

Sunday Reading
About the Kingdom of God

It is customary to speak of two advents, the first and the second coming of our Lord; his first advent in the flesh of our salvation, and his second advent in glory for judgement of the quick and the dead. The period between these two advents is regarded as a period of preparation, of watching and waiting for the return of the absent King. But the anxious watchers are to be industrious workers; and they watch to best advantage who work most diligently. We are to wait not only for the Lord but upon him. We are to toil in his vineyard. We are to preach his Gospel to every creature. We are to disciple the nations; and, in obeying that command, we have the assurance of his personal leadership. His withdrawal from the world was only apparent. He departed as to the flesh; he remained, and ever remains, in the power of his Spirit. The day of Pentecost was as real an advent as the day of his birth, and as the hour of his coming to judgement will be. So that we should speak of three advents: the advent in the flesh for our salvation, the advent in the Spirit for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, and the advent in glory for judgement of the quick and the dead. And the days in which we are living are the days of the second advent, whose great task is the evangelization of the world, the conversion of the nations.

If we want to make our view cover the entire period of human history, reaching its goal in the Kingdom of God, we may regard the pre-Christian centuries as a preparation for the kingdom, the Incarnation as the inauguration of the kingdom, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit as the extension and the consolidation of the kingdom, and the advent in glory as its graduation into eternal security and blessedness. Fourfold in form, it is one and indivisible in spirit and life. It is the rule of God in the hearts of men. It is the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over human souls.

What is the nature of this kingdom? What is the principal, what is the power, of this sovereignty? What is the aim of the rule of God on earth, and what is the power by which that rule is made effective? Jesus himself has answered these questions, and never more clearly than when he least seemed to be a king. Standing at the bar of Pilate, the amazed Roman judge asked him: 'Art thou a king, then?' Calmly came back the answer: 'I am. That is the meaning of my birth. It is not a sudden ambition which has seized me. I was born to rule. But my kingdom is not of this world. It does not mean a palace, and a throne, and great armies. It is not with Caesar that I have any controversy. I came to make an end of falsehood. I am a witness unto the truth; and all who are children of the truth, hear me, and follow me.' So then, the Kingdom of God is the reign of truth. And in his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus pointed out the agency by which the truth was to obtain the sovereignty. The citizens of the kingdom are they who are born from above, born of the Holy spirit. This completes the answer. The Kingdom of God is the supremacy of truth, secured by the Spirit of promise and power. The Sermon on the Mount elaborates the answer, and the parables illustrate it. Whose is the Kingdom of Heaven? It belongs to the poor in spirit, to such as mourn, to the meek to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness, to the merciful, to the pure in heart, to the peacemakers, to such as are persecuted for righteousness' sake. These are the salt of the earth, these are the light of the world. He sums it all up in the saying that our righteousness must exceed righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, if we would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and then he proceeds to outline the incisiveness and the spirituality of the law of God. We are to share in the moral perfection of God himself. The kingdom is the righteousness of the Eternal, and which only the Eternal can impart. The parables confirm and illustrate the answer. We need only consider two of them, the parables of the Sower and of the Prodigal Son. The

first teaches us that the Kingdom of God comes by the sowing of the truth in the hearts of men, and its fruitage in their lives. The second teaches us that citizenship in the kingdom is the free and undeserved gift of God to those who have squandered their substance, and who in godly penitence make appeal to his mercy. The answer is the same; the Kingdom of God is the sovereignty of truth in the hearts and lives of men, secured by supernatural Divine agency. The whole matter is admirably summed up by Paul, when he tells us that the Kingdom of God is 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' It is the reign of righteousness, a word which means more than justice, which is the equivalent of 'salvation,' weaving together truth and mercy; so that purity is aflame with the passion of love, and love is intent upon absolute purity. Such a reign of righteousness produces peace, and girdles the earth with joy. And that is not the product of a natural evolution, but of supernatural grace; it is the work of the Holy Ghost. The Kingdom of God, then, is the sovereignty of the righteousness, which is God's free gift to men by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

This makes clear a second thing, the method of administration. It is rational, for the incorruptible seed is the Word of God. And this Word of God is also the sword of the Spirit. It is the truth that slays, demolishing every citadel of lies; and it is the truth that saves. Lies plunge men into darkness, and crowd them to ruin; truth is candlestick, and star, and sun, lightening up our steps to safety and glory. Truth is what men need more than ought else; definite doctrine; a simple but a rational theology. The method of the Divine kingdom is spiritual. It lays hold upon that in human nature which is eternal, which has neither beginning nor end, which speaks with infallible and universal authority. It makes its appeal to the enlightened conscience, and makes duty the greatest word in our rational speech. And because the method of the kingdom is rational and spiritual, it is intensely and exclusively personal. There are no twin births in the Kingdom of God. Each soul has its solitary inauguration and discipline. Repentance is personal. Faith is personal. Obedience is personal. Forgiveness is personal. Regeneration is personal. Sanctification is personal. Every man does his own sinning, and the guilt of his sin is wholly and only his. Every man must do his own repenting, confessing, believing, obeying. All these things God works in us, as he is the originating cause of everything else. But the things which God works in, we must individually work out. We can stimulate each other to penitence, and faith, and good works, and what we can do for each other, God is able to do much more abundantly. But amid all this exterior and interior moral pressure, there is a point where the individual will stands in the majesty of the solitary personal action. I speak of a point, not of a moment. The idea of time is of no great significance. You may not recall the day or the hour of your repentance and surrender to Christ. It may have been identical with your first conscious thought, and your first moral decision, neither of which any of us can now locate. But when you did make your first moral choice, it was you who made it. And if it was the soul's choice of Christ, it was you who made it, though you made it only because God was in you, urging and constraining you to it. There is no fatalism in this, because fatalism is compulsion from without, and without any regard to personal choice. In the Kingdom of God we have to do with spiritual and interior energies, working along the lines of persuasion and of personal consent; and whatever results in voluntary personal action cannot have been produced by compulsion. The will of God does not bear down and crush the will of man; the will of God, which is always for salvation, broods over the will of man and wakes the dormant or dead will of man into normal life and action. And when the will of man wakes, it sees with its own eyes, and acts by its own personal energy. I am not trying to harmonize Divine sovereignty and human freedom. That has never been done. I do not believe that it can be done. I believe each to be absolute in its own sphere. God could not be more sovereign if man were not free. Man could not be more free if there were no God. What have I in mind is simply this, that the mortal life in every one of us is self-moved, even though it be God-moved. It is always intensely and exclusively personal. The gate into the kingdom is strait. It is just wide enough for all of us to pass through in single file. When we come to this gate, as when we come to the gate of death, hands must unclasp. In the sweet but awful solitude of personal peni-

tence and faith do we receive our pardon and adoption.

Commensurate with this radical method of administration are the results secured by the Kingdom of God. No change can be more radical than one which is rational, spiritual and personal. Such work does not need to be done over again. Once begun, the heaven, lodged at the very center, leavens all the meal. The radical change is revolutionary. It creates a new man. It brings all things into subjection. It thrusts out all that is foreign to it. It assimilates all that it appropriates. Rational, spiritual, personal regeneration is the method of the Kingdom of God. That makes the soul saintly. And a saintly soul will make a saintly body, with saintly eyes, and ears, and lips, and hands, and feet. Saintly souls will create a saintly literature, a saintly art, a saintly industry, a saintly commerce, a saintly politics. And in this way, by the energy of personal sainthood, the whole world will become saintly, until 'Holiness to the Lord' is engraved upon the bells of the horses. In our time this sovereign thought of the Kingdom of God has been seized to emphasize the fact that Christianity is the religion of social regeneration; and some urge us to substitute external appliances and helps for the personal agencies thus far relied upon. The cry is for 'institutional' churches and sociological methods; less doctrine, more handshaking, less-pulpit, more kindergartens and kitchens. But this is not only to reverse the natural order, it is seriously to misread the method of moral life. That is first of all, and always, rational, spiritual personal. It has its initiative within, not without. When you have said that man is personal moral being, you have said it all. You add nothing when you say that man is also social; for the social is simply the mutual interaction of the personal centers, and what the social product shall be depends wholly upon what the interacting personal centers are. Make them all good and your society will be good. Make them part good and part bad, and your society will be a state of moral conflict. Make them all bad, and your society will be utterly corrupt. Of course we want a good environment, but to secure it we must have the good deeply lodged in the personal beings who constitute society and who control social environment. This was the message of Jesus; to make the tree good, in the certainty that the fruit would be good. You may tie your figs to brambles bushes, but they will not stay there long. We cannot, as well-wishers of our fellow men, lay it too seriously to heart, that reformation is real and permanent only by the regeneration of individuals. The broad, deep base of the ideal social structure must be laid in profound personal conviction, and in corresponding intensely personal moral action. When righteousness is thus firmly lodged by the grace of God in the very centre of personal life, its expanding energy will sweep over a thousand radiating lines into and through the entire sphere of action. It will brush away all laws and customs which hinder and oppose; and will create new ones to take their place. Time only is needed to change the race of the world; the energy is in each soul which by the Holy Ghost has been led to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

A Student's Prayer.

There is no higher or profound study for mankind than theology, or a religious education. If God is in all of our thoughts then our education will draw us to him, but it, on the other hand, we allow ourselves to become engrossed purely with the study of material things, we shall be withdrawn from the pursuit of the higher and better knowledge of spiritual things. We would not disparage a good education, for

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Miss Margaret Brown, 627 Colborne St., London, Ont., says:—"My mother has been afflicted with nervousness and general debility for a long time. She suffered a great deal with insomnia, and found it almost impossible to sleep."

"I went to W. T. Strong's drug store and got a box of Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills, which she took, and derived so much benefit from them that I bought another box for her. They have done her a wonderful lot of good, making her nervous system much stronger, giving her restful sleep, and removing many other symptoms which previously distressed her."

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well we know its importance, both as a means toward a successful livelihood and as a refining and cultivating influence. The young man who is so fortunate as to begin life with this substantial and solid understructure has a grand start on the road of great possibilities, and the self-made man will never cease to regret the loss of that information which could not fail to be a supplement to his natural cleverness or ability. It takes more than books, we admit, to shape one's destiny, but book knowledge, with the proper motive and spirit added, is an able abettor toward this purpose.

Education has opened many doors and illuminated many mysterious passages. It has been the searchlight of discovery; it has led even into the secret places of the Most High, for study has evolved and developed matters that God intended we should seek out. It has been an aid to the missionary in preparing the way to salvation and Christ, and it is invaluable in all the walks of life. This fact has been recognized more and more within the past few years, as the records of our schools and universities show. It is of the first importance, therefore, that our colleges as well as our churches be made strongholds of religion and of aggressive Christian work. From our colleges and universities will come young men and young women who are to be the molders of public opinion and it is of the greatest importance they should be earnest Christians, forces in the cause of truth and righteousness, and we should pray that the influences which control these young people may be such as will sway their minds in the proper direction.

Prayer is the secret of all growing and enduring spiritual influence, whether of individuals or organizations; and it is prayer indeed which gives all Christian work its true value and fruitfulness, because it opens the way for God himself to do his work. All knowledge is vain without the knowledge of him who is wisdom incarnate, and the student's prayer for himself should be that, above all else, the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart may be acceptable in the sight of God, his strength and his Redeemer.

Putting Out the Fire.

A great coal mine in Pennsylvania took fire a little while ago, and notwithstanding great efforts were made to smother it or confine it to a limited area, the flames spread rapidly, the gangs of men were gradually driven back, and it soon became certain that the mine would be a total loss unless the fires were put out. The men and mules and cars were taken out of the mine, and the work of flooding the mine with water began. One can imagine how great a work this is when two hundred acres of area must be covered up to a height of one hundred and twenty feet deep in the shafts. It will take many weeks to pump the water in, and then pump it out again when the fire is extinguished, yet it was very wise to do that rather than lose the whole mine. The fire of sin raging in the human heart is like the fire in that coal mine. It cannot be smothered out, neither can it be kept back in some limited area of the soul. You may keep it smothered down for awhile, but unless extinguished entirely it will destroy the whole character. Christ saves men because he cleanses them from all sin and extinguishes the baleful fires of evil that ravage the soul.

The Courage of Love.

The greater part of a swan's life is spent in magnificently concealing the fact that he is a great coward, except when he is nesting, for then he is no coward. There is no passion so weak, according to Bacon, 'but it makes and masters the fear of death,' and there is no creature so timorous but in defense of its young it becomes valiant. Many a Thames oarsman incautiously guiding into a back water when

the swans are nesting has been glad to escape without a ducking or worse from the infuriated male bird, but with this incentive to heroism removed the swan becomes once more as nervous as a farm yard hen. God has made all things in nature sensitive to this heroism of love. This must be because the great central crowning attribute of his own heart is love. Christ opened God's heart to us when he said, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

"HIS MONEY IN THE STREET."

Catarrh Remedies Cost Him Hundreds and No Cure—Two Bottles of Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder Cured Him.
Fred H. Heib, jr., distiller, Railroad, York Co., Pa., on January 31 last wrote of Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder like this: "I had catarrh of the head and stomach for two years, and had it in the worst form. I spent several hundred dollar in remedies and might as well have thrown my money in the street. I was recommended to try Dr. Agnew's Catarrhal Powder, and two bottles of it have already cured me. I am a well man, and wish its makers the greatest success." For sale by E. C. Brown and all druggists.

Cautious.

There is a small boy in a certain Scottish town who is noted for his shrewdness. The other day he was sent by his father to a neighboring public house with the following order:

'Please send to our house ten dozen of ale.'

Now it so happens that one of the publican's faults is a propensity to poke his nose into other people's business, and so, when he had read the order, he could not help ejaculating—

'Good gracious, laddie, and whatever is yer fether gaun tae dae wi' sae muckle ale?'

For a moment Johnnie was puzzled, knowing that his father wouldn't like him to exactly tell the truth. Then an idea occurred to him, and he replied.

'I'm no verra sure, but I think he's gaun tae mak' a cork trane, and he'll need the corks.'

A CARD.

We, the undersigned, do hereby agree to refund the money on a twenty-five cent bottle of Dr. Willis' English Pills, if, after using three-fourths of contents of bottle, they do not relieve Constipation and Headache. We also warrant that four bottles will permanently cure the most obstinate case of Constipation. Satisfaction or no pay when Willis' English Pills are used.
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The Largest Standing Army.

Russia possesses the largest standing army on earth. Every year some 280,000 conscripts join the Russian forces, which in time of peace number 1,000,000 men. On a war-footing this rises to 2,500,000 and calling out the reserves would increase it to 6,947,000 well trained soldiers. Should necessity arise, the militia would be called out, bringing the Czar's forces up to 9,000,000 men.

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