

departing from or even contradicting the Old Testament. This is a strange and serious charge. It requires examination.

To begin with, we may note that of the six times that Jesus introduces a citation (verses 21,27,31,33,38, and 43) three times he adds that it was said "by them of old time" (verses 21,27,33). It should be noted that this is not Jesus' usual way of quoting Scripture. Never is the phrase elsewhere used. Usually some such formula is used as "it is written", "Scripture saith", "it is written in the prophets", "Moses saith", etc. Occasionally "it saith", or "it is said", may be used but never the appeal to them of old time. These verses are not said to be from Scripture, though obviously enough they include Scripture.

Love thy Neighbour

The last of the six examples will show that Jesus was referring to more than Scripture. "It hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,'" (vs. 43). Now clearly the first half of this saying is from Lev. 19:18. But just as clearly the last half is not in the Old Testament at all. And this last half is not in accord with the Old Testament. The Old Testament not only commanded love for the Israelite neighbour, but in such verses as Lev. 19:34 commanded the Israelites to love the strangers in the same way. And it is important to note that Christ does not object in the slightest to the Old Testament teaching. What he contradicts is the addition "hate thine enemy". This is what was not written.

But it seems clear enough that this additional phrase is just what we may have expected the scribal interpreter of the ancient law of Israel to have added. To love one's neighbour would imply by logical inference - so the scribes would have reasoned - its opposite. But Jesus cuts through their sophistry by an appeal to the example of the God of the Old Testament who does good to all. So Jesus is here not contradicting the Old Testament, He is rather disagreeing with the foolish and wicked scribal commentary.

Oaths

Another example of a similar thing is found in verse 33ff, the law of oaths, number four in this series of six. Now fortunately we know the scribal attitude toward oaths. Jesus refers to the subject again in Matt. 23:16-23. The scribes and Pharisees evidently distinguished degrees of obligation in oaths. Some oaths didn't count. Some carried, as it were, the penalties of perjury. Their attitude was not the God-ordained attitude of regard for truth, but rather the lawyer's attitude of finding penalties for various infractions. Their "lawyers" were evidently eager to profit by loopholes in the traditional regulations of Phariseism.

Now the principle had been accepted that the seriousness of a man's oath could be measured by the object he swore by. If he swore by the gold of the temple, he was obligated. If he swore by the lamb on the altar he was obligated. But curiously, they held that if a man swore by the temple he was not obligated - apparently because it was not for sale! Likewise an oath by the altar could be broken with impunity. It