



## The Mistakes of Jesus, by William Floyd

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THE MISTAKES OF JESUS

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BY

WILLIAM FLOYD

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TO DEVOTEES OF TRUTH

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Transcriber's Note:

Minor typographical errors have been corrected without note. Archaic spellings have been retained. Paragraph spacing has been normalised.

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CODE OF LIVING

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FOREWORD

The tradition regarding Jesus is so glamorous that it is difficult to review his life and character with an unbiased mind. While Fundamentalists and Modernists differ regarding the divinity of Christ, all Christians and many non-Christians still cling to preconceived notions of the perfection of Jesus. He alone among men is revered as all-loving, omniscient, faultless--an unparalleled model for mankind.

This convention of the impeccability of Jesus is so firmly established that any insinuation of error on his part is deemed a blasphemy. Doubting Jesus is more impious than mocking God Almighty. Jehovah may be exposed to some extent with impunity; a God who destroyed 70,000 of his chosen people because their king took a census[1] is too illogical for any but theologians to worship. But the Son of God, or Son of man, is sacrosanct. Jesus is revered as the one man who has lived unspotted by the world, free from human foibles, able to redeem mankind by his example.

Respect for the principles of Jesus is so inbred in American people of all faiths that an attempt to disparage his worth is denounced as bad taste. The detractor is suspected of being an immoral person, no matter how convincing may be the proof which he presents. A conspiracy of silence is directed against any system of ethics advanced as superior to the Sermon on the Mount. In popular opinion Jesus never made a mistake; all his teachings were infallible; no other view is tolerated.

### *Face the Facts*

This unwillingness to acknowledge the shortcomings of Jesus is partially due to fear of sustaining a great loss. The familiar answer to heretical arguments is that faith should not be destroyed unless something can be put in its place--ignoring the fact that something always may be substituted for beliefs destroyed. That substitute is faith in the world as it really is. And our modern world, with all its shortcomings, is infinitely preferable to the earth, or even the heaven, of the first century. We now know that man can do more to eradicate sorrow than Jesus ever thought of. We can have greater confidence in the world as revealed today than in the doubtful traditions of Biblical times.

But suppose there were nothing to substitute for the myth destroyed, should that deter the Truthseeker from continuing his investigation? Scientists do not hesitate in their research because the result of a new discovery may be disastrous. They seek the facts regardless of consequences; they want to know the Truth about the physical world. Ethicists should have a similar desire concerning the metaphysical world. They should have confidence that the Supreme Intelligence (as Edison called it) will lead on to better things.

### *The True Jesus*

If Jesus was what his followers believe, no arguments will destroy their faith in him; but if Jesus was not perfect, according to modern standards, it is important that his status as God, or man, should be revised. Loss of confidence in an erring idol is not loss of a true ideal.

When an iconoclast asserts that Jesus lacked supreme intelligence, the natural question is, "How do you know that you are right in your appraisal, 'lest haply ye be found even to fight against God'?" The answer is that we do not claim omniscience, but merely request everyone to use his or her own judgment, with intellectual honesty, examining each act or saying of Jesus without regard to presupposed ideas or tradition.

### *Scriptures Unauthentic*

The consensus of scholarship has rejected the creation of the universe in six days in 4004 B.C., science having proved the existence of the world for millions of years. Higher Critics refuse to credit the book of Genesis, according to the first chapter of which the trees, beasts and fowls were created before man, but according to the second chapter after man. It is not assuming too much for the humblest writer to say that Moses was mistaken concerning many things he described in the Pentateuch. It follows that if one important portion of the Bible is untrustworthy, other parts of that same book may not be the infallible Word of God. The New Testament, as well as the Old, may be examined critically, and if the gospels contain numerous contradictions, the statements of the authors on any point, including the life of Jesus, are open to question. A conscientious person should reach conclusions based upon the best knowledge obtainable from all sources.

If anyone is convinced that Jesus made mistakes, he is not necessarily compelled to become an atheist. All other Gods that have been worshipped by men have been found imperfect. The oft exposed errors of Jehovah do not prevent Christians and Jews from professing belief in God. Those who require support from outside themselves cling to the symbol of deity though not thoroughly crediting any personality ever described in any sacred scriptures. Except Jesus.

An Evolutionist passes beyond the negative denial of God to the construction of a new philosophy in which

Truth is his guide, Truth being the nearest approximation to reality obtainable with our present knowledge. Belief in the world as it is now, and as it is going to be, is a sufficient creed.

### *Faith in Jesus*

With Jesus entrenched in popular opinion, there is small probability that faith in him will be shaken unless there is a preponderance of evidence against his divinity. No one need abandon faith in Jesus until convinced that something better has been found. No one should even expose himself to heretical arguments unless he is a devotee of Truth. Then only can he rejoice at a revelation of error in confidence that the more nearly the universe is understood the better can man adjust himself to his surroundings. A worshipper of Truth fears no destruction of false gods, nor any facts that may cause him to throw over treasured superstitions. He is willing to prove all things and hold fast to that which is true. He rejoices when his idol is shattered, knowing that he is approaching nearer to the true way of living, a way that Jesus did not adequately explain.

Any attempt to censure the character of Jesus will meet with the ridicule it deserves unless substantiated by documentary evidence. The mere improbability of events contrary to natural laws does not destroy the ethical value of the teachings of the Nazarene. Anything might have happened in the eerie days of old; the critic must do more than deny the historicity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible. To be convincing he must derive from the scriptures in which Christians believe whatever proof can be deduced to unveil the superstition of a redeeming Savior.

### *Documentary Evidence*

The documents most generally accepted by Christians are those collected in the King James Version of the Bible. The Apocrypha and other early manuscripts are unreliable. None of the thirty or more writers who described events around Jerusalem in Jesus' time gives any account of his teachings. The only life of Jesus is found in the four gospels; the numerous biographers of Christ have had no other reliable source of information. It is deceptive for the publishers of revised editions of the Bible to claim that "original manuscripts" have been consulted. Not one of the original manuscripts is in existence, the earliest extant dating from the fourth century A.D., while the most ancient portion of the New Testament in any museum was transcribed in the sixth century.

Accepting, therefore, the King James Version of the New Testament as the most reliable source of information, the question arises as to what portion of the chapters therein may be considered authentic. Scholars have rejected the entire gospel of John as less reliable than the synoptic gospels; and the sixteenth chapter of Mark as an addition after the original papyrus had broken off. Modernists, being confronted, in spite of these deletions, with inconsistencies in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, have assumed the further privilege of rejecting any verses which appear at variance with their beliefs. Liberals of this class contend that the supernatural side of Jesus may be disregarded and yet that Jesus will remain Our Lord. They reject certain evangelistic passages that conflict with modern thought, but accept other statements by the same authors as authoritative.

As the Christian churches have not accepted any abbreviation of the Bible as a substitute for the King James Version, it seems proper for the critic to have recourse to that translation as the most authentic description of the life and teachings of Jesus. He is justified, moreover, in considering every word in the supposedly inspired gospels as equally reliable. His only concern should be to interpret each verse as nearly as possible as the original writers intended their words to be understood, allowing for Eastern hyperbole and the custom of the times.

### *Retain the Good*

In preparing a critical analysis of the character of Jesus, it is freely admitted that many of the thoughts

attributed to the son of Mary are superlatively fine. They will live forever whether the personality of Jesus be rejected as a divinity or not. That these beautiful preachments are ignored here is not due to any desire to belittle admirable sentiments or to disparage right living. The loving side of Jesus has been emphasized again and again and will be borne in mind by the reader when other less admirable traits are criticized. The intent of this criticism is not to destroy idealism but to assist the spirit of true progress.

### *Christianity Must Go*

The significance of this investigation lies in the changes that would have to be made in religious thought if it should be found that Jesus was not perfect. If Jesus was in error concerning conditions of his own time and exhibited no knowledge of our modern problems, his authority will be lessened. Searchers after the true way of life will not continue to worship a person whose conception of the physical and spiritual world was erroneous. If Jesus made mistakes, he is neither the Son of God nor an infallible man.

So long as people feel compelled to worship what has been proved imperfect, or to evade important doctrines of their creeds for fear of losing faith in old traditions, their minds will not be receptive to changes in social conditions that require abandonment of established customs. Christians are imbued with a psychology derived from a completed revelation. The firmer their belief in Jesus, the greater their resistance to new ideas. Catholics are more reluctant to join progressive movements than Modernists and Modernists than Evolutionists. Religious people are apt to be afraid of the new world; they doubt the possibility of eliminating war, poverty and injustice--customs as deeply rooted in the social world as belief in Jesus is in the religious world. If the chief reactionary bulwark of the past is abandoned, there will be greater possibility of accepting new revelations.

What would happen if Christians should discover that their leader was not an incomparable guide? Absolutely nothing at first. Those accustomed to lead a moral life would continue to do so. Members of Christian churches are the very people who most wish to do what is right. They will not lose their character because Jesus has lost his fictitious divinity. On the contrary, they will search for the most elevating principles to substitute for the personality that has been found deficient. It is difficult for people to be superior to their gods. These same church-going individuals, when freed from the fetters of antiquated supernaturalism, will gradually learn to serve mankind with the same devotion they now render to a misunderstood God. They will no longer be limited by the defects of their paragon in their efforts to make the most of life. They will seek to solve modern problems in a rational way instead of deciding such matters as birth control, divorce, war and prohibition by reference to the scriptures, as they do now. For the first time they will make their decisions according to the best knowledge obtainable today.

Jesus was in advance of his time. He declared that such revengeful theories as an eye for an eye must be supplanted by forgiveness. But as the world has evolved, Jesus has stood still. His teachings, superior as they were to those of the ancient Israelites, are now found to be inferior to the best ethics culled from the wisdom of the ages, brought down to date. It is heartening to feel that we can appropriate the superlative principles of all time instead of worshipping a deified personality who was limited to the best that men of his own generation could conceive.

This examination of the life and character of Jesus will be based upon the accounts in the New Testament. Each passage will be construed as appears to the writer to have been originally intended. The reader may substitute his own interpretation, but should in no instance pass lightly over a situation as immaterial. Every word or action of Jesus is an important link in the chain of his divinity, or of his exalted position as a moral guide. Each argument should be met by acceptance or rejection, never with indifference. No reader of the following pages should ever say, "What difference does it make?" Everything concerning Jesus is of vast consequence in determining whether he is or is not a divine Savior, or a perfect guide.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Chron. xxi.

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## ANTIQUATED THEOLOGY

The first event in the life of Jesus, the gospel story of his birth, is now considered unauthentic by many scholars and some theologians. The birth of a virgin, the visitation of an angel, the star in the East are phenomena contrary to natural laws and rest on insufficient authority for acceptance as credible. The probabilities are against exceptions in the laws of the universe.

### *The Virgin Birth*

The original evidence for the virgin birth is found only in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, two unknown historians, and both these evangelists implicitly deny their own tale when they trace the descent of Jesus from David through Joseph.[1] The slaughter of the children by Herod, in fear of Jesus as a rival, probably never took place. Mark, Luke and John do not mention it; Josephus, who dwelt on the crimes of Herod, knew nothing of this massacre. According to Luke, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem openly soon after the supposed decree.[2]

There is dispute as to whether Jesus was born in Bethlehem or Nazareth, and the date of his birth has been placed anywhere from 4 B.C. to 7 A.D. Matthew says that Jesus was born "in the days of Herod", while Luke says it was "When Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Herod died in 4 B.C., while Cyrenius did not become governor of Syria until 7 A.D.

The romantic story of the Christ-child is not corroborated by the historians of the time and is in opposition to the theory of evolution by natural processes. And yet it is still one of the main sources of Jesus' fame, being repeated at Christmas-tide in the churches, thus connecting Jesus with God in a superhuman manner.

The consensus of scholarship is in practical agreement that the theory of the virgin birth as a link between Jesus and God is a mistake; but whose mistake was it? Jesus never referred to his miraculous birth. If he was merely a man and never heard of the rumor about his conception, he was not to blame for the spread of this misleading story throughout Christendom.

While Jesus did not refer to his divine paternity in a physical sense, he did endeavor to convince his hearers that he was more directly connected with God than other men. "I and my Father are one." [3] "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." [4]

Jesus thus proclaimed himself identical with the Lord God of the Old Testament who called himself Jehovah. This is entirely in keeping with the whole Christian theory, for the *raison d'être* of Jesus derived from the act of God soon after the creation. Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God had commanded them not to touch, and for this disobedience, this fall of man from grace, God cursed mankind. Jesus came to earth to save man from the wrath of Almighty God.

But this claim of Jesus to oneness with God renders him liable to censure for the acts of Jehovah which represented a standard of ethics inferior to that preached by the Son of God. According to the scriptures, which anyone may freely search, God advised or countenanced deception [5]; stealing [6], selfishness [7], conquest by force [8], indiscriminate slaughter [9], murder [10], cannibalism [11], killing of witches [12], slavery [13], capital punishment for rebellious sons or for seeking false gods [14], sacrifices of animals [15] and other acts representing the concepts of primitive men. [16]

While Jesus could read [17] and was familiar with the scriptures, it is possible that he was not acquainted with the system of dictatorship formerly employed by his Father. Occasionally Jesus denounced the ethics of "them

of old time", but he always referred to his Father as perfect.

The dilemma is that Jesus must be condemned either for claiming identity with Jehovah (to whom he was really superior), or for accepting with only slight improvements the tyranny of God as described in the Bible, the Word of God. Of course if the Bible is not the Word of God, the whole system of Christian theology falls to the ground.

### *The Jewish Messiah*

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah expected by the Jews. "And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." [18] "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am." [19] "Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am." [20] "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." [21]

These acknowledgments by Jesus that he was the Messiah are important, for if he claimed divinity when he was merely mortal, either under false pretences or being self-deceived, he made a mistake of the most serious character. His claim was not recognized by his own people, and many of his followers today deny that he was the Jewish Messiah. Jesus said that he came from God to save the Jews. Either he was truly the predicted Messiah or he made an inexcusable error. In this as in other instances to be cited, Fundamentalists will not admit any mistake, for they believe in the supernatural events connected with the Son of God. But Modernists, who reject the anointed Christ while clinging to the human Jesus, may be at a loss to reconcile Jesus' claim to Messiahship with their rejection of his divinity.

Jesus stressed his mission to save the world, saying "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." [22]

### *Eternal Damnation*

Whether Jesus was mistaken or not in his estimate of his close relationship with God is for each person to decide; but his theory of the disasters that would follow unbelief in his divinity leads to serious difficulties if accepted literally. For not only was Jesus in error when he insisted that salvation depended upon belief, he was also reconciled to eternal suffering for unbelievers. Note some of his expressions:

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." [23] "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." [24]

"Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." [25]

"Except ye repent ye shall perish." [26]

"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." [27]

"How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" [28]

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." [29]

It is evident from these quotations that Jesus not only preached belief in his divinity as essential to salvation,

but endeavored to terrify people into belief by threats of eternal torment. Jesus was responsible for the theological conception of a fiery hell. If he was mistaken, if there never was a place of torment for the wicked after death, is it not an act of constructive criticism to expose the person most responsible for the false doctrine that has caused so much fear and mental suffering? Must we not deplore this mistake of Jesus and recast our entire opinion of him as a religious teacher?

Are we not justified in stating positively that Jesus made a mistake when he taught a physical hell and condemned people to spend eternity in torment for the doubtful sin of disbelief?

### *The Atonement*

The doctrine of the Atonement was taught by Jesus. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." [30]

Whether this sacrifice of the innocent Jesus to save sinful man was ordered by God or was voluntary on the part of Jesus, it represents a theory of reprieve from punishment long since abandoned as unethical. If sin must be punished, there is no justice in relieving the sinner and placing the burden upon the righteous.

Moreover, the Atonement appears to have been ineffective, for in spite of the sacrifice that Jesus made, few were to be saved under his scheme of salvation. "Many are called but few are chosen." [31] "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." [32] "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." [33]

If the theory of Atonement for sin by the sacrifice of the innocent was not ethical and if Jesus taught that doctrine, he was in error, was he not?

The sacrifice of Jesus was not so great as often made by men. Jesus was sustained with the thought that he was saving the world; his physical suffering was not long continued; on the night of his crucifixion he was in paradise. [34] He endured a few hours of pain compared to weeks of suffering by wounded soldiers, or years spent in prison by the proponents of an ideal.

Jesus not only claimed the power to remit sins but also said to his disciples: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." [35]

Is that true? Surely it is proper to ask that blunt question. Here is a definite statement concerning the power of certain men to remit sins. If those men did not have the power deputed to them, must we not doubt the accuracy of Jesus?

Jesus made a distinction between himself and the Comforter: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you ... And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." [36]

It must surprise some Christians that the Comforter could not be present at the same time with Jesus.

### *Angels and Devils*

Jesus believed in angels and devils, often referring to these imaginary supernatural beings as if they existed. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" [37] "So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth." [38]

The devils were among the first to recognize Christ's divinity: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" [39] "Let us alone, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art,

the Holy One of God."[40] "And unclean spirits when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God."[41]

Jesus believed in demoniacal possession, casting out devils on several occasions.

Jesus frequently referred to heaven as a place above the earth: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."[42] "And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."[43] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man."[44]

When Jesus was transfigured and talked with Moses and Elias, he charged his disciples, saying, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."[45]

According to the creeds based upon the Bible, Jesus rose from the dead, descended into hell, and ascended bodily into heaven. According to the gospels he stilled the storm, walked on the water and told Peter to do so and to find money in a fish's mouth and catch a large draught of fishes. These and other miracles connected Jesus with God and were part of his theology.

Every fair-minded person should re-read the gospels and refresh his memory regarding the theology of Jesus. Then a decision must be reached as to the correctness of the views expressed. Either conditions on earth were different in the first century from those of the twentieth, or Jesus was mistaken in his conception of God, heaven, hell, angels, devils and himself.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Matt. i; Luke iii.

[2] Luke ii, 22.

[3] John x, 30.

[4] Matt. xi, 27.

[5] Ezek. xiv, 9; Num. xiv, 30-34.

[6] Ex. iii, 21-22.

[7] Deut. xiv, 21.

[8] Num. xxxi et al.

[9] Ex. xxxii, 27.

[10] Deut. vii, 16 et al.

[11] Jer. xix, 9 et al.

[12] Ex. xxii, 18.

[13] Lev. xxv, 44-46.

[14] Deut. xxi, 18-21; xiii, 6-9.

[15] Lev. i, 14-15.

[16] See the Old Testament.

[17] Luke iv, 16.

[18] Matt. xxvi, 63-64.

[19] Mark xv, 61-62.

[20] Luke xxii, 70.

[21] John iv, 25-26.

[22] John iii, 16.

[23] John viii, 24.

[24] Matt. xxv, 31-46.

[25] Mark iii, 29.

[26] Luke xiii, 3.

[27] Mark ix, 43.

[28] Matt. xxiii, 33.

[29] Mark xvi, 16.

[30] Matt. xxvi, 28.

[31] Matt. xxii, 14.

[32] Matt. vii, 14.

[33] Luke xiii, 24.

[34] Luke xxiii, 43.

[35] John xx, 23.

[36] John xiv, 16.

[37] Matt. xxvi, 53.

[38] Matt. xiii, 49.

[39] Matt. viii, 29.

[40] Luke iv, 34.

[41] Mark iii, 11.

[42] Mark xiii, 26.

[43] Mark xiv, 62.

[44] John i, 51.

[45] Matt. xvii, 9.

## FALSE IMPRESSIONS

Jesus not only held mistaken ideas about theology, as anyone but a Fundamentalist must admit, but he often gave impressions about earthly affairs that were unreliable to say the least. Occasionally his statements were actual misrepresentations of fact.

### *Jonah and the Whale*

"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." [1]

Evidently Jesus believed the story of Jonah and the whale, as well as the tale of Noah's ark [2] both of which are now generally discredited. Moreover, his prophecy regarding his entombment was inaccurate, for he was only two nights and one day in the heart of the earth, from Friday night to Sunday morning.

### *End of the World*

Jesus was decidedly mistaken in his theory of the approaching end of the world.

"Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." [3] "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." [4] "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." [5] "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come ... Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." [6] "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." [7] "So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." [8] "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." [9]

Jesus was confident that the day of judgment was coming in the first century, but it has not come yet, nineteen hundred years later. This erroneous belief in the imminent end of the world had an important bearing upon his entire philosophy; for if the end of the world was so near it was far more important to prepare for life hereafter than to be concerned over mundane affairs. May we not view with doubt any of Jesus' teachings that depended upon his mistaken conception of the duration of the world?

### *Miracles*

Jesus is reported to have fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes, and again 4,000 with seven loaves and a few small fishes. He walked on the water, calmed the seas, raised three persons from the dead and performed other miracles contrary to natural laws. These wondrous acts were depended upon by him to convince the people that he was the expected Messiah: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the

dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." [10]

Jesus assured his disciples that they too would be able to perform miracles: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." [11] "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do." [12]

Jesus set great store by these marvels that only magicians attempt nowadays. Ministers of the apostolic succession cannot cast out devils or take up serpents, and they are affected by deadly drinks the same as others. Jesus had a primitive idea of the value of such magic. Either he sought to deceive the gullible, or, as is more likely, was himself overcredulous. It is important to remember that Jesus stressed the value of enchantment and advised his successors to conjure in his name.

If the miraculous had not been connected with the name of Jesus, it is probable that he never would have been heard of. His ethical teachings alone would not have won for him the exalted position that has come from the stories of his miraculous birth, life and ascension. In other words, his fame rests upon the supernatural side of his life that is now discredited by many of his followers.

### *Eternal Life*

The remarks of Jesus on the subject of death were not accurate. "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." [13] "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." [14]

Apparently Jesus referred to natural death, in which case he was utterly mistaken; but if he meant that believers in him should live forever in heaven, even so he gave a false impression; for there is no evidence that life after death is assured to Christians more than to others. Unbelievers were also to have eternal life, though in torment.

### *Raising Lazarus*

Jesus took advantage of opportunities, even of death, to create dramatic effects. The eleventh chapter of John shows that when Lazarus was reported ill, Jesus said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." So Jesus let Lazarus, one of the believers whom he loved, die [15] in order that he might have the triumph of raising him from the dead. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe."

The confusion between earthly death and loss of eternal life was shown in the remark of Jesus to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." This might be construed to mean that believers should have eternal life hereafter, but Jesus evidently had reference to life on earth for he proceeded to raise Lazarus from the dead and cause him to live again on earth with his sisters.

When Martha reminded Jesus that Lazarus had been dead four days, Jesus replied, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" But Jesus himself had doubts of his ability to bring back Lazarus to life, as shown by his spontaneous prayer of thanks: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." Then he revealed again his desire to dramatize the occasion, saying, "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." Do the followers of Jesus, who claim that he made no mistakes, believe on him? If so, they must believe that he raised Lazarus from the dead as he claimed to have done. Do they believe that they can also raise people from the dead? Jesus so assured them when he promised that believers could do greater works than he performed.

No, Jesus gave a false impression of his power.

### *God's Protection*

Jesus continued his deception of the world by promising protection that has never been accorded. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." [16]

These sayings may properly be taken as symbolical or allegorical; but the evident intention was to assure his followers that God would protect them in their daily life. Safety was promised for believers, a safety that has been lacking for everyone. There is no evidence that God does protect believers any more than unbelievers. When the Titanic went down, those who perished were not solely the wicked persons; there was no distinction in the terrible disaster between believers and unbelievers.

Jesus created in the minds of his hearers and his followers the idea that God was watching each individual to save him from danger, but this, unfortunately, is not a fact. It sounds comforting; it makes people feel nearer to God; but experience proves that no such close relationship exists. Jesus gave a false impression of God's loving care for men.

### *Belief in Prayer*

Modern religious people may still consistently believe in prayer as a form of inward aspiration, but it is difficult to take literally the assurance given by Jesus of practical accomplishments by means of prayer in his name.

Jesus did not confine himself to promising spiritual results from prayer, but distinctly gave it to be understood that the physical world would respond to petitions to Jehovah. "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." [17] "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." [18] "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." [19] "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you." [20]

These promises have not been fulfilled. Bishops, priests and deacons with strong faith have been unable to obtain, by means of the most sincere prayer, results similar to those indicated. They have followed Jesus in vain. No man living dare put his faith to the test by a public demonstration of prayer for physical changes. Christian prayers for rain are conventional, not being offered with confidence that rain will follow.

Jesus has misled us.

### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Matt. xii, 40.

[2] Luke xvii, 27; Matt. xxv, 38.

[3] Matt. iv, 17.

[4] Matt. x, 23.

[5] Matt. xvi, 28; Mark ix, 1.

[6] Matt. xxiv, 14-34; Luke xxi, 32.

[7] Mark i, 15.

[8] Mark xiii, 29-30.

[9] John v, 28-29.

[10] Matt. xi, 4-5.

[11] Mark xvi, 17-18.

[12] John xiv, 12.

[13] John viii, 51.

[14] John xi, 26.

[15] John xi, 6.

[16] Matt. x, 29-31.

[17] Matt. xviii, 19.

[18] Matt. xxi, 21-22.

[19] Mark xi, 24.

[20] Matt. xvii, 20.

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## OBSCURE TEACHINGS

Many of the sayings of Jesus lacked clarity. Various interpretations have been put upon them by scholars of distinction. No one is sure what was meant.

According to the gospels, Jesus was descended from David, but Jesus mystified his hearers on this descent, saying: "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"[1]

### *Witnesses and Judge*

On the subject of witnesses there is great confusion. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."[2] "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true."[3] "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me."[4] "I and my Father are one."[5] "My Father is greater than I."[6]

This and the following instruction regarding judicial procedure are far from clear. Jesus acknowledged the principle of law requiring more than one witness but said that in his case the only other witness necessary was his Father, although he and his Father were one.

Jesus is supposed to be the judge of the world, but his statement of the case leaves the issue ambiguous. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." [7] "I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true." [8] "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." [9] "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." [10]

The quality of reasoning employed in these instances has naturally led to theological quibbling. If Jesus can argue in that fashion, so can his followers, at the expense of intellectual honesty.

### *Cannibalism*

The Jews could not understand what Jesus meant when he said: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." [11]

### *Religion Only for Children*

Nor are these sayings clear: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." [12] "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." [13]

This train of thought implies that education is of no importance where belief is concerned.

### *Difficult or Easy?*

After enumerating the many hardships that must be endured by his followers, Jesus contradicted himself by saying, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." [14]

### *Charity*

There are apparent contradictions in his instructions regarding charity: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." [15] "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." [16]

### *The Scriptures Upheld*

Jesus revered the Hebrew Old Testament.

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

And yet Jesus was the reformer, overthrowing ancient customs, renouncing the old principle of a tooth for a tooth, improving upon the Mosaic law. He was inconsistent.

### *Illogical*

The logic of Jesus is often difficult to follow.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment,

because the prince of this world is judged."[18]

Jesus admitted his obscurity: "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father."[19]

That time has never come.

*Parables Deceptive*

Jesus explained his obscurity in this way: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand."[20] "But unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."[21]

In other words, Jesus, who said he came to save the world, concealed his meaning for fear some of his hearers should be converted and their sins be forgiven--which is exactly what he sought to bring about.

Obscurity in a teacher is a great defect, especially when he glories in his ambiguity. If any Christians wish that Jesus had been more clear, then Jesus does not appear perfect to them, and they should admit his imperfections.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Matt. xxii, 41-45.

[2] John v, 31.

[3] John viii, 14.

[4] John viii, 17-18.

[5] John x, 30.

[6] John xiv, 28.

[7] John v, 22.

[8] John viii, 16.

[9] John xii, 47.

[10] John x, 39.

[11] John vi, 53-58.

[12] Matt. xi, 25.

[13] Mark x, 15.

[14] Matt. xi, 30.

[15] Matt. v, 16.

[16] Matt. vi, 1.

[17] Matt. v, 17-18.

[18] John xvi, 8-11.

[19] John xvi, 25.

[20] Luke viii, 10.

[21] Mark iv, 11-12.

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### DEFICIENT INSTRUCTIONS

In a number of instances the teachings of Jesus are so incomplete, or so inappropriate, as to render no assistance in meeting similar situations in modern life. Either his meaning is not clear, or his instructions are too primitive to be applicable to our civilization.

#### *Labor*

The relation between employer and employee is one that requires practical guidance. Let us see what information Jesus gave on this important subject.

The parable of the laborers[1] relates that an employer hired men to work in his vineyard for twelve hours for a penny, and that he paid the same wage to other workers who toiled only nine, six, three and one hour. When those who had worked longest resented this treatment, as modern strikers would, the employer answered, apparently with Jesus' approval: "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last."

This parable may be a comfort to autocratic employers, sustaining them in their determination to dominate labor, but the principles enunciated are lacking in social vision. Equal pay for unequal work is approved, and the employer is vindicated in regulating wages and hours as he sees fit without regard for justice or the needs of the workers. In the manner of modern employers, the "goodman" calls his worker "Friend" but treats him with contempt. Jesus taught that the workers were wrong in demanding justice, that the employer was justified in acting erratically, as the money paid was his. He presented the issues between capital and labor and sided with capital. He stated the fact that the first shall be last, but said nothing to remedy that unfortunate situation. He did not explain how workers could obtain proper compensation for their labor.

Jesus assumed a fair attitude when he said, "The labourer is worthy of his hire", and, "It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his lord", but he continued with doubtful logic: "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household", implying that if an employer is worldly-minded his servants will be even worse.

Little respect is shown for employees in the remark, "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." [2] Probably in those days as now many an employee stuck to his post nobly to do his duty.

The meaning is obscure in his other comment upon an employer who told his tired servant to serve his master first, ending with the enigma, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." [3]

*Usury*

In the parable of the talents the servant who did not put his money out at usury to make profits was condemned: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [4] Punishment was to be severe in Jesus' program; the disobedient servant "shall be beaten with many stripes." Jesus did not advise leniency in such instances except that "he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." [5] In his estimation the servant was a slave to be punished corporeally by his master, even if ignorant of his wrong-doing.

A Dr. Taylor, former Yale College theologian, is reported to have said: "I have no doubt that if Jesus Christ were now on earth he would, under certain circumstances, become a slaveholder." A Southern divine in 1860 could well maintain that slavery was approved in both Old and New Testaments, but no Christian would now impute slaveholding to Jesus. The standard of human relationships has improved since slaveholding days in America. The modern attitude toward servants, though by no means perfect, is superior to the relationships between master and servants accepted by Jesus. Slavery was the custom of the times and Jesus did not rise above it.

In the parable of the unmerciful servant [6] Jesus taught the duty of forgiveness. He rightly rebuked the servant who oppressed his subordinates after being well treated by his lord. But the punishment suggested by Jesus for the abominable conduct was extremely harsh: "And his lord was wroth and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." Torture for criminals was thus taught by Jesus.

Jesus, apprenticed to his father in his youth, never did any practical work so far as we know. He lived on the charity of others, setting an example that would bring trouble to anyone who followed in his train. If anything, he was an agitator, a peripatetic propagandist, teaching what he believed right but not working to support himself and therefore not being a good example for the workaday world today.

*Economics*

Nothing in the teachings of Jesus was more definite than his denunciation of riches.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ... A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ... The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments ... Woe unto you that are rich."

These strictures upon the rich appear somewhat severe, and Jesus went much farther, condemning even ordinary thrift and precaution. [7]

According to Acts ii, 44-45 and iv, 32, "All that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need ... Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

It is to be presumed that the disciples practiced this communism at the instruction of Jesus. If Jesus approved of communism was he right or wrong?

"Blessed be ye poor." [8]

Poverty is not a blessing but a curse. Jesus taught the theory that the poor would be rich hereafter while the rich would be in hell.

*Punishment for Debts*

We have seen that Jesus expected an unjust servant to be tormented until he paid in full. There are also other evidences that he approved of imprisonment for debt. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." [9]

A legislator who patterned his life after Jesus would be justified in enacting laws imprisoning for debt and scourging for misdemeanors.

Some may say that the sentiments expressed by Jesus were not mistakes but merely presented the customs of his day. Possibly he did not intend to advise all that he seemed to approve; but if Jesus was a practical and prophetic guide he should have made it clear that he did not sanction the actions he apparently commended.

In the parable of the pounds the nobleman, seemingly with the approval of Jesus, denounced the servant as wicked who did not put his lord's money in the bank to draw interest. [10] And in the parable of the talents the lord rewarded those who had made 100 per cent profit through speculation. [11]

Another contradiction of his theory of the blessedness of poverty was his promise that those who followed him "shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." [12]

Finally, Jesus stated the unfortunate truth, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that he hath." [13] If Jesus did not approve of that worldly method of distribution, he could have denounced its injustice instead of leaving the comment as if it expressed his own policy.

### *Healing*

Many Christians value Jesus most for his healing powers, but Jesus looked upon disease almost as he did upon demoniacal possession, as something evil that could be cast out. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." [14] There was confusion in his mind between sin and sickness.

Jesus healed leprosy and palsy by touching the sick person; he healed the servant of the centurion by absent treatment, and restored sight by spitting on the eyes [15] or anointing them with clay made with spittle [16], or by requiring faith. [17] He healed a withered hand, cured impediments in speech and deafness, all without medical applications, even replacing an ear severed by a sword. [18]

Christian Scientists practice the same methods with confidence in success, but medical and surgical treatment are the most reliable means of effecting cures, disappointing as they are. If Jesus could cure disease, it was remiss of him not to instruct men definitely in his methods so that the suffering from illness that has afflicted the world could have been averted.

Jesus did not isolate the germ of leprosy, or establish any practicable method of preventing disease. He has been of less value to the world as a healer than Pasteur, Lister, Koch, or Walter Reed.

Some Christians will say that Jesus did not tell us how to avoid illness because man needs to be chastened by pain. If that is correct, if pain and disease are sent by God and are consciously permitted by Jesus, sick people should be allowed to suffer instead of trying to heal them.

### *Peace*

Jesus has been called the Prince of Peace, but the weight of his testimony is not on the side of absolute pacifism. With his view of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, it is possible that he would have advised young men to obey the state and enlist, or accept the draft, whenever their country called.

On November 12, 1931, Rev. Dr. T. Andrew Caraker said at a banquet of the American Legion in Baltimore that if Jesus Christ had lived in 1917 He would have been the first to volunteer in the American army, the first to wear a gas mask, shoulder a rifle and enter the trenches.

Other ministers derive from the same gospels the belief that Jesus would not have stabbed Germans with a bayonet. Nor would Jesus have advised others to fight if he had been unwilling to fight himself.

Most of the sayings of Jesus regarding violence or non-resistance were intended to apply chiefly to personal relationships; he said little of international strife. What he did say showed placid acceptance of the war system:

"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." [19]

"And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." [20]

"But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." [21]

These verses have a more direct bearing on war as we now know it than any of his other sayings. They show his belief in the inevitability of war. Apparently he did not feel himself competent to counteract general mass militarism. He offered no program for arbitration of international disputes, no substitute for war between nations, no policy of war resistance.

When Jesus advised non-resistance, saying to his follower, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," [22] he was merely stating the danger of using violence, not the immorality of employing force. In fact, he commanded his disciples to take the very sword which he later told them to sheathe: "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one ... And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." [23]

Thus Jesus, the supposed non-resistant, prepared his followers with swords. These swords were for defense, and when the time came he repudiated even that use of the weapons, but, nevertheless, he armed his disciples instead of adhering to his principle of non-resistance. He did not set a positive example of disarmament.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers ... love your enemies ... Have peace one with another ... On earth peace, good will toward men ... Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ... These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace ... Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Other remarks of Jesus favored violence: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." [24] "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." [25] "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." [26] "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." [27] "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." [28] "And when he had made a scourge of

small cords, he drove them all out of the temple."[29]

In determining whether or not Jesus was a promoter of peace it is only reasonable to review everything that he said or did relating to the use of violence, giving equal weight to every verse. We cannot accept one statement and reject the others. The conclusion reached must be that Jesus was inconsistent in advocating both non-resistance and the use of force. He took diametrically opposed positions, the use of swords and scourges and non-resistance being mutually exclusive. Jesus preached non-resistance and at the same time armed his retainers with two swords. He advocated turning the other cheek but did not criticize war. Therefore, pacifists and militarists, with their opposite philosophies, should both admit that at times Jesus was mistaken.

### *Marriage*

Jesus occasionally eulogized marriage: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh ... What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."[30]

### *Celibacy*

On other occasions he made remarks which indicated his preference for celibacy as the higher state, the one he adopted for himself. "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."[31] "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage."[32] "I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."[33] "There are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."[34] "There is no man that hath left ... wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."[35]

Jesus referred to the absence of marriage in heaven, the ideal realm. Paul's testimony adds to the evidence that Jesus considered celibacy preferable to any form of sex expression, even marriage.

### *Adultery*

On the other hand, Jesus was tolerant of sex offenses. He chatted in a friendly manner with the woman of Samaria, saying: "Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."[36] And about the woman taken in adultery he said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her ... Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more."[37] "The harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."[38]

### *Divorce*

Jesus sanctioned divorce. His followers are so annoyed at this fact that they frequently quote the verse on the subject with the offensive clause omitted. The text reads: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."[39] Again in Matthew xix, 9, he makes the same exception. It is evident, therefore, that Jesus permitted divorce for one cause. If the wife was unfaithful the husband could divorce her, but otherwise no matter how unhappy the couple might be, they must remain married.

The admirable leniency of Jesus toward sex offenders, and his permission to divorce, must seem like mistakes to churchmen who consider extramarital sex relations the unforgivable sin. And everyone must see the danger

of having our judges adopt as a principle of justice the dismissal of offenders on the ground that the prosecutors have also sinned.

A Christian girl of today would not be encouraged by the most zealous religious parents to marry a man exactly like Jesus.

### *Faulty Judgment*

Jesus selected Judas to be the treasurer of the apostles' joint funds, but later admitted his error, saying: "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve." [40]

Jesus erroneously supposed that "salvation is of the Jews." [41] "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [42] A nationalistic and partial spirit is expressed in these sentences, a spirit that has been followed to the extent that Jesus would not be permitted to enter America if he applied for a visa.

### *Unconvincing*

Jesus failed in his mission to save the world. He made the supreme sacrifice in vain. His method of proving his divinity did not convince his hearers: "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him." [43] "For neither did his brethren believe in him." [44] After he had healed many, cast out unclean spirits and appointed his twelve apostles to do likewise, his friends "went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself." [45]

Jesus admitted his impotence as a human being when he said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." [46] Even with the assistance of his Father he did not accomplish what he set out to do.

### *Prohibition*

The miracle of turning water into wine, providing one hundred gallons of wine after the people at the party had "well drunk", must appear to prohibitionists like a mistake on the part of Jesus. Many Methodists and Baptists would have preferred to have him turn the wine into water; yet they will not admit that Jesus made a mistake.

### *Lack of Experience*

So far as the gospels relate, Jesus never had any experience with three of the chief difficulties of human life--sex, earning a living and illness. He was therefore less able to explain those relationships than one who has struggled through in the customary manner of mankind. To take the inexperienced Jesus as our guide in practical living would be like a traveller who was planning a trip over perilous mountains and engaged as a guide a man who had never crossed the mountains.

As Jesus believed that the end of the world was approaching, and as he revealed no information about the future, his teachings should be taken as applying solely to his own time. A divinity living now would preach far differently from the inadequate doctrines of Jesus.

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The abandonment of reliance upon a Jesus who has not changed in nineteen hundred years, in favor of an Evolutionary philosophy that requires constant change, leads to a new conception of the world and its possibilities for man. A person who has thought himself out of antiquated theology may be expected to have

an open mind towards the betterment of human customs.

Every improvement in human relationships originates secularly and is adopted by the Church only after a bitter struggle. Faith in Jesus is a reactionary force. The Christian opposes change in the creations of God; the Evolutionist seeks to alter every unsatisfactory condition. The Evolutionist is more responsive than the orthodox Christian to proposals for promoting the happiness of the human race. Many liberals have abandoned conservatism because they saw the hypocrisy in Christianity.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Matt. xx, 1-16.

[2] John x, 13.

[3] Luke xvii, 10.

[4] Matt. xxv, 30.

[5] Luke xii, 47-48.

[6] Matt. xviii, 23-34.

[7] Matt. vi, 25-31, discussed under the Sermon on the Mount.

[8] Luke vi, 20.

[9] Matt. v, 25-26.

[10] Luke xix, 23.

[11] Matt. xxv, 20.

[12] Mark x, 30.

[13] Matt. xiii, 12.

[14] Matt. ix, 6.

[15] Mark viii, 23.

[16] John ix, 6.

[17] Mark x, 52.

[18] Luke xxii, 51.

[19] Matt. xxiv, 6-7.

[20] Mark xiii, 7-8.

[21] Luke xxi, 9-10.

[22] Matt. xxvi, 52.

[23] Luke xxii, 36-38.

[24] Matt. x, 34.

[25] Luke xii, 51.

[26] Luke xix, 27.

[27] John xviii, 36.

[28] Luke xi, 21-22.

[29] John ii, 15.

[30] Matt. xix, 5-6.

[31] Matt. xxii, 30.

[32] Luke xx, 34-35.

[33] Matt. v, 28.

[34] Matt. xix, 12.

[35] Luke xviii, 29-30.

[36] John iv, 18.

[37] John viii, 7-11.

[38] Matt. xxi, 31.

[39] Matt. v, 31-32.

[40] John vi, 70-71.

[41] John iv, 22.

[42] Matt. x, 5-6.

[43] John xii, 37.

[44] John vii, 5.

[45] Mark iii, 21.

[46] John v, 30.

Orthodox Christians accept both Old and New Testaments as authority for their actions, whereas Modernists are not much concerned with the commands of Jehovah but maintain that Jesus is the pattern for their lives. Religious liberals feel that the troubles of the world come largely from failure to follow the teachings of the Nazarene. They look upon him as the perfect example of what a man should be. In their opinion, if everyone would act as Jesus did all would be well.

On December 7, 1931, Dr. Henry Van Dyke preached at the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City, that the way to end the financial depression was to act as Jesus would: "We can judge only by what he did and said in the first century, an age not so different from our own, an age of unsettlement, violence, drunkenness and license. Christ would tell us not to yield to panic.... Christ would not tell us to join any political party or social group...."

Such a sermon sounds encouraging but, as a matter of fact, Jesus has not shown any of his ministers how to end the depression. To trust him for guidance in our modern world is to pin faith on an incompetent instructor. We can learn how to end the depression by examining the records of our own time and by correcting the errors that have been made. It is not safe to rely upon a person who had no knowledge of America's practical needs and whose acts and advice regarding worldly affairs in Jerusalem fell short of the best ethical values.

In this treatise it has been shown that Jesus made mistakes. Every instance cited may not appeal to all readers as worthy of criticism, but there can be no doubt in the mind of any honest thinker that several at least of Jesus' ideas were erroneous. His theology was filled with superstitions, his cosmology was that of the pre-scientific era, he expected the end of the world within a generation, his conception of sin was theological rather than ethical, he failed to convince his hearers by his oratory, he exaggerated the results from prayer and he related parables that gave a false sense of values.

Now we shall turn to his personal character and teachings to see if he was always the meek, gentle soul portrayed by the conventional Christ.

### *Cursing Nature*

The act in Jesus' life that has been most difficult for theologians to explain was the cursing of the fig tree. The tree was created to bear fruit in the Summer, but when Jesus found it without fruit in the Spring, he cursed it so that it withered away.

"Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, and when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away." [1] "For the time of figs was not yet." [2]

This episode involves several mistakes--ignorance of the seasons; destruction of a profitable food-producing tree; exhibition of temper when thwarted, and giving false information regarding man's power to effect physical changes by a curse. [3]

If Jesus acted unwisely in this one instance and was right in all others, he is neither an infallible God nor a perfect pattern for mankind.

### *Forgiveness*

The conventional Jesus is emblematic of supreme kindness and forgiveness, but in reality he was far from lenient in many instances, nor did he advocate forgiveness for certain offenses.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee ... tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." [4]

In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, Abraham was represented as justified in not forgiving the rich man tortured in hell, or even in saving the rich man's brothers as requested by the victim of Jesus' policy of punishment.

Again Jesus said: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father." [5]  
"Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness." [6]

All the wicked were condemned by Jesus to eternal punishment with no chance of forgiveness.

### *Vituperation*

Jesus was often vehement in his language to an extent hardly compatible with gentleness of character.

"O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things?" [7]

"Woe unto you, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves." [8]

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" [9]

"If I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you." [10]

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers." [11]

"Ye fools and blind." [12]

This language may have been necessary, in Jesus' opinion, to convince his hearers of their sins, but such vituperation does not become a modern ethical teacher.

### *Destruction of Property*

Two acts of Jesus, consistent with his disregard of worldly goods, were destructive in character.

"And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters." [13]

Jesus did what the devils requested, cruelly killing two thousand inoffensive valuable animals that belonged to other people.

"Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables."

Jesus has been defended for other acts on the ground that he was living in less civilized times than our own, but here he is seen offending both ancient and modern sensibilities. The destruction of the swine and the routing of the merchants were sensational and erratic exhibitions. If reformers today should destroy herds of animals, except to protect public health by due process of law, or overthrow banks, they would be liable to arrest in any city of Christendom. Therefore the consensus of opinion denies exoneration to Jesus for his spasmodic resort to direct action.

*Egotism*

If Jesus was not God, but merely the ideal man, his estimate of himself was excessive. In addition to his remarks already quoted there are many other instances of an exaggerated ego.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." [14]

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." [15]

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." [16]

"I am the light of the world." [17]

"I am the Son of God." [18]

"I am the resurrection and the life." [19]

If Jesus was correct in claiming that he was the Messiah, if he could control the elements and send people to heaven or hell, he was justified in any extreme remarks; but not if he were merely a man. Every person is entitled to have as good an opinion of himself as his character and ability warrant, but expressions of his own worth are unseemly even if true, and are inexcusable if exaggerated. As Jesus himself said (though this authority is only for believers) testimony about oneself is unreliable.

Jesus not only claimed to be more than a man, he threatened his hearers with death if they did not agree with him. All of which might be permissible if he were God, but was an egotistical illusion if he was merely human.

*Lack of Courtesy*

Jesus did not always exhibit the courtesy one would expect of a gentleman, or even of a nature's nobleman.

The first instance of lack of consideration was when he slipped away from his parents, causing them unnecessary anxiety: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." [20] He had remained behind to study Hebrew theology and did not tell his parents, presumably because he thought they would not have permitted the venture.

Another instance was found in his daily life:

"A certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools ..." [21]

Jesus had not only failed to wash as was expected of a guest, but defended his uncleanness and abused his host.

At another time Jesus was discourteous to his mother:

"And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?" [22]

Jesus was apparently annoyed at his mother's interference, though he followed her suggestion. He did not set a good example for children in addressing their mothers.

When the Syrophenician woman asked him to help her daughter, "Jesus saith unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." [23]

Jesus practically admitted that he had made a mistake in speaking unkindly to a Gentile. Her clever answer induced him to change his decision. A physician who called a stranger's child a dog would now be considered brutal even in a free hospital.

"And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." [24]

Jesus could have allowed the man to attend his father's funeral and follow him later. Would not that have set a better precedent?

When Peter intervened to protect Jesus, the latter "turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me." [25]

Even though Jesus was determined to go on with the sacrifice, he could have been more appreciative of his best friend's suggestion.

#### *Unethical Advice*

When the unjust steward cheated his employer, Jesus gave the following remarkable advice:

"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." [26]

This passage should be read again before deciding whether Jesus advised opportunism rather than morality. The words must be taken as they are; no interpretation can be based upon the assumption that Jesus was always right and therefore meant something different from what he said.

#### *Sermon on the Mount*

Many Christians say that they care nothing for theology; that the Sermon on the Mount contains all that is necessary for a religious life, being a perfect system of ethics.

The Sermon on the Mount does contain many admirable principles, but also some that are inferior to present standards. Few of the people who praise this Sermon would think it proper to abide by all the teachings therein. Christian parents do not wish their children to follow either the letter or the spirit of this famous preachment. It begins in the fifth chapter of Matthew.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." Is it better to be poor in spirit than rich and eager in spirit? Being poor in spirit is to be faint of heart. This is bad advice, is it not?

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." This means that those who mourn on earth will be comforted in heaven; but now that life on earth has assumed greater importance, so far as our daily conduct is concerned, than life in heaven, the philosophy of gloom is unfortunate. Jesus preached acceptance of

unhappiness as the common lot of man; he should not therefore be credited with providing happiness on earth. His urge to rejoice was usually in anticipation of good things to come in the next world. He preached sorrow for all here rather than the greater happiness for the greater number.

"There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake ... and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." [27]

"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." [28]

The beatitude, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" is of doubtful accuracy or value.

The commands to pluck out an eye or cut off a hand may not have been intended literally, although it does appear as if Jesus referred to the physical body, and men have often so interpreted these doubtful instructions.

Jesus said that "Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery", which is no longer true. Those who permit remarriage after divorce should admit an error on Jesus' part.

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil." This instruction should be reversed, should it not? Evil should be resisted in every possible way that does not involve evil in itself. What modern ethical teacher will say that evil should not be resisted, or that this advice of Jesus was perfection? If his instruction was intended to refer to physical resistance, then no righteous person should fight in any war, no police should be delegated to arrest criminals. If the phrase has merely a spiritual meaning, it is certainly unsound advice, for evil should be overcome by good.

A fanatical attitude towards the law was recommended when Jesus said: "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Extreme generosity and non-resistance are taught, but the illustration was not well thought out, for if the man had already won his suit and taken the coat, it is evident that the owner of the coat had put up a legal fight instead of giving away his coat and cloak as Jesus implies he should. Yielding more than a legal opponent wins in court is not compatible with defending the suit, nor is it a principle that would meet the approval of most of Jesus' followers today.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." If Jesus referred to Jehovah as his Father in heaven, the standard of perfection advocated was very low, for Jehovah was, as Thomas Jefferson put it, "cruel, vindictive, capricious and unjust."

The Lord's Prayer is not the simple, clear, devotional petition that is usually supposed. Take it literally, as was undoubtedly intended, and its irrelevance to actual life is at once apparent.

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." This is a proper invocation only if there is a heaven in which God's will is done. None such has been discovered.

"Give us this day our daily bread" indicates that God would not give our daily sustenance without being asked, whereas there is no apparent distinction in actual living between those who pray for bread and those who do not.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" intimates that divine forgiveness is not to be superior to that of men.

"And lead us not into temptation"--as if God were anxious to lead us there and would be deterred by our

prayer.

It may seem like petty cavil to criticize the prayer that has been acclaimed for many centuries as ideal, but, seriously, what valuable principle for guidance through life does the Lord's Prayer contain? Do its requests represent the best modern conception of prayer as an inward aspiration rather than as petitionary? Is it not vain repetition to recite it again and again?

The general idea of offering prayer in order to obtain various needs presents the difficulty of reconciling the conception of an omnipotent, all-foreseeing God with the contradictory theory of a Father who requires prayer before caring for his children, an almighty God who will be turned from his course by human petitions. Man can do wonders in the way of conquering nature, but he has not been able to alter natural laws, nor is there any evidence that such laws have been changed at any time in answer to prayer.

If the Lord's Prayer is not essential for man's welfare in the world, we may conclude that Jesus over-emphasized its importance.

One of the most important portions of the Sermon on the Mount is the advice regarding worldly possessions. Nothing in the teaching of Jesus is more definite than his instructions regarding wealth. He strikes an admirable note when he says, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ... A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." This general principle is sadly needed in the modern money-seeking world, but the teachings of Jesus on economics go much further, far beyond anything the best people of today are willing to follow.

"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 ... Take therefore no thought for the morrow." [29]

These commands, taken literally as Jesus intended, would lead to infinite trouble. Men are obliged to take thought for the morrow; if they do not they will fail to survive. In Jesus' plan provision for the earthly future was of no importance because of the imminence of eternal life, but now it is considered one's duty to provide for old age.

This mistake of Jesus cannot be explained away by saying that Jesus was right and that man falls short of the counsel of perfection given by the Master. No, there are few indeed who will say that it would be right to shape their financial life as Jesus advised. If they do not believe it right to follow his instructions, definite as they are on this subject, they must admit that he was wrong. Either thrift is now unrighteous, or Jesus is not a dependable guide for modern life.

The following instructions have little meaning now except for Roman Catholics. "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

Another portion of the Sermon holds out false hopes that cannot be substantiated: "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth." Is there any virtue in thus deceiving the people regarding the possibilities of prayer?

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the famous Golden Rule that has been heralded as one of the most original portions of Jesus' teachings. But Jesus admitted that he did not first state this rule when he said, "for this is the law and the prophets." [30]

Confucius, born in 551 B.C., several times announced the rule, "What you do not like when done to yourself, do not to others." This negative statement is less effective than the Jewish rule, but both are admirable regardless of who first formulated them. The Golden Rule is as valuable coming from the Hebrew fathers as if

Jesus had originated it.

The Golden Rule, however, is not perfect. It is one of the best rules of the ancients, showing the desirability of reciprocity, but it does not demand that our desires be always just, nor does it insure that what we want done to ourselves will always be what others most need. It would be consistent with the Golden Rule for a convivial man to entertain his prohibition friends at a speakeasy, or for a Catholic to take his atheist guests to daily mass. Possibly an even better rule than judging others by ourselves would be to do unto others what best pleases them.

### *Inconsistency*

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."[31]

Apparently the arrangement between Jehovah and Jesus was that Jesus should not give himself up as a sacrifice voluntarily but should be betrayed by someone else; and yet, although the betrayal was desired, the man who assisted was to be condemned.

The sacrificial plan for salvation was continued to the end in order that "the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." [32] The scriptures were Jewish, so this is additional proof that Jesus, rejected by the Jews, considered himself the predicted Jewish Messiah. While the Jews expected a Messiah, there is no clear prediction of Jesus in the Old Testament.

### *Fear*

Jesus said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body"; but when threatened with bodily injury himself, he was afraid. "Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself." [33] "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence." [34]

This avoidance of physical injury may have been due to a desire to postpone his end until the proper time, as indicated by "Mine hour is not yet come", but when the time did come, Jesus did not bear his approaching death bravely, as Socrates did when about to drink the cup of hemlock. Jesus was much afraid, "and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." [35]

He was resolved to go through with the painful experience at any cost but was much more frightened than many a mortal man, though he had a greater cause to sustain him than martyrs who have suffered uncomplainingly; for he believed that his sacrifice would save the world: "and there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." [36]

After saying, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified ... He that loveth his life shall lose it", he again showed terror: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour, but for this cause came I unto this hour." [37]

It is to be noted that God did not answer the prayer of Jesus, though Jesus had said that God would always answer prayers in his name. Jesus recognized his failure to obtain the answer, saying on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [38]

### *Failure*

Many a good man is a failure from a worldly point of view, but failure is not what one would wish to copy.

Jesus sought to save the world. Surely no one looking at the world today can say that he succeeded. His plan of salvation was a failure; it did not work out as Jehovah and Jesus intended. An ideal teacher is needed now almost as much as two thousand years ago. If the world is gradually improving, as seems probable, it is in spite of the superstitions of the past, not because of them.

At one time Jesus denied his own perfection, saying: "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." [39]

Christian parents who hold Jesus up to their children as a paragon would not wish their sons to grow up to be just like Jesus. He is not an acceptable prototype.

Jesus did not provide the knowledge so much needed by man to enable him to shape his course through life. No one knows how to live correctly, how best to meet each situation, what action is suited to the occasion. Jesus did not tell us what to do. His sayings are interpreted in many different ways. He failed to predict the needs of the future.

Jesus did not explain relations between man and wife, nor between employer and employee, nor how to educate children, nor how to preserve health, nor how to make a living, nor how to prevent war, poverty and suffering. Jesus gave little practical information, and his spiritual advice was not clearly enough expressed to enable man to apply it to modern conditions. Jesus neglected to instruct people how to live. His knowledge of the world was less than that of the average American citizen.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[1] Matt. xxi, 18-19.

[2] Mark xi, 13.

[3] Mark xi, 20-23.

[4] Matt. xviii, 15-17.

[5] Matt. x, 33.

[6] Mark iii, 29.

[7] Matt. xii, 34.

[8] Matt. xxiii, 15.

[9] Matt. xxiii, 33.

[10] John viii, 55.

[11] John x, 8.

[12] Matt. xxiii, 17.

[13] Matt. viii, 28-34; Mark v, 13; Luke viii, 26-34.

[14] Luke xiv, 26.

[15] John xi, 26.

[16] John viii, 24.

[17] John viii, 12.

[18] John x, 36.

[19] John xi, 25.

[20] Luke ii, 48.

[21] Luke xi, 37-40.

[22] John ii, 4.

[23] Mark vii, 25-29.

[24] Matt. viii, 21-22.

[25] Matt. xvi, 23.

[26] Luke xvi, 1-9.

[27] Matt. xxiv, 7-13.

[28] Luke vi, 21.

[29] Matt. vi, 25-34.

[30] Matt. vii, 12.

[31] Matt. xxvi, 24.

[32] Matt. xxvi, 56.

[33] John viii, 59.

[34] Matt. xii, 14-15.

[35] Luke xxii, 42.

[36] Luke xxii, 44.

[37] John xii, 23-27.

[38] Mark xv, 34.

[39] Matt. xix, 17.

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CONCLUSION

The historicity of Jesus has been discussed in many books and pamphlets. Whether Jesus lived or not depends upon what is meant by that phrase. If one is satisfied that there was a peripatetic philosopher named Jesus who was the son of a woman named Mary and who lived and taught around Jerusalem, uttering some, but not all, of the words attributed to him, then Jesus may be said to have lived. There can be no serious objection to the acceptance of that Jesus as an actual personage even though he was ignored by secular historians and though the time and place of his birth and death are in doubt.

On the other hand, if there never was such a person as the Jesus described in the New Testament--a man born of a virgin, superior to natural laws, able to walk on the water, and change the course of nature, performing miracles, casting out devils, a man who never erred, who was crucified, rose from the dead and ascended bodily into heaven where he now sits to judge the world--if there was no such man-God as the Jesus of the gospels, some may hesitate to say that Jesus ever lived.

### *Jesus a Myth*

Sincere Evolutionists who discredit miracles, must needs consider the gospel Jesus as a myth. This does not mean that Jesus had no reality, but that the original facts have been so enlarged upon that the principal features of his life are more fanciful than real. If you eliminate from the life of Jesus as unhistorical his birth, his miracles, his theological teachings, his resurrection, ascension and messianic mission, the Christ no longer exists. Jesus would have attracted no attention were it not for the very circumstances which Modernists admit were mythical.

### *Judged by His Works*

Whether Jesus was God, or man, or myth, he can be judged by his works, as he himself recommended. If he is found to be perfect in word and deed, it makes little difference whether he lived or not. As a symbol he can be revered and copied. But if Jesus is now seen to be the product of his times, representing the virtues and defects of his biographers, with no vision beyond their ken, his authority is gone.

Not only will the divinity of Jesus be discredited if he was found to have been occasionally in error, but his value as a guide to life will be impaired. What will be the result of this radical change? None of the beautiful ideals or sound ethical principles attributed to Jesus will be lost. Not one saying or counsel of valuable advice need go. Not one evil thought need take the place of that which was good. In fact, the finest qualities of existence will be more vital in our lives when their realization becomes of primary importance instead of being subordinate to worship of the supernatural. Principles are superior to persons. A dead personality remains unchanged; live ethical principles can be developed by more complete knowledge of evolutionary processes.

### *Ethical Evolution*

Evolution has been progressing along ethical as well as physical lines. To the teachings of Jesus, once considered perfection, have been added many newly discovered principles of value, for knowledge is cumulative. All the best thoughts of the ages are ours forever, no matter who first originated or expressed them.

Whatever the plan of the universe may be, it is more nearly comprehended now than in Jesus' time. Twentieth century events are more dependable in forming our philosophy of life than those of the first century. The failure to grasp this fact is the death knell of orthodox religion. Every existing religious sect has founded its spirituality upon events supposed to have occurred in the past. Christianity depends upon the direct creation, fall of man and life of an atoning Savior, all physical in character. Our new metaphysics will be based upon conditions existing today and that will be revealed by science in the future. The geologists, embryologists, biologists and astronomers of 1932 have more information about nature than Jesus had. On that knowledge

can be founded a system of living superior to the Sermon on the Mount.

Our own time is the most dependable era of revelation. We can safely accept whatever stands accredited after thorough examination, including all teachings of Jesus that are admirable. A modern person with religious zeal has confidence that the world is ordered along consistent lines and will respond favorably to man's best efforts to solve the true way of living. The scientific mind and the religious spirit are complementary. Religion, instead of being a system of handed-down sanctity, may become an inspired revelation to each individual--a religion of the spirit of the modern world.

As the spirit derived from Truth is superior to that based upon credulity, the new doctrines that supplant the old may be expected to excel any that have preceded them. Anyone may be as spiritual as the proved facts permit.

If the world has been improving physically and ethically, we can have confidence that whatever knowledge is necessary for our salvation is available to each of us now. No living God has died; no great principle has been lost. Instead of depending upon Jesus in an unthinking manner, we must seek the Truth wherever it is found and follow wherever it may lead regardless of consequences. This requires more courage than professing Jesus, whose teachings can be construed to mean whatever the reader desires. While the majority regard Jesus as an ascetic, a reformer, opposed to business and joviality, Bruce Barton has convinced thousands that Jesus was the great business man, rotarian and advertiser.

#### *Gains, not Losses*

Among the compensations that may supplant the loss of Jesus as an ideal are the thrill at being a pioneer in striving for the welfare of the human race rather than for individual salvation; the satisfaction at having a consistent creed that can be maintained against all criticism without hypocrisy or evasion; emancipation from inhibitions required by a supposedly divine teacher. Every pleasure is not a sin, but rejection of theology does not imply indifference to evil. Science warns against excess as strongly as any ancient command. The fear of natural or man-decreed punishment in this world is as potent as the dread of eternal torment threatened by Jesus.

If Jesus really was the sort of personage described in the Bible; if he really was born of a virgin, controlled the elements and had power to condemn unbelievers to eternal damnation, all people should obey his every word. He should be followed literally; we should sell all our possessions and take no thought for the morrow. But if Jesus was not that sort of a person; if he was neither a supernatural God nor an infallible man, he should not be worshipped as a redeeming Savior nor be followed as a true guide for human conduct.

Our faith shifts with careful examination of the scriptures from belief in Jesus to confidence that the world is a far pleasanter abode than Jesus imagined. Without reliance upon the authority of Jesus we can adopt a code which will prove comparatively effective in leading towards a wholesome life.

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#### CODE OF LIVING

1. Keep the body strong that the most efficient work may be done, the greatest happiness obtained during life and a wholesome inheritance passed on to future generations.
2. Cultivate the mind, learning as many important facts as possible, striving to become expert in some particular field of endeavor.
3. Develop a scientific spirit, the essential characteristic of which is a search for Truth in the light of evidence and reason. Do not deceive yourself or others.

4. Base your spiritual concepts on the latest developments of Evolution. Be prepared to change your philosophy to conform to the consensus of scientific opinion.
5. Conduct all human relationships in a spirit of tolerance and love, having proper consideration for others, not presuming to control their lives.
6. Treat the opposite sex honorably, respecting their complementary qualities, with due regard for succeeding generations.
7. Endeavor to embody in the laws of the community the spirit of equity and progress.
8. Strive for an economic system under which each individual shall be rewarded according to his or her value to society.
9. Avoid the use of physical force for personal revenge or national aggrandizement, having learned from experience that reason triumphs while brutality degrades.
10. Hold yourself in readiness to accept new revelations.

\* \* \* \* \*

Luther Burbank wrote concerning the above code on November 11, 1925:

*"I am greatly pleased with your code of living ... The false ancient theology has past or is rapidly passing with intelligent people at the present time. It is not applicable to our conditions and is of no more value than a worn-out suit of clothes."*

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