

durable, they may well enough find a place in the new structure, though commonly it will be only a subordinate one. So in the reconstruction of life there are many objects pursued, and many things done by unregenerate men which are proper enough for the regenerate, provided they are brought into subordination to the higher object that has been discovered, and are held subservient to the glory of God.

6. Further, this explanation of the figure enables us to see at once why such a change is necessary in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is the one in which God is sovereign, in which His will is supreme. They only, therefore, can be true members of it who are loyal to His authority and in sympathy with His rule. The Kingdom of God is something like the Judaism of the Dispersion. It is no certain territory marked off by physical boundaries, embracing all who happen to dwell within these limits, imposing upon them its laws whether they will or not, and conferring its benefits whether men seek them or neglect them. It is a spiritual realm, consisting of those in every land who love the Lord, own Him as King, and work His will. From the very nature of the case none others can be counted as belonging to it, and there can be no substitute for this one essential qualification. Many are disposed to regard it as a humiliating condition, and are prone to invent pleas why they may be excused from it. Is a man of noble birth? The subtle thought comes that this condition may well enough be demanded of the masses but can hardly be needed for him. Has he education, culture, refined tastes and an appreciation of the beautiful? It may be necessary for the rude and the uncultivated, but surely he is good enough for any society on earth or in heaven. Has he a fair character and eminent respectability? The criminal and the vicious may need to be regenerated, but scarcely he. Is his calling

one specially useful to his fellow-men? The selfish and the grasping and the worldly may need to rise to some higher conception of life, but surely nothing more can be asked of him. Does he come of pious parentage? Somehow he hopes that this will stand him in good stead at the day of inquiry, and that the question of his inward change will not be too severely pressed. A man may have even grave faults and vices, yet, when perchance he discovers that in some directions he can compare favorably with well-known church members, he will pride himself on his superiority and put from him the thought that he needs to be born again. He may have no religion at all and profess none, yet on the ground that he is at least no hypocrite, he will fondly hope to find admission at the end. But all such vain hopes are based upon the erroneous conception that this condition is an arbitrary one which may be changed at will if there is a sufficient motive for doing so, instead of being, as it is, a question whether he has the spirit that constitutes the Kingdom.

7. And, finally it makes it clear that all of those who are born again belong to the Kingdom. If regeneration means anything at all it means that they are loyal to God and in harmony with His will. It is therefore the only essential condition of salvation, and we have no right to impose any other. It makes no difference when or how, or under what circumstances, that new birth has been brought about, its value is the same. Knowledge of truth is a good thing, and the clearer it is the better, but if by the direct operation of the Spirit of God, infant children, or ill-balanced idiots, or ignorant heathen can be regenerated, they are thereby members of the Kingdom in spite of their ignorance. The doctrine of justification by faith may be as Luther called it, "the article of a standing or a falling church," but the knowledge of that doctrine or of any other can never be the one distinguish-