Jesus' ethical teaching and its relevance today

Amalia E. Villas
Interdenominational Theological Center

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations
Part of the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations/2568

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Collection for AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center. For more information, please contact cwiseman@auctr.edu.
SENIOR ESSAY

JESUS' ETHICAL TEACHING AND ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

Submitted in Partial Requirement for
the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree

By

Amelia E. Villas,

April 15, 1971

INTERDENOMINATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CENTER
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Γ = 27
To Renato, my husband,

who has lost the patience

and the path;

and

To Joel, our son,

who patiently waited

and found it.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

PREFACE 1

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I

THE TEACHER 6

CHAPTER II

THE TEACHING 9

CHAPTER III

A TEACHING OF JESUS AND AN ETHICAL PROBLEM 14

CONCLUSION 22

FOOTNOTES 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY 27
The saying that an individual's work is a reflection of himself has become a reality in this Senior Essay. My purpose in choosing to write the Senior Essay rather than taking a two-hour course for substitute is personal and is two-fold in nature, and it truly is a reflection of myself.

First, I believe that through this humble work, I was able to express my personal self with regard to my understanding of what I ought to expect of myself and my actions as a true child of God in my relationship to you and everyone, more specifically, to my life partner. What is expected of me when storms come and go in our life? Modern marriages of today are victims of conflicts and confusions, either because of inner forces (between the couple themselves) or because of outside forces trying to destroy the couple's good relationship. As a Christian believer, I believe that religion has a good ethical step toward this particular problem of today's society.

Secondly, I affirm that this Senior Essay would be the best place in writing to express deep gratitude within me to Reverend John F. Norwood, former Interim Director of Gammon Theological Seminary, for considering my scholarship application not knowing how I would do in theological studies; to Dr. Major J. Jones,
President-Director of Gammon Theological Seminary, for his exceptional guidance and support throughout my seminary life, not only financially but morally as well; to Dr. William T. Osborne, and my other professors in the Interdenominational Theological Center, who have inspired me to like ethics and theology in the long run. Special thanks to my Senior Essay Advisor, Reverend George B. Thomas, for helping me out in every aspect with this essay. Finally, to God, the greatest Teacher, my unseen support and guide, I extend not only my prayer of thanks for giving me the opportunity to learn of his greatness, but I also promise him that I will be his instrument in spreading the truth that he is the great God, and I am a witness myself.
INTRODUCTION

The title of this Senior Essay is suggestive of at least two main themes which emerge as basic to the study of Jesus' teachings. It seems to dictate a positive thrust toward the assertion that there is, in that body of teachings attributed to Jesus, a portion which is ethical or moralistic in nature; and that such teachings have definite application in today's societies. There is a bias in the title because it assumes the first point and implies the second.

As a matter of fact, all that the title tends to assert could be questioned, even so far as to whether what we think Jesus taught was really his in the first place. Critical scholars have raised questions about almost every passage attributed to him as to context, original content, influence of the interpretation of the early Church, etc. Yet, even from the viewpoint of the most hostile, critical approach, the foundation of Christianity rests solidly upon the accepted historical truth that Jesus did teach certain principles. The problems, therefore, have centered around discovering "exactly" what it was that he taught and why his teachings should be authoritative today. As to the latter, the Christian has no serious problem. He affirms the hardship of Jesus Christ and Christ's authority
into the contemporary scene through the Christian Church. It is precisely because the Christian Church affirms Christ as Lord today that the authority of his teachings — whatever they were and are — endure the scrutiny both from within and without the family called "Christians."

Furthermore, there are at least two basic approaches to Jesus' teachings: the points of view of the 'believer' and the 'non-believer.' This is to assert that Jesus' teachings may have influence upon today's societies for their intrinsic value alone. Even Mohammed's followers recognize Jesus as one of the twenty-eight prophets of Allah and his teaching, the Injil (Evangel), is among the four inspired books of that religion. Yet, this is a 'non-believer's approach' even though it is a religious approach. The Christian 'believer', the one who accepts Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God, the Savior, the only begotten Son, must come at Jesus' teachings from an entirely different point of view; this point of view hinges on the concept of authority.

Having acknowledged that there is a body of teachings attributed to the man, Jesus of Nazareth, and, that as Christians, our approach to his teachings is generally that he is authoritative because he is the revelation of God and Lord of the Faith; even so, there remain two other basic questions to be resolved. Did Jesus proclaim a distinctively ethical and
moral teaching, and, if so, is it a body of teachings intended for all men or only for Christians? In the latter question, I have limited the boundaries of consideration to the Christian perspective, the viewpoint of the 'believer', as further developed in the following pages.

Many, through the ages (including Mohammed), have extracted Jesus' teaching concerning morality and ethical standards out of the context of his unique religious proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God. There are, however, those who recognize that 'the moral teaching of Jesus is part and parcel of his religion and is not separable from it except by violence.' Dr. Manson, for one, presents a strong case for this approach which views the moral teaching of Jesus from the viewpoint of 'life in the Kingdom of God on earth.' He emphatically asserts that to approach the idea of ethics as an independent discipline did not present itself to the Hebrew mind, and leaves the implication that it was not in the mind of Jesus either. Thus, as to the former of the two remaining unresolved questions, we adopt a presupposition that Jesus did not proclaim a distinctively ethical and moral teaching separate from his religious proclamation.

As to contemporary relevance, the only conclusive base point is that the applicability of his teaching as to obligation - if any - is limited to those who live under the religious
Faith of Jesus of Nazareth. This does not, as yet, draw a distinct conclusion concerning 'relevance today', but it does confine such relevance to the context of life within the Christian faith. The 'non-believer' is excluded from obligation, but not from being affected by such standards in societies strongly influenced by the Faith.

In summary, I have outlined an approach somewhat as follows:

1) The teachings of Jesus can best be examined from the point of view of the Christian 'believer.'

2) The ethical teaching cannot be separated from the total body of Jesus' teachings, which was a religious proclamation of the coming Kingdom of God.

3) The contemporary relevance of Jesus' teachings is logically confined to obligation upon interpretation within the body of 'believers.'

4) The critical evaluation of the 'fruits' of responsive obedience to Jesus' teachings are not confined to the 'believers' alone, but come from the whole world to whom the mission of the Faith is extended.

It may well be that the more accurate title for this Senior Essay should be: "Jesus' Teaching and Its Ethical Relevance for Christians Today." Certainly, this is a small point of emphasis in one sense, but where radical interpretations are evolving from secular society in critical attack upon the more traditionally accepted legalistic ethical standards, from an existential point of view, one question is obvious: "Can Jesus' teachings stand with the new morality?" The current emphasis is ethical, not religious, whereas in Jesus' teachings, the
ethical was a result of the religious, or inseparably connected with the religious response. The Pope is severely criticized and challenged to defend his 'holy' position against a secular world that accepts birth control as moral and ethical, but not necessarily religious. The medical profession is caught in the dilemma of euthanasia and anti-euthanasia, as well as in complicated questions concerning legal abortion. The world's epitome of a "Christian nation" has one of the highest divorce rates, lavishes, and exceptional wealth upon itself while neighboring nations die from starvation of food, lack of knowledge of technical know-how, and lack of spiritual stability. These are ethical questions. What does Jesus' teaching say and does it relate to these ethical problems of today's world?
CHAPTER I

THE TEACHER

Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher . . . "sent from God" (John 3:2). One of his earliest acts was to gather around him a small body of disciples to whom much of the depth-teaching was directed. The historical acceptance and proclamation for future generations that he was the great teacher is attested beyond dispute among Christians. From the 'rabbinic teacher' image of his early career to the acknowledgment as 'The Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matthew 16:16; Mark 9:29; John 6:69), given by Peter and even to the title of 'Lord' given in the early Church, there is not so much a growth of the teacher but a growing awareness and acceptance of who he was. Even as an early rabbi, he was different from the scribes whom he sometimes criticized. "The Synoptic tradition emphasizes the authority of his teaching," one to whom discipleship as a pupil could not be affixed because we know not from whom we studied. Thus, the authority with which he, himself, proclaimed his teachings constituted a problem to his hearers, even as it does today.

James S. Stewart says that Jesus knew himself to be Messiah from the very beginning of his ministry. At Caesarea, Philippi, the inner circle of his followers were confronted with "the most
momentous question of their lives: 'Whom say ye that I am?' 6

The revelation of who Jesus was is progressive, from the baptism to the ascension. Exposure to the man, what he taught and did, and the events surrounding him contributed to the response already referred to from Peter and from future generations. To extract a body of teachings from the whole and expect to discover essential truth either about the teacher or even about what he taught is dangerous exegesis. Yet, the major categories of his teachings exert within themselves the compelling conclusion that his authority was as unique as what he taught. The miracles, the Sermon on the Mount, the parables, all convey implication by action and direct teaching, as in the latter that Jesus is indivisibly joined with the Kingdom of God. Joachim Jeremias concludes in his significant work, The Parables of Jesus, that "in attempting to recover the original significance of the parables, one thing above all becomes evident... they compel his hearers to come to a decision about his person and his mission." 7 He declares that Jesus 'hides himself' behind the concept of Kingdom, and Jeremias agrees with Fuchs that the parables imply a christological self-attestation that he is the 'Savior.' 8

The teacher spoke with authority (Mark 1:22) as one who knew himself to be "uniquely authorized by God... acting for God... doing God's doings." He was saying, 'Follow me'; 'learn of me'; 'come to me', asking men then (as he does now) to believe in him;
rising above even the Law and the Scriptures; saying, "Ye have heard . . . but I say unto you.""
CHAPTER II
THE TEACHING

To render the sub-topic in the singular is by no means intended to limit the subject to a single umbrella. It is rather a guide toward hopefully arriving at the core of all Jesus' teachings by deriving the general principal from the particulars. It seems reasonable, therefore, to approach the teaching from the expressed principal before attempting to apply either the principal or the particular to contemporary issues of today.

If there be any singular umbrella which embodies the principal teaching of Jesus, it is found in the passages referred to as the 'law of love,' or the 'great commandment' (Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-28).

Already, as so often repeated, an obligatory, legalistic emphasis is easily derived from name alone: "law" or "commandment." Is that the nature of Jesus' authoritative pronouncements, especially the 'royal law'?

"The authority which radiated from Jesus was not coercive but persuasive," says Scott. Yet, it was a persuasive authority directed toward those who were already of the same religious background as Jesus and who were seeking righteousness. The problem with the scribes and pharisees was simple: authority,
Because they viewed righteousness from a legalistically jaundiced eye, their chief concern seemed not toward who Jesus was, but in the radical interpretations of what he taught. Even a cursory review of the didactic words ascribed to him reveals the overwhelming imperative nature of the message he conveyed and the tone of the synoptic accounts resounds with the imperative. Certainly, in this passage under discussion, there is no question as to the strength of the imperative. It not only carries the force of him who gave it, but he reached back to the anchor point of Jewish law which made it impossible for his hearers to disagree or deny the authority of the components even if they did question the authority of the messenger.

This imperative, Scott says, is the unique example of the bare commandment issued on Jesus' bare authority: "Thou shalt love." I would have to disagree with Dr. Scott's latter emphasis for reasons already mentioned, as well as a basic belief in the continuity of biblical revelation. The authority of the shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) was basic truth; it was living out of love for God in the world, with the neighbor, that was needing incarnational authority. Likewise, the context of the commandment to love one's neighbor was also not only a shining verse of principle, but was recorded in interpretative clothing known to all, including Jesus (Leviticus 19:15-18). What then was the persuasive? To accept it of heart and hand, for Jesus, as for
us, it was "the constitution of the Kingdom." 12

The potential of fulfillment was not in new rules, but in
a release of the power of righteousness which puts self third in
line after God and neighbor. We quite humanly acquiesce spirit-
ually to God, but to love neighbor as self is most difficult.
It is what James Stewart calls "love difficulty", where feelings
of self-independence and personal rights "oust" love from pos-
sibility. 13 The persuasive, then, has to be: "accept the pos-
sibility that you can, under my authority," to put words into
the mouth of our Lord. After all, it is logically more unethical
for Christ to demand the impossible than for lessor humans to
deny it where probable. This must be kept in mind due to the
threat of diluted standards and values emerging from situational
rationalizations in our contemporary world.

The persuasive, again, is somehow only recognizable by the
persuaded. It characterizes divine respect for human will. "The
concept of love is undoubtedly the best summation of the ethical
teaching of Jesus." 14 Starting from the perfectionist saying of
Matthew 5:48, Dr. Davies affirms the centrality of love in Jesus'
teachings. He delineates the customary formula for understanding
the demand of love as follows:

1) the inseparability of love both for God and man

2) the priority of the two-fold commandment as the
capsule of obedient response to the gospel

3) the universal extension of neighbor to include
everybody
In this, Jesus is not restating the will of God particular from the law, but revealing His will in the Gospel. Jesus reveals the superiority of the love commandment not as an evolution of Jewish legalism, but as the supreme commandment "incommensurable with all the rest" (without need, in fact, for all the others) for he concluded, "Do this, and you shall live" (Luke 10:28).

T. W. Manson suggests that on close examination the great commandment is lacking in requiring love of neighbor as self. Such represents the emphasis of the highest in Jewish law, not Christian ethics. Why? He suggests we love ourselves selfishly. Therefore, to love one's neighbor as self is a kind of "sublimated selfishness." The gospel ethic, he declares, comes from the fourth account (John 15:12): "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." This total self-giving is the characteristic feature of Jesus' ethic; not idealistic, but an act, a deed, a way of life; not accomplishing the law, but transcending it, fulfilling it; motivated not by legal obedience, but springing forth from inward motivation akin to divine nature itself.

Therefore, we can agree with Edward Bausan's conclusion concerning the Sermon on the Mount: "Jesus did not offer a new system of ethics, but a whole new approach to ethics." His approach to the Jewish scribe who raised the big question was not the prerequisite given Nicodemus (John 3:1ff), namely the new birth; yet, in recognizing the wisdom of the man's response, he
acknowledged the breaking in of the new birth . . . "not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34b). The new approach, the influence of religious worship (service) to existential reality (neighbor's need) is only affected by an inner change (regeneration) given by God (grace) to the willing human spirit (repentant). This new approach, called love (agapē), for lack of better word, is characterized in Jesus' life and teaching not as a "genial amiability and good nature with no moral backbone," rather, as Stewart defines Christian love:

- a spirit that never harbors a grudge, because it is much too big for that kind of pettiness;
- a spirit that always discovers the best in men, because it can see underground;
- a spirit that is full of understanding, because it has been through hard places itself;
- a spirit that is wonderfully patient, because it has a great hope in its heart;
- a spirit that is utterly pure, because it knows God.18

This was the spirit of the Teacher, the Incarnation of the Truth.
CHAPTER III

A TEACHING OF JESUS AND AN ETHICAL PROBLEM
(On Divorce)

Amos Wilder portrays the true sanction of ethics as 'the fact of God . . . his nature and his will with men as assented to by the discernment of mind and heart.' "Fundamental to ethics, both as inspiration and sanction, is the apprehension of God and his will." This approach leads to further expression that Jesus' 'ethical' teachings (the particulars) had their origin in the personal situation of Jesus in his own ministry, in his own time, and are not general absolutes or divine universal standards. Such teachings were occasional, limited and specific, though important and related to the mission of his life. Wilder denies ethical absolutes derived from these teachings as non-historical and influenced by later Church interpretation. He summarizes:

They are occasional utterances to particular persons which the sacred records have lifted out of the obscurity of their original moment. Religious faith can generalize them, as every great occasional utterance can have wider significance, but such is the work of the preacher, not the historian.

Jesus was preparing disciples for his own struggle and for theirs. To find the relevance for today, the ethics of Jesus should be
sought (1) in the recapture of the spiritual vision of the will of the Father, and (2) in renewed appreciation of the significance of Christ's work and redemptive power. Wilder concludes his work by affirming the Church as the contemporary agent of God and calls for the same allegiance to his disciples under his eschatological expectations.

At this point, there could be an approach to particular teachings from the perspective of a view which depicts Jesus as a "situational ethicist" of the highest standard, declaring the 'will of God' as a demand for the time, not for the future. Does this mean that no ethical principal(s) can be derived which would be operative for present day expressions of the will of God? Certainly not! The pages of social history and Christian mission reflect, at least in the Western civilization, the perpetuating influence of the Judeo-Christian principals which the "sacred records have lifted out." Wilder, himself, closed with a note of allegiance to the Church. The Church has generally moved forward through changing times only after careful and considerable reference to the past. History has been the sacred guide. The social growth and development of man is intricately woven by the yarn of history.

Jesus' teachings are theological, more than anthropological. Yet, he was very person-oriented rather than a theoretician. He proclaimed the Fatherhood of God, not as a new and revolutionary
teaching, but in the context of personal relationship. This relationship calls for response, a response in love (agapé). Such response leads toward being in "The Kingdom of God," or at least not far from it. The emphasis of the Kingdom relationship (the rule of God) is forged through response to God. Whereas, Wilder denies universal application and contemporary relevance of particular teachings. Manson says that Jesus' moral teachings, "conceived as the requirements of God, are of universal application and validity," even though their primary application is to the community of those who accept the teaching as a whole, those who "enter into the Kingdom," those who become disciples.

Jesus' teachings regarding ethical conduct point to the highest expression of love as the response for disciples who have found new life in Christ. They were a guide, a "word from the Lord" to the early Church regarding Christian conduct and ecclesiastical discipline. John Lawson says the fact that the early Church remembered and kept alive the oral sayings which are evidence of the relevance and application in that primitive Church.

Jeremias is right when he declares that the Sermon on the Mount presupposes commitment to Christ. Righteousness was the hunger and the thirst of Christ, himself, because it was a desire to fulfill the will of the Father (Matthew 5:6). Such deep-seated commitment, such as Christ-like spirit, can only dwell within those who are disciples of our Lord. The will of God was the paramount
issue with Christ; it was the sum of his principal for existence; it was his ethic. That is why the ethic of Jesus is theological and religious. God wills love. God wills righteousness.

The law was intended to produce righteousness and not piestastic legalism. Because the law had been perverted, it was not rendered ineffectual. The one who relaxed the commandments or taught man to do was at least in the Kingdom, according to Matthew (5:19a). This emphasis of fulfillment of the Law (God's will) becomes the theme of the Sermon on the Mount, the heart of Jesus' ethical teaching. Some scholars reject this particular saying as being of the later Church's conflict over the Law. Rudolf Bultmann would likewise deny that God's will was revealed through the Law, for he sees Jesus' message as a great "protest against Jewish legalism, i.e., against a form of piety which regards the will of God as expressed in the written Law." Bultmann's emphasis is that Jesus understood God's will as a requirement for "radical obedience." He claims man "whole and wholly." The impure will cannot be made righteous behind external obedience to form. Thus, Jesus spoke more of attitudes, motives, desires, will, etc. than actual practices themselves. Simply stated, the greatest moral sin is to desire or will some act in opposition to the will of the Father, once the will of the Father is known!

Jesus' teachings are radically contemporary because they
transcend form and judge motive. Love (agape) becomes the universal standard ethic. The situational point of view equates love and justice as inseparable. This relates to motive, to will, to inner desire, as well as social relationship, though the emphasis is on the latter. "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). The true disciple must respond to the will of the Father before he can respond to the needs of His children in love.

The problem with contemporary application of Jesus' teachings is man's failure to apply the radical emphasis: "Not my will but thine be done." The thine may be either "Thine" (God) or "thine" (neighbor), to use Martin Buber's analogy. The possibility of conflict between the will of God and that of neighbor is an issue to the ethical response of the Christian. For example, the Christian minister in counsel with a partner to marriage must weigh his understanding of both wills in the situation. Jesus taught that "whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). Right away, man began to tamper with the radical emphasis of this teaching. Mark's account adds the phrase "against her" (10:11-12), Matthew (19:9) opens up another loophole, "except for unchastity," and in the Sermon in the Mount, he confuses the issue further by saying not that the one who initiates divorce (the male) is an adulterer, but rather implies the wife becomes adulteress together with the one who may marry her in the
future (5:32). The legal process starts all over with Matthew. Jesus was talking very absolutely about the act resulting from the will of the male, for he alone had the powers to initiate a certificate of divorce. The will is the key to understanding not only the implications in his time, but in ours. To counsel in absolutes was Jesus' way, but it is generally unpopular today.

Jesus expressed first the will of the Father: that man and wife should by selfless love conserve, reconcile and perpetuate marriage. This will affects our will. Few marriages need end in divorce where the will of the party whose rights are infringed is, nevertheless, to conserve the marriage. The crucial problem comes when, from the perspective of the Christian partner, the will of God (as interpreted) conflicts with the will of the partner. The law of love overrides. But, the law of love is not intended to imply relinquishing God's will just because the partner seeks to destroy the relationship. This "surrender" attitude is not love. Love seeks unselfishly the ultimate best for neighbor, not the immediate desire alone. Psychological insights force modern man to the truth that many divorces are simply "surrender" on the part of either or both parties and often never force an honest affrontal to the causes.

It is my firm belief that God does not will divorce — now or ever. Society currently looks at divorce as a social problem — especially regarding the emotional nurture of children and their
attitudes toward marriage. Jesus' teaching can and does stand with the new morality, but it overshadows it with hope and promise for fulfillment in love. Jesus' teaching about divorce does relate to us today because it sets forth the one single motivational force that can save a modern marriage: a selfless will not to be divorced. Without that teaching, the institution of marriage would long since have lost its sacred character in Christian society. Finally, as Bauman pointed out, Jesus' teaching on divorce is the guiding light, the divine approach to the biggest problem of marriage; namely, the possibility and acceptability of divorce. Let's face it: divorce is the easiest retreat of the marriage war.

To deny that situations do occur wherein divorce is the only alternative to humane existence, emotional health and selfless love is absurd. The message of the Gospel, however, must be that the will of God is loving, forgiving and understanding when the will of man is responsive, obedient and earnestly displayed in an attitude of hope. Truth comes to the willful seeker; reconciliation comes to the patient disciple; God expresses his will when man is open and selfless; and life reminds us that we are not individuals before God, but social beings dependent as much on each other as we are on Him and ourselves. That's simply how He made us.

Amos Wilder spoke of the apprehension of the fact of God
and his will with men. Manson's approach is more moralistic from the point of the Christian's obedience; it is more universal because it springs from absolute truth. Professor Lawson appeals to continuing relevance through the Church because the teachings have survived. Bultmann appeals to individualism in a radical obedience to the intent of the sayings. Bauman pointed to a principal, a guiding light and surely others have varying emphasis, but "I am persuaded" to use Paul's phrase that the Christian Church should never allow the ideal, perfect, absolute aspects of Jesus' teachings to be diminished for the sake of pragmatic practices. Surely, man realizes failure, but to quote from a poet who had more insight about human nature than many a modern Freudian "Flippant," Robert Browning wrote, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"
CONCLUSION

Jesus' teachings contained distinctive ethical and moral implications, but they were exclusively derived from a radical religious relationship with the Father. His teachings, understood in the Kingdom relationship of the 'believer,' not only stand with but transcend the new morality. The moral axel is love of God; the spokes of the wheels are relationships with neighbor; the ability to move comes by power of the Holy Spirit. Love of neighbor alone is like a wheel without an axel; it will roll, but cannot be easily directed nor can it bear the weight of a load. Love of God is primary, but not the exclusive response to Jesus' teachings. The biggest perversion of the great commandment is that we should love neighbor, self and God equally!!! How ridiculous! Humanism has pushed God out to the fringes. Psychology, in looking for self as primary, has dissociated God as reality and made the neighbor a servant of the self ego. Excess humanism of these philosophies and disciplines estrange man from his true source of life, the unseen God of Nazareth. Fanatical religiosity does the same.

Jesus' teaching on divorce illustrates the Kingdom relationship for which man strives. Whenever we break from our marriage to God, we are adulterous, alienated and incapable of entering
adulthood relationship. The keeping of the law (Matthew 5:19) is only possible in the Kingdom. If anger is equated with murder (Matthew 5:22), who can avoid the judgment? Can we love our enemies (Matthew 5:43) without the transforming power of divine love that comes only from love of God and neighbor? Obviously, he who serves two masters (Matthew 6:24) is missing the rewards of the Kingdom and is denying (hating) God's truth for love of things and self.

The most unethical and immoral act that the Church can do is to demand the "ethical" standards of Jesus without commending him as God's source of converted willpower in man. I cannot demand that an unchristian person avoid divorce, but I can hold up Christ as the Savior and Teacher who can change that will. Only when Christ controls, we proclaim with Paul, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus . . ." (Romans 8:1) for I will TO DO HIS WILf! The non-believer cannot understand that the Christian does not drink nor smoke nor exercise his anger but of responsive; he sees it as a depreciation of the self that fails to exert self will and freedom. Jesus' 'moment of truth' was when he yielded his will to the Father in the garden. That was obedience. The ethical problem is not the ambiguous but the clear path. Jesus agonized, had the will of God expressed, accepted it and acted in faith. That is moral living.
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


11. Ibid., p. 11.
12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25
Ibid., p. 13.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


