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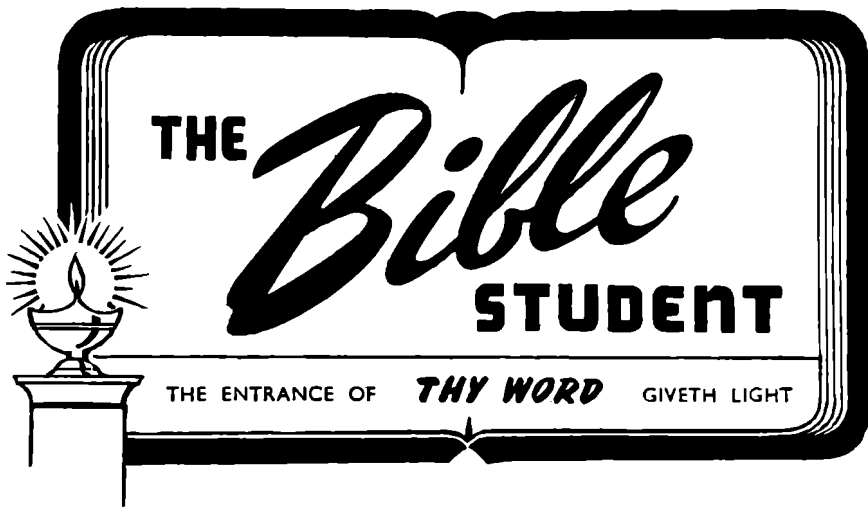
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

'THE INTERIOR KINGDOM'

A. C. ROSE

Of all the profound utterances of the Son of God there are none more mysterious and glorious than those which concern His kingdom. Pilate might well ask in his bewilderment, 'Art Thou a King then?', and be baffled by the confident reply, 'Thou sayest that I am a King'. There He stood, the last of the long line of Judah's kings, combining all the nobility of David and all the wisdom of Solomon, about to establish an everlasting kingdom on the foundation of sacrificial love.

It is not our present purpose to try and compass the length and breadth of the realm which owes allegiance to the King of Kings. We most joyfully anticipate the Empire which is to be when He shall reign in righteousness 'from the river to the ends of the earth'. Our concern is rather with the Kingdom in its heavenly reality surrounded by world-wide anarchy; the Lily among thorns; the Lamb in the midst of wolves; the Light gleaming through the darkness. For this let faith exert her noblest powers!

When the Pharisees demanded what time the kingdom of God should come, the unexpected answer was given, 'Behold, the kingdom of God *is within you!*' They visualized a conflict between the Lion of Judah and the Eagles of Rome. They were told in effect that the decisive battleground was in their rebellious hearts, and the vital issue between the Lamb of God and the venom of sin. This is equally true today. 'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink', those fleshly things, 'but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. Every Christian is designed to be a miniature kingdom, complete with throne, crown, sceptre and garrison, an absolute monarchy under the personal sovereignty of the Lord of Lords. That is the attractive ideal, but the real for most of us matter-of-fact folk is far to seek. Yet, perhaps, not too far when we find ourselves in company with the saints of all time. It is probable that even down the ages the King of Saints has had His own high tablelands where His thought was law and His presence heaven, when 'the blast of the terrible ones was as a storm against the wall'.

The names of Tauler, Suso and Tersteegen are still fragrant. They may have lacked some of our light but we lack much of their love. Madame Guyon belongs to the same band, although born nearer to our own time. It is a moving experience to visit her prison. Seen from a little distance against the snows of the Dent du Midi and girded by the blue waters of Geneva, Chillon is marvellously beautiful. But within the walls the atmosphere is heavy with cruelty. Those awful dungeons hacked out of the living rock, veritable bottomless pits. Those tracks worn in the stone by the dragging chains of how many prisoners! Even now the imagination staggers under a burden of horror. It seems as if those dark places had absorbed the cries of tortured victims to breathe them out again in endless sighs. Somewhere in the castle this gentle lady was shut up for Christ's sake, and because the kingdom of God was within her she could sing;

'All the dark and silent night,
On His radiant smile I dwelt
And to see the morning light
Was the keenest pain I felt.'

It would be wrong to imagine that the teaching of the interior kingdom is the mere mysticism of the enthusiast. It is the plain truth of Scripture summed up in the Pauline phrase, '*Christ in you the hope of glory*'. It is the experience of resurrection life in fellowship with the Risen Lord. It is life in the heavenlies, lived serenely among things that are of the earth earthy. It is the result of obedience to the moving appeal, 'I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice'. It is holy communion with the One who said, 'This is My body which is given for you'. The only permissible response is, 'Lord, this my body is to be the temple of Thy Holy Spirit, Thy sanctuary-kingdom!'

Having laid under tribute Paul's writings we may now listen to John teaching the same truth in the simplest, homeliest language: 'If any man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him'. That is 'kingdom truth', but faith must seize upon it or it will never become experimental.

This was and is the secret of Laodicean failure. The King is unkinged and now waits a suppliant at the door. He will only come in regally. We are persuaded that much has been lost by disregard of the kingdom character of the Church. Peter has put the matter forever beyond dispute by his statement, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation.' The Church is a part of the kingdom as the Consort of the King. In her, His will, His word, His government, must be displayed if anywhere. The populace may say, 'Our King!' but the Queen says, 'My King!' In her love and loyalty she is the pattern for the whole kingdom. Then since the Church is what Christians are, each of us must be responsible to maintain this Royal Estate. The King alone makes a kingdom possible. In obedience to His authority the desert blossoms as the rose and the flinty rock yields living streams, Immanuel's land indeed!

The First Step

The old masters taught that there are four steps which lead to this experience. The first is *Death*. 'Ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God'. We draw our new life from the cross but that same cross is intended to be the death of our old life as it was the death of our Saviour and our sin. Words and symbols which belong to natural things inevitably fail to express the whole truth when applied to spiritual things. We are not to think of death in the sense of dissolution so much as of separation. It is the experience of the seed-corn dying to produce a harvest for God and man. This does not mean either monasticism or asceticism. It is a detachment from self and an attachment to God, with every thought brought into captivity. The world is used but not abused. Its treasures are touched in the course of the day's work but not grasped. All that appeals to the senses is recognized as type and shadow, and the reaction of the heart is suitably adjusted. From the ordinary standpoint this is death because there is no correspondence with environment, but spiritually it is *regnant life*! 'The soul will realize in truth that to deny herself and all creatures for God is truly to seek Him, and to lose all is truly to find Him. She experiences what a good exchange she has made, for what

ever she has denied and forsaken for God she has more truly obtained and infinitely more besides; for God Himself has become hers'.

The Second Step

The second step is *Decision*. The two challenging wills demand that one must be dethroned, discrowned, discredited. 'I will be King!' cried Adonijah, greedy for power, but his wilfulness was his ruin. The will of God is good, acceptable and perfect, and yet we shrink from its embrace. We know that no progress can be made until we come to this place of surrender; so let us not be too advanced to pray, 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven'. Interpreted in terms of the 'interior kingdom' it is the glory of Galilee, Gethsemane and Calvary.

O will that willest good alone.
Lead Thou the way Thou guidest best,
A little child I follow on,
And trusting lean upon Thy breast.

The Third Step

The third step is *Devotion*, God first in everything. From being a far off Deity He has become a perfect Father. As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ He has revealed Himself so graciously that true affection has been awakened. We dare to say with trembling, 'We love Him because *He first loved us*'.

The cause of strong Peter's breakdown was apparently in his self-centred heart and he must needs have that question, keen as a surgeon's knife, thrust at him three times before the root of evil was reached: 'Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou Me?*' We do well to put ourselves in his place not once or twice. Too often sounding brass and tinkling cymbal and worthless martyrdom pass for spiritual sacrifices. John holds the open secret for us to share. Occupied with his Lord's love to him he became the chief of lovers. The measure in which we receive redeeming love is the measure in which we shall enjoy and mediate it. The basic law of the interior kingdom is LOVE!

The Fourth Step

The fourth step is *Dependence* or, 'Naked faith which is independent of sensible devotion or consolation and which because it believes in a dawn can walk undismayed in the darkness'. This according to the Scripture is, 'The just shall live by faith'. All depends upon the 'dependence of faith'. The mighty God has spoken. We have heard His voice above all voices and we must obey. By faith we have been delivered out of the authority of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. By grace we are in the kingdom and the kingdom is within us in the person of the King.

'Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion unto the ages of the ages. —*Amen*'.

THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL

H. L. ELLISON, B.A., B.D.

A Lament (19: 1-14)

Though God had held out His promise of life to those exiles that would walk in His ways (ch. 18), there were two who could not benefit from it because of the sins of others, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, and so Ezekiel lifts up a lament over them.

There are numerous variations in the interpretation of this chapter, but this seems to be the only one that takes its position—due as I believe to Ezekiel himself—in the book seriously and does justice to it. This becomes the more obvious when we realize that the second half (v. 10-14) comes in all probability from a slightly later date. Many see in these verses a prediction of the ruin of Zedekiah, but there is no claim that a prediction is being made. In addition it would involve the verbs in vs. 12-14 being taken as prophetic perfects,¹ but this idiom is seldom used unless

¹ To stress the certainty of the prediction, or the vividness of the vision the prophet often uses a 'perfect' where a 'future' would be expected. In most cases where a literal translation would create ambiguity the future has been used in English versions.