

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, Dec 20, 1890 to May 30, 1891)

The Good Samaritan

I will read for our instruction a part of the 10th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke beginning with the 25th verse – I read from the revised version —

“And behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him saying, Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him – What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.

And he said unto him, thou has answered right; this do and thou shalt live. But he desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among robbers, which both stripped him, and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance a certain Priest was going down that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed came where he was; and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him, and on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host and said, Take care of him, and whatever thou spendest more, I when I come back again, will repay thee.

Which of these three thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go and do thou likewise —

This beautiful parable has had an untold influence on the hearts and history of man ever since the day it was uttered —it has been written about and preached upon more than it would be possible to state. And yet the general current of the expositions of it from Apostolic times to our own day has been objectionable. Many commentators ignore the real point in it; and many have written only to obscure its real meaning.

One is reminded of the remark of the Good woman who said that she thought she could understand the sacred text, and was not quite without hope that one of these days she would be able to understand the explanation.

The Christian religion teaches in general the Universal brotherhood of man, and to emphasize this idea, this parable is quoted as teaching that it is the duty of every man to love every other man, as he loves himself ——The exposition came with a preconceived tenet, and they seek to use the fable to prove it, rather than to examine the fable to get at its own independent lesson.

As a fair sample of the Commentators, ancient and modern, I shall quote from Dr. William Arnot, whose work on the "Parables of our Lord" is the best that I know of. He says: the scribe in order to form a basis for his own defense inquires, "who is my neighbor?" The parable constitutes the answer. But before we proceed to examine its contents, it is of great importance to observe that it is not a direct answer to the scribe's question. It is the answer which the Lord saw meet to give, but it is not a decision on the case which has been submitted for adjudication.

In his question the scribe contemplated other people and speculated upon who had the right to receive kindness. The answer of Jesus on the contrary, contemplates the scribe himself, and inquires whether he is prepared to bestow kindness. As to those who should receive our love there is no limit, the real subject of this inquiry concerns the man who bestows it. The question is not "who is my neighbor?" but, "am I neighborly?" This is the line on which the parable proceeds. It does not supply the scribe with an answer to the question which he had put; but it supplies him with another question which he desired to evade.

He is not permitted to ride off upon speculative inquiry about the abstract rights of other men; he is pinned down to a personal practical duty" this may be taken as the consensus of the Christian Fathers, writers and preachers as to the meaning of the parable. They change the question from who is my neighbor to am I neighborly? The books are full of it; innumerable sermons repeat it; and everywhere the Good Samaritan is the type and Symbol of the man who loves every other man indiscriminately, as he loves himself.

The objections to this exposition are threefold – 1st It does violence to the text; 2nd It does greater violence to the human consciousness and our common sense. 3d – it does the greatest violence the candor and ingenuousness of the Great Teacher – the text is plain. The lawyer was a man who spent his life studying and teaching the Mosaic law. He was not quizzing Jesus. The word "tempted" is not used in that sense. He asked a plain question upon the most important of all subjects, to ascertain what the young teacher who assumed so much, knew about it, and how he would reply.

The first answer meets the question candidly, and it is direct and satisfactory. The law, which both upheld and taught, was quoted to the satisfaction of both. But the law did not clearly define one's neighbor and hence the lawyer was right in seeking to relieve himself of the suspicion of being a captious disputant by asking "and who is my neighbor?" And to that question the answer is equally direct.

"Which one of these three thinkest thou proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?" He that showed mercy on him."

This is accepted as the correct reply, and the statement that the Samaritan was the neighbor means also that the others were not. The expression of the one is the exclusion of the others. He is the one to love as yourself. You are not expected to have such a feeling for the others. To construct a sequel to the parable, let us suppose that the traveler,

on his return journey from Jericho back to Jerusalem, should find that a Cyclone had preceded him by a few hours, and that all the other characters had been caught in it. These were the Samaritan, the Levite, the Priest, and the robbers, all equally overwhelmed and in extreme distress. Suppose he could aid but one, or at least but one at a time. Would it not be his cold duty, as well as his natural impulse, to go to the Samaritan first and to confine his attentions to him as long as aid was needed?

Has not the Samaritan a claim upon him which, if it is as much his duty as it is the prompting of his heart to [] and is not such a claim as that if it take all his resources to liquidate it he must do so though there may be nothing left for the others, not even if they perish for want of aid.

This is the plain meaning of the text, well understood by the interlocutors, and accepted as satisfactory by both of them. 2nd — It is in harmony with our consciousness of right and wrong and has the approval of our common sense; for it is not possible for any healthy-minded man to love every other man indiscriminately, as he loves himself — Jesus himself loves his friends, and all unselfish souls, but no literature contains denunciations more bitter than those which he hurled at those people whom he thought to be deserving of them “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees; hypocrites; ye serpents; ye offspring of vipers; how shall ye escape the Damnation of hell —”

The traveler would be regarded as a hopeless Crank; as, in fact, he would have a nature warped out of all semblance to a healthy state, if he should pretend to regard the robbers and the Samaritan like. And again, whatever in the midst of his immense pretensions, Jesus was or was not, he was not a quibbler, he was not a pettyfogger. Much of his fame and influence rest on his crushing answers given to questions which were put to him. He had not need to evade and quibble and he never did it. He was asked “and who is my neighbor whom I am to love as myself,” and he replied, with unmistakable directness and clearness.

The unselfish man who shows mercy on you, and there is no tenet of religion and no dictum of philosophy which has ever been, or ever will be, at variance with the spirit of that answer. Why then did Jesus add having answered the lawyer fully “Go and do thou likewise” of course he meant, do as the Samaritan did. I think it is no part of the answer to his last question, but a bit of advice apropos of his first question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life.” They had agreed that the first thing was to love God supremely. He must first recognize and reverence his Master, and in so doing he will enjoy his Maker's favor and blessing.

Not that he will acquire a claim upon God by loving him supremely, but that His care naturally and necessarily surrounds those who yield their hearts to Him, and this is the first and chief assurance of the attainment of the Eternal life the Summum Bonum.

Now as to his fellow man the principle is the same. Love God — and He will love you. That is your main anchor. Do good to your fellow man, and he will esteem you. Enact the Samaritan and you will be neighbor to every man whom you befriend, and he will love

you as he loves himself. And the more such there are in the world, the nearer will you be to the attainment of the Chief Good – Eternal life – He who enjoys the love of God and man has all that the Universe can bestow. No man is unselfish for the sake of its reward, but the reward follows as day follows night.

General Washington was a rich man – notwithstanding the impairments of his fortune by his long ill paid public service, he died worth at least \$400,000 equal perhaps to a million nowadays. But what was that compared with, if you'll pardon a commercial phrase, what stood to his credit in the hearts of his Countrymen.

Sister Dora who established and so long managed the Cottage Hospital at Wasal had no money. Yet she was the richest person in the city. In fact she owned it all. She was their Samaritan. Now when Jesus told the lawyer to go, and do like the Samaritan, he did not send him off on a wild mission to exhaust himself by trying to aid any and every body in a reckless way. The good man was not asking some body to help. He ran across him in pursuit of his own affairs, and he aided him according to his needs and no more. He gave two dinar about 3 cts to the host of the inn and guaranteed his account in the necessary care of the wounded man, that was all, and that was enough. The Samaritan did not sacrifice, nor even risk, his own welfare for the welfare of another. No one is required to do that, although many do it every day. No one is expected to love his neighbor better than himself, however great may be his claim. The philosophy of his advice, is precisely the same as that in the injunction of Jesus to his own disciples. “Continue ye or abide ye in my love,” meaning continued to behave so that I shall continue to love you” “your chief Good lies in the enjoyment of the continued love of God and man” –for Jesus, according to his own claims of himself, represented both. By way of application –

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is not all rough, but it leads through a narrow, dreary mountain pass, by nature fitted to be a haunt of robbers. It was notoriously unsafe for travelers in that day, and it is equally dangerous still. A particular portion of the road acquired the name of the path of blood, and under the feeble government of the Turks, as well as in more ancient times, it well deserves the appellation. So the journey of life is not all rough, but there are trying passes through which each wayfarer must go, differing with each individual. One will get through a crisis only to fall in another; and one will succumb to trials today, which by being overcome by timely aid, will make the remainder of the pilgrimage in safety, rendering aid to others who stumble and fall over other difficulties. It is not necessary for the one to seek the other. Day by day, as life's current flows, the helpful come into contact with the helpless, and the strong are led where the feeble lie. If every person on his feet coming [Kata Sug Karian,] into contact with one who lies prostrate, should enact the Samaritan to the traveler, the Millennial dawn would begin to pierce and scatter the black shadows which, since Adam's fall, have hung like a pall over the life of man, and then, not as a consequence but rather as a natural sequence, the returning gratitude of the traveler would usher in the noon tide splendor of the Millennial day.

And now, my beloved brethren, since it is not en regle to conclude a sermon without something Hortatory I will give you a few home made lines. I do not mean to say that I

composed them myself, but they are home made nevertheless –

Give him a lift – Don't kneel in prayer.
Nor moralize with his despair.
The man is down, and his great need
Is ready help, not prayer and creed.

Do like the Samaritan; Speak in deeds.
A noble life's the best of creeds;
And he shall wear a Royal Crown,
Who gives them a lift when they are down.

Theo. Kemper
April 18th 1871