

THE ETHICS OF JESUS.

JESUS is the central figure in the Christian system.

To him, as a part of the Deity, is prayer addressed from every Trinitarian church in Christendom; to him as a perfect model of excellence do his followers enthusiastically point; to him alone do they profess to render obedience as their one Master (see Matt. 23:8); the primary duty of the believer is to imitate him as the "Great Exemplar;" and his words are supposed to furnish a perfect code of morals, beside which the ethics of other teachers are comparatively valueless.

I write to-day for the great mass of people who, owing to this exclusive laudation of Jesus by the Christians, scarcely know that there ever have been in the world any great teachers of morals except Jesus.

I write for the thousands who cannot, or at least do not, lift their eyes above and beyond the narrow horizon of their own theological environment; who fancy that the race has been chiefly guided ever since Adam by the precepts of a Hebrew book; and who believe that the words of the Sermon on the Mount are treasures absolutely unparalleled in the history of mankind. It is before these, who are not likely to investigate the subject for themselves, that I desire to present some of the corresponding precepts of the ante-Christian sages, and thus to estimate the relative position of Jesus as a moral teacher. I cannot expect, however, that this comparison of Jesus with other ethical masters will prove acceptable to the believer in the Deity of the Hebrew martyr. It is distasteful to the average Christian to find that the world is not solely indebted to Jesus for its light upon great moral questions. The more nearly a sage like Buddha approaches in character and doctrine to Jesus of Nazareth, the more jealously do Christians exclaim of their Master,

"Never man spake like this man." They will tolerate no rival, for they feel that to place Jesus in the category of human seers is practically to dethrone him.

Our business, however, is, if possible, to set aside all prejudice; to look dispassionately at the comparative teachings of Jesus and other masters; and to estimate relatively by contrast, and absolutely by an examination of those precepts peculiarly his own, the rank of the sage of Nazareth as an expounder of ethics. I say as an *expounder of ethics*, for it is in this capacity only that I desire to study Jesus at this time. Of his religious instruction,—of what he taught concerning man's relations to *God*,—I have nothing in this article to say. The common claim that Jesus, *as a moral teacher*, is the light of the world, is the only one which I now propose to consider.

In reference to the sources of our information upon the teachings of these various sages only a word is here needful.

To enter upon the vexed discussion of the historical accuracy of the four Gospels, the Dhammapada or Path of Virtue of Buddha, the writings of Confucius and Mencius as given us by Dr. Legge, the words of Socrates as recorded by Plato, and the precepts of the Jewish Talmud, is manifestly impossible in an essay of this length.

It is best, then, in the present discussion, to agree to waive all historical doubts, and to accept as genuine the teachings of Jesus, Confucius, Buddha, and the rest, as we find them crystallized in the various forms in which they have come down to us.

The great maxim of conduct, which throughout Christendom is almost distinctively associated with Jesus, and for the utterance of which he has received the encomiums of nearly nineteen centuries, is called the "Golden Rule." If we look, however, at the words of Confucius (B. C. 551) and Hillel, the renowned Jewish Rabbi (died A. D. 10), we see that not only was this idea not promulgated for the first time by Jesus, but that even the phraseology of its various teachers is strikingly similar.

GOLDEN RULE.

JESUS.

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so

CONFUCIUS (negatively).

Tsze Kung asked saying: "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of

to them: for this is the law and the prophets. — Matt. 7:12.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. — Matt. 23:39.

practice for all one's life?"

Confucius said: Is not *Reciprocity* such a word?

What ye do not wish done to yourselves, do not do to others. — Anal., Book 15, 23.

What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates to receive on the right, let him not bestow on the left. This is the principle with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conduct. — Great Learning, Sect. 10.

(Positively.)

In the way of the superior man there are four things, to not one of which have I as yet attained: To serve my father, as I would require my son to serve me; to serve my prince, as I would require my minister to serve me; to serve my elder brother, as I would require my younger brother to serve me; to set the example in behaving to a friend, as I would require him to behave to me! — Doctrine of the Mean, XIII.

HILLEL

The whole law is contained in this one rule: Whatever you would not wish your neighbor to do to you, do it not to him!

JEWISH LAW.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. — Lev. 19:18.

TALMUD.

Let the honor of thy neighbor be to thee like thine own.

It is worthy of notice that Jesus himself does not claim that this rule is original with him, but gives it as a *résumé* of, or at least a deduction from, his nation's "law and prophets;" which, moreover (see above), was the identical remark of his own countryman, the Rabbi Hillel, who died when Jesus was ten

years old, and of whose wisdom, meekness, and piety the records of the Talmud are full.

Another celebrated passage from the Sermon on the Mount, the great compendium of the moral teachings of Jesus, is that commencing at the seventh chapter.

JESUS.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye.

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye. — Matt. 7:1-5.

MENCIUS (B. C. 371).

The disease of men is this, that they neglect their own fields and go to weed the fields of others. What they require from others is great, while what they lay upon themselves is light. — Works of Mencius, Book 7.

Never has a man who has bent himself been able to make others straight. — Works, Book 3.

BUDDHA.

Not the failures of others, not their sins of commission or omission, but his own misdeeds and negligences should the sage take notice of. — Dhammapada, ch. 4, sect. 50. See also ch. 18, 252, and 253.

Let no one forget his own duty for the sake of another's. — Dhammapada, ch. 166.

CONFUCIUS.

To assail one's own wickedness and not assail that of other; is not this the way to correct cherished evil? — Anal., Book 12, 21.

HILLEL.

Do not judge thy neighbor, till thou hast stood in his place.

We thus observe that this idea also is not at all original with Jesus, but was expressed centuries before him by other great moral teachers.

Moreover, their statement of the precept is preferable to that of Jesus for this reason: Jesus urges as a motive for not judging others *that such persons will themselves be judged; that they are to have the same measure which they mete out;* in other words, that they will receive "tit for tat." But no such motive is expressed by the others. On the contrary, Confucius enforces his precept by presenting it as a means of correcting cherished

evil! It cannot be questioned for a moment which of the two is the nobler spring of action.

The necessity of *inward purification* has been repeatedly urged as a precept peculiar to Christianity. Let us look at this point.

JESUS.

Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. — Luke 11: 39.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. — Matt. 23: 27, 28.

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. — Matt. 7: 16 and 17.

BUDDHA.

What is the use of platted hair, O fool! What is the use of a raiment of goat skins? *Within thee there is ravening, but the outside maketh thee clean!* — Dhammapada, Book 26, 394.

CONFUCIUS.

I hate a semblance which is not the reality. I hate the dandel, lest it be confounded with the corn. I hate glib-tonguedness, lest it be confounded with righteousness. — Works, Book 7, 37.

From the emperor down to the mass of the people, all must consider that *self-cultivation* is the root of every thing. It cannot be when the root is neglected that what should spring from it will be well-ordered! — Great Learning, sect. 6 and 7.

MENCIUS.

What distinguishes the superior man is *what he preserves in his heart!* — Works, Book 4, 28.

He whose goodness is a part of himself is the real man! — Works, Book 7, 2.

See also at length the Hebrew prophet. Isaiah 1: 11-16. — Hosea 6: 6. — Amos 5: 21 and following. — Micah 6: 6-8.

It should be added in this connection that Dr. Legge, of the London Missionary Society, speaks thus of the doctrine of Mencius: —

"The great object of Mencius in his writings is to rectify men's hearts. According to him, if the heart be rectified, we recognize at once the goodness of the nature. All good actions have their root in the rectifying of the heart and in making the thoughts sincere." — "Life of Mencius."

If we consider the paramount importance which Jesus attached

to the possession of *Righteousness*, we shall see it duplicated in the teachings of Socrates and the great Chinese moralists.

JESUS.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. — Matt. 6: 33.

For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? — Matt. 16: 26.

CONFUCIUS.

The superior man in every thing considers righteousness to be essential. He brings it forth with humility; he completes it with sincerity. — Anal., 15, 17.

The man of virtue will even sacrifice his life to preserve his virtue complete. — Anal., 15, 8.

The superior man holds righteousness to be of the highest importance. — Anal., 17.

MENCIUS.

If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose Righteousness! — Works, 6, 10.

SOCRATES (B. C. 469).

The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding *unrighteousness!* — Plato, Apology.

I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the *greatest improvement of the soul!* — Plato, Apology.

But then, O my friends, if the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, not only in respect to the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity!

There is no release or salvation from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom! — Plato, Phædo.

Here, too, I think an unprejudiced critic will allow that the moral tone of the Grecian and Eastern teachers is in advance of that of Jesus. The Hebrew master adds to his precept, to "seek righteousness," the tempting motive, "*and all these things shall be added unto you!*" The reward in this case is very practical,

since the context shows that "all these things" refer to the provision for food, drink, and raiment. Moreover, in the other precept quoted from Jesus, we find the words *profit, gain, and exchange*; which raise us to no higher motives of action than those of rewards and punishments. As contrasted with this, the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, to cling to virtue rather than life for virtue's sake alone, are certainly to be ranked higher than those of Jesus.

The statement is constantly made by Christians that, whereas other moral teachers directed their followers to love their *friends*, Jesus was the only one who taught love to *enemies* as a duty. Let us examine this also.

JESUS.

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, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. — Matt. 5: 43 and 44.

Then came Peter and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times?

Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven. — Matt. 18: 21.

BUDDHA.

Let a man overcome anger by love! Let him overcome evil by good! — Dhammapada, 17, 223.

Hatred ceases by love! — Dhammapada, 1, 5.

Let us live happily, then, not hating those who hate us! Let us dwell free from hatred among men who hate! — Dhammapada, 15, 197.

CONFUCIUS.

Benevolence is to love all men. — Anal., 12, 22.

RABBI AEOTH NASTRAN.

He is a hero who maketh his enemy his friend.

SANHEDRIN.

Suffer thyself to be cursed, but do not thou curse others.

SYNOPSIS, SOHAR.

A man ought every night to forgive the fault of him that offendeth him.

INSTITUTES OF MENU (B. C. 1200).

Returning good for evil is enumerated among the ten primary duties. — Chap. 6, 92.

By forgiveness of injuries the wise are purified. — *Ibid*, 107.

ZEND AVESTA.

"Oh, blessed Ormuzd (God), pardon my offences against thee, even as I pardon those done against myself. — Vendidad Sade.

HINDU PRECEPT.

He who is kind to those that are kind to him does nothing great. To be good to the offender is what the wise call good. — Panchatantra, 4, 9.

SOCRATES.

We ought not to retaliate, or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him! — Plato, Crito.

I bear no resentment towards my accusers or my condemners! — Plato, Apology.

If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?

But love ye your enemies, &c. — Luke 7: 34.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! — Luke 23: 34.

Thus the overcoming of anger by love was, as we see, taught by Gautama Buddha six centuries before Christ, and the doctrine of forgiveness is found on the lips of many sages. It is frequently urged by Christians that the words, "Ye have heard that it hath been said," as contrasted with the "But I say unto you" of Jesus, denote that their master inculcated something entirely new to the world and opposed to all that ever had been taught before. This assertion, as we have seen, is plainly erroneous.

In these antithetical statements Jesus certainly makes an advance upon a few of the more meagre and revengeful articles of the old Jewish law and the traditional explanation of them by some of the scribes and expounders of that law. But the ideas are not peculiar to Jesus; and the most striking one of them all, "love to enemies," had been promulgated centuries before his time.

Let us look at other precepts of Jesus.

HUMILITY.

JESUS.

Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little chil-

MENCIUS.

The great man is he who does not lose his child's heart. — Works, Book 4, 12.

dren, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. — Matt. 18: 3, 4

Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. — Matt. 23: 12.

SINCERITY BEFORE GOD.

JESUS.

God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth. — John 4: 24.

SUBJECTION OF THE FLESH.

JESUS.

If thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life than, having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. — Mark 9: 45.

DEGREES OF GUILT.

JESUS.

That servant which knew his lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. — Luke 12: 47.

CARE FOR THE FUTURE.

JESUS.

Take no thought for your life, what

RABBI JEHUDA BEN LEVI.

If a man be of a humble spirit, the Scriptures consider him as having offered all sacrifice. — Sanhedrin (Mishna), 43.

TALMUD.

He who raises himself up will be humiliated; he who humiliates himself will be lifted up. — See London Quarterly Review, Vol. 122.

INSTITUTES OF MENO.

O friend to virtue, that supreme spirit, which thou believest one with thyself, resides in thy bosom perpetually, and is an all-knowing inspector of thy virtue or thy crime.

The wicked have said in their hearts, "None sees us." Yes: the gods see them, and the spirit within their own breasts. — VIII, 91 and 85.

RABBINICAL TEACHING.

It is better for me that I should be burned in this world with a little fire, than that I should be burned in the world to come with a devouring flame. — Targum, Genes., 33, 26.

RABBI SIMEON.

He who hath learned the words of the law and doeth them not is more guilty than he who has learned nothing. — Debarim Rabba, sect. 7.

RABBINICAL PRECEPT.

He who created the day, created the

ye shall eat or what ye shall drink . . . Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. — Matt. 6: 25 and 34.

INFLUENCE OF THE GOOD.

JESUS.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. — Matt. 5: 14.

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven. — Matt. 5: 16.

EVIL SPEAKING.

JESUS.

But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. — Matt. 12: 36.

UNOSTENTATIOUS CHARITY.

JESUS.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them. . . . That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. — Matt. 6: 1 and 4.

food thereof. Whosoever hath whereof to eat to-day and saith "But shall I eat to-morrow?" he is of little faith. — Schabbath (tract of the Mishna), 131.

BUDDHA.

Good people shine from afar like the snowy mountains. — Dhammapada, 22, 304.

He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds. — Dhammapada, 13, 173.

MENCIUS.

Great men rectify themselves, and others become rectified. — Works, 7, 19.

HINDU PRECEPT.

The sweet scent of flowers is lost on the breeze, but the fragrance of virtue endures for ever. — Ramayana.

BUDDHA.

Beware of the anger of the tongue, and control thy tongue. Leave the sins of the tongue, and practise virtue with thy tongue. — Dhammapada, 17, 232.

MENCIUS.

What future misery have they, and ought they, to endure, who talk of what is not good in others! — Works, 4, 9, Part II.

RABBINICAL TEACHING.

Whosoever lendeth to any one in public, with him God dealeth according to justice; but he who does it secretly, with him rests the blessing. — Sohar, 4. He who gives charity in secret is greater than Moses himself. — Quoted

from Talmud in London Quarterly Review, vol. 122.

INSTITUTES OF MENU.

By proclaiming a gift, its fruit perishes. — IV, 237.

HINDU PRECEPT.

The gift bestowed with right purpose on one who cannot repay it, is called a real gift! — Hitopadesa, 1, 14.

Lend, hoping for nothing again. — Luke 6: 35.

MERCY.

JESUS.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. — Matt. 5: 7.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. — Matt. 6: 15.

RABBINICAL TEACHING.

Whoever hath mercy on men, on him will God have mercy; but he that showeth no mercy to men, neither to him will God show mercy. — Schabath, 883.

BUDDHA.

My law is a law of mercy for all! — Burnouf, p. 198.

UNIVERSAL LOVE.

JESUS.

For the son of man is come to save that which was lost. — Matt. 18: 11.

BUDDHA.

Whoever loves, will feel the longing to save, not himself, but all others. Let him say to himself: When others are learning the truth, I will rejoice at it, as if it were myself. When others are without it, I will mourn the loss as my own. We shall do much if we deliver many; but more, if we cause these to deliver others, and so on without end. So shall the healing word embrace the world, and all who are sunk in the ocean of misery be saved. — Wulke, 2, 563.

My law is a law of mercy for all! Proclaim it freely to all men, rich and poor alike! It is large as the spaces of heaven that exclude none! — Koepen, p. 130.

CONFUCIUS.

A man should overflow in love to all. — Anal, 1, 6.

The good man loves all men. *All within the four seas are his brothers.* — Quoted in Johnson's "China."

INSTITUTES OF MENU.

Let not injustice be done in deed or in thought, nor a word be uttered that shall cause a fellow-creature pain! — II, 161.

HINDU PRECEPT.

To the noble, *the whole world is a family!* — Hitopadesa, 1, 64.

Let the wise man give up his goods for the sake of his neighbor; for the sake of the good, let him even give his life! — *Ibid*, 1, 38.

The good have mercy upon all! — *Ibid*, 1, 10.

Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother. — Mark 3: 35.

Parable of the Good Samaritan. — Luke 10: 30.

IMITATION OF GOD IN KINDNESS TO THE JUST AND UNJUST.

JESUS.

Love your enemies, etc. (see above under topic "Love to enemies"), that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

. . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. — Matt. 5.

SENECA.

It diverts not the Almighty from being gracious, even though we daily abuse his bounties.

What then ought we to do, but that very thing which is done by God himself; — namely, give to the ignorant and persevere to the wicked!

RABBI AFHU.

The day on which rain is sent is greater than the resurrection of the dead, for this pertains to the just alone, but rain to the just and unjust. — Jaarith, 71, Mishna.

LENDING.

JESUS.

Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again. — Luke 6: 30.

BUDDHA.

Give, if thou art asked, from the little thou hast; thus wilt thou go near the gods. — Dhammapada, 17, 224.

The teaching of Jesus here, as we shall later attempt to show more fully, is an impracticable one, and one in direct opposition to the necessities of society. Jesus here makes no reservation.

His followers are bidden to give to *every* man that asketh, and no attempt is to be made to recover stolen property.

The following extracts do not pertain strictly to ethics, but deserve to be noticed on account of their remarkable parallelism.

HATRED OF THE WICKED TO THE GOOD.

JESUS.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. — John 15: 18.

The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. — John 16: 2.

SOCRATES.

This is what will be my destruction, if I am destroyed . . . , the envy and detraction of the world which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more. There is no danger of my being the last of them! — Plato, Apology.

THE ISOLATION OF GENIUS.

JESUS.

Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? — John 14: 9.

Are ye also yet without understanding? — Matt. 15: 16.

Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. — John 16: 32.

CONFUCIUS.

The master said: "Alas! there is no one that knows me. Tse Kung said: "What do you mean by thus saying that no one knows you?" The master replied: "I do not murmur against Heaven, nor do I grumble against men. There is Heaven, — that knows me! — Anal., 14, 37.

MENCIUS.

If a prince acknowledge you and follow your counsels, be perfectly satisfied. *If no one does so, be the same!* — Works, 7, 9.

SIMILAR PARABLES.

JESUS.

The familiar parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25: 1-14), concluding with the words: "Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

See also the figure of the "King and the wedding garments." — Matt. 22: 11.

JEWISH TALMUD.

There was a king who bade all his servants to a great repast, but did not indicate the hour. Some went home, and prepared themselves, and stood ready at the door of the palace. Others said, There is ample time; the king will let us know beforehand. Of a sudden the king summoned them, and those that came in their best garments were received, but the foolish

ones, who came in slovenliness, were turned away in disgrace. Repent to-day, lest to-morrow ye be summoned! — See article "Talmud," London Quarterly Review, vol. 122.

CHILDREN OF GOD.

JESUS.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the *children of God*. — Matt. 5: 9.

TALMUD.

And we, if we are called the servants of God, are also called his *children*.

SIMILAR VIEW OF THE NEXT WORLD.

JESUS.

They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels. — Luke 20: 35.

TALMUD.

In the next world there will be no love and no labor, no envy, no hatred, no contest. The righteous will sit with crowns on their heads, glorying in the splendor of God's majesty.

PAUCITY OF THE TRULY WISE.

JESUS.

Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. — Matt. 7: 14.

For many are called, but few chosen. — Matt. 20: 16.

CONFUCIUS.

Those who know virtue are few. — Anal., 15, 3.

It is all over! I have not seen one who loves virtue as he loves beauty! — Anal., 15, 12.

MENCIUS.

The way of truth is like a great road. The evil is that men will not seek it. — Works, 6, 2.

BUDDHA.

This world is dark. Few only can see here. Few only go to heaven, like birds escaped from a net. — Dhammapada, 13, 174.

THEIR POVERTY.

JESUS.

Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. — Luke 9: 58.

CONFUCIUS.

With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow, I still have joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honors ac-

quired by unrighteousness are to me but as a floating cloud. — Anal., 7, 15.

SOCRATES.

I am in the uttermost poverty through my service of the God. — Plato, Apology.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WITHIN.

JESUS.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . . For behold the kingdom of God is within you. — Luke 17: 20.

CONFUCIUS.

Is virtue a thing remote? I wish to be virtuous, and lo! virtue is at hand. — Anal., 7, 29.

MENCIUS.

Kaou has never understood righteousness, because he makes it something external. — Works, 2, 16.

The path of duty lies in what is near; yet men seek for it in what is remote! — Works, 4, 10.

Much is made by Christians of the fact that Jesus regarded not the persons of men, and that he freely associated with publicans and sinners. It is even frequently asserted that no teacher, save Jesus, ever preached a gospel to the poor. Jesus certainly deserves all praise for his comprehensive charity, but this admirable quality was no more a characteristic of Jesus than of Socrates and Gautama Buddha. Five centuries before Christ, Buddha exclaimed: "Birth and eminence do not make the right to be honored; not by birth, but by conduct, is one a low person." "Ananda, one of the earliest disciples, sitting once beside a well, asked a drink of water from a chandāla woman, who was drawing water from the well. She answered, 'How dost thou ask water of me, an outcast, who may not touch thee without offence?' Ananda answered: 'My sister, I ask not of thy caste. I ask thee water to drink.' And Buddha took her among his disciples" (Burnouf, p. 205). "Look closely," says Buddha, "and you shall see no difference between the body of a prince and the body of a slave. What is essential may dwell in the most miserable frame" (*Ibid.*, p. 209).

Johnson, in the introduction to his "Oriental Religions," says: "The Chinese Buddhist priest prays at morning that the music

of the bell which wakens him to his matins 'may sound through the whole world, and that every living soul may gain release, and find eternal peace in God. The Buddhist Saviour vows to manifest himself to every creature in the universe, and never to arrive at Buddhahood till all are delivered from sin into the divine rest.' What else, or wherein better, is the claim of the Christian or the Jew?"

"Others were not like him," says Xenophon of Socrates, "*friends of the common people!*" (Memo. I, 2, 60).

Let us pause here to survey the ground over which we have advanced. The foregoing words of Jesus have, as we have seen, all met their counterparts in the precepts of other masters, in most cases long anterior to him. *Some of them are even synonymous with instruction given in the Rabbinical schools of his own age and nation!* "Like all the rabbis of the time," says Rénan, "Jesus expressed his doctrine in concise aphorisms. Some of these maxims come from the books of the Old Testament. Others were the thoughts of more modern sages, especially of Antigonus of Soco, Jesus, the son of Sirach, and Hillel, which were known to him, not through learned studies, but as proverbs often repeated. The synagogues were rich in maxims very happily expressed, which formed a sort of current proverb literature" (*Vie de Jésus*, ch. 5). Does Jesus teach the rule of reciprocity? So do Confucius and Hillel. Does Jesus inculcate self-condemnation rather than condemnation of others? So do Mencius, Buddha, and Confucius. Does Jesus labor for the poor and outcast? Not more nobly than does Buddha. Does Jesus rebuke hypocrisy? Not one whit more emphatically than do the Eastern sages or the prophets of his own people. Does Jesus urge love to enemies, forgiveness, humility, benevolence, and unostentatious charity? None the less are these duties inculcated by other moral teachers. Indeed, some of the commands of the Hebrew master are found to be inferior to those of the Chinese or Indian sages, because of the lower motives of action urged for their performance.

Looking, then, at the comparative purity of ethical teaching expressed in these two columns, do we find as yet any reason to exalt the words of Jesus over those of Confucius, Mencius, Socrates, or Buddha? I think that no one, free from prejudice and

judging simply from the teachings thus far considered, will assign any such superiority to the doctrine of the sage of Nazareth.

It remains to examine some points in the ethical teachings of Jesus which are more peculiarly his own. One very remarkable precept in the code of morals laid down by Jesus is that which commands *non-resistance*. Let us compare the ideas of Confucius with those of Jesus on this point.

NON-RESISTANCE.

JESUS.

But I say unto you that ye resist not evil (or more probably, that ye resist not the evil doer); but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. — Matt. 5: 39.

O. him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again. — Luke 6: 30.

The doctrine of non-resistance here advocated by Jesus is something not simply impossible for society to practise, but is a maxim which would be in the highest degree harmful to society, if put into operation. An injury done to the rights or possessions of an individual is a menace to the community at large, and hence it is due to society that such an injury be properly resisted and justly punished. Imagine for a moment a country in which this law of non-resistance prevailed. It would be the favorite retreat for the depraved and vicious of every grade, from the swaggering "Ring"-manipulator to the ferocious highwayman and rioter. Society could not exist under any such passive system. On the contrary, the words of Confucius exhibit the only means of good government, — the prompt recompensing of *injury* by *justice*. This is by no means the doctrine of retaliation, — an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; it is the doctrine of the *just preservation of equal rights*, which is the foundation of law and order in good society. At present we are living under a system of law and equity framed in accordance with the principle of Confucius, not that of Jesus. When and

CONFUCIUS.

Some one said: "What do you say concerning the principle that injury should be recompensed with kindness?" Confucius said: "With what then will you recompense kindness? Recompense *injury* with *justice*, and recompense kindness with *kindness!*" — Anal., 14, 36.

where our system fails is precisely when and where we fail to recompense an injury done to the individual or to society by prompt and efficient justice, or precisely when and where the instructions of Jesus on this point are obeyed.

It requires but a slight acquaintance with the precepts of Jesus to see that with him the incentives to virtue are frequently rewards and punishments; but the great extent to which these are employed is only realized upon a careful study of his teachings. Take, for example, the Beatitudes. In every case a *reward* is promised, and virtue is not taught for its own sake.

The poor in spirit (or, as Luke has it, simply *the poor*) are blessed, for theirs is to be the Kingdom of God. The meek are likewise blessed; not for any intrinsic value in meekness as a virtue, but because they are to "inherit the earth."

So the merciful are blessed, because they are in turn to receive mercy, and the persecuted and reviled are bidden to rejoice, because "great is their reward in heaven!" Does Jesus command his disciples to forgive men their trespasses? He enforces it with the promise, "and your heavenly Father will also forgive you!" Does he urge them to confess him before men? He holds out as a reward for so doing that he will also confess them before his Father in heaven! "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you" — what? that he does a noble deed to be commended by himself and God? He does not say that, but adds, "he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Again: "Every one that hath forsaken houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit everlasting life!"

Again: "Give," says Jesus; but adds as an incentive, "and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom!"

In the first phrases of the following verses it would seem that Jesus gave a rule for pure, disinterested action, but mark the italicized conclusion: —

"If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those

that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again; and your REWARD shall be great and ye shall be called the children of the Highest!"

So also in the following: "When thou makest a dinner, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee." Thus far nothing could be more noble and disinterested. But now all is spoiled by these concluding words, whose shadow seems fated to fall upon his finest precepts: "*For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just!*" (Luke. 14. 12-14)

"Verily I say unto you," exclaims Jesus, "ye which have followed me, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel!"

"If any man serve me," he continues, "him will my Father honor!" In the sixth chapter of Matthew secret prayer and private charity are taught with the incentive, "And thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly!" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" is the precept of Jesus; but, as we have seen above, the reward is immediately attached to the command in the words, "and all these things [worldly advantages] shall be added unto you!"

Passing over many more of a similar nature, if we look now at passages where the moral precepts of Jesus are enforced with threats of punishment, we shall find them equally numerous. "Take heed," says Jesus, "that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them." Why? Because such an act indicates a hypocritical state of soul, and renders the deed devoid of virtue? No such motive is urged. The incentive is this: "Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven!" "If ye forgive not men their trespasses," says the Hebrew teacher, "neither will your Father forgive your trespasses!" "Judge not," is the command of Jesus. Why? "That ye be not judged!" "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that

believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea!" "Agree with thine adversary quickly, . . . lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison!" "Whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Vain fellow' [Raca], shall be in danger of the council: and whosoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire!" "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!" Such are a few examples of the incentives of reward and punishment held out by Jesus in his moral teachings. By far the greater number of his precepts are thus enforced, and therefore do not present the loftiest motives to action, nor constitute the noblest kind of ethical instruction. The fact is that Jesus, as a teacher of morals, appealed directly, and in the strongest possible manner, to the hopes and fears of men. He talked continually of the "Kingdom" which he had come to establish on earth, in the speedy establishment of which his followers were to be abundantly recompensed for their self-denials, while his enemies, and even those simply indifferent to him, were to be punished with corresponding severity. Those who had confessed him were then to be acknowledged by him; and those who had denied him were to be by him denied. Those who had believed on him were to be saved; those who had disbelieved were to be damned. If any house or city should not receive his disciples with a cordial welcome, they would fare worse in the day of judgment than the overwhelmed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Whereas whosoever should receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, should receive a prophet's reward. Those who heard his words and acted upon them were compared to a house founded upon a rock; those who disregarded his precepts were likened, on the contrary, to a house destined to fall in ruin on the shifting sands. He that was not for him was against him. There is a power in this kind of teaching, a power which still has a great influence upon the masses to whom the gospel is preached; but it is not, nevertheless, the noblest method of presenting virtue. According to the incentives which Jesus almost invariably employs, a man is either bribed or frightened into obedience.

Now, if we look at the mode of teaching used by Confucius,

we shall see a marked difference. The Chinese sage — to whose honor a temple is erected in every Chinese city down to those of the third order — aimed exclusively at fitting men for pure and honorable conduct in this life. His teaching was *ethical*, not *religious*. He urged men to attain to perfect virtue, as the true aim of living. Heaven and hell do not enter at all into the list of incentives to virtue in his code. His precept is to practise virtue for virtue's sake. He did not talk much about "spiritual beings" or a future life, probably for the very good reason that he did not know much about them. His definition of wisdom was "*to give one's self earnestly to the duties due to men, and while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them.*" With all this, it would not be fair to charge him with being an atheist, for we find these words upon his lips: "He who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray;" "I do not murmur against Heaven;" and "There is Heaven; that knows me!"

It will be remembered that I am not comparing in this article the *religious* teachings of Jesus with those of others, but simply his *ethical* precepts. In this comparison we have found Jesus almost constantly appealing to rewards and punishments to induce men to follow his instructions in morality. We have found Confucius, on the other hand, teaching morality for its own pure sake alone, without any mention of reward or punishment. Which teacher, then, stands in this respect upon the nobler basis of morals?

In Mencius, the great follower of Confucius, there is visible the same purity of ethical instruction. The nearest approach to any threat of punishment joined to his teachings is found in the words already cited under "evil speaking," — "What future misery have they, and ought they, to endure, who talk of what is not good in others!" But that this "future misery" merely refers to the misery consequent upon such conduct *in this life* is highly probable from the fact that there is, in all the words of Mencius, no other passage capable of being construed into a reference to the result of men's actions in a future existence.

With Buddha the incentive of rewards and punishments is quite common. We find in the Dhammapada numerous passages like the following: "The evil doer suffers in this world, and he suffers in the next. The virtuous man is happy in this world,

and he is happy in the next." According to Buddha, the good will attain unto "Nirvana, which is the highest happiness" (Dh. 23), and "the bad will go to hell" (Dh. 126). "Righteous people go to heaven; the fool goes to hell." "The uncharitable do not go to the world of the gods" (Dh. 177). "He who says what is not goes to hell."

These extracts have the real evangelical ring to them. They are as plain and forcible as most of the declarations of Jesus, though we miss in the Dhammapada some of the more terrible allusions to future torment in which Jesus indulges; such as, "Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched;" "Where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth;" and "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" Moreover, it is to be remarked that the "hell" of Buddha was not a place of *endless* torment, but possessed "Heavens of refuge" for repentant souls. Can we say as much of the "hell" of Jesus?

It must, however, be borne in mind that Buddha, although appealing to rewards and punishments, does so much less often than does Jesus. Therefore, in this instance also, we find that, as a rule, the moral precepts of Jesus are not based upon as high and noble motives as are those of Buddha, and nowhere in the whole range of Jesus's words do we find any thing like the following noble sentiments: "*Let thy motive lie in the deed, and not in the reward! Perform the duty, whether it terminate in good or ill. This is devotion*" (Bhagavad Gita, chap. 2). "*The path of virtue is to be pursued with no view to emolument*" (Mencius, 7. 33). It will doubtless be replied to this that no motives, except those which appeal directly to the desires and fears of men, will have much influence in winning them to virtue, or reclaiming them from vice. The space of this article does not permit of a discussion of this subject. It is doubtless true that, with the masses of humanity, the incentives of rewards and punishments are the strongest. It is also probably true that the teaching of virtue for its own sake only to the thoroughly abandoned would be merely casting pearls before swine. And yet I claim that in a Divine Master, or even in the most perfect of human teachers, we should expect one half, at least, of his ethical precepts to be uttered without the adjunct of a bribe or a threat. We should, I think, reasonably anticipate that, if he were the only infallible

source of ethical instruction, he would, at least half the time, inculcate moral purity from its own inherent loveliness and for its own sake alone. In both these expectations we are disappointed.

On the subject of riches, the teaching of Jesus was quite peculiar. Buddha had said: "One is the road that leads to wealth; another is the road that leads to Nirvana." But Jesus, not content with similarly saying, "Ye cannot serve God *and* riches" (mammon), demands the utter renunciation of wealth in the case of the young man who inquired of him the way of life. "If thou wilt be perfect," he says, "go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor." It is to be parenthetically remarked that here too Jesus instantly adds, as an additional inducement, "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven!" Lest this should be called a special case, requiring peculiar treatment, let us examine other words of a similar nature. "Sell that ye have," exclaims Jesus in a general precept (Luke 12: 33), "and give alms." "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger" (Luke 6: 24). "Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19: 23).

The parable of Dives and Lazarus reveals the same bitter feeling towards the rich. Dives is not represented as having committed any sin, save the one of being rich and having neglected to invite Lazarus to come in from the steps and eat at his sumptuous table. As Lazarus, however, is represented as being "full of sores," we can hardly wonder at the taste of Dives in this particular. Lazarus, on the other hand, is not said to have possessed any other merit than that of being a beggar and the recipient of canine blandishments. Yet when they die, Jesus represents Lazarus as carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, while Dives is plunged into torments similar to those of Tantalus. Moreover, Father Abraham, when appealed to by Dives, remarks this only: "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time received'st thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." This is compensation with a vengeance! That the hatred of riches *in se*

and the praise of poverty *in se* were strikingly shown forth in the teachings of Jesus cannot be better proven than by the immediate conduct of his disciples whom he had thus instructed. No sooner was he dead than "all that believed had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2: 44). "Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4: 34). James, too, imitates his master in bidding rich men weep and howl in view of the miseries which shall come upon them. Thus we see that Jesus rebuked the possession of wealth in itself, as not only dangerous, but wrong. He makes no distinction between a proper and improper use and amount of riches, but utters one broad and sweeping denunciation of them. Those Christian millionaires, therefore, who regard Jesus as the infallible Teacher whose words are divinely authoritative, should, in consistency, sell their fine houses and clothes, take a humble cottage, dismiss their servants, and give the balance of their incomes to the judicious nourishment and instruction of the poor and degraded. Impracticable? Absurd? Perhaps; but then let us agree that *Jesus* was impracticable and absurd; for he commanded just that and nothing less. He would, in all probability, do so again to-day, were he to come among us, and would unquestionably receive from some of his wealthy worshippers merely an astonished shrug and stare.

This hatred of riches on the part of Jesus resembles very much the idea of the Essenes, one of the prominent Jewish sects in his day. And it is probable that he derived it from them. Of these Josephus says (Wars of the Jews, Book II, chap. 8) "These are despisers of riches. No one is found among them who hath more than another, for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order; so that among them there is no appearance of poverty or excess of riches. . . Many of them live in every city. . . Every one gives what he has to him that wanteth it. . . Although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please."

A peculiar feature in Jesus's code of morals is his prohibition

of all oaths. "Swear not at all," he says (it is needless to say, not meaning here "Take not the name of God blasphemously," but "Do not strengthen your assertions by any appeal to the Deity"). This precept is not only daily disobeyed by the majority of believers in the infallibility of Jesus, but those who persist in following his instructions in this particular have been frequently exposed to great inconvenience for so doing. This idea also was a dominant one among the Essenes. "Swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury; for they say that he who cannot be believed without swearing by God is already condemned" (Josephus, Book II, chap. 8, "Wars of the Jews").

The law which Jesus lays down upon the subject of divorce is explicit: "It hath been said," remarks Jesus, "whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Is this precept, on the whole, an advantageous one for society to follow? Experience in countries where it has been attempted, and where divorce for any other cause than fornication has been refused, has proved that this rule is far too narrow to meet the exigencies of a complicated society. This precept also is therefore quietly set aside and violated by the followers of Jesus, *who at the same time inconsistently claim to regard him as a Divine and absolutely infallible teacher.*

We have already seen that Jesus, in common with all other great moral teachers, rebuked hypocrisy and cant most scathingly. There is, however, a step beyond this, which Jesus unhesitatingly takes, and for which he deserves all praise. Jesus ranked practical morality far in advance of ritualism. It is true, he is not the only teacher who does this. The institutes of Menu (4. 204) contain these words: "A wise man should constantly perform all the *moral* duties, though he perform not constantly the *ceremonies of religion!* He who purifies himself in the river of a subdued spirit, the waters of which are truth, its waves compassion, and its shores holy temper, will be liberated from this world; but liberation cannot be obtained by any outward observance!" But Jesus seems to have emphasized this with peculiar force.

He gives continual evidence that he placed no high value upon the ceremonial observances of his nation. Every allusion which he does make to "giving tithes of mint, anise, and cummin," "making broad phylacteries," praying "in the temple," etc., by no means tends to make us regard such actions as important. He seems, indeed, to have observed his nation's feasts, but never issues any precepts in regard to them. Observance of religious ceremonials he does not include among the deeds which will be rewarded when he comes in his new kingdom. He strenuously objects to long public prayers, intimating that they are only made for display. Those who are to be admitted into heaven are the ones who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned; but those who cry "Lord, Lord, have we not in thy name done many wonderful works?" will be shut out. As regards the Sabbath, he "broke" it repeatedly, and defended himself for it on three separate occasions, because he had done so in acts of kindness. "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day," he exclaims. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." For these bold protests against bigoted formalism, even when it is not attended with hypocrisy, let us give to the teacher of Nazareth the praise which is due to him. But let us lament that his precepts and example in this regard have been so poorly obeyed by his disciples. The High Church mummeries; the endless ceremonials and Saint's days of Catholicism; the "vain repetitions" of most of the church services; and our unjust Sunday laws, — all attest how grievously Christians have misunderstood their master.

What now are the conclusions to be drawn from this review of the ethical teachings of Jesus of Nazareth?

1. He uttered many noble precepts, for which the world is better; but *every one of them had been substantially uttered by others before his time.*
2. Some of his best teachings had been already said *in his own nation, and even by his own contemporaries.*
3. Many of his most remarkable moral precepts are inferior to the analogous teachings of other masters, because supported by the selfish incentives of rewards and punishments.
4. Some of his doctrines, such as the non-resistance of evil and the community of goods, are utterly unsuited to society, and inferior to the corresponding precepts of other teachers.

5. Taking his instruction as a whole, Jesus cannot be said to have taught virtue for virtue's sake, since he almost invariably appealed to men's desires and fears as motives to right action.

6. Jesus deserves especial (though not sole) honor for having placed little or no value upon what may be called *sincere formalism*, in comparison with the far higher duties of *practical morality*; although in his denunciations of *hypocrisy*, he was fully equaled, by other ethical teachers.

Finally, as a light, but not *the* light, of the world, Jesus is entitled to the respect and reverence due to all great and good men, "the fragrance of whose virtue endures for ever," and who by their precepts have rendered the race wiser, better, and purer. As an expounder of ethics, he will always be recognized as one of its great masters, yet only as one among brethren. For not alone from the slopes of Palestine rises a lofty mountain peak to reflect the glorious dawn of moral truth to the darkened world beneath; but rather, as we journey backward up the stream of Time, do we discover one height of progress answering to another, until we stand admiringly before a glittering chain of snowy summits, from whose sunlit glory we catch refulgent beams, and in whose lustrous splendor we find our inspiration and our hope.

JOHN L. STODDARD.

TO A MAN ABOUT TOWN.

A REPROACH.

You scorn the world that worships you;
 (You worshipped it while it was far);
 You treat it when it comes to sue
 Like haughty, autocratic Czar,
 And when it bows before your feet,
 With bitter sneers its smiles you meet.

Too large-limbed were you for its dance;
 You should not wear its cramping dress.
 Your strength might carry mighty lance,
 And gaily forth to combat press.
 Your breath came deep and strong and clear;
 You panted in thin atmosphere.

Your roots that struck so strong and deep
 A vigorous foothold all around,
 You trimmed them close, they only creep
 With feeble clasplings through the ground.
 Your kingly head with branches topped, —
 By your own hand your crown was lopped.

You cut away your strongest roots,
 You stunted all your honest growth;
 How can you hope to bear rich fruits?
 You strangled blooms and seed cups both.
 And this you did with open eyes,
 To please a world you now despise.

Your soul was sent you half divine;
 You starve and waste its angel grace;
 And so you "dwindle, peak, and pine,"