

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

him, why God, who used to be so merciful and compassionate, should make so much of them, and why his appeal for pity and pardon should pass unheard.

“ Whereto serves mercy  
But to confront the visage of offence?  
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,  
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,  
Or pardon'd, being down?”

He cannot see as yet that many of the calamities which come on men are only undeserved in the sense that men have not and cannot deserve so great a blessing as they contain and disguise ; and as yet he does not see that he is being led on, by a deepened sense of the inequalities of the life that now is, to infer the life to come,—an issue, however, to which every step of the argument is bringing him nearer and nearer.

S. COX.

---

*THE NEW TEACHER ; THE KINGDOM OF  
HEAVEN.*

ST. MATT. IV. 17 ; ST. MARK I. 14-15 ; ST. LUKE IV. 14-32.

JESUS emerged from the desert to enter on his great career as the preacher of “the kingdom of God.” The season was the spring, with its bright heaven, its fresh sweet earth, its gladsome, soft, yet strengthening air, its limpid living water. And within as without all was spring-time, the season of million-fold forces gladly and grandly creative, of sunlight now clear and blithesome, and now veiled with clouds that came only to break into fruitful showers. “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee,” and Galilee felt and owned the Spirit

and the power. In the homes of its peasantry and the hamlets of its fishermen, on the shores of its beautiful sea; in the towns and villages that stood on its banks and were mirrored in its waves, He preached his Gospel. Only his own Nazareth refused to hear Him. Thither, indeed, He had gone, had entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, as his custom was, and had stood up to read. To Him the place was full of sacred associations. He had there, as boy and youth and man, listened for hours and days, to the voice of God. Memories of visions more glorious than had come to Moses or Isaiah, of meditations that lifted time into eternity and filled man with God, of loved friends passed into silence and rest, of moments when the unseen opened to the eye and the unheard entered the soul, made the place to Him awful yet attractive as the gate of heaven to one who has approached with reverent feet and beheld in the distance the glories that dazzle mortal sight. But others had their associations as well as He, and theirs were not always as sacred as his. The synagogue was often the scene of strife. The conflict of opinion was not unknown there. Rival schools, sects, and teachers have never been slow to express their differences, and in the battle of words the Jew has shewn pre-eminent skill. So the men of Nazareth had their personal rivalries and spites, and when One they knew, so far as the senses can know, rose, read, and applied to Himself the prophetic words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," they received his gracious speech with incredulous wonder. But when He proceeded to speak with authority, to

rebuke their unbelief, to quote against them their own proverbs, then they "were filled with wrath, rose up and thrust him out of the city." And He went his way, and found elsewhere men who heard gladly his words of power.

The strange thing about the new Teacher was not his having been untaught and a carpenter. The great creative spirits of Israel had never been the sons of a school. They were not made in the academy or the senate; their diploma came straight from Heaven, was the direct gift of the Almighty. Moses, the Lawgiver, was educated amid the sultry slopes of Horeb while tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. David, the typical theocratic king, the maker of the grandest psalms, was taken from the sheepfold, "from following the ewes great with young." When the prophetic schools were worse than dumb, men like the herdsman of Tekoa, or the patient suffering son of Hilkiyah, had become the true speakers for God. A man may be trained to be a scholar or thinker, statesman or mechanic, but not a prophet. That is a divine vocation, and the calling must be of God, cannot be of man. And even when the vocation had ceased to come, and teaching was only professional drill in the letters of a dead past, the great man of the school might still be a son of the workshop or the field. The celebrated masters of the Talmud and the Targums were tradesmen and artisans, weavers, tent-makers, labourers. The rabbi was qualified rather than disqualified for his office by a handicraft. And so it was no strange thing in Israel that one hitherto known as a carpenter should stand forward a pro-

fessed Teacher, a man learned in the law and the prophets.

But the strange thing was the new Teacher Himself. He stood distinguished from all the rabbis who had been, or then were, in Israel. Of the points that made Him pre-eminent and unique three may be here specified.

(1) The relation between his person and his word. The Teacher made the truth He taught. His teaching was his articulated person, his person his incorporated teaching. The divinity the one expressed the other embodied. He came to found a kingdom by manifesting his kingdom, by declaring Himself a King. The King was the centre round which the kingdom crystallized. His first words announced its advent; his last affirmed its reality, though a reality too sublimely ideal to be intelligible to the man of the world who knew enough to ask the question, "What is truth?" but not enough to wait for its answer. And the first word and the last were alike revelations of Himself; the truth He was incarnated, as it were, in speech, that it might live an ideal life on earth, while He lived a real and personal life in heaven.

(2) The consciousness He had of Himself and his truth; its authority and creative energy. He knew that He was true and his word true, was certain that, though He never wrote, only spoke, his words were imperishable—would outlast heaven and earth. He was, at the first as at the last, at the last as at the first, certain of the reality of his words and claims, of their endurance and triumph. He was as calmly and consciously confident when he sat, pitied

by Pilate, in the shadow of Calvary as when He went forth, approved by John, to preach, in his fresh and glorious manhood, "the gospel of the kingdom of God."

(3) His knowledge of his truth and mission was throughout perfect and self-consistent. His first word revealed his purpose, expressed his aim, embodied his grand idea. He did not learn by experience; He knew by Divine intuition what He had come to accomplish. His progress was not a series of tentative efforts, of mended mistakes, but an orderly movement to a consciously conceived end. "Had Christ at first a plan?" is a question which has often been discussed. "Plan" is a word too little ideal and spiritual, too mechanical and pragmatic, to be here appropriate. If we could use Idea in the Platonic sense, as a term denoting the archetypal image or pattern of things in the Divine reason, then I would say, Christ had at the beginning the Idea He meant to realize, knew the end toward which He and his were then and evermore to strive. And the evidence lives in the phrase which was the most frequent on his lips, "The kingdom of heaven." He who has penetrated its meaning knows what Christ came to do; he who has not done so has yet to know the Christ.

What, then, does the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" mean? Can we interpret it through its King? The notions of kinghood are very varied—differ in different nations, or even in the same nations in different ages. In England here the law is above the sovereign; *lex is rex*. The Queen is the greatest subject in these realms, has to be loyal to the superior

royalty of the Constitution, our true lord paramount. The Roman Cæsar was an Imperator, the commander of an army become the monarch of many peoples, with his old military supremacy of person and will. Of the Greek kings the earlier were chiefs, leaders of men; but the later were tyrants, despots who had dared to usurp the inalienable rights of free men. In Israel the kingdom was theocratic; the king was consecrated by the priest and instructed by the prophet that he might administer the law and ordinances of the God who had given him the throne, and whose will he existed to enforce and obey. But this ideal had seldom been realized, had almost always been depraved; and the fond imagination of the people, despairing and sick of the oppressive present, had pictured a future in which an ideal king, the anointed of God, should come to reign in righteousness. Yet the good dreamed of was political rather than moral; exalted the Jew, but cast down the Gentile; magnified a nation, but did not ennoble man. Though it had been realized, the perfect had not come.

Now these notions of kingdom hardly help us, save by way of contrast, to understand Christ's. Our ordinary ideas and experiences are here the worst possible interpreters. His sovereignty was not the creature, but the creator, of law; the kingdom did not make the king, but the king the kingdom. His will was not imperial—the transfigured and crowned might of the master of many legions—but moral, the expression of a self-vanquishing and victorious love. His authority did not lessen but enlarged the circle of human rights; made men awake to claims and quali-

ties in their manhood they had never known before. He did not seek the sanction and seal of the priest, or the counsel and guidance of the prophet ; but assumed his title and instituted his reign at the bidding of what seemed his own unauthorized will. And then He appeared without the attributes and actions, without the character and designs Israel had expected in its ideal king. He had no antipathy to Rome, but was willing to be a dutiful citizen of the Empire. He did not feel that his kingdom either denied or excluded Cæsar ; that tribute either touched or tarnished his supremacy. Men said he was of David's line ; but He never based his royalty on his descent. When they came to make Him a king He fled from their hands. When they asked Him to exercise one of the oldest royal prerogatives and judge a cause, He refused. His whole attitude was a puzzle, a dark enigma, to his contemporaries ; his claim a thing to be ridiculed. The superscription nailed above his cross was meant to be ironical. Pilate thought it mocked the Jews ; the Jews thought it mocked Jesus. But the irony lived in its truth, which was bitter to him who wrote and those who read it, not to Him who bore it above his head.

Christ's great idea, then, is too much his own, has too little of the local and transitory, too much of the universal and eternal, to be interpreted through our notions of kingdom. If it is to be understood at all it must be through his own varied and many-featured presentation. We have to note then, at the outset, that He has two formulæ for his great idea—"The kingdom of heaven," and "The kingdom of God." These are used with a slight difference of meaning,



and each is best understood through its antithesis. "The kingdom of heaven" stands opposed to the kingdoms of earth, the great world-empires that lived and ruled by the strength of their armies. "The kingdom of God" has as its opposite the kingdom of evil, or Satan, the great empire of anarchy and darkness, creative of misery and death to man. By the first antithesis Christ opposed his kingdom to the empires that were in means and ends, in principles and practice, bad. These had grown out of the cruel ambitions, the jealousies, and hatreds of men and States; had created war, with its inevitable offspring, bloodshed, famine, pestilence, the oppression which crushed the weak and the tyranny which exalted the strong. But the kingdom from above was no empire of an overgrown State, no ambitious scheme of a ruthless conqueror, realized by merciless agents and means; but was the descent of a spiritual power, calm and ubiquitous as the sunlight, plastic, penetrative, pervasive as the crystal air, silently changing from ill to good, from chaos to order, both man and his world. By the second antithesis Christ opposed his kingdom to the empire of evil, the dominion of sin in the individual and the race. Out of sin had come ruin to the single soul and the collective society. Evil had made man the enemy of man, the estranged and fearful child of God. But the kingdom of God was good, belonged to Him, came from Him, existed to promote his ends, to vanquish sin, and restore on earth an obedience that would make it happy and harmonious as heaven. So, though the phrases were Hebrew, the ideas were Christian. The old terms were transfigured and made radiant with a meaning

high as heaven, vast as the universe, inexhaustible as eternity.

Were, then, the two phrases to be distinguished as to meaning, it might be thus: the one indicates the nature and character of the new kingdom, the other its source and end. But for the interpretation of the idea it is necessary to understand, not only the names that denote it, but also its more distinctive qualities, aspects, and relations. (1) It is present, an already existing reality, none the less real that it was unseen, undiscovered by the very men who professed to be looking for it.<sup>1</sup> (2) It is expansive, has an extensive and intensive growth, can have its dominion extended and its authority more perfectly recognized and obeyed.<sup>2</sup> Its real is also its potential being. While it has come, it is yet always coming; the idea exists, but its realization is a continuous process. (3) It does its work silently and unseen; grows without noise, like the seed in the ground, which swells, bursts, and becomes a tree great enough to lodge the birds of the air.<sup>3</sup> And its intensive is as silent as its expansive action. It penetrates and transforms the man who enters it. Its entrance into him is his entrance into it, his being born again, his becoming as a little child, the new citizen of a new state.<sup>4</sup> (4) It creates and requires righteousness in all its subjects. To seek it is to seek the righteousness of God.<sup>5</sup> Where righteousness is real it is realized. (5) It is the possession and reward of those who have certain spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 20; xvii. 20, 21; Matt. xx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vi. 10; xiii. 3-8, 19-23.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 31-33.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xviii. 1-3; Luke xviii. 17; John iii. 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. vi. 33; v. 19, 20.

qualities. "The poor in spirit," the "persecuted for righteousness' sake," the childlike and the simple are its possessors and heirs.<sup>1</sup> (6) It is without local or national character, can have subjects anywhere, has none for simply formal or hereditary reasons.<sup>2</sup> No man belongs to it simply because a Jew, or is excluded from it simply because a Gentile. (7) It is at once universal and individual, meant to be preached everywhere and to every one;<sup>3</sup> to comprehend the race by pervading all its units. And (8) the universal is to be an everlasting kingdom, to endure throughout all generations. Heaven and earth may perish, but it must for evermore endure.

We must now attempt to formulate the idea of the kingdom. It is in nature and character heavenly: comes by the will of God being done on earth as in heaven. It is in origin and aim divine: proceeds from God that it may fulfil God's ends. Its being is real, but its ends are not yet realized, though the realization is in process. The process is silent and spiritual, the creation of righteousness in the individual and the race.

The idea includes, then, as an essential element, the notion of a reign, the reign of God in men, and through men over mankind. As such it must be, on the human side, inner, invisible. The nature of the king determines the character of the kingdom. Where authority is legal it can employ legal processes and forms; where it is ethical and spiritual, it must be enforced through the con-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 3, 10; xviii, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. viii. 11; xxi. 31; Luke xiii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiv. 14.

science and obeyed by the spirit. An invisible and moral sovereign implies an invisible and moral reign. The unseen is not, indeed, the unknown God. He knows, but does not see, Himself. We can know though we cannot see Him; the heart can feel his presence, the conscience can confess his authority. And where it does so righteousness is born. Where He is known and obeyed He reigns, his kingdom is realized.

But a second element involved in the idea is, that it is a reign by ideals, by truths believed and loved. The men who enter and live in the kingdom know God, believe the truths personalized in his Son. And so, with its sphere in the spirit and the truth as its instrument of authority and expansion, it is in its proper nature ideal. It is neither an institution, nor capable of being embodied in one. It cannot be identified with the church. The two are radically dissimilar. *Εκκλησία* does, *Βασιλεία* does not, denote an institution or structure. The kingdom is "righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost," but the church is a community, a body, a building. There may be many churches; there is only one kingdom. The voluntary action of men can institute the former, but not the latter. The kingdom created the church, not the church the kingdom. The parables that explain and illustrate the one are inapplicable to the other. The *Βασιλεία* was the most, the *Εκκλησία* the least, familiar idea of Christ. Of the first He never ceases to speak; of the second He speaks only twice;<sup>1</sup> and each time so as to indicate its structural or institutional character.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17.

The church and the kingdom may thus be more properly contrasted than compared. Only two points of contrast can be here noticed.

1. The church<sup>1</sup> has, the kingdom has not, a formal or organized being. The one must be a more or less elaborate organism, the other can only live a spiritual and unembodied life. A polity is as necessary to the voluntary society we call a church as to the involuntary society we call a nation. The ideals of church polity, realized or realizable, are many; but each has had, or may have, its counterpart in the State. There are, indeed, in each case but two great political types, though each may branch into very dissimilar forms. A State may be either monarchical or republican. If monarchical, it may be either autocratic or limited, imperial or constitutional. If republican, it may be either aristocratic or democratic—either a republic proper, where the authority is vested in representatives elected by the people; or a democracy proper, where the supreme authority is the people in council assembled. And the church, like the State, may be either a monarchy or a republic. If the monarchy be autocratic, it is, in ecclesiastical phraseology, a Papacy; if limited, an Episcopacy. If the republic be a representative aristocracy, it is Presbyterian; if democratic, Congregational. And so, while a polity is necessary to the church, it is not a polity of a particular type. The church creates the polity, not the polity the church. It has existed,

<sup>1</sup> The term "church" has indeed both a universal and specific reference. But the idea in both cases is the same. It always denotes an organized society. There are obvious advantages connected with the use of the term in a generalized sense. It enables us to deal with the general notion.

can exist, under each specific form, just as France has been Legitimist, Orleanist, Imperialist, and Republican, and remained France still. Men may argue that the one polity is more, the others are less, perfect; but no man has any right to argue that any one is essential to the being of the Christian church.

While, however, we can so describe and classify the polities of the church, we cannot attribute one to the kingdom. It is without a polity, properly so called. A *πολιτεία* implies both a *πόλις* and *πολίται*, but a *βασιλεία* simply a *βασιλεύς*. The king creates the kingdom, but the citizens the State and its polity. And the king here is the eternal and invisible God, who seeks to establish on earth the reign of heaven.

2. Men can make and administer laws in the church, but not in the kingdom. The very name of the former implies its power to determine its own constitution, the terms of communion or citizenship, the rights and privileges it will grant to its members, the duties and services it will require from them. And this power the church has always exercised, often with a most rigorous will. It has formulated creeds, declaring one opinion orthodox, another heretical. It has framed laws and executed judgment on every bold transgressor. Its judgments have been now righteous, now unrighteous, often pronounced against the evil, almost as often against the good. But in the kingdom of God the authority is God's, not man's; its laws are divine, administered from heaven though obeyed on earth. Exclusion from the church need not be exclusion from the kingdom. The excluded and excluding may be both within it. The man who

seeks or loves God's righteousness lives within God's kingdom, even though the excommunicated or the unknown of the churches. The real is not always a conscious Christian. Men come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God. It has room enough for Anselm and Abelard, Pole and Parker, Milton and Rutherford, Baxter and Laud, Bunyan and Ken. Rival churchmen are not rivals in the divine kingdom. Where man ceases to make and administer laws he must cease to anathematize his brother, and humbly begin to speak the praise of the God whose grace he enjoys, whose reign he confesses. There he lives like a little child, meekly learning to be the obedient vassal of the Eternal King.

But while the church and the kingdom thus differ, they are most intimately related. The relation is twofold. (1) The kingdom creates the church, but (2) the church exists for the sake of the kingdom. The ideals, the divine and redemptive truths, which actualize the reign of God, create the men and purposes constitutive of the church. It could hardly be said to exist in Christ's day. While He speaks of the kingdom as present and real, He speaks of the church as something still future; not as building, but as to be built.<sup>1</sup> It begins to exist, after his ascension, with the first Christian community. Persons were necessary to its existence. It was a society, an association, of the like-minded. But minds are made alike by being persuaded to think alike, and the persuasion came of the truths that were embodied in Christ. He was the truth, the ideal, that made the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 18: "Upon this rock I will build my church."

kingdom impersonated. His very being created it; but the effective action of his truth was needed to create the church.

And the created was meant to serve the Creator; the church was to promote the ends, to realize the ideals, of the kingdom. If the *βασιλεία* was steeped in Hebrew, the *ἐκκλησία* was penetrated with Greek associations. Its sense is not to be etymologically explained; its use was too specific and well-defined to admit of that. The *ἐκκλησία* was the assembly of the citizens—the citizens assembled to ordain or administer laws, to transact the business, maintain the being or secure the well-being of the State. And so the church exists for the kingdom—is, as it were, the society of the enfranchised organized to further the national weal. Within the one empire there may be many *πόλεις*, and each may have its own *πολιτεία*, at once determined and exercised by its own *ἐκκλησία*; but the cities, however variously constituted, are alike members of the State, united in a common devotion to imperial interests, often best promoting these by honourable attention to their own. So the great *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* is one, but its *πόλεις*, with their respective *ἐκκλησιαί*, are many. Yet the multitude does not exclude unity; cannot so long as loyalty to the kingdom and its ends is common to all. And without this loyalty the church loses its right to be. It is not in itself an end, but a means, and lives as it fulfils its purpose. Its purpose is to magnify its Creator, enlarge the kingdom, promote its extensive and intensive growth. Christ lives in the church, in and by it reigns that He may put all his enemies under his feet, and bring the time when the kingdom



shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, that He may be all in all.

We have only space for a word on the Ideals of the kingdom, its great creative truths. These may be reduced to two: the paternity of God and the sonship of man. God is manlike; man is Godlike. The first gives us, on the Divine side, the grace that can stoop to incarnation and sacrifice; the second gives us, on the human side, the nature that makes restoration both possible and desirable. And these were embodied in Christ. He was the manifested paternity of God; the realized sonship of man. In Him the highest truths as to God and man were personalized, made real and active, living and creative for earth. His very being made the kingdom; to be was for Him to be both the Truth and a King. And so, while He was king, the kingdom was God's; the reign of God through and by the Truth Christ both made and was.

The kingdom, then, Christ instituted, was sublime and glorious enough. While it has only an ideal being, or being in the realm of the spirit, it is creative of the best and noblest realities on earth. It has made our Churches, and inspired these to do every good work they have accomplished. It is the spring, too, of our philanthropies, our ambitions to be and to do good. While it can be embodied in no institution it forms and animates every institution that promotes the common weal. The State feels it in all its higher legislation, aims, and endeavours. Art in all its branches pulses with an enthusiasm it creates, is charmed by visions it sends, and fascinated by ideals it raises, making our perfect seem imperfect still.

It is, too, the one power creative of righteousness. It seeks the good of the race by seeking the good of all its individuals; blesses the mass through the units that compose it. The rewards of the kingdom are the virtues of the kingdom, the holiness that is happiness, the graces that adorn the saints of God. And it does its glorious work without ceasing, making earth more like heaven, man more like God. While it lives He reigns, and while He reigns man need fear no victory of evil, either over himself or his kind; may rest assured that the Divine Father who guides the world, will guide it, through its shadow as through its sunshine, to the calm and glory of an eternal day.

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

---

ON THE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER.

THE SECOND EPISTLE. (*Concluded.*)

To resume. The quotations in the second Chapter, which wear the appearance of being a Greek rendering of some Hebrew original, are full of words which not even St. Jude, though drawing from the same source, has employed. Such are *ταρταρώ* (Chap. ii. 4), rendered to *cast down into hell*, but which is derived from one of the Greek equivalents for the Hebrew word *Sheol*, and is, literally, *to commit to Tartarus*. In the same verse we have the word *σειρά*, which is translated *chain*, a word used by no one else in the New Testament, and the figurative employment of it here, in the expression "chains of darkness," is just, in the manner of St. Peter's word-painting. *Πλαστός*, too, in the preceding verse, which is rendered *feigned*, is likewise confined in