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# The Bible Student

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN,

AUG 6 1912

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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The Bryan Printing Co. Press, Columbia, S. C.

ON SALE BY—FLEMING H. REVELL CO., New York, Chicago and Toronto.  
 JOHN WANAMAKER, New York and Philadelphia.  
 PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION, Philadelphia.  
 PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION, 1001 Main St., Richmond, Va.

[Entered at Post Office at Columbia, S. C., as second class matter.]

# The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

## The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

Vol. I., New Series.

APRIL, 1900.

Number 4.

The ideas of many are confused by the distinction between religion and morality. This confusion is sometimes aggravated by the stress the pulpit lays on the inadequacy of mere morality and its emphasis of the imperviousness of a moralist's self-satisfaction; a stress and emphasis occasionally expressed so incautiously as to be liable to the perversion of being interpreted as implication that morality may be a disadvantage and that, on the whole, it were better and more promising of a religious future to be immoral than to be moral. Of course it ought to be a commonplace that morality is always and everywhere better than immorality; perhaps it is the axiomatic character of this truth that occasions preachers sometimes to be unguarded in the impression they may make.

Religion is always moral, and immorality is always irreligious, wherever found. Obvious as is the truth, yet its statement is not superfluous; there is such a thing as unethical "religion," having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. There are not wanting instances to prove that one may be very scrupu-

lous in the observance of religious rites and even zealous in religious activities, with every appearance, too, of conscientiousness, and yet be anything but moral in life. A famous chronicler has been recently quoted as saying of a celebrated ecclesiastic "that he was far from truthful and naturally deceitful and covetous, but full of religion!"

But while *real* religion is always moral, morality is not always religious; there is a distinction between the two and one fitly called radical because it lies at the very root, indeed it lies nowhere else; so far as the visible expression is concerned, the difference is not easily discerned, in externalities morality and religion may well appear indistinguishable. The distinction lies beneath the surface and inheres in the motive prompting. No act is religious that is not rightly related to God, and none falls short of religion that is so related. Men distinguish between the sacred and the secular, but to the heart that really enthrones God nothing is secular, and hence we hear St. Paul saying, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Certainly there is nothing intrinsi-

## THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

PROFESSOR THOS. R. ENGLISH, D. D., RICHMOND, VA.

The unbroken testimony of the Fathers assigns the first of the four gospels to Matthew, one of the Twelve. All three of the Synoptists, in relating his call to discipleship, note the fact that he was a publican, but he alone retains this "title of infamy" in the list of the Apostles, calling himself there "Matthew the Publican." That he did not look upon this as a title of honor is evidenced by the fact that while the others couple the name of "publicans" with that of "sinners," he alone uses the phrase "publicans and harlots." It is also worthy of note that he does not relate the incident of the Pharisee and Publican, nor that of Zacchaeus; both of which place that despised class in a favorable light.

This degraded publican, "touched by the Ithuriel spear of his master's love," was transformed into an apostle, and in the course of time was moved by the Holy Ghost to commit to writing the story of his Lord as he knew him. With a self-renunciation begotten of grace, he tells in a single verse the story of his gracious call by the master, but after that he has nothing to say of himself. Not a single word of his is recorded, nor a single incident in his life, save an obscure reference to the Lord's sitting at meat in his house.

His purpose in writing is not far to seek, for it lies upon the very surface. Irenaeus, Origen and Jerome simply state that he wrote "for the Hebrews," and almost every writer since has recognized the fact that this gospel was written from the standpoint of the Jew, and was designed to commend Jesus of Nazareth to Israelites. "His one subject, always and everywhere, is, Jesus the Messiah. He opens with the origin of Jesus the Messiah, and closes with the assumption of the universal authority of the Messiah, and from the beginning to the close never for a moment parts company with the Messianic idea." Most fittingly is this gospel placed first in order, for it is the connecting link between the Old and the New Testament. It was designed to bind together the Law and the Gospel, and to link together the memories and hopes of the people of God. It is pre-eminently the Gospel of the Past, and presents Christianity as the *flower and fruitage* of Judaism.

Matthew presents two companion pictures, the one the Messiah of Prophecy, and the other the Man Christ Jesus, whose motto is: "I am come not to destroy but to fulfil." In accordance with such a purpose, we find him constantly referring to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and eight times we meet with the characteristic formula, "that it might be fulfilled;" while an equivalent expression is used a number of times besides. There are upwards of *seventy* quotations and references to the Old Testament, as compared with about *one-half* as many in Luke and *one-fourth* as many in Mark. There are *forty-one* verbal citations in Matthew as compared with *nineteen* each in Mark and Luke, and it is to be noted that in the two latter the quotations are for the most part in the discourses recorded, and are not quoted by the writers themselves, as in this gospel.

Very characteristically this gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus, and his *legal* descent is traced back through Joseph his reputed father to David the King, from whose loins the Messiah was to spring, while Luke, writing for the Gentiles, traces his *natural* descent, through Mary possibly, to the progenitor of the race. To Luke he is the second Adam, but in the eyes of Matthew he is the "rod out of the stem of Jesse." But not only did this Jesus spring from the loins of David according to promise, but prophecy was fulfilled in the manner of his birth (1: 23); the place of his nativity (2: 6); his flight into Egypt (2: 15); the murder of the innocents (2: 18); his residence at Nazareth (2: 23); the ministry of his Forerunner (3: 3, 11: 10); his removal to Capernaum (4: 15, 16); his healing the sick (8: 17); his meek and retiring disposition (12: 18-21); his teaching by parables (13: 34, 35); his entry into Jerusalem (21: 4, 5); his rejection by the builders (21: 42); his being David's son and Lord (22: 44); his desertion by his disciples (26: 31); the price of his betrayal (27: 9); the division of his raiment (27: 35); his cry of agony (27: 46).

Both the *omissions* and the *additions* of this gospel are notably in harmony with the design as noted above. We meet with no explanations of Jewish customs, topography, or history, as in the other gospels. The Perea ministry, to which Luke devotes so much attention (9: 51-18: 30), and which presented so many indications of the universality of the Saviour's mission, is passed

over in almost entire silence, only a few verses at most being devoted to it. Notwithstanding the fact that *one-fourth* of the book is taken up with the utterances of our Lord, and the further fact that Matthew gives no less than ten parables peculiar to himself, he omits such parables as that of the Good Samaritan, and the Great Supper, and more notably still, that incomparable parable of the Prodigal Son. While he makes no attempt to conceal the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles, yet he refrains from placing these truths, so unwelcome to Jews, in the foreground, as does Luke. He alone records those sayings of our Lord, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and the charge given to the Twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." *Forty-two per cent.* of the matter in this gospel is peculiar to Matthew, and these additions are almost without exception such as present distinctively Jewish features, and the very expressions he uses, and which are peculiar to himself, stamp him as a son of Abraham. To him Jerusalem is "the Holy City," "the Holy Place," and "the City of the Great King." Seven times he calls our Lord "the Son of David." He alone of the Evangelists uses the expression "the Kingdom of Heaven," and this he does thirty times.

Old Testament Prophecy places the *kingly*, rather than the *prophetic* or *priestly*, work of the Messiah in the foreground, and hence in Matthew we have the portrait of a great king. It is the "King of the Jews" for whom the Magi inquire. He ever speaks with authority, using with the utmost freedom the royal 'Ego,' "I say unto you." The idea of punishment and retribution is also most prominent, for it is the King who gives his commands, (cf. Matt. 7: 13, 23, 42, 18: 34, 35, 22: 13, 24: 50, 51, 25: 30, 36.)

As has been already intimated, the didactic element predominates in this book, and we find five great discourses recorded, in addition to numerous minor ones, viz.: the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7); the Address to the Apostles (ch. 10); the Parables of the Kingdom (ch. 13); the Discourse on the Church (ch. 18); and the Discourses on the Judgment (chs. 23-25).

Matthew pays less attention to the strict chronological order than either of the other Evangelists, and has more regard for the

unities of *place* and *subject*. The Sermon on the Mount is given by Luke in eight separate portions, while Matthew collects all of these precious sayings into a single discourse.

The plan of the book is in full accord with the purpose had in view. The opening section (1: 1-4: 16) tells us of the Preparation of the Messiah for his great work. This heir of David, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, has tribute brought to him by the Magi, who also worship him, having seen his star in the East. His great Forerunner having prepared the way for him, he is now fitted for his mission by the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism, and by his temptation in the wilderness. The body of the book consists of two parts, each beginning with the formula, "From that time Jesus began." The first part (4: 17-16: 20), presents him chiefly as the wise, beneficent, and righteous king, who has come to set up the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and to bring order out of confusion. He is the great Reformer, who seeks to enlighten men, and to deliver them from the bondage of error. In the second part, 16: 21 to the end, introduced by the significant statement, "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he must \* \* \* suffer," he appears as the suffering Messiah, the "man of sorrows." Now the cross begins to appear athwart his pathway, and the clouds grow darker, and the mutterings of the approaching storm become more distinct. He begins now to prepare his disciples for it, and to reveal the deeper significance of his work. Then comes the awful catastrophe, quickly followed by his triumphant resurrection, and it most fitly concludes with the assertion of his mediatorial dignity, and the command to bear the tidings to every creature, contained in those memorable words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."