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## SHALL WE HAVE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS?

**A**S HAS been indicated elsewhere in THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN, a meeting is to be held at the Whittier Hotel in Philadelphia on the evening of January 11th to consider the question of the forming of Christian schools. We regard that question as a very momentous question indeed, and bespeak a very earnest attention to it on the part of all our readers.

If one looks out upon the condition of the world today, one has to be very blind not to see that something is radically wrong. Of course something has always been radically wrong ever since the fall of man. But when we say that something is radically wrong with the age in which we are now living, we are referring to something more specific than that great central fact of the presence of sin in the world. What we mean is that the deadly evil of sin is becoming particularly blatant in the present age, and that the sweet and gentle influences of the gospel of Christ somehow *seem* for the time to be stayed in their working.

Compare the state of public opinion today with that which prevailed forty or fifty years ago, and you will see that something little short of a moral revolution has come about. Forty or fifty years ago public opinion, at least in Great Britain and America, was in the main favorable to decency and to liberty. Today it is increasingly unfavorable to both of these things.

It is true, there are here and there indications that the sense of decency is not altogether dead. Even the enormous prestige of custom could not quite enable the King of England to remain on the throne when he contemplated marrying Mrs. Simpson. The abdication of King Edward was certainly a victory for Christian morality.

But the king who has thus abdicated has unquestionably great hosts of sympathizers, and unquestionably the trend of the times is in favor of toleration for the sin which he is contemplating.

As for liberty, that is almost everywhere prostrate. Fascism and communism, superficially opposed to each other but really twin sisters, are threatening to divide the world between them; and it seems doubtful whether persons who believe in civil and religious liberty will very long be allowed anywhere a place in the sun.

Underlying this widespread decadence in the field of conduct is a decadence in the field of thought. The licentiousness of the age is not due merely to a disregard of recognized moral standards; it is due rather to the fact that there are no recognized moral standards. Immoral conduct is quite generally defended by immoral doctrine. The existence of the law of God is denied. Men no longer believe that there is any very profound difference between right and wrong.

In the midst of such a world stands the Christian Church. We are not referring to the merely nominal Christian Church; we are not referring to ecclesiastical bodies like the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. that have officially dethroned Jesus Christ and that refuse to tolerate real Christian testimony within their membership or within their ministry; we are not referring to the Federal Council of Churches with its pseudo-Christian, Modernist preaching mission under the leadership of those who do not believe in the truth of God's Word. But we are referring to the *real* Christian Church. We are referring to those ecclesiastical bodies that really do endeavor with some sort of faithfulness to obey the commands which are found in the Word of God. We are referring to those groups of Christian

# The "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Kingdom of God"

By JOHN MURRAY



Mr. Murray

IN THE PRESBYTERIAN GUARDIAN for August 17th we set forth by quotation from Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and the *Scofield Reference Bible* the distinction dispensationalists draw between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, and presented part of the evidence to show the arbitrary and untenable character of that distinction. In this article we proceed to develop that argument still further in accordance with our promise.

It will be remembered that both Dr. Chafer and Dr. Scofield affirm that the term, kingdom of God, is used when there is nothing stated that would limit its authority over all the universe. It is therefore a universal and comprehensive category, embracing angels, the church, and the saints of all ages. The kingdom of heaven, on the other hand, is the *earthly sphere of the kingdom of God*, and is therefore the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth. Dr. Scofield acknowledges that they have for this reason almost all things in common.

But this acknowledgment that they have almost all things in common naturally leads us to question the validity of the series of rather hard and fast distinctions that has been drawn. The need for such a question is greatly strengthened when we find Dr. Scofield proceeding to say that it is the omissions that are important. The only omissions mentioned are two parables, the parable of the tares and the wheat and the parable of the fish-net. In the kingdom of God, it is contended, there are neither tares nor bad fish.

Now in the face of abundant parallels where the two terms are manifestly used synonymously one is compelled to conclude that these two omissions provide us with rather scant evidence for such an important distinction. Especially is this the case

when we remember that the parable of the leaven is spoken of the kingdom of God as well as of the kingdom of heaven. On Dr. Scofield's interpretation heaven is the symbol of evil and represents, as he says, "the principle of corruption working subtly." The parable, he says, "constitutes a warning that the true doctrine . . . would be mingled with corrupt and corrupting false doctrine, and that officially by the apostate church itself" (p. 1016).

If, then, this pervasive leavening process applies to the kingdom of God, it surely must be through the instrumentality of personal representatives within the kingdom of God. Evil does not make progress as an abstract principle; it must be expressed in the activities of individuals, and in this case, since it is a leavening process, of individuals who are active within the kingdom of God. It will not do, as Dr. Scofield suggests, to find the representatives solely in the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. It will not satisfy the conditions of the description Dr. Scofield himself has given of a leavening process to throw the responsibility on to representatives who are outside the sphere of the kingdom of God. If the representatives of this corrupt and corrupting false doctrine are, therefore, within the kingdom of God, we wonder what could be the difference between such and the tares or bad fish! Surely Dr. Scofield's argument for distinction on the basis of omissions breaks down on his own premises.\* He has, no doubt, what may seem to some a rather convenient way of getting around the difficulty. He says: "But the parable of the leaven (Mk. 13:33) is spoken of the kingdom of God also, for, alas, even the true doctrines of the kingdom are leavened with the errors of

which the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Herodians were the representatives. (See Mk. 13:33, note)" (p. 1003). This resort is by no means impressive. It is but an attempt to slide over a fact that stands in the way of a theory.

## Further Inconsistency

Furthermore, if "the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God" (p. 1003), that is, if the distinction between the two kingdoms corresponds quite closely to the relation between genus and species, how is it possible to hold that the condition for entrance into the kingdom of heaven is so utterly different from the condition for entrance into the kingdom of God?

On the one hand, as "the earthly sphere of the universal kingdom of God," the kingdom of heaven would be included in, without exhausting, the kingdom of God. The distinctive constitution and constituency of the kingdom of heaven could not, of course, be defined in terms of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of heaven could always be called the kingdom of God. This surely follows from the premise that the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the kingdom of God. What belongs to the essence of the kingdom of God must be realized in the kingdom of heaven. Otherwise the latter could not be a phase or sphere of the kingdom of God. Accordingly, whoever belongs to the kingdom of heaven, even in its more restricted Messianic form, would also belong to the kingdom of God. Of course, since the kingdom of God is more comprehensive, not every one who belongs to the kingdom of God would belong to the kingdom of heaven, but every one who is within the lesser circle would also be within the larger. Not every resident of Pennsylvania is in Philadelphia, but every resident of Philadelphia is in Pennsylvania.

On the other hand, the conditions for entrance into the two kingdoms are sharply distinguished from one

\* It must be borne in mind that in this article we are not giving our own constructive exposition of the kingdom of God-kingdom of heaven concept, but exposing the fallacy and error of the dispensationalist construction.

another. It is contended that the conditions for entrance into the kingdom of heaven, in its Messianic form at least, are legal. The kingdom of heaven, Dr. Chafer argues, is offered in early Matthew with positive demands for personal righteousness in life and conduct. "This is not," he continues, "the principle of grace, it is rather the principle of law. It extends into finer detail the law of Moses; but it never ceases to be the very opposite of the principle of grace. Law conditions its blessings on human works: grace conditions its works on divine blessings. . . . So the preaching of John the Baptist, like the Sermon on the Mount, was on a law basis as indicated by its appeal which was only for a correct and righteous life. . . . Lk. III:7-14." (*The Kingdom in History and Prophecy*, pp. 46f.) The law of Moses, the Sermon on the Mount, and the preaching of John the Baptist, then, were purely on a law basis,—the very opposite of the principle of grace,—and prescribe for us the conditions for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Entrance into the kingdom of heaven in this its Messianic form may, it is said, be "*by so low a standard as merely exceeds* the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees" (italics ours). These same legal requirements, we are told, prepare the way for, and condition life in, the earthly Davidic kingdom as it is yet to be set up upon the earth (Cf. op. cit., pp. 48f.).

Entrance into the kingdom of God, on the other hand, is said to be by the new birth alone. The apostle Paul, for example, "lived in all good conscience" within the revelations of the nation's faith," but he "had to be transformed into a new creature on the Damascus road" (op. cit. p. 65).

The question we would now ask is: how, even on dispensationalist premises, can the distinction between these two sets of conditions be maintained? We have already shown that, even on the premises of this position, every one who belongs to, or has gained entrance into, the kingdom of heaven must also belong to the kingdom of God. How then, if the kingdom of heaven is the earthly sphere of the kingdom of God, and if the one condition for entrance into the kingdom of God is the new birth, can one be said to enter the kingdom of heaven by conditions that are legal, by a

righteousness merely in excess of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. If the kingdom of God can be entered only by the new birth, then the new birth is also a condition for entrance into any sphere within the kingdom of God, in this case the kingdom of heaven. But this is exactly what this scheme denies. Dispensationalists will have to offer us some other method of distinction and formulation if they are to avoid this manifest self-contradiction.

### The Sermon on the Mount

The immediately foregoing objection exposes, we think, a serious logical fallacy in this construction. We should not regard fallacy of this kind a minor affair. But there are other objections that are far more serious, and that because they concern the very heart of Biblical interpretation and doctrine. Is it true that the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, or the preaching of John the Baptist, is on a law basis that knows nothing of the principle of grace? We entreat readers to pause, so that they may frankly face this question. Does the Sermon on the Mount at any point imply that the kingdom of heaven in its Messianic form may be entered by so low a standard as that which *merely exceeds* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, by a merely external and legal righteousness? Are the conditions Jesus enumerates such as may be fulfilled without that regeneration of the Spirit of which He spoke to Nicodemus? Can they be fulfilled in a profession that may be true or false? Let us read and study some of them.

"3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

"7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

—Matt. 5:3-10.

In this same Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the

prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). In the immediate context He proceeds to give instances of His meaning. He refers to the sixth and seventh commandments, and with respect to the latter He says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (vs. 28). The apostle Paul tells us that he was alive without the law once, that is, before Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus road. "But when the commandment came," he informs us, "sin revived, and I died." "Nay I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:9, 7). In other words the law exposed his self-righteousness, the depravity of conscience and heart and life. It convicted and convinced him of his sinfulness. Is the fact not plain that he found with respect to the tenth commandment the very same thing that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount taught with respect to the sixth and seventh commandments, that the law takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart as well as of the outward act? The correspondence is very close, so close indeed that we may say confidently that it was just the light that shines in the Sermon on the Mount that shone into his heart and upon his life. He found what our fathers would call the spirituality of the law of God, and it is just that same spirituality that thunders from the Sermon on the Mount.

The truth is that as we read the Sermon on the Mount and catch the note of intense spirituality that pervades it, then we cease to speak of a righteousness merely in excess of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and vehemently reject the very suggestion that the kingdom of heaven—the theme discussed—can be entered by a profession that may be true or false. If we read the beatitudes on the background of what Scripture teaches as to the depravity of the human heart, and on the background of Scripture teaching as to what constitutes righteousness, meekness, and purity of heart, we shall be assured that the qualities enumerated can be present only when the regeneration or new birth, which served the subject of Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus, has by God's grace been

wrought. Indeed we need but read on in the Sermon on the Mount to find this thought expressly stated. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (7:18). Or later in the same gospel, "Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. . . . A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt. 12:33, 35).

It is surely time for us to regard the position that the Sermon on the Mount is on purely legal ground, and therefore the very opposite of the principle of grace, as the fruit of baneful prejudice. It is time for us to call it pernicious heresy that entails the most serious doctrinal and practical consequences. From no part of Holy Scripture more than from the Sermon on the Mount do we gain deeper conviction of the truth that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

### The Preaching of the Baptist

Dr. Chafer adduces Luke 3:7-14 to show that the preaching of John the Baptist, like the Sermon on the Mount, was on a law basis. This appeal of John the Baptist must not, he contends, be confused with the present terms of salvation without nullifying the grounds of every hope and promise under grace.

Now the burden of John's preaching as recorded in this passage, it will be remembered, is: "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (vs. 8). This *general* exhortation is followed by more *specific* directions in answer to the questions of different classes. In a word, it is the demand of repentance John is voicing. Is there any essential difference between this demand and the demand of the gospel in all generations? Jesus said after His resurrection: "Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day: and that repentance unto the remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47). Paul says at Athens: "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the

world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31). Accordingly the apostles went everywhere testifying repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance is change of mind, and it manifests itself outwardly in the renunciation of the characteristic sins of which men have been the addicts. John the Baptist says nothing more nor less than this. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. So was the message Jesus ordained for His messengers who were to be His witnesses unto the ends of the earth and to the end of the age. And yet it is pleaded that to appeal to John the Baptist's demand for repentance in presenting the present terms of salvation is to nullify the grounds of every hope and promise under grace! What *principal* difference, we ask, is there between John's demand and that of Peter on the day of Pentecost, when he said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"? John's preaching of repentance had direct reference to Christ. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus" (Acts 19:4). So had Peter's preaching. They were both unto the remission of sins.

From what does the remission of sins flow? Surely from the grace of God. Mere law knows nothing of the remission of sins. All it knows in the matter of sin is unmitigated condemnation and curse. Repentance that is unto remission like faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ has meaning only in relation to the gospel of the grace of God. They are both the demands of the gospel, and they always bespeak grace. Shall we permit ourselves to be told that the preaching of John the Baptist was on a basis the very opposite of the principle of grace? Surely the asking of the question contains its answer.

We see, therefore, that this distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God is not only an arbitrary and untenable one but, as worked out by its exponents, is fraught with very serious consequences for Biblical interpreta-

tion. What is arbitrary and self-contradictory cannot commend itself to sober intelligence. What is so prejudicial to Scripture interpretation must be vigorously rejected. It bewilders the minds of the simple and imperils the salvation of souls.

## THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.

**T**HE Diamond Jubilee of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., commonly called the Southern Presbyterian Church, was celebrated during December. Seventy-five years ago, on December 4th, 1861, the commissioners of all the Southern presbyteries which had renounced their allegiance to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. met in Augusta, Georgia, and constituted the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. This split in the ranks of the Old School Presbyterian Church came with the outbreak of the Civil War. Up to that time the church had steadfastly refused to discuss economic and political questions in its assemblies. On May 16th, 1861, the General Assembly met in Philadelphia in an atmosphere of tense excitement. Only sixteen commissioners from the south were present. On May 20th, North Carolina seceded from the Union. After eight days of prolonged and heated debate the General Assembly yielded to tremendous pressure and passed the famous Gardiner Spring resolutions, which declared the obligation of the church to promote and uphold the Federal Government and pledged unabated loyalty to the Constitution, in all its provisions, requirements and principles.

On June 10th the Presbytery of Memphis, in an adjourned meeting, renounced connection with the Assembly for its so-called un-Christian and revolutionary action, and requested all concurring presbyteries to join with it in the organization of another Assembly.

The Presbyterian Church in the U.S. adopted the constitution of its parent organization without change. There have been subsequent modifications of the doctrinal statements of the Northern Church, and larger changes in the Form of Government.