

THE
PRINCETON
SEMINARY
BULLETIN

When Truth Is a Belt

John A. Mackay

The Christian Imperative

James I. McCord

Sermons:

The God Beyond Theology

Bryant M. Kirkland

A New Commandment

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Toward the Christian Captivation
of the Suburbs

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Issues in Church Education Today

D. Campbell Wyckoff

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WHEN TRUTH IS A BELT

JOHN A. MACKAY

DR. EMMONS, President McCord, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Faculty and of the Graduating Class, fellow alumni, dear friends:

I am not being conventional or merely courteous when I say that the privilege of addressing you at this time is an honor that I deeply cherish. It is not unnatural, but only human, that I should stand before you as one profoundly moved. As I think of the occasion, and scan the faces before me and around me, including that of an old teacher,¹ it could not well be otherwise.

Present in this audience are a number of my classmates, and not least, the distinguished member of our class who presides over this gathering. They and I graduated together from Princeton Theological Seminary just fifty years ago. When we first met on the beloved campus the sun of the Victorian era, with its watchwords, "evolution" and "progress," was moving towards its setting. The day we received our diplomas and bade each other farewell, the guns of the First World War were booming.

On this Graduation Day, as you who are members of the Class of 1965 come forward to receive the academic awards of your labors, and brace yourselves for tomorrow, you cannot be unaware that it will be your lot to live with revolution both as word and as reality. Human history confronts a revolu-

tionary springtime. But I would ask you to greet this springtime with calm resolution; for it is God's springtime, albeit His terrible springtime.

Never so much as in this revolutionary era could words mean more for men and women graduating from a theological seminary than the words that inspired the revolutionary zeal of first century Christians. Those words are enshrined in the Church's first creedal statement, "Jesus Christ is Lord." This timeless truth regarding the centrality of Christ and His Lordship in history, must illumine the thought and determine the action of the worldwide community of Christ, through all the changing patterns and the complex issues of this terrestrial life.

In the shadow of change and the changeless, let me share with you some thoughts regarding things that have been and continue to be, very real to me. I will begin with reminiscences of yesterday, and, then proceed to a confrontation of today. There will be involved the basic question of truth in both its subjective and its objective dimension.

I

A controversy is growing in Church circles as to the significance and status of God, of religious experience, of subjectivity in general, of conversion in particular. The controversy is closely related to the meaning and marks of Christian discipleship. It involves

¹ Dr. Frederick W. Loetscher.

Church members, Christian ministers, and the Christian Church as a whole. This particular issue, I venture to affirm, is the most crucial that confronts contemporary Christianity. Will you forgive me if, in seeking to make a contribution to the current discussion, I become reminiscent and lyrical. Let me for a few brief minutes move backward into yesterday.

I once penned these words: *The road to Tomorrow leads through Yesterday*. At one of the crossroads of my life, my family and I were on a western journey, headed towards the Yellowstone Park. We spent a weekend among the Black Hills of South Dakota. It was there, as I gazed at those historic figures that are sculptured side by side on towering crags, that the relationship between Yesterday and Tomorrow took on a new dimension in my thinking.

This question is an abiding question, and was never more real than in our time. Whether people are in an evolutionary or a revolutionary mood, whether they be Christians or non-Christians, Leftists or Rightists, whether they live in the Americas or in Europe, in Asia, Africa, Latin America or the Islands of the Pacific, they cannot evade the question, What has Yesterday to say to Today, what guidance does it offer to Tomorrow?

Speaking for myself, Yesterday is primarily significant in my life because it is linked to an early revolutionary experience of the reality of God.

In these days when the question of Deity is up afresh for discussion in Church and society, I would not be "honest to God" or to myself, to the Bishop of Woolwich, to Paul Tillich

or to you, if I did not avow, soberly and unashamedly, that a sense of a living Divine Presence, of a Hand, strong, amorous and controlling, has been the most decisive factor in my thinking and living from teenage years to beyond the threescore and ten. A proud Celtic youth was yesterday gripped by a Presence that changed the direction of his life.

Why do I speak like this? Why should I risk being called a sentimentalist, a romanticist, a candidate for psychiatric treatment or, perchance, a pathetic instance of senility? I have taken this risk because, from my early teens, Deity has not been for me a God up yonder, out there, or in there. He has been a God right here. The metaphysical "Ground of Being" became a spiritual Presence beside me, a Hand that held both my present and my future life. I learned that life, if I trusted him, could be adventurous; and adventurous it became.

Memory, on its road to Yesterday, takes me back to old Miller Chapel in the spring of 1915. It was my turn to preach the customary class sermon, in the presence of classmates and under the scrutiny of our teacher of homiletics. My text was a line from one of the psalms, "My times are in Thy hand" (Ps. 31:15).

These words were expressive of a mood of quiet confidence and deep conviction that my life, as I faced the uncharted future, was in the hand of God and that he would direct my way.

I cannot recall a single word of what I said on that occasion. But what I felt was something that went beyond a sense of God as the mere Ground of one's being and of all Being, more

than a conviction that all human life is lived under the general direction of Deity. There was the intimate conviction of being in a Hand that held me lovingly and would control my life.

Specially meaningful for me was the Hebrew poet's use of *Thy*, "in *Thy* hand," following the words he addressed to Deity in the preceding line "Thou art *my* God." He was *mine*, I was *his*. There was the sense of a personal Presence who had taken me under his Sovereign care.

On another occasion, during the same period in my seminary course, it became my turn to spend a weekend in New York, where we students were supposed to go in small groups to visit different types of mission work and to hear great preachers. Dr. J. H. Jowett was then minister of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. On that Sunday he opened the afternoon service with the hymn, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Being a young Scot, brought up in a religious tradition where only metrical psalms were allowed in worship, it happened to be the first time I had ever heard this now favorite hymn. Two lines in particular expressed my life's deepest yearning:

"Let Thy grace, Lord, like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee."

II

As I share with you this reminiscence, I seem to overhear a query: "But tell us, what exactly do you mean by God, and by the Hand of God, in this context?"

Now I am fully aware that to be meaningful today, even when you address a Christian audience, you can

take nothing for granted where the name of God is concerned. You will not take it amiss, therefore, if I become still further reminiscent in order to clarify my position. For I too, if I may use words that have recently become familiar, I too must be "honest to God." It is necessary, in the words of another contemporary thinker that I should "validate the idea of transcendence for the modern mind." In so doing I must also, of course, be honest with myself. So on this road called *Honesty*, I retrace my steps still further into Yesterday. From a seminary chapel and a metropolitan church, I go back to a Scottish hillside, to a time when your speaker was in his teens.

I was a young teenager when God first became real to me, when Jesus Christ became dear to me, when religion became more than conventional ideas and practices in my boyhood life. Of a sudden, it became a very exciting thing for me to be alive, and a very meaningful thing to desire to be admitted to church membership, upon confession of faith in Christ.

The apostolic word, "and you he made alive when you were dead," (Eph. 2:1) became validated in my existence. The experience, which was outwardly undramatic but inwardly decisive, followed a period of boyhood longing for something I wanted to be and was not. My anxiety and longing I would vocally utter each night before falling asleep, echoing the words of that anguished woman who addressed a plea to Jesus Christ: "Lord help me." Something happened, the details of which I will not enter into; but literally everything became new. A sense of new life, and of the personal presence of Christ in life, was followed

by a compulsive call to be a minister, and, later, to be a missionary.

As I look back to those days, in no sentimental or romantic mood, I vividly recall what an exciting thing it became for me to be a Christian. The Bible, which had been conventional reading from childhood now became a literary must, especially the Psalms and the New Testament. Most exciting of all were the letters of that man born in Tarsus, and reborn on the Damascus highway. Dumas' *Count of Monte Cristo*, which I had received as a school prize, had now to take second place. This teenager would rest his fishing rod on the bank of a stream, and sprawl for a while on the grass, with the New Testament open before him. He had found something which was far more exciting than either fiction or fishing. God was someone he could talk to in a very natural way, a *Thou* who had become meaningful to the boyish *I*. This *Thou* was a "*Wholly Other*," He was transcendent, yet he was real and dear, and relevant, to all the concerns of my boyish life.

The new dimension which life had suddenly taken on gave me a special interest in learning from older Christians what their experience had been. I coveted to know all they could tell me about what had happened in their own life history and what God had come to mean to them in daily living.

I developed at the same time a passion for literature and theology and some years later for philosophy. John Bunyan and John Milton, Shakespeare and Wordsworth, Lord Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Chalmers and Jonathan Edwards became favorite authors.

Coincident with this passion for

literature was a passion for a person, Jesus Christ. I could say with Raymond Lull, that famous Spanish scholar and missionary to Moslems in Medieval times, "I have one passion in life and it is he." At a very early date in my life, heart and mind, love, passion and theological thought, became inspired by Paul's cosmic vision that all things would eventually be united in Him, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men's lives and the Lord of history.

III

It is an inescapable fact that a person's philosophy of life, his theology, and also his interpretation of the Christian Church and its role in history, comes from something not derived from reason, or from any purely empirical or rational study. Well and truly did that great philosopher, scientist and mystic Saint, Blaise Pascal, remark, "the heart too has its reasons which reason does not know." Your speaker's life and thought have been determined, have become shaped and inspired, by something positive and creative that happened in his heart and to his heart, something which aroused an intellectual passion and shaped the course of his thinking and his living.

In college years I owed an unspeakable debt to my philosophy professor, J. B. Baille, a leading Hegelian and a translator of Hegel's works. He opened up for me the dimension of philosophical thought and provided a perspective for an intellectual approach to religion, for which he himself frequently expressed disdain. Very moving and unforgettable was his statement one day in the classroom—that in the whole range of literature no book descanted

in such an extraordinary manner upon the intimacy between God and individual persons as did the Book of Psalms. God had little personal reality in his own life, but he wanted to be "honest to God" where others were concerned. The student did not agree with many of his teacher's ideas; but he admired him and owed him an unspeakable debt, not least the challenge of a philosophical position he could not personally adopt.

The sense of a Hand, and of one's life being securely in it, continued to grow in my consciousness. The conviction developed, slowly but steadily, that God wanted me to be a missionary, and that my mission field should be some South American land. It was following the decision to give myself to missionary service abroad, and the pledging of troth to one destined to become my life companion, and who is here present as my most critical listener, that the sense of divine guidance, of being in God's hand, took on a new dimension.

There began to appear at crucial crossroads on one's journey what I would call *undesigned coincidences*. By "undesigned coincidences" I mean *happenings that occur which one had neither intended nor could have anticipated, but which, when they take place, enable a person to fulfill a commitment he undertook in obedience to what he considered to be God's Will*.

I learned by experience, especially during graduate study in Spain, that if I made the service of Christ and the Gospel the goal of my life, and strove to equip myself in the fullest possible manner for that service, facing each new situation as it arose, God would not let me down. And he did not. As

to making the road map, I left that to God. And he made it, routing the path through unexpected places in three continents—until this hour.

IV

With this let me say good-bye to lyrical musing, and to subjective and personal experience as a prime essential for the knowledge of God. Let me skip over the five decades of life from student days in the beloved community of Princeton to this new Commencement Day. Allow me from this point onward to look at the question of truth in its *objective* dimension, and in relation to the human situation as we face it today. Piety, or whatever term be used to designate a personal relationship to Deity, need not, should not, separate one from concern for humanity in every phase of man's existence.

Literally never has the question, "What is Truth?" been more crucial than in this revolutionary time, when the foundations of thought and life are being shaken as rarely before in the history of mankind.

Truth in general was once defined by that Anglican saint and scholar, William Temple, as the "perfect correlation of mind and reality." Christian truth as God's self-disclosure in Holy Scripture and in Jesus Christ, is all that and much more. Christian truth is worthily apprehended, and fulfills its function in life and in thought, when it is not merely a luminous possession of the mind, or an experience of the heart but when it is accepted as a belt that girds life for action in the service of God and man.

Of timeless significance in this connection are St. Paul's words in the

Ephesian Letter: "Buckle on the belt of Truth" (Eph. 6:14 N.E.B.). The "belt" is the symbol of the fact that Christian truth is dynamic in quality. It is inseparably related to action, to action in which the whole personality is involved. We cannot really have truth unless truth also has us.

Christian truth, let us be quite clear, must be given a theological dimension. If Christians are to be intelligently belted in the great classical tradition of the Christian faith, and not live in an intellectual vacuum; if they are to be more than mere fanatics, gripped by some slogan or cliché—it is essential that they cultivate a theological understanding of what Christianity is and of what it means to be a Christian.

Let us, therefore, thank God for the great creeds and confessional statements of the Christian Church. We Christians must have Truth just as Truth must have us. We must have, as far as possible, a structured understanding of what it is the Church believes, and what we ourselves believe, and why. We should on this account rejoice whenever an effort is made by the Church to reformulate its faith more adequately, to express it more clearly, and to give it the fullest possible relevancy to the cultural and ethical problems by which Christians are confronted, in the particular epoch in which their witness is given.

While this is true, let Christians beware, let Christian ministers especially beware, of mere theological sophistication. I have said elsewhere that theological sophistication without spiritual commitment leads to pompous sterility.

There is a scholastic trend in cultural

and religious circles today to treat truths as birds to be pursued and caught and then caged for study or exhibit. There are theological pundits who are master ornithologists. They love to put on display the winged creatures that belong to the great family of Truth. But a theological aviary in which truths, whether as facts, ideas, or systems are exhibited merely for admiration or study cannot represent ultimate truth for thoughtful men and women who want to commit their lives to what they believe with their minds.

It is legitimate and sometimes essential, in human relations, that Truth should be a *badge* to be worn. It is important that Christians be willing to be identified by some visible symbol to show who they are, for what they stand, and, perchance the particular church fellowship denomination to which they belong. But let Christians eschew the *Cult of the Badge*. Let them not substitute an identification card or label for a personal understanding of the Truth, and for a dynamic commitment to the Truth of which the badge is merely a symbol.

One of the perils of Church membership today is precisely this *Cult of the Badge*. Willingness to be publicly regarded as belonging to a local congregation or to a world confessional body, is not enough. T. S. Eliot's warning of the "hollow men, with headpiece filled with straw" continues to have relevancy.

A Spanish peasant, proud to identify himself as belonging to the "one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," was once asked this question, "Tell me, my friend, what is it you believe?" He replied: "Sir, I believe what the Church believes." "And what does the Church

believe?" "The Church believes what I believe."

Nominal Catholicism has become a great concern in Roman Catholic circles, especially in Latin America. An eminent Jesuit theologian, with whom I was privileged, while in Santiago, Chile, last summer, to engage in public dialogue on the Ecumenical Movement, made this remark, "We Catholics must make Christians." Deeply moved by his words, I responded, "We Protestants must also make Christians." And I went on to say, "Speaking as a loyal Presbyterian, we Presbyterians too must make Christians."

It must be recognized that in large segments of the Christian Church today there is no more than a very nominal Christianity, a vacuous, institutional nominalism. We are forced to admit that in very many Christian congregations, Church members have become Church alumni; they appear in the sanctuary solely on the great anniversary occasions.

V

There is a mood which, until recently, was all pervasive in academic centers. Intellectual maturity was identified with what might be called the *Cult of the Uncommitted*. The real intellectual was regarded as one who possessed a vast panoramic view of all Truth, but who felt himself to be so superior that he would not identify himself with any one truth in particular. He became an addict to what the Spanish philosopher, Unamuno, called "intellectual Don Juanism," which being translated into English, means, "intellectual libertinism." It was to such people that Unamuno

said again and again: "Get a great idea, marry it, found a home with it, and raise a family."

But "intellectual Don Juanism" and what I once called "the balcony view of life" are having their troubles. I have been thrilled by the way in which university professors and students, together with journalists, essayists, poets and artists, have recently taken a determined public stand on matters of international policy where moral principles, and the realities of human relationship, are involved. As regards Christian Churchmen, I thank God for the recent marches to Selma and Montgomery and for the new concern over international policy, racial equality, social justice, and human welfare in general. May this be an indication, in both the secular and the religious order, that the Cult of the Uncommitted is being replaced by another.

Let the fact be faced: If the importance of truth, and its relevance to life, is to be taken seriously, there must be personal commitment to great ideas. *Commitment* is of the very essence of life and thought. A person begins to be alive and truly human when he commits himself to something greater than himself. That something may be an idea, a cause, or a person. To be a Christian in the deepest sense is to be committed to Christ. That means to be Christ's man, Christ's woman, a "saint" in the original New Testament sense, one for whom Jesus Christ is the Truth, the luminous liberating Truth, to whom the liberated self gives ultimate loyalty in love and obedience. "You are my friends," said Christ, "if you do what I command you." Jesus Christ calls for committed people. He is not interested

in mere ecclesiastical "buddies," in proud orthodox dogmatists, in liturgical aesthetes, or in Christian pharisees who are willing to bear his name for status and gain, but who never serve his cause. In the Christianity of our time there needs to be a rediscovery, both of the timeless and the contemporary significance of Christian commitment, Christian obedience and Christian discipline, both as regards individual persons and the Church as a corporate body.

If an official statement of the Church's faith, for example, is to be continuous with the Eternal and relevant to the Temporal, it is not enough that it affirm the glorious truth that God, through Christ's life, death and resurrection, has made provision for the reconciliation of man to himself and of men to one another. Reconciliation, if it is to fulfill what God designed should happen through the work of Christ, is a two-sided phenomenon. The reconciliation of God and man can become a reality only when man is willing to become reconciled to God through faith in Christ and obedience to him. Reconciliation is not something that can be forced upon man. If this fact is not taken into account, talk about reconciliation can be a mere theological cliché, romantic sentimentalism, an escape from reality, a failure to recognize the real human issue. God has done his part; he calls upon men, he waits for men, to do their part, by responding to his abiding love for them.

Contemporary significance must, therefore, be given to the Biblical concept of repentance. Repentance involves a right about face on man's part, followed by his personal response to Di-

vine love, to God's measureless yearning to be loved, just as he himself has loved and continues to love. But when reconciliation does take place in the wake of man's response to God, it must not become an end in itself. It is for the sake of a dynamic Divine-human partnership in the fulfillment of God's grand design in Christ.

This same principle applies to the Ecumenical Movement, and to every laudable effort in the direction of Christian unity and Church union. The Church, in every phase and dimension of its reality, must never think of unity as an end in itself. It must think of unity rather as a means whereby, as the body of Christ, it becomes the instrument which Jesus Christ its Head uses to carry on his work in the world. In this way the Church becomes redemptively relevant to every phase of the human situation.

If the Christian Church today, in both its local and its ecumenical dimension, is to be true to its nature and fulfill its destiny, it must match and surpass those dynamic crusading forces in the secular order, whose objectives for the future of mankind run counter to God's purpose in Christ. In this revolutionary epoch the Church would do well to spend less time in academic talk *about* unity, and dedicate more time to crusading action *in* unity. In a word, the Christian Church must "Buckle on the belt of Truth."

For those of us who belong to the "historical churches" of Protestantism it is a thrilling thing to observe what is happening in the so-called "non-historical" communions, and also in the great Roman Catholic Church. Both to the right and to the left of the Protes-

tant highway exciting developments are taking place. These developments are expressive of great Christian verities that are being rediscovered and of concerns that are given expression in contemporary terms. The Spirit of God is at work, whether it be in Pentecostal glossolalia, and dynamic evangelism; or in the rediscovery of the Bible, the new emphasis upon the Lordship of Christ, the quest of the new life in Christ, the manifestation of an ecumenical spirit, the pursuit of relevancy to the human situation, that have begun to appear in the great Roman communion.

VI

Never was it a more exciting time to be alive and to be a Christian than it is today, even though the skies are lowering and ominous signs begin to fill the horizon. Evidence abounds that human civilization is steadily moving toward a time of judgment, a new "Day of the Lord." Let it never be forgotten that God, the loving Reconciler is also God the Judge. Let us be concerned about the question that Christ addressed to his contemporaries in Palestine, "How is it that you do not discern this time?"

I do not speak in a pessimistic mood, but in a realistic perspective. Following recent journeys in Asia and in Latin America, I have come to the conclusion that the Judge is at the door. The dimension of Judgment, let it not be forgotten, belongs to the essence of Biblical thought. Its sombre reality stands out in the writings of Israel's prophets, in the teaching of Jesus, and in the witness of the Apostles. Whenever and wherever man's way for himself, in per-

sons or in peoples, runs counter to God's way for man and for man's relations with his fellows, fateful consequences inevitably follow.

Christians and all citizens in this generation must confront the fact that certain ominous trends have emerged. These are: First, there is the glorification of absolute power; second, the pursuit of anarchic freedom, that is, freedom to acquire limitless wealth and to indulge unrestrained appetite; third, the beatification of lying. It is held in certain circles that if lying can give power the freedom it needs, Blessed be the liars! It is no exaggeration to say that in our country today, Truth is becoming a captive in the land of the free. We confront a situation in which a lie can be canonized, in which dedication to falsehood can make one a candidate for national sainthood.

In view of the millions upon millions of human beings, hungry, landless, living in misery, under the rod and scorn of wealthy oppressors, and brutal dictators, the vision of the "boiling pot," which the boy Jeremiah once saw on the Judean plateau, near his home in Anathoth, takes on contemporary significance. It was the burden of Jeremiah's message that, unless his people took God and righteousness seriously and were concerned about truth and justice, a pagan power from the north would be used by God for the doom of the Holy City.

Let us face the fact that this could happen today. A political power, ideologically godless, could be used by God to exercise judgment upon any nation which, while professing to live "under God," does not take God or his moral order seriously.

VII

At such a time the figure of Christ Crucified, who is the central reality of the Christian faith, takes on fresh meaning. The pointing finger of John the Baptist, standing near the cross, in that artistic masterpiece of the German painter, Grunewald, and the words he utters, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), acquire special significance. Christ Crucified must not be given exclusive significance as an historical fact, a theological idea, or a liturgical symbol. The cross must become engraven on the hearts of Christians. It must be no mere sacred emblem that dangles from their necks, or a symbol that greets them when they assemble for worship.

Christian men and women, and the Christian churches everywhere, must, through the power of Christ's resurrection, share like Paul the fellowship of his sufferings in every situation in which their lot is cast. The cross will thereby become a dynamic reality. Participation by Christians in the sufferings of Christ for the redemption of mankind, must mark Christian thought and life in this revolutionary time when Christianity and the civilization it created are undergoing their most crucial test.

In conclusion, and in the context of what I have said, let me address myself to those of you for whom today will be the beginning of a new life.

Dear friends of the Graduating Group: *Buckle on the belt of Truth.* Brace yourselves for the road ahead.

Be realists, Christian realists, responsive to the reality of God, sensitive to

the reality of men, whatever their race, or class, the structure of their society, or the ideology of their beliefs.

With intellectual conviction, attested by personal experience, may you live by the faith that Christianity is Christ.

Make the Bible your closest companion in the realm of letters, the chief medium of your communion with God and of your knowledge of God. Remember that in its deepest essence the Bible is a book about Christ. Let the Book of Books continue to open up to you the splendor of God's purpose in his Son. May it be the chief medium whereby you help others to come to know Christ and to serve him in the fellowship of the One Holy Catholic Church, which is his Body.

Make it your mission to give present day reality to the Gospel of Christ in the life and thought of the world. Committed to the truth that the Church's primary task is evangelical and missionary, to communicate the Gospel to all people that they may become members of the New Humanity, make evangelism a contemporary, transforming, revolutionary force. To achieve this, become incarnate in the people among whom you labor, winning a right to be heard because of what they find you to be.

Whatever your specific office or task may become in the worldwide community of Christ, in this land or in other lands,—whether you be a preacher, a teacher or an administrator; serving on a college campus or in suburbia; in an industrial area, a rural countryside, or a city slum,—take the form of a servant and have the heart of a friend.

In so doing, and till travelling days are done, may you sense the reality of

God's presence and the grip of his Hand. Knowing that Christ's Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, that he is Lord of all, and will have the last word in history, be willing to bear your cross and to tread rough paths.

And wherever your lot may be cast, be it:

"Mid scenes of deepest gloom,
or where Eden bowers bloom,
by waters calm or troubled sea,"

live and work to the sonorous strains of Handel's Chorus:

"He shall reign forever—and ever—and ever."

JESUS' TEACHING

What is important concerning the originality of Jesus' teaching is not the amount of new material, whether great or small, which he brought; it is the way in which he has linked this teaching with a new religious conception and a new religious experience. The end of all ethical teaching is not knowledge but action. Everyone recognizes the chief problem is how to change knowledge into performance. The important element in the ministry of Jesus is that he inspired others to follow his teaching.

How is one to explain the dynamic quality in his message? To this question no final answer is possible, but it is not difficult to perceive that the power of his teaching was partly due, at any rate, to his intense realization of the reality of what he taught. The truths might themselves be old, but no one before him had grasped them with such absolute conviction. Others had applied the name "Father" to God, but the point is that when Jesus called God "Father" he knew him as the Father. He was able to communicate to others his personal assurance of the truth of what he taught.

A second reason which accounts in great measure for Jesus' power as a teacher is that he so identified himself with his teaching that obedience to it became a matter of personal loyalty to him. There are few who can follow an abstract ideal; all are capable of devotion to a person. It was the supreme achievement of Jesus as a teacher that he exemplified in himself all that he taught. Thus he made it possible for men to identify the moral law with a personal leader who evokes their love and confidence. The ultimate secret of Jesus' originality and power is intimately related to who is and what he accomplished in behalf of his followers.

—Bruce M. Metzger, in *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*, Abingdon Press, 1965, p. 166.