THE BOOK OF MATTHEW.

CHAPTER I.

Matthew i.
16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.
17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

SAINT MATTHEW is supposed to be distinguished from the other Apostles by the frequency of his references to the Old Testament. He records more particulars of Jesus than the others do, far more of his birth, his sayings and his miracles.

There has been much difference of opinion among writers of both sacred and profane history as to the paternity of Jesus, and whether he was a real or an ideal character. If, as the Scriptures claim, he descended from heaven, begotten by the Holy Ghost, the incarnation of God himself, then there was nothing remarkable in his career, nor miraculous in the seeming wonders which he performed, being the soul and the centre of all the forces of the universe of matter and of mind. If he was an ideal character, like the gifted hero of some novel or tragedy, his great deeds and his wise sayings the result of the imagination of some skilful artist, then we may admire the sketch as a beautiful picture. But if Jesus was a man who was born, lived and died as do other men, a worthy example for imitation, he is deserving of our love and reverence, and by showing us the possibilities of human nature he is a constant inspiration, our hope and salvation; for the path, however rough, in which one man has walked, others may follow. As a God with infinite power he could have been no example to us; but with human limitations we may emulate his virtues and walk in his footsteps.

Some writers think that his mother was a wise, great and beauti-
ful Jewish maiden, and his father a learned rabbi, who devoted much
time and thought to his son's education. At a period when learning
was confined to the few, it was a matter of surprise that as a mere
boy he could read and write, and discuss the vital questions of the
hour with doctors in the sacred temples. His great physical beauty,
the wisdom of his replies to the puzzling questions of the Pharisees
and the Sadducees, his sympathy with the poor and the needy, his
ambition for all that is best in human development, and his indiffer-
ence to worldly aggrandizement, altogether made him a marked
man in his day and generation. For these reasons he was hated,
reviled, persecuted, like the long line of martyrs who followed his
teachings. He commands far more love and reverence as a true
man with only human possibilities, than as a God, superior to all
human frailties and temptations.

What were years of persecution, the solitude on the mountain,
the agonies on the cross, with the power of a God to sustain him?
But unaided and alone to triumph over all human weakness, trials
and temptation, was victory not only for Jesus but for every human
being made in his image.

Matthew ii.

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethle-
hem of Judea in the days of Herod the
king, behold, there came wise men from
the east to Jerusalem.

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King
of the Jews? for we have seen his star in
the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these
things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem
with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief
priests together, he demanded of them
where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem
of Judea:

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and
said, Go and search diligently for the young
child; and when ye have found him, bring
me word.

9 And they departed; and lo, the star,
which they saw in the east, went before
them, till it came and stood over where the
young child was.

11 And when they were come into the
house, they saw the young child with Mary
his mother, and fell down, and worshiped
him: and when they had opened their treas-
ures, they presented unto him gifts; gold,
and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream
that they should not return to Herod, they
departed into their own country another
way.

13 And the angel of the Lord appeareth
to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and
take the young child and his mother, and
flee into Egypt; for Herod will seek to de-
stroy him.

14 And he arose, and departed into
Egypt;

15 But when Herod was dead, behold, an
angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to
Joseph

16 Saying, Arise, and take the young
child and his mother, and go into the land
of Israel.

These sages were supposed to be men of great learning belong-
ing to a sect called Magians, who came from Arabia. There was a
general feeling that the king of the Jews was yet to be born, and
that they were soon to see the long expected and promised Messiah.
Herod was greatly troubled by the tidings that a child had been born
under remarkable circumstances. The star spoken of was supposed
to be a luminous meteor the wise men had seen in their own country
before they set out on their journey for Bethlehem, and which now
guided them to the house where the young child was. Notwith-
standing the common surroundings, the wise men recognizing some-
thing more than human in the child, fell down and worshiped him
and presented unto him the most precious gifts which their country
yielded. Some have supposed that the frankincense and the myrrh
were intended as an acknowledgment of his deity, as the gold was of
his royalty.

To defeat the subtle malice of Herod, who was determined to take
the child's life, Joseph was warned in a dream to flee into Egypt with
the child and his mother. The wise men did not return to Herod as
commanded, but went at once to their own country.

Matthew ix.
18 Behold, there came a certain ruler,
saying, My daughter is even now dead; but
come and lay thy hand upon her, and she
shall live.
19 And Jesus arose and followed him.
20 And behold, a woman, which was dis-
eased twelve years, came behind him, and
touched the hem of his garment:
21 For she said within herself, If I may
but touch his garment, I shall be whole.
22 But Jesus turned him about, and when
he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good
comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole.
And the woman was made whole from that
hour.
23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's
house, * * *
24 He said, Give place: for the maid is
not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed
him to scorn.
25 But when the people were put forth,
he went in, and took her by the hand, and
the maid arose.

Matthew xiv.
3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and
put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his
brother Philip's wife.
4 For John said unto him, It is not law-
ful for thee to have her.
5 And when he would have put him to
death, he feared the multitude, because
they counted him as a prophet.
6 But when Herod's birthday was kept,
the daughter of Herodias danced before
them, and pleased Herod.
7 Whereupon he promised to give her
whatsoever she would ask.
8 And she, being before instructed of her
mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's
head in a charger.
9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless
for the oath's sake he commanded it to be
given her.
10 And he sent, and beheaded John in
the prison.
11 And his head was brought in a char-
ger, and given to the damsel: and she
brought it to her mother.
12 And his disciples came, and took up
the body, and buried it, and went and told
Jesus.
Josephus says that Herodias was niece both to her former husband, Philip, and to Herod, with whom she at this time lived. Herod had divorced his own wife in order to take her; and her husband Philip was still living, as well as the daughter Salome, whom he had by her. No connection could be more contrary to the law of God than this. John, therefore, being a prophet and no courtier, plainly reproved Herod, and declared that it was not lawful for him to retain Herodias. This greatly offended Herod and Herodias, and they cast John into prison. Herodias waited her opportunity to wreak her malice on him, counting John's reproof an insult to her character as well as an interference with her ambition.

At length when Herod celebrated his birthday, entertaining his nobles with great magnificence, the daughter of Herodias danced before them all, with such exquisite grace as to delight the company, whereupon Herod promised her whatever she desired, though equal in value to half his kingdom. Salome consulted her mother, who urged her to demand the head of John the Baptist. By the influence of Herodias, Herod, contrary to his own conscience, was induced to put John to death, for he feared him as a righteous man.

It must have been a great trial to the daughter, who might have asked so many beautiful gifts and rare indulgences, to yield all to her wicked mother's revenge. But these deeds were speedily avenged. It is said that Salome had her head cut off by the ice breaking as she passed over it. Herod was shortly after engaged in a disastrous war on account of Herodias, and was expelled from his territories; and both died in exile, hated by everybody and hating one another.

E. C. S.

In regard to the charge against Herodias, which is current among theological scandal-mongers, there is not a moderately intelligent jury of Christendom (if composed half of men and half of women) which, after examining all the available evidence, would not render a verdict in her favor of "Not Guilty." The statement that she "paid the price of her own daughter's debasement and disgrace for the head of John the Baptist," is an assertion born wholly of the ecclesi-
astical, distorted imagination. Not even a hint, much less an iota of proof, to warrant such an assertion, is found anywhere in history—sacred or profane. While some anonymous writer of the early Christian centuries did put in circulation the charge that John the Baptist was put to death at the instigation of Herodias (without implicating her daughter's character, however), Josephus, on the contrary, explicitly declares that his death was wholly a political matter, with which the names of Herodias and her daughter are not even connected by rumor. Says Josephus: "When others came in crowds about him (John the Baptist), for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause. . . . Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death."

Now, the jury must remember that Josephus was born in Jerusalem about 38 A. D., that he was an educated man and in a position to know the facts in this case, owing both to his prominent position among the Jews and to his study of contemporaneous history. But that, on the other hand, the anonymous writers who bring Herodias' name into the transaction, are not traceable further back than the fourth century of our era, and that even they do not bring any charge against her character as a mother.

E. B. D.

Matthew xx.

21 Then Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples besought him to send her away.

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

25 Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 But he said, It is not meet to take the children's food, and to cast it to dogs.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Peter had a house in Capernaum; and his wife's mother lived
with them; and Jesus lodged with them when in that city. It is hoped that his presence brought out the best traits of the mother-in-law, so as to make her agreeable to Peter. As soon as Jesus rebuked the fever, she was able without delay to rise and to wait on Jesus and his disciples. These displays of the power of Christ in performing miracles, according to the text, are varied, in almost every conceivable way of beneficence; but he wrought no miracles of vengeance, even the destruction of the swine was doubtless intended in mercy and conducive to much good—so say the commentators. He not only healed the sick and cast out devils, but he made the blind to see and the dumb to speak.

The woman of Canaan proved herself quite equal in argument with Jesus; and though by her persistency she tired the patience of the disciples, she made her points with Jesus with remarkable clearness. His patience with women was a sore trial to the disciples, who were always disposed to nip their appeals in the bud. It was very ungracious in Jesus to speak of the Jews as dogs, saying, “It is not meet to take the children’s food, and to cast it to dogs.” Her reply, “Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master’s table,” was bright and appropriate. Jesus appreciated her tact and her perseverance, and granted her request; and her daughter, the text says, was healed.

We might doubt the truth of all these miracles did we not see so many wonderful things in our own day which we would have pronounced impossible years ago. The fact of human power developing in so many remarkable ways proves that Jesus’s gift of performing miracles is attainable by those who, like him, live pure lives, and whose blood flows in the higher arches of the brain. If one man, at any period of the world’s history, performed miracles, others equally gifted may do the same.

Matthew xx.
20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshiping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.
21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou?  

She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Zebedee, the father of James and of John, was dead; and he was
not so constant a follower of Christ as his wife; so she is men-
tioned as the mother of Zebedee’s children, which saying has passed
into a conundrum, “Who was the mother of Zebedee’s children?”
Scott in his commentaries gives her name as Salome. Whatever
her name, she had great ambition for her sons, and asked that they
might have the chief places of honor and authority in his kingdom.
Her son James was the first of the Apostles who suffered martyr-
dom. John survived all the rest and is not supposed to have died a
violent death.

A mother’s ambition to lift her sons over her own head in educa-
tion and position, planning extraordinary responsibilities for or-
dinary men, has proved a misfortune in many cases. Many a young
man who would be a success as a carpenter would be a failure as the
governor of a State. Mothers are quite apt to overestimate the
genius of their children and push them into niches which they can-
not fill.

Matthew xxii.
23 The same day came to him the Sad-
duees, which say that there is no resur-
rection and asked him,
24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man
die, having no children, his brother shall
marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his
brother.
25 Now there were with us seven breth-
ren: and the first, when he had married a
wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left
his wife unto his brother:
26 Likewise the second also, and the
third, unto the seventh.
27 And last of all the woman died also.
28 Therefore in the resurrection, whose
wife shall she be of the seven? for they all
had her.
29 Jesus answered and said unto them,
Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor
the power of God.
30 For in the resurrection they neither
marry, nor are given in marriage, but are
as the angels of God in heaven.

Jesus reminded the Sadducees that marriage was intended only
for the present world, to replenish the earth and to repair the ravages
which death continually makes among its inhabitants; but as in the
future state there was to be no death, so no marriage. There the
body even would be made spiritual; and all the employments and the
pleasures pure and angelic. The marriage relation seems to have
been a tangled problem in all ages. Scientists tell us that both the
masculine and feminine elements were united in one person in the
beginning, and will probably be reunited again for eternity.

E. C. S.
Chapter II.

Matthew xxv.

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

In this chapter we have the duty of self-development impressively and repeatedly urged in the form of parables, addressed alike to man and to woman. The sin of neglecting and of burying one's talents, capacities and powers, and the penalties which such a course involve, are here strikingly portrayed.

This parable is found among the Jewish records substantially the same as in our own Scriptures. Their weddings were generally celebrated at night; yet they usually began at the rising of the evening star; but in this case there was a more than ordinary delay. Adam Clarke in his commentaries explains this parable as referring chiefly to spiritual gifts and the religious life. He makes the Lord of Hosts the bridegroom, the judgment day the wedding feast, the foolish virgins the sinners whose hearts were cold and dead, devoid of all spiritual graces, and unfit to enter the kingdom of heaven. The wise virgins were the saints who were ready for translation, or for the bridal procession. They followed to the wedding feast; and when the chosen had entered "the door was shut."
This strikes us as a strained interpretation of a very simple parable, which, considered in connection with the other parables, seems to apply much more closely to this life than to that which is to come, to the intellectual and the moral nature, and to the whole round of human duties. It fairly describes the two classes which help to make up society in general. The one who, like the foolish virgins, have never learned the first important duty of cultivating their own individual powers, using the talents given to them, and keeping their own lamps trimmed and burning. The idea of being a helpmeet to somebody else has been so sedulously drilled into most women that an individual life, aim, purpose and ambition are never taken into consideration. They oftimes do so much in other directions that they neglect the most vital duties to themselves.

We may find in this simple parable a lesson for the cultivation of courage and of self-reliance. These virgins are summoned to the discharge of an important duty at midnight, alone, in darkness, and in solitude. No chivalrous gentleman is there to run for oil and to trim their lamps. They must depend on themselves, unsupported, and pay the penalty of their own improvidence and unwisdom. Perhaps in that bridal procession might have been seen fathers, brothers, friends, for whose service and amusement the foolish virgins had wasted many precious hours, when they should have been trimming their own lamps and keeping oil in their vessels.

And now, with music, banners, lanterns, torches, guns and rockets fired at intervals, come the bride and the groom, with their attendants and friends numbering thousands, brilliant in jewels, gold and silver, magnificently mounted on richly caparisoned horses—for nothing can be more brilliant than were those nuptial solemnities of Eastern nations. As this spectacle, grand beyond description, sweeps by, imagine the foolish virgins pushed aside, in the shadow of some tall edifice, with dark, empty lamps in their hands, unnoticed and unknown. And while the castle walls resound with music and merriment, and the lights from every window stream out far into the darkness, no kind friends gather round them to sympathize in their humiliation, nor to cheer their loneliness. It matters little that women may be ignorant, dependent, unprepared for trial
and for temptation. Alone they must meet the terrible emergencies of life, to be sustained and protected amid danger and death by their own courage, skill and self-reliance, or perish.

Woman's devotion to the comfort, the education, the success of men in general, and to their plans and projects, is in a great measure due to her self-abnegation and self-sacrifice having been so long and so sweetly lauded by poets, philosophers and priests as the acme of human goodness and glory.

Now, to my mind, there is nothing commendable in the action of young women who go about begging funds to educate young men for the ministry, while they and the majority of their sex are too poor to educate themselves, and if able, are still denied admittance into some of the leading institutions of learning throughout our land. It is not commendable for women to get up fairs and donation parties for churches in which the gifted of their sex may neither pray, preach, share in the offices and honors, nor have a voice in the business affairs, creeds and discipline, and from whose altars come forth Biblical interpretations in favor of woman's subjection.

It is not commendable for the women of this Republic to expend much enthusiasm on political parties as now organized, nor in national celebrations, for they have as yet no lot or part in the great experiment of self-government.

In their ignorance, women sacrifice themselves to educate the men of their households, and to make of themselves ladders by which their husbands, brothers and sons climb up into the kingdom of knowledge, while they themselves are shut out from all intellectual companionship, even with those they love best; such are indeed like the foolish virgins. They have not kept their own lamps trimmed and burning; they have no oil in their vessels, no resources in themselves; they bring no light to their households nor to the circle in which they move; and when the bridegroom cometh, when the philosopher, the scientist, the saint, the scholar, the great and the learned, all come together to celebrate the marriage feast of science and religion, the foolish virgins, though present, are practically shut out; for what know they of the grand themes which in-
spire each tongue and kindle every thought? Even the brothers and the sons whom they have educated, now rise to heights which they cannot reach, span distances which they cannot comprehend.

The solitude of ignorance, oh, who can measure its misery!

The wise virgins are they who keep their lamps trimmed, who burn oil in their vessels for their own use, who have improved every advantage for their education, secured a healthy, happy, complete development, and entered all the profitable avenues of labor, for self-support, so that when the opportunities and the responsibilities of life come, they may be fitted fully to enjoy the one and ably to discharge the other.

These are the women who to-day are close upon the heels of man in the whole realm of thought, in art, in science, in literature and in government. With telescopic vision they explore the starry firmament, and bring back the history of the planetary world. With chart and compass they pilot ships across the mighty deep, and with skilful fingers send electric messages around the world. In galleries of art, the grandeur of nature and the greatness of humanity are immortalized by them on canvas, and by their inspired touch, dull blocks of marble are transformed into angels of light. In music they speak again the language of Mendelssohn, of Beethoven, of Chopin, of Schumann, and are worthy interpreters of their great souls. The poetry and the novels of the century are theirs; they, too, have touched the keynote of reform in religion, in politics and in social life. They fill the editors’ and the professors’ chairs, plead at the bar of justice, walk the wards of the hospital, and speak from the pulpit and the platform.

Such is the widespread preparation for the marriage feast of science and religion; such is the type of womanhood which the bridegroom of an enlightened public sentiment welcomes to-day; and such is the triumph of the wise virgins over the folly, the ignorance and the degradation of the past as in grand procession they enter the temple of knowledge, and the door is no longer shut.
Matthew xxvi.

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head.
8 But when his disciples saw it, they said, To what purpose is this waste?
9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.
10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman?
11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.
12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.
13 Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached, there shall also this be told for a memorial of her.

Matthew xxvii.

19 When Pilate was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of him.
24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.
25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.
55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him;
56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.
61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

It is a common opinion among Christians that the persecutions of the Jews in all periods and latitudes is a punishment on them for their crucifixion of Jesus, and that this defiant acceptance of the responsibility is being justly fulfilled.

Matthew xxviii.

1 In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.
2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.
7 Go quickly and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him.
8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with great joy.
9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him.
10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Among the witnesses of the crucifixion, this melancholy and untimely scene, there were some women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and had waited on him, supplying his wants from their substance. Affection and anxious concern induced them to be present, and probably they stand afar off, fearing the outrages of the multi-
tude. Words cannot express the mixed emotions of true gratitude, reverence, sorrow and compassion which must have agitated their souls on this occasion. We find from John, who was also present, that Mary the mother of Jesus was a spectator of this distressing scene.

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, he was greatly troubled as to what judgment he should give, and his hesitation was increased by a warning from his wife, to have no part in the death of that righteous man; for she had terrifying dreams respecting him, which made her conclude that his death would be avenged by some unseen power.  

E. C. S.