

Paper 159 — The Decapolis Tour

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Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

Sources for Paper 159, in the order in which they appear

- (1) George Adam Smith, D.D., LL.D., Litt.D., *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915)

Note: This source is coded **AHGHL**.

- (2) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest Dewitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904, 1932)

- (3) David Smith, M.A., D.D., *Our Lord's Earthly Life* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925)

Note: This source is coded **Smith2**.

- (4) Leslie D. **Weatherhead**, M.A., *Jesus and Ourselves: A sequel to 'The Transforming Friendship'* (London: The Epworth Press, 1930)

- (5) Rev. Alfred **Edersheim**, M.A.Oxon, D.D., Ph.D., *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Volume One) (New York: Longman, Green, & Co., Eighth Edition, Revised, 1899)

- (6) Benjamin Willard **Robinson**, Ph.D., *The Sayings of Jesus: Their Background and Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.

- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable. The highlights are tentative.)

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22 June 2015

Work-in-progress Version 12 Nov. 2013

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Revised 6 Jan. 2014 and 22 June 2015

PAPER 159 — THE DECAPOLIS TOUR

159:0.1 When Jesus and the twelve arrived at Magadan Park, they found awaiting them a group of almost one hundred evangelists and disciples, including the women's corps, and they were ready immediately to begin the teaching and preaching tour of the cities of the Decapolis.

159:0.2 On this Thursday morning, August 18, the Master called his followers together and directed that each of the apostles should associate himself with one of the twelve evangelists, and that with others of the evangelists they should go out in twelve groups to labor in the cities and villages of the Decapolis. The women's corps and others of the disciples he directed to remain with him. Jesus allotted four weeks to this tour, instructing his followers to return to Magadan not later than Friday, September 16. He promised to visit them often during this time.

In the course of this month these twelve groups labored in

MAP 21, MAP 25, MAP 26, MAP 42
(AHGHL)

Gerasa, Gamala, Hippos, Zaphon, Gadara, Abila, Edrei, Philadelphia, Heshbon, Dium, Scythopolis, and many other cities.

Throughout this tour no miracles of healing or other extraordinary events occurred.

1. THE SERMON ON FORGIVENESS

XXIII: IN CAPERNAUM AGAIN (4
Harmony of the Gospels 122)

§81. DISCOURSE ON HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS. Matt. Chap. 18. Mark 9:33-50. [Luke 15:4-7.]

<p>Matt. 18:12 How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray,</p>	<p>159:1.1 One evening at Hippos, in answer to a disciple's question, Jesus taught the lesson on forgiveness. Said the Master:</p>
<p>doth he not leave the ninety and nine,</p>	<p>159:1.2 "If a kindhearted man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray,</p>
<p>and go into the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray?</p>	<p>does he not immediately leave the ninety and nine</p>
<p>[Luke 15:4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?</p>	<p>and go out in search of the one that has gone astray?</p>
<p>5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.</p>	<p>And if he is a good shepherd, will he not</p>
<p>6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them,</p>	<p>keep up his quest for the lost sheep until he finds it?</p>
<p>Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.</p>	<p>And then, when the shepherd has found his lost sheep, he lays it over his shoulder and, going home rejoicing,</p>
<p>7 I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,</p>	<p>calls to his friends and neighbors,</p>
	<p>'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'</p>
	<p>I declare that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents</p>

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.]

than over ninety and nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Matt. 18:14 Even so it is not the will of your [ERV mg.: Some ancient authorities read *my*] Father who is in heaven,

Even so, it is not the will of my Father in heaven

that one of these little ones should perish.

that one of these little ones should go astray, much less that they should perish.

In your religion God may receive repentant sinners; in the gospel of the kingdom the Father goes forth to find them even before they have seriously thought of repentance.

159:1.3 “The Father in heaven loves his children, and therefore should you learn to love one another; the Father in heaven forgives you your sins; therefore should you learn to forgive one another.

15 And if thy brother sin against thee, go, shew him his fault

If your brother sins against you, go to him and with tact and patience show him his fault.

between thee and him alone:

And do all this between you and him alone.

if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

If he will listen to you, then have you won your brother.

16 But if he hear *thee* not,

But if your brother will not hear you,

if he persists in the error of his way, go again to him,

take with thee one or two more,

taking with you one or two mutual friends

that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.

that you may thus have two or even three witnesses to confirm your testimony

and establish the fact that you have dealt justly and mercifully with your offending brother.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

17 And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church [ERV mg.: Or, *congregation*]:

Now if he refuses to hear your brethren, you may tell the whole story to the congregation,

and if he refuse to hear the church [ERV mg.: Or, *congregation*] also,

and then, if he refuses to hear the brotherhood,

let them take such action as they deem wise;

let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

let such an unruly member become an outcast from the kingdom.

While you cannot pretend to sit in judgment on the souls of your fellows, and while you may not forgive sins or otherwise presume to usurp the prerogatives of the **supervisors of the heavenly hosts**, at the same time, it has been committed to your hands that you should maintain temporal order in the kingdom on earth. While you may not meddle with the divine decrees concerning eternal life, you shall determine the issues of conduct as they concern the temporal welfare of the brotherhood on earth.

And so, in all these matters connected with the discipline of the brotherhood,

18 Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

whatsoever you shall decree on earth shall be recognized in heaven.

Although you cannot determine the eternal fate of the individual, you may legislate regarding the conduct of the group,

19 Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask,

for, where two or three of you agree concerning any of these things and ask of me,

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven.

it shall be done for you

if your petition is not inconsistent with the will of my Father in heaven.

And all this is ever true,

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

for, where two or three believers are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.”

159:1.4 Simon Peter was the apostle in charge of the workers at Hippos, and when he heard Jesus thus speak,

Then came Peter, and said to him,

he asked:

Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times?

“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?”

22 Jesus saith unto him,

And Jesus answered Peter:

I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven [ERV mg.: Or, *seventy times and seven*].

“Not only seven times but even to seventy times and seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king,

Therefore may the kingdom of heaven be likened to a certain king

who would make a reckoning with his servants.

who ordered a financial reckoning with his stewards.

24 And when he had begun to reckon,

And when they had begun to conduct this examination of accounts,

one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

one of his chief retainers was brought before him confessing that he owed his king ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not *wherewith* to pay,

his lord commanded him to be sold,

[The king was indignant and, after the irresponsible manner of an oriental potentate, not only confiscated the rascal's property but doomed himself and his wife and children to be sold as slaves (Smith² 229).]

and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him,

saying,

Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion,

released him,

and forgave him the debt [ERV mg.: Gr. *loan*].

Now this officer of the king's court pleaded that hard times had come upon him,

and that he did not have wherewith to pay this obligation.

And so the king commanded that his property be confiscated,

and that his children be sold to pay his debt.

When this chief steward heard this stern decree,

he fell down on his face before the king

and implored him to have mercy and grant him more time,

saying,

'Lord, have a little more patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

And when the king looked upon this negligent servant and his family,

he was moved with compassion.

He ordered that he should be released,

and that the loan should be wholly forgiven.

	159:1.5 “And this chief steward, having thus received mercy and forgiveness at the hands of the king, went about his business,
28 But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence [ARV. txt.: shillings]	and finding one of his subordinate stewards who owed him a mere hundred denarii ,
[Hardly had he left the court when he encountered another officer of the royal household who owed him the paltry debt of an hundred <i>denarii</i> —some £3, 10s. ... (Smith2 230).]	
and he laid hold on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay what thou owest.	he laid hold upon him and, taking him by the throat, said, ‘Pay me all you owe.’
29 So his fellow-servant fell down and besought him, saying,	And then did this fellow steward fall down before the chief steward and, beseeching him, said:
Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.	‘Only have patience with me, and I will presently be able to pay you.’
30 And he would not:	But the chief steward would not show mercy to his fellow steward
but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay that which was due.	but rather had him cast in prison until he should pay his debt.
31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceeding sorry,	When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were so distressed that
and came and told unto their lord all that was done.	they went and told their lord and master, the king.
	When the king heard of the doings of his chief steward,
32 Then his lord called him unto him, and saith to him,	he called this ungrateful and unforgiving man before him and said:
Thou wicked servant,	‘You are a wicked and unworthy steward.
I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me:	When you sought for compassion, I freely forgave you your entire debt.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

33 shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?

Why did you not also show mercy to your fellow steward, even as I showed mercy to you?’

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors,

And the king was so very angry that he delivered his ungrateful chief steward to the jailers

till he should pay all that was due.

that they might hold him until he had paid all that was due.

35 So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.

And even so shall my heavenly Father

show the more abundant mercy to those who freely show mercy to their fellows.

How can you come to God asking consideration for your shortcomings when you are wont to chastise your brethren for being guilty of these same human frailties?

I say to all of you:

[Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give (Matt. 10:8).]

Freely you have received the good things of the kingdom; therefore freely give to your fellows on earth.”

BACK IN GALILEE (Smith2 221)

159:1.6 Thus did Jesus teach the dangers and illustrate the unfairness of sitting in personal judgment upon one’s fellows. Discipline must be maintained, justice must be administered, but in all these matters the wisdom of the brotherhood should prevail. Jesus invested legislative and judicial authority in the *group*, not in the *individual*.

Here, in the first place, He confirms the authority which at Cæsarea He had conferred upon His Apostles and all who after them should be ordained to rule the community of the faithful. And, in the second place, He reminds them of its limitation: It was not a **personal authority**:

it belonged to them as representatives of the holy community, and no individual judgment was valid unless corroborated by conference and consent.

Where one sits alone in judgment, his verdict may be **warped by prejudice** or **passion**;

but where several take prayerful counsel, **personal bias** is **eliminated** and their common judgment accords with the will of God (S2 228).

The reference here is to that ancient story of primæval savagery in the Book of Genesis—how **Tubal-cain**, the first worker with metals, learned the art of fashioning deadly weapons; and his father **Lamech**, a descendant of Cain, the first murderer, **exulted** in the advantage which his son's invention afforded him over his enemies.

Even this investment of authority in the group must not be exercised as **personal authority**.

There is always danger that the verdict of an individual may be **warped by prejudice** or distorted by **passion**.

Group judgment is more likely to remove the dangers and **eliminate** the unfairness of **personal bias**.

Jesus sought always to minimize the elements of unfairness, retaliation, and vengeance.

159:1.7 [The use of the term seventy-seven as an illustration of mercy and forbearance was derived from the Scriptures referring to

Lamech's exultation because of the metal weapons of his son **Tubal-Cain**,

who, comparing these superior instruments with those of his enemies,

“If,” he cried, “Cain, with no weapon in his hand, was avenged seven times, I shall now be avenged seventy-seven” (S2 229).

exclaimed: “If Cain, with no weapon in his hand, was avenged seven times, I shall now be avenged seventy-seven.”]

2. THE STRANGE PREACHER

XXIII: IN CAPERNAUM AGAIN (4
Harmony of the Gospels 122)

§81. DISCOURSE ON HUMILITY AND FORGIVENESS. Matt. Chap. 18. Mark 9:33-50. [Luke 15:4-7.]

Mark 9:38 John said unto him, Master,

we saw one casting out devils **in thy name:**

and we forbade him, because he followed not us.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not:

159:2.1 Jesus went over to Gamala to visit John and those who worked with him at that place. That evening, after the session of questions and answers,

John said to Jesus: “Master,

yesterday I went over to Ashtaroth to see a man who was teaching **in your name**

and even claiming to be able to cast out devils.

Now this fellow had never been with us, neither does he follow after us;

therefore I forbade him to do such things.”

Then said Jesus: “Forbid him not.

Do you not perceive that this gospel of the kingdom shall presently be proclaimed in all the world? How can you expect that all who will believe the gospel shall be subject to your direction? Rejoice that already our teaching has begun to manifest itself beyond the bounds of our personal influence.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name,

and be able quickly to speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us is for us.

41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

BACK IN GALILEE (Smith2 221)

It was a common proverb; and there was a companion proverb which our Lord quoted on another occasion:

“He who is not with me is against me” (S2 224).

[Compare S 225.]

Do you not see, John, that

those who profess to do great works in my name

must eventually support our cause?

They certainly will not be quick to speak evil of me.

My son, in matters of this sort it would be better for you to reckon that

he who is not against us is for us.

In the generations to come many who are not wholly worthy will do many strange things in my name, but I will not forbid them.

I tell you that,

even when a cup of cold water is given to a thirsty soul,

the Father's messengers shall ever make record of such a service of love.”

159:2.2 This instruction greatly perplexed John.

Had he not heard the Master say,

“He who is not with me is against me”?

And he did not perceive that in this case Jesus was referring to man's personal relation to the spiritual teachings of the kingdom,

[And what of the maxim which our Lord quotes here: "One who is not against us is for us?" It is a pithy rebuke of partisanship in politics and sectarianism in religion; and it is the complement of the other proverb and quite as needful for us to lay to heart.... There have always been and always will be diverse opinions on ecclesiastical **administration** and doctrinal definition; and no man is an heretic who loves the Lord and seeks His honour (S2 225-26).]

[*Note:* The account of the strange preacher appears only in Mark and Luke, not in John.]

while in the other case reference was made to the outward and far-flung social relations of believers regarding the questions of **administrative** control and the jurisdiction of one group of believers over the work of other groups which would eventually compose the forthcoming world-wide brotherhood.

159:2.3 But John oftentimes recounted this experience in connection with his subsequent labors in behalf of the kingdom.

Nevertheless, many times did the apostles take offense at those who made bold to teach in the Master's name. To them it always seemed inappropriate that those who had never sat at Jesus' feet should dare to teach in his name.

159:2.4 This man whom John forbade to teach and work in Jesus' name did not heed the apostle's injunction. He went right on with his efforts and raised up a considerable company of believers at Kanata before going on into Mesopotamia. This man, Aden, had been led to believe in Jesus through the testimony of the demented man whom Jesus healed near Kheresa, and who so confidently believed that the supposed evil spirits which the Master cast out of him entered the herd of swine and rushed them headlong over the cliff to their destruction.

3. INSTRUCTION FOR TEACHERS AND BELIEVERS

159:3.1 At Edrei, where Thomas and his associates labored, Jesus spent a day and a night and, in the course of the evening's discussion, gave expression to the principles which should guide those who preach truth, and which should activate all who teach the gospel of the kingdom. Summarized and restated in modern phraseology, Jesus taught:

I: JESUS' RESPECT FOR OUR PERSONALITY (Weatherhead 27)

[contd] There are at least four ways in which one man can impose his will on another.... Let us see how Christ regarded these four methods.

First of all, think of physical power. Jesus must have been in touch with resources of physical power which no one else could tap.... Yet the striking thing is that, out of respect for man's personality, Jesus will not try to win even a righteous cause by force (W 27-28).

159:3.2 Always respect the personality of man.

Never should a righteous cause be promoted by force;

spiritual victories can be won only by spiritual power.

Turn, secondly, to the method we call personal **psychic force**. Think to what a degree Jesus possessed this!... Are we surprised to hear one man say to Him, 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest'? We are not surprised at that, but it is with tremendous appreciation that one notices the way in which Jesus deliberately stands away from men, as it were, in order that they may not be persuaded merely by the magnetism of His personality, hypnotized into decision (W 29-30).

Turn, thirdly, to the method of **mental superiority**. How easy it would have been for Jesus to take an attitude expressed in the words of those who say to us, 'Well, I know better than you do.' Might He not have brought to bear on His followers such an enormous weight of evidence that they would have been mentally unable to acquiesce in anything else but His will, or in any other way but His way?

It is most impressive to notice that Jesus **never crushed men's minds by the sheer weight of argument**, which they had no trained faculty to disentangle or coordinate with the rest of their mental background (W 31).

Consider, fourthly, the method of appealing to **emotion**... Jesus used emotion again and again. Surely one cannot read His words without being stirred to the very depths. It seems to me that the point is that He never asked a man to make a **decision** while his personality was swept by emotional force (W 32).

This injunction against the employment of material influences refers to **psychic force** as well as to physical force.

Overpowering **arguments** and **mental superiority** are not to be employed to coerce men and women into the kingdom.

Man's mind is not to be crushed by the mere weight of logic or overawed by shrewd eloquence.

While **emotion** as a factor in human **decisions** cannot be wholly eliminated,

it should not be directly appealed to in the teachings of those who would advance the cause of the kingdom.

Make your appeals directly to the divine spirit that dwells within the minds of men.

He used emotion—for instance, He spoke words which kindled fear as no other words can kindle that emotion—but, out of a divine respect for human personality, He never pressed for decision while emotion was at its height, nor coerced a submission by an appeal to admiration, or pity, or fear (W 33).

Do not appeal to fear, pity, or mere sentiment.

In appealing to men, be fair; exercise self-control and exhibit due restraint; show proper respect for the personalities of your pupils.

If He lifted so much as a little finger, our paltry defences would go down in ruins, but, because of this tremendous respect for our personality, which reveals the eternal restraint of God, this great Lover of the soul will never be its burglar, but will wait on the threshold until we ourselves rise and let Him in. ‘Behold,’ He says, ‘I stand at the door and knock’ (W 35).

Remember that I have said: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any man will open, I will come in.”

II: JESUS’ CONCERN FOR OUR SELF-RESPECT (Weatherhead 39)

159:3.3 In bringing men into the kingdom, do not lessen or destroy their self-respect.

Rightly or wrongly, I conceive self-respect to be belief in one’s own worth—worth to God and worth to man. It may, of course, abnormally develop until it becomes pride, conceit, or arrogance;

While overmuch self-respect may destroy proper humility and end in pride, conceit, and arrogance,

or it may be minimized, making a man slack, careless, and shabby in character as in dress (W 39).

the loss of self-respect often ends in paralysis of the will.

‘The first thing to be done to help a man to moral regeneration,’ says Macdougall, the great psychologist, ‘is to restore if possible his self-respect’ (W 39).

[And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matt. 23:12).]

If you are bound constantly to rebuke a child for one fault which he often commits, do praise him for other qualities which he possesses (W 43).

Jesus will stop at nothing to give a man back his self-respect (W 41).

But it is so easy to wound a person’s self-respect, and again and again I have seen a timid soul shrink right inside his shell because there was a feeling of inability to meet the thrusts of a quicker mind. Jesus was very careful in this not to wound men’s self-respect.

He was never sarcastic at the expense of simple-minded people (W 42).

The danger of unemployment, from a religious and psychological point of view, lies here. It tends to undermine a man’s self-respect (W 45).

It is the purpose of this gospel to

restore self-respect to those who have lost it

and to restrain it in those who have it.

Make not the mistake of only condemning the wrongs in the lives of your pupils;

remember also to accord generous recognition for the most praiseworthy things in their lives.

I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it,

and who really desire to regain it.

159:3.4 Take care that you do not wound the self-respect of timid and fearful souls.

Do not indulge in sarcasm at the expense of my simple-minded brethren.

Be not cynical with my fear-ridden children.

Idleness is destructive of self-respect;

[Compare W 45.]

therefore, admonish your brethren ever to keep busy at their chosen tasks, and put forth every effort to secure work for those who find themselves without employment.

159:3.5 Never be guilty of such unworthy tactics as endeavoring to

We shall always be God's children, and He will guard our self-respect. We shall not be frightened into submission either in heaven or on earth (W 48).

frighten men and women into the kingdom.

A loving father does not frighten his children into yielding obedience to his just requirements.

III: JESUS AND OUR TEMPTATIONS (Weatherhead 53)

159:3.6 Sometime the children of the kingdom will realize that strong feelings of emotion are not equivalent to

The first thing to notice is that the Jew could not leave God out of anything that happened or out of any process of the mind.... Where we should simply say, 'He went into the wilderness,' they would say, 'The Spirit led Him into the wilderness.' Where we should say of a man that he decided to leave home and live in another land—decided it, possibly, in response to ... some mighty urge within him, pressing him far beyond the limits of common sense, prudence, or reason—they would say, though the mental processes might be the same, 'The Lord spake unto him saying, "Get thee from thy kindred . . . into a land that I will show thee"' (W 54).

the leadings of the divine spirit.

To be strongly and strangely impressed to do something or to go to a certain place, does not necessarily mean that such impulses are the leadings of the **indwelling spirit**.

V: JESUS AND OUR CONFLICTING HUNGERS (Weatherhead 77)

159:3.7 Forewarn all believers regarding

You notice that this invasion [*i.e.*, the dawning realization that one belongs to the Infinite and that the finite can never mean complete happiness] is marked with a sense of unhappiness. The other world in which we have lived is broken up, and for a little while we are between two worlds, and for a time there will be a **succession of conflicts** within the soul.... On Sunday night we really do honestly and sincerely desire God; by Monday night the lure of lower things fills all our world (W 80).

the **fringe of conflict** which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit.

[contd] And that is why some people come to think of religion as not real at all, but as an emotional **fringe** on life. That is also why, I think, so many religious people are miserable.... They are aware of the spiritual world, but also aware of the material world, and they are not quite satisfied that the spiritual world can bring them more happiness than the material world.... In a way, they are not even as happy as the worldling, because the worldling, at any rate, has an undivided mind and is enjoying his pleasure to the full (W 81).

To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion,

but all are doomed to experience more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living.

XI: IS THE WAY OF JESUS EASY?
(Weatherhead 147)

[Compare W 152.]

It is easy enough to [tell people that the way of Jesus is ultimately the easiest and most rewarding way to live], but they have the right to feel that talking is easier than doing, and, though I cannot give them their answer, I believe that Christ can, if they will listen to His voice, a voice that, in spite of our protests that His way is too hard, comes to us down the ages, saying quite clearly and definitely, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light' (W 150).

But there are thousands of wistful, lovable people in our Churches who have never realized that, and if one may say so, they have a 'try' religion instead of a 'power' religion. They are familiar with creeds and phrases; they have heard sermons and lectures; they have read books and pamphlets; they have been to Keswick and Swanwick; and their faces as they walk up the aisle to the Communion table remind me of one of the saddest lines in English poetry, that line of Hardy's in *The Oxen*

Hoping it might be so (W 151).

For years they have fought God to get it, hammered on a door that is open, and sought with burning eyes and weary feet for a treasure

that all the time has been within their reach (W 151).

In entering the kingdom, you cannot escape its responsibilities or avoid its obligations,

but remember: The gospel yoke is easy and the burden of truth is light.

159:3.8 The world is filled with hungry souls who famish in the very presence of the bread of life;

men die searching for the very God who lives within them.

Men seek for the treasures of the kingdom with yearning hearts and weary feet

when they are all within the immediate grasp of living faith.

It is just here that so many people's religion fails and shows itself to be a difficult thing, because of course it is difficult, as Dr. Maltby would say, if we insist on 'carrying the thing that ought to be carrying us,' for, as Samuel Rutherford said, 'Religion ought to be the kind of burden that sails are to a ship, that wings are to a bird,'

an added power rather than an added burden (W 152).

Some people will say to me, 'But does not St. Paul say that the Christian life is a battle? Is not his word "fight the good fight"?' No! His exhortation is 'Fight the good fight of *faith*.'

The only battle is with your doubt that there is a power to be received, a life to be laid hold on; and in the first century the writers of the New Testament could hardly understand why people insisted on making life such a hard thing, in struggling to make both ends meet, like those stricken down with poverty, when within their reach there were the unsearchable riches of Christ (W 153).

One of the reasons why we think following Jesus is so hard is perhaps that we have never clearly realized what the essential thing in Christianity is. In my view it is a transforming friendship with Jesus (W 150).

Faith is to religion what sails are to a ship;

it is an addition of power, not an added burden of life.

There is but one struggle for those who enter the kingdom, and that is to

fight the good fight of faith.

The believer has only one battle, and that is against doubt—unbelief.

159.3.9 In preaching the gospel of the kingdom, you are simply teaching

friendship with God.

XII: IS THE RELIGION OF JESUS
EFFEMINATE? (Weatherhead 165)

Tennyson used to speak of the man-woman in Jesus, and it is one of the glorious facts of our religion that womanhood finds all its ideals realized in Him (W 167).

XIV: THE RELENTLESS LOVE OF
JESUS (Weatherhead 185)

[I am in such danger myself of over-emphasizing the tender and winsome qualities of the Master that I want in this chapter to point out that He is not only a Physician who can use a tender touch, but a Surgeon who can, and may have to use cold steel (W 186).]

So violent is Jesus sometimes, so stern, so austere, so surgical, so insistent on reality, so relentless, so inexorable, that I sometimes wonder whether, when He said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart'—a strange thing to say—it was because He had definitely to tell them that this was His real nature, lest men should gather a wrong impression from the vehemence of some of His words (W 189).

And this fellowship will appeal alike to men and women in that

both will find that which most truly satisfies their characteristic longings and ideals.

Tell my children that I am not only tender of their feelings and patient with their frailties, but that I am also ruthless with sin and intolerant of iniquity.

I am indeed meek and humble in the presence of my Father,

but I am equally and relentlessly inexorable where there is deliberate evil-doing and sinful rebellion against the will of my Father in heaven.

XVI: THE RADIANCE OF JESUS
(Weatherhead 205)

I am not trying to prove that Jesus was a humorist, but trying to correct the picture most of us have of the **Man of Sorrows**, by emphasizing the other side,

in order that we may see running through every part of His life manifestations of a **radiant** spirit, of which a sense of **humour** is one of the signs (W 210).

You remember how fast it spread. That speaks for its radiance. It spread like a glorious infection, not so much taught as caught. It was called a 'gospel,' which means '**good news**,' and it spread with the **infectious power** good news always has (W 215).

The men who exemplified it in their lives were radiant men. They revelled in the **new life** which that good news had brought them.... Life was thrilling with **new meaning**. Life was **throbbing** with new power. All things had become new. They were radiant men teaching a radiant religion (W 215).

159:3.10 You shall not portray your teacher as a **man of sorrows**.

Future generations shall know also

the **radiance** of our joy, the buoyance of our good will, and the inspiration of our good **humor**.

We proclaim a message of **good news** which is **infectious in its transforming power**.

Our religion is **throbbing** with **new life** and **new meanings**.

Those who accept this teaching are filled with joy and in their hearts are constrained to

It was after Paul had been five times flogged, stoned, and three times shipwrecked, that, with one ankle chained to a ring in the wall of his cell and one wrist chained to a Roman sentry, he wrote from a Roman prison, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.' And this spirit has continued through the ages, so that we might fill many pages recalling case after case of radiance (W 215-16).

[Rejoice evermore (1Thes. 5:16).]

Jesus derived His radiance from three sources. (1) He had no sense of sin. (2) He was doing God's will. (3) He was certain of God. [Etc.] (W 218)

XVII: THE SYMPATHY OF JESUS
(Weatherhead 225)

Let us look first at three kinds of false sympathy which Mr. Fearon Halliday has described in his book *Psychology and Religious Experience*.

rejoice evermore.

Increasing happiness is always the experience of all who are

certain about God.

159:3.11 Teach all believers to avoid leaning upon the insecure props of

false sympathy.

You cannot develop strong characters out of the indulgence of self-pity; honestly endeavor to avoid the deceptive influence of

The first is an identification with the sufferer which is neither constructive nor creative, and which perhaps can best be described as 'a fellowship in misery.' ... Very often such a false sympathy includes a subtle form of self-pity, driving both the sufferer and the sympathizer to a morbidity which is disintegrating, pulling the personality down and not building it up (W 225-26).

A second kind of false sympathy is that which is afraid to face the moral issue in the life of the person suffering. All of us know how easy it is, if people complain that they are suffering in any way in mind or body, to assent to the situation because of our love of the easiest way out, even though we can often see that people are lying down to their troubles instead of standing up and facing them (W 226-27).

We therefore come to see that a good deal of what passes as sympathy is really self-pity, a love of the easy way in which the moral issue is shirked, or a pretence of sympathy in order to win the sympathy of another (W 230).

XVIII: THE PRESENCE OF JESUS
(Weatherhead 243)

mere fellowship in misery.

Extend sympathy to the brave and courageous while you withhold overmuch pity from those cowardly souls who only halfheartedly stand up before the trials of living.

Offer not consolation to those who lie down before their troubles without a struggle.

Sympathize not with your fellows merely that they may sympathize with you in return.

159:3.12 When my children once become self-conscious of the assurance of the divine presence,

such a faith will expand the mind,
ennoble the soul,

How, then, was His presence manifested to them after He had carried them beyond the need of vision and voice? I suggest that it was manifested in four ways: ...

(1) An inward **reinforcement of the personality**. I mean by this an inward strengthening which made a man feel that he could face any situation that might arise, *certain* of coming out on top, certain that nothing could happen which had any power to down his spirit (W 249)

(2) A transcendent **happiness**; a kind of infectious gaiety of spirit which others caught from those who knew His presence in their hearts (W 250).

(3) A **deep serenity of spirit**. What is more needed in these days of hectic rush than that inward peace, the only thing Christ left in His will, and which is one of the marks of his Presence? (W 250-51)

(4) An outgoing **love**. The presence of Jesus meant, and means, a love that goes out to all men, to our critics and enemies, not merely loving the lovable, not only seeing what is lovable, but, seeking no reward, a love which is creative enough to *make* something lovable in all men; a love which changes coldness, bitterness, and cynicism into warmth and sweetness and radiance (W 251).

Now Jesus never said or implied that religion was an insurance from **catastrophe**.... Jesus never said or implied to His followers that His presence would mean **immunity** from disaster, nor does He promise this to us (W 253).

reinforce the personality,

augment the **happiness,**

deepen the spirit perception,

and enhance the power to **love** and be loved.

159:3.13 Teach all believers that those who enter the kingdom are not thereby

rendered **immune** to the accidents of time or to the ordinary **catastrophes** of nature.

[footnote] Cf. Dr. W. R. Maltby: 'In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promised His disciples three things—that they would be entirely fearless, absurdly happy, and that they would **get into trouble.**

They did get into trouble, and found, to their surprise, that they were **not afraid.** They were absurdly happy, for they laughed over their own troubles, and only cried over other people's' (*Christ and Human Need*, p. 196) (W 253n).

Jesus does not say, 'I will **deliver you from the waters,**'

but something infinitely greater—'When you pass through the waters I shall **be there too**' (W 254).

Believing the gospel will not prevent **getting into trouble,**

but it will insure that you shall be **unafraid** when trouble does overtake you.

If you dare to believe in me and wholeheartedly proceed to follow after me, you shall most certainly by so doing enter upon the sure pathway to trouble.

I do not promise to **deliver you from the waters** of adversity,

but I do promise to **go with you** through all of them.

159:3.14 And much more did Jesus teach this group of believers before they made ready for the night's sleep. And they who heard these sayings treasured them in their hearts and did often recite them for the edification of the apostles and disciples who were not present when they were spoken.

4. THE TALK WITH NATHANIEL

159:4.1 And then went Jesus over to Abila, where Nathaniel and his associates labored. Nathaniel was much bothered by some of Jesus' pronouncements which seemed to detract from the authority of the recognized Hebrew scriptures. Accordingly, on this night, after the usual period of questions and answers, Nathaniel took Jesus away from the others and asked: "Master, could you trust me to know the truth about the Scriptures?"

[See 159:5.1, below.]

I observe that you teach us only a portion of the sacred writings—the best as I view it—

and I infer that you reject the teachings of the rabbis to the effect that the words of the law are the very words of God,

[The Torah had really existed 2,000 years before Creation; the patriarchs had had their Academies of study, and they had known and observed all the ordinances; and traditionalism had the same origin, both as to time and authority, as the Law itself (Edersheim 85).]

having been with God in heaven even before the times of Abraham and Moses.

What is the truth about the Scriptures?"

When Jesus heard the question of his bewildered apostle, he answered:

159:4.2 "Nathaniel, you have rightly judged; I do not regard the Scriptures as do the rabbis. I will talk with you about this matter on condition that you do not relate these things to your brethren, who are not all prepared to receive this teaching.

The words of the law of Moses and the teachings of the Scriptures were not in existence before Abraham. Only in recent times have the Scriptures been gathered together as we now have them. While they contain the best of the higher thoughts and longings of the Jewish people, they also contain much that is far from being representative of the character and teachings of the Father in heaven; wherefore must I choose from among the better teachings those truths which are to be gleaned for the gospel of the kingdom.

[Compare: *The Bible is not a book but a library; the product not of one mind and age but of many minds and many ages; the record not of the fixed but of the progressive revelation of God; designed not to teach history or science but morals and religion; whose inspiration is not verbal but personal; and whose authority rests not upon tradition, infallibility, or churchly sanction but upon its own intrinsic value as the supreme religious literature of the world* (Henry Kendall Booth, *The Background of the Bible: A Handbook of Biblical Introduction* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928], p. xii).]

159:4.3 “These writings are the work of men, some of them holy men, others not so holy. The teachings of these books represent the views and extent of enlightenment of the times in which they had their origin. As a revelation of truth, the last are more dependable than the first. The Scriptures are faulty and altogether human in origin, but mistake not, they do constitute the best collection of religious wisdom and spiritual truth to be found in all the world at this time.

159:4.4 “Many of these books were not written by the persons whose names they bear, but that in no way detracts from the value of the truths which they contain. If the story of Jonah should not be a fact, even if Jonah had never lived, still would the profound truth of this narrative, the love of God for Nineveh and the so-called heathen, be none the less precious in the eyes of all those who love their fellow men.

[See 130:1.2.]

The Scriptures are sacred because they present the thoughts and acts of men who were searching for God, and who in these writings left on record their highest concepts of righteousness, truth, and holiness. The Scriptures contain much that is true, very much, but in the light of your present teaching, you know that these writings also contain much that is misrepresentative of the Father in heaven, the loving God I have come to reveal to all the worlds.

159:4.5 “Nathaniel, never permit yourself for one moment to believe the Scripture records which tell you that the God of love directed your forefathers to go forth in battle to slay all their enemies—men, women, and children. Such records are the words of men, not very holy men, and they are not the word of God. The Scriptures always have, and always will, reflect the intellectual, moral, and spiritual status of those who create them. Have you not noted that the concepts of Yahweh grow in beauty and glory as the prophets make their records from Samuel to Isaiah? And you should remember that the Scriptures are intended for religious instruction and spiritual guidance. They are not the works of either historians or philosophers.

159:4.6 “The thing most deplorable is not merely this erroneous idea of the absolute perfection of the Scripture record and the infallibility of its teachings, but rather the confusing misinterpretation of these sacred writings by the tradition-enslaved scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem.

And now will they employ both the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and their misinterpretations thereof in their determined effort to withstand these newer teachings of the gospel of the kingdom. Nathaniel, never forget, the Father does not limit the revelation of truth to any one generation or to any one people. Many earnest seekers after the truth have been, and will continue to be, confused and disheartened by these doctrines of the perfection of the Scriptures.

159:4.7 “The authority of truth is the very spirit that indwells its living manifestations, and not the dead words of the less illuminated and supposedly inspired men of another generation. And even if these holy men of old lived inspired and spirit-filled lives, that does not mean that their *words* were similarly spiritually inspired. Today we make no record of the teachings of this gospel of the kingdom lest, when I have gone, you speedily become divided up into sundry groups of truth contenders as a result of the diversity of your interpretation of my teachings. For this generation it is best that we live these truths while we shun the making of records.

159:4.8 “Mark you well my words, Nathaniel, nothing which human nature has touched can be regarded as infallible. Through the mind of man divine truth may indeed shine forth, but always of relative purity and partial divinity. The creature may crave infallibility, but only the **Creators** possess it.

159:4.9 “But the greatest error of the teaching about the Scriptures is the doctrine of their being sealed books of mystery and wisdom which only the wise minds of the nation dare to interpret. The revelations of divine truth are not sealed except by human ignorance, bigotry, and narrow-minded intolerance. The light of the Scriptures is only dimmed by prejudice and darkened by superstition. A false fear of sacredness has prevented religion from being safeguarded by common sense. The fear of the authority of the sacred writings of the past effectively prevents the honest souls of today from accepting the new light of the gospel, the light which these very God-knowing men of another generation so intensely longed to see.

159:4.10 “But the saddest feature of all is the fact that some of the teachers of the sanctity of this traditionalism know this very truth. They more or less fully understand these limitations of Scripture, but they are moral cowards, intellectually dishonest. They know the truth regarding the sacred writings, but they prefer to withhold such disturbing facts from the people. And thus do they pervert and distort the Scriptures, making them the guide to slavish details of the daily life and an authority in things nonspiritual instead of appealing to the sacred writings as the repository of the moral wisdom, religious inspiration, and the spiritual teaching of the God-knowing men of other generations.”

159:4.11 Nathaniel was enlightened, and shocked, by the Master's pronouncement. He long pondered this talk in the depths of his soul, but he told no man concerning this conference until after Jesus' ascension; and even then he feared to impart the full story of the Master's instruction.

5. THE POSITIVE NATURE OF JESUS' RELIGION

XIV: THE INNER DYNAMIC OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS (Robinson 223)

HIS GENIUS IN SELECTING THE BEST (Robinson 223)

159:5.1 At Philadelphia, where James was working, Jesus taught the disciples about the positive nature of the gospel of the kingdom. When, in the course of his remarks, he intimated that some parts of the Scripture were more truth-containing than others and admonished his hearers to feed their souls upon the best of the spiritual food, James interrupted the Master, asking: "Would you be good enough, Master, to suggest to us how we may choose the better passages from the Scriptures for our personal edification?" And Jesus replied: "Yes, James, when you read the Scriptures look for those eternally true and divinely beautiful teachings, such as:

Create in me a clean heart (Psa. 51:10) (R 223).

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (Psa. 23:1) (R 223).

[contd] Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. 19:18) (R 223).

159:5.2 "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord.

159:5.3 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

159:5.4 "You should love your neighbor as yourself.

159:5.5 “For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying, fear not; I will help you.

Neither shall they learn war any more (Isa. 2:4) (R 223).

159:5.6 “Neither shall the nations learn war any more.”

159:5.7 And this is illustrative of the way Jesus, day by day, appropriated the cream of the Hebrew scriptures for the instruction of his followers and for inclusion in the teachings of the new gospel of the kingdom.

Other peoples were telling of the nearness of God. Epictetus taught that we are “fragments of God.” Stoicism held to a belief in the close kinship of God and man.

Other religions had suggested the thought of the nearness of God to man,

This religious truth that God is our father, however, Jesus made a corner stone of his religion (R 223).

but Jesus made the care of God for man like the solicitude of a loving father for the welfare of his dependent children and then made this teaching the cornerstone of his religion.

The brotherhood of man is a corollary of the fatherhood of God (R 224).

And thus did the doctrine of the fatherhood of God make imperative the practice of the brotherhood of man.

The two complementary teachings of the love of God and the love of man make up what is usually regarded as the essence of his religion (R 224).

The worship of God and the service of man became the sum and substance of his religion.

Jesus took the best of the Jewish religion and translated it to a worthy setting in the new teachings of the gospel of the kingdom.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 159

THE DYNAMIC QUALITY WHICH HE IMPARTED (Robinson 226)

159:5.8 Jesus put the spirit of positive action into the passive doctrines of the Jewish religion.

His instructions are not in the realm of temple service or ceremonial observances or of avoiding of certain sins,

In the place of negative compliance with ceremonial requirements,

but are injunctions to positive conduct and action (R 226).

Jesus enjoined the positive doing of that which his new religion required of those who accepted it.

Jesus' religion consisted not merely in *believing*, but in actually *doing*, those things which the gospel required.

[contd] This does not mean that Jesus found the essence of religion in social service.

He did not teach that the essence of his religion consisted in social service,

It means rather that Jesus taught that social service is the surest way to find God the Father and to enter into fellowship with the eternal spirit of love.... True religion, for Jesus, is the finding of eternal values and the attainment of the higher life, through service to our fellows (R 226-27).

but rather that social service was one of the certain effects of the possession of the spirit of true religion.

EARLY HEBREW MORALITY (Robinson 227)

159:5.9 Jesus did not hesitate to appropriate the better half of a Scripture while he repudiated the lesser portion.

Even that greatest of the Old Testament Commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18),

His great exhortation, "Love your neighbor as yourself,"

cannot be separated from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs,

he took from the Scripture which reads:

“Thou shalt not take vengeance against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (R 227).

“You shall not take vengeance against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus appropriated the positive portion of this Scripture while rejecting the negative part.

The same principle holds in his revision of the Old Testament law, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Matt. 5:38). I tell you, says Jesus, do not strike back or demand retribution. Nor should you be merely negatively non-resistant.

He even opposed negative or purely passive nonresistance.

But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek,

Said he: “When an enemy smites you on one cheek,

do not stand there dumb and passive

turn the other cheek to him.

but in positive attitude turn the other;

that is, do the best thing possible actively to lead your brother in error away from the evil paths into the better ways of righteous living.”

The thought of Jesus is perfectly clear. He will not allow his disciples to strike back, or to demand an eye for an eye. Nor will he allow his disciples to suffer injury and do nothing about it; such a procedure is too negative. Jesus’ religion is positive. A man must express himself vigorously and actively.

Jesus required his followers to react positively and aggressively to every life situation.

The turning of the other cheek is not easy. It demands initiative

The turning of the other cheek, or whatever act that may typify, demands initiative,

and may develop personality (R 228).

necessitates vigorous, active, and courageous expression of the believer’s personality.

159:5.10 Jesus did not advocate the practice of **negative** submission to the indignities of those who might purposely seek to impose upon the practitioners of nonresistance to evil, but rather that his followers should be wise and alert in the quick and positive reaction of good to evil to the end that they might effectively

Instead of saying, Do not hate your enemies, he told men to use the fire of their nature in doing good to those who persecute. **“Overcome evil with good”** (Rom. 12:21) (R 228).

overcome evil with good.

Forget not, the truly good is invariably more powerful than the most malignant evil.

JESUS’ **STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**
(Robinson 229)

The Master taught a positive **standard of righteousness:**

[contd] **“Anyone who wishes to be my disciple will renounce self, take up his cross daily and follow me”** (Lk. 9:23) (R 229).

“Whosoever wishes to be my disciple, let him disregard himself and take up the full measure of his responsibilities daily to follow me.”

Jesus of Nazareth . . . **went about doing good** and curing all who were under the power of the devil (Acts 10:38) (R 230).

And he so lived himself in that **“he went about doing good.”**

[See R 230-31.]

And this aspect of the gospel was well illustrated by many parables which he later spoke to his followers.

He never exhorted his followers patiently to bear their obligations but rather with energy and enthusiasm to live up to the full measure of their human responsibilities and divine privileges in the kingdom of God.

Again, some disciple would say to Jesus, Master, a man **took away my coat**. How can I do anything for him? Jesus' answer was clear, Give him your other coat (Lk. 6:29) (R 232).

It is not the particular action which concerns Jesus so much as the constant care which any human soul should exercise that it does not become a **passive sufferer of wrong or injustice**.

There are **three ways** of meeting the evil things of life.

One way is to **return evil for evil**.

The second is to **suffer without complaint**.

The third is to **return good for evil**,

to assert the will and become master of any situation, through doing some act which makes necessary the expression of initiative (R 232).

159:5.11 When Jesus instructed his apostles that they should, when one unjustly **took away the coat**, offer the other garment,

he referred not so much to a literal second coat as to the idea of doing something *positive* to save the wrongdoer in the place of the olden advice to retaliate—“an eye for an eye” and so on.

Jesus abhorred the idea either of retaliation or of

becoming just a **passive sufferer or victim of injustice**.

On this occasion he taught them the **three ways** of contending with, and resisting, evil:

159:5.12 1. To **return evil for evil**—

the positive but unrighteous method.

159:5.13 2. To **suffer evil without complaint** and without resistance—

the purely negative method.

159:5.14 3. To **return good for evil**,

to assert the will so as to become master of the situation,

to overcome evil with good—the positive and righteous method.

[contd] What should I do, another disciple might ask Jesus, if a man forces me to carry his pack for a mile?

Jesus' answer was positive and definite:

Do not just set it down, breathe a sigh of relief and escape. You will not please God in that way.

If there is nothing else you can do, you can at least offer to carry the pack a second mile (Matt. 5:41) (R 232).

THE DYNAMIC QUALITY INHERENT IN ALL PARTS OF JESUS' RELIGION (Robinson 237)

The Old Testament, to be sure, often mentions God's mercy toward those who have transgressed, but his mercy is that of a father who tries to forgive and forget.

The glory of the Christian religion is that it pictures God as starting out in search of the sinner,

to find him and befriend him and bring him back home (R 238). [See also R 237-38.]

159:5.15 One of the apostles once asked:

"Master, what should I do if a stranger forced me to carry his pack for a mile?"

Jesus answered:

"Do not sit down and sigh for relief

while you berate the stranger under your breath.

Righteousness comes not from such passive attitudes.

If you can think of nothing more effectively positive to do, you can at least carry the pack a second mile.

That will of a certainty challenge the unrighteous and ungodly stranger."

159:5.16 The Jews had heard of a God

who would forgive repentant sinners and try to forget their misdeeds,

but not until Jesus came, did men hear about a God

who went in search of lost sheep, who took the initiative in looking for sinners,

and who rejoiced when he found them willing to return to the Father's house.

Likewise, **prayer** takes on a positive note.... Prayer, which in the old day was largely an uttering of petitions for blessings, became in the religion of Jesus, a giving of the soul to the will of God (R 240).

The **Golden Rule**, says Scott, "is found in the literature of various ancient peoples, but always in the negative form. . . . The new element in the Gospel precept lies in its positiveness" (*Ethical Teaching*, p. 20) (R 239).

XV: THE FORCEFUL QUALITY OF HIS EXPRESSIONS (Robinson 243)

EXCLUSION OF NON-CONTRIBUTING DETAILS (Robinson 248)

[contd] Another element of power in Jesus' illustrations is the exclusion of **non-contributing details** (R 248).

It has been said that the story of the prodigal son is an elaborated and ornamental narrative. The real fact is that many details of fanciful imagination are carefully excluded. Isaiah 55:2; 44:22; Proverbs 29:3, Isaiah 61:10, Zech. 3:2-5, and other references are suggestive of the **flowery language** which Jesus might have used (R 249).

Another instance of the exclusion of all **merely** poetic material is found in what Jesus says to his disciples at the Last Supper. In very simple language he likens the outpoured wine to his own shed blood. Jesus did not attempt such **poetic imagery** as did the writer of Ecclesiastes 12, making no mention of the loosing of the silver cord, or the breaking of the golden bowl or of the pitcher at the fountain, or of the wheel at the cistern (R 249).

This positive note in religion Jesus extended even to his **prayers**.

And he converted the negative **golden rule** into a positive admonition of human fairness.

159:5.17 In all his teaching Jesus unflinching avoided **distracting details**.

He shunned **flowery language**

and avoided the **mere poetic imagery** of a play upon words.

And where in all literature is a story to be found which has **larger meaning**, yet is condensed into such a short compass, as the parable of the lost sheep? For contrast, it is only necessary to turn to such a passage as Ezekiel 34:11-31 (R 250).

He habitually put **large meanings** into small expressions.

EFFECTIVE REVERSAL OF PREVIOUS FIGURATIVE USAGE (Robinson 251)

A fifth element of power in Jesus' sayings is the effective **reversal** of the previous usage of striking words.

For purposes of illustration Jesus **reversed** the current meanings of many terms,

"Salt" had been used in a bad sense, not only by the Jews, but by Semitic people in general, as shown by Assyrian inscriptions and other sources....

such as **salt**,

When Jesus called his disciples "salt" the remark must have started and perhaps offended them (R 252).

"Leaven" also was generally used in a bad sense figuratively.... The disciples must have done some acute thinking when Jesus told them that the kingdom of Heaven itself is like leaven (R 252).

leaven,

"Fishing" had been used very widely and unfortunately, as applied to the catching of men. [Etc.] (R 252)

fishing,

Perhaps the most interesting instance of Jesus' reversal of the ordinary sense of an illustration is noted in his references to infants and **children**. [Etc.] (R 252)

and little **children**.

JESUS' USE OF ANTITHESES (Robinson 253)

[contd] "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail" (Lk. 16:17).

"You blind guides who strain out a gnat and swallow the camel" (Matt. 23:24).

"Consider the lilies. . . . Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Lk. 12:27).

"We weep and you do not weep; you do not weep and you do not weep" (Lk. 7:32) (R 253).

[contd] A sixth feature of Jesus' power lies in his use of **antitheses**.

He contrasts the **minute with the infinite**. The sweep of heaven and earth is set against the microscopic "tittle," the dotting of an "i" to distinguish between one letter and another.

Ten thousand talents, or ten million dollars, is a large sum to set over against a little debt of a hundred "pence," or a hundred shillings. The gnat is contrasted with the heavy bulk of the ungainly camel. [Etc.] (R 253)

COMBINATION (Robinson 255)

A further way in which Jesus secures the power in his sayings is by a combination of figures and **pictures**. The combination is not a mere collecting of two or more separate items, but is a remarkable fusion and blending (R 256).

Perhaps the best remembered of Jesus' combinations of this sort is that of the blind guides.... The blind guide is a frequent reference in the Old Testament (Isa. 56:10; 42:19; 42:16; 6.10), but the intense brevity and power of Jesus' picture of **one blind man trying to lead another blind comrade** is apparent to everyone (R 257).

He most effectively employed the **antithesis**,

comparing the **minute to the infinite**

and so on.

His **pictures** were striking,

such as, **"The blind leading the blind."**

NATURALNESS (Robinson 257)

The ninth element of power in Jesus' sayings may be designated as **naturalness**. The more Jesus' words are compared with those of the Old Testament or of other religious writings, the more clearly the fact stands out that his teaching kept close to the natural and the probable (R 258).

Socrates brought philosophy **down from heaven to earth**. Jesus' sayings did the same for religion (R 260).

[FINAL SECTION] (Robinson 261)

In all these respects the sayings of Jesus attained a power which carried them into the hearts of his listeners. He used words and illustrations from Old Testament Scripture and other existing sources. The subjects about which he taught were also familiar: the character of God, the way of salvation, the nature of true righteousness; but Jesus stated these **elemental needs of the soul** with new clearness and power (R 261-62).

But the greatest strength to be found in his illustrative teaching was its **naturalness**.

Jesus brought the philosophy of religion **from heaven down to earth**.

He portrayed the **elemental needs of the soul** with a new insight and a new bestowal of affection.

6. THE RETURN TO MAGADAN

159:6.1 The mission of four weeks in the Decapolis was moderately successful. Hundreds of souls were received into the kingdom, and the apostles and evangelists had a valuable experience in carrying on their work without the inspiration of the immediate personal presence of Jesus.

159:6.2 On Friday, September 16, the entire corps of workers assembled by prearrangement at Magadan Park.

On the Sabbath day a council of more than one hundred believers was held at which the future plans for extending the work of the kingdom were fully considered. The messengers of David were present and made reports concerning the welfare of the believers throughout Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and adjoining districts.

159:6.3 Few of Jesus' followers at this time fully appreciated the great value of the services of the messenger corps. Not only did the messengers keep the believers throughout Palestine in touch with each other and with Jesus and the apostles, but during these dark days they also served as collectors of funds, not only for the sustenance of Jesus and his associates, but also for the support of the families of the twelve apostles and the twelve evangelists.

159:6.4 About this time Abner moved his base of operations from Hebron to Bethlehem, and this latter place was also the headquarters in Judea for David's messengers. David maintained an overnight relay messenger service between Jerusalem and Bethsaida. These runners left Jerusalem each evening, relaying at Sychar and Scythopolis, arriving in Bethsaida by breakfast time the next morning.

159:6.5 Jesus and his associates now prepared to take a week's rest before they made ready to start upon the last epoch of their labors in behalf of the kingdom. This was their last rest, for the Perea mission developed into a campaign of preaching and teaching which extended right on down to the time of their arrival at Jerusalem and of the enactment of the closing episodes of Jesus' earth career.