

The Kingdom of God.

Because holiness is declared to be essential in order to obtain admission into the kingdom of God, it is supposed that our endless salvation is dependent upon conditions which involve our moral welfare in uncertainty. This is a great error, and at war with all the fundamental principles of the plans of grace. It implies, first, that God has no infinite interests upon that which we find nothing like this. The means he employs always correspond to the end he desires to accomplish. When he desired the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage, he raised up Moses, whom he endowed with wisdom and power fully adequate to the work, and the people were delivered. The tyrant who held them in chains strove to retain them; but it was all in vain to contend against a power which had control of all the elements of nature. God, in all his works, uses means adequate to what he purposes. Hence, when he sought the salvation of the world, he sent his Son, clothed with all wisdom, power, and goodness, for its accomplishment. The means corresponded to the end.

The common doctrine of conditional salvation implies, secondly, that God is not infinitely good. It implies this, because it teaches that God has unnecessarily exposed his people to infinite dangers. Perfect goodness could not do that; for it is an evil act, and perfect goodness could not be guilty of it. But the theory implies even more than this,—it implies that God has placed some under circumstances which he knew would prove their endless ruin, for as he knew all things, he knew whether they would comply with the conditions or not, and to create them, knowing they would not, was to create them expressly for endless misery. It would have been no worse if he had, on the very instant of their creation, plunged them into ceaseless woe!

The doctrine in question implies, thirdly, that we are probationers for eternity. But if we are, why are we not informed of the fact? Why are we not told, that we form our characters here for eternity? But suppose we do, what chance have the heathen? what chance idiots? what chance infants? None of them can be saved, for none of them can form Christian characters.

Do you say, they are treated according to their circumstances? Then you abandon the position in question; you admit that all do not here form characters for eternity, you know just what we believe, that all will be treated according to their circumstances, and that, consequently, there is a chance for those who do not here believe in Christ.

Do not, in the face of this admission, tell me that Solomon says there is no work nor device in the grave; for if he refers to the spirit, then neither the heathen, idiot, nor infant can be brought to God. Do not tell me that the New Testament says, Now is the accepted time,—now is the day of salvation, for it that means that this world is the only place where salvation can be effected, then all infants, idiots, and heathen will be damned, and that, too, for unaccountable ignorance!

The question will here arise, how we are to understand the passages which teach, that, unless we are born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God? There is, it will be said, a condition, clearly, distinctly expressed, and the same condition is found on almost every page of the New Testament. I grant the condition; but do we read, Unless we are born again in this life, we shall never inherit the kingdom? That is the popular idea, and there is the great error. In order to make the subject plain, let us ask, What are we to understand by the kingdom of God? where is this kingdom? what is to be its extent? what is its perpetuity? what is its administration? A brief answer to each of these questions, will re-echo the whole subject-plain.

1. What is the kingdom of heaven? The usual answer to this is, The final state of the blessed. A few quotations from the New Testament will show the incorrectness of the answer. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you." "Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." Here it is said to be coming, to be taken away from some, to be shut up by men, and to suffer violence; but none of these things can be said of the final abode of the redeemed. By the kingdom of heaven, then, is denoted, in general, a new religious economy, instituted by God and by his special care established and extended in the world, breaking down every opposing power, and assimilating all things to its own peculiar character. The economy we now call by a name rather vague the gospel dispensation, but by the ancient Jews it would have been more properly denominated the reign of the Messiah. As the kingdom of heaven and of God is in this world, we have not to wait till we die, in order to enter it.—we can enter it here as well as after death. Every true believer is in this kingdom, enjoying its light, its joys, and its peace.

2. Where is the kingdom of God? We answer, wherever Christ reigns. Some have answered, it is only in this world, others that it is only in the world to come; but we say it is both here and there. "Thus we read," "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills in all." Eph. i. 20-23. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father when he shall have put down all rule, and all au-

thority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. xv. 24-26. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 9-11.

Here we see that Christ is Lord of the dead and of the living, that the limits of his kingdom are not circumscribed. Unless he reigns in both worlds, how is he to subject all men to God? We see but a small number subjected here, and those who are, are only partially subjected; but he is to completely subject all, so that when his work is done, and he gives up his kingdom, God shall be all in all. His empire, therefore, extends over both worlds,—these are the region or province over which he reigns.

3. What is to be the extent of Christ's kingdom? We have already stated that it extends over both worlds. But the question will arise, in what sense does it extend there? If Christ now reigns here over all, it is no evidence, it will be said, of universal purity. We do not pretend that he now reigns over all. Still, his right to reign thus is clearly taught, for the Father has given all things into his hands. Not only has he a right thus to reign, but he has power over all flesh. In accordance with this right and this power, we read, that of the increase of his peace and government there shall be an end, that he shall triumph over all his foes, and restore all to holiness. On no point are the Scriptures more explicit. They say, "Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. v. 18, 19. "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. xv. 27, 28. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Col. i. 19, 20. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the work of thy hands, thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sacrificeth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 7-16. Such is the extent of the Saviour's reign.

4. What is to be the duration of this kingdom? We answer endless. Some have supposed, because Paul says "Thou comest the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God," that Christ's kingdom will end. Such is not the fact. His reign as king will end, but his kingdom will stand forever. When he has subdued all his enemies, destroyed all death, and all are made immortal and incorruptible, his work as a Redeemer and Saviour will be done, and he will then lay aside his offices, which were taken in order to accomplish his work, and be no longer a King over all human intelligences.

5. What is the administration of this kingdom? In carrying forward his work of subjecting sinners and extending his reign, Jesus employs various means. He makes use of the Christian ministry, and all the ordinances of his holy religion. He also makes use of rewards and punishments, by which obedience is encouraged and sinful hearts are subdued. Possessing power over all men, and having all the treasures of knowledge and grace at his command, he can carry forward his work just as he desires. He is limited to no one field of operation, for all fields are his; he is limited to no one mode of operation, for all modes are his, and he is limited to no one season, for all seasons are his. He has power to convert thousands in a day, as he did at the feast of Pentecost, and to arrest the boldest sinner, as he did Saul of Tarsus. He can employ external aids when he pleases, or dispense with those aids, however grand and mighty they may be, and yet carry on his work with a glory and splendor which all human triumphs have never equalled.

The time in which he is to his work is variously designated in the Scriptures. It is called "the times of the restitution of all things;" "the dispensation of the fulness of times;" "the accepted time;" "the day of salvation;" and "the day in which God will judge the world." Jesus is now judging or reigning, and will continue to judge or reign until his work is done. Then there will

be no unrighteous person, every one will have been washed, sanctified, justified by his spirit. Millions experience this renovation here,—not wholly, but to such a degree that they now shine as stars in the firmament.

Such is the dominion of the body over the soul that none will be perfect until the soul is disenthrallled from its encumbering influences, unlifted above all its earthly circumstances. What a change will that be, not only to the good, but also to the bad. Then all downward tendencies will cease to act upon them; the vain desires which originated in the body will have no more power, and Christ, with all his benignity and the splendors of his religion, can act upon them without encountering one opposing influence.—*Universalist Miscellany*

Camp Meetings.

Camp meetings have ever been a great nuisance. They disturb the quiet and order of the Sabbath, by calling the people away from their homes and churches to the camp ground, and thus make it a day for riding, noise, and confusion. They endanger the health, for what female or person of delicate health can camp on; upon the ground for successive nights, and perhaps during a severe storm, without serious injury! They are scenes of wild excitement, where abuse and rant, and declamation are employed to frighten people into religion! The Methodists, it seems, are becoming sick of them. Rev. Mr. Loven, in a recent number of the Olive Branch, says,—

"The religion of the present day, even with the once plain Methodists, dresses in silks and walks in silver slippers with gold-headed canes, and feasts on the fat of the land. Camp meetings have, in many cases, become places of feasting and luxury, it seems by the following description given by a writer in the Western Christian Advocate, which is the organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church in that region. He thinks the time for doing good at camp meetings near cities and large towns has nearly gone by. But his description. He says:

We go to the encampment and build extensive tents, or rather houses. Then we take out rich and splendid carpets, and the most elegant fashionable furniture, silver service, &c. Then comes the requisites for sumptuous living,—cooks and cooking stoves, wafers, chickens in their coops, and even pigs in their pens, some of which have been known to be killed on the holy Sabbath day! And the cooks, likewise, have cooked them, as well as other things, during the hours of solemn worship! The butcher erects his shambles, and the baker comes with his bake oven also, the sugar and tobacco seller finds a profitable place for his business, the cake and candy shops appear in great abundance, the travelling dry goods merchant presents himself likewise. Melon wagons are brought into requisition in large numbers, and boarding tents are put up sufficient to supply a large town. All this accomplished, little remains to be done but to decorate the body, and commence the exercises, if indeed they commence at all, for too often they halt about the tents, or sit at the tent doors, holding light and trifling conversation.

That does not look much like the avowed object of Methodism,—to spread holiness through the land!"

Good Works the Evidence of a Christian Character.

He that doeth righteousness is born of God! Such is the declaration of John, and it accords with the general language of the Bible. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James i. 26, 27. Allah is natural. If I am honest at heart, I shall be honest in my dealings; if I love my neighbor, I shall delight in doing him good, if I love truth, falsehood will never dwell upon my lips; if I am meek, I shall never act the part of the proud and haughty. In a word, if I am a Christian I shall keep all the commandments: and these cover the whole ground of human duty,—my duty as parents and children, brothers and sisters, citizens, and friends, governors and subjects. They are the rule for the government of our thoughts, desires, and actions. Thus good works are the only possible evidence we can have of being Christians. They are the witness works, and bad men have no claim to the Christian name than I have claim to the discovery of America, or to the honors of the revolutionary fathers. Satan himself might as well claim to be a Christian as those whose works are bad, for they have his spirit, obey his law, and follow his devices.

The foregoing consideration, I trust, is sufficient to expose the falsity of the idea that religion is distinct from goodness; that it is some tangible matter, which a man can get as he gets a new garment, or a new dwelling. It is common to hear people say, "This one has got religion;" "that one has got religion on such an evening;" just as though religion were something that can be picked up and deposited in the heart. If you would say, A man at such a meeting became deeply convicted of sin, or first saw the riches of grace, or first felt the power of truth, or was constrained to rise and publicly confess his faith in Jesus, that would be well, for all this we can understand; but when you say a man got religion, you give expression to one of the worst absurdities ever entertained. I say, therefore, that religion and goodness are identical, and the fruits of religion are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, and gentleness.

According to this view, of religion, conversion is not a momentary work, but a gradual one, and though a man may suddenly stop in his career, and turn from his vices and follies, it requires time to effect a thorough reformation in his character, because his passions must be subdued and his powers developed.

Again, According to these views, religion is not confined to one sect. It is very common among some persons to set themselves up as the only pattern of Christian excellence, and to denounce all not of their creed as entirely destitute of vital godliness. We alone have the secret of religion, to us alone has God given this mystery. But why do they make such arrogant pretensions? Are they the only ones who have faith in the Bible,—in God,—in Christ,—in the ordinances of religion,—in the Sabbath,—in prayer,—in the importance of the Christian graces? Very far indeed from this is the case. Those whom they denounce sustain worship, and read the Bible, and follow Christ, and love each other quite as much as those who make these arrogant pretensions. Not only so. Very often is it the case that these pretensions are deficient in some of the most essential virtues of the Christian character, and very far inferior to those they denounce as infidel. You may frequently see the case that those who claim to have this wonderful secret are treacherous, morose, ill-tempered, cruel and unjust. Thus, they have on the garb of piety, and are punctilious in their prayers and forms, but still they will wrong all with whom they deal, and slander all who oppose their wishes. No doubt the reader has seen families containing one or two such persons, and heard their bitter denunciations of a father, mother, brother, and sister, who were far their superiors in a firm faith, a warm love, an undeviating integrity, and a desire to be useful.

Religion a secret! And those who have the secret must be kept to, and concealed, and permitted to deal in denunciation and abuse! How different is this from the simple and affecting teachings of the Saviour. He called upon man to seek for a living and strong faith in the great system of revealed truth, and let that system govern his thoughts, elevate his affections, direct his steps, and strengthen his love,—during this was being religious: With a beauty and simplicity which none but the Saviour could employ, he said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.—Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.—Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.—Matt. v. 3, 9.

Such is the Christian. He is not a creature of strife and contention and bitterness, but of love. His soul is not filled with pride and self-righteousness, but with true meekness and humility. He is not cold and marble-hearted, unable to feel another's woes; but he has a soul warm with benevolence, full of sympathy, and ready to help the needy and the distressed. You will find him, in the cottage of poverty, by the bedside of the sick, and the couch of the dying. He is the friend of the widow, the counselor of the orphan, the guide of the blind, and the hope of the unfortunate. When the ear hears him, then it blesses him, and when the eye sees him, it gives witness unto him. O that the world were filled with such Christians! Goodness would be diffused over the whole face of society; and not one could be found with a heart of gall to deal out denunciation and abuse, or claim an exclusive right to the Christian name. Give me this religion,—this religion of faith, hope, and love; this religion of benevolence, kindness, and honesty; this religion of truth, justice, and forbearance, and I am contented. I ask for nothing better.—I would prefer it above the crazy zeal of the fanatic, the high sounding profession of the self-righteous, the bitter denunciations of the bigot, or the strong party feelings of the sectarian. It is the life of the soul, the peace of the church, the alleviation of our sorrows, and the golden chain which will finally encircle the world, and bind all men together as one.—*Univ. Mis.*

A Question.

Where will the wicked be punished, when hell is destroyed? Hoax says, "O dear! I will be thy plague,—O hell I will be thy destruction." Paul says, All men shall sing the song of triumph over death, and hell. Thus we see hell will be destroyed. Where, then, we ask, will the wicked be punished after this?

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