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The Sermon on the Mount by Joachim Jeremias

Dr. Jeremias' other books published in English include The Parables of Jesus (New York: Scribner's), The Eucharistic Words of Jesus (New York: Macmillan), and Unknown Sayings of Jesus (Seabury). This book is a translation of Die Bergpredigt, Number 27 in the series "Calwer Hefre" edited by Theodor Schlatter and published by Calwer Verlag, Stuttgart,in 1959. The English version was first published by The Athlone Press, London, in 1961, then Fortress Press in 1963.

(ENTIRE BOOK) Does the Sermon on the Mount lay down rigid rules that Christians must follow, or is it only a standard to reveal human sin? Did Jesus mean it should be taken literally? Dr. Jeremian explains simply and clearly how the sermon came to be, and its contemporary relevance.

Introduction

Joachim Jeremias is an expert in the use of the tools of critical analysis of the Bible, and this study of the Sermon on the Mount is a splendid example of how these tools and methods can be used to tell us what Matthew 5-7 is all about.

Chapter 1: The Problem

Some of the Sermon on the Mount can be found in the Talmud, but there is much that cannot be found in that source. Much is in contrast to rabbinical-Pharisaic piety. Some of it stands over and against the teachings of the Torah. The main thrust of the Sermon, however, is that the whole preaching of Jesus is directed to the imminent End.

Chapter 2: The Origins of the Sermon 0n the Mount

Isolated sayings were first gathered together in the form of an Aramaic Sermon on the Plain, out of which the Greek Sermon on the Plain in Luke and the Greek Sermon on the Mount in Matthew have in turn developed.

Chapter 3: The Sermon on the Mount as an Early Christian Catechism

We have in the Sermon on the Mount a composition of words of Jesus, brought together on the basis of parenetic considerations, and we may conclude that its original function was in catechetical instruction (prebaptismal), or in teaching designed for the newly baptized (post-baptismal). In Luke (6:20-49) this catechism is designed for Gentile-Christians, and in Matthew (Chapters 5-7) for Jewish Christians.

Chapter 4: The Individual Sayings of Jesus

When we consider the sayings and groups of sayings independently, especially those directed to the disciples, we observe again what we noted at the conclusion of our third section: we notice very quickly that we can only rightly understand the individual saying when we presuppose in each case that *it was preceded by something else.*

Chapter 5: Not Law, but Gospel

The sayings of Jesus collected in the Sermon on the Mount say this: You are forgiven; you are the child of God; you belong to his kingdom. The sun of righteousness has risen over your life. You no longer belong to yourself; rather, you belong to the city of God, the light of which shines in the darkness. Now you may also experience it: out of the thankfulness of a redeemed child of God a new life is growing.

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Introduction

To many Christians -- including even some pastors who have been through "introductory courses" in seminary -- critical study of the Bible does not always commend itself as an aid to deeper faith and understanding. All too often it seems remote and negative and unrelated to making the Bible meaningful for life today. Yet there are some scholars who have a knack for making the Bible clear and applicable to us precisely through these tools of critical analysis. Joachim Jeremias is such an expert, and this study of the Sermon on the Mount is a splendid example of how these tools and methods can be used to tell us what Matthew 5-7 is all about.

When New Testament scholars like Jeremias explore a passage in the gospels nowadays, they are aware of four levels through which the material has passed which makes up our written account. First came the words of Jesus himself or accounts, from his lifetime, of what he did. Then there is the period after the resurrection when his words and deeds were told and retold in the Aramaic language (Jesus' mother tongue) by Christians of Palestine who believed in him as risen Lord. Third, from about the year 40 on, these sayings of Jesus and stories about him began to be translated from Aramaic into Greek to aid the missionary advance into all the world and to enrich the faith and life of those who had already confessed him as Lord. We can picture some of the problems in this third stage if we recall the difficulty which German- or Swedish-speaking immigrants, for example, had in America with the transition to

church services and religious life in the English language. Fourth, there was the stage when evangelists, like Matthew and Luke, put this material together, selecting certain sayings and incidents out of the host available (cf. Luke 1:1-4, John 2 1:25) and arranging them to make the picture of Jesus and impression which they desired, in order to meet the needs of Christians of their day.

In viewing this whole development, from the time of Jesus (about AD 30) to our written gospels (composed just before or in the decades after AD 70), the scholar must take into account the fact that for some years these sayings and stories of Jesus circulated individually, by word of mouth, and then were collected into larger blocks of material, sometimes oral and sometimes written, which the evangelists then employed as sources. Technically the discipline which seeks to isolate the source-blocks is literary criticism or source analysis, and the one which investigates the earlier oral materials is form criticism or form history, which operates on the premise that stories circulating orally often take a rather definite shape or form (to make them easy to remember and repeat) and that the history of these forms and their use can with some success be guessed at by investigators today. It is precisely these techniques of source and form analysis which Jeremias employs to answer, from a scholar's vantage point, the long-debated question of the aim of the Sermon on the Mount. He yokes critical methods and practical concern in order to enlarge our theological understanding.

Those who know the previous writings of Professor Jeremias, many of which have quickly been translated into English, have come to expect just this sort of fruitful scholarship from him. He is today Professor of New Testament Studies at Göttingen University, in Germany. Born in Dresden in 1900, he spent a great part of his boyhood in Jerusalem, where his father was in charge of the German congregation. His uncle, Professor Alfred Jeremias, was a famous Old Testament scholar. He himself has been engaged in biblical studies his entire career, specializing -- rather naturally in view of this background -- in rabbinic sources on the early Christian period and in the Palestinian environment in which Jesus lived. He was named to a professor's chair at the age of twenty-nine, and the stream of articles and books from his pen includes the following available in English: *The Parables of Jesus, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, Unknown Sayings of Jesus, The Servant of God* (written with Walther Zimmerli), *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, and *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries.* A fuller account of his

work can be found in the series "Theologians of Our Time," in *The Expository Times* for January, 1963.

This study on Matthew 5-7 first appeared in print as *Die Bergpredigt*, Number 27 in the German series edited by Theodor Schlatter "Calwer Hefte" (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1959) and was presented on a lecture tour in England as The Ethel M. Wood Lecture, delivered before the University of London, March 7, 1961. The English translation is by Dr. Norman Perrin, Professor of New Testament at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and a former pupil of Professor Jeremias. Minor changes in the text of the present edition have been made with the permission of both author and translator.

Readers interested in further examination of how the Sermon on the Mount has been interpreted through the years will find helpful Appendix II, "The History of the Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount," in Gunther Bornkamm's book *Jesus of Nazareth* (pp. 221-25), or the volume by Harvey M. McArthur, *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount.* A more detailed treatment by Professor Jeremias of the portion of the Sermon on the Mount containing the Lord's Prayer is in preparation for future publication as a Facet Book. Bibliographical details on the books mentioned above will be found at the end of this volume.

Lutheran Theological Seminary John Reumann

June, 1963

Philadelphia

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Chapter 1: The Problem

What is the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount? This is a profound question, and one which affects not only our preaching and teaching but also, when we really face up to it, the very roots of our existence. Since the very beginning of the church it has been a question with which all Christians have had to grapple, not only the theologians among them, and in the course of the centuries a whole range of answers has been given to it. In what follows I propose to indicate and discuss the three most important of these answers.

The first answer to the question of the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount is given by what we may call the *perfectionist conception.* This says: In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells his disciples what he requires of them. He unfolds for them the will of God as this should determine their way of life. One only needs to consider the six antitheses, in which the old and the new conceptions of the will of God are contrasted with each other: "You have heard . . . but I say to you . (Matt. 5:21, 22). Here one clear instruction is followed by another; and so it continues in chapter 6, and further in chapter 7.

From this conception, however, one thing follows, and it is to the merit of Hans Windisch, the late Professor of New Testament at Halle, that he drew this consequence with ruthless honesty in his book *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount* .(*Der Sinn der Bergpredigt* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1929, 1937). English translation by S. MacLean

Gilmour [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1951]). If it is right that Jesus gives simple commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, and if he expected his disciples to keep them, then we must ask: Is this not legalistic thinking? Is this not ethical perfectionism? Windisch answers: Yes, it is so. be honest; let us free ourselves once and for all from that idealistic and Paulinizing exegesis! We must admit that the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount is every bit as much an obedience-ethic as is the ethic of the Old Testament. Nothing is said in the Sermon about the inability of man to do good; nor is there anything to be read here of the office of Jesus as mediator, or of the redemption through his blood. What stands in the Sermon on the Mount is, from the point of view of Paul, Luther, or Calvin, complete heresy; for this is perfectionism, this is righteousness by works, this is law and not gospel.

The Sermon on the Mount -- this is the conclusion to which Windisch comes -- stands fully in the context of the Old Testament and of Judaism. For this is what the Old Testament tirelessly repeats: Obey, then you will live! In exactly the same way the central theme of the theology of Judaism at the time of Jesus was the inexorable nature of the law of God. In the Talmud we can read, admittedly side by side with a great deal of casuistry, the same condemnation of lust, of hate, of vengeance, that is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Also in the Talmud we find the Golden Rule of Matthew 7:12. "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets," says Jesus. In the Talmud this saying is found in the context of the well-known story of Hillel (20 BC.) and the Gentile who was prepared to become a proselyte. This Gentile had gone first to Shammai, Hillel’s contemporary and rival, and demanded of him that he should teach him the whole law in the time in which he could stand on one leg. Shammai, who was a carpenter, had taken his yardstick and driven him out. Now he came to Hillel with his demand and Hillel answered him: Yes, I can do it. I can indeed teach you the whole law in the time in which you can stand on one leg -- and then he said: "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. The whole law is contained in this sentence. All the rest is only commentary." (Sab. 31a, freely rendered; cf. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Antho1ogy* [1938; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960], p. 200, selection [539].) It is the Stoic teaching of an unwritten law which Hillel took up, when, with what was for a rabbi an amazing candor and a magnificent inner freedom, he ventured to make the bold statement: The Golden Rule is the heart of the Torah; all other precepts

are only expositions of it.

Similarly in Matthew 7:12 we find the Golden Rule with the addition (probably omitted in Luke 6:31 in view of the Gentile-Christian readers): "This is the law and the prophets." To be sure, the Golden Rule is given by Jesus m a positive form, and by Hillel in a negative one. That is a great difference. Hillel says: "You shall not do harm to your neighbor"; but with Jesus it is a case of: "The love which you yourself would experience, you should show to your neighbor." To give love is far more than to refrain from harming. Despite this significant difference a relationship between Jesus and Hillel here is very probable.

Must we not then go on to say: What Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount is every bit as much perfectionist legalism as is the teaching of Hillel? I am afraid that the conception which Windisch represents is by and large the most widely accepted conception of the Sermon on the Mount in contemporary thought, represented for example in some such statement as: Here Jesus is making most extreme demands, although knows that nobody can completely fulfil them; but he hopes to bring men to the point where they exert themselves seriously in an attempt to attain a part of them.

What are we to say concerning this first conception? Well, there is a real element of validity in it. The Sermon on the Mount is certainly concerned with the will of God, and we find in it concrete, hard and fast demands. Jesus says what he really expects from his disciples: "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man (Matt. 7:24). It is also quite valid to say that Jesus is firmly rooted in his own time, or rather that both Jesus and late Judaism are firmly rooted in the Old Testament. We may not lightly ignore the common ground between Jesus and the Judaism of his day, as can happen if we content ourselves with a caricature of that Judaism. But there are nonetheless differences, great differences, between the demands of Jesus and the ethic of late Judaism. I would indicate four such differences:

(1) Certainly a good deal of that which is found in the Sermon on the Mount can also be found in the Talmud, not merely the Golden Rule. Wellhausen has deliberately overstated the case thus: Everything that is to be found in the Sermon on the Mount is also to be found in the Talmud -- and a great deal more. That is exactly the case, that in the Talmud "a great deal more" is to be found, and that one must seek the

grain among a great deal of chaff, the scanty golden grain that may be compared with the words of the Sermon on the Mount.

(2) The comparison between the Sermon on the Mount and the Talmud also reveals that, significantly, it is the decisive sayings in the Sermon for which there are no parallels in the Talmud. One seeks there in vain for parallels to the blessing of the poor, the forbidding of divorce, the turning of the cheek, the pregnant "love your enemies," the joy of repentance (Matt. 5:3, 32, 39,44; 6:16-18), and many others.

(3) It is much more the case that the Sermon on the Mount as a whole (especially Matt. 5:21-48; 6:1-18) stands in conscious and decisive contrast to rabbinical-Pharisaic piety.

(4) Jesus even goes so far as to set his teaching over against that of the Torah. The criticism which is implied in the antitheses to the Torah would be, in the eyes of his contemporaries, blasphemy against the divine law, and as such the decisive break with Jewish piety.

It is not, therefore, so simple a matter to set the Sermon on the Mount in the context of late Judaism. Now, naturally, Windisch is conscious of this, and therefore he says: What we find in the Matthean composition as a whole, as well as in the separate sayings, is not simply the ethic of late Judaism, but a refined, humanized, radicalized, simplified, concentrated Judaism that finds its fulfillment in the confession of Jesus (*Op. cit.*, p. 50 of the German edition; English translation, pp. 71-72 [i.e., "which culminates in confession of Jesus as the divinely commissioned interpreter of the will of God."--Editor]). We could continue to suggest similar modifying adjectives but this would not bring us to the heart of the matter with regard to the Sermon on the Mount. The fact is that Jesus was not a teacher of the law, or a preacher of wisdom, such as could be found among his contemporaries; his message burst the bounds of late Judaism.

We now turn to a second answer to the question of the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. It is the answer that has been given by Lutheran orthodoxy: the *theory of the impossible ideal* [German: *Unerfullbarkeitstheorie,* literally ‘unfulfilability-theory.-- Editor.] This has not only played a great part in past centuries; even today it has numerous supporters. With this conception of the meaning of the Sermon, we move out of the superficiality of the theory which we discussed first, and into deeper realms. The second conception says:

When we read the Sermon on the Mount earnestly, we are of necessity moved to despair. Jesus demands that we should free ourselves from anger; even an unfriendly word is to be reckoned as murder. Jesus demands a chastity that extends even to the avoidance of an impure look. Jesus demands absolute veracity, and that we should love our enemies. Who lives like this? Who can live like this? Who can fulfil these demands? This is the point of departure for the theory of the impossible ideal. It says: It is a great mistake to regard the Sermon on the Mount as capable of being fulfilled; these sayings of Jesus cannot be fulfilled, and Jesus knows this.

What is then his intention in teaching these things? The answer of the theory of the impossible ideal is that it can best be understood when these demands are viewed through eyes that have been sharpened by what Paul has to say about the law. The law, says Paul, has not been given that it may lead to life. It is not law which saves, but faith. Law awakens the consciousness of sin; law provokes transgression. The law is *praeparatio evangelica* in that it reveals to man his impotence; by driving him to despair it opens his eyes to the wonder of the mercy of God. It is exactly the same with the Sermon on the Mount, and this was the intention of Jesus. He wanted to bring his hearers to the consciousness that they cannot, in their own strength, fulfil the demands of God. He intends to lead men, through the experience of their failure, to despair of themselves. His demands are designed to shatter our self-reliance nothing else is intended. The Sermon on the Mount, according to this second theory, is "Mosissimus Moses," to take a phrase from Luther; it is Moses quadrupled, Moses multiplied to the highest degree. If the first conception sees in the Sermon on the Mount a perfectionist law, this second discovers in it a "propaedeutic law," that is, a law the purpose of which is to prepare men for salvation.

Again, in my opinion, we must say emphatically that there is a real element of validity here. On the one hand it is a valid emphasis that the demands of Jesus are to be taken seriously, and may not be trifled with; and on the other hand, our poverty is also taken seriously. But what does the actual text of the Sermon say? Where in the Sermon does one find even a hint upon which such an interpretation could be based? Certainly there are some sayings which seem to bear the stamp of the impossibility of fulfillment, for example Matt. 5:29-30: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away," "if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away." But one cannot build a theory on sayings such as these, for this is a paradoxical

exaggeration such as we often find in Eastern sayings; just as a saying like that of the mote and the beam (Matt. 7:4-5) is paradoxical picture-language. Such language does not justify the conclusion that Jesus was deliberately stating an impossible ideal.

"Nowhere in the Sermon on the Mount is there a clear statement which points unmistakably in this direction, and upon which such a theory could be built. Nowhere is there to be found, as there is in Paul, reflection upon the inability of men to fulfil the will of God but rather the astonishing fact that Jesus expected from his disciples that they would do what he commanded. He addresses himself throughout to the will of men. The conclusion of the Sermon shows this especially dearly: the four groups of pictures of the narrow and wide gate, of the sound and bad trees, of the men standing before the throne of God at the final judgment, and of the building of a house on rock and sand (7:13-27). When the waves of the Last Judgment beat upon the rock, then the man will stand firm who "hears these words of mine and does them," and only he. The instructions of the Sermon apply to everyone who is a disciple of Jesus. They direct his way to the narrow gate, to the reign of God. So we must reject also the theory of the impossible ideal. It is, in fact, a classic example of what the consequences are when one interprets Jesus in the light of Paul, instead of interpreting Paul in the light of Jesus. It is Paulinizing exegesis, and that means it is eisegesis.

Finally, there is a third understanding of the Sermon that deserves mention, that which understands it as an *interim-ethic.* This interpretation was first developed at the end of the last century by Johannes Weiss in his book *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (1892), and it is also to be found in the works of Albert Schweitzer. Both of these authors wrote in the era of the belief in progress and of "culture Protestantism," when the preaching of Jesus was viewed as a culture-ethic. Against this background they developed their eschatological interpretation of the gospel. They claimed that Jesus does not preach a long-term culture-ethic, but rather his demands are rooted in the terrible earnestness of the hour. The supreme crisis is at hand. The time of decision has come. God has given man a last opportunity for repentance and decision before the waves of the flood break once more into history, before the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah is repeated; and the main source for this new and radically eschatological view of the preaching of Jesus is the Sermon on the Mount.

For the Sermon contains, according to the tenets of "thoroughgoing

eschatology," exceptional laws, laws valid only for the time of crisis. It is, so to speak, a form of martial law declared in the last decisive phase of a total war. The Sermon was preached to men who knew that they were standing under a dangerously leaning wall which might at any moment come tumbling down upon them; to men who found themselves in the position of a dying man who knows that he has only a very little time left. This means: The words of the Sermon on the Mount are a challenge to most exceptional effort in the face of catastrophe, a last call to repentance before the End. Because the situation is so critical, Jesus demands of his disciples that they burn all bridges behind them; they must have no ties left at all with the world. Let the dead bury their dead. All possessions are equally valueless in this catastrophic situation; they must be cast away, so that they do not bind the disciples of Jesus. Even the right of self-defense may play no part in this last hour (Matt. 5:38ff.*)*. In this hour Jesus demands unprecedented commitment, even to the love of enemies. All these are heroic commands, valid only for the short period before the End in which unheard-of sacrifices must be made. In one word: the Sermon on the Mount offers an *interim* -- *ethic*.

Once more it must be said emphatically that here again there is an element of validity, in fact, an element of decisive importance. Here we have really come a step nearer to the heart of the matter, for the whole preaching of Jesus is in fact directed to the imminent End. This lies unexpressed behind every word that he says, even those of the Sermon on the Mount. It is really so, that he brings God's last word. One's attitude to this last word of God is a matter of life and death; the hell of which Jesus speaks (Matt. 5:22, 29**,** 30) is not something that lies in the distant future, but a threat that is drawing near to his hearers. The dynamic of eschatology lies behind every word of Jesus, and here nothing may be explained away or rendered harmless. God gives one last respite; it is pure compassion on the part of God that allows the fig tree to stand for one year more (Luke 13:6-9). This is something that we can understand better today than could the men of sixty years ago.

But here too we have questions. A straining toward the maximum possible effort is exactly what we do not find in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not an ethic of the death-hour, nor the utterance of a voice from a world on the brink of catastrophe. Where the mistake lies can be seen from a statement by Johannes Weiss concerning the commands to abjure vengeance and to love one's enemies, which in his opinion are the two classical examples of this exceptional eschatological law. He says: "For such a love the normal abilities of men are insufficient. There

must be a special impetus, an intensification and heightening of the spiritual powers, such as is promised to the disciples for the times of stress and strain."[*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (2nd ed.; Göttingen Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1900), p. 150.] But nothing of this "special impetus," of this "heightening of spiritual powers," stands in the text. Jesus is no fanatical enthusiast; his ethic is not an expression of anxiety in face of the catastrophe. Rather the dominating thing for Jesus is something quite different: knowledge of the presence of salvation. Here is to be found the great difference from the ethics of Pharisaism and of apocalyptic. In the case of Jesus the decisive accent is not upon human effort, but upon the fact that the salvation of God is here. Jesus quite certainly did not proclaim an exceptional law for a short interim period; his words have validity not only up to the End, but also after it (Mark 13:31).

The three attempts at a solution that we have discussed, for all the great differences between them, have nonetheless one thing in common: all three of them regard the Sermon on the Mount as law, and in this regard it makes no difference in the end whether this law is more nearly defined as perfectionistic, as a tutoring into salvation, or as interim-ethical. Every legalistic understanding of the Sermon puts Jesus within the realm of Judaism. The first conception makes him a teacher of the law; the second a preacher of repentance; the third an apocalypticist. But was he any of these things?

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Chapter 2: The Origins of the Sermon 0n the Mount

How do we find our way out of this impasse? We can find help by considering the results of the most recent research into the origins of the Sermon on the Mount by means of literary and form criticism. Four essential observations must be taken into account:

(1) The evangelist Matthew wrote his gospel about AD. 75-80. He used as his basis the Gospel of Mark, but he added very considerably to this basis, especially in regard to sayings, for he had at his disposal many sayings of Jesus that are not found in Mark. He built these sayings into the structure of the Marcan gospel at suitable points; for example, be expands the three parables of Mark 4 into a more extensive parabolic discourse now containing seven parables (Matt. 13). So we now find in Matthew's Gospel five great discourses: Matt. 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount; 10, the mission discourse; 13, the parabolic discourse; 18, guidance for the conduct of the community; and finally 23-25, the great farewell discourse in Jerusalem. That Matthew has in fact deliberately constructed his Gospel in this manner is a conclusion to be drawn with complete certainty from the fact that he ends each of these five discourses with one and the same formula (with minor variations): "And when Jesus had finished these sayings" (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1).

The possibility has been suggested that Matthew, in giving these five

discourses of Jesus, has been influenced by the five books of Moses; that in this way he intended to present Jesus as the proclaimer of a new Pentateuch, as the second Moses, as the one who establishes the Messianic Torah. But here we need to be cautious. The detailed explanation which Matthew gives for his use of the number fourteen in the genealogy of Jesus (1:17), leaves the impression that he would have drawn attention to the fact, if he had intended the number of five discourses to have such a symbolic significance. But a different conclusion may well be drawn with some degree of certainty. In chapters 5-7 Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount as the first discourse, and then goes on (in chapters 8-9) to add a collection of miracle stories. He intends therefore to portray Jesus as the Messiah in word and as the Messiah in deed. But both belong together: word and deed. Wherever the Spirit of God is manifested, it is manifested in this combination of word and deed; never simply in words, and never simply in deeds. So in bringing together chapters 5-7 and 8-9, Matthew intends to express one thing: Jesus is one in whom the Spirit of God is manifested in its fullness.

(2) We take a step further when we observe that the Sermon on the Mount has an equivalent in the Gospel of Luke, namely, the Sermon on the Plain, Luke 6:20-49. The Sermon on the Plain also begins with the Beatitudes; it then goes on to sayings which are also found in the Sermon on the Mount: on love for enemies, on turning the other cheek, the Golden Rule, the exhortation to be merciful (6:35, 29, 31, 36), and so on; and it concludes, as does the Sermon on the Mount, with the parable of the house-builder. But the Sermon on the Plain is very much shorter than that on the mount, and from this we must conclude that in the Lucan Sermon on the Plain we have an earlier form of the Sermon on the Mount.

(3) When we go on to compare the Sermon on the Mount with the Sermon on the Plain, we notice at once that there are considerable differences in phraseology. The very first sentence in Luke runs (6:20), "Blessed are you poor" (second person); in Matthew on the other hand (5:3), "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (third person). Similar variations in wordings are to be found in practically every verse. These are sometimes to be attributed to the evangelists themselves; for example, in Matt. 5:3 the addition "in spirit" could come from Matthew.

But in the vast majority of cases it is a matter of translation variants; one and the same Aramaic text has been translated into Greek in two

different ways. We may take as an example the conclusion of the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:12, parallel Luke 6:23). The differences here -- Matthew, "Rejoice (present imperative) and be glad," and Luke, "Rejoice (aorist imperative) and leap for joy"; Matthew, "for your reward is great in the heavens" (plur.), and Luke, "for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (sing.); Matthew, "for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you," Luke, "for so their fathers did to the prophets"-- these differences are beyond doubt due to an Aramaic tradition which has been rendered into Greek in different ways. This is especially clear in the case of the very last words, where the Aramaic original has been understood by one translator as an apposition (Matthew: "who were before you"), and by the other as subject (Luke: "your fathers"). With this observation, that an Aramaic tradition underlies the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, we have already moved a considerable distance behind the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew wrote AD. 75-80; the Aramaic Sermon on the Plain belongs to the first decades after Jesus' death.

(4) We must take still one further step. When we look closely at the Lucan Sermon on the Plain it is noticeable that in it the address vanes constantly between the second person plural and singular. At the beginning we have the plural: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," "Love your enemies but then suddenly in Luke 6:29-30 the singular occurs: "To him who strikes thee on the cheek, offer the other also." Then follows the plural again in verses 31-38, then the third person, and then again the singular in verses 41-42, and so on.[The detail can best be observed by English readers in the King James Version, where "ye" and "you" represent Greek plurals and "thou" and "thee" the singular in Greek. –Editors.] From this the conclusion follows that the Sermon on the Plain is a grouping together of separate sayings of Jesus which were originally spoken on different occasions (just as the parables in Matthew 13 were originally quite separately delivered and only later brought together into one discourse). The same is true of the Sermon on the Mount, which offers us a version of the Sermon on the Plain further expanded by the addition of still more sayings of Jesus.

We can demonstrate this compositional character of the two sermons through specific examples. Luke preserves for us a tradition with regard to the situation out of which two sections of the Sermon on the Mount arose. The first is the saying concerning the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13-14). According to Luke the occasion for Jesus' coining of this particular

image was a question from an unnamed individual concerning the number of the saved: "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Instead of giving an answer to this question Jesus called out: "Strive to enter by the narrow door" (Luke 13:23-24). The other saying in the Sermon on the Mount for which Luke has preserved a tradition with regard to the original situation is the Lord's Prayer. Jesus was praying alone and the disciples came to him and made their request: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

We have, therefore, in the Sermon on the Mount, a composition of originally isolated sayings of Jesus. Sometimes, although by no means always, they consist of a single sentence. Each one of these sayings of Jesus, as we must envisage them, is the summary of something like a sermon by Jesus, or the essence of a piece of his teaching, that could have taken the form of question and answer and have lasted for a whole day, or it may have been the result of a dispute with his opponents. These isolated sayings were first gathered together in the form of an Aramaic Sermon on the Plain, out of which the Greek Sermon on the Plain in Luke and the Greek Sermon on the Mount in Matthew have in turn developed.

If I may express it in the form of a picture: We have learned to differentiate between the *edifice* of the Sermon on the Mount, which was built in several stages, and the *bricks* out of which the whole was built. We must therefore look at these two things separately: first the edifice as a whole, as we have it today, and then the individual bricks out of which it is built.

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The Sermon on the Mount by Joachim Jeremias

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Chapter 3: The Sermon on the Mount as an Early Christian Catechism

The result, then, of our investigation up to this point is that the Sermon on the Mount is no more the record of a continuous sermon by Jesus than is the parabolic discourse in Matthew 13, but rather a collection of sayings of Jesus. For what purpose was this collection made? How was it arrived at?

Here it is helpful to call to mind a result of the work of Professor C. H. Dodd, who made the fundamental observation that everywhere in the very earliest period of Christianity there were two forms of preaching, namely, proclamation and teaching, kerygma and didache. [C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936); *Gospel and Law* (New York Columbia University Press, 1951)]. These two conceptions are unfortunately always being confused with one another, although each of them, at any rate in the Pauline usage, refers to something quite different. Proclamation, kerygma, is the missionary preaching to Jews and Gentiles. The content of the missionary preaching was the message concerning the crucified and risen Lord and his return. The oldest statement of the kerygma is to be found in I Cor. 15: 3-5: Jesus died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and was buried. God raised him on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Thus, the kerygma is the proclamation of Christ, the message

that he has redeemed us and is our peace. To be differentiated from the kerygma is the didache, the teaching, the preaching to the congregation. The kerygma is directed outward, but the didache is directed inward. Every service of worship began with the didache. In Acts 2:42 we have, in my opinion, a representation of the course of an early Christian service of worship. It consisted of four parts. It began with (1) the teaching (didache) of the apostles; then followed (2) the fellowship (which we must probably understand as table-fellowship); after this came (3) the breaking of bread, the Eucharist; and finally (4) the prayers. The teaching, the instruction, came at the beginning of the worship, and for this we have also numerous other examples.

What is, then, the content of *the* didache in contrast to the kerygma? Dodd answers in his work: ethical instruction, i.e., it provides the instructions for Christian conduct of life. This is, of course, correct. But a proviso to this may be suggested, insofar as Dodd's definition of the didache as an ethical instruction is somewhat too narrow. The didache is not to be understood only as a kind of outer ring around the kerygma, but rather the kerygma itself was constantly repeated in these instructions to the congregation. The didache included therefore (1) the content of the kerygma and (2) that in which the congregation must be instructed; and this latter included not only instruction in morals but also much more, as for example, teaching concerning the sacraments and the last things (Heb. 6:2), and also scriptural proof texts and information concerning the life of Jesus.

We have many examples in the New Testament which help us to envisage the general form of such didache. For instance in Matt. 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-13 we find two *didackai* of very different character, namely, two examples of instruction in prayer. When one considers first the constituent parts of the Matthean instruction in prayer, and then those of the Lucan, one sees at once the differences between the two. The Matthean instruction consists of four sayings: When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, who make a public show of their prayers (6:5-6); when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases (6:7-8); take the Lord's Prayer as an example of a prayer that does not heap up empty phrases (6:9-13); and when you pray, then you should also forgive (6:14-15). Like the Matthean, the Lucan prayer didache, Luke 11:1-13, also consists of four parts. First Jesus is requested, "Teach us to pray," and he responds to this request by teaching the disciples the Lord's Prayer (11:1-4). Then in the parable of the friend at midnight they are taught not to give up in prayer, even when their prayer is not

immediately answered (11:5-8). This is followed by the renewed instruction: Ask, and God will give you (11:9-10). The conclusion is given in the picture of the father who does not fail to give gifts to his son (11:11-13).

We can see that the Matthean didache is directed to men who come from a world in which people had learned to pray, but in which there was the danger of a misuse of prayer. Beyond question we have here before us a Jewish-Christian didache. The Lucan prayer didache, on the other hand, is directed to men who must learn to pray and who must be encouraged in prayer. We may see in this a Gentile-Christian instruction in prayer. The Sermon on the Mount as a whole is, together with the Epistle of James, the classical example of an early Christian didache.

Having made this much clear, we now go on to ask if we can say anything about the purpose for which this didache was composed, what "Sitz im Leben" (Literally, "situation in life"; form critics employ this term to refer to those recurring religious and sociological situations in the life of the early Christian community which shaped the use of the gospel materials.) it had. We must, therefore, consider its content carefully. The Sermon on the Mount has a very clear construction. Its theme is stated in Matt. 5:20: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." The customary interpretation tends to equate the scribes and Pharisees here. But in fact they are two quite different groups. The scribes are the theological teachers who have had some years of education. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are not theologians, but rather groups of pious laymen from every part of the community -- traders, craftsmen, professional men; only their leaders were theologians. According to Josephus there were six thousand Pharisees in Palestine in the first century AD.

Having noted the difference between the scribes and the Pharisees, we can see that Matt. 5:20 speaks of three kinds of righteousness, and this corresponds exactly to the construction of the Sermon on the Mount: it deals consecutively with the righteousness of the theologians, of the pious laymen, and of the disciples of Jesus. After the introduction (5:3-19) and the thematic sentence (5:20), the first part of the Sermon deals with the controversy concerning the interpretation of scripture between Jesus and the theologians (the six great antitheses, Matt. 5:21-48). As the second part, there follows his controversy with the righteousness of the Pharisees; for almsgiving, the keeping of the three hours of prayer,

and representative fasting on behalf of Israel are characteristics of these pious groups of laymen (6:1-18). The concluding section (6:19 to 7: 27) develops the new righteousness of the disciples of Jesus. The theme of this three-part didache is therefore the way of life of Christians as distinct from that of their Jewish contemporaries.

We have in the Sermon on the Mount a composition of words of Jesus, brought together on the basis of parenetic considerations, and we may conclude that its original function was in catechetical instruction (prebaptismal), or in teaching designed for the newly baptized (post-baptismal). In Luke (6:20-49) this catechism is designed for Gentile-Christians, and in Matthew (Chapters 5-7) for Jewish Christians. If in this way we have rightly determined the *Sitz im Leben* of the Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon on the Mount, then there follows a quite simple but decisively important conclusion. If the Sermon on the Mount is a catechism for baptismal candidates or newly baptized Christians, *then it was preceded by something else. It was preceded by the proclamation of the gospel; and it was preceded by conversion, by a being overpowered by the Good News.*

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Chapter 4: The Individual Sayings of Jesus

Having considered the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, we turn finally to the individual sayings of Jesus, which are the bricks out of which the whole building has been constructed. We have already seen that in the very earliest period these were handed on as isolated *logia.* Here we find a very complex picture. The *logia* that have been brought together in the Sermon belong to very different form-critical categories.

There are statements by Jesus concerning himself, such as Matt. 5: 17 "I have come to fulfil [the law and the prophets]"; as the last messenger of God, who brings the revelation to its completion, Jesus is the proclaimer of the final will of God. In the antitheses (5:21-48) this "Sendungsbewusstsein Jesu" (this consciousness by Jesus of his mission) is strongly portrayed. Schniewind has rightly stressed the fact further that the Beatitudes are concealed testimonies by Jesus to himself as the savior of the poor, the sorrowing, etc.(Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Matthaus ["Das Neue Testament Deutsch," Vol. II {Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1936, 1953}], pp. 43 ff.) Matt. 5:18 also belongs to the category of Jesus' witness to himself, that is, if this saying refers originally to the prophecies of the passion in the Old Testament: not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the prophecies until all is accomplished.

A second category is formed by the crisis-sayings, which speak of the imminent judgment, such as Matt. 5:25,26 (be reconciled, before it is too late); Matt. 7:21-23 (before the judgment seat of God what matters is not having said, Lord, Lord, but having done God's will); Matt. 7:24-27 (the flood threatens). Then we must mention the controversy-sayings against the scribes (5:21-48) and against the Pharisees (6:1-18); some other sayings, as for example the mote and the beam (7:3-5), may also have been originally controversy-sayings.

Further, we find mission-sayings. To this group probably belongs the long section 6:25-34, which forbids anxiety for oneself and was very possibly originally addressed to the departing missionaries, who were to learn to depend entirely upon God.

Finally -- and this was the major category -- we read in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus' instructions concerning the manner of life of his disciples. Here the six antitheses are to be mentioned again; one always thinks of them first when talking about the Sermon on the Mount. In them Jesus regulates one aspect of life after another: the proper attitude to a brother and to women and marriage, truthfulness in speech, and behavior with regard to an enemy (5:21-48); further, the sayings concerning the right way in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (6:1-18), the instruction to let the light shine (5:16), and many others.

When we consider the sayings and groups of sayings independently, especially those directed to the disciples, we observe again what we noted at the conclusion of our third section: we notice very quickly that we can only rightly understand the individual saying when we presuppose in each case that *it was preceded by something else.*

Let me demonstrate this with five examples. The short sentence Matt. 5:14: "You are the light of the world," which compares the disciples with the sun, makes no sense when taken by itself. Can it really be said of these men, whose weaknesses and failures the evangelists do not extenuate, that they are the light which illuminates the world? The comparison becomes immediately meaningful, however, when we presuppose a previous, unexpressed sentence: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

As a second example Matt. 6:15 may be mentioned: "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither can [so is the original Aramaic imperfect to be translated here] your heavenly Father forgive your

trespasses." If we take this saying by itself, then it seems as if the law of reciprocity may be applied to the relationship between God and man, as in a commercial bargain. The same saying is found, however, in one other place in Matthew's Gospel, namely, as the conclusion to the parable of the unmerciful servant: "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (18:35). Here we see especially clearly this second demand *was preceded by something else.* It was preceded by the great debt-cancellation of which the parable of the unmerciful servant speaks. Thus, the demand of God that we also forgive is no longer like a commercial bargain, but is an obvious foregone conclusion. "So much, you unmerciful servant, has God forgiven you; ought you not to have forgiven the little debt?"

A third example is offered by the saying on divorce (5:31-32). This was for contemporaries an extremely harsh saying, for the Jewish divorce law was regarded as a great step forward. The letter of divorce had after all the intention of protecting the woman, who as a divorcee was without protection. The letter gave her the right to seek the protection of another man. Jesus' rejection of divorce must have seemed harsh, not only because it cancelled out a Jewish step forward, but still more because it expressed a criticism of the Torah (Deut. 24:1). This criticism of the Torah can only be properly understood if we set the rejection of divorce in the context of the discussion of divorce (Mark 10: 2-12), in the course of which Jesus' opponents rely upon Moses while Jesus goes back to the creation story. The rejection of divorce is therefore preceded by the proclamation that the time of the law has run out, because the time of salvation is beginning, the time in which the original will of God, the pure paradise-will of God, is valid.

As a fourth example I would name the command to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:44-45), the hardest of commandments: "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Again something has preceded the demand of Jesus: the message of the heavenly Father, which runs like a red thread through the whole Sermon on the Mount, and of his unbounded goodness.

As a last example we may take the saying concerning turning the other cheek as a very much misunderstood saying: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" But I say to you,

Do not go to law [this is the correct translation] with a man who offends you [literally: one who is evil]; but if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (5:38-39). The introduction, "You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’" immediately tells the hearers of Jesus something quite concrete, namely, that Jesus is now concerning himself with the civil law. The so-called *lex talionis* ("an eye for an eye") was of course no longer literally applied at the time of Jesus, but it did form the foundation for the whole civil law. It was used to establish the principle that the degree of punishment should correspond to the extent of the offense. In contrast to this Jesus says to his disciples: In the matter of legal protection through the civil law, I forbid you to make a complaint when you are offended. And as an example he chose a particularly grevious offense. Striking a person on the right cheek -- a blow with the back of the hand is still today in the East the insulting blow. But then Jesus -- and this is very important for an understanding of this matter -- is not speaking of a simple insult; it is much more the case of a quite specific insulting blow: the blow given to the disciples of Jesus as heretics. It is true that this is not specifically stated, but it follows from the observation that in every instance where Jesus speaks of insult, persecution, anathema, dishonor to the disciples, he is concerned with outrages that arise because of the discipleship itself. If you are dishonored as a heretic, says Jesus, then you should not go to law about it; rather you should show yourselves to be truly my disciples by the way in which you bear the hated and the insult, overcome the evil, forgive the injustice.

"Again, something precedes all this: the act of becoming a follower of Jesus, and of publicly confessing allegiance to him, through which the fanatical hate is first provoked. It is possible that we can be even more precise in our formulation of what preceded if we ask the question: How did Jesus come to take this particular matter of the blow on both cheeks as his example? It could naturally be that there had been an actual instance of one of his disciples’ being insulted in this way. But it is perhaps much more important to note that there is but one passage in the whole of the Old Testament which speaks of the voluntary endurance of a blow on both cheeks. This is Isaiah 50:6, where the prophet says: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks [plural] to those who pulled out the beard." If Jesus had this particular passage of Scripture in mind, (K. Bornhäuser, *Die Bergpredigt* [Gütersloh; Bertelsmann, 1923], pp. 96 ff., is the first to have suggested that here Jesus may have been thinking of Isaiah 50:6.) then the purpose of the saying concerning the blow on both cheeks is that Jesus prophesied the fate of the prophets for

his disciples. But in that case this saying must have been preceded by the mission charge, in which Jesus designated his disciples as being in the prophetic succession, and also by the prophecy that for him too the fate of suffering was appointed. "The saying concerning the heresy-blow is not -- let us say it once more -- a matter of reaction to a general insult, but of outrage suffered as a consequence of following the suffering savior. If the disciples suffer the insulting blow because of their confession of Jesus, then they must accept it gladly as the taking up of a cross to follow him.

Something preceded. Every word of the Sermon on the Mount was preceded by something else. It was preceded by the preaching of the kingdom of God. It was preceded by the granting of sonship to the disciples (Matt. 5:16, 5:45, 5:48, etc.). It was preceded by Jesus' witness to himself in word and deed. The example of Jesus stands behind every word of the Sermon on the Mount. But this means the instructions of the Sermon have been torn out of their original context, although in many cases, as we have seen, this context has been preserved in parallel passages. All of them are, as it were, apodoses, which cannot be understood without the protasis, and which could not have been understood without the protasis at the time when Jesus spoke them.

If I may express it with a touch of exaggeration, it is as if to every saying of the Sermon on the Mount we must supply the protasis: "Your sins are forgiven" (Matt. 9:2). Therefore, because "Your sins are forgiven," there now follows: "While you are still in the way with your opponent, be reconciled to him quickly" (5:25). Because "Your sins are forgiven," there now follows: "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither [can] your Father forgive your trespasses" (6:15). Because "Your sins are forgiven," there now follows: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44).

The gospel preceded the demand. Better: the sayings of Jesus which have been brought together in the Sermon on the Mount are a part of the gospel. To each of these sayings belongs the message: the old aeon is passing away. Through the proclamation of the gospel and through discipleship you are transferred into the new aeon of God. And now you should know that this is what life is like when you belong to the new aeon of God. This is what sonship is like. This is what a lived faith is like. This is what the life of those who stand in the salvation-time of God is like, of those who are freed from the power of Satan and in whom the wonder of discipleship is consummated.

The fact that the Sermon on the Mount -- ostensibly -- retains only the apodoses and leaves out the protasis is not in itself surprising, when one remembers that in its present form it is an early Christian catechism. As such it is designed for a quite specific pedagogical purpose: it is intended to show the young Christians, who have not only heard the message of Jesus Christ but also opened their hearts to it, what manner of life they should lead in the future. In this case the protasis, if I may so express it, was given in the situation. The kerygma is now followed by the didache. Moreover, the protasis is only ostensibly missing. It is found at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in the form of the Beatitudes (5:3-12), and in the sayings on the glory of discipleship (5: 13-16). These two sections concern the whole Sermon, just as in a mathematical formula a number before a bracket concerns every entity within the bracket. They concern every saying m the Sermon on the Mount; they are simply not repeated every time.

Something preceded. Beginning with this recognition, which is absolutely decisive for a true understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, two further things are now understandable. First: *the heavy nature of the demands which Jesus makes.* His teaching on discipleship is directed to men for whom the power of Satan has already been destroyed by the Good News, to men who already stand in the kingdom of God and radiate its nature. It is spoken to men who have already received forgiveness, who have found the pearl of great price, who have been invited to the wedding, who through their faith in Jesus belong to the new creation, to the new world of God. It is directed to men who already know in their lives the great joy of which the parable of the hidden treasure speaks, in which the man in his joy goes and sells all that he has. It is directed to lost children, whom the father has already taken back into the home. To them Jesus says: You may live now in the time of salvation. But the time of salvation is also the time when the will of God is valid in all its earnestness. The presence of the kingdom of God means establishment of the coming world’s divine justice *[Gottesrecht]*. This divine justice is at once sovereign forgiveness and the validity of God’s holy will. Bestowal *[Zuspruch]* of divine forgiveness includes God’s claim *[Anspruch]* on the forgiven life. So speaks Jesus, and he does not hesitate to use the imperative, "You must." You should truly not be angry with your brother, you should truly avoid the impure look, strive for absolute truthfulness, love your enemy. Only if we begin with the greatness of the gift of God can we really understand the heavy nature of the demands which Jesus makes.

Beginning with the recognition that something else preceded the Sermon on the Mount's teaching on discipleship we can go on to understand a second thing: *the incompleteness of the Sermon* (Herbert Girgensohn). What Jesus teaches in the sayings collected in the Sermon on the Mount is not a complete regulation of the life of the disciples, and it is not intended to be; rather, what is here taught is symptoms, signs, examples, of what it means when the kingdom of God breaks Into the world which is still under sin, death, and the devil. Jesus says, in effect: I intend to show you, by means of some examples, what the new life is like, and what I show you through these examples you must apply to every aspect of life. You yourselves should be signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened. Through every aspect of your lives, including aspects beyond those of which I speak, you should testify to the world that the kingdom of God is already dawning. In your lives rooted and grounded in the *basileia,* the kingdom of God, the victory of the kingdom of God should be visible.

"But who can accomplish this? We are poor-spirited, wavering men, driven to and fro." The disciples put this question, and Jesus replied to it. His answer to the objection is found in Matt. *5:14.* This saying was uttered at a time when the disciples referred to their inability, their weakness. Then Jesus answered: "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." Gerhard von Rad has shown us, in a fine investigation, that here the reference is not to an ordinary city, but to the eschatological city of God. (Gerhard von Rad, "Die Stadt auf dem Berge," *Evangelische Theologie,* VIII (1948-9), pp. 439-47; reprinted in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* [Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1958], pp. 214-24.) Its light, says Jesus, shines in the world. You belong to it. In the eschatological city of God there is no need for convulsive efforts; its light shines of itself.

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Chapter 5: Not Law, but Gospel

The result to which we have come is that the Sermon on the Mount is not law, but gospel. For this is indeed the difference between law and gospel: The law leaves man to rely upon his own strength and challenges him to do his utmost. The gospel, on the other hand, brings man before the gift of God and challenges him really to make the inexpressible gift of God the basis for his life. These are two different worlds. In order to make the difference clear, one should avoid in New Testament theology the terms "Christian ethic," "Christian morality," "Christian morals," because these secular expressions are inadequate and liable to misunderstanding. Instead of these, one should speak of "lived faith" [*gelebter Glaube*]. Then it is clearly stated that the gift of God precedes his demands.

If we take up once more the triad with which we began, we may now conclude: The sayings of Jesus which have been collected in the Sermon on the Mount are not intended to lay a legal yoke upon Jesus' disciples; neither in the sense that they say: "You must do all of this, in order that you may be blessed" (perfectionist conception); nor in the sense: "You ought actually to have done all of this, see what poor creatures you are" (theory of the impossible ideal); nor in the sense: "Now pull yourself together; the final victory is at hand" (interim-ethic). Rather, these sayings of Jesus delineate the lived faith. They say: You are forgiven; you are the child of God; you belong to his kingdom. The sun of righteousness has risen over your life. You no longer belong to

yourself; rather, you belong to the city of God, the light of which shines in the darkness. Now you may also experience it: out of the thankfulness of a redeemed child of God a new life is growing. That is the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount.

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