HOMILETICAL HINTS FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.*

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It would be a sad oversight for a Christian preacher to omit the study of Christ's great sermon, as a sermon. It is not enough to take the substance of his teaching. The truth was, indeed, most important: and, coming from his personality, it was charged with a power unusual in religious discourse. But, after admitting his divinity, after granting it was truth that he uttered, we have yet to consider its intellectual form.

Only those who saw and heard him could, in full measure, feel the magnetic force of his personality. Imagination may help: it cannot reproduce the personal presence. But, next to that, we do have a wide range of choices as to the elements and qualities of speech through which he sought to make impression on his hearers.

The joining of words is a disclosure of purpose and method: much more so, the dovetailing of sentences, the relative use of reason, imagination and plain statement, the balancing of appeal to acknowledged authority and to conscience, the proportion and blending of light and dark shading of thought, the degree of emotional stir pulsing through the whole, the variety of treatment marked on the one side by reaching down to the familiar objects of every-day life, and on the other by a soaring away to the ideal.

These reveal rhetorical choices of a Master Speaker, preeminently our Master.

Before considering these choices, I wish to notice three objections which may be urged against such a treatment of the Sermon on the Mount.

1. It is said that this is not one sermon, but a collection of striking sentences from many.

Matthew represents it as one. At the beginning, we read: "he went up into the mountain, and, when he had sat down, he opened his mouth and taught them, saying ——." At the close, we read: "when Jesus had ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching."

Evidently we have not the whole discourse, but a faithful sketch of it. We have the various elements which combined to produce the vivid impression made on Matthew's mind.

It need not be claimed that all homiletical elements are found here any more than it need be insisted upon that this sermon contains all there is in the Gospel. That would be far from the truth. And, yet, fragment though it may be, in Christian preaching it should have all the inspirational value of a torso of a fine Greek statue in the realm of art. Suggestively it reveals the living principles of the realm.

2. It may be further urged that Christ spoke nineteen centuries ago; that his audience was in Asia, not America; and he who forgets the difference between the eastern and the western mind lacks the very first qualification of an intelligent critic.

To this it may be replied that, while Christ was the Child of the Nazarene Mary, he grew to show himself, not exclusively a Jew, but preeminently the Son of Man. He incarnated himself in human nature. The light that he brought with him was that which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, whether in the western or the eastern continent. He came with a love of the race in his heart, with an idea of the race in his mind. And it is to be remembered that heart and mind, working through personality in the act of expression, determine a man's style. It is not shut up to mere external, linguistic accidents or grammatical technicalities. "The style is the man." Christ's style was the style of the Son of Man, revealing the fundamental, everlasting qualities which belong to human discourse. In conduct, he was an example. Why not in public address?

After all, there is not the difference between men in different ages and climes that we sometimes think. No two are precisely alike in the same town: and no two, separated by a continent or a thousand years, are essentially unlike. All

deep minds find their thinking coming up from a common human nature. Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, belong to one brotherhood: David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Job, belong there also. They all go deep enough to find thought musical and their poetry goes singing through the ages. Surely Jesus is no less cosmopolitan. John takes pains to tell us in one place that Christ knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man. Beneath the Jewish countenance he saw the human soul. "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as the Christian is?" Jesus spoke to the deeper nature of his Jewish audience and, therefore, to the ages.

3. Again, it may be said, this is only one sermon: there were many others: and they may be very unlike this. Indeed, this seems to be a general, introductory address on "the nature and requirements of the Messianic reign." It is so inclusive as to be rather exceptional than a model.

Granted that it is general, introductory, and one among a multitude which differ from it in certain particulars: still, the fact remains that this is one of the two or three sermons given to us in anything like an approach to completeness. These are what the Bible furnishes. Every individual masterpiece reveals method and quality, and therefore calls for closest scrutiny. To master one of the longer poems of Tennyson is to get into the rhythmic sweep of his orbit.

Let us now try to get into the homiletical sweep of the Sermon on the Mount.

I. One does not read far before he feels himself in a spiritual atmosphere. The intellectual activity, expressed in the sentences, is not all. It is activity serving truth so utterly for the good of souls, and feeling the Divine presence so vividly that it brings with it the atmosphere in which the thinking was wrought.

There is such a thing as atmosphere in homiletical work. It is antecedent to all: it envelops and conditions every minutest growth: gives fashion, tone and color to sentence, word and metaphor as climate does to forest, field and meadow. A ser-

mon is to be not simply an oration dealing with a religious theme. It is to be the utterance of a man who comes before his fellow-men, not with God's truth upon his lips as a rehearser, but with God's breath blowing upon his soul as his prophet. No minor tones or cant phrases or frequent interspersing of ejaculatory prayer or pious pantomime can take the place. These are tricks. The preacher must realize that he has been standing in the midst of eternal truth: that he has visions of the actual state of man, his dangers and possibilities, his Yosemite heights and his Yosemite gorges: that he stands where he does, with a message, because he has been near enough to God to hear him say, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." A preacher who lives and works in that atmosphere will take it with him to the pulpit.

II. The Sermon opens with beatitude and promise.

There were dark things to come: deep thrusts, sorrowful unveilings, a merciless disentangling of motives, pictures of catastrophe; but when he opened his lips first to announce himself, it was like the opening of heaven at his advent. Then an angel chorus sang of glory, peace, good will. And, so, when he struck the key-note of his message to the race, it was this: "Blessed." Ownership in the kingdom offered to the humble. Comfort standing at the threshold of the mourner. Fulness for the soul's hunger and thirst: a vision of God lifting itself before purity of heart.

There is health and hopefulness of mind in all this magnificently fitting. Christ comes before his hearers, not with the quiver and fear of a temporary agitation, but with the calmness of a soul that has looked both deep and far. He has a clear view of fundamentals, essentials, ultimate issues.

In the midst of all the medley, contradictory, changing phenomena of society, he triumphantly believes that spiritual laws have an eternal right of way. Where final victory shall rest is foregone conclusion. While persecution, even, is venting its malice, he speaks his same calm, hopeful word of blessing. He does not ignore the dark; but he will not allow himself to be overwhelmed by it. He came to bring the dark world light.

That, preeminently, is the preacher's mission. His message is a Gospel. He should, therefore, have that splendid poise of soul in which, no matter what is to follow, his serene calmness can utter its beatitude. Not every sermon should begin in just this fashion, but that spirit should be in the preacher and make itself felt. In some recognizable way he should bring good cheer into his pulpit work, face the people with a promise, strike the sorrowing world joy-foremost. Then, however faithful he is in portraiture of conduct, however keen-edged his sentences are in feeling for the heart, his severity will never take on a morbid tinge nor betray the lurking of despair.

Paul caught this spirit. The Roman prison could not drive it out of him. With chains clanking on his limbs he wrote words that were "half-battles" for the struggling church outside. This fact meets the ghostly demurrer rising in some mind, that Christ was divine, and therefore could speak from larger outlook and with more masterful composure than mere human preachers. The plea, here, is not for excellency in extreme but in high degree. Did not Christ say unto the disciples: "My peace I give upon you: my joy remain in you: your joy be full"?

III. The Sermon grounds itself in fundamental principles.

It faces the actual conditions in the midst of which the listeners are living, but reaches back, for solid ground, to primal laws. Revolutionary as his purpose was, Christ came not to destroy the law or make less of it than the prophets did, but even more: he came to fulfil it. He came to fill it full with his own obedient life, and, in his teaching, to reveal it in its fulness of meaning.

Righteousness is rightness of personal life in the sight of God. The so-called righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was simply a tallying of conduct with the Rabbinic glossary. Christ said there is a law of righteousness which shall stand till heaven and earth pass away. He brought out this eternal law and laid it along side the Pharisee's life and teaching.

There is, therefore, nothing of expediency in the sermon: no mere superficial attempt to formulate external rules and regulations. There is a reaching down to the deepest laws of life. "Only a good tree can bear good fruit."

Old laws are, as it were, dug out and shown to have larger ethical capacity and therefore a wider manifoldness of application. "Thou shalt not kill" has reference not simply to the mortal blow but to murderous anger in the heart, and "Raca" contemptuously spit out from between the lips. Law against adultery is broad enough to reach the question of divorce and sufficiently suggestive in its search for springs of action to find a clew in the lustful eye.

And here is where all true preaching gets its mighty power. It builds on fundamentals: leans back on the ethical substructure of the ages. Eternal law is the dynamic coefficient of this particular man speaking for God at this particular moment. In his sentences there is not only the weight of his individual thinking, but the pressure of the energy of God stored up in the law.

The Christian preacher should cultivate, to the last degree, this power of intuition. And there is need here of intellectual as well as moral insight. They go together. He need not become a reputed metaphysician, a psychologist: indeed, his sermons will fail in power in proportion as they become oversubtle, involved and refined in their handling of themes. But he must have the penetrative glance, a passion for diving into the deeps of truth.

Christ got behind the "least" and the "greatest" commandments to the one, great, living fact of God commanding. He saw it clear as sunlight: "least" and "greatest" both, alike, front man and put him to the test. Has he the spirit of obedience? To him, also, light in the natural world and light in the spiritual reach back to a primal law in which they find their unity. Indeed, the Old Testament and nature are the two volumes from which he is continually citing to which he makes appeal, as they are, both of them, the acknowledged manifestation of God's will, the one throwing light upon the other. In nature he is keen to detect the spiritual thought hidden within the material drapery.

It is not strange, therefore, that his preaching gave to the people a progressive understanding of the truth. He brought forth things both new and old from his treasury: the old, old laws in ever fresh and new applications.

And the preacher of today, knowing the truth in its profundity, will the more readily discover the fact that many separate appearances on the surface come within the scope of one deep law underneath. His preaching will have a searching power against which no heart is proof and a closeness of fit from which there is no appeal.

This leads very naturally to a consideration of the

IV. The Sermon has a personal assertiveness and a directness of personal appeal.

"Verily, I say unto you." One man is speaking to a number of other men. It is personality grappling with other personalities, face to face, in public address.

Insight imparts power. Undoubtedly Christ spoke with a commanding authority peculiar to himself. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies." His divine insight gave him the supreme place. "Never man spake like this man." But his manner of interpreting the old laws threw a flood of light on the method of interpretation. The disciples and all preachers afterward are to walk in that light, and see the truth in the new illumination. Indeed, he made the special promise that the Spirit of truth should come and continue this enlightenment, taking things about which he had begun to speak and showing them more perfectly. Paul afterward declared this to be the case: "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

When the preacher has this penetrative, spiritual insight into fundamentals, his own assurance will enter as a personal, additional value into his sentences. There will not only be the thrill and glow of personal experience, but straight-forward, bold, unflinching, positive assertion. He believes and therefore speaks. He sees a vision and tells just how it looks to him. He hears a message and he gives it. He deals in argument; but not all the time. Often, surcharged with a conviction of the truth, he will strike out from his own personality, repeating the pivotal phrase of Christ himself, "you have heard it spoken in this way, BUT I SAY unto you, it is the reverse." So confident is

he of his truth, that, to his mind, the truth and his personality giving it expression are, at the moment, practically identified as body and spirit.

And, then, there is directness of personal appeal.

Christ said to them: "Ye are the light of the world"; "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men": "If God so clothe the grass of the field which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" He talked to them to win them. Every principle he took up he applied to them. From first to last it was the fitting of the truth to the man. Christ kept his feet firmly planted on the conversational level. His mind soared; but he never lost his standing-place among his hearers. Indeed, there is a comradeship in the relation he holds to them. He brings lofty truth down to their common life: makes them feel it in heart, in home, in society, in their fasting and praying, in their work-day anxiety, in their enduring of opposition: all the while he stands in the midst of them, heart loving them as well as mind thinking for them.

In this sermon, truth is not presented with a view to logical completeness of the treatment, getting the law of its unfolding from itself. It is not a system nor the segment of a system, but an address. There is logic in it, but it is logic serving the present, definite purpose of living discourse. The mind of the preacher, then and there, seeks to get a clinch upon the mind of the listener. That fact, in numberless and nameless ways, gives fashioning touches to the whole sermon.

Thought may be treated as having universal value: it may be considered in and by itself. It may be carved like a statue, painted like a picture, or written into the rhythm of poetry. As such, it may be held off and looked at with critical eye, admired or condemned. It is outside ourselves for external consideration. It has a certain relation to our thinking; but it is thought, pure and simple, disassociated from the life that wrought it. It has attained to independent existence. That is one of the possibilities of thought. There are purposes to serve along this line, of immense value; but it is one remove from the straight line along which life rushes with eager desire

to influence another life through personal presence and the living voice.

When a preacher become so absorbed in his thought, or so engrossed in his own feelings, that his sermon projects itself, not into the pierced heart of the listener, but out into the air, where it can be looked at, as a thing by itself, a theory or a soliloquy, it loses the momentum of directness, the clinch and grapple of life charging life. The process is triangular. The preacher, in one angle, projects his thought into a second angle, while the listener is simply near enough in the third angle to consider the thought in the second, if he cares to. Whereas, speaking is the coming down of one life upon another life through the animated expression of the first life's feeling, thought and will. Such action travels along straight lines.

Life is first. Thought does not think. Life thinks. A true life thinks truth. The truth in its largeness is God's thought. Truth apprehended by man is the thought of God in fragment. Whether in God or man, primarily, truth belongs to life, not life to truth. Therefore truth is always more expressive, has more power, when it is nearest life. A life speaking has the advantage of a book which must be read. I know a genius has that marvelous power by which he seems to communicate something of his personality to his work. Admit the force of this. Still, a preacher should preach like a preacher, and not like a book. He should know, at least in kind, if not in degree, that experience, which Tennyson describes in "The Holy Grail," where Percivale's sister speaks to Galahad:

> ". . . . . and as she spoke
> She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
> Through him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
> On him, and he believed in her belief."

V. The Sermon is marked by a wealth of figurative language. Illustrations abound. At the very beginning he brings in a lighted candle from the home life: midway he introduces the beautiful lily in comparison with Solomon in all his kingly glory: and, at the last, he builds two houses, then sends a storm upon them and leaves the listeners looking on the stability of the one and the wreck of the other. The sermon is charged through

and through with this illustrative tendency. Arguments are mostly arguments from analogy. The figures used are not for ornamentation. He convinces you at every step that he has a definite, serious, moral purpose. There is a simplicity, a straight-forwardness in all his movement; but, as he presses on, he reaches out on right and left, seizes upon common, every-day objects and events and leads them captive in a glad service of symbology. Victor Hugo divined this secret of the Master Teacher when he portrays the good bishop in "Les Miserables" as "going straight to his object, with few phrases and many images, which, he says, was the very eloquence of Jesus Christ, convincing and persuasive."

As one studies the Sermon on the Mount to find the actual proportion of this rhetorical element, he is surprised, even though he had a generous judgment before. It prevails. It dominates.

Underlying the entire variety of illustration is the evident purpose to deal in the concrete and specific. In the language of Henry Rogers there is a "graphic suppression of needless generality." To emphasize this statement, let me hurriedly run through with a list of particular things referred to: Candle, candle-stick, bushel, gate: bread, oven, raiment, meat: treasure, trumpet: darkness, double sight, light: hunger, thirst, sow, reap, spin, knock: lily, grapes, figs, thistle, tree, grass: fish, fowl, dog, swine, sheep, wolves, serpent: moth, rust, flood, wind, rain, sun: body, face, hair, hand, eye, foot, tooth: city, prison, officer. Think of this variety of material things and every-day actions as brought into a religious discourse and wrought into rhetorical strength, beauty, effectiveness. Indeed, this choice and method of Christ give to us his idea of how to present thought so as to catch the attention of the hearer and lodge the truth in his mind.

We are not to count up Christ's words and our own words and introduce a mathematical proportion of figurative speech in concrete examples; but we are to see the luminous pathway along which this Master Preacher trod, and in the light of it learn a life-long, life-moulding lesson. It was no accident or incident in Christ's case. It was conformity to law. Definite-

ness and vividness of conception depend upon specialty of language. The great preachers, as a rule, have known this law well. The supreme masters, like Spurgeon and Beecher, have thoroughly obeyed it.

Let us briefly consider the different figures used.

Metaphor takes the lead. It is bold, strong, condensed. It does not declare, as the simile does, that there is a likeness, but assumes it. "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing: inwardly they are ravening wolves." "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This is the figure of clear insight, strong emotion, deep conviction, intensity of purpose. It has the condensation of long argument packed away in a well selected term. And, where it is denied that "a metaphor is an argument," as in the case of James Russell Lowell, yet even he admits that it may be "sometimes the gunpowder to drive one home and imbed it in the memory."

Argument from resemblance, in the Sermon on the Mount, is like the darting of the woof back and forth through the web of the discourse.

And, then, it is somewhat remarkable how large a place is taken by interrogation. There are one hundred and nine verses in the sermon, and twenty-one interrogative sentences: almost one in five. This shows, in a convincing way, that Christ made his preaching a personal matter. He spoke to the individual heart and sought its co-operation in making the truth do its work. A question that does not expect an answer may have all the awakening power of one that does. Hear Christ ask questions: "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" An appeal to home scenes and the paternal instinct. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" This last question, for an audience of common people (and when a clear-headed speaker interests the ordinary mind, he catches all others) is worth pages of dry, ethical, metaphysical ratiocination. A question like that will flash like lightning, startle from slug-

gishness, give at least a momentary glimpse of the situation and help clarify the whole atmosphere.

Hyperbole is another characteristic of Christ's discourse. He does not announce that he is going to exaggerate, or apologize for it afterward. He gives natural expression to his vehemence of feeling and counts on the sane judgment of the average man to interpret his meaning. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt . . . lay up treasures in heaven." "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off: cast it from thee: it is more profitable that one of the members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." He said *that,* even though some shallow brain might afterward argue that to cut and gash the body was a good way to cure the soul. Christ uses human language, as he used the human body, by conforming to its laws. And one of the laws of mundane speech is that, at rare intervals, it may overleap itself to drive a strong thought home. A preacher who has not the nerve and passion, the capacity for indignant protest, the abandon which will, at times, throw itself into apparently reckless, daring hyperbole stops far short of powerful discourse. Prophets, poets, apostles, all use hyperbole. What else can we call that sentence of Paul: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Then, there is exclamation. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him!" Christ had sympathy: he entered into the condition of others. He felt for them: wept with them. The tears were not always in his eyes. They were more frequently in his voice and sentences. His great heart was ready to burst forth with joyful announcement. In imagination I can see him, as with divine instinct, and human instinct, too, he suffers a little space of silence before some of his short sentences, and, then, lets them come forth travailing in language after a completeness of love's expression.

In addition to these, there are three other rhetorical forms which call for special attention.

Christ had a fondness for antithesis. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corner of the streets, that they may be seen of men; but, thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." "Bless them which curse you." "No man can serve two masters: either he will hate the one and love the other or he will hold to the one and despise the other." "If a man's son ask a fish will he give him a serpent?" "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Contrasts like these strike home. They give keenness to the thrust and brilliancy where the thought is glowing.

Christ also delights in the proverbial sentence with its "pregnant brevity." "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." In the sentence, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," we have metaphor, hyperbole, antithesis, proverb, all in one. These are what Emerson calls "lyric glimpses." They are ever found in the penetrative mind that looks for the germinal idea, the nucleus thought, the ball-and-socket joining of things held in relation. There is nothing in which a preacher can help himself to greater effectiveness than the cultivation of this faculty: susceptibility to a flash of thought, alertness of mind to seize upon the faintest inkling and make it serve as guide to some gleaming treasure. Even the ordinary mind has rare days of intuition. First, know their priceless value: then pray with Joshua's fervor that the sun delay his going down. Another day, a duplicate will come the sooner. Browning tells us, the

> ". . . German Boehme never cared for plants,
> Until it happened, a-walking in the fields,
> He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
> Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
> That day the daisy had an eye indeed."

Minutest life has revelations for the loving, lingering eye. Looking at this thought intently, to my mind it seems to fashion itself into a portal: and, as I look, behold! on the threshold steps the seer. There must be something of the prophet, with clear, deep, inner seeing power in the modern preacher. This means more than cultivating the epigrammatic style. There can be no doubt, however, that the breaking up of long, involved sentences into briefer ones, mechanical and superficial as that may seem, would be, first, an added gain to style, and, by reaction on the mind, conducive to the penetrative glance.

Christ, also, threw in here and there a little cluster of bright, brief sentences, gem-like pictures, cameos cut in translucent onyx. What could be more exquisite than that little picture he holds before the mind worried about meat and drink: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin": "Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns: yet, your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Beauty no mission in the sermon! because it deals with stern truth and with men who know the world's hard, grinding facts!! Christ thought otherwise. So did Nathan when he went into David's presence with that beautiful, tender, pathetic parable of the little ewe lamb, and then stabbed his conscience with the sentence, "Thou art the man."

Jesus never allows the listener to get the impression that he is picturing beauty for beauty's sake. Fidelity to truth is first. Energy is before beauty. He speaks many plain sentences. He can even indulge in satire: "If ye love them that love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same?" He even reaches over toward the homely and the coarse. He calls the adulterer, the fornicator, the hypocrite by their strong, right names. He has a use for the serpent, the dog, the swine. He has no use for a dainty style that draws its robes of elegance about it and hesitates to walk the dusty roads of earth.

Thus do we see into what an amplitude of rhetorical expression our Master reaches: metaphor, interrogation, hyperbole, exclamation, antithesis, proverb, gem-picture, satire, plain state-

ment, bold challenge, homely thrust. He appeals to nature lying all about them as an open book, interpreting in its symbolic way the spiritual thought of his message. He will not permit himself to make an abstract statement of high truth and leave it in its glittering generality. He ushers in a humble, concrete fact from common life and makes the palace of his thought the living, home-like habitation of the poor. Though always speaking in prose, he shows the poet's instinct to "drape" his thoughts "in sights and sounds."

VI. The Sermon makes a strong appeal to the Heroic in men.

One exalted standard is presented for every phase of life: Rightness in God's sight. He calls for a struggle up to that standard.

Men had lowered it to favor various forms of selfishness; but, now, anger, lust, retaliation, pride are brought out, in their deformity, into the blazing light. The appeal is made to the heroic, because, while sin drags men down, there is still an interior kinship to the divine, a vestige yet remaining of the divine image, in human nature which makes it susceptible to such appeal.

Fifteen times, in this sermon, God is spoken of as Father. Men are addressed as his children who ought to live worthy of such parentage. For example, "Do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, that ye may be, indeed, the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. . . . If ye salute your brethren, only, what do ye more than others? Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect": that is, let your "beneficence have an all-inclusive completeness": let love sweep round the radiant circle of moral attributes.

This is the standard Christ exalts. This is the lofty ideal seen drifting through the sermon from first to last. He believes there is a heroic element in man, a conscience and a will, which, in alliance, make a mighty power. Truth fits into conscience. With the truth he seeks to arouse the soul's life to its noblest possibilities.

He was not all the while trying to win them by concessions. He put daring into his sentences and challenged them. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: strait is the gate into that kingdom: narrow the way: few there be that find it; but enter that gate: tread that way: dare to be with the minority. Art thou eager to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye? Thou dost not begin at the right place: first, cast out the beam out of thine own eye. Clearness of vision demands it. Let the surgery of righteousness always begin in thine own person: and let there be heroic treatment, when called for: If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. In thyself be right. Let thy conscience bind thee fast to God. Then, thou canst rejoice even amid the sharpening of tongues against thee. In thy soul resolve that thou wilt belong with the elect of the ages, having fellowship with prophets on earth and assurance of great reward in heaven.

He appealed to men as those who, in his presence, could will to go toward hell or heaven. They were before him, living personalities to be stirred into action, not psychological problems to be studied through subtle analysis.

Here is where the preacher of today should more frequently and powerfully imitate his Master. He should say to men: While God's air is in your lungs, while God's Spirit is breathing in your soul, will to do these heroic things and you can. Men will to do it, and they bore a railway passage through rocky mountains. Men will to do it, and they float palaces across the stormy Atlantic, and turn its fathomless deeps into a whisper gallery for Europe and America. Men will to do it, and they face the cannon's mouth, inviting eternity to throw back its mysterious doors.

Christ spoke to this will-power of man in religion as men speak to their fellows in practical affairs. There must not be any reserve of thought at this point, arising from a metaphysical balancing of probabilities. But the will of the speaker, that is, the preacher in action, charged with truth and love, must hurl his living, quivering self against the innermost life of the hearer, and move his will, if he can, as Christ caused the palsied man to stretch forth his withered hand. What if there be

mystery here? The farmer drops his corn into mystery, as well as into soil.

Such intensity of purpose will find itself moving toward the end with accelerating cumulation. At the last it will not be satisfied except there is a real grapple of soul with soul, and the man who listens is made to feel the grip of responsibility, the everlasting urgency of the issues involved.

Can you not almost hear Christ speak those last few words of tragedy? He spoke, but he painted. More than that: he spoke, and a vision of the two houses stood before them, as real as life itself: sand under one: rock under the other: down upon the two came rain and flood and wind: and, after the fury of the storm, behold! the house founded upon the rock fell not; but the house built upon the sand fell, and great was the fall of it.

Thus have we seen, that when Christ came before men to address them, he brought with him the spiritual atmosphere of his previous thinking. He opened his lips: beatitude and promise were swift to announce themselves. In all his teaching he dug down to the rock-bed solidity of primal moral law. But it was wide of his purpose to unfold truth as a system: he was preeminently a preacher, personality grappling with other personality, face to face, in public discourse. To gain attention, make clear his thought and send it home to mind, heart, conscience, he reached out into the realms of nature and common life, seized upon concrete, symbolic values and then scattered them with a lavish hand. He saw the divine image in the human soul, however bruised and blurred: he saw "the thing we ought to be beating beneath the thing we are," and he appealed to it with a voice that bids the heroic come forth like Lazarus from his enswathement.

No wonder it is recorded, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority. God was in him reconciling the world unto himself, declaring, interpreting, illustrating, persuading, convicting.

And the nearer the Christian preacher gets to his Master, in spirit and method, the more his life is hid with Christ in

God, the more will he be able to speak with a prophet's living authority. No good man does his very best, his highest, noblest, holiest, in preaching truth to men, who does not, now and then, force this confession to the hearer's lips, "The preacher outdid himself today: this is no ordinary preaching: he seemed inspired: the pastor spoke from God this morning."

*It is expected that this will be later issued with other kindred addresses in book form.