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ARTICLE XII.

CRITICAL NOTES.

THE PLACE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN THE
CHRISTIAN SYSTEM.

A SERIOUS error seems to be increasingly prevalent concerning the place which the Sermon on the Mount was designed to occupy amid the remedial agencies of the gospel. We hear much said about going back to the Sermon on the Mount, as if by so doing we should gain a distinct vantage-ground, and clear ourselves from later and useless excrescences ; whereas the fact is that the Sermon on the Mount, by reason of the time at which it was delivered, if for nothing else, is occupied with only one phase of Christian truth, and would be extremely defective if made to stand by itself. The Sermon on the Mount is the law, and not the gospel, and, like the law of Moses, is but the schoolmaster leading to Christ. The more distinctive elements giving power to Christ's works and words were brought to light subsequent to the delivery of this sermon. Indeed they were not available to the world until after Christ's death and resurrection and the spiritual manifestation of Pentecost, and would now be largely beyond our reach but for the apostolic epistles which unfold and enforce them.

The truth of these statements will appear from even a hasty glance at the sermon. The Beatitudes pronounce blessings only upon those who have kept the law, and the standard set up is one to which none of the hearers could say that he had attained. Who of Christ's hearers could have said that he was one of the really poor in spirit, of the meek, of the merciful, of the pure in heart, of the peacemakers, and of those that hunger and thirst after righteousness? But only they were to be blessed. What chance therefore did the multitudes have, or does mankind in general have, to become partakers of these promises?

In the specific sections upon the fulfilling of the law, the exalted character of the standard set up appears in most emphatic terms. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. . . . But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire. . . . Agree with thine adversary quickly, . . .

lest haply . . . the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the last farthing. . . . If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee. . . . Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . . But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, . . . Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them; else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven. . . . Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. . . . If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. . . . Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where thy treasure is, there thy heart will be also. . . . Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? . . . Judge not that ye be not judged. . . . All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them. . . . Enter ye in by the narrow gate . . . for narrow is the gate and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it. . . . Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out devils, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. . . . Every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand."

It thus appears that the Sermon on the Mount is little else than a reiteration of the moral law, emphasizing all of its requirements by declaring them to have respect to the thoughts of the heart, and not merely to the outward action. If we are to be forgiven only as we have forgiven others, how can we hope to be forgiven at all? The motives essential to the securing of this high obedience are largely absent from the Sermon on the Mount. The preaching of this sermon was calculated at the time, and if unconnected with doctrines unfolded at a later period in Christ's history, is always calculated, to produce conviction of sin. The contemplation of the truths here presented is not adapted to the production of faith and hope. The hearers upon this occasion were not *converted* like those who heard Peter upon the day of Pentecost: they were simply *astonished* at the authority with which the Saviour spoke. The only intimation of mercy in this sermon appears in the seventh chapter, where we read, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; . . . for everyone that asketh, receiveth"; but even this is followed by the most terrific warning against hypocrisy in asking. It is only they who ask aright who shall receive.

In explanation of these facts, it should be noted that the Sermon on the

Mount was preached before the most characteristic facts of the gospel were enacted. The sermon makes clear the duties of mankind, but does not reveal, and at that time could not reveal, the love of God as expressed in the sufferings and death of Christ. The preaching of the apostles was successful because they had, as the theme of their discourses, the culminating exhibition of God's love in the death of Christ which in a mysterious way makes effective to all believers atonement for the sins of the past, and, at the same time, furnishes the most melting motives to obedience which have ever been presented to mankind. The sufferings of Christ which pave the way for the forgiveness of sinners are at the same time the most powerful of all motives to induce repentance, and to establish men in the observance of all the requirements of the law.

As an enforcement of the law of duty resting upon man's spiritual nature, the Sermon on the Mount is invaluable; but it needed, and was designed to have, as a supplement, the motive power found in the later story of Christ's sufferings, and in the unfolding of the theme preserved for us in the writings of the apostles. Happily we are not limited to either of these alone. The church is not compelled to choose between the law as emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount and the gospel consummated on the cross; but, firmly holding to both, she lifts on high the lofty standard of the one, and at the same time the all-powerful motives of the other to make it effective. With the use both of the law and of the gospel the church has hitherto prevailed, and, by this means only, will she continue to conquer.

NOVEL BIBLE HISTORY. ¹

[As illustrating the outcome of most of the disparaging criticisms of the Pentateuch, the following bit of thorough exegesis is worthy of more permanent reference than it would receive in the weekly periodical for which it was prepared.—EDS.]

THE law of Moses, whatever else may be said of it, has always been commended for its striking sanitary character. But we have recently read the charge against it of criminal inhumanity, stated in these terms: "It may be that many believe that the Law of Moses, Deut. xiv. 21, *permitting diseased meat to be sold to foreigners* was the law of God. But if any one in this country should be *caught acting on the provisions of that law* he would soon find how decided is the disapproval of it by courts and people."

One should be quite sure before making the statement in so offensive a form. It would be a very singular conjunction of incongruities in the same humane code which forbids even the capture of the mother bird from her nest in any tree or on the ground, the muzzling of the ox when he

¹An article by ex-President S. C. Bartlett, D.D., in the Advance for January 7, 1897.

treads out the corn, and plowing with the ox and ass together, to find also express, universal, permanent provision, and therefore encouragement to the Hebrew to sell diseased meat to the foreigner. Is there in the Deuteronomic code a positive "provision" for every member of the Jewish race to do what any one in this country "caught" in doing would be punished by the courts?

There is not. Does the Hebrew word (*nevelah*) so unhesitatingly pronounced "diseased meat," actually mean that? It does not; no competent scholar will pretend that it does. Can the word be shown in any case definitely to designate diseased meat? It cannot. Can it even be shown in any instance distinctly to include diseased meat as such? In no instance.

Indeed, a clause in the very verse cited, but not alluded to in the reference, is itself sufficient to refute the assertion. It is the clause which assigns to "the stranger within thy gates" substantially the same treatment in this respect as the "foreigner." The writer selects from the first clause of the verse one word which somewhat vaguely renders the Hebrew word, curiously omits the second clause, and fixes on the third. The second clause, taken in connection with the injunction of the very near context and numerous other injunctions in this same book of Deuteronomy, effectually disproves the charge. Now, replacing the Hebrew word in the text, and inserting the omitted clause (in parenthesis, to call attention to it), the passage reads thus: "Ye shall not eat of any *nevelah*; (thou mayest give it to the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it); or thou mayest sell it to the foreigner." Is it possible for any man to understand that the "diseased meat" which the Jew was to sell to the foreigner, he was to induce the favored stranger within the gates to eat by *giving* it to him? Still further; the constant and strenuous commands given in this very book of Deuteronomy, and in close connection with this text, preclude the possibility of such an interpretation.

How was the Jew commanded to treat "the stranger within the gates," thus coupled with the foreigner? In this same chapter, only eight verses later, we find one of the many commands requiring the *kindest treatment* of this same "stranger" (the same word, *Ger*), who in this respect is steadily classed with the widow and the fatherless and the Levite, one or all. Thus in this very chapter (verses 28, 29), when at the end of three years the tithe of increase is brought in and laid up, the command is given, "The Levite, because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the fatherless, and the *stranger*, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come and eat and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." So, still more strongly, chapter x. 18, 19, "He [God] doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. *Love ye* therefore the *stranger*; for ye were strangers

in the land of Egypt." Similar injunctions for the kind treatment of the stranger, with the same classification with the widow and the fatherless, and for similar reasons, are given in connection with the feast of weeks (xvi. 11) and of tabernacles (xvi. 13). The Hebrews were not to oppress the stranger (xxiv. 14), nor to pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor hinder the stranger, the fatherless and widow from gleaning in the grain-field (xxiv. 19), the olive trees (verse 20), and the vineyard (verse 21). The same three classes are commended to special kindness with a double enumeration in chapter xxvi. 12, 13, with a reminder of the Israelites' own bondage in Egypt.

Now it is to be noted that in the passage where our friend finds his "diseased meat," the same thing is to be *given* to this stranger which is to be sold to the foreigner. But in view of these steady and urgent requirements in the same Deuteronomic code and in the near context, to find the injunction or permission to give him diseased meat is an interpretation entirely precluded if any other is admissible, or I might say, possible. And with the case of the stranger resident within the gates, that of the foreigner in the same passage also falls.

A different interpretation is very obvious, and has been very commonly and easily recognized down to the present time. A ceremonial restriction was laid on the Jew which was not laid on the stranger within the gates nor on the foreigner. What is contained in the prohibition and the permission of the verse in question (and other similar passages), is simply this: The Jew being forbidden to eat blood, was therefore forbidden to eat any bird or animal that had not been regularly slaughtered and drained of its blood.

The assertion or implication that *nevelah* means diseased meat, as has been already said, is destitute of foundation. It means the dead: as Gesenius renders it (in the Thesaurus), *cadaver*, translated by Robinson, corpse, carcass; Fuerst defines, the sunk, the fallen, hence a corpse; Knobel and Dillmann render in this passage, the fallen, as does Strack in Lev. xvii. 13; Oettli renders here, corpse (Leichnam). Not all dead animals or carcasses were forbidden to the Jew; but we have a long catalogue of clean animals which he was permitted to eat, yet not until the blood had been thoroughly drained from them (Lev. xvii. 14, 15). For this very reason in the passage just referred to, the torn by wild beasts is prohibited, and also *nevelah*. Now, what carcasses of wild animals might be covered by this word (and for the reason rendered), not included in those torn by wild beasts? All others not regularly slaughtered and drained; such as all birds and beasts killed by the hunter and not bled, all killed by accident, or by battling with one another, those caught in traps and snares, struck by lightning, as so often happens, destroyed by tornadoes, as has happened to hundreds and thousands during the present year, and, we might add, destroyed by hail as in Egypt, and as in North Dakota on the 25th of last May. All these would fall within the reason rendered, and

put the *nevelah* in the same general class with the more specific and perhaps more common one of those torn by wild beasts. This is the simple, consistent and long received explanation. Any one who shall attentively read the first twenty verses of the chapter containing the passage in question, and other partly parallel ones (Lev. xvii. 14, 15; Ex. xxii. 31; xxii. 8; Ezek. iv. 14), and observe the reason rendered, and the association of the act with ceremonial uncleanness and prohibition of blood, will see the perfect validity of the received interpretation. The stranger and the foreigner might eat; the Jew under his ritual law might not, although in the Levitical code which claims to be many years earlier, this was forbidden to the stranger and the foreigner also. A slight modification had been made during the intervening forty years.

This, I say, is the accepted interpretation of the best modern scholars. Dillmann says, "From the prohibition of blood it follows also not to eat the *fallen* or torn, of which the blood is not drawn off" (Lev. xvii. 15). So Strack: "In case of the fallen and torn the blood is not duly poured out." The somewhat radical Kalisch says (Lev. p. 223): "Such flesh was partially if not chiefly interdicted because it allowed but an imperfect removal of the blood." And the Higher Critic, Driver, says (Deut. p. 165): "The ground upon which this flesh was prohibited being, doubtless, partly because it *might* be unwholesome, but *principally* because it would not be thoroughly drained of blood."

The Hebrew Archæologists have taken the same ground with the best expositors. Jahn more than sixty years ago said (Upham's translation, p. 154) that both of these things, the *nevelah* and the torn of beasts, were interdicted, "inasmuch as the blood remained in the body." Benzinger in 1894 says (Archæologie, p. 483), "Even for this reason they ate no corpse and nothing torn by wild beasts, because here was the blood." Saalschuetz, midway between (1853), says of this verse under discussion, that "the law speaks of only one kind of forbidden thing, namely, of beasts which had not fallen by the knife." (Das Mosaiches Recht, p. 252, note.)

After what has been said it scarcely need be added that the English phrase, "that which dieth of itself," on which alone the charge against the law of Moses is understood to defend itself, is a very loose rendering, not supported by the Septuagint, Vulgate, or so far as I am aware by any modern lexicographer or careful scholar, but used and retained for want of an English word or brief phrase that exactly covered the case, and without a thought, probably, that it would ever be put to such a use. The Douay Version renders a little more, though not quite, exactly, "whatsoever is dead of itself," easily understood to mean, not properly slaughtered. But waiving the question what would be the best brief rendering, it is obvious that the assertion that the law of Moses permitted diseased meat to be sold to the foreigner is unjustifiable.