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12. The Kingdom of God. 2 Pet 3. ?

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WHAT IS THE ESSENCE?

What are the most important ideas in Christ's teaching? This poses another question - important for what? Surely important for man's salvation; as John puts it "There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess life by his name." (Jn.20 30:31 NEB). If therefore we can master the message presented in John's gospel we have the way to life eternal. The same is also true for the "Good News" presented by Mark, Matthew and Luke and for that matter by Paul in his letter to the Romans. Each evangelist, helped by the Holy Spirit, is presenting his view of what is the essence of Christ's teaching for man's fuller life. They differ because each is endeavouring to describe in words what is indescribably good the perfection of God as a human being - "The word made flesh."

Jesus is not only "The Truth" and "The Way" but also "The Life". We cannot therefore learn the way by intellectual discernment we have to live it. Paul's theme in his "Good News" is "The just shall live by faith". The result of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus, if it has had the impact that it should have had on us, is that we have become new creatures in a new world - "When

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

by Alfred Green

"The Kingdom of God has its focal point in the land of Israel; and Israel was itself in a very real sense the Kingdom of God in earlier days." ("The Kingdom of God" - N.J.Smart).

In a public address on the subject "World Government", the speaker summarized his remarks along these lines:

The essentials of a Kingdom are:

- (1) A King: Jesus returned assisted by immortalized saints.
- (2) A Country: Palestine with Jerusalem the Capital and world centre.
- (3) Subjects: The mortal people of the world with restored Israel as first amongst the nations.
- (4) Laws: Divine laws, with a system of worship centralised in a magnificent temple in Palestine requiring annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem.

This brief sketch expresses the substance of any traditional Christadelphian lecture on the subject of the Kingdom of God.

The concept of a world transformed, disease eradicated, food abundant, absence of fear and insecurity, orderly government, elimination of war, does not have the same force or appeal as it did 100 years ago. An affluent society, extraordinary advances in medicine and greatly improved standards of living etc. have changed the direction of man's thought and aspiration. Yet, it still carries great attraction to the poorer peoples, or the coloured races who are of the have-nots of our age. Perhaps this is because it expresses the purpose of God in practical, very human terms which are easily grasped, and human beings do not like anything vague - especially in the realm of religion. They like concrete dogmatic answers.

There is some interest in World Government, a realisation that no true peace will come to our troubled world until a government with world authority eliminates national rivalries, jealousies, and intense economic competition.

To support the traditional approach to the subject, considerable scripture is quoted, mainly Old Testament. For example, the propositions found in "The Declaration" covering the subject "Kingdom of God" have no less than thirty-four quotations from the Old Testament, and only four from the New. One would suppose therefore that a topic so thoroughly supported would present no difficulties for us. Yet when we examine closely the use of the phrase "Kingdom of God" by Jesus, we find some quite striking differences. Perhaps of greatest importance is the absence of appeal to human nature.

The emphasis in the Old Testament on the restoration of Israel to political power, the destruction of her foes, her emergence as chief among nations, appealed as history demonstrates, to her national pride, ambition and revenge, and created a sense of superiority over other peoples. One could say that "racism" as such was first shown by the Jew.

There is also the emphasis on physical needs. Passages such as Psalm 72:16, "There shall be an handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, "or Isaiah 65:21, "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit."

None of this is found in the teaching of Jesus; it is entirely absent. The Apostle Paul comments, "For the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but justice, peace and joy, inspired by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17 NEB).

There is the use of the expression "The Kingdom of God" by Jesus in circumstances and tenses quite out of harmony with our traditional teaching. The following are examples: The opening message in Mark's record (Mrk.1:14 NEB) "The time has come; the Kingdom of God is upon you." In His rebuttal of the argument used by His opponents to discredit Him - that His power to cast out demons was of Beelzebub: (Luke 11:20 NEB) "But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out the devils, then be sure that the Kingdom of God has come upon you." The Lord Jesus then uses an analogy drawn from Isaiah 49:24-25. The dispossession of a tyrant of his victim can only be accomplished when someone with greater power has come; so in the context "The Kingdom of God" is the power of God in action, freeing men from their bondage to disease and superstition. Again, (Luke 17:20 NEB) "The Pharisees asked him, 'When will the Kingdom of God come?' He said, 'You cannot tell when the Kingdom of God comes; there will be no saying "look, here it is " or "There it is " for in fact the Kingdom of God is among you." This passage is very familiar to us and sometimes classified as a difficult one. The

phrase is not found very often in the Epistles, but the few places where it is found tend to confirm the thought that we must seek another significance if we are to appreciate the full force of the call to "Repent, the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is upon you." "He rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us away into the Kingdom of His dear Son." (Col.1:13-14 NEB). It would be profitable to read the account by Paul of the commission given to him by Jesus, fully to appreciate the significance of his saying. (Acts 26:18 NEB). Another: "I shall come very soon, if the Lord will, and then I shall take measure of these self-important people, not by what they say, but by what power is in them. The Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor.4:20 NEB) And there is, of course, the passage already referred to - Romans 14:17.

With these few illustrations of the use of the expression "The Kingdom of God" it should be reasonably obvious that an interpretation based solely on it as a political organisation, or system of government to come into existence in the future, does not do justice to the force and significance contained in it.

The parables of Jesus provide other facets. The most familiar "The sower went forth to sow" shows the response by Jesus to the growing organised opposition to His teaching. The certainty of a harvest in spite of set backs and obstacles is its theme - perhaps Isaiah 55:10:11 is its background. No human opposition can prevent the response of men to the "Word" and the growth of the Kingdom. The parable of the mustard seed: something insignificant in its beginnings, growing to great dimensions. The parable of the net: a glance into the future, harvest, judgment. The parable of the tares repeats the thought. (Matt.13:28:39. especially verses 39-49).

With this very brief review we are moved to ask, "Does the conventional Christadelphian interpretation convey the true force of the Lord's call to the men and women of His age when He said, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is upon you?"

The word "kingdom" is rendered in a modern dictionary, (1) Kingship. (2) A politically organised community having a monarchical form of government. (3) A realm in which God's will is done.

(4) Various categories of living creatures - i.e. the animal kingdom. The Greek term "Basileia" from which the word kingdom in our New Testament is translated, also has a flexible meaning, its basic significance however being that of sovereignty. The prime application being the power, influence etc. of the monarch independent of the territory or sphere in which he ruled. So Jesus could say He was a king though no political organisation existed or acclaimed Him. "My Kingdom (kingship, royal power) belongs not to this world." (John 18:36 Amplified Version).

The varied uses made by the translators of the New English Bible also serve to illuminate the subject:

Luke 1:33 - "Reign." Luke 22:28-29 - "Kingship."
John 18:36-37 - "Kingly authority." Acts 1:6 -
"Sovereignty".
Revelation 1:6 - "Royal house".

This brief examination of the use of the expression "The Kingdom of God" in the New Testament should make quite clear that whenever Jesus used this phrase He was not referring to a monarchical form of political control to be established in the unseen future, but He was confronting men with the "sovereignty", the "rule", "The Kingdom of God" and its clear cut alternatives.

There was nothing new in this idea to the Jews who listened to Jesus. The rule of God over His people was the theme of their history. The basic relationship between them and their God was spelled out after their redemption out of Egypt, Ex.19:5-6. "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The same fundamental choice implicit in the words of Jesus was spelled out to a people in a more primitive age by Moses: Deut. 30. Nationally speaking, the choice was between "life or death."

Joshua put the same thought into his own words, Joshua 24:15, "Choose thee this day whom ye will serve." The history of the children of Israel could very well be called the record of the conflict between the human and the spiritual understanding of the "Rule of God." Their greatest tragedy the equating of the Kingdom of David, and of Solomon with the Kingdom of God. This was to colour their understanding of the Divine Purpose through the rest of their history.

It was the prophets who sought to bring home to their people the true Divine standards: that God's own people could only be distinguishable by their God-likeness. Again and again, these prophets condemned their trust in temple worship. Micah expressed it in those eloquent brief words: Micah 6:8 - "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"? One of Jeremiah's finest statements: (9:23-24) "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practice kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth for in these things I delight, says the Lord."

It was Isaiah who was to spell out the significance of the role of God's own people in the Divine Purpose in the most compelling way. It is found in the Servant Prophecies where God's servant is shown to be one who in God's name lives to serve, to bear the burdens of others, to accept humiliation and suffering, even death, that men might come to know God and be set free. It was a theme that found its complete fulfillment in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This then was the nature of the choice that Jesus presented to His people. "The time was fulfilled", the wisdom of the ages was complete when "The Kingdom of God" was no longer a matter of teaching, of debate, but was revealed in the life and teaching of the Son. Men were confronted with "the rule of God" in its essence. A quality of life that had within it the germ of immortality. Stripped of all appeal to national pride, of self-righteous trust in ceremonial religion, with no room in it for ambition, selfishness or greed. As Jesus brought the message to His world "the rule of God" was the way of the Cross. Matthew 18:1-4. 16:24. 20:26-27, spell out the principles.

In a very real sense therefore, whenever God has revealed Himself to men they are confronted with "the rule of God" and its stark alternatives, whether it was 1900 years ago or now in the twentieth century. This was not a call by Jesus to social revolution, or involvement in movements to overthrow governments - this would be to commit the same error as Israel, to think that God's rule could be established by political action.

It was a call to personal reformation, to repentance or change of will and direction of life. This is infinitely more difficult because it sometimes means loneliness, to choose to live under the rule of God with His absolute standards of justice, kindness,

faithfulness, in whatever circumstances, accepting the consequences with the absolute confidence that in the climax of time these will be the source of peace for the troubled world.

This then is the "Rule of God", it is "The Way of Life", because it is God's Way and therefore Eternal. In contrast, "the rule of the world" i.e. the "kingdom of men" is the way of self-interest, ambition and greed and therefore self-destructive.

It is this dynamic call of Christ to a life of faith in His Way, of emptying of self, of honoring God by living to love and serve our fellows in His Name, however humble and obscure that personal way might be. That, in this writer's opinion, is seriously obscured by our intense pre-occupation with political Zionism. Perhaps there has never been a greater opportunity to preach Christ in this fashion. The world is full of young men and women disillusioned, frustrated, seeking a way of life with higher values.

Surely, it is time to reassess the Glad News of the Son, and seek to interpret in twentieth century terms and idiom His call to men expressed in those paradoxical terms:

"if anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; he must take up his cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost; but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self. What will a man gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of his true self? Or what can he give that will buy that self back?" (Matthew 16:24-25 NEB).

The creative purpose of God is a world at peace and in harmony with Himself. A world that will "know" Him, not theoretically or intellectually, but through experience. Through the word and lives of men and women who have made Him known as a God of justice, kindness, and faithfulness, through their own trust in these Divine standards. This is the "city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." The growing community who, with Christ at His return, will be "God Manifest" to the world and will bring light, healing and life to all nations.

It is to this Kingdom that Christ calls men. It is a high

calling indeed, and above all other things it demands vision and faith. The ability to see beyond present frustrations and despair to the eventual beauty of the Divine purpose, to have the faith, the complete trust in God that "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord."

INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES - 2

by John H. Weaving.

Continuing Jeremias' second group of our Lord's parables, those illustrating God's mercy for sinners, we come to a set of three in the Gospel of Luke - The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and The Prodigal Son. Although these parables in Luke's "Good News" run consecutively, when first spoken they would probably be individual sword-thrusts in vigorous arguments with the religious rulers of his day. As Luke says -

The taxgatherers and other bad characters were all gathering to listen to him; and the Pharisees and the doctors of the law began grumbling among themselves. "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15: 1-2).

We will look first at the Prodigal Son.

We have already observed that this is not a true allegory. It is the story of an earthly father's love for his erring son. But the force of the parable is indeed an analogy - God acts like this.

The parable is too well known to need repeating but it is refreshing to read it again, in the NEB. We notice in this version, "His father ran to meet him, flung his arms around him and kissed him" - "Father, I have sinned, against God and against you; I am no longer fit to be called your son." Here his father cuts him short before he completes his prepared repentance - "Quick, fetch a robe, my best one, and put it on him, put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Bring the fatted calf and kill it and let us have a feast to celebrate the day." And why? Because, "This my son was dead and has come back to life again."

This story, in anticipation, tells us more of the spirit of the Atonement than most of the man-made theories put together in the first two centuries. In its simplicity it tells us God is a God of Love, only too anxious to forgive and provide a new start for a wayward son. He rejoices over one who repents and showers gifts on the undeserving. Nevertheless, let us note that the father did not stop his son going along the road that leads to death but could only sorrow at his departing.

But we have forgotten the elder son - the parable is two-edged - the sting is in the tail. In the audience were also the Lawyers and Pharisees, those respected people apparently doing their duty honestly and righteously, and respecting their God. But they are exposed by this parable. "Contrast" - says Jesus, "the greatness of God's love for his lost children with your own joyless, loveless, thoughtless, and self-righteous lives. Cease then, from your loveless ways and be merciful. The spiritually dead are rising to a new life, the lost are returning home, rejoice with them."

It would be easy for us to pass over this parable with the thought, "Thank God we are not like the Pharisees", but to our shame we find we are dealt the "coup de grace" by yet another parable - The Lost Sheep. It behoves us, therefore, to examine our lives with care. Who are the "Prodigal Sons?" Or, in the other parable the "Lost Sheep?" What is our attitude to them? Or even - could we be a prodigal son? If we are honest there is much "prodigal-sonship" in all of us. Let us thank God he still loves us.

The twin parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin are closely related to the Prodigal Son, and in Luke's "Good News" precede this parable and were presumably addressed to the same audience - "The people", including Jesus' opponents, the Pharisees and Lawyers. In Matthew it is in a different setting, it is addressed to the disciples.

"What do you think? Suppose a man has a hundred sheep. If one of these strays, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the one that strayed? And if he should find it, I tell you this he is more delighted over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that never strayed. In the same way, it is not your heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should be lost." (Matt 18:12-14).

How beautiful the analogy. At the time this would be a medium sized flock tended by the shepherd-owner with loving care. He counts the flock into the fold but finds one missing - the activity of God's love!

The context in Matthew we note is associated with "Never despise one of these little ones..." (Matt 18:10). "And search diligently for an erring brother - If your brother commits a sin, go and take the matter up with him strictly between yourselves..." (Matt 18:15-...).

In the Lukan context, however, it is given in answer to the question "Why do you welcome sinners and eat with them?" (Luke 15:2): implying that no godly man would do that. The answer of Jesus - "As a shepherd rejoices over a lost sheep so God rejoices over a repentant sinner because He can forgive."

The differences between Luke and Matthew are small. Luke adding that the shepherd lifts the lost sheep on his shoulders and calls the neighbours together to rejoice with him. In this particular it parallels the Lost Coin.

Because of the differences one might conclude that the parable of the Lost Sheep was told on two different occasions but Jeremias points out that once the Church had been established there was a great need of exhortatory material for the instruction of the Christian community. How suitable this parable is for this purpose if interpreted as Matthew records.

The Lost Coin The coin referred to in this parable is the Greek drachma. Coins were used to bedeck the head-dress of a woman and formed a part of her dowry. A drachma was of similar value to the Roman denarius - a labourer's wage for a day - so it implies a humble woman. She lights a lamp not because it is night but because the low door of her simple dwelling lets in little light. These delicate touches of the Master show how he entered into the lives of these humble, simple people. She sweeps the house so that she may hear the coin tinkle on the stone floor. She so prizes the recovery that she invites her neighbours to share her joy in a little celebration.

Jesus says, "God is like this and so am I, that is why I mix with sinners." It is easy to miss the force of this point in

these three parables which, in their context of justifying Christ's action to sinners, imply clearly that he is acting as God does and what is more knows what God is like. This goes a long way towards acknowledging Messiahship.

In this section, Jeremias puts the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1-15). Let us read this parable preferably from the NEB and try to dismiss any pre-conceived ideas. A good start in interpretation is to determine where lies the emphasis or focus of the parable. We shall probably feel that it is found in the unusual practice of the employer paying each labourer the same money despite the different amounts of work they have done - an apparent injustice. Looking deeper, we should then probably decide, as it is stated that the parable is about the Kingdom, that it is eschatological, namely, all will get an equal reward at the last day - eternal life. It is probable that Matthew used this parable for just this purpose. It is an illustration in answer to Peter's previous enquiry (Matt 19:27). "We have left everything to become your followers. What will there be for us? Jesus answers - "Eternal Life" - "But many who are first shall be last, and the last first." The parable finishes with the same words.

This explanation has considerable value in giving us the belief of the inspired evangelist told by means of an interpretation of a parable of Jesus. But was it the purpose for which Jesus originally composed this story? Jeremias thinks not.* These are his reasons. Firstly, he point out that the conclusion "The first shall be last and the last first" is not a logical deduction from the story - namely that they all received equal pay. The fact that the last were paid first, is relatively unimportant - all got the same. The reason for this order is apparent - so that the first should be aware of the fact that they all had the same. The phrase "first - last" fits more happily where it is in Luke 13:30. Namely, of those admitted to the Kingdom, many that think they should be first will be last and vice versa. Jeremias suggests that in its original setting the phrase was not there and invites us to take a look at the story again. The parable then ends with the question, "Why be jealous because I am kind?" Let us have another look at the story. A good landowner went out between 8 and 9 am., and hired labourers to work in the vineyard, presumbly to gather grapes and agreed

* The Parables of Jesus, Revised Ed. 1963 S.C.M. Press.

with them the usual day's wage of a denarius. At mid-day and at 3 pm, while passing through the market he saw others idle and invited them to join the workers in the vineyard saying he would pay them a fair wage. Finally, an hour before sunset he found another group standing idly, no doubt gossiping in oriental fashion, who, on enquiry, said "No one had hired us" - probably an excuse. Nevertheless, as there must have been plenty to do, the good landowner told them they could also go and work in the vineyard.

When evening came he told his steward to pay them all equally - a full day's wage. In his kindness he provided each with sufficient to take home for their respective families. What was the reaction? Much as we should find today either on a farm or in a factory. In colloquial language - "Let's see the boss!" and without any formal address such as "Sir." Instead "What are you up to? We have done much more than the last and in addition it was in the blazing sun." In contrast comes the owner's reply - "My friend I am not being unfair to you. You agreed to the usual pay for the day ... If I choose to pay the last man the same as you, surely I am free to do what I like with my own money. Why be jealous because I am kind?"

The message of this story is - "God is like this with us poor sinners" and he expects us to act with similar generosity of spirit. This is what life should be like in the Realm of God now. The labourers, who were engaged last, had done nothing to warrant a full day's wage; that they received it was entirely due to the goodness of their employer. Here lies the difference between the two Worlds : the World of merit and the World of grace : the law and the gospel.

We see that like the Prodigal Son this parable is two-edged. It teaches the goodness and love of God and also the harshness and selfishness of man.

These points are, to Jeremias, sufficient to demonstrate that there has been a diversion of its use and a change of audience suggested by Matthew. It was originally, says Jeremias, addressed as a reply to The crowd including the carping Pharisees justifying his actions in befriending the despised. Whether Jeremias' interpretation is the original one or not, there is no doubt that his interpretation conveys a poignant message and is certainly true of the type of story that Jesus told.

TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGY OF MORAL LAW

by Arthur Gibson.

The following paper was delivered and discussed at the Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity's Seminar on "Christian Ethics" held in Jesus College on 2 December, 1970. The writer has been asked to analyse John A.T. Robinson's ethical theory of "rule" and situation ethics' notion of rule and circumstance. (The paper has been shortened and simplified for publication).

Ruling Circumstance.

John Robinson asserts⁽¹⁾ that, the Christian command of love holds the status of law and rule: maintaining that, "apart from this there are no unbreakable rules." Enlarging upon this the ethical situationist, such as Fletcher, states, "Christianly speaking ... the norm or measure by which any thought or action is to be judged a success or failure, i.e., right or wrong, is love"⁽²⁾. It is here apparent that love is regarded as a principle unit line measure of right and wrong (I am placing aside the equation of success with right and failure with wrong, as it is incidental to the present examination; though deviant logics would be required to fix the differentia of this relation.) One experiences difficulty in conceiving precisely of an emotion that is the ruling measure of arbitration on values of right and wrong - having, as Robinson and Fletcher claim, no exceptions⁽³⁾. In applying this concept within the context of situation ethics, Fletcher uses some words of Professor Emmet⁽⁴⁾ - "A judgement as to what is right has to be made in a situation and a situation is comprised of facts seen as bounded and related to human interests, problems or attitudes ... ". In addition, Hare is appealed to in an attempt to demonstrate that justification⁽⁵⁾ of the principle or rule of love in the situation is possible.

Quantification in Moral Law.

Hare argues that moral judgements share the feature of universalizability with descriptive judgements: if it is claimed

of a thing that it possesses a given characteristic, say, red, Hare observes that the person who so asserts is committed to an affirmation that of anything which shares such a quality it can truly be said of all such instances that they possess the given characteristic. Hence, descriptive judgements (e.g. "This is red") entail the universal quantifiability of a class of objects thus denoted (i.e. : "This object is red, therefore all objects identical to it are red"). Hare claims that this state of affairs is paralleled in the arena of moral assertion, such, that moral judgements are universalizable. His evidence is that moral judgements embody descriptive meaning as do descriptive expressions. This is manifestly false, for the descriptive meaning in a moral assertion is used to illustrate values imposed by interpretation of a circumstance, not to act as a logical substantive conditional to describe an existent in the situation. That is to say, such a thesis would not inform one, that if a person judged the expression of love in adultery as wrong in principle, what index the person was using to measure the seeming moral values encased and displayed in the act. Hare's analogy with descriptive judgement only holds (it can easily be shown by expressing his argument in First Order Predicate Calculus) to demonstrate that such a critical observer once having judged adultery wrong, is committed to deeming all the class of cases of adultery, as wrong. (In saying this, I have, of course been charitable in turning a blind eye to the fallacy of Hare's logic just mentioned; if one chooses to let his argument operate with the fallacy, then he has proved nothing.) Thus, the situationist has misunderstood Hare in thinking that a criterion for measuring right or wrong has been supplied; and in addition I have shown that there exists a major defect in Hare's correlation of description of circumstance with moral judgements, which effectively prevents Hare's notion being useful. Paradoxically, though, the example of adultery shows that even given the situationist view as tenable, here is an instance of the expression of love, in adultery, as being wrong. Therefore, when Robinson maintains love is the only unbreakable rule, coupled with his claim that sincerity may render an expression of love as right⁽⁶⁾, he has provided an exception to violate and so falsify his and the situationist's thesis of there being only one principle of universal status in moral law. According to their view, there is none if one follows the actual consequence of their assertions and examples. It might be added that apart from this the situationists have taken Hare's view from its context, for he

observes that he does not conceive of any moral principles as existing antecedently, as a rule of prescription for a circumstance; contrary to Robinson's and Fletcher's regarding the rule of love as the moral antecedent. Here again, one has an example, far too typical, of theologians content only to use either bad philosophy or doctored philosophy in their chase from Biblical theology to the vogue modernity.

Ontology of Law.

Lifting Robinson's and Fletcher's principle hypothesis out of their use of Hare's descriptive technique, one may detect an appeal to something analogous to experimental observation-instances in the formulation and construction of a scientific law. Although a comparison of scientific law with the law of love in their status may be unlikely, it may be thought their ontological status is analogous.

A random series of observation instances of the recurrences of the same event, provide the data for the formulation of a law which can support counterfactual and conditional statements about potential future instances of the same phenomena (7). Similarly, it could be argued, situation ethics' advocates attempt to construct a law by abstracting observation instances of circumstantial experience. It will be argued that this is impossible and reveals an impasse for Robinson's law of love.

Laws of science are descriptive; moral laws are prescriptive. (I am now taking, of course, the general account accepted among scientists and philosophers of the nature of scientific law and moral law. In fact, at a more specific level, I think that there exists evidence for a causal account of scientific law that gives way to a prescriptive picture of scientific law; but this shall not effect the logic of the discovery-procedure for either types of law.) Thus, scientific law will have antecedent occurrences but moral law may not for the existence of prescription supposes a time before objects of prescription were subject. (Robinson cannot counter this with a claim from authoritative Biblical revelation as being the source of prescription, for factually he accepts no such account.) Hence, the existence of a moral law requires justification before it can be illustrated, for it is not subjunctive nor counterfactual; and so only enjoys the status

(that is, without the verifying influence of theistic revelation which Robinson is not willing to give it) of an accidental generalisation. Nor could any appeal to a quasi-Humean natural necessity be made for a support for a law of love, because the absence of constant conjunction by prescription is all too clear. And the direction of the analogy would be one of appeal to an advisable state, not the existence of already proved relations based on an actual law.

Conclusion.

The foregoing comparison of scientific law with moral law may be unexpected, yet the outcome suggests that the moral law of love in Robinson's conception does not share the status of scientific law in any sense; and the lack of similarity - given the absence of other verifying means in his thesis - reduces the law of love in Robinson's and the situationists' epistemological world-view to a mere existential fiction. Other approaches, without revelational bases, to the establishment of moral law, like recently revised forms of the emotive theory, give of even less Proof than Robinson's. But they, together with Robinson, invest their law of love with the authoritative power status of a scientific law; but we have seen any attempt at comparison collapses inwardly. In any case it would become a contradiction in terms for volitional emotion to act as the dictate-imperative of the way things ought to be!

Robinson, like many theologians who have divested themselves of the need to admit revelation from God to their conceptual framework, has imprisoned the law of love within his own epistemological framework; because of this, his account and the situationists' notion that love is the rule for measuring right and wrong, commits suicide. Namely, such a principle needs to be vested with a fundamentalist assertion about Biblical inspiration for it to be able to bear the authority status which it logically requires to dictate and adjudicate the values of right and wrong that Robinson claims for it. And Robinson, together with contemporary theologians who follow him, does not concede any such form of Biblical authority. Even if a revelational premise was admitted by Robinson, immediately the epistemological claims within the premise (i.e. content of the New Testament) would counter the principle of a law of love measuring line; for while love is

regarded as the substratum of New Testament ethics its application is realised in application of other principles which pertain in subject matter to that that they govern. But the theologians under consideration will have none of this, as their aim is to establish - as with the aims of the Faculty's "Christian Ethics" Seminar series - a Christian ethic without reference to Biblical revelation. The foregoing preliminary remarks have shown this to be a contradiction in terms which falsifies its own foundation as it erects itself. Unintentionally, but appropriately, Robinson said "There is no such thing as a Christian ethic"⁽⁸⁾. In sum: mathematical logic and linguistic theory can be used, I believe, to develop and support the Christian ethics of the New Testament; but, because of the peculiar ideological consensus and teleological orientation of its ethical theory, the Christian ethics become a self-falsifying hypothesis when stripped of its revelation origin and (so) authority. Therefore, it may be safely said, if the earlier analysis is correct, that the aim of these seminars is doomed to failure, building as it is on sand.

- (1) ROBINSON (John A.T.)

Christian Freedom in a Permissive Society SCM Press, 1970.
pp.1 - 51 and 16.

- (2) FLETCHER (J.)

Situation Ethics SCM Press, 1966. p.43ff.

- (3) OUTKA (G.A.) and RAMSEY (P.) (Eds)

Norm and Context in Christian Ethics SCM Press, 1969
p.402ff.

- (4) See ⁽³⁾ p.329.

(7) Hempel (C.G.) -

- (5) See ⁽³⁾ p.355ff.

Philosophy of Natural Sciences p.57

- (6) ROBINSON (John A.T.)

(8) See 1, page 13.

Honest to God SCM Press, 1963 on "The New Morality" and more generally, See ⁽¹⁾ pp.14 - 15.

JESUS AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES:
THE DISCIPLES.

by John Sealey.

Into the attitude of the authorities towards Jesus there came a change. A hardening of suspicions. A deepening of the suspicion that Jesus was an imposter, and therefore a blasphemer.

In the case of the disciples there was also a change: a much bigger one. In their case it was a revolution, a metanoia, a change of mind, a repentance.

We can follow this change in the study of four words. They are: belief, doubt, disillusionment, and again, belief. I have chosen these four phrases to express the "metanoia" - the change in the feeling of the disciples throughout the three years or more they were with Jesus. There was belief; when the disciples first followed him. Although Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, does not speak of his Messiahship until just before the Transfiguration, John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, knew exactly what he was doing when he showed, right at the beginning of his Gospel, that Jesus was the Messiah. John records Andrew saying "We have found the Messiah." We knew what John, with hindsight, knew about this word. The question is, what did Andrew mean when he used it? To some people, this difference between Mark and John has been a problem, even a contradiction. But two things ought to be remembered. In the first place we grossly underestimate John's ability as an author if we think he simply ignored the silence of Mark whom he had undoubtedly read. In the second place, we too glibly think that Andrew meant what we mean by the word "Messiah", whereas it is my contention that Andrew, along with the other disciples, did not. The disciples at this time just did not know what they were talking about! This can clear up a textual problem that has evaded solution for too long. There need be no conflict between John and Mark. Mark's history is admittedly ambiguous, whereas John has discovered for us a strand of credible emotion in the disciples. Emotion with which he is clearly out of sympathy, as we shall now see.

What was this "Messiah" that Andrew so enthusiastically announced? There is a clue a few verses later. Nathaniel says "Thou art

the king of Israel " This is what the first belief of the disciples was based upon - a king. A warrior-monarch from the family of David who would take up the sword, crush the enemies of the Jews, and reign in Jerusalem, the world's capital.

But however wrong this idea was, for that time, Jesus does not contradict them. There had to be a starting point which his very human followers could grasp. This was it. Belief in a physical warrior-king that half the Old Testament prophecies spoke about.

But does Jesus confirm it? Look again at his reply to Nathaniel, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these. " "Greater things ...", what greater things? What could be greater than "The Son of God", "The king of Israel"? Therefore right at the very beginning of his leadership - even in John's gospel - Jesus directs their attention to something different, to something far more astounding than the traditional ideas of Messiahship shared by most Jews.

Yet, to his followers, it seemed that Jesus was confirming their suppositions. It is said, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" and something very much like that was said by Philip to Nathaniel, "Come and see." What was it that Nathaniel had to see, to believe? Like the disciples he had to see the Teacher, he had to hear what the Teacher taught and see the fruits of that teaching. A parallel situation is found when John the Baptist sent to Jesus from prison (Luke 7. 19-23). Both Nathaniel and John the Baptist had their belief confirmed.

Every hope that the disciples had in common with the rest of Jewry seemed to be confirmed by the way Jesus acted and even more by what he said and the way he said it. But their belief only seemed to be confirmed. Because he was so devious and so deep, there must have been in their minds, as time progressed, a growing, though unanalysed, doubt about him. A mystery that was very soon to deepen, literally, beyond belief.

But for the moment the important thing remained, and that was their faith. At the end of Jesus's first miracle, it is recorded "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of

Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed in him." Jesus knew that however bent their faith was, it had to be preserved. How well it was written of him "a bruised reed shall he not break." But faith in what? The confirmed thought uppermost in their minds was current Messianism. The real and deeper faith that Jesus was intent on strengthening was faith in him - as a person - not as an idea.

Judas must always be regarded as an exception. But in this early period I think it would be misleading to imagine that there was a fundamental difference of motive and belief between Judas and the other disciples. If we attribute to Judas the hope of an immediate, physical restoration of Israel's kingdom in which he wished to be a key figure judging one of Israel's tribes, I believe we would be unjust to him if we did not attribute the same wordly hopes to the eleven. Judas was no different. He was "one of us". He is the "type" of that which lives with every one of us, in part of our lives. He is "the evil that we would not" but still practice (Rom.7).

Hope and belief there certainly was among these disciples, but the Master Carpenter had to use such lavish skill in re-shaping it that, in its final form, most Jews - like Judas - failed to recognize it.

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For two years their beliefs and hopes were held in abeyance. They were busy assimilating the mind and ways of Jesus. Storing in their memories the actions and words they only half understood. Towards the end of the ministry their doubts became more evident.

The Gospel of John gives us a good example of this period of doubt. "Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said "This is a hard saying: who can listen to it?" But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offence at this?" (Jn 6. 60-61). And if anyone is inclined to answer "But that doubt did not exist for Peter at least; look at his reply to Jesus in verse 69, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'". I would say this reply is a little too glib: Peter protests too much: he seems to doubt his own knowledge.

Both on this occasion and in the parallel at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus, far from congratulating Peter on his superior knowledge, seems to say, "What you are saying is perfectly correct but you do not understand what you are saying". The parallel is to be found in Mark 8. 29-30.

In John, Jesus is saying "Very good, Peter, but you do realize don't you that you could be my murderer?" And in Mark, Jesus is saying to the twelve, "Well spoken. But don't bandy it about, because with your present notions of the word "Messiah" you are most likely to misrepresent me."

Doubt can be an emotion rather than a measurable thought. I suggest that even where there is acknowledgement, there is doubt. Mark 8 adds nothing to John 1 where Jesus is recognized as the Messiah on sight. Jesus's whole manner from the beginning had seemed to confirm their beliefs. But there was nothing concrete: no direct statement. Their belief was based on a big, black void, which they did not recognize, but which must have disturbed them emotionally.

It seems to be that Peter really meant what he said - "Lord, to whom shall we go?" He had detected the enigma in Jesus's life and teaching and had seriously considered - as had John the Baptist - whether Jesus truly was "the one who was to come", yet even in his conviction that Jesus was the true Messiah, Peter still remained ignorant of his Master's real personality and message.

This was the stone at which many people stumbled. "We know the carpenter, the son of Mary" we can almost hear them say, "but who is this man?" The only immediate result of this so-called revelation of Peter and the acknowledgement of Jesus, was to intensify the doubt that I have suggested was forming in their minds. This doubt can be seen progressing as far back as Mark 4.41. It becomes unfathomable for the disciples after Mark 8.32.

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Three times in a short while Jesus crushes the highest of their hopes; Mark 8. 31; 9. 31 and 10. 33-34. From this moment the despair of disillusionment begins to descend on them.

It is no coincidence that, immediately after their great profession of faith in Christ, Jesus rebukes them in very strong language for having so little faith that they failed to heal the deaf and dumb boy. "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" I think there is a pattern here. Having seen that their belief in him as a person is quite firm (however misguided), he now has the task of re-educating them.

From the heights of Hermon, and the tremendous spiritual experience of the Transfiguration, the disciples now have to descend to the abyss of disillusionment. The pattern begins then, with failure. A failure that must have brought them back to earth with a jerk. It continues with yet another rebuke. "They had disputed one with another in the way, who was the greatest." And Jesus has to show them the way of humility by using the example of a little child. There is considerable significance in this story. Jesus has recently spoken of his rejection, when they only had visions of his glory. Now, when they can still see their own importance, Jesus speaks of their humiliation, "If any man would be first, he shall be last of all." If they had been disillusioned on hearing of his humiliation, how much more when Jesus speaks of theirs!

Their disillusionment continues as Jesus teaches about the rich in the Kingdom of God. On this occasion they were "astonished". Equating riches with greatness because their expectations (though beginning to be rudely shaken) were still on a very physical level, they had little hope of grasping his true meaning and hence their bewilderment and further disillusionment. "They were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, 'Who then can be saved?'" The same disturbing warning of Jesus results from the question of James and John that they might be given chief places in the kingdom of God. "The greatest shall be servant of all."

There is an interesting detail in this last story which ought not to be missed. "And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John." Why were the ten indignant? Was it because they understood Jesus's teaching on humiliation? Not a bit! They were indignant simply because

James and John were "jumping the gun." They hoped for precisely the same as James and John. The only difference was that they considered the claim of James and John to be premature. The teaching Jesus gave to them as a result of this incident, we may safely assume he gave to them all. All needed to be disillusioned.

Only Judas had the courage of his convictions. The rest, by the time of the Last Supper, were quite confused and bewildered. Not Judas. For him the veil of mystery was lifted. The situation is too uncertain for us to be able to say that Judas knew what Jesus had in mind. On the other hand, I think he was more certain about Jesus than was anyone else at the time.

Like the man who started to build a tower but was not able to finish it, passing through the phases of belief, doubt and disillusionment like the others, Judas stopped short at disillusion. Judas was disillusioned when the others were both disillusioned and confused. Judas was not confused. "I hoped it was he which should redeem Israel" thought Judas (if I may misappropriate a nobler situation). "Now I believe he will not. It's time I left the sinking ship." "And he went out; and it was night," John cryptically records.

I suppose the nadir of the disciples' disillusionment came at the arrest of Jesus. Here, they were forced to realize the truth of Jesus's intentions. "And they all forsook him and fled." What bitterness, what disappointment and despair they felt on that occasion is put into words by the two on the road to Emmaeus, words which I paraphrased in the mouth of Judas; "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel...".

Editorial continued

anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world, the old world has gone, and a new order has already begun" (2 Cor 5:17 NEB). This new world, which has another dimension is a spiritual world. The only law here is to love one another. In this world the citizens are concerned for one another and for others who are not in this world. Christ is the King. The Life is to know Jesus and to become like him.

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