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The place of the individual in the teachings of Jesus

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL
IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Submitted by

Mary Mann

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In partial fulfilment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

1927

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THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL
IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL
IN THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

"Jesus Christ was the first to bring the value of every human soul to light, and what he did no one can any more undo."
-- Adolf Harnack

These are days when Christian and non-Christian alike are seeking to understand Jesus Christ. With the clearer insight into Jesus' appreciation of the individual the term, "Social Gospel," has come into common use. Difficult as it is to act upon what they do know, men are honestly inquiring just what is their responsibility for each other.

The individual among primitive peoples was counted merely as a member of the clan, tribe or race. Even the deities were only personifications of the forces of nature. Among modern non-Christian peoples the place of the individual is vastly different from that enjoyed in the so-called Christian lands. Wherever the teaching of Gautama Buddha has been received, or where any system of the Buddhist religion has wielded an influence, the people have been gripped by a conviction that no human life possesses any enduring worth religiously.¹ The human body is a miserable hindrance, and inescapable suffering makes life hardly worth living. The worshipper of Shinto catches no sense of the intrinsic value in a human individual.

¹ Rhys-Davids: Buddhism, N.Y., G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901, p. 133.

The person is valuable only in proportion to his worth to the state. To the Confucianist, who scarcely recognizes a God, "Whatever the Superior Man seeks is in himself."¹ Woven into the very fiber of this cultured gentleman's being is this saying of the great teacher, "Have no friends not equal to yourself."²

In the midst of civilizations builded upon systems which specifically provided for human slavery, the Hebrew prophet began gradually to recognize some value in the individual. One of the interesting roadways through Old Testament Scriptures is one which traces the conception of the value of the individual Hebrew. Following Josiah's reformation, pious souls who could not obey the command to go to Jerusalem to worship in the temple caught something of the secret of worshipping without shrine or priest. In the Exile family and clan ties were broken and the individual was thrown back upon Jehovah. Jeremiah gave his people a life that knew much of the character of a God who would fellowship with individual men. And Ezekiel broke through the old theology and insisted on each man's own responsibility before his God. Now and then there appears in the Old Testament some sense of value not merely to the Hebrew but for all men. And with Jesus every human soul was of priceless worth.

¹ S. B. E., 15:20.

² Analects, 1:8.3; also 9:24.

In this brief study it is our purpose to inquire into the source of Jesus' new appreciation of human life, how it affected his own human relationships, and what he expected it to mean to future generations of God's great family of men.

CHAPTER I

JESUS' DISCOVERY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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"O Thou good omnipotent, who so carest for everyone of us, as if Thou caredest for him alone; and so for all of us, as if all were but one!Thou madest me for Thyself, and my heart is restless until it repose in Thee."

-- Saint Augustine

A. Our Right to Find the Key

As children of men we claim very real relationship to Jesus Christ. When he says, "Everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened,"¹ we are sure we are included in the invitation and are glad. When he, the resurrected Christ, says, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,"² he is challenging us to see just such value in men and women as he sees. We ask how it can be. Whence this valuation of every individual, regardless of race, sex or station?

We know how futile it is to undertake to explain a person. And yet if we are to accept his challenge, he expects us to know the secret of his way of thinking and doing and living. The records give us the impression that he wants us to know. And such an attitude toward folk implies a way of life rare to this twentieth century.

¹ Mt. 7:7b.

² Mt. 28:19a.

B. The New Testament Attitude
toward the Creator

If the reproduction of Jesus' conversation as well as his longer discourses is true, there is no expression on his lips quite so often as his title for God and mention of his Kingdom. And what does he say about God? Again, if our records are true, he does not say much about God. As a Hebrew, Jesus assumes God, the omnipotent creator of the universe. In the whole New Testament, in which Jesus is the central figure, there is scarcely a sentence of praise or even recognition of the "Great Artificer."¹ He simply appeals to men to trust the great, good God to control his wind and sea in the interest of his children.

C. God as Father in the Old Testament

It has come to be almost axiomatic that Jesus taught us to think of God as Father. But he was not the first good Hebrew to call God a father. The thought was not unknown to Old Testament writers. Not infrequently did prophet and poet speak of Jehovah's fatherly attitude toward his people. "I will lead them, for I am a father to Israel."² "As a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him."³ "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. . . . Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms, but they knew not that I healed them."⁴ Tender, beautiful is this conception of Jehovah's attitude toward his people. But not once

¹ Glover, T.R.: Jesus of History, N.Y., G.H. Doran CO., 1917, p. 93.

² Jer. 31:9.

³ Ps. 103:3.

⁴ Hos. 11:1&3.

do we find a man or woman in Jesus' Scriptures, in worship, addressing Jehovah as "Father." The almighty, righteous God of the Hebrews was too far away and too exalted to be Father, even to his prophets, much less to common men and women.

D. Jesus' Discovery of the Father

1. The Father "Father" was the title Jesus used in speaking who provides either to or of God. Of course, he knew how the prophets had used the title, and it may have been from them that he received the suggestion. But it is a beautiful tribute to his carpenter father that the Messiah should use the relationship of father and son to describe his own relationship with Jehovah, the high and holy One.

In the villages of Palestine there was enough food and clothing to keep industrious folk comfortable. Jesus had watched the great caravans carrying between the cities of the Mediterranean world the precious products of mine, loom and orchard. He was convinced that his Father had made bountiful provision for the physical needs of his every child. Following a discourse on anxiety about things, Jesus said, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."¹ And again we hear him emphasizing his Father's interest in each child and saying, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered."²

¹ Mt. 6:32, 33.

² Mt. 10:29, 30.

It has been suggested that God's infinity is the infinity of his care for the individual. (Reference?)

2. The Father who needs and seeks his child But Jesus' Father who never forgot physical need was infinitely more interested in that life which was created to live on through all eternity. He was and is interested in that life which has within it the power to wound the great heart of its creator, and the power to bring to him comfort and joy and comradeship. He was interested in the soul with its power to repent of offenses committed against him, that soul which having experienced forgiveness learns to forgive wrongs committed by fellowmen,¹ and in so doing grows into the likeness of its own Father.

And all that Jesus tells us of God's great, loving, understanding heart comes so clearly out of the young man's own experience.² Throughout those "silent years" preceding the public ministry Jesus was learning much about God as Father. We have no reason to believe his home was essentially different from other good Hebrew households. It is the uniqueness of Jesus that he grasped these things. The fact is he was very sure he did discover the very heart of the God of his people and Jesus was just as sure as we are that his Father was the Father of all mankind.

More than once as a hungry lad, Jesus had received bread

¹ Mt. 18:32. To Jesus it was natural that one who receives forgiveness should forgive others.

² Kent, C.F.: The Life and Teachings of Jesus, Boston, Scribner's, 1913, p. 49.

from Joseph's hand. And there must have come to him the sense that God, his great spiritual Father, responded just as graciously to his children's needs. He had seen his own mother sweep and sift the shavings in the shop home until she found a lost coin. He may have joined some anxious shepherd in a night's search for some venturesome lamb. For years he had watched the troubled yet expectant face of a neighbor father as he waited for the return of his prodigal boy. He may have been a guest at the feast given in honor of the boy's homecoming, where he saw the gleam in the father's eye and felt the relief and satisfaction and joy in the very tone of every word that fell from that old man's lips. And there came to Jesus the picture of his Father's great, throbbing concern for his own children who do not know him, who are entirely cut of sympathy with his holy purpose.¹ We are told that for Jesus the word "lost" was "tender and compassioned and full of the heart of God."² The God that Jesus knew suffered a father's grief that anything so precious as an individual should be lost.

E. The Meaning of Sonship

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Discovery
of
essentials
of
sonship | In his later young manhood that crisis known
as the baptism and wilderness experience
Brought to Jesus a deeper, very vivid sense
of what it meant to be a son of the kind of God he had learned |
|---|---|

¹ Glover: Op. cit., pp. 24-28.

² Ommun, John: "Individual," Dictionary of the Gospels.

to know and love. Through those days of thought, prayer and most intimate fellowship he found his Father's heart ready to respond to the very deepest need of one of his struggling children. That wilderness experience was no play-acting with little or no possibility of failure. Such a Savior as men find in Jesus Christ must certainly have been "in all points tempted like as we are."¹ In his inmost soul he was asking questions to which he must have answer. What did it mean to be the Son of God? If he were to establish the Kingdom of God, what kind of a Kingdom should it be? How was it to be realized? Were the people right in their picture of a Messiah who would overthrow political enemies and establish a Kingdom surpassing in splendor the kingdoms of the earth and one in which every citizen would be free from all physical hardship?

Out of those days Jesus came with the fundamental answers to those questions. He learned that the Son of God was to do more than feed the bodies of men. His business was to reflect the character of God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."² He was keen enough and honest enough to accept the fact that any spectacular announcement of his Messiahship would have been utterly selfish and ultimately futile to the Son's business of Kingdom building. Hence the reply, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord, thy God."³

These principles were to Jesus the very essentials of Sonship. And these essentials far transcended the loftiest conception of the pious peasant, the most serious and honest Pharisee of his

¹ Heb. 4:5b.

² Mt. 4:4.

³ Mt. 4:7.

own time, or of the prophets of old. They had to do primarily with character, with the Son's attitude toward the Father. Sonship meant living in absolute obedience to , and in complete sympathy with, the will of the Father, whose interest was in every child of man.¹ It was an interest surpassing that of the very noblest Hebrew father, as far as God's omnipotence surpassed that of a human father.

2. A privilege The centuries which have been unfolding for us
 open
 to all the history of all mankind seem clearly to verify Jesus' belief that he was the first to discover the will and the heart of God. He was very sure that he was the Son of God.² And he was just as sure that it was his Father's will that every one of his children become in very deed sons of God, entering into the beautiful relationship that he knew. After a startling admonition to go freely a second mile, probably bearing a burden for some arrogant Roman soldier, hear his demand that men love their enemies "that ye become sons of your Father which is in heaven."³ And then he follows with that "impossible" command "Be ye perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect."⁴ Again we hear him saying, "Even so it is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish."⁵

3. The price The records indicate that after the temptation
 of
 Sonship experience Jesus never went back to his old position as bread-winner in the household at Nazareth. And it

¹ Wendt, H.H.: The Teachings of Jesus, Vol. I, p. 209.

² Jn. 18:25; 10:7-9. ³ Mt. 5:45. ⁴ Mt. 5:48. ⁵ Mt. 18:14.

looks as if the thought of God that for him closed the career as carpenter and sent him out as preacher and teacher was the discovery that his Father was searching for his lost children. Could the Son of God do other than share in that search? His whole life story seems to tell of his recognition of a privilege of cooperating with his Father in bringing the sons of men into their heritage of fellowship with their Father. It meant working together with God, a privilege which was worth any price. For Jesus, being the Son of God meant being like God.¹ It meant paying the price which would show his fellowmen what God is like. It meant speaking truth which cut into the very roots of the ecclesiastical order of his time.² It meant breaking the Law, even for but one wretched woman.³ It meant being peculiar. It meant being misunderstood and unpopular.⁴ It meant whole nights of hard thought and prayer.⁵ It meant Gethsemane and the Cross, all for the sake of being the Son of a Father whose "infinity consists in his infinite care for the individual."⁶

As Jesus beheld the suffering round about him, he was sure his way of life was more worthwhile than that of even the most fortunate of his countrymen. Just to be like such a Father as he knew was priceless attainment. He never suggested comfort and ease to those who would become sons of his Father and theirs. And yet we hear him speaking (it must have been to a multitude of common village folk), "Come unto me all ye that labor and are

¹ Mt. 5:48. ² Mk. 2:27, 28; Lk. 3:15; 5:30.

³ Lk. 13:12-14. ⁴ Lk. 5:30. ⁵ Lk. 6:12; 21:37.

⁶ Commun: Op. cit., p. 814.

heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."¹ Sons of God have burdens to bear. And bearing them in his fellowship they become like God.

4. Conclusion In conclusion we are convinced that it was through fellowship with his great, loving Father-God, that Jesus came to recognize something of the divine, something of the intrinsic worth in every human being. A father loves and respects each child as an individual. He sees in each child a personality with its own peculiar characteristics. With this sense of his Father's appreciation of every individual as the very life current of his whole ministry Jesus gave himself utterly to the task of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹ Mt. 11:29, 30.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN JESUS' MINISTRY

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"This truth that God cares for everyone of us is easy to speak about, beautiful to contemplate, but hard to believe. . . . How can we make it real to ourselves that he who sustains the milky way, who holds Orion and the Pleiades in his leash, knows us by name?"

-- Harry Emerson Fosdick

A. Jesus and the Crowds

1. The crowd's appeal to Jesus One of the most vivid impressions left by the gospel records is that of Jesus' compassion for the multitudes. And it is easy to see that with some thirty years of such intimacy with God as could culminate in his baptism and wilderness experience, Jesus returned to Judea and then to Galilee with his spirit keenly, almost painfully, alert to every human need. His soul was literally burning with the desire to make every man he met grasp and appreciate the fact of his great privilege of becoming in his soul a Son of God.¹

In his early ministry Jesus seems deliberately to have sought the centers of population. We are told that after a brief visit in Nazareth upon his return from the Jordan, he went down to Capernaum, where he taught the people "on the Sabbath day."²

¹ Jn. 1:35-42.

² Lk. 4:31b.

And then we hear him say to his disciples, "I must go also into the next towns."¹ It was his custom to attend the annual religious festivals of the Jews in Jerusalem where there were always crowds.

The people among whom Jesus worked knew nothing of the rigid schedule of our modern industrial and educational systems. They enjoyed the freedom of home-craft industry. We are told that in his day that tiny country supported some two and one-half million souls.² So literal multitudes could come together upon a moment's invitation. They had time to come and to stay. If the discipline of the synagogue school might be compared with that of a typical school in some parts of the Orient today, the master and pupils were often a part of the crowd.

2. Jesus' appeal to the crowds It is clear that many of the people, perhaps most of them, came from pure curiosity or in the hope of seeing some miracles. Jesus was very sure that one crowd followed him hoping for food.³ And yet the very fact of curiosity is what we build on in any attempt at education. There was something about Jesus himself that could hold crowds, even when far away from home, until late in the evening.⁴ In our study of the place of the individual in Jesus' teachings we shall find a secret of these large audiences in the very nature of his discourse. Even though the crowd was so great that he had to push

¹ Mk. 1:38, (Horne, p. 137).

² Sanday: Sacred Sites of the Gospels, p. 16.

³ Jn. 6:26.

⁴ Mt. 14:13-21.

out in a boat to speak to them, his teaching was individual. "He was an individual dealing with individuals and required from them most individual actions, repentance and obedience."¹

It is one of the common characteristics of the great human family to delight in being recognized as individuals. And those hungry peasant folk were quick to recognize Jesus' sincere interest. Those farmers and tradesmen, as well as the bargain-driving merchants, were just as quick to follow Jesus through to the very heart of things as were the tutored scribes and Pharisees. Indeed, sometimes those men find it easier to think in straight lines than do the more cultured folk who depend too much upon the training of the school.

Into these multitudes there came many a man and woman with mind alert and heart receptive, who went away to finer, nobler living, and with a sense of what it meant to belong to God, just such a God as Jesus knew. There were doubtless those who in their hearts made the same response as did a certain ignorant African woman. After hearing about her Father's love expressed in the life and character of such a Son as Jesus, she turned to a member of her own clan and said, "There! I always told you there ought to be a God like that."

We know there was a group of followers who were just as loyal as they knew how to be. During Jesus' last week in Jerusalem, the scribes and Pharisees dared not be too bold in their attempts to silence Jesus. They feared an uprising in his behalf.² And immediately after Jesus' death the number of followers was so large

¹ Omun, J.: Op. cit., p. 814.

² Mt. 26:4, 5.

that they were considered a menace to the established religious order.¹

3. The individual in the crowd We have spoken of how individual was Jesus' teaching even when speaking to the multitude.

He simply never lost sight of the individual. Think of the reaction that came to every man, woman, boy or girl who heard his parable of the ninety and nine.² And if they allowed themselves to be honest, how small those scribes and Pharisees must have felt! Think of quibbling over eating with sinners when Jehovah, the Father of those very sinners was like the Good Shepherd. And who was there who was not very sure that he was the hundredth sheep and being sought by the Shepherd? If it were on that same occasion Jesus told the story of the lost boy,³ we wonder how many prodigals there were in the crowd. Were there as many as there were folk?

Once again we find Jesus' whole spirit determined by the conviction that his Father cares for the individual and cannot rest until every child has responded to his love.

We find it very easy to suppose that some of that very group did repent, thus bringing joy to heaven and to Jesus' eager soul. Were they part of the multitude dreaded by scribe and Pharisee during Jesus' last week in Jerusalem?

Although we may find that Jesus did much of his most effective work in the small group and in personal interview, the Gospels repeatedly picture for us Jesus among the people. His heart

¹ Acts 4:1-18.

² Lk. 15:1-7.

³ Lk. 15:11-32.

never ceased to be moved by the multitudes,--multitudes of individual souls.

B. Jesus and the Small Group

1. Jesus and his disciples Although Jesus never lost interest in the souls of the hungry folk of the crowd, he had clear enough insight to discover soon that for permanent work frequent, even constant, contact was necessary. Following the custom not only of his own people and age, but that of many peoples and many ages, Jesus drew to himself a group of young men into whose character and minds he consciously set out to instill the things he had learned about and from God.

We wish we knew each of the men more intimately. There is just enough told to make us very sure they were twelve distinct and very different personalities. Their one common characteristic was a loyalty to Jesus and openminded interest in the things he talked about. We who are eternally indebted to them for the Jesus of history as well as the message of the risen, living Christ are tempted to wonder that they were so dull of comprehension, so slow to grasp truth which we of the twentieth century have scarcely made our own.

We are accustomed to speak of "The Twelve."¹ Did Jesus speak of them so? Why was an apostolic school not a permanent institution? One was chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas. And yet there is certainly no evidence that the group was main-

¹ Mt. 26:20; Mk. 14:17; Lk. 22:14, 47; Jn. 6:71.

tained as such. The disciples, however, were held in high respect in the early church, especially among all Jewish Christians. Their testimony was accepted as authority. Paul's letters show how he was not allowed to forget that he was not one of the twelve who tramped and talked with Jesus. Had Jesus given the slightest hint of solidarity for this little group, they would most likely have caught it, and it is easy to picture how such a body might have assumed authority over the whole Christian church.

No, this is just another evidence of Jesus' way of working. Mark reveals much in that little sentence in which he says, "Jesus chose his disciples that they might be with him."¹ The only suggestion of that which we call "organization" was just the fact that Judas carried the common purse. The binding power in the group was a common friend, whom they recognized as Master and Teacher.

Students have given much time to detailed study of Jesus' training of the twelve and doubtless with no small profit. It is surprising that so little is recorded as having been said to them alone. They must have been with him most of the three years. We read of what he did and said in their presence, but usually the crowd was there. We know they did have seasons alone.² Why are those discourses not recorded? We venture the suggestion that the men never thought of reporting many of the things that were said to them. They were so informal. So often the most significant lesson of the day came under such homely, common circumstances that the men scarcely realized what they were

¹ Mk. 3:14b.

² Mk. 4:34; 7:24; 8:27-9:14.

learning. So often the most precious gifts of friendship have been with us for months before we know that we have them.

We are told that a real teacher teaches the child first, trusting that through her technique some mathematics, geography, etc., may be learned. But the first interest is the child. So Jesus was teaching Peter, James, John, and each of the rest eternal truth. But his emphasis was upon each man. He knew that truth is caught quite as surely as it is taught. Out of these months of fellowship they did catch much of his spirit. They, in very truth, did become fishers of men, and were so successful that church and state feared this new way of life would upset the established order. Tradition tells us how these same men died as martyrs loyal to their Lord.

Jesus lived and worked on the principle expressed by Saint Augustine, "One loving spirit sets another on fire."¹ He chose a group of twelve young men who had responded to his picture of God. He respected them as individual men. They saw him under every sort of circumstance. They had every chance to find weakness in his character, but even in their judgment there was not much amiss. They felt his respect for them. He loved them and let them know it. He rebuked them. He prayed for them individually. We hear him as he turns to Peter and says, "But I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not."²

Throughout his ministry one of the outstanding characteristics of Jesus was his honesty. We have already spoken of how he took it for granted there would always be burdens to bear. And

¹ Confessions, 4:14, 21.

² Lk. 22:32.

although he was very sure that his Father meant that all physical needs be met, he never promised ease to any applicant for discipleship. "And there came a scribe and said unto him, Teacher, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest."¹ That was a bold declaration of loyalty from a churchman. And Jesus must have been glad for any member of the literati who could or would accept the message he had come to bring. But listen to his reply, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."² Jesus insisted that anyone who undertook his way of life do it with eyes open. He would have his disciples well aware of the fact that no big salaries or even comfortable homes were assured. He was working with a minimum of physical comfort and he could promise no more to his disciples. To Jesus, discipleship meant exactly what it meant to him to be the Son of God.³ And that was willingness to pay any price circumstances might demand of one committed to obedience to the will of his Father.

Well may men marvel at the dignified intimacy that existed between master and student friends. We have seen how he shared with them the triumphant struggle of the wilderness experience. He gave them God's answer to his searching questions and pictured for them something of how it came. Into the later crises of his life Jesus took them right with him just as deeply as they were able to go.

It must have been near the close of the so-called period of

¹ Mt. 8:19-22.

³ Mk. 10:39.

retirement into the region of Syro-Phoenicia that Jesus led in that series of conversations about the meaning and cost of Messiahship.¹ And the conversation near Caesarea-Philippi was something of a climax in the thinking of the whole group. Luke says Jesus had been praying and his disciples were with him. "Who do the multitudes say the Son of man is? But who say ye that I am?" "The Christ of God." The disciples were so conscious that that wayside conversation was fraught with a significance so new and mighty that their report is fairly electric in its tenseness. Jesus was not only seeking to know what they had been thinking but was also throwing out a challenge for clearer further thinking than they had yet known.

A few days later Peter, James and John were with Jesus when he prayed.² And how could they better have learned the meaning of Messiahship than to be present when the Son of God sought from his Father the next step in the accomplishment of his mission? They were given to know that God was there. Something happened that brought forth a special name for the whole event. We call it the transfiguration. And dare we smile as we recall the suggestion that they build tabernacles to Moses, Elijah and the Messiah? They were learning lessons so new and so significant even to this twentieth century that it is no wonder they were bewildered. They knew that God held communion with men.

For us the significant thing about the three short years Jesus spent with that little group of common folk is that they did learn so much of the lesson he had learned from his Father and

¹ Mt. 16:13-28; Mk. 8:27-9:1; Lk. 8:18-27.

² Mt. 17:1-7; Mk. 9:28; Lk. 9:28-36.

theirs. They learned that God was interested in individuals and he expected men to become like himself in character. And the records of Jesus' commission¹ to the eleven who remained faithful reveals something of how keenly they were aware of the fact that Jesus went away depending on them to carry on the task of Kingdom building. History tells us that every one of them proved worthy of the trust.

2. Jesus in the home We wish the authors of the gospels had told us more about Jesus' life in his own home, and had preserved for us more detailed pictures of him as guest in the homes of friends. And yet the Jesus of experience has filled in between the lines until we can almost hear some of the conversations of the carpenter shop. We are just sure farmers who came for plows went home with some new sense of God's care and love for them.² And we do have a few very significant scenes in which Jesus was the guest of honor. Perhaps it is because of uniqueness in each situation that these stories are preserved. Two of the occasions were feasts given by wealthy publicans, despised tax-collectors, unworthy to entertain a loyal Jew.

The first was up at Capernaum in the home of Levi,³ the fifth to join Jesus' inner circle. We have no direct reflection of the conversation that day. But the very fact that Jesus and his disciples accepted the invitation was an eloquent declaration of the burden of the Master's whole message. And the visit brought forth comments from the scribes and Pharisees to which

¹ Mt. 28:16-20; Mk. 16:14, 15; Lk. 24:44-53.

² Glover: Op. cit., p. 28.

³ Lk. 5:27-32.

Jesus replied in some of his most direct statements of his own mission. He had come to seek out, to heal and to save even the poor rich folk who were far away from God.

According to the records Jesus invited himself to be a guest at the home of the curious, earnest Zaccheus.¹ Again Jesus broke away from tradition and dined with a "chief publican, a very rich man." Orthodox Jews were quick to criticise. But Jesus' one concern that day was winning a man; for "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." And he won the man.² Details of the table conversation are lacking. But it requires little imagination to conclude that the general theme of conversation had to do with the Kingdom of righteousness. The whole party must have somehow become strangely aware of the character of God, that the host should have made such a declaration. Out of things Jesus had been saying plus his whole attitude toward people, Zaccheus became a penitent before a Father who would forgive. A man was in earnest when he could say to Jesus, "Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold."

Our imaginations have delighted to picture many happy occasions when Jesus was a guest in the home of his Bethany friends. But the scene which requires less imagination to make it real and which means much to us was the one in which Jesus taught his

¹ Lk. 19:1-10.

² Hall, H. F.: The Life of Jesus, N.Y., Abingdon, 1918, p. 124.

great lesson on the meaning of hospitality.¹ Again he was emphasizing the value of personality. To Jesus it was the man or woman that counted. Hospitality meant more than the provision of food. It provided for mutual interchange of ideas. It implied conversation on themes that had to do with the real values of life. As was Jesus' way, in only a sentence or two he brought to light the key to the enrichment of one of the oldest rites known to human society. And when will hospitality cease to be a most effective method for the nurturing of friendship? Again he was working in the realm of the individual. Friends are won and kept one by one.

It was as a guest in the home of Simon of Bethany² that Jesus made one of his most emphatic assertions of the worth of every human soul. And it came not as a climax in lofty, thoughtful conversation, but as an actual experience lived out among the very elite of the town. We can understand the amazement of those cultured gentlemen as that woman anointed the head of the guest of honor, and allowed her untidy hair to absorb the tears that fell upon the feet of her Lord. Unable to comprehend the significance of the situation, questions were asked which brought forth the parable of the two debtors. The story is so perfectly clear. And yet to this day we, too, stand amazed that such a thing could be.

C. Jesus in Personal Interviews

Some of Jesus' most significant work was done in personal

¹ Lk. 10:38-42.

² Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Lk. 7:36-50.

interviews. Let us recall a few of the individuals to whom he ministered.¹ There was each of the Twelve; then there were also Nicodemus, Peter's wife's mother, the son of the nobleman at Capernaum, Simon the Pharisee, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, the Gadarene demoniac, Martha, Mary, Lazarus, the mother of James and John. Not including the twelve or the seventy, from our meagre gospel records we can make a list of at least fifty persons with whom Jesus came into some vital touch. If the gospels name so many, there must have been scores more who treasured memories of conversations which meant for them life, new and worthwhile.

We shall study Jesus very briefly in just four of the interviews: one with an honorable citizen, one with a wretched sinner, one with an ambitious family, and one with an intimate friend.

1. Interview with a good citizen Whether disciples were present at that night-time conference or whether the noble Pharisee told the story, we do not know. We only know that the Fourth Gospel has preserved for us, in some detail, Jesus' conversation with one Nicodemus, who has come to be one of the outstanding characters of the New Testament.

We are left to imagine the beautiful Oriental courtesies of introduction. We almost feel the simple, genuine welcome which made it easy for Nicodemus to address Jesus as Rabbi and go directly to the purpose of his call. And one of our very first impressions is Jesus' recognition of his guest's sincerity. He

¹ Horne, H.H.: Jesus: The Master Teacher, N.Y., Association Press, 1925, p. 140.

knew what it meant for a man in his position to be seeking a private interview with a peasant prophet from Galilee. It was clear to Jesus that, limited and bound as he was by his own Pharisaism, he was honestly seeking truth.

And Jesus came out straight from the shoulder with one of the most personal, one of the most fundamental declarations he ever made, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."¹ From his youth Nicodemus had been trained to believe that all Jews by birth and especially those of his particular party, were members of the kingdom. Little wonder he was astonished and asked how such a thing could be. But Jesus believed in him. He saw not merely the Pharisee dreaded² by the common people. He saw the man God would have him be. So he followed his first statement with explanation and further challenge.

Nicodemus had come to Jesus recognizing in him a peculiar relationship to God, apparently because of signs he had seen, or about which he had heard. And Jesus began talking with him about a miracle infinitely more wonderful than anything of which he may have heard by wildest rumor. He was offering to that good citizen a miracle to take place within his own life. He was offering him an experience with God. He was telling him how God's own Spirit was ready to come into his life, making him see and feel and think like God. Jesus must have said many things to make clear a thought so new, and they are lost to us. The last ques-

¹ Jn. 3:3.

² Mt. 23:13-29 (Description of a character which the common people would have dreaded.)

tion we have from Nicodemus is, "How can these things be?"¹ And God has an opportunity to help folk who are asking such questions as that. We wish we knew the whole story. But much may be implied from the sequel, which John gives when he tells us that Nicodemus came with costly gifts of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' body in preparation for burial.

2. Interview Within the last few years educators have been with a sinner studying Jesus as a teacher. Herman Harrell Horne names the five most unanimously accepted essentials of a world teacher; then announces that the Galileean preacher-teacher embodies them all.² From the standpoints of both teacher and preacher, there is probably nowhere a more perfect piece of personal work than Jesus' interview with the "woman of Samaria".³

It was mid-day. And there sat on the curb of the village well, just outside Sychar, in the country of Samaria, a stranger, dusty and thirsty from travel. All the respected women of the town were in their homes. So it was an opportune time for this woman to come for water. Jesus understood the situation at a glance. She was of the despised mixed race and guilty of the sin most hated by the Jew. The stranger whom she knew to be a Jew asked for a drink. It is surprising what happened through that simple request. The wall of race prejudice began to crumble. From the tone of absolute sincerity the woman knew that she had been recognized as an individual not unlike other persons.

In reply to the woman's answer of amazement that a Jew

¹ Jn. 3:9.

³ Jn. 4:1-42.

² Horne: Op. cit., pp. 184-187.

should address a Samaritan, Jesus seems to say, "If you knew God's great willingness to bless you and who it is that asks of you a favor, you would seize the opportunity to ask of him a very much greater one. You would ask him for the living water."¹

Not unnaturally the woman questioned his reply, "Whence the living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob?"² And just here comes one of the Master Teacher's masterful replies. Unlike the typical Jew, he did not challenge her right to call Jacob her father, and neither did he follow up her comparison of himself with Jacob. Rather, he uttered to that ignorant, unfortunate woman one of his most significant and most loved promises, "Everyone that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."³ Note the reply, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw."⁴ Misunderstood him? Perhaps. But something had happened. This needy woman was asking Jesus for something. Her longing for something, she may not have known what, had come to expression. Jesus had awakened wonder and hope.

Then came another masterful step. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither."⁵ The Teacher had the interest and attention of his pupil. The Physician had the confidence of his patient. The woman made honest reply. Forgetting all about the magic water she soon recognized in the man who could sympathetically know her and her sin, one who also knew God. And she called

¹ Walker, R.H.: A Master Personality, Methodist Book Concern, 1926, p..70.

² Jn. 4:11b, 12.

³Jn. 4:13, 14. ⁴ Jn. 4:15.

⁵ Jn. 4:16.

him a prophet.

The woman then turned to Jesus with the biggest theological question on her horizon. Whether or not she wished to turn the conversation away from herself and her sin, we cannot know. We do know that folk are touching a very personal, vital theme when they talk about where to pray, where God is willing to meet his child. Jesus treated her as if she were sincere. He seemed to respect her as the woman she ought to have been and followed her lead into a discussion about where to pray. Not forgetting the debt to the Jews for the way of salvation, again he spoke neither as Jew nor Samaritan. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.....God is spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. For such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers."¹

When the disciples came back from Sychar, they found Jesus so happy that he forgot his own hunger and thirst. "I have meat to eat that ye know not. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work. Lift up your eyes, and look unto the fields, they are white already unto the harvest."² It looks as if he knew that the woman really did accept the living water which he had offered.

Whatever Jesus may have said about his Messiahship was overshadowed for the woman in her consciousness of having found one who was interested in her good. She went back to her village with an invitation to see not a mere fortune-teller but one who

¹ Jn. 4:21, 23, 24.

² Jn. 4:32, 34, 35b.

had something new and different to tell about God. The stranger had called God a Father, who could be worshipped anywhere, and more wonderful still, her Father was seeking for even such miserable, unhappy folk as she had been to worship him.

John tells us that many "believed" because of the testimony of the woman; that the people asked him to come into the village and live with them. "He abode there two days. And many more believed because of his word."¹

In these paragraphs we have reviewed the story of Jesus' conversation with one of society's lowest, an outcast. Again we find him giving his best. He, like the Father about whom he told her, sought out the opportunity to talk with her. Propriety demanded that he keep silent. Not for a moment unmindful of her sin, her need, he treated her with the respect due the woman God meant she should be. He brought to her the same kindly forgiving Father-God, whose Son he knew himself to be.

3. Interview: The roads leading to the Holy City were peopled
with an with eager pilgrims, going to keep the Passover.
ambitious family

The air was surcharged with the sense that if Jesus of Nazareth were there something new and strange would certainly come to pass.² The disciples who had just been with their Master through the so-called period of retirement were convinced that somehow the Kingdom was about to be realized. The accomplishment of Jesus' mission was imminent. They wanted to understand what he said about the Kingdom and about himself, but

¹ Jn. 4:40b, 41.

² Jn. 11:56, 57; 12:20.

it was simply beyond their ken.¹

It must have been somewhere along the way to Jerusalem that James and John, accompanied by their mother,² sought out an interview with Jesus in which they revealed the meaning of the Kingdom from their point of view. If Hebrew customs were like those of some parts of the Orient today, it was very natural for the mother to make application for positions for her mature sons. We who can look back upon the event have said much about the blindness of both mother and sons, that they still thought Jesus was to set up an earthly kingdom. Much has been written about the selfish ambition of the men who would "get in on the ground floor" as the king would make up his cabinet.

The fact is we are scarcely in a position to offer much criticism upon those mistaken folk. There is, however, much to be learned from the Master Teacher as he met the situation. There is scarcely a word which discloses the disappointment which must have been very keen. Instead of rebuke, in reply there came a question which has rung down through the centuries as a challenge which men to this day find almost, if not quite, beyond their grasp. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?.....Are ye able?" Then came the confident response, "We are able." Very probably James and John did not know what they were saying. But they did believe in their good Friend. Jesus most certainly believed in them and simply accepted at face value their declaration. "My cup indeed ye shall drink." Their loyalty had been proven sufficiently for Jesus to believe that

¹ Lk. 18:31-34. ² Mt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45; Lk. 18:31-34.

when he was gone they would be true to the ideals he had given them. They would stand as individual men in the very teeth of persecution even unto death.

The story continued tells how Jesus included in the discussion the whole group of disciples and especially stated the only terms on which men could expect positions in his Kingdom. "Whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister: and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant."¹ And the records seem to imply that the two ambitious brothers left that interview almost forgetting their original request, but with hearts and minds honestly grappling with the challenge to develop ability to serve.

So again we find Jesus teaching individual men, James and John, a lesson, reinforced by a background of respect and unfaltering trust. "Are ye able? My cup indeed ye shall drink."² Luke records the story of James' death at the hands of Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D.³ And evidence is accumulating which points to an early martyr's death for John.⁴

4. Interviews In our study of Jesus in personal interviews, with a friend we have now to observe some of his contacts with one of his most intimate friends. And we have chosen the friend who is so like all of us. Is there any single person to whom more adjectives have been applied than to Simon Peter,⁵ fisherman of Capernaum, who responded to the challenge to become

¹ Mt. 20:26, 27. ² Mt. 20:22, 23. ³ Acts 12:2.

⁴ Kent, C.F.: The Teachings of Jesus, N.Y., Scribner's, 1913, p. 32

⁵ Mt. 4:18-20.

a fisher of men? He was warm-hearted, quick-tempered, courageous, resourceful, vacillating, energetic, enthusiastic, inquisitive, intense, affectionate, devoted, and sometimes impudent. Bishop Warne declares that he is the best type of universal human nature; that he is the nearest like everybody of anybody in sacred or secular literature.¹

We have no way of knowing when the friendship began. We only know that very early Jesus had invited Simon Peter "to be with him."² Then after some two years and more of almost constant fellowship, up at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus opened a conversation about himself.³ And it was Peter who voiced the conviction that Jesus was the Christ. And when Jesus began telling those nearest, dearest friends something of the price that must be paid, something of what it was meaning to him to be the long-hoped-for Messiah, Peter could not understand.⁴ And in response to his insistence that he knew what should come to God's Anointed One, the records tell us of one of the sternest rebukes that ever fell from human lips. Not many men can keep a friend after comparing him with Satan. But Jesus had already proved himself to Peter. And severe as the rebuke was, it was so surcharged with sympathetic understanding, with faith and love, that apparently not for a moment was there the slightest breach in the deep affection and friendship which existed between the two men.

In his story of Jesus' Last Supper with the Twelve, Luke

¹ Warne, F.W.: A Covenant Keeping God, N.Y., Methodist Book Concern, 1925, p. 95.

² Mk. 3:14. ³ Mt. 16:13-28; Mk. 8:27-38; Lk. 9:18-27.

⁴ Mk. 8:27-33.

reflects for us something of Jesus' appreciation of the needs peculiar to his friends individually. The betrayer had left the table and gone out to do his work. Jesus was trying to prepare the disciples for what was about to happen. And at some moment during that hour we see him turn to Peter with, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren."¹ Then when Jesus tells how they will all be scattered, we hear Peter's declaration of loyalty. Both Matthew and Mark record a pledge of fidelity unto death: "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."² And Jesus, knowing the terrific test in store for his good friend, uttered the warning which was at once a shock and an added thread in the cord of common sympathy and abiding understanding. "Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny thrice that thou knowest me."³

Gethsemane and the trial followed. That awful denial came. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter."⁴ Was ever a look more eloquent, laden with more drawing, binding love? Instead of anger or doubt, there was confidence, tenderness, and inspiration. Peter knew that Jesus still believed in him and he "went and wept bitterly." His heart was broken, but Jesus had not lost his friend.

We do not know where Peter was during the crucifixion and the following day. But it was just like Jesus that Peter

¹ Lk. 22:31, 32. ² Lk. 22:33. ³ Lk. 22:34. ⁴ Lk. 22:61a.

knew to send, on the resurrection morn, exactly the message that is reported: "Go tell my disciples and Peter." All we know of the next interview is recorded by Luke. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon."¹ Fitting it is that the details of that meeting are sealed in Jesus' heart and Peter's. We do know that Jesus was then able to do for Peter what he never had done before. His passionate devotion to Jesus became quiet trust and a dignified loyalty not only to his Friend, but to that for which his Friend had given his life.

There is one more most significant interview. And in that, the testimony of these twenty centuries seems to say that Jesus, indeed, gave to Peter the key to the Christian church. "Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Simon, son of Jchn, lovest thou me? Tend my sheep. Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep."² He must have spoken in like manner to other friends, and Peter was the only one who reported. We know that it was in similar tone that he spoke to Saul of Tarsus, and to thousands of men and women of succeeding generations there has come the same message, "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." To Peter was given the key and to it there is a duplicate for every soul who will accept it.

So in Jesus' fellowship with Simon Peter we have seen not only his appreciation of the intrinsic worth of the individual, but we discover something of his tact, untiring

¹ Lk. 24:34;
I Cor. 15:5.

² Jn. 21:15-17.

patience, and infinite wisdom in bringing that worth to realization.

So as Jesus mingled with his people, whether with the crowds, in small groups, or in personal interview, the outstanding characteristic of his whole attitude was his genuine interest in each person. And the records indicate an appreciation of every soul as of equal worth.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SPECIFIC
TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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"All other motives in the life of Jesus gather about this one, the value of the individual soul, like staff officers around a general."

-- Phillips Brooks

A. The Fundamental Law in All His Teaching

1. Worth of individual based on character of God In the first chapter we have seen how the very secret of Jesus' appreciation of the value of the human soul lay in his knowledge of the character and heart of God. To him God was a moral Father, and his omnipotence as creator, his justice and his wisdom were all transcended by the one quality of love. And no attribute, human or divine, is in a more peculiar sense personal and individual than love. Love in the abstract, or love of even a mass of people does not count for much. Anyway Jesus was very sure that his Father loved folk individually and loved every individual.
2. Manifest methods in teaching the law of love Jesus knew his task. He knew his people who needed to know their Father. He knew how, in spite of their hungry hearts, just how slow they were to catch the message he had come to bring. So he told the wondrous truth in many ways and from many angles.

He gave it to them in phrase so delicate that we forget the carpenter's tool and think of the poet's pen. He gave it to them in startling parable and shocking rebuke. He gave it to them in quiet conversation and in simplest service of every-day living. He gave it to them in miracles of mercy. His unquenchable faith in his fellowmen and in God gave him courage to go on until in his passion and death he gave his all that men might know the heart of their Father. If they could only know, they would surely respond to his love and accept their heritage as sons of God.

In this chapter we are setting out to study some of his applications of the fundamental teaching of God's love for every child of man.

B. The Law of Reverence and Respect

In our study of Jesus in personal interviews, we have seen with what perfect respect he treated everyone he met. He acted upon the principle that all else in God's universe is instrument; man alone is end and worthy of respect.

1. Reverence We are so constantly harassed by the ugly old
for
the self¹ sin of selfishness, that it is easy to forget that Jesus gave some very positive teaching about the value of the self. "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"² Jesus is not thinking here of the physical life, but of the real life, the real self which is

¹ Rall, H.F.: The Teachings of Jesus, N.Y., Abingdon Press, 1918, p. 102.

² Mt. 16:26.

reflected only through eye and speech. He is speaking of the self God intended his child to become.

Luke has preserved for us Jesus' story of the rich fool, which is a picture of one who has sinned against himself. There is no indication of crime. There is no hint of any sort of injustice in the manner in which he got his wealth. He had simply placed his own soul on a par with his body and even with his possessions. He had not learned, "It is better to make a life than a living."¹

Those habits which destroy the body are sins against the true self in that they mean irreverence for the dwelling place of a human personality. The fostering of emotions which prevent the soul from living at its best: malice, hatred, anger, and fear defile God's image in the human soul.

2. Reverence With Jesus' sense of values he might well have
for
fellowmen felt that all else was sacred except the people.
The state, institutionalized religion and property were sacred. Even rank and ancient privilege were holy. But man for his own sake was not. Under Roman law men could be held as property and receive from their masters whatever treatment their whims required. There was no recourse.

Jesus saw the bitterness of class division among his own people. The priest looked with indignation at the Pharisee. He, in turn, despised the common people, who could not if they would, meet all the requirements of the law. The Jew hated the Samaritan as bitterly as he did the intruding Greek and

¹ Luccock, H.A.: Studies in the Parables of Jesus, p. 24
(Quoted from Gov. W.E. Russel.)

Roman. And Jesus made some scathing pronouncements against such scorn. He put anger on a level with killing one's brother. And to call a brother a fool is worthy of "hell fire."¹ In anger right relationships are destroyed. And Jesus saw exactly the same attitude which does lead to killing, to murder. To call a brother a fool is a sin against the most sacred of God's creation. It is an expression of utter disrespect for human personality.

Back of all Jesus' sharp rebukes to Scribe and Pharisee was his keen appreciation of the men and women who were being locked upon in scorn. It has been suggested that a whole chapter might be written on "Jesus the Gentleman."² In his "Light of the World" William Holman Hunt has presented that theme. The guest awaiting an invitation to enter a home is to any people and to any generation a fitting symbol of reverence and respect. Hunt has recognized, too, the truth that the Father has given to each child the one key to his own heart. And Jesus' whole attitude toward all he met, whether friend or stranger, whether the honorable Nicodemus or the "traitor" Zaccheus, was one of reverence. It looks as if one of the secrets of his grip upon men was his respect for their privilege of rejecting the message that he brought.

¹ Mt. 5:21-24.

² Rall: Op. cit., p. 100.

C. The Individual and His Property

1. Economic system of Jesus' time There is probably nothing in the chronicles of the first century that reflects more accurately the code of economic law in common practice than does Jesus' parable of the unjust steward. His hearers knew exactly what he was saying. They knew he was using the longheadedness in a system of graft as a challenge for clearheaded foresight in a kingdom of righteousness. Jesus was very conscious of the relation between property and the growth of a human soul. He spoke of its dangers more often and more fully than of any of the evils of licentiousness. "His concern was for the spiritual vitality and soundness of the individual and for human relations existing among men."¹
2. Relation between money and character Luke gives us a story of how a man once called out from the crowd asking Jesus to help him secure justice in the division of the family property.² Jesus was too wise to become entangled in the quarrel, but went straight to the source of the trouble, the cause of all disputes over property. Someone was greedy and tried to get more than his rightful share. Out of this perfectly natural situation Jesus took occasion to teach one of the lessons on the relation between things and character. Every person in that crowd must have been conscious that in those few short sentences Jesus was picturing exactly the prosperity he would like to have enjoyed. It would have been great to have such

¹Rauschenbusch, W.: The Social Principles of Jesus, N.Y., Association Press, 1925, p. 124.

²Lk. 12:13-21.

crops that new barns were necessary, great to be master and mistress of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bountiful. Then we can see the change of expression and shrug of the shoulders as Jesus closed the incident with "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee. . . . So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."¹ Again he was saying that it is the person that is of enduring value.

Jesus' parable of the sower² is rich in suggestion. There is comfort for the sower of the seeds of truth. It fosters faith in both seed and soil. But one of its driving lessons is the fact of the deceitfulness of riches. The things that money is so likely to buy are often rivals to the highest, finest interests of life.

The story of Lazarus and the rich man³ Jesus used to point out how the comforts of riches may, and do all too often, paralyze the finer human qualities of interest in and compassion for the less fortunate. It is one of the acids that eats into the sense of human brotherhood. While the rich man reveled in his own selfishness, even the dogs expressed sympathy for the wretched beggar child of God. Riches not only dry up the fountains of sympathy toward fellowmen; but they close the heart to the voice of God. Poor Dives pleaded that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers, and Jesus replied in one of the most nearly hopeless sentences that ever fell from his lips: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead."

¹ Lk. 12:20, 21.

² Mt. 13:3-23.

³ Lk. 16:19-31.

In the story of the rich young ruler¹ we see Jesus dealing with the problem of riches from still another point of view. The young man evidently was one of the nation's best. There was no question as to how his wealth had been acquired. We may well assume that all the law was kept as faithfully as that mentioned in the story. So he brought his tithe into the house of the Lord. He probably gave to the poor. But Jesus seems to have seen in that fine specimen of manhood a Peter or John or Paul, or anyone of hundreds of other loyal souls of that first century A.D. And that great Master of Men saw that money was robbing the life of the power of becoming its best. It is often suggested that Jesus never meant that the man sell all and give the money to the poor. Jesus was sensible. And it was clear to him that if money stood between that man and his highest excellence, he could well afford to part with it. Being one's best, which to Jesus meant becoming increasingly like God, is worth any price.

The parabolic discussion of a man's treasure house and his lamp,² gives a clear summary of Jesus' teaching about the place and use of things. There is nothing in his teaching or his example to encourage either asceticism or dependence. Until the beginning of his ministry he earned a living as an ordinary tradesman. We have every reason to believe that he and his disciples paid for food and lodging with honest earnings. The key to the whole problem is a matter of the heart. It is a matter of putting first things first. Things, money, property of any

¹ Lk. 18:18-25.

² Mt. 6:19-24.

spert honestly acquired may be a means to character building, of kingdom building. But when they become the center of thought and interest, they eventually extinguish the very life they were intended to serve. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."¹

D. The Individual and the Home

1. The family
fundamental
to man's
earthly
life

We have seen how Jesus used the family to express the relationship between God and each member of the race of men. From the earliest institution of the family it had been recognized as both the religious and social unit. Among the peoples of Jesus' time the Jewish family was distinguished for its purity. Fine as Jewish homelife was when compared with other nations, Jesus saw that divorce was all too frequent. The moral standard for men and for women was not the same. A woman caught in adultery should be stoned, but nothing was said about the man.² A woman might be divorced and she had no recourse.³

In Jesus' thinking the institution of the family stood for a peculiarly sacred relationship between man and woman, dating back as far as the story of creation. Basing his conviction on this principle, Jesus gave expression to the only specific law, preserved in the record of his sayings. And this one rule has not been remembered accurately by the three

¹ Mt. 6:24.

² Jn. 8:3-11.

³ Deut. 24:1; Mk. 10:4.

synoptists. Mark and Luke report no legitimate excuse for divorce, while Matthew says that for reason of adultery divorce may be granted.¹ It is suggested that in the light of this one instance we can see what would have happened if Jesus had left the whole body of his teachings in the form of a code of law.² To Jesus all other human relationships depend on the sanctity attached to marriage. So he insisted that for this life a marriage vow is permanent.

In the sentence just preceding the pronouncement concerning divorce he is clear as sunlight in his remedy for all impure living. It is simply clean thinking. Hearts in tune with the heart and purpose of God are not only the one insurance against impurity, but are the one requisite which transforms a household into a home.

It is good to know that in this twentieth century in every nation there are homes in which to a comparatively high degree the Kingdom with its reign of love is being realized.

2. The family an institution for this life only Jesus' whole life bespeaks the sacredness of the home and its obligation to contribute to the highest, richest development of every member of the family.³ But he recognized it as an institution belonging to this life only. In the resurrection there will be no marriage. Each soul will be so immediately related to God that there will be no reason for the family group.

¹ Mt. 5:27-32; Mk. 10:22-12; Lk. 16:18.

² Scott: Ethical Teachings of Jesus, pp.99-101.

³ Mt. 5:27, 28, 31, 32; Mk. 10:2-12; Lk. 15:11-32, 10:38-42.

Jesus evidently saw the danger of a loyalty limited to the family circle. And there have come down to us some of his sayings which we of the Occident find it a bit difficult to understand. The synoptists tell us how Jesus declared that those who do the will of the Father are his true family.¹ In his requirements for discipleship he declared that it might mean leaving father, mother, brothers and sisters. He was challenging a loyalty to something bigger than a home. He was inviting an allegiance even more binding than family ties which had meant constant fellowship in the same household.² In his command to the disciple who would wait to bury a father,³ he is again emphasizing the place of the Kingdom interests as superior to the demands of custom and even family ties. He was answering a mere excuse common in the Orient even today.

So Jesus demanded of himself and all who would be his disciples absolute obedience to the will of God and that implied a loyalty which transcended that of the family group. Furthermore, it implied for the family richer, fuller meaning for the relationship of its members. The very words father, mother, brother, sister take on new content for those who practice Jesus' way of life. For those who grasp Jesus' significance of the family there comes not only a new and purer reverence for each of its members, but the dignity of the sense of Sonship to God and a loyalty to an institution as big and as holy as his kingdom of righteousness.

¹ Mk. 3:33-35; Mt. 12:46-50; Lk. 8:20, 21.

² Mt. 8:21, 22.

³ Lk. 9:59, 60.

B. The Individual and Prayer

1. Teach us to pray To Jesus prayer was not only the center of religion, but was the very heart of life itself. His disciples no doubt asked many a time, "Whence his authority? Whence his new conception of God?" And they evidently began to realize that one secret must lie in his practice of prayer. They knew how he sometimes spent whole nights out alone with God. They knew how, long before day, he slipped away into his Father's out-doors to pray. They were convinced that something happened when Jesus prayed. One day they came with the petition that Jesus teach them to pray. Following that request, although he practiced the sacred privilege much more than he talked about it, there is no other theme on which he spoke more fully or more definitely.

2. Conditions of prayer a. Sense of God as Father.-- Jesus knew how his people thought of God as far away and too holy to be addressed by name. His whole conception of prayer was based on his conception of a Father who cared and heard the cry of every earnest soul. Jesus had seen the emptiness of prayers said to be heard of men. So he asked men to go into the closet and pray to the God who hears in secret. Then he added, "And when you pray do not repeat over idle words as the Gentiles, for they think they shall be heard because of their many words. Be not therefore like them (hypocrites), for your Father knows what things you need before you ask him."¹

b. A forgiving spirit.-- Jesus knew about the bitterness and

¹ Mt. 6:5-8.

feuds common to men and women in all stations of life. He knew, too, that that same bitterness made fellowship with a forgiving God absolutely impossible. And so he pointed out forgiveness of debtors as one of the first essentials of actual prayer. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, they will also forgive you."¹ And forgiveness means being received into fellowship with God, and experience just as real as reestablishing friendly relations between men.

c. Trust in God.-- Another condition Jesus pointed out to those who would learn to pray was faith. And he uttered some promises which have long been puzzling to those who would think of him as a theologian and author of exact definitions. "Have faith in God. Of a truth I tell you that if anyone shall say to this mountain, Be removed and thrown into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that it will happen as he says, it will be done for him."² "Ask and ye shall receive. All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."³ In the first sentence of the quotation, Jesus has given the key. He was not talking about a pagan's faith in prayer. He had not the slightest thought of compelling God with prayer. And neither was he insistent upon the granting of any particular petition. But he was pleading for faith in a good Father who wants to help each soul become all it is capable of becoming. He knew how his Father had removed mountains of questionings for him. He had shown what it meant to be a worthy Son. As he pondered upon the glaring wrongs from

¹ Mt. 6:14.

² Mk. 11:22, 23.

³ Mk. 11:24.

which his people were suffering, there had come answers, clear as sunlight. God had given him the principles by which all these wrongs were to be righted and the Kingdom of righteousness made a reality. As he shared those principles with others he saw them gradually transforming character. And changing ideas may well be compared with the removal of mountains. Out of his own experience he could counsel such absolute trust that the soul could say, "Thy will be done," and mean it.

3. Meaning of prayer to the soul that prays "To pray is to talk with God, to lift ourselves up to him, to converse with him that he may come down to us. It is an act of meditation, of reflection, which presupposes the effort of all that is personal in us. Looked at in this sense, prayer is the mother of all liberty and freedom.

"With St. Francis, as with Jesus, prayer has this character of effort which makes it the greatest moral act. . . . For him, as for his Master, the end of prayer is communion with his heavenly Father, the accord of the divine with the human; or rather, it is man who puts forth his strength to do the work of God, not saying to him a mere passive, resigned, powerless 'Thy will be done.'"¹

This description of the prayer life of St. Francis seems to express in very large measure the experience of the Master in the school of prayer. And what prayer meant to Jesus he coveted for his every disciple. "If you shall ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name; hereafter ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be complete."²

4. Prayer as service That which is known as intercessory prayer was just as natural to Jesus as was prayer about his own personal problems. He told Peter he had prayed that his faith fail not, and seemed to be perfectly sure of his friend's final loyalty. Again in his Sermon on the Mount we hear him

¹ Hall: Op. cit., p. 87, (quoted from P. Sabatier).

² Jn. 16:23, 24.

saying, "Love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you."¹ He evidently expected that through the prayer the enmity would be changed to friendliness. Anyway in the heart of the one who prays the way is open for friendly relationship.

If Jesus could expect his disciples to pray for their persecutors, what did he, and what does he, expect them to do for loved ones, friends and the many children who do not know their Father? The few daring souls who have gone exploring with the Jesus of experience report rich treasures in the field of intercessory prayer. It is a method by which a Christian can live the Christ spirit into other people's lives. He is not limited by space. It is the one way by which a Christian can really touch many of the folk he meets every day and can project to the farthest corners of the earth a personality permeated with the spirit of Jesus.

F. The Individual and the Problem of Suffering

1. The Messiah and the age-old question Jesus lived and worked among a people suffering from burdens imposed by a foreign rule, by the legalism of their own leaders, by ignorance and sin. It hurt to pay taxes into the Roman treasury. But it hurt more to see the omnipresent representative of Roman militarism. The minutely detailed law of the Pharisees had gradually forced the mass of common people quite outside the pale of God's elect. On every hand was poverty and disease, the fruitage of ignorance and

¹ Mt. 5:44.

sin. The atmosphere was surcharged with the question, "How long must the righteous suffer? When is the Messiah coming to make things right?" And to the average Jew there was not the slightest doubt that he belonged to the class of the righteous; and the coming of the Messiah would mean release from all suffering.

On that memorable day in Nazareth, when Jesus stood in his own home synagogue, and read from the prophet Isaiah,¹ he seems to have accepted as part of the Messianic task the answer to that question. "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." The Kingdom he was proclaiming would bring relief to the poor, captive, blind and oppressed.

2. Jesus' attitude toward the suffering of his time We know that Jesus was always keenly aware of the suffering he saw round about him, whether it be physical, mental or spiritual. Mercy and compassion were so much a part of his personality that in both literature and art any attempt to interpret him makes these characteristics stand out in bold relief. And yet, in only a few cases did Jesus actually externally remove the sufferings and bondage of men. He did utter a beautiful promise fraught with comfort and courage for those whose burdens were too heavy. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. So shall ye find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."² Here Jesus definitely promised a burden, a burden which could be borne, when attempted under his

¹ Lk. 4:16-21.

² Mt. 11:28-30.

yoke, which was the will of a kindly, friendly Father-God. Jesus offered a spirit in which suffering might be endured.

He was so sure that his way of living implied burdens, even suffering, that he included them in the challenge to men and women to enter his way of life. "If any man would follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."¹ When Jesus uttered this sentence he probably did not know that he would actually die on the cross. But he did know that hardship, pain, suffering lay in store for any man or woman who dared to respond to his invitation to become in very deed a child of their God.

3. Jesus' final answer to the problem In attempting to discuss this theme, we again find ourselves in danger of presuming to enter a realm of personality too holy for other than the Father to enter. And yet we dare think upon the theme just because Jesus has made it so clear that he wanted to share with his disciples all that he knew of his Father.

Although Jesus in his earliest ministry accepted as part of the Messianic mission an answer to the problem of suffering, modern research in the light of the Jesus of experience is saying with increasing conviction that for him the final answer came during the last months or even the last weeks of his life.

We cannot know just when it became evident to Jesus that his mission implied severe suffering and even death. The very acceptance of his ministry meant in large measure giving up the con-

¹ Mt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23.

veniences of settled home life and often meant physical discomfort. Yet he might naturally have entertained the joyful hope of winning the gratitude and recognition of his people.¹ He was familiar with the stories of the prophets of earlier days. He knew how they had been misunderstood, ignored and even died as martyrs at the hands of the leaders of Israel who ought to have understood. Then came the report of John the Baptist's tragic death. And Jesus must certainly have connected his fate with what might be in store for himself.

We have seen how in the discussion with the disciples at Caesarea-Philippi Jesus was clearly facing the fact that his path must lead into the keenest kind of suffering.² From this time he spoke with his disciples often and very frankly of the necessity of the Messiah's suffering, his rejection by the elders and chief priests. Jesus came out of the temptation days thoroughly committed to the policy of living a life in perfect harmony with the will of God. These years of just such living had revealed the fact that power to endure unembittered had come as a reward of his consecration. But now it had become evident that the Messiah must follow in the footsteps of the martyred prophets. And if we are given to understand something of what the Transfiguration experience meant to Jesus, it must have been then that there came to him a sense of glory in the very fact of vicarious suffering.³ Can it be that he entered an unexplored

¹ Wendt: Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 22.

² Mt. 16:13-28; Mk. 8:27-38; Lk. 9:18-27.

³ Mt. 17:1-7; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36.

room in the heart of his Father and there he realized the pain endured just because of the sins of man?

The days in Jerusalem when Jesus made that last strenuous attempt to reach the Jewish leaders had been fruitless, and he arranged what promised to be, and was, the Last Supper with his disciples. It is easy to imagine how those puzzled, earnest friends were vainly straining every nerve to understand the significance of what was happening. The betrayer left the group. Then followed the walk through the dark streets, the Garden Scene, and the prayer of the suffering Messiah, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will but thine, be done."¹ The grim experience was imminent. And what a death! His life message was being publicly discredited. And yet, and yet, he was so sure that his Father was good that he could still say, "Thy will be done." It was clearly necessary that his death be the "ransom,"² and the "sacrifice of the new covenant."³ If he used the figure of the ransom in the sense of bringing "an inward freedom from the dominion of death," and sacrifice in the sense that his death was to serve for the "definitive ratification of the new covenant," he must have thought of his death as the final accomplishment of his mission.⁴

How fully he thought these things through we cannot know. It is clear, however, that Jesus was convinced of the necessity of his death and he was willing to pay the price, leaving his followers each to discover the significance of it. To Jesus the

¹ Lk. 22:42.

² Mk. 10:45.

³ Mk. 14:22-24.

⁴ Wendt: Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 232-239.

thought of Messiahship and Sonship were always connected with the idea of Saviorhood, of bringing every human soul into a filial relation to his Father. The very guerdon of his acceptance of the cross seems to have been the conviction that through it men would know the heart of God. They would grasp something of the depth of his love and recognize him as Father. The Christ of experience seems to be saying to men that the agony of the cross was transcended by the glory of a consciousness of living in harmony with the will of such a God as Jesus came to reveal.

So whether Jesus was talking about the self or about a man in relation to his fellows, whether about property, the family, prayer, or even the age-old problem of suffering, the one center of interest lay in the individual life. All else must minister to the soul which was created for a fellowship with his Father, a fellowship which is to continue throughout eternity.

CONCLUSION

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With mind familiar with the character of God as revealed to prophet and poet of Hebrew literature, and heart in perfect harmony with the heart of his great Father-God, Jesus made the most significant discovery in the history of men. Not only did he bring to light the value of every human soul, but he gave the principles by which this value may be realized.

Within these recent decades men have been finding new implications in the teachings of Jesus. They are beginning to face the fact of the strong man's responsibility for the protection and development of men and women of less fortunate heritage. They are finding new and fuller meanings in what Jesus said about the relation between family, neighbor, property and the worth of each human soul. And the application of these principles is sometimes called a "Social Gospel." Professor Scott¹ says it was indeed part of the originality of Jesus that he understood so clearly the interdependence of all human lives. He lived in a society which was far from ideal. There was no one who did not feel that affairs were sadly wrong. Homelife, industry, economics each made its contribution to the list of hardships under which people were living. All needed correction. But it was very clear to Jesus that the only way to have a perfect society was to have perfect

¹ Scott, E. F.: The Ethical Teachings of Jesus, N.Y., Macmillan, 1925, p. 61.

individuals. He saw there was no essential relation between the possession of things and pure, unselfish, wholesome living. Because a man had food, comfortable, even beautiful clothing and home, was no assurance he would be good. So both the correction of social wrongs and the maintenance of a perfect society would depend upon individuals who were living in harmony with the will and purpose of God, thus becoming like him in character.

As a prophet he did not set out to reorganize society. But he did point out principles upon which a new, perfect world is to be builded. And the guiding interest underlying each principle was the welfare of the individual. What is going to contribute to the development of character like unto the character of Jesus' great, good Father-God? And out of Jesus' own experience it was his testimony that through fellowship with God and faithful obedience to his will it was possible for the sons of men to enter actually into their heritage as sons of God. And if we have correctly interpreted Jesus, in the actual ministry of his Gospel it is individual to individual.

COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

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CHAPTER I

JESUS' DISCOVERY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

We have accepted as our right to attempt to understand the source of Jesus' appreciation of the individual in the fact that Jesus meant for us to know it. Furthermore, he was very clear in his purpose that his followers think and feel as he thought and felt. So we dare ask for the key to his discovery.

Since Jesus so constantly spoke of God, we are led to inquire if there may not have been something in that relationship which gave him a conception so new and so vital. A comparison of the mere terms for God used in the Old and New Testaments is suggestive. The New Testament has almost nothing to say of God as Creator. That office is simply assumed. The Old Testament has nothing to say of God as Father in the sense of nearness and as one approachable to all. But in Jesus' vocabulary the one title for Jehovah is Father.

He, of course, knew that his people had sometimes compared their God to a father. But it is the uniqueness of Jesus, the son of a pious Galileean shop home, that he should recognize that he was in a peculiar sense the Son of a great Father-God. And in fellowship with such a Father he found

that as a real Son it meant absolute obedience to the will of a good and friendly God. For him it meant the payment of any price that might be necessary to open the way for every son of man to realize his Sonship to God.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN JESUS' MINISTRY

The records seem to picture the Messiah coming out of the wilderness experience fairly burning with the desire to make known to every soul the fact of a priceless heritage as a Son of God. He deliberately went to where the people were. He went into the synagogues and accepted invitations to speak to the congregations. He went into the towns and cities.

As his ministry became known, wherever he went he was in the midst of a crowd. Many came through curiosity. But always there was a sense of Jesus' interest in every individual. His message was individual. He asked men to repent. He asked them to live like sons of God.

In the small group, whether among his disciples, in his own home or as a guest in a home, his characteristic attitude was one of sincere interest in each person in the group. The twelve were with him as individual men. They had something to contribute to Jesus' joy and much to receive from him. As a guest in a home his interest in the individual was so pre-eminent in his thought that even the courtesies of a formal dinner could not mar his opportunity for teaching one of his most vivid lessons on the value of the human soul.

In his personal interviews Jesus was courteous, tender, respectful, and reverent. And yet, just there he stands peerless as a moral and spiritual surgeon. Keen in diagnosis, he thrust with absolute accuracy into the very heart of the trouble. Then through an application of love like unto God's own, men and women left him on the way to becoming whole and well. Nicodemus went out into that night a different man from the one who came to Jesus. The Samaritan woman went into her village bearing testimony to a new life. James and John forgot their foolish request and went out to prove worthy of Jesus' trust when he said they would drink the cup he was so soon to drain. And Peter became so truly a son of his Master's God that tradition tells us he died a martyr, bearing witness to Jesus' power to save.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE SPECIFIC TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Through Jesus' study of the literature of his people, but more through personal fellowship with God, he discovered his Father's immeasurable love for every human soul. He learned that love is the one ruling principle in the world that is to be. In his teachings Jesus used many a concrete illustration that men might understand just what kind of love he was talking about. He told how men commit sin against the self when they allow anything to mar its growth into the likeness of God. Then the law of love is taught and finds further expression in respect for fellowmen. This law Jesus taught both by precept and example. In his Sermon on the Mount he was most emphatic that men who

were worthy to be sons of God respect all other men as sons of God. In his own ministry this respect seems to have been one of the keys by which he found entrance to the secret places of men's lives.

Jesus gave large place in his teachings to the relation between men and their possessions. He knew how often money buys things which rob the soul of its finest heritage. He warned men against the comforts of wealth, which deaden their finest sympathies and even deafen them to the voice of God. In Jesus' summary of his attitude toward the relation between life and property he was very clear that the whole problem is one of the heart. A character growing into the likeness of his Father was simply incomparable to any amount of money and all it could buy. Yet nowhere did Jesus exalt poverty or dependence. The whole problem was simply that of putting first things first.

In Jesus' discussion of the family, he was so definite in his conviction of a peculiarly sacred relationship between husband and wife that he laid down a rule stating that marriage is permanent as far as this life is concerned. And yet in his appeal to men to enter upon his way of life, his challenge was for a loyalty which even transcended family ties and meant the building of character worthy of citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

Nowhere do we have clearer revelation of Jesus' own character or of his hope for his followers than in his practice and teaching of prayer. Through prayer he expected his disciples to experience his Father's love and to discover his great purposes. Through prayer he promised ability to work together with God in bringing other men into filial relationship with

their Father.

Jesus always looked with compassion upon the suffering round about him. And yet he never promised his disciples freedom from burdens or even from suffering. For himself his one concern was that he be the kind of a Son that would reflect truly the heart of his Father. And he accepted those last painful weeks and the cross with all its ignominy in the confidence that through such a death of the Son men would see the heart of their Father-God and return to him.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."¹

¹ Jn. 12:32.

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