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ARTICLE V.

Ἡ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ ἢ ΤῶΝ ΟὐΡΑΝῶΝ.

BY REV. OLIVER S. TAYLOR, ESSEX, CONN.

OUR Lord Jesus has directed us to ask, in the beginning of our prayers: "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." Except when we hear our Lord's prayer repeated, is not the form prevailing an inversion of Christ's order, so as to close our prayers with the petition: "Bring us at length to thy kingdom in heaven." Here observe an inversion, not merely in that we mention the kingdom of God at the close rather than in the beginning of our prayers; but instead of asking for the "kingdom of God" as in heaven to come on the earth, as if this was our great concern, we ask chiefly to be taken to the kingdom of God in heaven. Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom of God to come from heaven to earth. We little think of this, but are all concerned in being taken in due time from earth to the kingdom of God in heaven.

Whether this inversion of the order in our Lord's prayer reveals any departure from the substance of the petition given us to imitate, or any change of thought and effort respecting the kingdom of God, is a question to be in part answered by our study of the common scripture phrase: ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, or τῶν οὐρανῶν, "the kingdom of God," or "the kingdom of heaven."

The latter expression, "kingdom of heaven," is peculiar to Matthew, who uses it as exactly synonymous with the "kingdom of God," found in parallel verses of the other evangelists. Whatever therefore may be said in explanation of one of these phrases will be also the explanation of the other.

It is first to be observed that the original word *βασιλεία*, translated in our Bible "kingdom," may with equal authority, so far as classic use is known, be rendered "dominion" or "reign."

It is true, these words are often used as synonymous; but in most accurate speech they designate two distinct ideas. Each word, "kingdom" and "reign," implies authority; but the former designates rather the place or region where the authority is exercised, and the latter the influence from that authority on the mind of its subjects. One's kingdom is the territory or numbers over which his jurisdiction extends. One's reign is the influence which goes out from his person to be a force on men's character and action. He who reigns over men works results on their minds. He effects something in their thoughts, feelings, and wills. He exercises positive control. Here then is a phenomenon in man's spiritual part, something working a result in mind; and the thing working this result — this power of the superior in exercise — is distinctly called his reign. He reigns over those whom he controls. Thus the word "reign" has its chief import in the power of mind over mind.

God's reign is the power of his will over his subjects. It is wholly a spiritual thing. But there is also a place for his authority; a region, with its inhabitants, over which it extends; and this place or region is designated by the definite word "kingdom." We know these words may be, are sometimes, interchanged. The word "kingdom" may be used to represent that spiritual thing we have called reign. But there is danger if we entirely lose sight of this distinction in terms, that we fall into confusion of the two ideas noticed. We see this in the common version of the Bible; for here we seldom find the phrase "reign of God," but almost universally "kingdom of God"; and the result in popular thought is to conceive of a place called heaven much oftener than of that spiritual fact of God's actual control on the heart and will, which is the heaven revealed by Jesus. Because one word, "kingdom," has been used to represent the two ideas noticed, one of those ideas has become much obscured. More accurate would be the reading: "May thy reign come," "The reign of God is at hand," "The reign of God is within you." In the French translations this distinction of terms is more

accurately observed than in ours. In the Lord's Prayer, for example they say, *ton regne vienne*, not *ton royaume* — "thy reign come," not "thy kingdom."

In some of the parables there are still other meanings of the word *βασιλεία*, it being used by metonymy to signify the mode of administration; again, its results in the heart and in society, and in one instance royal authority.

With this explanation of the word, we revert now to the starting-point of our thought, the petition in our Lord's prayer: "Thy reign come as in heaven so on earth." This is not so punctuated in the English translation. A period is here found after "thy kingdom come," as if disconnecting it from the modifying words, "as in heaven so on earth." We read, "Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth"; but the punctuation does not require that "thy kingdom come" be modified the same as "thy will be done." Why our translators so placed the period as to make this distinction, we cannot understand. We know they found no authority in manuscripts, which were unpunctuated, nor in the real meaning. The exact and literal rendering of the petition is: "Thy reign come as in heaven so on earth." The prayer is for the reign of God to be established on the earth as it is in heaven. We have recognized here, therefore, two places of God's reign: a reign of God in heaven; a reign of God on earth. It is a question of interest to determine which of these is commonly referred to in the New Testament expression, *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* or *τῶν οὐρανῶν*.

First in this study, we shall need to go back to the Old Testament, where we find the origin of the idea beneath these words, to the times of prophecy, when the first dim visions of this kingdom were obtained by holy men.

The prophet Daniel seems to have foreseen it most clearly when he wrote: ¹ "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." And again,²

¹ Dan. ii. 44.

² Dan. vii. 14.

when he "saw given to the Ancient of Days dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

And the prophet Micah¹ writes: "In that day I will gather the halting, and the far-scattered I will assemble, and those whom I have afflicted. I will make the halting a remnant, and the far-scattered a strong nation. And Jehovah shall reign over them in Mount Zion henceforth, even forever." And Jeremiah: ² "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth."

We find reference also to this same heavenly state on earth, in those prophetic verses which speak of the "New Covenant" or "Everlasting Covenant" which God would make with his people; when he would put his law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts, and be their God, and they should be his people.¹ Also what are called the Messianic Psalms, and the Messianic glimpses in the historical books of the Old Testament, and the more abundant Messianic verses in all the prophets, have a definite allusion to a future kingdom to be established on the earth. Indeed, we find this kingdom first foreshadowed by the theocracy of Moses, when Jehovah ruled over Israel by inspiring this his servant to communicate and execute his will. The imperfect obedience of this stiff-necked people Israel was made suggestive of the time when, under another prophet Jehovah would raise up "greater than Moses," he would have a people who would obey his commandments; when not only would he be their God, but they would be his people in very fact, by their minds and hearts being subject to his will.

Thus do we find an idea that has prevailed in all the ages of the people of God — an article of faith and expectation in

¹ Micah iv. 7.

² Jer. ii. 3, 5.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 3, 1; xxxii. 33; xxxii. 40; Ezek. xi. 19.

all the generations of the church in the Old Testament—that the day was coming when God would reign on the earth, when his will would be obeyed, and the people be exalted and happy in him. It was a part of the nation's expectation of the Messiah, that he would establish a kingdom on the earth.

When John the Baptist came he entered into this same inspiring hope; and seeing its realization to be nearer, even close at hand, he presents as the chief motive for the people to repent, the declaration: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." When he thus spake of a kingdom it was no new word to the Jews. It was something they had learned in their early days; it was a word found in the catechism of their youth; that a glorious day of Jehovah's reign was to dawn upon the earth. "This day," cries John the Baptist, "the day of your hopes and delights, is at hand."

And when, soon, Christ is come, and would utter the message he brings from above, he takes up this favorite idea and hope of the remnant of Israel, and joining in the holy expectation of the ages, proclaims as he goes: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Thus may we trace to its origin the idea under the phrase we study, and observe its growth up to the time our Lord employed it in his preaching. And need we assert—has it ever been doubted by any student—that this long expected kingdom was to be on the earth? It was no holy state to be reached by death, but some heavenly rule over the inhabitants of the earth.

And now we come to study more minutely Christ's use and meaning of "the kingdom of heaven, or of God"; a most important study in understanding his words and work.

The first message we have recorded from his lips is thus written: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Thus he proclaims in the beginning, that the great subject of his teaching is the kingdom of God. He comes forth in the church of his day as a prophet and teacher, with a message from God to man, with some burden of the word of the Lord

upon him which he must utter. There is one subject which is uppermost in his mind, in his office, of which he must speak first and often, and even make the burden of all his words; and that one subject is this ancient article of the faith of God's people, which we have found in their creed from the beginning, which they had chanted through centuries: "We believe in the kingdom of God which is to come on the earth, when his law shall be put in the inward parts, and shall be written on the heart." Jesus takes up this holy desire, this heavenly hope, and announces as the subject of his teaching, the burden of his prophecy, this kingdom of God. So prominent is this in his teachings. His first words were concerning it. And when he opened his mouth for the Sermon on the Mount, this kingdom of heaven is his subject, his text, all his words are in exposition of this. When he sends forth his disciples to speak in his name this is his commission: "Go, proclaim the kingdom of God." And they went, repeating his first words: "The kingdom of God is at hand." And what proportion of his parables are but efforts in this one thought, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of heaven? It is like to the mustard seed"; "It is like to the leaven hid in the meal"; "It is like to a treasure hid in a field"; "It is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls."; "It is like unto a net that was cast into the sea." The teachings of Christ are sometimes called fragmentary. We wonder he did not bequeath to us more connected discourses. Why did he not leave us some systematic statement of the doctrines he would teach? We have, instead, a few words he spake at the marriage feast, a few in the home of Mary and Martha, a few in Simon's house, a few with the publicans, a few with the Syro-Phenician woman, a few at the grave of Lazarus. He seems to speak more from mere incitement of suggestive circumstances than from the impulse of one who has a single, all-engaging subject to unfold. But if we study faithfully his words we find they are not so devoid of unity. We find one subject uniting them all. His illustrations would fit in one sermon. His reasonings seldom

diverge from one theme. His testimonies unite for one conviction, and the one subject giving unity to his thoughts was — The Kingdom of Heaven. This was the all-engaging thought of his mind; and whatever suggestive helps he had, only drew forth some new words on this one theme.

Nor is it some heavenly state beyond the grave that so absorbs Christ's mind. He is in sympathy with the prophets of old, and with his forerunner John the Baptist, in giving his desire and effort too for a heavenly state on earth. We have his meaning, his constant meaning, of the phrase "kingdom of God" in that petition, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." Here is all Christ's zeal in behalf of some spiritual state on earth. "As in heaven so on earth." These were his words, this his work. He himself came from heaven to earth to bring to us heaven's peace and joy and righteousness. He brought to earth heaven's words, heaven's promises, heaven's pardon, heaven's peaceful mind, heaven's affections, heaven's spirit, even the Holy Ghost; in a word, he brought to earth heaven's God — the tender, forgiving, and omnipotent Father, that earth might have the same ruler as heaven.

This was Christ's mission, to transport, with himself, heaven to earth. The kingdom of which he spake was a present rule of God on the heart. The heaven he offered men was a present state of peace and blessedness. Until he came to his last words with his disciples, he had very little to say of the world beyond the grave. It was not his chief mission to describe the Jerusalem above, and tell how many consolations awaited souls in that region beyond death. He seldom sought to comfort his disciples by assuring them this life was one of trouble unalloyed, and the life to come a place of as pure peace. He did not so teach as to impress his hearers that there is no real good, no real purity, no true holiness, except in the future world. His words have even a contrary direction; to draw the mind back from the future to the present, down from some high locality called heaven to the earth. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." "The

kingdom of heaven is within you." "The kingdom of heaven is peace and joy and righteousness in the Holy Ghost." His chief promise was, not that he would take them to the Comforter, but "the Comforter will come to you." "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him." Here is the thought. Not chiefly our going from this earth to God; but God, who is in heaven, coming to us on the earth, even the Father, Son, and Spirit, to dwell in us and abide with us here. Not, ye shall know all things when ye reach heaven, but "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things."

If we count the number of times the expression "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" is used in the New Testament, we find it in Matthew about thirty-seven times; in Mark thirteen times; in Luke thirty times. And with three or four exceptions, the reference in all these instances is indisputably to the kingdom of God on the earth. The few exceptions referred to are variously interpreted; and by some commentators so as to make them not exceptions, but in harmony with the common meaning, giving but one interpretation to the phrase we study, and that, the kingdom of God on the earth.

Passing to the Gospel by John, we are surprised to find he has made use of this phrase, so common in the other evangelists, but on a single occasion, in his account of Christ's interview with Nicodemus. It can hardly be possible, however, that he should make no more reference to the substance of thought in the phrase. It was too prominent and too constant in Christ's words not to be frequently repeated by any recorder of his teachings.

We find, therefore, this evangelist has been more attracted by other words of Jesus which convey a like meaning with those we study. Instead of *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* or *τῶν οὐρανῶν* he uses *ἡ αἰώνιος ζωῆς*, eternal life. Not a life to begin when we pass to our eternal state, but now known by every believ-

ing soul: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life"; "I am come that ye might have life"; "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." The reign of God on the heart secures a heavenly life; and this evangelist, marked in all his writings by his attention to spiritual states, the affections and emotions of the soul, was absorbed in the result of God's reign, and has used the word for this result, "life," present "eternal life," as synonymous with the power of God securing it. And we may observe, this synonym is evidence in the argument we present, that the reign of God which was meant by Christ, was one exercised on the soul in the flesh.

Leaving the Gospels, we find the phrase used less frequently in the Epistles, only thirteen times in all; in eight of which it has the common meaning, and in five making reference either to some millennium state to come on the earth, or to the spiritual world beyond the grave.

Thus in all the Bible, in both the New and the Old Testaments, the phrase "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" invites our attention almost exclusively to some holy state on earth. Other scriptures leads our minds to the heaven above, but the phrase we study is consecrated to express some holiness on earth. We cannot refrain from an inference here. If we extract from the phrase we have studied all allusion to the future world, do we not leave much less eschatology in the New Testament than is commonly found there? We mean no diminution of the great truths revealed of that world to come, but a less frequent use of them in appeals unto men to turn to God. This present reign of God on earth seemed to Christ's mind to contain the chief motive for repentance. Thus he cried, not, "Repent, for you must die and go to judgment"; but "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Repent" for the present rewards of repentance. "Turn," for that to which your turning will now bring you "for the kingdom of God." Dr. Watt's remark, that "the New Testament derives its motives of terror and comfort chiefly from the

resurrection and the day of judgment," is certainly not true of the words of Christ.

We come now to notice the nature of this kingdom or reign of God on the earth. It is exactly made known to us in the petition of our Lord's Prayer following "Thy kingdom come," by "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." This latter desire is but a continuation or explanation of the former. In every reign or kingdom there is a governing will. In the reign of God his will is that control. Whenever a soul has come to live day by day and moment by moment, doing the will of God, that soul is in the "reign of God" according to the petition, "Thy kingdom come." All self-will is removed from the heart; all passions are subdued. The conscience and spiritual vision are quickened to observe with a spiritual discernment what the will of God is, and then the affections, impulses, and will are eager to perform it. "Jesus said unto them, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.'" In this picture of Christ's mind we see the perfection of the reign of God. We see here the glorious reality of that prophecy, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts." God's law, which is the expression of his will, is represented as brought into such effective control over the heart as if it were written upon it, or put into it as its all-actuating impulse.

Again, we read of the new covenant in distinction from the old; and the distinguishing thing in the new is the abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the enlightening and ennobling of the darkened, fallen condition of man. This we may call the subjective aspect of the reign of God, which is the full union of the soul with the divine will.

Viewed objectively, this kingdom or reign includes all the peculiar administration of holy influences and powers which secure this sanctified state, namely, the fuller relation of God's will in the words of Christ and the apostles; the great power of God in Christ's life and sufferings and death, and the all-abounding gift of the Holy Ghost in these last days; with the ever-attendant arrangement and harmonious work-

ing of divine providence. These are the instrumentalities of government in this reign of God. We may view this administrative order as existing where the desired results are not secured ; as the reign of the queen extends over all England though there be many disobedient subjects. Her dominion or government is over all, and so felt by all, securing in some true obedience, and on others the restraints and compulsions appointed to the disobedient. Wherever her law is proclaimed and enforced, there is her reign, though many of her subjects yield not to obey. Wherever his ministers are proclaiming the name of Christ, the gift of the Spirit, and the will of God, — the co-working providences ever being added — there is his reign over all whose minds are reached by these means, though they do not yield to the same.

Thus while we may view this reign of God as complete in its governing arrangement, it may be far from complete in the results secured. A complete government may not prevent all disobedience.

Viewed objectively, we may say the reign of God has come in fulness on the earth, that reign which is as in heaven — meaning his word, his Son, his Spirit, with the holy ordering of his providence, all are now here to work on souls. But viewed subjectively we see their operation on the souls of men like the leaven in the loaf, or like the mustard seed ; in a way so small as to be almost imperceptible, but going on from this small beginning to the perfect work of harmonizing all minds with the counsels of God.

Here now are explained some scripture representations, which at first view seem difficult to harmonize. When Jesus was asked when the kingdom of God should appear, he replied : “ The kingdom of God is within you, or among you.” The full meaning is, “ You look for this kingdom in the future. Behold it is now in your midst.” Again, he proclaims, “ The kingdom of God is at hand,” as if not yet here but near. Again : “ Some of you standing here shall not see death till you see the kingdom of God appear.” This last verse gives us the impression of some distance in the

future. Thus we have three representations. In one it is present, in another only near, in the last distant many days. We explain these varied words by remembering the different stages of its working. It may have reached the first stage when the second was but near, and the third some distance in the future. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The corn is present in the blade, near in the ear, and yet to come in the full, hardened kernel.

The varied parables also represent the kingdom of God in a twofold aspect, which may be contrasted as individual and social. We have thus far viewed it only in its power over individual hearts. This is the ultimate design of its work, to perfect souls; but this cannot be accomplished except by employing social agencies. Therefore the reign of God in its administrative arrangements, includes a society, a holy community, called the church. Thus we find some of the parables illustrating the working of the church in the world. "The field is the world, and the seed are the children of the kingdom." Here is the kingdom in its social aspect. In the parable of the sower the word is the seed, and the individual heart is the soil in which it falls. Here is the individual aspect. Some of the parables may be interpreted as illustrating both the work of grace on the heart, and the work of the church in the world.

Also this kingdom is represented sometimes as invisible, and then again as to be seen. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Certain Pharisees had inquired when the kingdom of God should come, as if eager to behold its approach. They are informed it will come with no ostentatious appearance, like the kingdoms of this world. But again we read: "There be some standing here who shall not taste death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." Here is the declaration of something visible and impressive to the senses. And such was the manifestation of this kingdom when its woes were visited on Jerusalem for the downfall of the Jewish power which opposed Jesus' sway. On the day of Pentecost the power of the Holy Ghost was

seen, as it came upon the multitude in Jerusalem; not merely in the fiery tongues which descended and sat upon them, but in the cries of those pricked in heart from the power of Peter's words. Here was some visible coming of power in the kingdom of God.

So in revivals since that day, this kingdom has been manifest by signs and workings to be received by our observation. Even in the days of Christ and his disciples this kingdom could be seen by a spiritual vision. That little company was the beginning of a society that would subject the world. While, then, the kingdom of God comes not with the observation of a worldly mind, it is open and manifest to a spiritual discernment. It assumes not power like earthly potentates, but it takes an even mighty power in ways of gentleness and suffering. It is hidden only to the blind. For all the increase of the church of God is acknowledged to be the progress of Christ's visible kingdom on the earth.

We see thus the way of harmony in many verses respecting this kingdom of God, which at first appearance seem at variance. It may be in the midst of us, and yet only near unto us, and also some distance in the future. It may be a power on individual hearts, and also on communities and the world. It may be hidden from the eager watch of the world, and still be open and manifest to a spiritual mind.

We are able now to detect the error in the Jewish conception of the kingdom of God. It was not in that they expected it to be a kingdom established on the earth, for such is the kingdom of God, a reign on the earth in time. Nor was their error in that they thought this kingdom would immediately come with the Messiah. It did come with his coming, and from that time has been in the midst of men. Nor was it in that they expected this kingdom would be established with power. For the kingdom of God has shown its power, even the mighty workings of omnipotence. Their error was that they allowed no time for it to gain its full sway, but thought it would break forth at once by dint of God's almighty hand unto a full dominion. And further,

they had false views of the kind of power that ruleth in that kingdom, supposing it would be like Caesar's reign, one of compulsion and worldly authority. They discerned not the power of spoken truth, of self-suffering to save an enemy, nor of the Spirit of God. They had no appreciation of the moral power from reason, testimony, forbearance, love, humiliation unto death.

We see also a common mistake now prevailing respecting the kingdom of God. It is located above the earth, not on it; beyond the grave, and not with men in the flesh. But we have seen that this kingdom is on the earth and in the midst of living men. "So on the earth as in heaven," is language that remains in our holy form of words, but how little we find it in our faith and efforts. We are so under sin, so completely disabled, and behold the world so deeply fallen, that we cannot rise to faith in a full restoration. We gain no hope for full purity and holiness except by separation from this earth. The highest hope, how often, is that we may gain sufficient grace to mark us in this fallen earth, for a better state to come. The *παλιγγενεσία*¹ (regeneration) of the earth, and of our hearts while on the earth, is more a matter of speculation than positive hope. Our thoughts for the good fly continually to heaven, and rest there, forgetful of the hope and promise, "As in heaven so on earth." Do we remember the representation of that New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, that crown of our hopes, that it is not fixed in heaven, and so that all the nations seem going into it from the earth? But it was seen coming down from God out of heaven to earth. The language is, "The tabernacle of God is with men." Thus we find carried out unto the end of the New Testament and unto the full consummation of God's working, that the kingdom of God is on earth, even its glorious perfection in the New Jerusalem is not in heaven but on the earth.

And further, how many think of this kingdom as only invisible, and ever are in fear of sensualities, material views,

¹ Matt. xix. 28.

when any seek to see this kingdom. But is it not true that we do see the kingdom of God in every visible church of Christ? All its ministrations in its ministry, its word, its sacraments, its confessions, and prayers, are the very instrumentality of God's kingdom. The spiritual kingdom is in this which is visible. Its completion is dependent upon the perfection of the church in its holy ministrations. The church is Christ's body, the visible tabernacle of the most high God while he reigns on the earth.

Will not this interpretation of the kingdom of God also modify some common views in soteriology? We will take up the single scripture, "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God." If we mistake not, just two thoughts are usually suggested by this verse. First, the new birth; secondly, final salvation, or "eschatological salvation," we may say, to get out the pure idea. So where one has "met with a change," as the language is, the mind rushes at once into the world to come, as the place for its results and reward. There will its vitality be seen. For that spirit-condition is this change given. There will be manifest how different it makes me from others. This new birth is an entrance to some place or state not found here on earth but in heaven.

And then alternates the season of doubt. How be sure this is the change required? How determine its sufficiency for that day? O that I could now test so important a change as is connected immediately with my eternal state! Would that some present issue was given, in which would be revealed whether I know the veritable new birth! Thus some live in deception from want, in their view, of any present testing agency for the change they have felt to prove it false; and others live in doubt from want of some present testing agency to prove them truly born again.

Now see how matters are simplified by the real meaning of scripture. We read, "The kingdom of God is righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost." Here we have a synonym for kingdom of heaven. Let us use it. "Except

a man be born again he cannot enter" "this righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost." Here we have an immediate issue of the new birth in present qualities or conditions of the soul. For entrance to this new spiritual state was the change ordained. Man is not by nature righteous, joyful, peaceful. His will is under self rather than God. His heart is dissatisfied by many covetous desires which it cannot gratify. His conscience speaks fearful verdicts from want of divine approval.

Now, how natural the figure when Jesus proclaimed that one who is in this selfishness, dissatisfaction, and fear must be made over, "born again," before he can enter into peace and joy and righteousness.

And now when the question arises, Am I born again? it is but the simple inquiry whether I have left my selfishness to live in righteousness, regarding the will of God? Have I found an escape from my dissatisfied, covetous state, into contentment and joy in God's providence? Have I lost my fear of God's presence and judgment, and found veritable peace in his favor?

We are now no more mystified and lead astray in some metaphysical process of new birth, a point or subject which was doubtless the very furthest off from Jesus's mind when he said, "be born again," but we have simply two present conditions or states of the soul, the one said to be in nature, the other in the kingdom of God, and our question is: Have we passed from one to the other? Have I come into righteousness and joy and peace? Am I verily under the reign of God? In a plain, simple word, Am I doing God's will? How I came into this state — what hidden operation, natural or supernatural, on the physical or moral faculties of the soul; what division of mental philosophy will best help me test my change — all this quantity of metaphysics is cast aside as chaff; and the inquiry is: Have I come into doing God's will? Is God verily reigning over me so that I am under him by obedience and trust and joy? This reign of God over us being simply the power of his will to control, we

have but to inquire: Am I doing his will? If I am, I am in his kingdom. If I am not doing his will, I still need to be changed and new-born, and changed again continually, till I do come into doing his will. And as to the eschatological salvation, that cares for itself when we stand aright in God's kingdom on the earth.

It may be said these criticisms imply a false charge on the conceptions of the present day, since the power of God in his Son and Spirit is now recognized. We hear of Messiah's kingdom and of the "state of grace" in the soul, which is like to the definition we have given of the kingdom of God. Consenting that this language we now hear contains a portion of the meaning we would exalt; still it is true we do not hear the words "kingdom of God" applied in common use to this state on earth. If the spiritual powers included in it are recognized in part, they are not expressed by this consecrated language of Christ and the New Testament.

But would any say: Why make so much of this phrase, if its import is still left in different words? We believe its import is not all left, but much of it has gone with the giving up of the words. The terms substituted for this phrase are not so forcible, and for the simple reason, the thoughts to be expressed are not so high and holy.

Repeat again the words which guide us in this study. "Thy reign come as in heaven so on earth." May the very reign of heaven in all its completeness, where thy will is done so universally and continually, may this reign come on earth. May that power of God which is seen in heaven, securing holiness and blessedness, peace and joy, may this power come upon earth and secure this blessedness and these graces here.

This is the language, "As in heaven so on earth." Heaven is to be transported to earth, to secure its own purity here in the souls of men and in communities, and finally in the whole world, when the new heavens and new earth will appear. This is the high and holy conception contained in the words "kingdom of God." It is a condition on earth

worth seeking for its own reward. It is a power of God mighty to control the man. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in the body, writing the law of God in the heart, putting it in the inward parts, where abide our secret, involuntary impulses, so that we are enlightened and impelled by the Spirit in every thought and word and deed. It is divine care over us as over the angels above. It is divine power given us as the pure spirits above enjoy omnipotence.

We ask if such high and holy thoughts as these are commonly believed to be promised to this earth? Is it not rather generally thought that we must die before we come to the place of so much divine power? That we can only begin grace now and make preparation for the kingdom of God "at last." We are not seeking to enter into rest here, but simply hoping for a rest to come; nor to conquer sin here, but waiting to awake in his likeness, when we shall have put off this mortal flesh. The present so-called "state of grace" is viewed as so exclusively preparatory that we estimate not the infinite worth in itself. Our eyes dwell with delight on the heavenly visions of purity and bliss; but our faith adds not the thought that these are the patterns for earth.

This is our criticism; not that a state of grace is ignored, but we have not common any conception for earth so high and holy as is found in the prayer of our Lord: "Thy reign come as in heaven so on earth." In dropping the phrase, we have dropped also much of the heavenly meaning in it. In substituting another phrase, "state of grace," we have substituted an earthly and small conception of God's power on the soul.

This is what we seek from our study: to exalt our view of the present and visible kingdom of God on the earth. We should see in the church the holy reign of God; and in the power of the Spirit, so freely offered us in the new covenant, a sufficient help to elevate our souls into a present divine state; and so come into some heavenly place in Christ Jesus, that in seeking words of sufficient strength to express our glory, we shall restore that sacred language: "Thy reign come as in heaven so on earth." May this be our prayer.