

*THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM AND THE
INVITATION OF THE KING.*

II.—THE SECOND LAW.—ST. MATTHEW xi. 27.

THE First Law of Christ's kingdom, which we have already seen lays down the terms of admission into that kingdom, is in accordance with all his teaching. His object was not to put a new doctrine in the place of the old; "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," is the key-note to all his teaching: but He came to implant a new life in the midst of corruption and death. Other teachers have attempted to propagate new ideas, new beliefs, and even to change the laws by which the society they lived in was governed: Christ sought to change men themselves, and through the inward personal regeneration of the individual to effect the regeneration of the whole race. This obviously far transcends the office, as it transcends the conception, of every human teacher. And this new life He would impart not merely to theologians, but to all men who were willing to receive it. It was not therefore a theology. Nor did he intend it only for thinkers, and hence it was not a matter to be comprehended by the intellect: it was no subject of speculation. On the contrary, it was antagonistic to the pride of the speculative understanding. He intended it for, He offered it to, all: it was in its nature accessible to all, most of all to those who were least under the influence of philosophical systems, least conversant with the wisdom of this world.

The First Law of the Kingdom is that the revelation of God is made only to humility. The Second Law of the Kingdom is that the revelation is made only in

Christ. "All things are delivered to me, of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to make the revelation."

All things are delivered unto me. Two questions arise on these words. What are the "all things"? When were they "delivered"? (1) The "all things" do not mean "the babes" of the previous verse, nor yet exclusively the whole administration of the Messianic kingdom. The "all things" are to be taken in their largest sense. Christ is the one Mediator between God and his creation. He is the Eternal Word, by whom the heavens and the earth were made, as well as the Son, in whom the Father has been made manifest unto men. The "all things" comprise the whole revelation of God, whether in nature or in grace; for this has been made through Him, and through Him alone. Three worlds are his. He has all power in heaven and in earth; He has the keys of Hades and death. (2) It follows, in the next place, that the aorist (*παρεδόθη*) does not refer to a single past act in time, such as the entrance of the Incarnate Son into the world, or the beginning of his earthly ministry. It is strictly and properly used of a timeless act. It is the act, not in time, by which the Father constituted the Son the Mediator between the unseen God and the whole visible creation; the act by virtue of which through Him the worlds were made, as well as the act by which He gave Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to all that the Father had given Him (John xvii. 2). His mediatorial position He derives from the Father; the Father has bestowed it upon Him: but with it He has also bestowed the plenary power of

the government and administration of the mediatorial kingdom. There is a subordination; for He says, "That he may give eternal life to as many as *thou hast given him.*" There is a personal sovereignty, an individual supremacy; for He says, "No man knoweth the Father, but he to whom the Son *willeth* (*βούληται*) to make the revelation." His power is "given" unto Him, but it is "all power in heaven and in earth."

How completely the Second Law of the Kingdom corresponds to the First! If the revelation is made to the heart, to the sense of need, to the moral and spiritual nature rather than to the intellect, is not this in exact accordance with the fact that that which is proposed for the acceptance of men is not a string of dogmas, but a Person, a Person who reveals God as a Father, a Person who is the Incarnation of Divine Love, and therefore is the object not of intellectual speculation but of personal attachment? "The pivot of the Gospel," it has been truly said, "is not a formula, a principle, an idea more or less noble; it is the Person of Jesus itself, but the living Person, whose regenerating action each one may feel within him, and not the metaphysical Person, which has been reduced by the definitions of a scholastic theology to nothing better than an abstract and incomprehensible notion." It is this Person, human and Divine, having the most intimate personal relationship to the Father, appearing in form and fashion as man, through whom alone the revelation of God to man is possible. He alone, as the Son of God, possesses that absolute and perfect knowledge¹

¹ The verb *ἐπιγινώσκειν* does not necessarily denote this. But it is used frequently, as is the noun *ἐπίγνωσις*, of inward and spiritual discernment. See, for instance, for the verb, Matt. xiv. 35, xvii. 12; Mark ii. 8, *ἐπιγινούς ὁ Ἰ. τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ*, v. 30, *ἐπιγινούς ἐν ἑαυτῷ*; Col. i. 6; 2 Pet. ii. 21; and very strikingly in 1 Cor.

of the Father which must be possessed by One who is to declare Him to others: He alone, as the Son of Man, can so present, so bring near, God to men, that they can learn to acknowledge Him as a Father. Both these truths are involved in our Lord's words in this verse. First, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son." There He claims an exclusive prerogative of knowledge. Whatever knowledge of God others in the form of men may attain to, it is a knowledge imparted, a knowledge acquired through faith and repentance; a relative, not an absolute knowledge: with Him it is a privilege of nature. Next, "All things are delivered to me of my Father. . . . No one knoweth the Father but he to whom the Son will reveal him." In these words He claims to be not merely the sole channel of the revelation of God, but to have the absolute disposal of it in his hands. The language of the verse, it has been often remarked, is strikingly like the language of St. John. In this passage and the corresponding passage of St. Luke (Chap. x. 22) we have the connecting link between the Synoptists and the Fourth Gospel in relation to the Person of Jesus. That Gospel is a comment on these words. The doctrine of that Gospel concerning the pre-existence and Divine Nature of the Son is little more than a repetition, it can scarcely be called an expansion, of

xiii. 12, where the Apostle does not expect even in a future life to have an absolutely perfect knowledge of God, which no creature can have, but only the full inward illumination, free from all let or hindrance by reason of sin, an intimate and immediate rather than a perfect knowledge; and for the noun, Rom. iii. 20, "the knowledge of sin;" Eph. iv. 13, "the knowledge of the Son of God" (where *ἐπιγνώσις* is used of the knowledge of believers, as *ἐπιγνώσκω* in our passage of the Father and the Son); Col. i. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. i. 2, 8; and many other passages. In the parallel passage in St. Luke (Chap. x. 22) the verb is *γινώσκει*, as it is also in the Patristic quotations. See note at the end of this Exposition.

what we find here. The words of St. John—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"—are a mere variation of the statement in St. Matthew. They assert the same exclusive knowledge of the Father, the same personal revelation by the Son. Our Lord's own words, as given in that Gospel, do not transcend his testimony concerning Himself here. In reply to Philip's demand, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," what is his answer? "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" In this passage, as in the one under consideration in St. Matthew, the great central thought is the same, that the perfect and adequate expression to man of God is only to be found in Christ. In both there is asserted a deep inner union between the Father and the Son, such as does not exist between any created being and God. In both there is the same assertion of an exclusive Revelation through the Son. The only difference is that the relation which in St. Matthew is described as one of mutual intimate knowledge, in St. John is described as one of mutual indwelling. But the paramount claim, the absolute self-assertion, is the same in both. And whatever may be said elsewhere of the indwelling of God in holy men, or of the knowledge of God to which they attain, yet this is invariably represented as a gift, as an acquisition, not as an inherent and inalienable right. The holiest man that has ever lived has never dared to say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;"

or to assert, "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

The First Law of the Kingdom was, we saw, in harmony with the law by which all knowledge is acquired. Humility is the gate of all knowledge, human as well as Divine.

The Second Law, it may be affirmed with equal truth, is established by all the facts of human history. That history has been, no doubt, in one respect a perpetual wandering from God, but it has also been in another respect a perpetual seeking after God, if haply men might find Him. And it is no less certain that God has met this need, that He has ever in some measure revealed Himself to man. By the visible creation, by the conscience within, by the sense of duty and responsibility, by the voice of teachers, to whom a larger illumination was given than to the mass of mankind—God has spoken to man.

In different ages and in different degrees God has been pleased to impart to certain persons a knowledge of Himself not vouchsafed to others. Nor were these revelations confined to one race, the Jewish, though bestowed upon it in a larger degree than upon others. The founders of religious systems, like Zoroaster and Confucius, like Sakya Muni and Mohammed, have either claimed themselves to possess, or have been credited by others with the possession of, supernatural communications whence they derived any truth they possessed. Teachers like Plato and Socrates had an insight and a wisdom not their own. The histories of Melchizedek and Balaam seem written as if to warn us how we narrow the sphere of Divine Revelation. It is indeed impossible to read the sayings of Indian

sages, containing so many striking parallels to our Lord's words in the Gospels,¹ or the Divine guesses of Plato, without feeling that God did not leave Himself without witness in human hearts, as well as in the order of creation. Still, all the utterances of truth which have come from the best of human masters have been only broken fragments mingled with base alloy, gleams of light crossed and darkened by human passion and error. No Master but One has ever shewn us the Father. There is but One who could say, "I do always such things as please the Father;" but One who could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

And that which to every serious and thoughtful mind must establish his claim is this, that He has so manifested God by his words and his works, in his life and in his death, that not only has no other ever approached either his character or his teaching, but that the one and the other are practically infinite in their instruction. Is it not the unquestionable fact that no discovery has ever been made in religion or in morals which is not explicitly or implicitly contained in the teaching of Christ, and that the heart has never formed any lawful aspiration which He does not satisfy? There is no morality like the morality of the gospel. The greatest masters have admitted its unapproachable purity and majesty; none have been able to add to it or to alter it. All that is left for men is to study and practise it, with the perpetual consciousness of coming short. Nor has any discovery been made concerning God and his relation to man which can for a moment be put in competition with that which is made to us in

¹ See Dr. J. Muir's "Religious and Moral Sentiments from Sanskrit Writers."

Christ. We may, of course, reject this, but it will not be to choose any other system in preference. Either the character of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, or it has never been revealed at all.

He whose whole life bears witness to his words, He who is the spotless mirror of truth and righteousness, makes this affirmation concerning Himself: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal (Him)." He who is "meek and lowly in heart" does not, in false humility, deny his true dignity. He tells us plainly that we cannot find out God for ourselves, that we shall weary ourselves in vain if we make the attempt, that He only can shew us the Father. May it not be worth while to listen to Him? May it not be worth while to recognize these fundamental laws of His kingdom, and to act upon them, instead of beginning with cavils and objections? In all the attempts that men are now making to solve the problems which never can be solved by the human intellect, they fail, and must fail, because they refuse to bow to the Laws in accordance with which alone any revelation is possible. They have learnt a better wisdom in their study of the physical universe. Let us hope the time may come when the laws of the spiritual and moral universe will obtain due recognition, and when men will confess that the first step to any true Divine knowledge lies in submission to the laws of the Divine kingdom, not in resistance to them. To this result we may hope that all the struggles and failures of men are tending. When men find that all these weary attempts to discover God end in disappointment, when they have honestly and without reserve admitted that no revelation of moral truth can be hoped

for beyond that which has been given in Jesus of Nazareth, they may perchance at last learn to adopt his method. The secret of Jesus is to be found here. The laws of his kingdom may not be such as we, in the pretentiousness of our self-wisdom, should have expected or thought most desirable. As the philosophers of old could conceive of no centre of the universe but the earth, so we can conceive of no centre but ourselves. But Christ lifts our thoughts into another sphere, bids us take a far wider range, points us to the great central Sun round which all the parts of the system are grouped, and thus in the light of this new revelation we see how all the several parts fall into their proper harmony and order. When we have submitted to this revelation, when we have acknowledged its Laws, we shall have shewn ourselves worthy to listen to the invitation which follows.

NOTE.—I have reserved till the last the discussion of the different readings of this passage in order to leave the exposition clear. The variations are interesting, but whichever reading we adopt, our Lord's testimony to Himself and the value of the passage in its relation to the Fourth Gospel remain the same. There are two principal variations in the text; the one, the transposition of the second and third clauses of the verse, many of the earliest quotations in the Fathers running, "No one knoweth the Father but the Son, neither knoweth any the Son but the Father;" the other, the substitution of the aorist *ἔγνω* for the present *γινώσκει* or *ἐπιγινώσκει*. Other noticeable variations are the perfect *παράδεδοται* (Justin Martyr) for *παρεδόθη*; the plural *οἷς ἂν, quibuscumque*, for *ᾧ ἐὰν (ἂν)*; and *ἀποκαλύψαι* for *βούληται ἀποκαλύψαι*.

As I am unable to agree with Dr. Bruce in his rendering of the aorists, *παρεδόθη*, *ἔγνω*, and as there appears to be a little confusion in his quotations from Irenæus, I will subjoin first the forms in which the passage appears in the earliest patristic quotations, and then discuss the use of the aorist. The latter is a question of considerable importance in its bearing on New Testament exegesis, and, I think, has been dealt with much too hastily by commentators.

First, then, for the quotations of the passage. It stands thus in Justin Martyr :—

(1) πάντα μοι παραδέδοται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ οὐδεὶς γινώσκει τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός, οὐδὲ τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ καὶ οἱς ἂν ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψῃ.—*Dial.* c. 100.

(2) οὐδεὶς ἔγνω τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός, οὐδὲ τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ καὶ οἱς ἂν ἀποκαλύψῃ ὁ υἱός.—*Apol.* i. c. 63.

These words are quoted again in the same chapter, with no other variation except that the order of the last three words is ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψῃ.

It will be observed (*a*) that Justin's order in both passages differs from that of the present text of the Gospels as received by the best editors; (*b*) that he has the perfect *παραδέδοται* instead of the aorist *παρεδόθη*; (*c*) that he has *ἔγνω* in one place, *γινώσκει* in another.

We come now to Irenæus. Quoting the passage as alleged by the Gnostics in proof of their position that "before the coming of Christ no one clearly knew the Father of truth, but only a Creator of the world," he cites it, together with Verses 25, 26, thus :—

(1) πάντα μοι παρεδόθη ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἔγνω τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός, καὶ τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὃς ἂν ὁ υἱὸς ἀποκαλύψῃ.—*Lib.* i. 20, § 3.

In another place (where, however, we have only the Latin translation) he introduces his quotation by saying, "Our Lord, shewing Himself to his disciples as the Word which maketh the Father known, and upbraiding the Jews for rejecting the Word through which God is known, said," and then gives the passage as follows:—

(2) *Nemo cognoscit Filium nisi Pater, neque Patrem quis cognoscit nisi Filius, et cui voluerit Filius revelare.* "So," he says, "we find the passage in Matthew and Luke, and Mark has exactly the same: John omits it altogether." There is here an obvious slip of memory, and we may infer that the quotation is from memory, and not from a manuscript lying before him. "But," he continues, "they who would be wiser than the apostles give the text as follows (*sic describunt*):"—

(3) *Nemo cognovit Patrem nisi Filius, nec Filium nisi Pater, et cui voluerit Filius revelare.* "And they explain it to mean that the true God was known by no one before the coming of our Lord, and that the God which was preached by the Prophets was not the Father of Christ."—*Lib. iv. c. 6, § 1.*

He quotes the passage twice more in the same chapter, in both places keeping the present tense (in the Latin), but varying the order of the clauses. In § 3, (4) *Nemo cognoscit Patrem nisi Filius, &c.*; in § 7, (5) *Nemo cognoscit Filium, &c.*, and in both having *et quibuscunque Filius revelaverit.*

In the last section he adds the important remark that *revelaverit* must not be taken to refer only to the future, as though the Word then first began to manifest the Father, when He was born of the Virgin Mary; but that it covers all time. "For from the beginning

the Word present with his creation reveals the Father to all to whom the Father willeth, and when He willeth, and as He willeth."

Now what conclusion is to be drawn from these variations? How are we to understand especially what Irenæus says about the heretical text of the passage? It does not differ in any particular from the text as quoted by Irenæus himself. *Cognovit* no doubt represents ἔγνω in the original. But so Irenæus quotes the passage with the aorist in 1, and he quotes with the same order of the clauses in 1 and in 4. Besides, as we have seen, Justin Martyr (*Apol.* c. 63) has essentially the same reading, both as regards the aorist and the order of the clauses. Irenæus, therefore, must have had in view the *construction* put upon the passage by the Gnostic heretics (probably the Marcosians) with whom he is contending, and not any heretical *variation of reading*.

In other heretical citations of the words, if the aorist stands in the first clause, the present tense stands in the second. Thus Marcion has, οὐδείς ἔγνω τὸν πατέρα εἰ μὴ ὁ υἱός, οὐδὲ τὸν υἱὸν τις γινώσκει, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ.—*Dial. ap. Orig.* § 1, p. 283. But just afterwards the words are quoted, οὐδείς γινώσκει τὸν υἱὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ, καὶ οὐδείς οἶδε τὸν υἱὸν κτλ. It does not appear from anything in the argument that Marcion was held to have falsified the text. In the Clementines (*Hom.* xvii. 4) the form is very nearly that of Marcion, except that in the second clause we have ὡς οὐδὲ τὸν υἱὸν τις οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ κτλ.

These variations, and in particular the fact that where the aorist stands in the first clause the present is found in the second, lead to the conclusion that no stress is to be laid upon the aorist as necessarily marking a

point in past time ; though no doubt it may be more favourable than the present to the Gnostic interpretation, viz., that in past times, before the coming of Christ, none knew God as a Father. Still this did not hinder the Fathers in contending with the Gnostics from adopting the same reading. They evidently treated the tense as indifferent.

As regards *παρεδόθη*, indeed, there is no variation except in Justin.¹ But even if, as is most probable, he quoted from memory, he certainly gave a true and nearly equivalent sense by the perfect *παράδεται*.² The aorist ought not to be rendered "were delivered," as if pointing to some one specific act. It brings out strongly the fact, without any nice definition of time. The fact here is an eternal fact, not a fact in time at all. And in English, in such a case, the best equivalent is often the present or the perfect. We have, in this same Chapter of St. Matthew (xi. 19), a use of the aorist, which, though not exactly the same as the *παρεδόθη*, yet cannot clearly be confined to a single past act. The words are, *καὶ ἐδικαιώθη ἡ σοφία ἀπὸ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς*, where the aorist does not mean that once, on some particular occasion, Wisdom was justified of her children, but that, on each occasion as the need arises, she is so justified ; and, consequently, our translators are perfectly right in keeping the present, "Wisdom

¹ There is, however, in the parallel passage in St. Luke, where Kal² have *παρεδόθη*. Indeed this fluctuation between the aorist and the perfect is by no means uncommon in the MSS. of the New Testament.

² Even if the act be regarded as past, its results must be regarded as continuing. In the Satanic counter-claim we have *ὅτι ἐμοὶ παράδεται* (Luke iv. 6), where, however, the act denoted is of course not an eternal fact. Justin does not seem to have felt the distinction between aorist and perfect on which our modern critics insist. But ought we to apply to Hellenists the *jas et norma loquendi* of the classic writers of Attica ?

is justified," &c. And so here they are perfectly right in rendering, "All things are delivered." In the next Chapter (xii. 2, 5), οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε cannot possibly mean, "Did ye not read?" *i.e.*, on one particular past occasion; but it must mean, "Have ye not read?" *i.e.*, whenever that passage has come before you. Hence the proper equivalent of the aorist there is the perfect in English.

In like manner, as regards the use of ἔγνω in the patristic quotations, it is obviously used as the equivalent of the present γινώσκει and οἶδε. And this is abundantly supported by New Testament usage. The aorist is very often equivalent to a present or a perfect, though of course I do not deny that there are many instances in which the strict aorist past is to be retained in translating. But in Luke xvi. 4, ἔγνω τι ποιήσω is exactly our "I know what I will do"—a happy thought; has just occurred to me—a true and proper aorist. So again, in Luke xxiv. 18 (σὺ μόνος παροικεῖς . . . καὶ οὐκ ἔγνω) the present and the aorist are used with no marked difference, "Art thou a stranger living alone, . . . and knowest not?" or still more literally, "Hast not got to know?" &c.

So, again, John xvi. 3: "These things will they do unto you" (ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὸν πατέρα κτλ), "because they know not (or, have not known) the Father."

In John xvii. 25, the parallelism with the passage in St. Matthew, so far as regards the use of the aorist, is still more striking (πατὴρ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δέ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας), where it is obvious that the aorists cannot be confined to single past acts, but are equivalent to presents or perfects: "The world knoweth thee not, but I know

thee," &c. ; or, as our Version, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." The latter rendering is most in harmony with the verse that follows, where the aorist (*ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου*) can only be translated, "I *have* made known unto them thy name;" that having been not a single act, but the whole work and purpose of Christ's life. The aorist, in short, is the tense which is strictly undefined. The fact of the action is prominent, the moment of the action may be placed anywhere and everywhere along an indefinitely extended line.

I have discussed this question purely from the point of Greek Testament grammar, but I cannot refrain from expressing my conviction that the intensely Hebraistic colouring of the New Testament is nowhere more visible than in the use of the tenses, and that this has been strangely overlooked by the majority of critics. No two languages could be more unlike in their use of tenses than Hebrew and Greek ; the one marking every point of time with subtle exactness, the other almost disregarding time in the peremptory haste with which it seizes upon the action. But it is obvious on this very account that men accustomed to think in Hebrew, with its sublime disregard of exact temporal relations, would not be likely to appreciate or to employ the finer and subtler delicacies of the less familiar tongue. Nor must it be forgotten that the Greek which they would hear and speak was not the Attic tongue of Sophocles and Plato, but a language already debased, and shorn largely of its original exactness, as well as of its original grace and beauty.