter 13, the crucial chapter of the book so far as understanding its history is concerned. The dramatis personae and other details of this chapter seem to fit the situation in the Roman Empire during one of the great persecutions. Moreover, it gives us a clue to the "beast". The "beast" is a Roman emperor of one of these times of oppression. Read particularly 13:1-4 and 13:11-18.

MESSAGE. Knowing what we now know about emperor worship and Roman persecution of the Christians, let us try to reconstruct the actual situation and clarify the meaning of the author. It is difficult, however, to understand the message until we have identified the dramatis personae of chapter 13. The following represents tentative identification of important allusions in this chapter.

<u>Allusions in Revelation Ch. 13</u>	<u>Interpreted meaning conforming to events in the empire of the first century</u>
"The dragon" (v. 2)	"Satan", as 12:9 tells us.
The first "beast" (v. 1)	The "imperial rule" or Roman Empire as such, which is the instrument of Satan (v. 2). (See Dan. 7:23 where "beast" in apocalyptic writing is identified as "kingdom".)
The "seven heads" (v. 1)	Various wicked emperors such as Nero, Domitian, etc. (?)
The "ten horns" (v. 1)	May refer to local, provincial rulers or governors (see Dan. 7:24 where the key is given that "horns" are "kings" and Rev. 17:12).
The second "beast" (v. 11)	The imperial priesthood (?) with its local inquisitorial police powers — particularly active in Asia Minor where emperor worship was emphasized.

In vv. 17 and 18 the first beast seems to be identified as a specific "man" whose code number for first century readers of Revelation was "666" (some MSS give "616"). We attempt to identify this person below.

Allusions which make it fairly certain that the author is speaking of emperor worship are:

Mention of "worship of the first beast" (v. 12) and death for those who fail to comply (v. 15).	
Reference to "a statue to the beast"	Statues were often erected to the Caesars in the temples. For example, to Augustus in the temple at Pergamum, where one of the churches to which Revelation was addressed was situated.
Reference to "fire" falling from heaven (v. 13) and to the statue speaking (v. 15)	Pagan priests were famous for using slight-of-hand magic, fire, and ventriloquism in conducting idol worship for credulous folk.
Reference to the "mark" on the "forehead" and "hands" (v. 16) and	The economic boycott of people who fail to support the government is a common-

that people could not buy or sell unless they had conformed to the worship of the beast.

place practice of tyranny. You may see a parallel in Hitler's Germany where the right to work often depended on whether you were a Nazi -- and held the party card, the "mark."

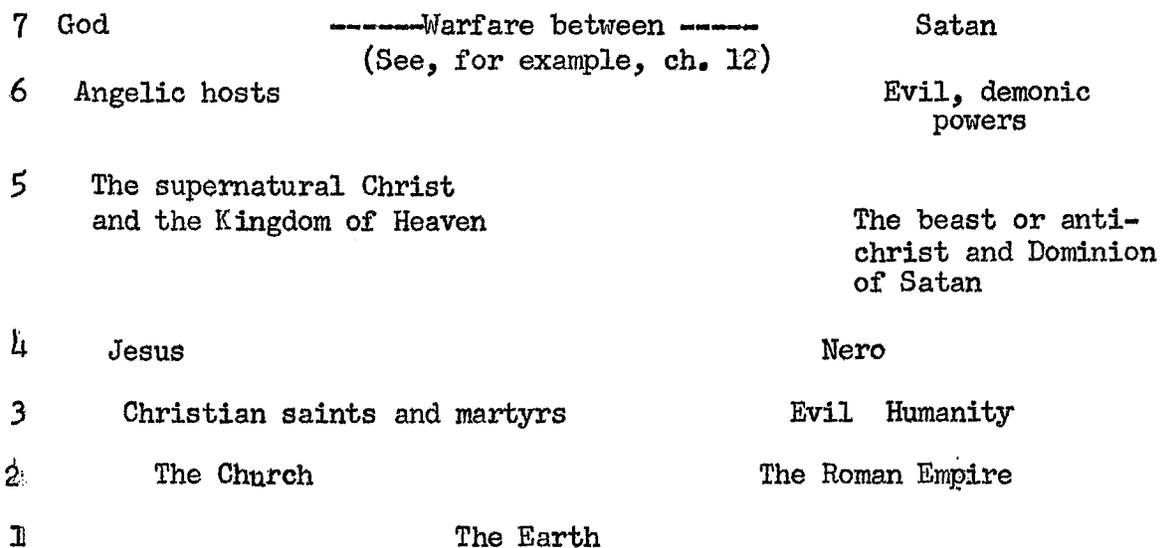
Who is the man with the number 666? Most scholars agree that it probably refers to Nero Caesar. How do they derive this? The ancient practice of secret writing by number was called gematria. It was especially prominent among the Jews. Certain numbers were assigned to the letters of the alphabet. Of course, those acquainted with the scheme would know what the message or person was which was spelled out by number. Actually such a name-number represented the addition or sum of the numbers assigned to the letters of the name. The Bible text itself makes clear that this is an example of the ancient practice of gematria and means some person contemporary to John. It specifically says, "Let everyone of intelligence (that is everyone who knows the riddle or code) calculate the animal's number, for it indicates a certain man; its number is 666" (13:18 Smith-Goodspeed translation) This direction to the readers of Revelation is in the present tense. Much the most natural interpretation, therefore, is that the author wanted to direct their attention to someone of their own day and age -- not to somebody in the remote future. Ancient cryptograms, in which letters of the Hebrew or Greek or Latin alphabet are given numerical equivalents have provided the clue whereby some scholars have decided that 666 refers to Nero. ("Nero Caesar", in Latin, seems to be equivalent to 616, the number found in some MSS. "Neron Caesar", in Greek, to the 666 of our translation.) Clogg explains, "The word 'Caesar' had to be written defectively in Hebrew to make the total correct, but this is not without parallel."<sup>128</sup> Why, now, is the reference to Nero?

Apparently, to the author of Revelation Nero was the embodiment of all the evil that Christianity had to face. Not to mention his despicable character, the first great persecution had occurred under him (A.D. 64). Now, throughout the book, the beast is represented as a supernatural, demonic person. There was an ancient legend that Nero had not killed himself (as was the actual fact), but that he had fled from Rome and was waiting his time to return with an avenging army. This may be paralleled in our own day by the popular speculation -- at least until a few years ago -- about Hitler's still being alive. Several years ago a large picture of Hitler appeared on the front of a German periodical. The issue was instantly sold out. The people were still wondering what had happened to the Fuhrer. To return to our analysis of the New Testament Apocalypse, the central thought of John may be summarized: the beast, as the emissary of Satan, is to be let loose upon the world in some final reign of terror. It may not be the actual Nero of history, which the author has in mind, but a "supernatural Nero," the resuscitated spirit of the actual man come back from Hell, with Satanic power, to torment the world. Could the beast of this chapter of Revelation refer to what other Christians meant by Antichrist (see I John 2:18)?

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<sup>128</sup>Abingdon Commentary, op. cit. p. 1388. (See Charles, R. J., International Critical Commentary, Revelation, p. 365 ff. for a detailed illustration of the derivation of 666 as Nero.)

Now, what do we mean when we say that John of Revelation has the events of his own day in mind? According to the broader scope of the book, contemporary events afford only a suggestive starting place for the author's vision. These first century happenings within the Roman empire suggest a greater drama about to be enacted between Heaven and Hell, between opposing supernatural powers of Good and Evil. Revelation is not just an allegory of actual events, but a real pre-vision to the author of supernatural occurrences to take place. This larger warfare, however, between Heaven and Hell is, in his prediction, about to begin within his own, or soon after, his lifetime. We may thus diagram in a panoramic way the full sweep of the author's thought by representing the various ideas and personages in hierarchical order in a scheme of cosmic conflict for possession of the earth. Here we recall the Zoroastrian motif.



The thought of Revelation starts with historic levels (1, 2, 3, and 4) and rises to supernatural heights (5, 6, and 7) where the drama largely takes place. The final warfare between God and Satan is about to occur. In what sense is the Book of Revelation a message to future ages?

PERMANENT SIGNIFICANCE. For one thing, this book contains some of the most magnificent imagery in the Bible -- see for example chs. 1, 20, 21. But apart from its literary interest, what of its teaching? In over-all view, it represents in stirring form the eternal warfare of good with evil, truth with falsehood, the spirit of justice, love, and brotherhood with human unrighteousness, and particularly in the form of political tyranny. John of Revelation thinks of Hell as a literal place. His identification of the power of the state with Satanic power is not such a far-fetched conception from one point of view, when we think of our modern totalitarianisms. Their concentration camps with their torture chambers are examples of the literal hells which they would make of the earth. With such forces of evil the forces of love and humanity must be in conflict. As to the personification of the evil of that age in the figure of the beast, Scott says, "There was truth in these old interpretations in so far as the wickedness of an age is wont to typify itself in some one supreme criminal."<sup>129</sup>

<sup>129</sup>E. F. Scott, The Book of Revelation, N. Y. Scribner's, 1944, p. 82.

And again Scott trenchantly spoke of the contemporary significance of Revelation, when the outcome of the struggle with the Nazi evil was still in some doubt: "The author wrote for his own time, but he had laid hold of principles which would be always valid. He so understood the conflict of his own day as to throw light on one that would repeat itself, age after age. In a real sense, every generation has been justified in taking this symbolic book as applying directly to itself...."

"At the present day, more clearly perhaps than ever before, we can read the message of John as if it were spoken directly to ourselves. By one of those strange reversions which sometimes come about in history, the situation for which the book was written has repeated itself almost to the letter. It was taken for granted, not so many years ago, that this was quite impossible. For most of the evils condemned in the New Testament we could still find modern counterparts, but those which meet us in Revelation seem to have been definitely overcome. There could never again be a time when Christianity would be persecuted, when the State would declare itself the highest good, when human beings would lay claim to divine honours, when the very existence of a moral order would be denied. It was in view of such conditions that Revelation was written; and it was therefore commonly regarded as a book of the past. Any meaning it may once have carried was now supposed to have exhausted itself. The Church in this modern day was confronted with new problems, which required all its energy, and was bidden to forget those ancient ones which could never trouble it again. But they have all come back, exactly as they were when John knew them. Satan, thrust into the pit and bound for a thousand years, has mysteriously returned."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ib. p. 151, 179.

Questions

1. What are the main differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptics? Summarize the purpose of the two authors as stated in Lk. 1:1-4 and John 20:30-31.
2. From what generation of Christian writers does the Fourth Gospel seem to come and how do we know this?
3. What is the "Gnostic problem" which the First Letter of John has as its main historical background?
4. What types of testimony does John cite in order to establish that Jesus was divine? Which of these seems most important to you?
5. As you read John 14:15-15:14 and I John 3:24; 4:7-16 what formula assures the reader of his fellowship with God, or of his salvation?
6. These passages are also John's formulation of the idea of how God was in Christ Jesus. Is this Johannine formula of the Divinity of Christ essentially different, in your estimation, from St. Paul's Rom. 1:3, or the Synoptic's Lk 4:16-19; 22:27? What do you think John meant by John 10:30 and 14:6?
7. Summarize the message of I John. Read I John 3:14-4:21. What do you conclude as to the following, according to John's belief:
  - a) The Christian idea of love?
  - b) The nature of the oneness or fellowship with God?
  - c) The condition of salvation?
  - d) The agent of the revelation of this salvation?
8. What seems to be the historical background of Revelation Ch. 13? How may we be fairly certain as to what the author means by the beasts, first and second; the seven heads, the ten horns, the statue speaking, etc?
9. What is the main purpose of apocalyptic writing? What main thought forms and imagery does it use?
10. What is the over-all message of the book of Revelation? What is your favorite passage and why?

D. Formation of Old and New Testament Canons:  
a Summary

The word canon means a measuring rod or standard by which something is measured. Thus a canonical scripture would be the standard or guide of faith for a religious movement. The Koran is such a canon for Islam. Mary Baker Eddy's Science and Health is a kind of canon for members of the Christian Science Faith. The Book of Mormon is the canon for Latter Day Saints. Traditionally a canon of scripture has meant something sacred, venerated, and authoritative, to or from which nothing can be added or taken away. By what process and whose authority did the various pieces of literature that make-up our Hebrew-Christian Bible come to canonization?

The formation of the Old Testament, as you now realize, took place over many centuries. Review our discussion of the Canon in earlier pages 9-10, 55, 102 (Old Testament section), 124 (New Testament section). At the time of the Deuteronomic Reform in the seventh century B. C. we noted how Josiah's party turned to the law of Moses as their inspiration and standard for the changes they brought about in the religious life and institutions of Judah. By this time, then, a law of Moses, or Torah, seemed to be in a definite stage of formation and constituted the core of what gradually became canonized scripture. We recall an even more definite step toward canonization of the Old Testament when the Torah (probably the main part of our present Pentateuch) was formally presented to the people by Ezra in the fifth century B.C. ( Nehemiah chs. 8-10). The process of canonization, in the sense of certain books being separated off from others to which no addition may be made, was slow. The Torah itself did not attain its final shape until about the end of the fourth century B.C., and not until long afterwards was the entire Old Testament Canon as we now know it an accomplished fact. The works of the prophets and the other books of our Bible were gradually added to the nucleus of Mosaic law. It is somewhat artificial to regard the formation of the Hebrew Canon in a three-fold way as the standard division between Law, Prophets, and Writings might suggest, as if these were canonized successively in separate units. The general fact is, however, that many of the Books of the Prophets had been added to the Torah by the end of the third century B.C., while the Writings accrued somewhat more slowly. It was not until Christian times that the process was complete. The dispute over Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes continued even into the third century A. D., long after the discussion of the Rabbis at Jamnia, (around 90 A.D.) had given recognition to the other Old Testament books as sacred. Indeed, G. R. Driver says, "No portion of the Old Testament....it may be concluded, was ever formally canonized by any judicial or ecclesiastical authority; but the various books of the New Testament came to be accepted in the church."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>G. R. Driver, Abingdon Commentary, op. cit., p. 98.

Oesterly and Robinson well summarize the reason for the development of a canon among the Jews: "The underlying and real cause which in course of time forced the idea of forming a Canon to arise was Greek culture and the growth of Greek literature; the more immediate cause -- which was, however, to a large extent an outcome of this -- was the spread of apocalyptic books written by and circulating among the Jews.... It became necessary in view of what was regarded by the Jewish religious leaders as erroneous and pernicious literature, to gather out from the mass of current books those which they held to contain the truth; thus the idea of a Canon came into being, and this was towards the end of the second century B.C. but the actual fixing of the Canon did not come until...about A.D. 100."<sup>132</sup>

During the third and second century B.C. the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek at Alexandria. This translation was known as the Septuagint (LXX), since according to tradition it was made by seventy scholars in seventy days. Tradition also adds they worked independently, and that their results coincided. The Septuagint was used by Hellenistic Jews who could not read Hebrew, and came to have a status independent of the scriptures of the Palestinian Jews. The LXX is not just a translation of the present standard Hebrew Bible; it includes different material, such as the Apocrypha. The Book of Jeremiah is so different in the two as to suggest that the Septuagint version is not a translation of the Hebrew Jeremiah. It is thought that Paul may have used the Septuagint. The oldest copies extant are dated not later than 34 A.D.

To the story of the New Testament canon presented previously we may add the following by way of summary. From earliest New Testament times the general practice among Christians was to accept the Old Testament as holy scripture. This is revealed by the numerous quotations of the Old Testament which we find in the New Testament. By the time of Justin Martyr (mid-second century A.D.) we find the four Gospels collected with the Old Testament. Also, Paul's Epistles were circulating in collected form by this time. We have seen how the famous Marcion Bible at this period excluded the Old Testament and retained only Luke and the ten letters of Paul. Recall that the Letter to the Hebrews had not been accepted customarily among the Roman or Western Christians, though Jerome finally included it in his famous Vulgate (Latin) Bible, translated toward the end of the fourth century. On the other hand, the Eastern churches had accepted Hebrews, but were divided on Revelation, which the West had not doubted. These illustrations serve to point out that the early churches had begun independently to collect various Christian writings, some of which are not included in our present New Testament. Some of these collections contained as many as thirty books, perhaps more. We realize, therefore, that certain selections of our present New Testament writings were not accepted as authoritative in these early days.

The definitive stage of formation of the New Testament canon came in the middle of the fourth century. Briefly the story may be recalled. A canonized scripture was needed as an authority against heresy. The heretical Marcion Bible itself had given the Fathers the idea. In 367 Athanasius, who was recognized as the leading figure of the church of that day, promulgated his famous Easter Letter,

<sup>132</sup>Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 7.

which enumerated the books of the New Testament as we now have them, and declared that these henceforth would stand as the Christian Scriptures.

In one sense, then, the church, the already existing institution, decided what documents should be included in the Bible, on the basis of what tradition and usefulness had dictated. Actually, the bishops of the third and fourth centuries approved a process of selection which had been going on for generations. As for the claim of the Scriptures to authority in the early days, we may recall Scott's incisive comment that the significance "is to be found in the very fact that the selection was made by a gradual, tentative process.... When a book has survived all changes of fashion, when it has appealed to all kinds of readers and they have responded, only then can we be sure that it is a living book.... The selection was made unconsciously by the mind of the church at large.... The church, in the end, selected those writings which had already selected themselves."<sup>133</sup>

We conclude with a word about the oldest Bibles. The oldest Bibles in book form are called codices (singular, codex). The codex refers to the Roman practice of binding books in leaf-form as we do today, in distinction to the more ancient scroll-form.. The oldest and most important Codex Bibles in existence (Old Testament and New Testament complete except for relatively minor omissions and mutilations) are written in Greek. They are: (1) Codex Sinaiticus, a fourth century manuscript found in the convent of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai, part in 1849 and the bulk in 1859. It preserves only one-third of the Old Testament; however, the New Testament is complete. It is now in the British Museum. (2) Codex Vaticanus, a fourth century manuscript; has been in the Vatican library since 1481. It is recognized as one of the most valuable of the ancient texts. (3) Codex Alexandrinus, a fifth century manuscript, was presented to Charles I of England in 1628 by the Patriarch of Constantinople, who had probably obtained it in Alexandria, Egypt. It is now in the British Museum. In addition to these ancient Bibles, there are numerous extant fragments, some of which are considerably older than the above codices. The latest and most interesting find in some years is a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah and other scrolls discovered by Bedouins in a cave overlooking the Dead Sea (1947). These are known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of this collection it is believed that the Isaiah scroll dates from the first or second century B.C.

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<sup>133</sup> Literature of the New Testament, op. cit., p. 239