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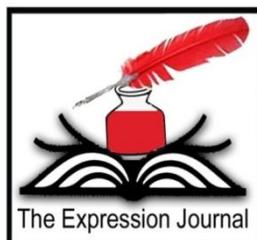
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JESUS CHRIST PRACTISED WHAT HE PREACHED SPIRITUALITY AND HUMANITY

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Abstract

Mankind is by nature sinful and needs the righteousness of God. Jesus has given us the secrets of a new fruitful life through his gospels presented in the holy Bible. It is a book of divine instruction serving humanity with spirituality. The great theme of Bible is the preaching of Lord Jesus Christ and his work of redemption for mankind. It offers comfort in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, advice for our problems, and rebuke for our sins and daily inspiration for our every need. It includes history, drama, biography, prophesy, science, philosophy and inspirational reading. The Bible proclaims the good news of the gospel that we might know God; it explains the will of God that all of us may grow spiritually before Him. To the rationalist, Jesus is a multidimensional personality: an excellent teacher, a compassionate friend, a sympathetic healer, an expert interpreter of law and a social reformer. He practised what he preached; meekness, love, sympathy and simplicity. The family was the first human institution created by God. He created all of the heavens and earth and the things in them that they might prepare the way for and sustain the crown of his creation-humanity. The present paper is based on *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* where the opening verse strikes the note that 'Jesus is the Masiah'.

Key-Words

Spirituality, Humanity, Biography, Preaching, Gospel, Mankind

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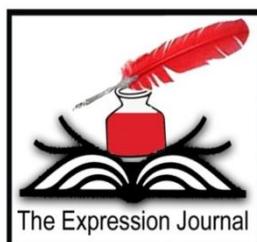
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Introduction

Mankind is by nature sinful and needs the righteousness of God. Jesus has given us the secrets of a new fruitful life through his gospels presented in the holy Bible. It is a book of divine instruction serving humanity with spirituality. The great theme of Bible is the preaching of Lord Jesus Christ and his work of redemption for mankind. It offers comfort in sorrow, guidance in perplexity, advice for our problems, and rebuke for our sins and daily inspiration for our every need. It includes history, drama, biography, prophesy, science, philosophy and inspirational reading. The Bible proclaims the good news of the gospel that we might know God; it explains the will of God that all of us may grow spiritually before Him. To the rationalist, Jesus is a multidimensional personality: an excellent teacher, a compassionate friend, a sympathetic healer, an expert interpreter of law and a social reformer. He practised what he preached; meekness, love, sympathy and simplicity. The family was the first human institution created by God. He created all of the heavens and earth and the things in them that they might prepare the way for and sustain the crown of his creation-humanity. The present paper is based on *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* where the opening verse strikes the note that 'Jesus is the Messiah'. Gospel tells us about the good news of Jesus Christ. It describes his character, his life and his miracles. There are four Gospels those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospel of Matthew is supposed to be the first Gospel written by a Jew in order to convince them of the authenticity of the Messiah or Christ besides being Matthew, an eye witness to many of the events that took place in the life time of Christ and also because the early Christians in 2 A.D quoted frequently from the writings of Matthew. According to Wickenham, the Church and Christians light is more deeply influenced by Gospel of Matthew than by any other New Testament Book." THE book is an apology (means of instruction) and a handbook of lectionary (book read in public). The language of the Gospel changed from Aramaic to Greek and then from Latin to English. According to Filson, "its strength lay not in narrative power, literary appeal or mystic depth, but in its proved and persistent

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capacity to shape Christian thought and church life.”. It is possible that it was written at the end of the war between Jews and Romans which ended in destruction in 70 A. D.

Arrangement of Material in the Gospel

Matthew paid special attention to the arrangement of material. The whole Gospel is arranged as follows:

Chapter 1-4—Introduction

Ch. 5-7—1st section of Teaching

Ch. 8-9—Jesus miracles of Healing

Ch. 10—2nd section of Teaching

Ch. 11-12—Rejection of Jesus and John, the Baptist by Jews. John was Christ’s cousin and was 6 months older to Jesus.

Ch. 13—3rd section of Teaching

Ch. 14-17—Further miracles, confrontation with fallacies, Peter’s confession and transfiguration of Jesus.

Ch. 18—4th section of Teaching

Ch. 19-22—Journey of Jesus and his Disciples to Jerusalem and his teachings in the Temple

Ch. 23-25—5th section of Teaching

Ch. 26-28—Last days of Jesus, his arrest, trials, crucifixion, Resurrection and his final appearance in Galilee.

Genealogy of Jesus

In the Gospel Jesus is presented as a messianic king; the son of the royal house of David-/:/, his ancestors are traced back to Abraham who is considered as the Father of Faith. Matthew has used in his title the three names; Christ, David and Abraham and writes the genealogy through David to Christ dividing into three equal ages; Abraham to David; David to the Deportation; Deportation to Christ. The genealogy supports the conclusion that Christ was the genuine son of David and Abraham through Mary, a king with a right to rule, with his legal title through Joseph and his divinity supported by his supernatural conception without a human father. The first age is the age of waiting especially mentioning three women in the genealogy. First woman is Tamar, the daughter- in -law of Judah, Rahab the second woman, a harlot of Jericho, the wife of Salomon and the mother of Boaz. Ruth was the third woman, a Moabites’ and not a descendent of Abraham. The second age is the age of the kings from David, the first king to Jechoniah the last king of Judah before exile. The 3rd period begins after the deportation to Babylon it is another period of waiting. Herod and his son, people of Jerusalem represent Jews. The wise men from the east were the representatives of the gentiles. Bethlehem was the village where David was born and Christ would be born there. The gifts of Magi’s have a peculiar astronomical phenomenon with supernatural manifestation regarded as symbolic of Christ’s threefold office as king, Priest and Prophet. Jesus though sinless made himself one with the sinful humanity by going for Baptism to John, the Baptist. This step was taken to accomplish God’s purpose. As Jesus declared in chapter 5.27, of Matthew, he had come not to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfill what was laid down. He objected the hypocrisy practised by the scribes and Pharisees in its implementation somewhat

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similar to Gautama Buddha. The Pharisees were the most important of the Jewish religious sects. They stood for a scrupulous observance of the letter of the Mosaic Law (Moses). Sadducees (mostly bureaucrats) were the next great Jewish sect. They taught that virtue was to be practised for its own sake, not for a reward. Jesus believed that a new day was at hand and he wanted to prepare men for a new life. Before preaching to the people, he prepared himself by cleansing his own inner being of various human weaknesses. Jesus baptism is a step that must be taken in order to accomplish God's purpose. This symbolic act was an illustration of the greater baptism which he was to undergo at Calvary where he died for every sinner of the world. All the three persons of the Trinity were either visible or audible to human eyes and ears at the time of his baptism and God the Father claimed him his beloved Son. For this he underwent the ordeal of temptation, emerged victorious in his mission. He gave his Sermon on the Mount after the temptation episode, and went about in Galilee, 'teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. 'He gave the call 'Repent, believe the good news.'

The three Temptations, 'man shall not live by bread alone'(Deuteronomy Ch.52 ,Vs 8) indicate that man has spiritual needs than material needs and Jesus has to satisfy this hunger. 'Thou shall not tempt the lord, thy God' and devils word, 'worship me "is to evade the cross by establishing a kingdom by force in accordance with the ways of the world and not of God.

Sermon on the Mount (Beatitudes or Blessedness)

Christ Sermon on the Mount generally described as the code of Christianity, the character of the kingdom of God, is a fully developed discourse. The eight Beatitudes forming the introduction state clearly the moral requisites for becoming a member of that kingdom. The obligations and rights of its citizens comprise the main body of the work, while the conclusion is an appeal to mankind to prepare them for the coming of the kingdom. Chapter 3-11 contains eight short sayings (the Beatitudes) each beginning as "blessed are..." Declaring that God will reverse the positions and judgements which man has made on this earth. Blessed are those who rely on God for the necessities of spiritual life being meek, unselfish and peacemakers who make peace between man and man. The listeners of that sermon were of three classes, the newly chosen apostles, the larger band of the faithful disciples and the general throng that had come from every quarter to hear Christ and to petition cures at his hands. His general theme is Christian morality of the old law; its very opening line upsets the whole Jews concepts of the significance of riches. Jews looked on wealth as a blessing from God for leading a good life and on poverty as a divine curse in consequence of sin. Christ's first words cut into that false trust in wealth like a scythe swinging through weeds. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," he began, "for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." In the same startling vein he continued "blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall see God. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake for theirs is the kingdom oh heaven." Healing Miracles like that of Roman servant, Peter's mother-in-law, stilling of storm, paralytic, blind man and of leper. Healing and cleanliness lead to service to others. Every healing is a manifestation of His divine power over life and death. Miracle of loaves and fishes demonstrate that God having created all varieties of creatures in the world continues to sustain them. Three things are essential for a miracle; event must be visible;

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event must go beyond the power of nature; it must be a sign of divine mission. Jesus miracles were the symbolic actions which explained the nature of his mission.

In all Christ mentions 8 Christian virtues: Voluntary poverty, meekness, penitence, resignation to suffering of all sorts for the love of God, mercy, purity, peacemaking and the enduring of political and social persecution for being true Christians. He encourages his apostles to endure suffering, telling them that they are the salt of the earth which must not lose its flavour. Christ reassure them: "Do not think that I have come to destroy but to fulfil." The moral reality of the old law would be retained and even perfected. Another example is his enlargement of the scope of the 3rd commandment: 'You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Thou shalt not kill, and that whoever shall kill shall be liable to the judgement. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement, and whoever says to his brother, Roca (an obscure term) shall be liable to the fire of Gehenna.'" Christ here distinguishes three degrees of culpability. Until then the murder alone was punished by the sword on "Judgement"; but he taught that murderous and irreconcilable rage equalled at sin. Secondly to call anyone by the name of 'Roca' (suffering moral and intellectual deformities) was deserving of the same penalty as that meted out to the Sanhedrin or council—death by stoning or burning. And thirdly to call anyone "thou fool" that is to hope and say that a person was abandoned by God, an infidel was to deserve the greatest punishment humanity can know—condemnation hell by God Himself. Christ, therefore, broadened the law to embrace sins of thought and word as well as deed. Filson expresses well these two conceptions of abrogation and fulfilment when he says that, "the spirit of Christianity could not be said to destroy mosaic legislation except in the sense that a seed is destroyed by the fruit." In this Christ gave 6 precepts: first, on justice, second on purity not merely of deeds but of thoughts; third on divorce; fourth on oaths; fifth on retaliation, sixth on brotherly love. He commanded that purity of intention accompany acts of faith, almsgiving, prayer, fasting and his prescribed singleness of purpose in spiritual things and trust in God-providence- at all times. The Evangelists then adds various precepts uttered by Christ in his discourse, having to do with rash judgements, reverence for divine revelation and holy things, perseverance in prayer the difficulties that best salvation, false prophets, mere lip service of Christ and finally the need of obeying the commands and counsels of Christ. The sermon also contains the prayer "our Father". Usually emphasis falls on an at least the victims, which awakens and strengthen the individual conscience and suggest an example that requires faith and spiritual determination to follow. The Sermon on the Mount goes on to give injunctions that define godly action. The most famous is the Golden rule, 'so whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.' (7:12)

Teachings through Parables

The parable is the illustration of spiritual truth in the form of a story to explore the deeper meanings of scriptures. Jesus parables include a wide range of allusions and comparisons that vary from a few words to extended stories that pushed one to examine the understanding of God and Self. Jesus did not teach in a particular mode but he taught according to the opportunity with command over his subject and discourse. He used local proverbs, teach directly, exhort, snub, give personal example, and quote the law or a prophet in a cohesive way reaching the innermost core

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of the heart. It acts like a catalyst. It is interpreted as referring to God Himself giving everything to win the treasure of his people and showing them the way to salvation. Christ as Jesus is based on 5 discourse: Sermon on the Mount; Charge to the 12 disciples; Teaching by Parables; Teaching on Humility and Forgiveness; and The Last days. The Parable of Ten Virgins and the Bridegroom, sharply focus on the foresight and prudence which prompt men and women to face life with a lamp of hope. The Parable of the Vineyard Workers symbolically extols the grace and loving kindness of God toward those who enter the kingdom late. J. Weiss interprets it to mean that every distinction between the first and the last vanishes in the kingdom of God. The parable of Talent has been verified by modern psychology that man's mental, moral and physical capabilities increase when put to correct use otherwise they are useless. The parable of the Debtor focuses on the importance of the forgiveness. The Parable of the Lost Sheep signifies togetherness and a caring attitude.

As per the Christianity, Jesus Christ, the son of God, the messiah, the saviour, came on earth to spread the message of the kingdom of Heaven. His interest was in human life and his aim was to make people better human beings by bringing inner change in them. His moral uprightness, clarity of thought and the freshness of his approach lent authenticity to his teachings. He was not a moralistic preacher but he was to make people better human beings by bringing change in them. Religion for Jesus, was away of leaving of a healthy men in a healthy society and vice versa. So it was necessary to follow the law meticulously to give birth to morally clean, upright and healthy individuals. Rituals and ceremonial practices like hand washing and others were out rightly rejected by him with impunity which often angered Pharisees and the scribes. Christ and his followers did not follow the outworn customs rigidly of washing hands ignoring the personal cleanliness. When Pharisees questioned him he replied convincingly, ``-what goes in the body through our hands is not important but what comes out of the heart is significant because what we speak leaves its impact. On asking about healing and reaping on Sabbath Jesus replied, if a man is in trouble there is no harm in relieving his suffering even be it be Sabbath; similarly if a man is hungry he can reap and eat because even David has to sow bread when hungry. For him human need is greater than the futile ceremonial practices. Such hypocritical rules really burden the mankind. Moses gave the Jewish Law which was clear and strict. It covered all important personal and social questions like adultery, murder, divorce, theft and ascertained punishment for the erring. Jesus not only upheld the law but elaborated upon it further. For example murder is a grievous punishable crime but for Jesus only desisting from killing was not enough because it was not a remedy. Man should search within to find the cause and uproot the evil. One should be in control of his anger. Regarding adultery, Jesus enjoined upon men to purify themselves of evil thoughts and desires. He was not against divorce but he did not want people to seek it on flimsy grounds. He advocated truthfulness, forgiveness and the will to do good even to one's enemies. His own life was an illustration of these precepts. He forgave even those who ill treated, humiliated and crucified him. He told Peter and the world, 'they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.(26:52)Jesus worked hard to build the telebois, the perfect man. If religion is fellowship with God then prayer is the conscious expression to have a communion with God. Even APJ Abdul

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Kalam thinks on such veins on religion and prayer in his essay 'The Power of the Prayer'. Jesus too prayed in isolation. There are instances when Jesus left his followers and went to hill tops isolated to pray. His agitated mind, the night, prior to his arrest trial strengthen his own faith in the power of prayer. He wanted to transmit similar faith to his disciples. After the cursing of the fig tree he told his disciples that they could achieve power to control nature only if they prayed with unshaken faith in the lord. Christ is the bridegroom. We don't know at which day or hour he will come so be prudent and ready.

Jesus advocated performing prayer with a calm and composed spirit with pure trust, reverence and devotion leaving all things to God. Being father he knows what the child requires, there is no need to clamour. Prayer should be a conscious expression of our fellowship with God. A true human should show reverence for humanity, spirit of forgiveness, goodwill, a self forgetting sense of service and sacrifice for a high moral life. Love should be a mere sentiment but a good will to do best for others. His teachings are not bound by time and change but with new order spirituality and humanity goes together. The Sermon on the Mount specifically focuses on meekness, mercy, goodness, nobility and peace which can lead man to eternal bliss. Jesus visualised integrity, singleness of purpose and high aims to be the distinctive elements of Christian character. Only a man of sterling quality can elevate his character of being a true follower of Jesus. Jesus used four metaphors for such men-Salt, light, a city on a hill and a lamp on a lamp stand. He showed that religion in its essence was different from law, and that a man who has been inwardly changed becomes a law to himself, because he is then guided by the spirit of the Lord. Where the spirit of God exists, liberty is possible there distinguishing between the moral and ceremonial. The charge levelled against him by Pharisees, scribes and priests that he was breaking the existing system was an outcome of their jealousy. Jesus faith was the faith of his people and the Old Testament was his Bible. Unlike Jews he was against the blind adherence to tradition. People loved to follow him because his tidings did not depend upon the appeal of scriptures; he spoke from within and with a note of immediate inner certainty. Christ was the new paschal lamb whose blood was to be shed for the deliverance of mankind from sins. He gave a new significance to the Jews tradition of breaking bread and taking wine on the Passover feast by saying that bread and wine symbolises his body and blood respectively. His death would achieve mankind redemption from sin and death.

The Charge given to the twelve Apostles were to confine themselves to the Jewish Towns. Unlike ordinary travellers they were to depend on the gifts and hospitality of those who accepted their preaching. They were to be as wise as serpent. The worst the enemies can do is to destroy our physical health but not our souls, our hopes of everlasting life—that belongs to God alone. Only a life emptied and poured out in the service of Christ in this world will find its full joy in the Life everlasting.

Some critics contend that Jesus teachings left out social, familial and institutional life of man; that he had nothing to say on family life, war, slavery and such other things which affected everyday life. He spoke of property, of wealth but his discussions were not systematic. Such critics should look into the various parables, sayings and proverbs which throw light on social, familial

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and institutional side. The parable of Wheat and tare(13:36-46) shows how in society one has to stay with and tolerate evil without being choked by it: the parable of lost sheep(18:10-14) speaks of accepting and taking care of the obscure and lowly so that man lives in the community harmoniously. Thus Jesus did not lay down rules but set forth ideals. All his teachings were directed at generating reverence for humanity, the acceptance of one father, the obligation of brotherhood, spirit of goodwill, co-operation and service.

The Last Days

The last great discourse given at Peter's house was on humility and forgiveness the two principles of humanity. This was given before the journey to Jerusalem when he was to be crucified. Teaching on Divorce is an answer to Pharisee. Christ said that only those who forsake all for the kingdom of Heaven are able to set aside all desires for marriage and can take up celibacy. Chapters' 24-25 talks about the end of the world. The prophesy of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was fulfilled in the time of Emperor Julian, who in futile attempt to rebuild the temple removed even those stones which had been left at the time of destruction by Tithes. The disciple thought that the end of the world was synonymous with the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem but the destruction was a sign that the old order was obsolete and that a new one had begun. He foretold that great tribulations would overtake the entire world. The Last Judgement will be based on love, the point of central importance in relationship to God and one another, an everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his fallen Angels. Our failures are due to being no love in our lives. The question of Crucifixion and Resurrection has often puzzled critics and scholars. The rationalist finds an explanation that Jesus did not rise in body and flesh but in spirit. He lives on and Christianity lives on, not as a disembodied spirit but as a living spirit.

Summation

Rationally thinking, Jesus is a great teacher, a compassionate friend, a sympathetic healer, an expert interpreter of the law and a social reformer. He irked the people for his new and unconventional interpretation to the Jewish law. Today when violence has become a mode of everyday living, one remembers with gratitude Jesus' exhortation to his disciple (who drew the sword to hit the Chief Priest): `` that those who live by the sword perish by the sword''. He visualised a society where love, compassion, mutual understanding and brotherhood thrived and where human goodness prevailed side by side with spiritual devotion, where man's inward experience elevated him from manhood to Godhood.

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