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The Ethics of Jesus*

By ALFRED M. REHWINKEL

The heart and center of the Christian Gospel is Jesus and His atonement. "God made Him sin for us who knew no sin." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." That is the essence of the Gospel according to St. Paul and all the other New Testament writers. Any attempt to change or modify this truth means to distort the Gospel and to dishonor Christ.

But while the above is a divine truth which must be emphasized and re-emphasized, we dare not forget that Jesus was also a great teacher; in fact, the greatest religious teacher that ever lived, greater than all the Prophets and Apostles. "He taught not as the scribes and Pharisees, but as one who had authority." He revealed in simple language the deep things concerning God and man and concerning life here and hereafter. No man ever spake as He, because He came from the bosom of the Father to reveal these truths to man. And what is more, He interpreted His teachings in His own life. He lived and exemplified what He taught. If we are not sure about the meaning of His words, we need but examine His life to find a clear interpretation. Jesus did not teach words or a theory. He taught life. He did not merely set forth a body of doctrine or evolve a system or establish an institution. The religion of Jesus is a way of life, yea, is life itself. His Gospel is a power of God which engenders new spiritual life, and this new life manifests itself in the conduct and the life of the regenerate. The teachings of Jesus which deal with the Christian life we call the ethics of Jesus.

The ethical teachings of Jesus are found in their most comprehensive form in the Sermon on the Mount. But they are not confined to that part of the Gospels.

The ethics of Jesus are not a new Law, but are in harmony with the Old Testament and the Prophets. Jesus accepted the authority of the Old Testament and lived in conformity

* In the following paragraphs the ethics of Jesus are presented in brief outline form. This is done with a practical view in mind. The outline here offered ought to lend itself as a basis for a discussion on Christian conduct and life in Bible classes, adult classes, or even for a series of Sunday evening sermons. It is taken for granted that each section will be elaborated more fully for such class discussion.

with the requirements of the Old Testament Law. He Himself said that He came not to destroy, but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

In religion we deal with man's relation to God; in ethics we deal with man's relation to his fellow men. Jesus was a teacher of both religion and ethics. His ethics, in fact, were grounded in His religion.

The ethics of Jesus may be summarized as follows:

1. *The norms and standards for moral conduct have their origin in God.* — They are revealed in the Law of God. They are absolute and binding for all times and all men. Matt. 5: 17-18: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled."

Luke 16:17: "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the Law to fail."

Luke 10:26-28: "He said unto him, What is written in the Law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live." The same thought is expressed by Paul (Rom. 2:14-15): "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

The position of Jesus and the Apostles regarding the Moral Law recognizes the universality of the Moral Law. There is no race or people which is amoral, or entirely void of moral knowledge. Certain acts have at all times and everywhere been regarded as evil and others as good or right. The Moral Law is not the result of race experience or the product of a certain environment or culture, as so many modern teachers of ethics say, nor is it the result of class struggle, as the atheistic Communists claim, but God made man a moral being, and He provided him at creation with a moral standard which is as fixed and unalterable as the physical and biological

laws which govern his physical being. The Ten Commandments are an epitome of this divine Moral Law. Jesus accepted the Ten Commandments as of divine origin and backed with divine authority. He explains this Law and reveals its deeper meaning as it is to be understood and followed by His disciples.

2. *Moral conduct must grow out of a proper relation to God.*—Only if man is in correct relation to God, can he come into correct relation with his fellow men.

Sin separated man from God and brought disharmony into the universe. Christ brought about a reconciliation and harmony between God and man. Through faith in Christ we are again brought into proper relation with God. Where that has taken place, the original harmonious relation of man with his fellow man is again made possible. John 15:5: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing."

Sanctification, which means the glorifying of God in our lives here in the world, is identical with ethical conduct, and both are the results of justification and are the fruits of faith. "Ye must be born again" is fundamental. Conversion is the only means by which a radically bad person can be changed into a radically good person.

There is much confusion at this point. The social gospel proponents would improve man by first improving his environment and then expect him to reach God by his own efforts and attainments. The ethics of Jesus follow the reverse order. Jesus would first change the heart of man and bring him into right relation with God. When that has happened, he will be brought into right relation with his fellow men.

Luther says: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works. Evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works. So it is always necessary that the person himself be good before there can be any good works and that good works follow and proceed from a good person as Christ says: A corrupt tree does not bring forth good fruit, and a good tree does not bring forth evil fruit. It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree, nor does the tree grow on the fruits, but on the contrary, the tree bears the fruits, and the fruits grow on the tree."

3. Christian conduct is based on the fundamental law of love.—Love to God expresses itself in love toward our fellow men. Love includes justice. Love and injustice are mutually exclusive terms. If we do not love our brother whom we see, how can we love God, whom we do not see? 1 John 4:20-21. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. Man cannot be right with God and wrong with his fellow men.

The Pharisees were condemned not because they tithed mint, anise, and cummin, but because they neglected justice and mercy and faith.

Love is the basic ingredient of true moral conduct. Love is basic for an acceptable conduct toward God. From the love of God there must flow a love toward our fellow men. 1 John 3:14-15: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3:17: "But whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Rom. 13:8: "Owe no man anything but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law." John 13:34: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Jesus has no abstract theory of ethics. He begins with a concrete conception of human society in which love and mutual good will is the universal Law. The standard used by Jesus is "Love thy neighbor as thyself." That is a profound thought but expressed in language so simple that every child is able to understand it. "Neighbor" includes all men, even our enemies. Jesus said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. 5:43-45. "For if

ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" Matt. 5:46.

Jesus not only taught this love, He practiced it. The Apostles and early Christians likewise practiced such love, and showed that they were capable even of loving their enemies.

Jesus taught us to pray: "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us," Luke 11:4. The same lesson is taught in the Parable of the Wicked Servant. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. 5:23-24. Jesus also impresses the same lesson in the account of the last Judgment. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me," Matt. 25:40.

In all these and many other passages we are taught that our relationship to God must express itself in proper conduct towards our fellow men. What Jesus taught and practiced, His disciples after Him preached and practiced. One of the most beautiful chapters in all the writings of Paul is the thirteenth of First Corinthians, in which he shows that all of a Christian's life can be expressed in the one word *love*. 1 Cor. 13:1-7: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

The generally accepted theory of evolution and the doctrine of the survival of the fittest are the very antithesis of the ethics of Jesus and must lead to a callous disregard for the human individual.

The ruthless destruction of human life and the unparalleled barbarism which has engulfed the Western World despite its material advancement are the inevitable results of such teaching. If we are what we are because of a blind mechanistic process of evolution and if only the strongest is fit to survive, then all is fair and right, and he who has the last and the largest atomic bomb will deserve to survive.

The ethic of love for our fellow men as taught by Jesus is the only effective approach to the great social and human problems which disturb society and the world today, such as the race problem, the labor problem, the class problem, the problem of war and peace, and the international problem. All these are essentially human problems. The worst trouble is that the world is lost in sin. The thinking and the actions of Christians must be motivated by this principle if the world is to be saved from its own blindness and folly.

4. *Jesus teaches a moral inwardness.* — A moral act must be an outward expression of an inward attitude.

Jesus opposed the externalism and the formalism of the moral teachers of His day. According to Jesus, an act is moral only if it is in harmony with the whole man. The words and acts of man must express what is in the man. Otherwise such conduct is not moral in the sight of God.

Jesus considers evil motives as sinful as the act itself. Anger (without proper cause) and hatred are murder. To lust after women within one's heart is committing adultery. The righteousness of the disciples must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, because it must take account of the spirit of religious and ethical precepts, not their mere letter. Jesus would make the tree good, and the good fruit will follow. He concerned Himself primarily not with what a man does, but with what a man is. Inward purity takes precedence over outward acts. Filial love is more important than a gift in the Temple. Mercy is better than Sabbath-keeping. Jesus did not teach rules but principles. That is why His teaching had universal and permanent value for all times. The most vehement denunciations which Jesus ever uttered were directed against the sin of hypocrisy. He condemned in the severest terms possible the religion of the Pharisees, who could practice injustice towards the poor six

days of the week and on the seventh make long prayers or prate about righteousness.

What would Jesus say about the injustice, the unrighteousness, the formalism, of the professing Christians today?

5. *Jesus places the highest value on human personality.* — The human being is so infinitely precious in the sight of God because he is a human being. Even when men have lost an understanding and appreciation of their own dignity, Jesus still has the highest regard for them. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son," John 3:16. Even publicans and sinners and outcasts were, therefore, not too low to be reclaimed. At the Well of Jacob He did not disdain to reclaim a disreputable, adulterous woman. In the parables of the lost things — the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son — He stresses the preciousness of the human being. Even a small child is most precious in His sight. To offend one of these little ones is so serious that it were better for such a man not to have been born. With Jesus, man is always an end in himself and never a means to an end.

In His high evaluation of man, Jesus is in harmony with the whole teachings of the Bible. According to Scripture, man begins as a creature created in the image of God. Fallen man is redeemed by the blood of the Son of God and is destined for eternal union with God.

A beautiful evaluation of the ethics of Jesus on this point is found in Link's *Rediscovery of Man*. He writes: "The essence of Christianity is its insistence on the supreme value of the individual in the scheme of things where love, faith, and moral law transcend all man's intellectual schemes and mechanical concepts.

"In Christianity men are not the puppets of the state; they are the sons of God. They are not cogs in a machine, but creatures with souls. They are not helpless victims of an adverse environment, but rather beings born in sin, bound to suffer for their sins, but who can be born again to a new life of unlimited growth and freedom.

"No matter how individuals, differing in background and point of view, read the New Testament, they will agree that the common denominator is the potentiality of personality. All men are held equal in the opportunity to develop a richer personality and a higher life, whether Jew or Gentile, Phar-

isee or Publican, rich or poor, whole or crippled. If anything, the possibilities of the underprivileged excel those of the privileged. For the rich, salvation is more difficult than to enter through the eye of a needle; for the arrogant intellectual it is harder than for the ignorant, but repentant sinner. But for all it is possible.

"Thus the Christian concept of personality is the absolute opposite to that of the physical sciences. Whereas the natural sciences have progressively revealed man's limitations, Christianity forever emphasizes his possibilities. Whereas the hygiene movement of medical science increasingly describes people as innocent victims of mental disorders, Christianity long ago described the same disorders as the natural consequence of sin, either the sins of omission or commission. (Pp. 235—236.)

6. *Society cannot be regenerated except by the regeneration of the individual person.* — "Ye are the salt of the earth," Matt. 5:13. "Ye are the light of the world," Matt. 5:14. Jesus addressed these words to His disciples. The individual cannot exist apart from society and fulfill his purpose in the world. John 17:15: "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world." A supernatural revolution of the individual is the necessary condition to a natural evolution of society. Men are saved singly, soul by soul, just as men are born singly into the world; but every regenerate soul is born into society as truly as every babe is born into society. In regeneration the individual is transformed. This transformation affects every relation of that individual in society. Social reform is possible only through spiritual renewal of the individual. Jesus spoke of His disciples as salt. He says: "Ye are the salt," "Ye are the light," not: "Ye have the salt." Salt is an active ingredient. It never is neutral. It does not cease to be salt, though it affects other substances. Salt cannot be active in isolation. Jesus did not take His disciples out of the world, but prayed that God would keep them in the world. Jesus was, therefore, not revolutionary in His methods. He would change society by the impact of individuals on their environment. He would have His disciples penetrate with their ideas and their examples the society of which they were a part and would thus bring about a change from within, and not a change superimposed by force, or by law, from without.

Social reformers have tried to improve society through education or legislation, but education can only train the life that is, and legislation is able at best only to restrain. Love of right and the impulse to do right must come from the regenerated heart of man.

Link points out very forcefully the futility of education without a correct moral training (*op. cit.*, pp. 154—5):

“The emphasis in our time has been on the quantity or the years of education. The major premise of the American system has been that the more education a man has, the better man he will be. A college graduate will be better than a high school graduate, and a high school graduate will be better than the person who has completed only the grade school. In 1889 the total enrollment in colleges was 55,687. In 1938 it was 1, 346,856. In 1947 it promises to reach 2,000,000 or almost thirty-six times as many as in 1889. Over 80 per cent of all children are now getting all or part of a high school education. All races and classes have shared in this great increase even though inequalities between them still exist.

“And yet, with more years of education than ever, the objective facts of social behavior are these:

“1. The highest divorce rate in the history of divorce statistics. At present more than one out of every five marriages ends in divorce. If the present rate of increase continues for the next twenty years, every other marriage will end in divorce. Divorce is one type of conflict which cannot be attributed either to poverty or lack of education. Indeed, the greater the wealth and education, the higher the divorce rate. Now investigations are increasingly demonstrating that broken homes are a principal cause of juvenile delinquency.

“2. A steady increase in the frequency of crime among those under twenty-one, reaching an all time high in number and percentage in 1945.

“3. A particularly sharp growth in juvenile delinquency, especially stealing, gang violence, and sex irregularities.

“4. A continuously high rate in major crimes throughout the United States. Major crimes include murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and auto theft.

"5. The highest rate of strikes and industrial conflicts between 1934 and 1946 on record.

"6. The rejection of well over four million young men as mentally or physically unfit for military service, even of a limited kind. This appalling degree of unfitness, especially in the case of psycho-neurotic 4F's was due in large part to the wrong kind of education rather than to its lack in quantity. The need for better physical training was especially obvious.

"7. Reliable records of race riots or crimes due to racial hatreds are lacking. Yet it is generally held that racial tensions are higher and quarrels more frequent than at any other time in decades. Obviously it is with the improvement of education, among whites as well as Negroes, rather than its equalization that we should be first of all concerned. Where should this improvement begin?"

If we add to this the appalling barbarism we have committed in the war and still are committing, the picture becomes even more disturbing.

From the ethics of Jesus we learn that the Christian pastor must avoid two mistakes. For one thing, he must not identify the Christian message with a social revolution that will call in question all of the established forms of society in which the Church lives. On the other hand, he must not preach a Gospel of individual redemption that is so detached from life that it makes no impact on the unchristian elements of the social life of the society of which he is a part.

7. *Jesus is positive and not negative in His ethical teaching.*—He does not stress the don'ts, but the do's. The good life in the sight of Jesus is not a mere absence of that which is evil, but a positive doing of that which is good. The ethic of Jesus is life, is a dynamic, is an active leaven and a salt. The Christian life is to be a positive dynamic force in the world. Christians are not merely to abstain from this and from that, but rather they are to do in an active and positive way the will of God and thus show forth the glory of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

8. *Jesus taught very clearly that man must fear God rather than men when determining the course of his conduct.*—Matt. 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him which is able

to destroy both soul and body in hell." And Peter and John say in harmony with their Master: "We ought to obey God rather than men," Acts 5:29.

There have been many opportunities in the decade through which we have lived when Christians everywhere, including our own country, should have acted upon this principle. But it is less precarious to conform, and so we continue to admire from a distance and in eloquent orations the heroic "Here I stand" of Martin Luther.

Christians and the Christian Church must always stand for truth, justice, and righteousness, even if the society in which they live or the powers that be are hostile to such truth, justice, and righteousness.

9. *Jesus clearly distinguishes between fundamental ethics and matters of ceremonies, customs, and traditions.*— Jesus observed Jewish customs and the Jewish Ceremonial Law, but He always kept first things first, and when His disciples were charged with having violated the Sabbath, He pointed out to his critics that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

Man-made church rules, synodical regulations, national or racial traditions, must not be placed above the Law of God. They must not become the *norma normans*, but must always remain the *norma normata*. Every age tends to repeat the errors of the Pharisees in its own way.

10. *The cardinal virtues of Jesus.*— The cardinal virtues of Jesus are love, humility, sincerity. These are the three foremost. Others are justice, mercy, gentleness, peacefulness, purity, kindness, patience, a desire for righteousness, a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, gratitude, courage, and service to all men. "He that would be great among you, let him be a servant to all."

Comparing these virtues with the prevalent ethical practices of the world about us, we find that not one of them rates recognition. The very opposite is true. The world is full of hatred, is motivated by hate, and preaches hatred. The world is proud and arrogant; and in hypocrisy, private and public, the world has reached an all-time high. And so it might continue. It is at these points that the world is such a wicked influence for the Christians. Living in the world, we gather the dust of the world.

11. *Virtues must be spontaneous.*—Virtue does not inquire about rules and regulations. It is not legalistic. The Good Samaritan acts when he is placed in a situation where something has to be done. On the Day of Judgment those to the right of the Lord are told by Jesus that He was hungry and thirsty, and they reply that they haven't seen Him hungry and thirsty. They were not aware of the good deeds they had done. They had acted spontaneously when the need arose. The same idea is expressed in the statement of Jesus: "Let not your right hand know what your left is doing."

Luther says: "Faith is a living, acting, dynamic thing that does not stop to ask whether there be good works to be done, but is already doing them. No one bids the sun to shine. It does so of its own accord. No one bids the trees to grow and bring forth fruit. They do so of their own accord. No command is needed to make two and two equal four; they are four. So it is with the justified. He needs no command to produce good works. He does them of his own accord."

12. *The attitude of Jesus toward the material world.*—Jesus received the gifts of God with thanksgiving. The world belongs to God. God made it. God rules over it. He sustains it. He clothes it with grass. He gives the lilies of the field their beauty. He sends the rain and causes the sun to shine. He watches over everything that He made. Not even a sparrow falls from the roof or a hair from our head without His will.

Because God is the Creator and Giver of all things, Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread." If we pray for the things needful, we shall also receive them with thanksgiving. Christians do not murmur.

Because God is the Creator and Giver of all good things, man will not waste the gifts of God. "Gather up the fragments that none be left," says Jesus. Waste is the result of ingratitude.

This is a practical lesson which needs to be stressed in our day. We waste in our homes. We waste as a people and a nation. We plow under cotton, burn corn, kill hogs, and destroy potatoes to produce an artificial scarcity. We could feed several of the smaller nations of Europe with what we

throw into our garbage cans. We shall reap the consequences of such wicked ingratitude.

Because of God's care of His creation, Christians should trustfully depend upon Him and not be given to anxious worries. Matt. 6:25-34: "Therefore I say unto you: Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying: What shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

If society were as God wants it to be, there would be no need for worry. The earth produces enough food, clothing, and shelter, oil, minerals, and other necessities, to supply the wants of every living being. The resources placed at man's disposal for his good and enjoyment are enormous. Even in a world which has been impoverished by the curse of sin there is enough that none should need to suffer want.

And yet there is untold want, misery, and starvation in the world, in large measure because some, by their superior strength of body or mind or other advantages, have obtained an undue share, not leaving enough for the many that remain. God feeds the birds that neither sow nor reap. There are no poor or rich birds. All have enough. But the birds do not defeat God's purpose as does man. Birds don't organize

a corner on worms or the fruits of the field; none seize the woods as their possession and demand exorbitant rents from others who would roost there, they don't create artificial scarcities. They all come alike to the table that God has spread for them, and each one gets his share. But man, being a free moral agent, with his nature polluted by sin, is greedy and selfish. He hoards for himself, squanders and wastes his abundance, and wantonly deprives others of their needs. This is true of individuals and of nations and has been the chief cause of all the great wars. Man is responsible for the misery, the suffering, and the starvation of the world, not God.

A warning of Luther is in place at this point. He writes: "How could it ever be, and accord with God's will, that a man should in a short time grow so rich that he could buy out kings and emperors? But they have brought things to such a pass that the whole world must do business at a risk and at a loss, winning this year and losing next year, while they always win, making up their losses by increased profits, and so it is no wonder that they quickly seize upon the wealth of all the world, for a pfennig that is permanent and sure is better than a gulden that is temporary and uncertain. But these companies trade with permanent and sure gulden and we with temporary and uncertain pfennig. No wonder they become kings and we beggars!

"Kings and princes ought to look into these things and forbid them by strict law, but I hear that they have an interest in them, and the saying of Isaiah is fulfilled: 'Thy princes have become companions of thieves.' They hang thieves who have stolen a gulden or half a gulden, and trade with those who rob the whole world and steal more than all the rest, so that the proverb may hold true 'Big thieves hang the little ones,' and as the Roman Senator Cato said: 'Simple thieves lie in prisons and in stocks, public thieves walk abroad in gold and silk.' But what will God say to this at last? He will do as He says by Ezekiel: Princes and merchants, one thief with another. He will melt them together like lead and brass, as when a city burns, so that there shall be neither princes nor merchants any more. That time, I fear, is already at the door. We do not think of amending our lives, no matter how great our sin and wrong may be, and he cannot leave wrong unpunished." (Holman edition, Vol. IV, p. 34 ff.)

Jesus was not an ascetic. Jesus ate and drank, and we do not hear of His fasting excepting at the one time in the wilderness. Drunkenness was a great social evil at the time of Christ, yet He did not denounce the use of wine because of that but even encouraged the moderate use of it by drinking wine Himself and by making wine for the wedding guests at Cana.

Jesus was not an ascetic like John. "For John came eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, He has a demon. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, Behold a glutton and a drunkard." Jesus was not a fanatic, and His ethics did not consist of a set of rules and regulations like those of the Pharisees. In this, as in other matters, Christians will be governed by the law of love. One who loves God and his brother will be temperate in all things. He will be temperate in food and drink, but also in thoughts and words and deeds. Excesses and abuses in all things are sinful. Drunkards cannot enter the Kingdom of God. But while neither Jesus nor the Apostles teach asceticism, they teach consideration of the weaker brother. "I will neither eat meat nor drink wine if thereby my brother is made to stumble." Abstinence in the spirit of self-righteous asceticism is not Christian; abstinence for the sake of the brother is profoundly Christian.

On the other hand, Jesus did not overestimate the things of this world. Man's life does not consist in having an abundance of things.

Jesus does not say that wealth is wrong and therefore to be shunned, nor does He say that wealth is good and therefore to be sought. He does not say that poverty is a virtue and therefore to be sought. Jesus had among His disciples men of wealth or at least of superior means; for example, Matthew, Zacchaeus, and later Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea. Jesus never showed special favors to the rich, nor was He prejudiced against them. He does not demand that the rich renounce their wealth, unless wealth becomes a snare for their souls and hinders them in their way to Christ and eternal salvation, as in the case of the rich young ruler. Because riches so easily become a snare for men, Jesus warns against riches. The parables about the rich man, the rich fool, and the saying about a camel's passing

through the eye of a needle are examples of such earnest warnings.

Jesus stresses the importance of stewardship. Man is merely a steward of the things that he has. They are given to him by God as a trust which imposes upon him a special responsibility. Not only are rich men stewards, but also the poor. The poor man, too, may neglect his stewardship. The poor are not to be envious of the rich. The poor, too, can be servants of Mammon.

13. *Jesus was not an ascetic, but He taught a correct and desirable asceticism.* — There are occasions and circumstances when a Christian must be ready to deny himself the use and enjoyment of things which are valuable and even desirable for him — if such things would cause him to stumble so that he lose his highest goal, his eternal fellowship with God. Jesus says (Matt. 5:29-30): "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee, etc." The Apostle Paul and the whole New Testament are in harmony with this view here stated by Jesus. Paul says: "All things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's," 1 Cor. 3:21-23. However, as soon as Paul feels that something in itself good might become dangerous to his own spiritual life, he voluntarily denies himself its use. 1 Cor. 6:12: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

In 1 Cor. 9:24-27 Paul uses the example of the runner in a race, who is temperate in all things and will have nothing to interfere with his purpose of winning the crown in the race.

Such asceticism is a means to an end and not an end in itself, as it is with Romanism. It is not meritorious, that is, thereby a Christian does not gain the favor of God.

14. *Jesus sets forth a correct norm for ethical conduct, and He provides an example, to be followed by translating His own teachings into life and living what He taught.* — Jesus is our Savior, but He is also our Example, and we must hold Him up to our Christian people as an example to follow. "In Him (Jesus) all graces unite: strength and humility, justice and mercy, holy zeal and forgiving love, purity and

rescuing power for the lost, thoughtful and active, forceful as a man and gentle as a woman, hating evil and saving men, full of strong impulses and yet calmly balanced, strong in the virtue of every temperament and without its weakness. He stands as the supreme moral ideal, in whom age after age finds new inspiration. The moral perfection and inspiration of Jesus Christ is the guarantee of the permanence of Christianity in the world's moral progress. It is essentially true that if the Son makes us free, we are free indeed." John Haas, *In the Light of Faith*, p. 220.

And finally, Jesus also provides the dynamic for moral conduct. "He that abideth in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Faith in Jesus, or the new spiritual life, is the dynamic for moral conduct; it is the power by which the goals for ethical conduct may be achieved. The ethics as taught by Jesus are the only true ethics. They are practical; they work; they achieve results; they are the only solution for the ills of society. Through them we show forth the glory of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

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