1927

The element of paradox in the teachings of Jesus

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/5859

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THE ELEMENT OF PARADOX IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS
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(B.S. Mc Kendree, 1915)
(S.T.B. B.U.S.T., 1924)
In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts.
1927.
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The Element of Paradox
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I. Introduction.
A. Is there paradox in the teachings of Jesus?

The method of a workman is always subordinate to the results which he obtains. His tools are only a means to an end. This is true whether the workman be a carpenter or a teacher, and whether the tools employed be the hammer, saw, square, and plumb line, or the various literary forms such as poetry, drama, story, parable or apocalypse. But to appreciate the finished product it is more necessary to understand the tools of the teacher than those of the builder. The poet, for example, does not confine himself to matter-of-fact modes of expression. A certain freedom known as "poetic licence" enters into his work, and a poem cannot be rightly understood apart from an appreciation of the poet's art.

The literature of the Bible illustrates this truth. When Joshua was leading the Israelites against the Amorites he is quoted as saying, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon: and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." In the King James version this is printed as prose narrative, and as such it is commonly regarded either as a miracle or as a mistake. A literal interpretation of the words is contrary to modern scientific
views of the solar system, and causes honest doubts in the minds of seekers after truth. Scholars who prepared the American Revised version have come to our relief in this instance, as in others, by showing that the words were really intended as poetry. Instantly our difficulty is cleared away, for the poet does not confine himself to scientific statements as does the historian. Poetic licence permits him to speak a language of his own. When we read, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera", we understand again that a poet is speaking. We see, then, that an appreciation of the nature of poetry and the habits of the poet is necessary for an understanding of the bible.

Jesus used various literary forms and methods in his teaching. From the foregoing suggestions it is apparent that an understanding of these forms and methods is necessary for an understanding of the gospel. The most familiar form of his teaching is the parable. We are told that after a certain time Jesus spoke nothing to the people without a parable. Much has been written about this body of his teachings, for the parables are rather clearly defined. Their form and use is very well understood, and their content opens for us a rich store of teaching about the nature of the kingdom of God. The danger in their use lies in the ease with which the interpreter may
fall into allegorizing every detail of these accounts. It is important, therefore, to know the nature of the parable, and to be able to distinguish between it and allegory. If an understanding of the parable is necessary to interpret them rightly is it not important that we understand other forms and methods of the Master Teacher if his meaning is to be understood as he intended? Another difficult form of expression is the paradox. We therefore raise the question as to whether or not Jesus used paradox in his teaching; the extent of its occurrence; its nature and value.

B. The nature of paradox.

Paradox is a literary form, yet it is more than a form. It is a statement containing certain qualities that are contradictory or opposed to accepted standards. (4)
The word comes from two Greek words, para,- beside, beyond, contrary to; and doxa,- opinion (from dokein,- to think, suppose, imagine). Webster's dictionary gives three meanings of the term: First, it is a tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion; also an assertion or sentiment seemingly contradictory, or opposed to common sense, but that yet may be true in fact. Second, it is a statement actually self-contradictory or false. Third, it is any phenomenon or action with seemingly contradictory qualities or phrases.
C. How recognize paradox.

The definition of paradox suggests the forms in which it may occur and gives several keys to its recognition. "A tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion." In this sense every teaching of Jesus which was contrary to the orthodox teaching of his day was paradoxical in nature. To recognize this kind of paradox it is necessary to know something about the teaching of the scribes so that Jesus' departure from them will be known. Whenever Jesus says, "Ye have heard that it was said -- but I say unto you" we may expect to find the element of paradox entering in. This kind of paradox may be also recognized by comparing the teaching of Jesus with the accepted standards of our own day. After nineteen hundred years of Christian influence we would expect that men would have come to accept the values of Jesus, but such words as "Blessed are ye poor" are probably more paradoxical today than when they were spoken by Jesus.

"An assertion or sentiment seemingly contradictory, or opposed to common sense, but that may be true in fact." Here is the familiar form of paradox and the one most easily recognized, for in it we have the balancing of terms and the apparent contradiction of meaning that is commonly associated with this form of expression. In its classic ex-
amples great truths are gathered up, stripped of unnecessary appendages, clothed in the fewest possible words, and flung out to challenge the thought of men, as when Jesus said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

"A statement actually self-contradictory or false." This type of paradox may be recognized by its extreme form of statement. It is one of those statements which, like the report of Mark Twain's death, was greatly exaggerated. Exaggeration is carried to the point of impossibility for the purpose of teaching a truth, as when Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

A broad statement, indeed, characterizes the last form of paradox,—"Any phenomenon or action with seemingly contradictory qualities or phrases."

Here we find a form which may be described as unconscious paradox, or accidental paradox. In most cases the speaker probably did not intend to introduce the element of contradiction, yet wherever it is found it is a form of paradox. Jesus' habit of relating things to himself in a personal way gives several instances of this, as when he said of the bread, "this is my body", and of the contents of the cup, "this is my blood."
II. Extent of paradox in Jesus' teachings.

A. Brief general survey.

In the broad sense set forth in the foregoing topic paradox freely abounds in the teaching of Jesus. The two main bodies of teachings, the "sermon on the mount" and the parables, each contains examples. The former is well saturated with paradox, while the latter contains a much smaller element. Many of the paradoxical sayings are found in the large body of fragmentary teachings apart from these two groups. The fourth gospel contains numerous striking examples. We shall consider them in five distinct classes.

B. Five types of paradox.

1. First there is the proposition that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense, but that may be true in fact. Sayings of this type might be called conscious paradox, for they seem to have been purposely stated in this particular form.

Four examples of this type are found in all of the synoptic gospels. Two are fundamental ethical principles which find their best exposition in the character and ministry of the Teacher himself. "Whoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." This occurs again in Luke, and twice in Matthew in a slightly different form, the second part adding the phrase, "for my sake"; while Mark reads, "For whosoever
would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever
shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's
shall save it."

Again Jesus says, "Not so shall it be among
you: but whosoever would become great among you
shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first
among you shall be your servant: even as the son
of man came not to be ministered unto but to minis-
ter, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Several shorter forms of this paradox occur in the
synoptic gospels,—"But he that is greatest among you
shall be your servant. "But ye shall not be so:
but he that is the greater among you, let him be-
come as the younger; and he that is chief, as he
that doth serve." "— for he that is least among
you all, the same is great." Still another form
says, "If any man would be first, he shall be last
of all, and servant of all."

This last form suggests another paradox,—
"But many that are first shall be last; and the
last first. " Matthew 19:30 gives the same saying
in the same setting, while it occurs again in Mat-
thew and Luke, each time under different circumstances.

A statement of some difficulty, found in vary-
ing forms in each of the synoptics, is certainly
paradoxical in character. Gould regards Luke as pro-
probably the original form,—"Unto you it is given to
know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to
the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see,
and hearing they may not understand." It is a more
impossible paradox as given in Mark where Jesus is
quoted as saying, "Unto you is given the mysteries
of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are with-
out, all things are done in parables: that seeing
they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they
may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should
turn again, and it should be forgiven them." The
simplest and most reasonable form is that in Matthew
which says, "Therefore speak I to them in parables;
because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear
not, neither do they understand."

Several other examples of this type of para-
dox are found in two of the gospels. Matthew and
Luke declare that "whosoever shall exalt himself
shall be humbled: and whosoever shall humble him-
self shall be exalted." The parable of the pounds,
in Luke, and of the talents, in Matthew, each contain
the thought, "For unto everyone that hath shall be
given, and he shall have abundance; but from him
that hath not, even that which he hath shall be
taken away." These same gospels give us the prayer
of Jesus which begins, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord
of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these
things from the wise and understanding, and didst
reveal them unto babes." We also find here the
paradox, "If therefore the light that is in thee be
darkness, how great is that darkness." Here also
we find Jesus' recognition of that difficult para-
dox of divine determination and human responsi-
(30)
when he said, "Woe unto the world because of occa-
sions of stumbling, for it must needs be that the
occasions come; but woe to that man through whom
the occasion cometh."

We may mention two examples of this type that
occur but once in the gospels. Matthew gives us, "For
many are called but few are chosen," while John says,
"For judgment came I into this world, that they that
see not may see; and that they that see may become
blind."

2. Second there is the paradox of simple iden-
tity, or those whose meaning is found in the realm
of value. Many statements of this type are found in
both the synoptic and Johannine gospels. The identi-
fication is not one of metaphysical reality, but rather
one of ideal value.

Three of these propositions occur in each of
the synoptics. "But he answered and said unto him
that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my breth-
ren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his dis-
ciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren.
For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is
in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."
A shorter statement of the same is found in both Mark and Luke.

The next triplet of this type is the saying of Jesus, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." To this Mark adds, "And whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." The saying in Luke is similar to Mark's version. Two single sayings of this type may well be included here. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me," and "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me."

The words of Jesus at the last supper are also found in all of the synoptics. "And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

The parable of the great judgment contains a familiar example of the paradox of identity. "And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Also,"Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you,
Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."

Jesus' statement about the offering of the poor widow is a paradox of value. No identity is involved, but it belongs to this same class of examples. "And he looked up, and saw the rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than they all; for all these did of their superfluity cast in unto the gifts; but she of her want did cast in all the living that she had."

The fourth gospel gives us some striking examples of this type of paradox. "I and the Father are one", and "- - he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Some of the "I am" assertions are paradoxical in this sense, as, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

3. Third are the statements which are actually self-contradictory or false. It is difficult to classify any of the sayings of Jesus in this group. All might be classed elsewhere almost as well. But there are certain statements which are self-contradictory or false in a literal sense which may serve as examples.

One familiar example has already been mentioned,- "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye,
than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." If this were literally true it would be impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus' own experience with Zacchaeus shows that wealth does not necessarily bar one from the kingdom.

To a hesitating disciple Jesus said, "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead." The paradox is in the last phrase of the remark. It is plainly impossible for the dead in a literal sense to perform the rites of burial.

His instructions to his disciples regarding preparation for their work brought out another paradox. "When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." The advice of Jesus to buy swords is contradicted immediately by his reply that two swords are enough.

From the fourth gospel we have these words, "The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto
them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was born, I am."

4. Fourth come the words spoken at different times and different circumstances which seem contradictory when brought together. There are many examples of this kind of paradox, for there are many apparent inconsistencies in the teachings of Jesus. The following comparisons serve to illustrate the type.

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<tr>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>Mt. 5:16</td>
<td>a. &quot;Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.&quot; Compare: &quot;But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.&quot;</td>
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<td>(51)</td>
<td>Mt. 6:3</td>
<td>b. &quot;If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.&quot; Compare: The duty of filial love to aged parents. The sanctity of the marriage relation. The prayer for daily bread, etc.</td>
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<td>(52)</td>
<td>Lk. 14:26</td>
<td>c. &quot;He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.&quot; Compare: &quot;For he that is not against us is for us.&quot; Also: &quot;But Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you.&quot;</td>
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<td>(53)</td>
<td>Mk. 7:10ff</td>
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<td>Mt. 12:30</td>
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<td>Mt. 5:17</td>
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<td>(62)</td>
<td>Mt. 5:21ff</td>
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e. "And one said unto him, Lord, are there few that are saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Compare: "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Also, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him."

f. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." Compare: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Also, "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you."

g. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Compare: "Jesus answered, 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: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

h. The kingdom as both present and future. Some sayings indicate that the kingdom of God is near at hand, but still in the future, such as; "The kingdom of God is at hand." "Thy kingdom come," "I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."
Other sayings indicate that the kingdom of God is already a present reality that is being experienced by many, such as: "And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here, or, There, for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see;" etc. "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force." "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears."

1. Various contradictory statements on the question of judgment appear, especially in the fourth gospel. Compare the following: "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." "— and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man." "— as I hear I judge: and my judgment is righteous." "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope." "And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind." "Ye judge after
the flesh; I judge no man. Yea and if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me."

j. Jesus used and permitted to be used the title, "Son of God." He more frequently used the title, "Son of man." These two titles suggest the paradox of his personality, both divine and human. The two phrases are combined in the conversation of Jesus with the high priest. "But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (For other uses of the phrase, "Son of God" see: Matthew 4:3, 14:33; Mark 3:11, Luke 22:70; John 5:25, 9:35, 10:36, 11:4. "Son of man" is used in Luke 9:58, 11:30; Mark 2:10, 2:28, 8:31, 9:9, 9:12, 9:31, 10:33, 10:45, 14:21, etc.)

5. The fifth group is made up of statements opposed to received opinion. In this group may be included all of the teachings of Jesus that were opposed to the current orthodoxy or the commonly accepted standards of his time. Many of his teachings are paradoxical in this sense today. Also many of the sayings that have been classified in other groups could also be included here. The sermon on the mount abounds in this type of paradox.
"Blessed are ye poor."
"Blessed are ye that weep now."
"Blessed are the meek."
"Blessed are ye that hunger now."
"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets."
"But woe unto you that are rich."
"Woe unto you, ye that are full now."
"Woe unto you, ye that laugh now."
"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets."
"- Resist not (him that is) evil,"etc.
"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth."
"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow;"etc.
"Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on."
"But seek ye first his kingdom and his right-
eousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
"Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

"- - remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath."

"Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him; - - That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man, For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man."

Jesus' fulfilment of the law, with his change of emphasis from external, overt acts, to motives and springs of action involves this type of paradox. The law forbade murder; Jesus condemned anger. The law prohibited adultery; Jesus condemned impure desire. The law prescribed certain oaths; Jesus demanded simple honesty. The law permitted retaliation for wrong; Jesus forbade revenge and enjoined unfailing kindness toward the evil doer. The law said that one must love his neighbor and hate his enemy; Jesus taught evenhanded justice and universal love.
In this group are some instances of extreme statements which are tinged with paradox. The best examples are those in Matthew, "And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire." Jesus' conversation with Peter brings out another, "how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven."

III. The meaning and value of typical paradoxical teachings from each group.

A. Three examples from the first group.

1. "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

The solution of this paradox lies in the two meanings of the word "life." In the antecedent clauses the gaining or losing of life refers to the external, earthly life; while in the concluding clauses it is the loss or preservation of a higher, personal or spiritual life, whose wellbeing is independent of physical circum-
stances. The first is not regarded by Jesus as man's true life. The higher life, which is man's true destiny, is only found by sacrificing the lower.

This paradox is a fundamental principle of life, and the key to its truth is found in the experience of loyalty. Royce has expounded its meaning in his book, "The Philosophy of Loyalty." The loyal person looks outward for his plan of life, and finds it not in self but in a person or cause worthy of his wholehearted devotion. The religious man who gives himself in absolute loyalty to the will of God finds that self-sacrifice becomes self-expression, and that absolute obedience seems the finest sort of display of one's own powers. "In thee I do not lose but find myself, living intensely as I live for thee." The other gospels are right in adding the qualifying phrase, "for my sake," or as Mark puts it, "for my sake and the gospel's." This suggests both the person and the cause worthy of the disciple's loyalty. The paradox is best understood in experience, and the records of Christianity from Jesus, himself, to the present day bear constant witness to its truth.

2. "Unto you is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

There is a twofold paradox here. In the first place there is a paradox of method. This saying of
Jesus intimates that he spoke in parables for the purpose of hiding the "mysteries of the kingdom of God" from all who were not his sympathetic followers. Mark goes so far as to say that Jesus hid the truth from the multitudes "lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them." We are reminded of the unwillingness of Jonah to preach to the Ninevites lest they should repent and God should spare them from destruction. It is impossible that this could have been true of Jesus. He who came to seek and to save them that are lost would not wilfully have hidden God's truth with all its saving power from anyone who was ready to receive it. The most likely solution of this phase of the paradox is to regard this as a statement of fact rather than one of purpose. It is true that the meaning of many of the parables is veiled and that a key or analogy is needed to explain them. Some understanding of Jesus' point of view and some insight into spiritual values is a prerequisite to catching their central lesson. Many of those who heard the parables from Jesus would remember their content but would not readily perceive their application. But it is reasonable to believe that Jesus' purpose in their use was to make clear and vivid the truths which he wished to expound. Some of the parables which are difficult for us to understand today would no doubt be more easily interpreted if we knew all of the circumstances which led to their utterance.
The second phase of the paradox lies in the two meanings of the word "see." Its solution has already been suggested above. To "see" in the first place refers to the sense impression, while in the second place it means mental perception. The meaning is clearly brought out in the last phrase by the words "hearing" and "understanding".

3. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes."

Jesus is here represented as giving thanks that God had hidden his truth from the "wise and understanding." To understand this paradox we must again distinguish between fact and purpose. It was true that the trained religious leaders among the Jews, the scribes and Pharisees, had rejected his teachings, and that the unlearned folk had begun to accept it. But Jesus could not have been happy over the superior attitude of the orthodox Jews. The thing for which he was really thankful, as McNeile says, was the fact that the poor and simple saw and understood. The paradoxical form of the prayer serves to emphasize the contrast between the two groups.

B. Three examples from the second group.

1. "And he answered them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking around on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother
and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

The declaration that "whosoever shall do the will of God the same is my brother, and sister, and mother," is paradoxical indeed. But these terms are used by Jesus in a figurative sense only. By this paradox he set aside the common sense view that kinship is merely a matter of physical birth, and declared that it is more a matter of spiritual quality. Those who are like him in spirit are his true kinsmen.

Plummer points out that Jesus' reply does not deny the claims of family ties, nor does it necessarily imply any censure on his mother and brethren. But it does assert that there are far stronger and higher claims. The paradoxical form of the statement gives it freshness and power. The same truth stated in another form would fall flat upon the ears of his hearers. Here is a case where Jesus utilized the words of the bystanders to drive home in paradox the truth that the occasion suggested to him.

The paradox consists in the identification of the little child with Jesus, and in a similar way the identification of Jesus, himself, with God. We recognize at once that physical identity is not intended. It is rather an inward identification of spirit and
purpose. Jesus feels a personal interest in the little child. As the Messiah the little child rightfully belongs to him. Because of this relationship any sincere act done in behalf of the child becomes the equivalent of doing it for Jesus. The qualifying phrase, "in my name", may mean "for my sake", or "in my spirit". In either case the act of receiving the child is related to Jesus and identifies the doer with him. The same is true of Jesus and the Father, for the relationship extends beyond him to God. So Jesus truly says, "Whosoever receiveth me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me:" Invalue, then, an act of love toward a little child is equivalent to a like act toward Jesus, and in this way we may truly serve the Father.

3. Other similar cases.

In other cases of identification the meaning is likewise found in the realm of value. When Jesus says, "This is my body", and "This is my blood of the covenant", the identification is paradoxical, but it is easily understood. The bread and wine are representative of the body and blood of Jesus, and as such are symbols of his sacrificial death. It is in this symbolic sense that Jesus could identify them with his own body and blood. When he says, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst", or the similar words which John later repeats, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of
this bread, he shall live forever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world", he is speaking again in a figurative or symbolical sense. Wendt suggests that the solution of this paradox is found in the words, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." As bread is to the body so the words of Jesus are to the spiritual life. So he may paradoxically call himself the "living bread" or the "bread of life."

C. Four examples from the third group.

1. "It is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Those who are inclined to give a literal interpretation to the bible are hard put to it to discover a plausible interpretation of sayings like this. Two interpretations have been offered, however to explain this verse. It is suggested by some that the reading should be "kamilon" = "cable", and thus the statement is greatly toned down. This reading is found in a few late manuscripts. Others would make the "needle's eye" into a narrow gateway for foot passengers, and thus relieve the situation.

Farrar has disposed of both of these suggestions and has shown that it is better to regard this statement of Jesus as a strong paradox. In it Jesus virtually says that it is impossible for a rich man
to enter the kingdom of God. Plummer supports this view by showing that in the Talmud an elephant passing through the eye of a needle is twice used of that which is impossible: also a camel dancing in a very small corn measure. That it is paradox and not intended as a literal statement of fact is shown by Jesus' further remark, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." In this stern paradox we have, then, Jesus' declaration of the extreme peril of riches. The only hope for the rich man (and Jesus might have included all others) is in the power of God.

2. "But Jesus saith unto him, Follow me: and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

There are several possible interpretations of this paradox depending upon the translation of the word "nekrous". If it is taken as figurative in both cases it implies that the father of the disciple to whom Jesus spoke these words was only spiritually dead. On the other hand, if taken literally it gives the harsh meaning, "Leave the dead to take care of themselves."

To avoid these difficulties it is generally suggested that its first use is figurative, while in the second place it is literal. The meaning would then be, "Leave the spiritually dead to bury their own dead."

There is precedent in the teachings of Jesus for attributing a double meaning to such words as "nekrous."
A similar change from the figurative to the literal is found in John 5:21-28, where verses 21-27 refer to spiritual resurrection from sin, while verses 28-29 refer to actual resurrection from the grave. In the story of the prodigal son the father speaks of his son who was "dead, and is alive again". In John 11:25f the word "die" is used in a double manner, and it has already been pointed out that the solution of the paradox in Luke 17:33 consists in the two meanings of the word "life". Again in John 9:39-41 Jesus uses the idea of seeing and blindness in a double or transferred sense. One time it means the possession or want of possession of earthly knowledge and wisdom, while the other time it refers to the possession or want of the knowledge leading to salvation.

If this dual interpretation of the term "nekrós" is correct it is an instance where a higher duty necessitates the abandonment of normal human relationships, as Jesus intimated when he said, "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life." However, there is another possibility. Allen suggests that the words of Jesus, "let the dead bury their dead", was a proverbial saying, meaning, "cut yourself adrift from the past when matters of present interest call for your whole attention." This intenti-
fies the paradox and clarifies its meaning. It also frees us from the awkward necessity of explaining why Jesus would consign the duty of burial of a disciple's father to those who are spiritually dead.

Grieve suggests that the term "bury my father" does not require that the father is actually lying dead. Rather it indicates the disciple's feeling that he was not justified in leaving home while the head of the house was still alive. This strengthens the view, it seems to me, that the statement was proverbial. To the disciple addressed Jesus' meaning would be clear: Nothing must be allowed to interfere with his call to discipleship.

3. "And he said unto them, When I sent you forth without purse, and wallet, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. And he said unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet; and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword. For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough."

These words of Jesus,—"and he that hath none, let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword"—are often quoted in proof-text fashion to show that Jesus' teachings support modern warfare. If the words are taken literally
we do have here sanction for the use of force by the disciples. But when we read the whole conversation in the light of our knowledge of other teachings and his personal example we can see that the words were not meant in a literal sense. We have rather Jesus' very strong warning in paradoxical terms of the seriousness of the situation which the disciples were now going to face. That it must be understood as paradox and not as literal advice is clear from the phrase with which Jesus closed the discussion. The disciples showed him two swords, and Jesus replied, "It is enough". Those who would use the words of Jesus to support warfare today are careful not to carry their literal application of Jesus' words through to the end of the discussion.

Evidently the disciples had failed to understand his meaning. He did not intend that they should repel force by force; still less that they should use the sword in spreading the gospel. He desired to warn them of the changed circumstances under which they must labor and for which they must be prepared. "If the words ("It is enough") apply to the swords, they are spoken with sad irony, as meaning, not that the two weapons will be sufficient for the protection of the company, but that none at all are required: they have grievously misunderstood him."

4. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast
thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am."

We have here one of the most difficult statements of Jesus. No matter how it is interpreted it remains a paradox. The most complete discussion of it is found in Wendt who analyzes the situation as follows: Jesus had declared to the Jews that whoso kept his word would not see death forever. The Jews regarded this as a piece of presumption arising from a blinding by the devil. If it were true that the keeping of his word bestowed eternal life upon another, then he himself must have lived forever in possession of this word. So they met him with the reproach that he was nevertheless no greater than Abraham and the prophets who were dead. Jesus responded that the honor which he claimed for himself was not a vain self-honor, but one bestowed upon him by God, and that it would be an untruth were he to deny his knowledge of God (and accordingly also what he knew as to his own saving significance on the ground of this Divine knowledge). Then he added that the inference from his words which the Jews had branded as absurd was perfectly true: he was indeed greater than Abraham: 'Abraham, your father, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.' And to the question of the Jews, which was meant to bring out the absurdity of his declaration, when they asked if he, who was not yet fifty years old, had seen Abraham, he replied, still further heightening his paradoxical claim: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,
before Abraham was born, I am.'

Two solutions are offered to explain Jesus' words.

(136) Stevens: Johan-Scholars like Stevens who accept the apostolic authorship of the fourth gospel are inclined to give a relatively great historical value to these words. And since it is absurd to hold that the earthly existence of Jesus extended back to before the time of Abraham they maintain that the seeing did not take place during Abraham's earthly life, but in his after-existence in Paradise; and that Jesus' reference to his experience before Abraham was, must be understood not as an experience of his present earthly life, but as an event of his heavenly existence before his birth. According to Stevens, then, Jesus' words indicate that he possessed the consciousness of having personally existed previous to his life on earth "in an essential life-fellowship with God, to which he should return after his work was finished." The paradox in this case consists in the divergence of Jesus' views from that of his contemporaries.


Another solution is offered by Wendt. He rejects the interpretation which appeals to the post-mundane life of Abraham and the pre-existence of Jesus to solve the paradox. If Abraham saw "the day" of the Messiah it must have been in spiritual prevision only. When the promised birth of Isaac was realized Abraham saw in spirit the fulfilment of the messianic promise, and ideally, therefore, "the day" of Jesus. Similarly we find the meaning of Jesus' reference to his existence
before Abraham's time. "The present earthly existence of Jesus, in which He is the Messiah, was not a real thing before Abraham's time; but yet it could truly be spoken of, in so far as it held good in the spirit of God. So far as Jesus felt Himself to be the Messiah, He knew that His earthly life was not a fortuitous event, but from the beginning -- it was predetermined and foreseen of God."

The key to this paradox, then, according to Wendt, lies in the distinction between ideal existence or value, and real existence. We have already seen that many cases of paradox of identity have found their meaning in the realm of value. Here also ideal existence or value, though unexpressed, is plainly intended. The use of paradox here should warn us against the tendency to give a historical meaning to Jesus' words. These statements of Jesus are historically impossible, but they are not absurd because in the realm of value we can see their deep significance.

D. Four examples from the fourth group.

1. "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". Compare: "The duty of filial love to aged parents; the sanctity of the marriage relationship; and the prayer for daily bread.

In the first instance Jesus is apparently sanctioning disregard of those who are nearest and dearest
in family relationships; while in the second place he insists upon the permanence and sanctity of those relationships; he declares further that his followers must hate their own lives, but he teaches them to pray for daily bread that their lives may be preserved.

The contradiction here is more apparent than real. Jesus' first paradoxical demand is for absolute loyalty on the part of his followers. He must have first place in their lives. But to give him first place does not exclude others from their rightful relationships. On the contrary the very fact that Jesus occupies first place makes it imperative that his spirit shall permeate all of the other relationships of life. The duty of children to parents, of husbands and wives toward each other, and of every person toward his own physical needs, will be fulfilled in the spirit of that higher loyalty to Jesus.

2. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God." "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you." Compare: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." "Let him sell his cloak and buy a sword."

There appears to be a decided contradiction between Jesus' attitude in these two pairs of quotations. The first represents him as a man of peace who has brought a message of peace to his disciples; the second denies that peaceful purpose, and advises preparation for conflict. The paradox is evident. However neither
of these references to a "sword" can be taken literally. The first is followed immediately by the statement, "For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." If we take one verse literally we must interpret both in this way. But it is impossible to regard Jesus' purpose as that of a "great home-wrecker". The thought which Jesus intended was that he came to bring about a sharp division between those who do right and those who do wrong. Or as McNeile says, "I came to do that which will inevitably divide society into camps," and cause divisions in families. This thought is not inconsistent with his purpose to impart his spirit of peace to all men. The figurative use of the word "sword" in the last instance has already been discussed.

3. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Compare: "Jesus answered, 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: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

These sayings of Jesus are seemingly contradictory. The first is from the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples; the second is from his examination by Pilate when the Jews had accused him of sedition. The prayer that God's will may be done on earth has its social im-
-plications. To do God's will involves its application to all relationships of life, including the economic and political. But to Pilate Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." To reconcile this with the prayer of Jesus we must look at the context. The Jews have accused him of political ambitions, which of course would make him a dangerous citizen from the Roman standpoint. This statement by Jesus was his denial of political intentions. He declared that his kingdom was a kingdom of truth, and that his followers were men who loved the truth. For this kind of a kingdom Pilate expressed an ironical disregard. It represented no immediate challenge to Roman authority, though in time its power was to become known.

4. "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Most scholars regard this as largely the author's own thoughts and theology, but it seems to represent truly the spirit of Jesus' teachings) "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. Yea and if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope." Compare: "— as I hear I judge: and my judgment is righteous." "— and
he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man." "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see."

The tendency of the first group of statements is to represent Jesus as coming to save rather than to judge, while the second group emphasizes his prerogatives as a judge. The paradox is easily solved. The answer is suggested in the first quotation. It is probably true that Jesus came to save rather than to judge, but when he had once come into the world judgment was inevitable. For judgment is primarily the revelation of character, and it is self-working once Jesus has set the true standard before men. John further says, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light." The separation of men who "loved the darkness" from those who loved the light, was the necessary result of the coming of the light into the world.

E. Two examples from the fifth group.

1. "Blessed are ye poor." "Blessed are ye that weep now." "Blessed are ye that hunger now." "But woe unto you that are rich." "Woe unto you, ye that are full now." "Woe unto you, ye that laugh now."

As given in Luke these beatitudes constitute a real paradox. The words of Matthew which lend a spiritual interpretation to these teachings are here omitted, and the blessings are assigned to external conditions. Actual poverty, sorrow, and hunger are declared to be
Plummer insists that we have no right to supply "in spirit" from Matthew. "It is actual poverty that is here meant. Nor is it the meaning that actual poverty makes men 'poor in spirit.' Still less does it mean that in itself poverty is to all men a blessing. There is no Ebionite doctrine here. But 'to you', my disciples, poverty is a blessing, because it preserves you in your dependence on God, and helps you to be truly His subjects."

If Jesus meant to pronounce blessings and woes upon external conditions as such I cannot offer any solution for this paradox that commends itself to reason or experience. Neither can I reconcile his attitude with that revealed elsewhere in the gospels. He is constantly stressing the paradoxical truth that religion is a matter of inward life and experience rather than outward forms and circumstances. His rejection of the ceremonial law and his insistence upon a spiritual fulfilment of the Mosaic law reveal the fundamental trend of his thinking. It is almost unbelievable that he should turn and bless or curse mere external conditions. Despite the insistence of some scholars that we have no right to supply the words "in spirit" I cannot believe that Matthew is mistaken in his interpretation of Jesus' thought.
The whole paragraph from which this quotation is taken is Jesus' answer to the law of retaliation which was accepted in his day because it carried the authority of Mosaic authorship. "Resist not -- evil." After these words Jesus proceeds to give extreme examples of the application of his teaching. "But whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

Jesus has clearly put his thought with a touch of paradox or exaggeration. "The attempt to act literally on these commands", says Scott, "has always led to fanatical extremes, and if it were general would soon make any kind of social life impossible. Now it cannot be supposed that Jesus himself was blind to the impracticable nature of such requirements. The temper of the fanatic, as his whole life proves, was quite alien to him; and he purposely expressed himself in that emphatic, paradoxical way in order to enforce the principle as against the mere rule." The principle back of these examples is that of unfailing kindness or goodwill. The disciple of Jesus must not think of himself, and of the wrongs that he has sustained, but of the welfare of the offender. And he must do whatever
may be required to win him to brotherhood. These words of Jesus are a dramatization of the principle later stated by Paul, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

IV. The teaching power of paradox.

A. The dangers in its use.

1. Failure to recognize it as paradox.

We have seen from our study of paradox that certain dangers arise from its use. There is first the chance that many will not recognize it as paradox. Perhaps this danger is greater today than when these words were spoken by Jesus. Although his hearers may have been unschooled in literary forms they were akin to him in mode of thought, and would better understand his imagery. We have already pointed out the necessity of some knowledge of the poet's art to appreciate his lines. Some knowledge of paradox and an ability to recognize it are no less necessary when we sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his words. The teacher sternly declares, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, - - And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee," - severe requirements, indeed, of a disciple. To an eager pupil he says, "There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time," - a strange promise
to come from the Christ. When we hear him assert that it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, we say to ourselves, "Surely that cannot be true." Again he meets the excuse of a would-be disciple with the seeming harsh and heartless words, "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead." The extreme form of these sayings suggests that they were not meant as mere matter-of-fact statements, yet there is danger that they will be taken as such by many hearers. The matter-of-fact mind is likely to interpret them in a matter-of-fact way, not recognizing the essential paradox of each thought. Jesus risked misunderstanding in both word and deed, using paradox, as he did the parable, to increase the effectiveness of his speech.

2. Literalism in interpretation.

A second danger, not unlike the first, is the tendency toward literalism in interpretation. This generally misses the point of the paradox and leads to varying degrees of fanaticism in religion.

In his autobiography the pioneer Methodist preacher, Peter Cartwright, tells of a case of literalism that came to his attention which involved a paradox. A circuit rider had preached on the text, "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." After the service he saddled his horse and started for his next appointment. He had not
gone far from the church when he saw a strange sight in the road ahead. A little man was walking along carrying his portly wife on his back. As he drew near he recognized that they had been in his congregation. Thinking that some accident had befallen them the parson asked if they were in trouble, and offered to assist the couphe. Whereupon the man assured him that there had been no trouble, and said, "You told me to take up my cross, and she's the only cross I have."

Where specific acts seem to be enjoined by Jesus it is not easy to say which were given as literal rules of conduct and which were intended for another purpose. For example we interpret in all seriousness the words of Jesus at the last supper, "this do in remembrance of me", and accept them as a more or less literal command that his disciples should continue to observe the "Lord's Supper" in his memory. At the same time we smile at those sects that interpret the words, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you," as a command to perpetuate the foot washing incident as a religious practice. Many of the exhortations of Jesus certainly were not intended as literal commands. Their paradoxical nature demands that they be interpreted according to the whole spirit and purpose of Jesus rather than as specific rules of conduct.

Jesus' free use of imagery increases the danger of misunderstanding thru a tendency toward literalism.
Professor Horne says, "Really great teachers, especially teachers of ultimate things, must have a poetic cast of mind, to suggest more than can be told about truth. Such a teacher's mind can play with truth, it is not in bondage to literal facts. But imagery easily leads to misunderstanding, if it is read as prose by prosaic minds. Jesus was not only a master of imagery, he also sensed the danger of its being misunderstood, and warned against it: 'The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.' -- Imagery means not what it says, but what it means to say. The observance of this principle of exegesis would prevent many a dispute."

3. Confusion of thought due to apparent inconsistency of teachings.

Perfect consistency is perhaps never attained by any teacher. Nevertheless the mind demands a certain unity of thought and consistency of purpose. When conflicting statements are made by the same teacher we may be left in doubt as to his real meaning. Thus the paradoxes of Jesus lead us into many perplexing situations.

How can one, for example, let his light shine before men; that they may see his good works, and at the same time not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing? Or why need one strive to enter in by the narrow door in order to be saved, if it is the Father's good pleasure to give him the kingdom?
Why should Jesus bless the peacemakers and say, "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you," if he really came "not to bring peace, but a sword?" And what kind of a God can it be in whose nature we find universal benevolence and mercy bound up with severe and inexorable justice? How is it possible for the disciples to be characterized by childlike simplicity united with worldly shrewdness? How can we reconcile the paradox of divine determination and human responsibility? On the one hand Jesus has an apocalyptic outlook; on the other he presents an ethic and an idea of growth and development that quite contradicts apocalypse. In his personality we see a perfect consciousness of sonship with God blended with his consciousness of feeble humanity— he was both Son of God and Son of man. For many such paradoxes a fairly satisfactory explanation can be given. Nevertheless we can readily see the danger of confusion of thought that arises from its use.

B. The limits of its use.

Just as there are dangers in the use of paradox so also there are limits to its use. However we know by the large element of paradox which occurs in Jesus' teachings that the limits are rather broad. There are four occasions when it may be expected.

1. To state truth which contradicts current views.
   Here its use is unavoidable, for by definition
any view that is contradictory to commonly accepted standards is a paradox. Jesus' manner of fulfilling the law, and his repudiation of the ceremonial system have already been suggested as illustrations of this type. His disregard for the rules regarding fasting and Sabbath observance, and his friendship for publicans and sinners are further cases. While even more paradoxical in this sense must have been his condemnation of the Pharisees, and his conception of the Messiah.

2. Paradox is used, in the second place, to give startling emphasis to truth, so that it will stimulate thought and challenge action.

Certain contrasts in Jesus' teachings were clearly intended to cause reflection. His advice on judgment in Matthew is in terms of the "mote" and the "beam". We are told that we should not give that which is holy to the dogs; neither cast pearls before swine. His purpose in coming is not to send "peace", but a "sword." "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Other sayings were meant to arouse the will to action, as when he said,"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me." And such was no doubt
his purpose when he said, "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead."

3. In the third place, paradox is used to enforce principle rather than mere rule of conduct.

Here we find one of its most effective uses by Jesus. In his emphasis on principle rather than rules of conduct he set himself against the casuistical method of the scribes. It was their endeavor to show the application of the law to every concrete case and every possible circumstance. Hence it was necessary for them to hedge the law about with many provisions and qualifications. "Jesus proceeds by just the opposite method," says Scott. "He states his demand in the extremest form, sweeping all compromise out of sight. He is anxious only for one thing,—that men shall apprehend his principle without any possibility of mistake. It is for them to reduce it to practice, and to decide how it may best be adjusted to varying circumstances. But first of all they must lay hold of it firmly, in its ideal scope and significance."

Thus it was a principle that he desired to teach when he told his followers to pluck out the offending eye, or to cut off the hand which caused them to stumble; when he told them to turn the other cheek when they had been struck, to give the cloak when the coat was taken, or to go a second mile when compelled to travel one. It was principle which he wished to teach when he told men not to worry about food or clothing,
and enjoined them not to be anxious for the morrow; and it was principle when he told Peter to forgive an erring brother "until seventy times seven." These sayings are of such a nature that, as Wendt says, "every loophole of escape was cut off, and no exceptions were possible." In them we see the focusing power of paradox, for through its use the principle is held in bold relief, while detailed applications are not intended.

4. Finally paradox is used to give an adequate interpretation of certain paradoxical elements of experience.

In this, as in the first instance, Jesus used paradox because it was unavoidable, the greatest truths of life having something of paradox in them. When we hear the story of Jesus we realize the truth of his oft repeated words, "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it." Standards of greatness are constantly being revised in accordance with the judgment of Jesus, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all". Life is constantly teaching men that, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted." Jesus' struggle in the garden reveals the paradox of divine determination and human freedom.

It is also a matter of experience that, "unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath
shall be taken away." And that the blessings promised to the "poor in spirit", the meek, the merciful, etc, are fulfilled is the testimony of every earnest follower of Jesus.

C. The justification of its use.

If further justification of Jesus' use of paradox be needed other than that which has been incidentally pointed out in the preceding paragraphs we may find it in its adaptation to the paradoxical method of the Teacher. Like the parable paradox is a form of teaching likely to be remembered.

"Unlike most great teachers Jesus did not commit his teaching to writing. It was evidently no part of his purpose to give his instruction a stereotyped form. His profoundest and most striking sayings were often uttered upon a chance meeting with some stranger; his inimitable parables were spoken to little groups at the wayside or by the lake shore; while his greatest works were often accompanied by an injunction of silence upon those who had witnessed them. Did any other public teacher ever adopt so strange a course? Was there ever such carelessness of results, such apparent waste of effort?" It was necessary, therefore, if Jesus' teachings were to be remembered that they should be put into words and phrases likely to stick in the minds of his hearers. Both parable and paradox were effective means toward this end.
1. The literary form of paradox.


   In its more characteristic forms the paradox resembles a method long current in the Jewish schools of embodying moral and religious truth in pointed proverbs and maxims. It was a form extensively used in Hebrew wisdom literature, and by some of the prophets, notably Hosea. When we read, "like people, like priest," we are reminded of the terse form of many of Jesus' sayings. "For they shall sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind," suggests both his penetrating insight and his masterful command of language. And his judgment of values is not unlike the prophet who said, "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings." Certain Old Testament paradoxes remind us of Jesus in both their form and spirit. We hear Isaiah's words of assurance to the people of Jerusalem, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Ecclesiastes declares, "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." In proverbs we read, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Again we read the words so like the spirit of Jesus, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head, and Jehovah will reward thee."
b. Characteristics of style.

Since they occur in a great variety of forms, it might be argued that paradox is independent of form. Yet there are certain characteristics which are often present in them. They have been called the "burrs of literature - they stick". This penetrating quality is due largely to four characteristics of style.

First, the contrast between the lower and higher meaning of the terms employed. Thus "life" is used in the double sense of physical and spiritual; "see" is used to indicate both sense perception and rational understanding; "die" refers to natural death and also to spiritual death; "blind" is used in the double meanings of lack of vision and lack of understanding. Many scholars also maintain that "dead" is used to denote both the physically and the spiritually dead.

The second characteristic of style is the use of extreme forms of statement. Rall says, "Jesus used vivid phrases to startle men and pictures to make them see." "Where is the Christian who hates his father or mother, who cuts off his right hand, or plucks out his right eye?" We are told to "take no thought for the morrow", to forgive until "seventy times seven", to "resist not evil".

A sharp contrast of terms often adds to the power of the paradox. Swete points out that Jesus chose the largest beast of burden known in Palestine to compare with the smallest artificial aperture common among men.
At one time Jesus speaks of blind guides that "strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel". Another time the tiny mustard seed is contrasted with its final outgrowth,—a plant "greater than all the herbs". Two distinct ways of life are entered either by the "narrow gate" or by the "wide gate"; and of the two ways themselves one is "broad" and the other "straightened".

After the great challenge to the sacrificial life Jesus adds, "For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life"?

Third, the thought is brought out with the greatest clearness in the briefest compass. Thus the teaching of a parable or the central idea of a discussion, or the significance of a demonstration is often gathered up by Jesus into a single pregnant utterance. Two parables, as we have them, end with the thought, "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away". A discussion of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees is followed by the two paradoxes, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant, And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted". When the disciples were disputing about which of them was the greatest he took a little child and set him by his side as an object lesson, concluding his teaching by the words, "For he that is least among you all, the same is great".
The fourth characteristic of style is Jesus' use of imagery. In much of this there is the element of paradox. Professor Horne says, "Imagery is the poetic element in prose. It adds a light and sparkling quality. This effect is due to emotion combined with imagination. It increases the pleasure of both listening and reading. -- The New Testament rewritten without imagery would be stale and flat, even if such a rewriting were possible. Try to state the meaning without imagery of 'Ye are the salt of the earth -- Ye are the light of the world.' Such an effort reveals how Jesus saved words, packed words with meaning, feathered them with imagery, and set them flying on the winds of the world.

There is much imagery in the paradoxes that have heretofore been cited. Jesus speaks of "faith as a grain of mustard seed" by which men can remove mountains; of the "mote" and the "beam", of "pearls before swine", of "blind guides" that "strain out the gnat and swallow the camel", of the "narrow gate" and the "wide gate", of the "bread of life", the "living bread", and the "living water". Even the "cross" is redeemed from shame and made the symbol of the highest way of life. To these examples may be added the familiar paradox which Jesus quotes, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner". The paradox of life through death is expressed in the imagery of the parable,
"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

3. The power of paradox.

a. The power of the eternal.

The contrast between the method of the scribes and that of Jesus has already been indicated. The scribes sought to govern life by intricate regulations covering all details of behaviour. Not only the law and the prophets but the many traditions of the elders were prescribed in legalistic fashion. Jesus realized the passing nature of this kind of a system of life. Forms and ceremonies are static and cannot keep pace with changing conditions of life. A system suited to one age or group of people would not be suited to another. Jesus therefore carefully avoided the method of the scribes. He developed fundamental principles of life that are unchanging in their nature, and left to the individual their application to particular situations. The use of paradox enabled him to achieve this end. Through paradox he was able to focus attention upon principle to the exclusion of all else. We therefore sense an enduring quality in many paradoxical truths that gives to them the power of the eternal. They are true today as they were true when Jesus spoke them. They are true for all groups of people as they were true for himself and his first followers.
b. The power of intuitive appeal.

Many of Jesus' paradoxes are of such a nature that they commend themselves to the mind without argument or proof. Their appeal is direct and intuitive. It is because of this direct appeal that they may be called eternal principles. Yet not all paradoxes are self-evidently true. Some, indeed, require much proof for their acceptance. Of this sort are the sayings, "Resist not (him that is) evil", "Love your enemies", "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake". These words are so contrary to the unregenerate impulses of men that we fail at first to apprehend their meaning. These examples, however, only serve to emphasize the truth that many familiar paradoxes carry the weight of conviction within themselves.

The appeal of much of the "sermon of the mount" is direct and intuitive, yet paradoxical to a high degree. "Blessed are the poor in spirit -- Blessed are they that mourn -- Blessed are the meek -- Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness -- Blessed are the merciful -- Blessed are the pure in heart -- Blessed are the peacemakers". These words and others like them produce conviction by their direct appeal to the moral sense. It was his purpose always to produce conviction, and paradox was admirably used to achieve this end.
c. The sanction of experience.

Professor Bowne has said that life is the test of truth. Whether we fully agree with him or not as to the criterion we must admit that in many instances our final appeal is to life or experience. Truth that has been wrought out in life and thus bears the sanction of experience is not to be denied its power.

When we consider the paradoxes of Jesus we are often forced to appeal to experience to understand their truth. As theoretical propositions they do not always commend themselves, but we recognize that they are true in life. Some of the most characteristic paradoxes are made concrete in the life of Jesus, and our own experience confirms their truth.

It has already been suggested that many of the greatest truths of life have an element of paradox in them. Take the words, "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" King says of this, "Jesus has discovered for himself, and holds unflinchingly for others, that a genuinely unselfish love is the most rewarding of all things, that the paradoxical secret of life, therefore, is to find one’s life by losing it,—fulfilment of life by the surrender of the selfish self, just because in every personal relation there is no enlarging
life without such continuous self-giving. — It is worth noting that it is this very principle of self-sacrifice, as set over against the counsel of self-regarding prudence, which on the one hand has made the Christian teaching seem so impracticable, and yet on the other hand, as civilization advances, is seen to be absolutely indispensable, not only to the progress of that civilization as a whole, but to the larger life of the individual himself.

What reason has been slow to accept has thus been found true in life. In the words of Jenkinson, "We have the great and deep conceptions of life through death, joy through suffering, love through severance, peace through conflict, victory through surrender, self-realization through self-renunciation, the conquest of the world through the cross of shame. Here are the profoundest truths, and yet the most paradoxical, for they are expressed through ideas that are partially contradictory to one another. We believe that if we could apprehend the whole truth, if we could understand through and through the whole meaning and purpose of creation, we could express these truths in a manner that would not shock reason. But in the twilight of our knowledge we must be content to hold fast to half-truths, none of which is quite free from error or, at any rate, indefiniteness. Some who prefer consistency to comprehensiveness would sacrifice one part of the antithesis..."
and elaborate part in the dialectic movement of progress. They appear to be further removed from the whole truth than those who embrace the seeming contradiction, unable to fathom its depths, yet assured that in it is realized a perfect reconciliation."

V. Conclusions.

Our study of the element of paradox in the teachings of Jesus warrants the following general conclusions:

1. Paradox in all its forms is present in the teachings of Jesus.

2. It is present to a much greater extent than is commonly supposed.

3. Its use is responsible for many of the difficulties in the understanding of Jesus.

4. It is also responsible for a large degree of the effectiveness of his teaching.

- Finis -
Summary.

The Element of Paradox in the Teachings of Jesus.

I. Introduction.

A. Is there paradox in the teachings of Jesus?

The forms and methods of a teacher are always subordinate to the results that are obtained. Yet since the teacher may use forms that allow a certain freedom, like "poetic licence", it is necessary to understand the forms that are used to know the meaning intended.

Jesus used various literary forms, the most familiar of which is the parable. Much has been written about this body of teachings. But even with the parable some study of its form is necessary to distinguish it from allegory, and to interpret its true meaning.

If an understanding of the parable is necessary for a right interpretation of Jesus' teachings it is also important that we understand other forms and methods that he used. Another difficult form of expression is the paradox. We therefore raise the question as to whether or not Jesus used paradox in his teaching; the extent of its occurrence; its nature and value.

B. The nature of paradox.

Paradox is a statement containing certain qualities that are contradictory or opposed to accepted standards. It may be defined, first, as a tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion; also one
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seemingly contradictory, but that yet may be true in fact. Second, it is a statement actually self-contradictory or false. Third, it is any phenomenon or action with seemingly contradictory qualities or phrases.

C. How recognize paradox.

The definition of paradox suggests several keys to its recognition. "A tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion." In this sense every teaching of Jesus that was contrary to the orthodox teaching of his day was paradoxical in nature. A comparison of his teaching with that of the scribes, or with present day standards, reveals this type.

"An assertion seemingly contradictory but that yet may be true in fact". This is the familiar form of paradox, and is characterized by the balancing of terms and apparent contradiction of meaning usually associated with paradox.

"A statement actually self-contradictory or false". This may be recognized by its extreme form of statement, for the exaggeration is carried to the point of impossibility for the purpose of teaching a truth.

"Any phenomenon or action with seemingly contradictory qualities or phrases". This is probably an accidental or unconscious paradox for it was probably not intended as such by the speaker. Wherever contradictory elements occur we have this type.
II. Extent of paradox in Jesus' teachings.

A. Brief general survey.

In the broad sense set forth in the foregoing paragraph paradox freely abounds in the teaching of Jesus. Two main bodies of teaching, the "sermon on the mount" and the parables, each contains examples. The former is well saturated with paradox, while the latter contains a much smaller element. Many of the paradoxical sayings are found in the large body of fragmentary teachings apart from these two groups. The fourth gospel contains numerous striking examples. We shall consider them in five distinct classes.

B. Five types of paradox.

1. First, there is the proposition that is seemingly contradictory, or opposed to common sense, but that may be true in fact. This might be called conscious paradox, for they seem to have been purposely stated in this particular form.

The most familiar example of this type is the saying, "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it". Other examples include: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant". "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first". "For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind". 
2. Second, there is the paradox of simple identity, or those whose meaning is found in the realm of value. Many statements of this type are found in both the synoptic and the Johannine gospels. The identity is not one of metaphysical reality, but rather one of ideal value.

A familiar illustration of this type is, "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother". Jesus' habit of identifying himself with things and persons furnishes many examples, as, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me". "This is my body". "This is my blood".

3. Third are the statements which are actually self-contradictory or false. Although all of Jesus' statements might be classed elsewhere there are some which in a literal sense illustrate this type.

"It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead".

4. Fourth are the words spoken at different times and under different circumstances which seem contradictory when brought together. Comparison of different sayings brings to light many paradoxes of this type.
"Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven". Compare: "But when thou dost alms, let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth". "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil". Compare: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time -- but I say unto you".

5. The fifth group is made up of statements opposed to received opinion. Many sayings that are classified elsewhere could also be included here. The "sermon on the mount" abounds in this type of paradox.

"Blessed are ye poor". "-- resist not (him that is) evil". "Be not anxious for the morrow". "It is more blessed to give than to receive". "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath". Jesus' fulfilment of the law, with his change of emphasis from external, overt acts, to motives and springs of action.

III. The meaning and value of typical paradoxical teachings from each group.

A. First group.

"Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it". The solution lies in the two meanings of the word "life". In the antecedent clauses it refers to the external, earthly life; while in the concluding
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clauses it is the loss or preservation of a higher, personal life, independent of physical circumstances, that is meant. The key to its truth is found in the experience of loyalty – in the case of a Christian – to Christ and his kingdom.

B. Second group.

"And he answered them, and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking around on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother". Jesus' use of the terms "mother" and "brethren" is figurative. By this paradox he meant to declare that kinship is not so much a matter of physical birth as it is one of spiritual quality.

C. Third group.

"It is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". In this strong paradox Jesus virtually says that it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. It is Jesus' way of suggesting the extreme peril of riches. The only hope for the rich man is in the power of God.

D. Fourth group.

"If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". Compare: "The duty of filial
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love to aged parents; the sanctity of the marriage relationship; the prayer for daily bread. The contradiction here is more apparent than real. Jesus' first demand is for absolute loyalty on the part of his followers. But to give him first place does not exclude others from their rightful relationships. On the contrary all duties will be fulfilled in the spirit of that higher loyalty.

E. Fifth group.

"Blessed are ye poor". Plummer insists that it is actual poverty that is blessed here. But since Jesus was constantly emphasizing the truth that religion is a matter of inward life and experience rather than outward forms and circumstances it is almost unbelievable that he should have turned and blessed or cursed mere external conditions. The interpretation of Matthew who adds, "in spirit", is the only reasonable answer that can be given.

IV. The teaching power of paradox.

A. The dangers in its use.

1. Failure to recognize it as paradox.

The stern declarations of Jesus may be easily misunderstood, especially by those unschooled in literary forms and not akin to Jesus in mode of thought. The extreme form of the sayings suggests that they were not meant as mere matter-of-fact statements, yet there is danger that they will be taken as such by
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healers. Jesus risked misunderstanding in both word and deed, using paradox, as he did the parable, to increase the effectiveness of his speech.

2. Literalism in interpretation.

A second danger, not unlike the first, is the tendency toward literalism in interpretation. This generally misses the point of the paradox and leads to varying degrees of fanaticism. Where specific acts seem to be enjoined by Jesus it is not easy to say which were given as literal rules of conduct and which were intended for another purpose. Many of the exhortations of Jesus certainly were not intended as literal commands. Their paradoxical nature demands that they be interpreted according to the whole spirit and purpose of his life. Jesus' free use of imagery increases the danger of misunderstanding through a tendency toward literalism. Homme says, "Imagery means not what it says, but what it means to say. The observance of this principle of exegesis would prevent many a dispute".

3. Confusion of thought due to apparent inconsistency of teaching.

Perfect consistency is perhaps never attained by any teacher. Nevertheless the mind demands a certain unity of thought and consistency of purpose. When conflicting statements are made by Jesus we may be left in doubt as to his real meaning. For example, how can one let his light shine before men: that they
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may see his good works, and at the same time not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing? For many such paradoxes a fairly satisfactory answer can be given. Nevertheless we can readily see the danger of confusion of thought that arises.

B. The limits of its use.

There are four occasions when paradox may be expected: First, to state truth which contradicts current views. Here its use is unavoidable, for by definition any view that is contradictory to commonly accepted standards is a paradox. Second, to give startling emphasis to truth, so that it will stimulate thought and challenge action. Certain of the paradoxes of Jesus were clearly intended to accomplish these two ends. Third, to enforce principle rather than mere rule of conduct. Here we find one of its most effective uses by Jesus. Fourth, to give an adequate interpretation of certain paradoxical elements of experience. In this, as in the first instance, Jesus used paradox because it was unavoidable, the greatest truths of life having something of paradox in them.

C. Justification of its use.

Paradox was well adapted to the paradoxical method of Jesus. Since his teaching was oral it was necessary for him to use words and phrases that would be likely to stick in the minds of his hearers. Its form and power make it adapted toward this end.
Summary.

1. The literary form of paradox.
   In its more characteristic forms the paradox resembles a method long current in the Jewish schools of embodying moral and religious teaching in pointed proverbs and maxims. It was a form extensively used in Hebrew wisdom literature, and by some of the prophets, notably Hosea.

   b. Characteristics of style.
   The penetrating quality of paradox is often due to one of four characteristics of style. First the contrast between the lower and higher meaning of the terms employed. Second, the use of extreme forms of statement. This sometimes takes the form of a sharp contrast of terms. Third, the thought is brought out with the greatest clearness in the briefest compass. The central idea of a discussion is sometimes gathered up by Jesus into a single pregnant utterance. Fourth, the use of imagery.

2. The power of paradox.
   a. The power of the eternal.
   Jesus' method of enforcing principles rather than mere rules of conduct has been suggested. The use of paradox enabled him to achieve this end. We therefore sense an enduring quality in many of the paradoxical truths that gives them the power of the eternal, in that they clothe eternal principles.

   b. The power of intuitive appeal.
   Many of Jesus' paradoxes are of such a nature
Summary.

that they commend themselves to the mind without argument or proof. Their appeal is direct and intuitive. On the other hand not all of the paradoxes are self-evidently true. But these only serve to emphasize the truth that many familiar paradoxes carry the weight of conviction within themselves. Paradox is admirably adapted to make the direct appeal to the moral judgment of men.

c. The sanction of experience.

In many instances our final appeal in the test of truth is to life and experience. Truth that has been wrought out in life and thus bears the sanction of experience is not to be denied its power. It has already been suggested that some of the greatest truths of life have something of paradox in them. What reason is slow to accept is often found true in life.

V. Conclusions.

Our study of the element of paradox in the teaching of Jesus warrants the following general conclusions:

1. Paradox in all its forms is present in the teaching of Jesus.

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MISCELLANEOUS.
