

Theology in Germany

What Has Gone Wrong in the Land of the Reformation?

A Wake-Up Call for America

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität
Erlangen-Nürnberg



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Theology in Germany

by Manfred E. Kober, Dallas, Texas

OUTLINE:

1. The Schools:
 - a. Diverse Theology.
 - b. Disparaged Scholars.
 - c. Disillusioned Students.
2. The Scholars:
 - a. Practical Unbelief.
 - b. Profound Teaching.
 - c. Pious Appearance.
3. The Students:
 - a. Scholarly Interest.
 - b. Scriptural Ignorance.
 - c. Soteriological Indifference.
4. The Studies:
 - a. Unsound Doctrines.
 - b. Unwarranted Methods.
 - c. Unpromising Future.

It cannot be doubted that German theology is setting the pace for the rest of the world. The maxim is true, which is frequently heard, that America is twenty years behind Germany, as far as the field of theology is concerned. This therefore being the case, it is only right for Americans to examine the theological climate of Germany today and be thus informed as to the changes and trends which will become evident before long in their own country too. The following reflections are written by one who recently studied in Germany. The purpose of this article is primarily to record personal impressions and to give specific examples of contemporary belief, rather than to make a doctrinal analysis of German theology, for this alone would necessitate the writing of a little volume to do justice to the subject. For clarity's sake I will discuss German theology under four headings: the schools, the scholars or professors, the students, and the studies.

The Schools

There are a number of well-known universities in Germany where Protestant theology is being taught. Among them are the universities of Heidelberg, Göttingen, Marburg, Tübingen, Erlangen, Bonn, Mainz, and Münster. I studied at Erlangen.

Diverse Theology

If there is anything typical of the schools of theology at these universities, it is the diverse theology. A person who expects to find Neo-Orthodoxy in Germany will surely be disappointed. A neat theological system of that nature just doesn't exist there. One of the students confirmed my observation when I asked him recently how he would characterize German theology. He unhesitatingly uttered, "It's a mess!" There are as many different types of theology here as there are theologians. Decades ago men like Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann nearly eclipsed all other theological directions and made many converts to their ideas, but their students, now professors themselves, have long since departed from their masters' methods. The theological spectrum is so variegated that one would have to study each theologian individually to understand German theology. Like the scholastics, each has his own little system, and perhaps the last verse in the book of Judges would describe the situation in Germany best of all: "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Disparaged Scholars

Also characteristic of Germany is the disparaging of other scholars who don't agree with one's views. The passion with which one professor belittles another is astounding. They seem to be following the old German principle, "Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein, so schlag ich dir den Schädel ein" (And if you do not wish to be my brother, I shall knock in your skull.) Teaching only a maximum of six hours per week, the prime task of the professors is to do research and to write books. These books are usually written against a treatise by some other professor. Then a third professor joins the dialogue with another volume to denounce both books as inanity and illogic. And so it goes on . . . each professor thinks that he alone has the truth. It is therefore little wonder that a crusade especially against conservative theologians is being carried on with the greatest vehemence. The university of Erlangen is known to be the most "conservative"

in Germany, because certain professors still hold to at least some historical details about the Bible. For example, the N. T. professor Stauffer insists that much of the gospel of John is historically accurate – notwithstanding current theological consensus. This causes him to be ridiculed everywhere. Whenever his name is mentioned in a lecture at some other university, like Heidelberg, for example, everyone howls. But this is nothing compared to the scorn that is heaped upon the true conservative theologians of a century or so ago. (There just are not any true conservative professors in Germany today, in the American sense of the word.) Their high esteem for the Bible, their efforts in the defense of the truth, these are touched upon in such a way that there is created a contempt for them among the students. Paul Althaus, considered by many as Germany's most "conservative" theologian, by-passed Theodor Zahn, who fought here in Erlangen so valiantly against the tide of liberalism and radicalism in the last century, with the words, "He was an extremely learned man but his greatest mistake was that he tried to defend the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible."

Notwithstanding the teaching at most other universities, many professors here still hold that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a historical fact and event, and therefore Erlangen is often ridiculed as being unscholarly and unprogressive.

Disillusioned Students

It is impossible to speak of German theology without mentioning the widespread disillusionment among the students. They are looking for something to believe, something objective and absolute. Their perplexity and discontent are understandable. Professors contradict each other in almost every area of theology. Whom then should the students believe? Which innovation are they to follow? In addition to this, studies are anything but conducive to a firm personal faith. It is really a saddening experience to see how theologians delight in the destruction of their students' faith. No wonder many students finally refuse to become pastors of the Staatskirche (Lutheran State Church), for which most theological students are preparing, once they have completed their studies. Typical is the comment which two graduates made: "We have now finished our studies at the university, but we have nothing which we can believe or preach. How can the church expect us to be preachers?!" Even my roommate, a brilliant student, decided that he would not enter the ministry –

after diligently studying theology for three years. To my question why he, who seemed so convinced of the value and rectitude of German theology, would suddenly turn his back on it, he gave a very illuminating answer: "If I want to have a personal faith which I should preach to the people, I can have nothing to do with this theological science. On the other hand, if I want to be a conscientious theologian and be true to theology's logical consequences, I must reject the possibility of a personal faith in the facts of the Bible." This disjunction between theology and a biblically oriented faith is discernible everywhere. In the words of one professor: "We must be honest and admit that we have two types of theology: a practical theology, which is that which we must preach, and a scientific theology, which is that which we really believe."

Scholars

Let us now look more closely at these men who are presently professors of theology.

Practical Unbelief

The unifying factor among professors today is an appalling unbelief relative to the contents of the Bible, though their other teachings and ideas might be as disparate as can be. Before coming to Germany, I surely thought that the great Bible teacher Dr. Charles Woodbridge was exaggerating when he stated that as far as he knew, there was not a single university professor in Germany today who believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. Now I am convinced that he was absolutely right. I would even venture to go one step further and say that it seems an utter impossibility for anyone subscribing to the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures to be ever able to become a professor at a German university. Such a primitive and naive concept of the Bible is unscholarly and unscientific, meriting only the greatest condemnation, we are told. It is said to be an utter impossibility and sign of abysmal ignorance to maintain that we can have a Bible-based system of theology, a true biblicism, in the light of 20th-century knowledge.

Profound Teaching

The great erudition of German scholars is universally recognized. Some of these men have mastered as many as eight or ten languages. Their knowledge in every area of theology is astounding to say the

least. In writing books they are very prolific. Despite these commendable factors, and upon their own admission, there is coupled with their teaching and writing an innate ambiguity. It is a standard joke that a book is of little value unless one has to read a sentence three times to understand its meaning. Clarity is tantamount to naivete. The lectures are often equally as unintelligible. To a student who is used to an easily-followed, clear outline in class, this vagueness and lack of clarity are a source of constant despair. A prime example of this ambiguity was a recent lecture held by a visiting professor from Mainz. Two hundred students listened over one hour to a lecture on a certain form of philosophical hermeneutics by Professor Pannenberg. Nobody knew what he tried to say; in fact, the whole discourse was so unintelligible, that a professor rose immediately subsequent to the peroratory and rebuked the lecturer for his excessive and unwarranted vagueness. This is no uncommon occurrence, by far. A logical outcome of such teaching is, of course, an equally ambiguous type of speech and expression on the part of the students – tomorrow's pastors. Is it therefore any wonder that people no longer attend church (whereas churches were filled to capacity during the 17th century, when people "naively" believed the Bible)? One of the professors assured me that a typical Lutheran church in Germany has 3000 members; 300 members attend church; 30 come to the mid-week service; and there are 3 persons with whom the pastor can pray!

Pious Appearance

It is impossible to tell whether or not these teachers are born-again Christians. There is much talk about faith and justification through grace, and yet, there is a deadness and a coldness in the lectures, sermons, and church life as a whole. One receives the unmistakable impression that something is missing. It may just be that the whole amalgamated theological system contains enough truth which the Holy Spirit would use to bring men to salvation, but it is difficult to see how men who deny or ignore the fundamentals of our Christian faith, such as the inerrancy of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, and the historicity of His resurrection, can really be loving Christ. Notwithstanding the erroneous and unbiblical teaching of the professors, their traditional and characteristic erudition is displayed with a personal piety and a Christian decorum which merits and obtains the respect of all. Among the theology students, the professors are practically honored more than God Himself, and

it is considered a real boon when a professor at times condescends to converse with a student. Of course, not all professors display such outward virtues of piety and gentility, but the exception merely confirms the rule. Therefore the common idea is unwarranted that all teachers of doctrinal error are naturally unlikable in appearance and obnoxious in demeanor. Satan himself employs only angels of light.

The Students

Scholarly Interest

German students evidence a tremendous thirst for knowledge. It is customary that students study at as many different universities as possible. They are a modern counterpart of the ancient Athenians who always ran to hear something new. When, for example, a visiting lecturer comes, the lecture hall will be crowded, no matter how insignificant and unimportant the subject matter of his lecture might be. Students will flock to hear a lecture on the derivation of some words in Hindu mythology with the same interest and participation as a discourse on *analogia entis* (the analogy of being) and the related critique of the basis of the dogmatic methodology. At most universities the lecture halls are filled to capacity and if a student hopes to get a seat, he will have to let a friend reserve a seat for him from the previous hour. Most Germans are studying for learning's sake and one must admire their zeal and dedication. Almost all theology students – and this includes women also – possess an amazing knowledge of at least Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Scriptural Ignorance

Despite these admirable qualities listed above, the typical German student has a profound ignorance relative to the contents of the Bible. Being taught that it is unscientific and improper to use the Bible as a proof text, the students primarily learn the theories about and criticisms on the Bible, but little of what it contains. This is why some student borrowed my Bible before a lecture on 1 Corinthians 15 one day, so that he could see what its subject matter was. And this is why my fellow students, instead of citing the Bible, run to get their theology books, when I ask them about their personal beliefs. They can recite with astounding accuracy what this or that theologian has said about a given subject. They know how many redactors supposedly worked on a given book; where Babylonian myths or Greek thought can be traced in the Scriptures; or where the early

Church is said to have mutilated the text of the Scriptures and injected its own ideas; but it is impossible to ascertain what the students really believe. Few of them have any personal convictions.

Soteriological Indifference

In the light of the foregone observations it seems only natural that the current German theologies quench any evangelical zeal. The first reason for this appears to be the vagueness of the teachings on the matter of salvation and a misplaced emphasis in theology, lacking any real authority. And secondly, the Lutheran Church firmly adheres, at least in practice, to the doctrine of infant salvation. At "baptism" faith is given to the child and he or she becomes a disciple of Christ. This error is being taught in most churches.

An oft-repeated phrase heard in lecture halls from the mouth of professors, as they refer to some current teaching, is, "Sagt das ja nicht eueren Leuten!" ("Don't ever tell that to your people!"). For instance, we were recently exhorted not to tell our people at a funeral that it is a great fallacy to believe in the immortality of the soul. Professors and students alike are well aware of the fact that a multitude of church members would rise up in protest if they were exposed to certain teachings of this *neology* (one can hardly call it theology, for theology is the teaching about God). The ancient, sound church creeds and confessions of faith have their place in the church as they had in years gone by. But, as someone has well observed, "creeds and stated policies are but verbal opiates to tranquilize the unsuspecting into continued support of institutions that are antagonistic to biblical Christianity."

A third reason for this indifference relative to the Lord's command to preach the message of salvation to every creature is the tragic fact that a simple Bible Christianity has been replaced a long time ago by an involved theological science. Listening to professors and preachers, one cannot help but receive the impression that it is impossible for a person to have even the vaguest understanding of what the gospel is all about, unless he is a great scholar who has mastered four of five languages, is familiar with the "gains" of biblical criticism, and knows all the current theories about the Bible. While theologians are wrestling with the latest hypotheses and ideas about the proper understanding of the Bible, thousands are perishing because no one has ever told them the simple words, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

The Studies

What are the problems and questions with which German theology concerns itself today? Can there be seen a uniform concept or idea which underlies the theological science and the tremendous amount of research and studying going on?

Unsound Doctrines

It is unwarranted to engage in any universal condemnations, but one certainly has the right to ask what German theology has in common with historic evangelical Christianity, and whether or not there is any evidence that it is moving in that direction. It cannot be denied that every theological system stands or falls upon its concept of the Bible. It is legitimate to say that German theology is antagonistic to the biblical doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration. The fact of the matter is that the term "Verbalinspiration" is like a red flag to German theologians and they seem unable to heap sufficient scorn and ridicule upon those who adhere to this blessed teaching.

Dr. Edward J. Young, in his most penetrating book on the biblical testimony to its own inerrancy and infallibility, *Thy Word Is Truth*, rightly observes that a false concept of the Bible is really rooted in a false form of theism or view of God. What kind of a God is this who cannot even reveal Himself to men in words free of error and human modification? Certainly not the almighty and holy God of Truth whom the Bible reveals. And if God has passed on even a few words void of any error – all would admit that He has – why could He not have done it with all of the Scripture? And in the Scriptures we find unmistakable evidence that He has. Therefore the fact being true that in German theology the foundation – the view of the Bible – is faulty, it would hardly follow that the superstructure could be built properly. Consequently, since theologians expect and attempt to find flaws and errors in God's Word of Truth because their whole system is built upon an errant Bible, there remains not even the remotest possibility that they shall ever return to the biblical and historic Christian view of an inerrant, pure Word of God. This false view of the Bible brings with itself, of necessity, a shift in authority. The Bible is no longer our rule of faith and practice, for we must first determine, through diligent scholarship, what is the true text of the Bible. Reason exalts itself above revelation. The Bible can no longer be accepted as it stands.

Unwarranted Methods

Men like Bultmann have attempted to remove the so-called myths from the Bible. This process of *Entmythologisierung* (demythologizing) has been carried out to the nth degree by Bultmann's students, so that hardly anything stands before the pen-knife of the critics. Many theologians now completely deny the personality of God and make Him to be some kind of an inter-personal relationship between men.

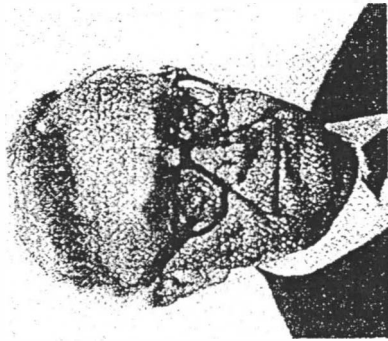
Besides the term "de-mythologizing", one often hears the term "kerygma" (preaching) mentioned. We should direct our efforts, we are told, to find out the most central teachings in the sermons of the apostles and the early Church, to determine what we really must believe. Everything else, the Old Testament, and most of the New Testament doctrines are merely secondary, unimportant. They may or may not be believed. Along these lines, Dr. Frör, one of the professors here, told us recently that if anyone had difficulties with miracles, he need merely ignore the miraculous elements and go to something more appealing. The core of the kerygma, to which we ought to adhere here at Erlangen, is the death and resurrection of Christ. The inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth of Christ, His deity and His return are no longer believed. The problem is, that few people agree what the absolute minimum for our faith really is. At other universities the resurrection of Christ is likewise denied. Thus for these theologians, of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, only Christ's death remains. But this is not the substitutionary, expiatory death of Christ, for their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. He is the Christ of their imagination and "scholarship." Refusing to believe the biblical account of the origin of Jesus of Nazareth, they are left to their own devices to account for this miraculous person. One day Professor Stauffer, who has devoted his entire life to the study of the person of Christ, stood in front of his class, while discussing John 1, and exclaimed almost with despair: "The writer of the gospel of John evidently doesn't know where Christ came from; I have no idea where Christ came from; and you, ladies and gentlemen, probably don't know either." This then is the result of a life-time searching for the truth while rejecting the Word of Truth: plain, unadulterated agnosticism. Incidentally, this same professor has developed a very elaborate system of five steps as to how one can determine the true words of Jesus Christ. This, he says, is necessary, because the gospel writers obviously attributed many words to Christ which in reality they made up. Thus, for example, it can

be said with certainty that only those words are from Christ which are original, that is, which were not and could not have been spoken by someone before Him. Furthermore, the true words of Christ were always a *scandalon*, a reproach or an offense to someone. It is rather ironic that the professor down the hall has developed a system of three steps to ascertain the words of Christ; but his prerequisites are virtually the opposite of those taught by Stauffer. Pity the poor student who wants to know what Christ really spoke! – These then are some of the methods employed by German theologians as they study the Scriptures.

Unpromising Future

The forced methodology in the study of God's Word cannot but have a devastating effect on the students and ultimately on the churches and on the country as a whole. The spiritual atmosphere at such institutions of learning, where men supposedly are trained to be servants of God, may be briefly illustrated by relating what occurred at a certain meeting. The professor of practical theology, Dr. Frör, was asked by an evangelical group within the student body to speak to them, and anyone else who wished to attend, on the topic: *Hat die Bibel wirklich recht?* (Is the Bible indeed inerrant?) Hundreds of students crowded into the lecture hall as the professor started his tirade against the authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures. The first twelve chapters of Genesis were dismissed as myths, which nevertheless have a deep and lasting lesson for us. He never pointed out just what that lesson was. Next he dealt with the subject of prophecy in the most ambiguous terms and finally dismissed prophecy as an impossibility – for how could man foretell future events? Thus he went on for over an hour, concluding his lecture by assuring us that despite all, we still could trust the Bible! There was a time for questions and I expected at least some of the more conservative students from evangelical churches to rise up in protest. But for thirty minutes this and that point were discussed and yet, not a single student disagreed with what the professor had said. Indeed, the students obviously agreed with him. Finally I ventured to ask why prophecy should be an impossibility in the light of 2. Peter 1:20-21 and 2. Tim. 3:16, which passages clearly indicate the divine origin of prophecy and the divine enablement of the writers. Why should it be impossible for the Holy Spirit to reveal events which happened in pre-historic time (such as the creation) or events yet many years in the future?

Neoorthodoxy: Its Representatives and Renegades



KARL BARTH

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Karl Barth
1886-1968



EMIL BRUNNER



Paul Tillich (1886-1963)



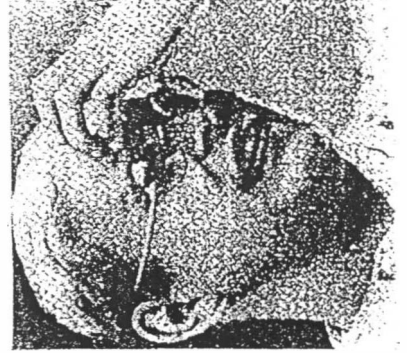
ALBERT SCHWEITZER

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PAUL TILICH

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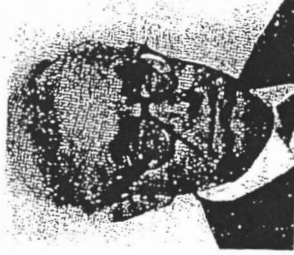
THE DILEMMA OF CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

LIBERALISM - 1850	NEO-ORTHODOXY - 1919
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Friedrich Schleiermacher



Karl Barth



NEO-EVANGELICALISM - 1956	FUNDAMENTALISM - 1909
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Billy Graham



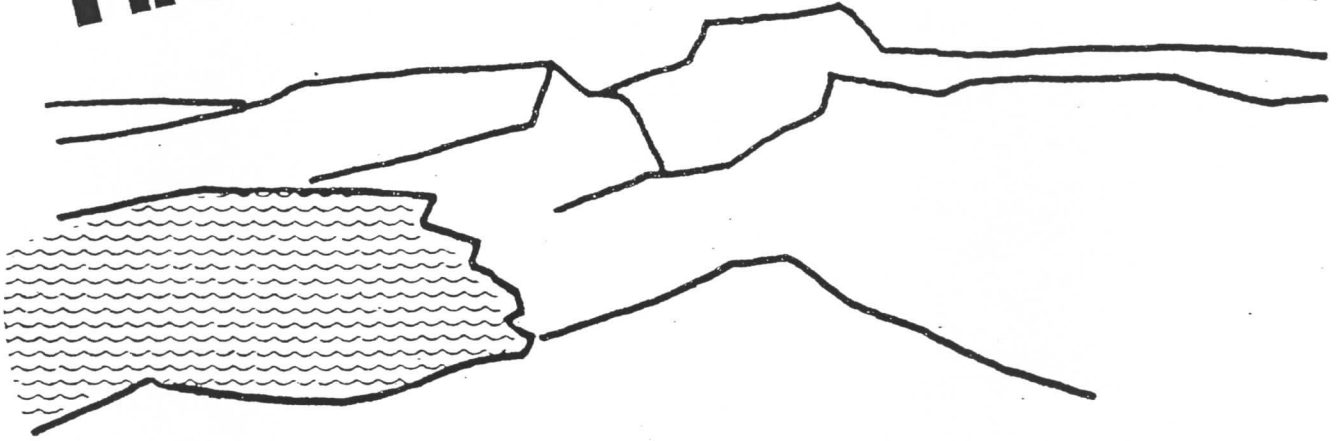
Robert T. Ketcham



<p>BIBLE</p> <p>DELETES CERTAIN DOCTRINES</p>	<p>DEEMPHASIZES MAJOR DOCTRINES</p>
<p>CHURCH</p> <p>DISMISSES FUNDAMENTALISM AS BIBLIOLATRY</p>	<p>DISASSOCIATES ITSELF FROM FUNDAMENTALISM</p>
<p>CHRIST</p> <p>DETRACTS FROM CHRIST'S DEITY BY VAGUENESS</p>	<p>DIALOGUES WITH EVERYONE</p>
<p>SALVATION</p> <p>DEPENDS ON A LEAP IN THE DARK</p>	<p>DISSEMINATES THE CULTURAL MANDALE</p>

<p>DEFENDS THE FUNDAMENTALS</p>	<p>DEMANDS SEPARATION FROM DOCTRINAL DEVIATION</p>
<p>DELIGHTS IN THE THEANTHROPIC SAVIOR</p>	<p>DECLARES THE OLD-FASHIONED GOSPEL</p>

The Sermon on the Mount



LAW,

GRACE

or KINGDOM?



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: LAW, GRACE, OR KINGDOM?

1A. INTRODUCTION

1b. The Intent of the Paper:

To determine whether the Sermon on the Mount is to be considered as truth for the church age, truth and instruction for the kingdom, or instruction and exhortation for the Jews living in the Lord's day.

2b. The Importance of the Problem:

1c. The Sermon on the Mount is a major discourse of our Lord and we must determine the addressees, the purpose of the instruction, and the primary interpretation, as well as the secondary application.

2c. False doctrines and a false standard of Christian conduct result from an erroneous interpretation. A wrong interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount invariably leads to wrong conduct.

2A. VIEWS

1b. The Soteriological View:

1c. The Representatives: This is generally the view of the liberals.

2c. The Rationale: Men may attain salvation through governing their lives by the principles set forth in the Sermon.

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The view is out of accord with the rest of Scripture. The Sermon would become a gospel of works.

2d. The view is out of accord with the Sermon itself. Its high moral standard, that of absolute perfection, is impossible to attain.

3d. The view is now generally abandoned, being unable to stand the test of time.

2b. The Sociological View:

1c. The Representatives: Adolf Harnack, Frederick Keller Stamm

2c. The Rationale:

The Sermon is a guide to the salvation of society. "What would happen in the world if the element of fair play as enunciated in the Golden Rule . . . were put into practice in the various relationships of life? . . . What difference all this would make, and how far we would be on the road to a new and better day in private, in public, in business, and in international relationships!" (Stamm, Seeing the Multitudes, pp. 68-69)

2A. VIEWS

2b. The Sociological View:

3c. The Refutation:

- 1d. The Sermon was not addressed to the whole world but to the disciples as representative Jews (Mt. 5:1-2).
- 2d. The Sermon contains no references to basic themes related to spiritual salvation.
- 3d. It cannot be shown that the kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 5:20; 7:21) means society.

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

- 1c. The Representatives: Its proponents are of every theological position--liberals, fundamentalists, amillenarians, premillenarians: F. B. Meyer, C. F. H. Henry, H. A. Ironside.

- 2c. The Rationale: The Sermon is for the present age, as a rule of life for the believer, a code of personal ethics.

"This discourse, laying the foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven, may also be called the Directory of the Devout Life, and we can wish for nothing better than to drink into its spirit and realize its exquisite ideals" (F. B. Meyer, The Directory of the Devout Life, p. 12).

"We need to remember that, though a heavenly people, we have earthly responsibilities, and these are defined for us in this greatest of all sermons having to do with human conduct" (Ironside, Expository Notes on Matthew, p. 44).

The Sermon is a "statement of the practical way in which agape is to work itself out in daily conduct here and now. The sermon expresses therefore the only righteousness acceptable to God in this age or in any" (C. F. H. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 308).

"The Sermon on the Mount is nothing but a great and grand and perfect elaboration of what our Lord called His 'new commandment'" (M. Lloyd-Jones, Sermon on the Mount, I, 15). According to Lloyd-Jones, there are five main reasons why the Sermon on the Mount has to be for the church:

- 1. The Sermon anticipates New Testament truth.
- 2. The Sermon truths are found in the epistles, although in another form.
- 3. The disciples formed the nucleus of the Church.
- 4. The promises are most certainly for us (e.g. salt of the earth, light of the world).
- 5. If the Sermon is not for us, it is completely irrelevant. (Lloyd-Jones, 15)

3c. The Refutation:

- 1d. The principle of literal interpretation would have to be discarded if the Sermon applies to the Church.

2A. VIEWS

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

3c. The Refutation:

2d. The context:

- 1e. Such a view is contrary to the theological pattern of Matthew, who gives the Sermon a place which definitely relates it to the Messianic kingdom. The order of Matthew is divinely inspired, and the Sermon on the Mount follows the announcement of the kingdom by John in Matthew 2-3 and by Christ in Matthew 4:17.
- 2e. The church is not mentioned till Matthew 16:18.
- 3e. John the Baptist and Christ announced the kingdom of heaven as "at hand" (3:2-3; 4:17), making the Sermon on the Mount part of the King's message as He instructed the subjects of the kingdom.

3d. The content:

- 1e. The complete absence of church truth. L. S. Chafer, in his Systematic Theology, V, 112, shows that unique church age truths are significantly absent from the Sermon. It would be impossible to lead a person to Christ with the Sermon on the Mount. The five major church age truths, conspicuous by their absence, are the following:

- 1f. Ministry of the Spirit.
- 2f. Death of Christ.
- 3f. Regeneration.
- 4f. Salvation by faith.
- 5f. Justification.
- 6f. Prayer in the name of Christ.

The latter is a rather important omission from that which Carl F. H. Henry (p. 305) calls "the rule of daily life for the Christian believer."

Christ mentions the church, prayer, and the Spirit on other occasions during His ministry (Jn. 14:16; 16:13, 24; Mt. 16:18), and if the Sermon were for the church, undoubtedly these truths would be mentioned in the Sermon at least in passing.

2e. The Sermon concerns those who inherit the earth (5:5).

3e. The Sermon is legal in character:

- 1f. It is delivered within the context of the law (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 15:8).
- 2f. It re-enacts the decalogue (Mt. 5:17-19) with stringent additions (5:21, 22, 27, 28).

2A. VIEWS

3b. The Ecclesiastical View:

3c. The Refutation:

3d. The content:

3e. The Sermon is legal in character:

3f. No statement of the gospel can be found, notwithstanding C. F. H. Henry's statement: "Grace dominates the whole biblical revelation" (p. 290).

4f. The bringing of gifts to the altar (5:24) is clearly within the context of the Mosaic law.

4d. Neither Christ nor the early church did actually seek to follow the Sermon on the Mount:

1e. Christ: In the Sermon He exhorts to turn the other cheek (5:39), yet Christ protested against being smitten on the cheek (Jn. 18:32).

2e. Early church: Christ stresses that no thought was to be taken for life, things necessary for eating, for drinking, or the clothes necessary for covering (6:26-34). And yet, in the New Testament, church age believers do take care for food and garments, and are exhorted to do so:

1f. The activity of Dorcas (Acts 9:39).

2f. The request of Paul for his cloak (II Tim. 4:13).

3f. The words of Paul that one should plow with hope (I Cor. 9:10).

4f. The work of Paul in taking an offering for the poor of Jerusalem (II Cor. 8, 9).

5d. The view that the Sermon on the Mount is a guide of spiritual life for the church, allows only two alternatives: either blatant contradiction of Scripture or the destructive principle of spiritualization.

4b. The Millennial View:

1c. The Representatives: Gaebelien, Kelly, Pettingill, Barnhouse, Campbell, Ryrie.

2c. The Rationale: The common view held by premillenarians is that which applies the Sermon to the future earthly kingdom, which the Lord announced as being at hand. The Sermon is the constitution of the kingdom.

1d. Its legal character: The law is re-enacted and appended with stringent additions. Romans and Galatians, however, teach that the child of God is free from the law.

2d. The character of Matthew: He portrays Christ as King.

2A. VIEWS

4b. The Millennial View:

2c. The Rationale:

- 3d. The context of the Sermon: The King was announced and expected (3:2-3; 4:17).
 - 4d. The hearers were faithful Israelites (5:1-2), looking for the Messiah (Jn. 1:45).
 - 5d. The age: The age of law continued. Christ was made under the law (Gal. 4:4), lived in absolute obedience to the law (Jn. 8:46; Mt. 17:5; I Pet. 2:21-23).
 - 6d. The identity of the speaker: Matthew 1:1--the son of David, i.e. King.
 - 7d. The rejection of the King and postponement of the kingdom. This involved a delay in the application of the kingdom's constitution and rule of life.
 - 8d. The principles of the Sermon demand a personal presence of the King (Pentecost, Bibliotheca Sacra, October 1958, pp. 313-315):
 - 1e. To comfort the mourners (c.f. Micah 7:1-7; Is. 61:2).
 - 2e. To give the meek their inheritance (Ps. 37).
 - 3e. To let the merciful obtain mercy.
 - 4e. To grant possession of the land (5:3; 5:5; 5:10).
 - 9d. The description of Millennial conditions:
 - 1e. The salt of the earth, the light of the world, i.e. the responsibility of believers in the kingdom (5:13-16).
 - 2e. The turning of the other cheek, etc. This could only be true in the kingdom because Christ didn't turn the other cheek, nor do the two witnesses of Revelation 11, who destroy their opponents with fire. The turning of the other cheek is encouraged because Christ will personally be present in the kingdom to avenge His own (5:39-44).
 - 3e. The prohibition of judgment. In the kingdom, the righteous judge will be judging for His people (7:1-6).
 - 4e. The possession of the land (5:3, 5, 10).
- 3c. The Refutation:
- 1d. The conditions for the Millennium are incongruous:
 - 1e. The disciples are seen as reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake (5:11-12).

2A. VIEWS

4b. The Millennial View:

3c. The Refutation:

1d. The conditions for the Millennium are incongruous:

2e. The disciples are to pray for the coming of the kingdom (6:10), which clearly indicates that the kingdom is as yet anticipated.

3e. The disciples are warned concerning false prophets (7:15), which are unlikely to exist in the kingdom (Rand, Bibliotheca Sacra, January 1955, pp. 28-38).

2d. The entrance into the Millennium is impossible:

The proponents of the kingdom application of the discourse assert that the Sermon contains the constitution of the kingdom. Those who desire to inherit the kingdom must live up to the standards presented in the discourse. Chafer comments:

"The conclusion growing out of this analysis of this discourse is that it is the direct and official pronouncement of the King Himself of that manner of life which will be the ground for admission into the kingdom of heaven and the manner of life to be lived in the kingdom" (V, 111).

If the Ten Commandments present an unattainable standard of life, how much more the Sermon on the Mount? The requirements for entrance into the kingdom are extremely stringent:

--Poor in spirit, meek, persecuted for Christ's sake (5:1-12).

--Righteousness (5:20).

--Perfection (5:48).

--Entering the straight gate (7:13-14).

--Doing the perfect will of the Father (7:21-22).

--The concluding parable: obeying Christ's sayings (7:24-27).

5b. The Interim View:

1c. The Representatives: S. L. Johnson, Pentecost, Toussaint.

2c. The Rationale: The discourse presents a description of the good fruit, the fruit of righteousness and repentance. It is concerned with the life the disciples were to live in the light of the coming kingdom.

1d. The grammatico-historical method of interpretation is employed.

2d. The message of the Sermon is anticipatory:

1e. The entrance to the kingdom is anticipated:

1f. It looks forward to a time when people shall enter the kingdom (5:20; 7:21).

2f. It speaks of future rewards (5:12, 19, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 18).

2A. VIEWS

5b. The Interim View:

2c. The Rationale:

2d. The message of the Sermon is anticipatory:

1e. The entrance to the kingdom is anticipated:

3f. Its sample prayer includes a request for the coming of the kingdom (6:10).

4f. It sees the king as judging before the establishment of the kingdom (7:19-23).

2e. Persecution and false prophets are predicted (5:11-12; 7:15-18). There will thus be a time lapse before the establishment of the kingdom.

3e. The future tense is used abundantly (5:4-9, 19-20; 6:4, 6, 14, 15, 18, 33; 7:2, 7, 11, 16, 20, 21, 22).

3d. The addressees are primarily the disciples:

1e. The setting: 5:1-2

2e. Their description: salt, light (5:13-16)

3e. Their prayer: "Our Father" (6:9)

4e. Their lives:

1f. Characterized by righteousness (5:19-7:12)

2f. Hunger and thirst after righteousness (5:6)

3f. Peace makers (5:9)

5e. Their work: concerned with service and doing (5:10-12, 13-16, 19-20, 21-48; 6:1-18, 19-34; 7:1-12, 12-23, 24-27).

6e. Their instructions: teaching rather than preaching (5:2, 19; 7:29).

7e. Their anticipation:

1f. Rewards (5:12, 19, 46; 6:1, 2, 5, 16).

2f. Seeking first the kingdom (6:30).

4d. The subject matter is service and doing (7:19).

3c. The relevance:

1d. Stanley Toussaint:

"The sermon is primarily addressed to disciples exhorting them to a righteous life in view of the coming kingdom. Those who were not genuine disciples were warned concerning the danger of their hypocrisy and unbelief. They are enjoined to enter the

2A. VIEWS

5b. The Interim View:

3c. The relevance:

1d. Stanley Toussaint:

narrow gate and to walk the narrow way. This is included in the discourse, but it is only the secondary application of the sermon" (The Argument of Matthew, unpublished doctor's dissertation, p. 114).

2d. Lewis S. Chafer:

The Sermon "as a rule of life is addressed to the Jews before the cross and to the Jew in the coming kingdom" (V, 97). "It was addressed to the people before Him and concerned the requisite preparation on their part for admission into the kingdom of heaven then being published as 'at hand.' It likewise declared the manner of life that would be demanded within the kingdom when once it is entered" (V, 100). "A secondary application to the Church means that lessons and principles may be drawn from it" (V, 97).

3d. Dwight J. Pentecost:

"We feel that this Sermon on the Mount is to be connected with the offer of the kingdom, rather than with the description of the kingdom or the kingdom age itself" (Bibliotheca Sacra, April 1958, p. 134). "In its primary interpretation the Sermon on the Mount is directly applicable to those of our Lord's own day who by their profession in John's baptism were anticipating the coming of the King and the kingdom" (Bibliotheca Sacra, October 1958, p. 316).

4d. Charles C. Ryrie:

"1) Basically and primarily it is a detailed explanation of what the Lord meant by repentance. . . . 2) it has therefore relevance to any time that the kingdom is offered. . . . But 3) it does picture certain aspects of life in the millennial kingdom and thus in a certain restricted sense is a sort of constitution of the kingdom. However 4) as all Scripture, it is profitable for any people" (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, pp. 81-82).

3A. CONCLUSION

The Sermon on the Mount is a problem passage of the first magnitude. It is one of Christ's three major discourses. The Upper Room Discourse deals with church age truth, the Olivet Discourse with the tribulation, and the Sermon on the Mount with the kingdom. We have rejected the ecclesiastical interpretation of the Sermon because of its place in the arrangement of Matthew (see diagram on the final page). It comes long before the announcement of the church and, indeed, forms part of the kingdom offer. Furthermore, the Sermon lacks Church truth, such as salvation by faith, prayer in the name of Christ, and the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. While certain truths of the Sermon seem to be repeated in the Epistles, similarity does not mean

3A. CONCLUSION

identity. The addressees of the Sermon are subjects of the kingdom rather than members of the Body of Christ. The church was to them as yet a mystery. The bonafide offer of the kingdom forms the interpretive key for the Sermon. Actually, both the interim view and the millennial view are correct in certain respects. The Sermon on the Mount, rightly understood, involves three aspects. It is taught to the disciples who lived during the time of the proclamation of the kingdom. Further, it involves their preparation of the kingdom, and also deals with the participation in the kingdom (see diagram).

1b. The Sermon relates to the proclamation of the kingdom.

Various passages of the Sermon definitely relate to the period just prior to the establishment of the kingdom, such as the persecution of the disciples, the prayer for the kingdom, and the future prospects of rewards. Since the kingdom was officially rejected in Matthew 12, the promise of the kingdom was taken from the Jews of Christ's time, and given to another generation (Mt. 21:43), living during the tribulation, when the disciples would once again expect the coming of the King and His kingdom. The so-called Lord's Prayer will be especially relevant then, as the disciples pray that God's will be done on earth, where the Wilful King of Daniel 11 has free reign. The request for deliverance from the Evil One will then be made by those who suffer under Antichrist's reign of terror.

2b. The Sermon describes the proper preparation for the kingdom.

Lewis S. Chafer is correct in seeing the Sermon as spelling out the entrance requirements for the kingdom. It is the "pure in heart" (5:8) who alone shall see God. The citizens of the kingdom need a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20). In fact, Christ requires of them the absolute perfection of God (5:48). The disciples must have responded in utter amazement. How could they be pure in heart, more righteous than the Pharisees and as perfect as God? The answer lies in Christ's concluding illustration of the house built on the rock (7:24-27). Those disciples who heard Christ's sayings and did them would endure and enter the kingdom. The message of the Messiah would produce faith and works in the attentive disciples, qualifying them to enter the straight gate of the kingdom (7:13).

3b. The Sermon outlines the disciples' participation in the kingdom.

Ryrie stresses that the Sermon pictures "certain aspects of life in the kingdom and thus in a certain restricted sense is a sort of constitution of the kingdom" (Biblical Theology of the New Testament, p. 82). The inheritance of the land will then be a blessed reality. The turning of the other cheek and the giving of one's possessions to anyone who asks, will then be tolerable because of the personal presence of the Prince of Peace. Especially in the Kingdom will His citizens function as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. (5:13-14)

3A. CONCLUSION

- 4b. The Sermon provides high ethical principles for any dispensation, and any people.

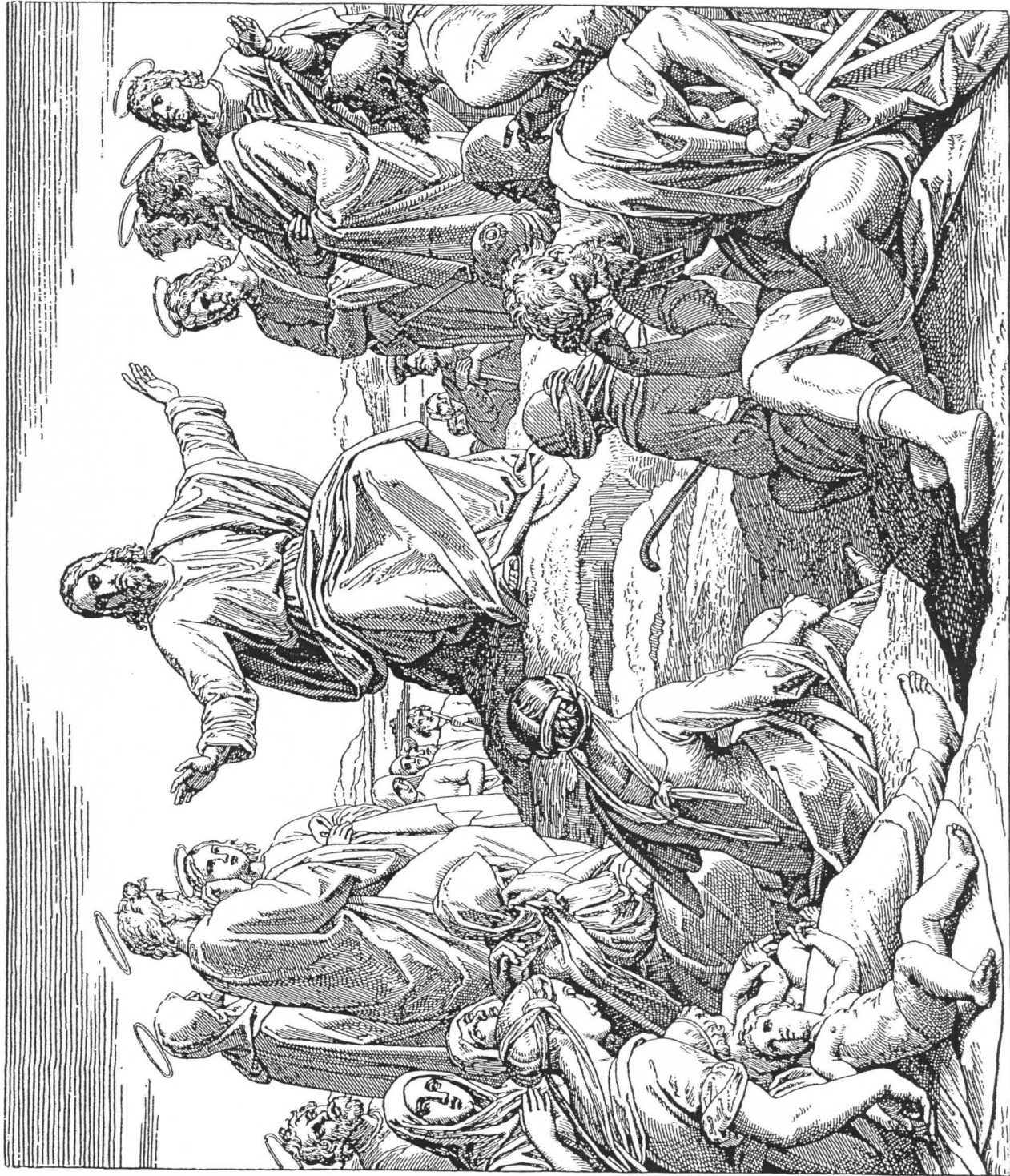
As a guide for daily conduct, the Sermon is no more applicable to the church age believers than are the Ten Commandments. By interpretation, the Sermon is for the subjects of the kingdom, giving them guidelines for life in anticipation of the kingdom, detailing the qualifications for entrance into the kingdom and outlining their participation in the kingdom. Once one realizes these three major purposes for the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes possible to rightly divide the teachings of the Sermon and assign each paragraph to its proper purpose. But, like the entire Old Testament, which, while not written to us, is certainly for us, so the principles of the Sermon may be used with great profit by the church age believers.

Consistent dispensationalists have been unjustly accused of writing off this portion of the Word of God as irrelevant for today. Yet dispensationalists insist that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. And they recognize the necessary distinction which others refuse to see, that between interpretation and application. He who would rightly divide (II Tim. 2:15)--rather than recklessly distort (II Cor. 4:2)--the Word of God, must know that while each passage of Scripture has many applications, it has only one correct interpretation. To determine the correct interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount has been the purpose of this study.

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The Sermon on the Mount

Law



Grace



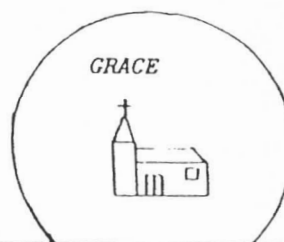
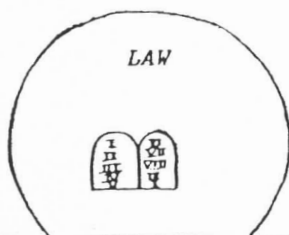
Kingdom



MT. 3:2-3; 4:17	MT. 3-12	MT. 12-13	MT. 16	ACTS 1-REV.	REV.	MT. 25:32
KINGDOM ANNOUNCED	KINGDOM OFFERED	KINGDOM REJECTED	CHURCH ANNOUNCED	RAPTURE ANTICIPATED	KINGDOM REOFFERED	KINGDOM INSTITUTED

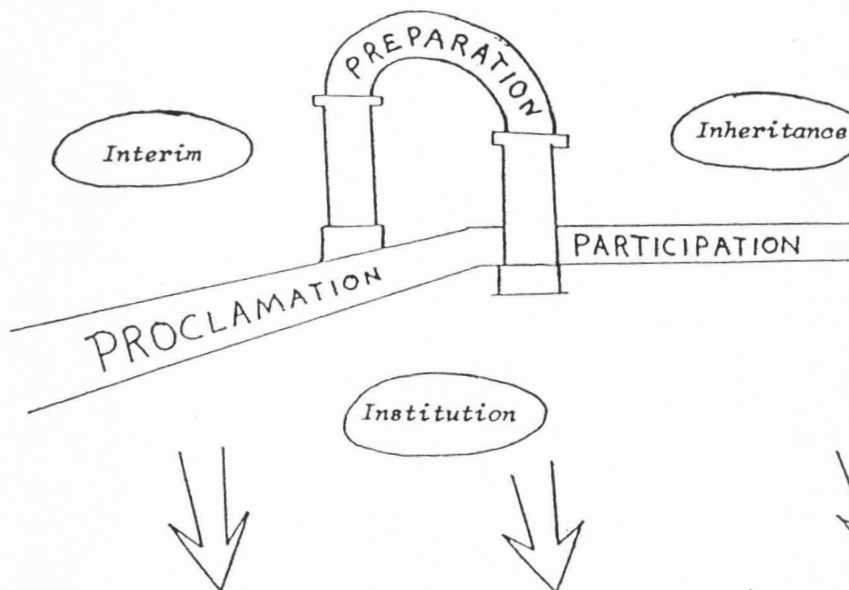
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
FOR WHOM?

CONCEPT
OF THE
KINGDOM



MT. 3:2-3; 4:17	MT. 3-12	MT. 12-13	MT. 16	ACTS 1 - REV.	REV.	MT. 25:32
KINGDOM ANNOUNCED	KINGDOM OFFERED	KINGDOM REJECTED	CHURCH ANNOUNCED	RAPTURE ANTICIPATED	KINGDOM REOFFERED	KINGDOM INSTITUTED

CONTRAST
OF THE
VIEWS



CONTRADICTION
WITH THE
AGE OF GRACE

ARRANGEMENT OF
MATTHEW
ABSENCE OF
CHURCH TRUTH
ADDRESS OF
INHERITORS

CONTENT
OF THE
SERMON

REPRESENTA- TIVES:	S. L. Johnson Toussaint	Chafer	Ryrie
REASONS FOR THE VIEWS:	Persecution of disciples Prayer for the Kingdom Prospect of rewards	Preparation for disciples Perfection of the citizens Prompting to repentance	Possession of the land Peace on earth Presence of the Messiah

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