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ST. PAUL'S EQUIVALENT FOR THE 'KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.'

THERE is a broad contrast between the Gospels and the Epistles which strikes the eye at once: the one simple, pellucid, profound with the profundity that comes from elemental ideas and relations and that is quite consistent with great apparent artlessness of expression; the other involved and laboured, only at times emerging into real simplicity of language, often highly technical, and if profound, not seldom also obscure.

This contrast, as I have said, strikes the eye from the first. It represents not only two styles of writing but two distinct types of thought.

From the point of view of criticism the distinction of these two types is important. There is no better guarantee of the generally authentic character of the Gospel record. The older Tübingen criticism spoke of Pauline and Petrine elements in the Gospels. And the very first thing we should expect would be that some such elements would enter into them. But the wonder is that the extent to which they are actually present should be so small. When the Gospels are examined the really intrusive Pauline and Petrine elements (in the Tübingen sense) are found to be quite insignificant. The distinctness of type is hardly affected. There is exceedingly little running of the one type into the other. All this we may take as proof that the teaching of our Lord as it is recorded in the Gospels has

been preserved substantially as it was given. We have by the side of it later types of teaching of marked individuality. These later types in one form or another covered nearly the whole Christian world. And yet they have not encroached upon the earlier. They have not obliterated its sharpness of outline. There is practically no confusion of type. The teaching of the Gospels has not been corrupted by the theology of the Epistles. The teaching of the Epistles has not been mixed up with that of the Gospels. The two types stand out clearly marked off from each other[1].

But this state of things leaves us with a problem which has been, I cannot but think, as yet insufficiently faced. What is the relation of the two types to each other? The one, as we can see, passed into the other; but how did it pass? Can we trace a continuity between the leading conceptions of each? How far is there a real identity of substance underlying the difference of form?

A wide field of investigation is opened up which I believe needs more working out than it has received either in England or on the Continent. This we may hope will not be wanting.

For the present I propose to take only one leading conception of the Gospels, but that perhaps the most central of all—the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, or of Heaven. I propose to ask, What becomes of this conception in the Epistles, and in particular in the earlier Epistles of St. Paul? I propose to ask, first, if we find this conception there; and if we do not, or so far as we do not, what takes its place.

Now it is remarkable upon the face of it that we hear so little of the Kingdom of God in the Epistles. Let us think for a moment of the way in which it is the one theme of a whole succession of our Lord's parables; and then of the very subordinate place, to say the least, which the conception takes with St. Paul. If we run over in mind the main trains of thought in all his Epistles, and especially in the early Epistles, it is conspicuously absent.

And yet the conception by no means disappears entirely. It occupies really just the sort of place that we might expect,

[1] On this subject see especially an essay by von Soden in the volume dedicated to Weizsäcker (Freiburg i. B., 1892), p. 113 ff.

if it were taken over from an earlier body of teaching—a body of teaching of which the Apostle himself had not been a hearer, but which came to him rather at secondhand and when his own mental habits had been largely formed.

There are a few familiar places where the phrase occurs. Five times over the Apostle speaks of 'inheriting the Kingdom of God.' Four times he reminds his readers that evil-doers will not inherit the Kingdom (1 Cor. vi 9, 10; Gal. v 21; Eph. v 5); once he says that flesh and blood cannot inherit it (1 Cor. xv 50). In all these places he has in view the Messianic Kingdom of the saints in glory. And it is in the same sense that he encourages the Thessalonians with the hope of being 'counted worthy of the Kingdom of God,' for which they were suffering (2 Thess. i 5). This is the purified and spiritualized Christian form of the current Messianic expectation.

There are however two passages which go beyond this. One is in Romans (xiv 17), where it is said that 'the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' And the other is in 1 Corinthians (iv 20), where the Kingdom of God is described as not being 'in word but in power.'

In both these cases the Apostle is thinking not of anything future but of the present, not of any catastrophic change, but of the actual experience of Christian men. Where were they to look for the coming of the Kingdom? What were to be the signs of its coming? The signs are—not any change in the Levitical order, a new list of clean and unclean, new regulations as to abstinence or the like, but a new spirit permeating the life, a new attitude and temper of mind, a new relation of the soul to God—righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. What a beautiful description in those few strokes! What an advanced experience of the best gifts of religion! How undreamt of by Pharisee or Sadducee or Essene or Zealot! There was only one school where the Apostle could have learnt that lesson—the school of Jesus. If we had only that one verse it would suffice to tell us that the teaching of Jesus had really sunk into his soul.

And it is no less a direct reflexion of that teaching when he says that the Kingdom of God is 'not in word but in power.'

I shall have in a moment to say more of this aspect of the Kingdom.

We may think it strange that with so much insight into the mind of the Master, St. Paul did not fall more into His habitual language. He did fall into it; he did adopt it, in no lukewarm manner, but with heart and soul. And yet it is only on rare occasions that this particular mode of speech comes uppermost.

To change a whole vocabulary is not an easy thing. St. Paul had been brought up as a Pharisee. He was like one of us, trained in his own academic tradition. The language of that tradition was the mould into which his thoughts naturally fell.

Further, he was an ardent student of the Jewish Bible. The words of Psalmists and of Prophets lived in his memory. And they happened to be a different cycle of words from those which are most prominent in the Gospels.

It is marvellous to see how St. Paul has recast the old phrases and reads into them a specifically Christian content. But the phrases are old; they are in great part phrases to which he had been accustomed before he became a Christian.

Let us once again then ask where the coincidence between the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles comes in. I said just now that St. Paul really knew what Jesus had meant when He spoke of the 'Kingdom of God.' He knew His innermost, distinctive, and characteristic meaning. Many times our Lord seems to speak—or half to speak—as His contemporaries might have spoken. The Kingdom of God was the Messianic Kingdom. But He infused into the phrase a larger as well as a deeper meaning than it bore on the lips of the people. The Messianic Kingdom was for Him the culmination, or bringing to a head, of a process that was always going on. It is probable that the phrase which we translate 'Kingdom of God' meant quite as much, as it is said to mean predominantly in the Talmud, 'reign' or 'sovereignty' of God[1]. It was nothing less than the sum of all those influences and forces that specially betoken the presence or manifestation of God in the world.

The world is energized by God. There are constantly streaming, as it were, down from heaven a number of currents which come straight from God. The Apostle's phrase expresses

[1] Schürer, *Gesch. d. Jüd. Volkes* ii 454 n, ed. 2 (539 n, ed. 3).

exactly the effects by which these divine currents are manifested. Where they are, there are 'righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

But the Apostle knew quite well that these were the effects and not the cause. The cause lay in those mighty powers or energies put forth by God for the redemption of the world. To be within the range of those powers, to clasp them—so to speak—to the heart, was to 'enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' It was to be really loyal to God as King—to let His sovereignty have its way, not to obstruct and oppose but to welcome it, to surrender the will to it, to open the soul to those divine influences and forces which flowed in its train.

This is the Kingdom which Jesus told His listeners was 'within them[1].' Those influences and forces taken into the heart were the pearl of great price, the treasure hid in the field. Righteousness and peace were their natural fruit. And the consciousness of them brought with it an exceeding great joy.

Such is the life-history of this work of God within the soul. It begins above in the highest heaven; it ends below in the hearts of men. It diffuses itself throughout the world. It passes from one soul to another. It is like a river rising among the hills and increasing in volume as it flows. It sweeps individuals along with it, so that they gather into a society. And so another kind of figure becomes applicable to it. It is like a draw-net cast into the sea and bringing the fish which it encloses to land.

Where shall we seek an analogy for all this in the writings of St. Paul? The thought of the Kingdom is so central in the teaching of Jesus that we naturally look for its counterpart in the central teaching of the Apostle. Now by common consent that central teaching is contained in two verses of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed the righteousness of God by faith unto faith' (Rom. i 16, 17: RV. has '*a* righteousness,' but '*the* righteousness' is probably better).

[1] For proof that this is the true sense of ἐντὸς ὑμῶν see especially Field, *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament* (Cambridge, 1899), p. 71.

We may put aside the mention of 'faith.' It is no doubt a term of great importance for the purpose of St. Paul; it is less important for ours. St. Paul has in view the psychological process by which the righteousness of God becomes actual for the believer. With this we are not concerned for the present, though if it were to be examined we should find the teaching of the Apostle on this head fall perfectly into its place.

For us the important term is 'the righteousness of God.' This expression, I think we may say, is better understood now than it was only a few years ago. At that time there seemed to be an almost established tradition in Protestant exegesis that was not so much wrong as one-sided and inadequate.

I cannot think that it was wrong to explain the words in Romans on the analogy of the more explicit language of the Epistle to the Philippians. St. Paul there in a well-known passage (Phil. iii 8, 9) speaks of his hope that he may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own 'even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (*τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει*). The insertion of the preposition ἐκ makes the phrase explicit. The contrast of the two kinds of righteousness is decisive. On the one hand is the righteousness which he disclaims, the righteousness which he calls 'his own,' the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees, the product of a mechanical obedience to law. On the other hand is the righteousness which he desires, the righteousness which is 'from God based on faith.' This righteousness, however much it begins with God, must at least end as a state or condition of man. It is as such that the Apostle prays that it may be his.

And yet it does begin 'from God'; and it is this beginning that has had less justice done to it. When St. Paul says, in the verse of Romans, that in the Gospel is revealed 'the righteousness of God,' he means in the first instance the Divine attribute of righteousness, just as in the verse that follows he says that the wrath of God is also revealed. For him the whole Gospel is summed up as a revelation of the righteousness of God.

It is a very large conception, and one that is not easy to grasp at all adequately.

This is an instance that illustrates in a striking way how

much we are at the mercy of language. We remember that the Latin- and Romance-speaking peoples have but a single word for 'justice' and for 'righteousness.' The almost inevitable consequence is to lose sight of the larger meaning in the smaller.

We are somewhat better off than that. We have the two words, and we can keep clear the two senses. We are not in so much danger of limiting our idea of righteousness to that of equal dealing between man and man. But even we must find it hard to rise to the full height of the conception as it was present to the mind of St. Paul.

St. Paul had behind him the whole weight of the Old Testament realized with a vividness and a force with which it is impossible for us to realize it.

Now there is perhaps hardly any word in the Old Testament that has so rich and full a meaning as this word 'righteousness,' especially as applied to God.

Even as applied to man, even as applied to the Judge, it is still a good deal more than 'justice.' The righteousness even of the Judge is before all things tender care for the weak, the defence of those who cannot defend themselves—the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the stranger—vigilant protection of the oppressed. Hence it goes on to mean an ever-present and ever-active sympathy. We see this in the famous passage in the Book of Job (xxix 14–16), 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my justice was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the needy: and the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.'

When this character is transferred to God it is of necessity enlarged and deepened yet further. We must never forget that for Israel everything was seen in the light of the special relation in which God stood to His own people. All that is tenderest, all that is most gracious, was concentrated upon this relation. And the word for it all—the word that describes the faithfulness of God to His covenant with His people—was 'righteousness.' That one comprehensive word described the deepest workings of the Divine Mind as it went forth in lovingkindness and pity to the people of His choice. All the mighty acts of the Lord sprang from this motive and from this relation: 'In His love and

in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old' (Isa. lxiii 9).

All this we may be sure that Paul the Pharisee grasped intensely. In so doing he was not exceptional. The sense of the love of God for Israel, of the covenant relation between Jehovah and His people, was the very best side of Jewish religion. The Jew too often traded upon his privileges, too often let himself repose on them without making any strenuous effort really to live up to them. But that was the perversion of a feeling good in itself. The sense of intimacy between Israel and its God, the delighted response of the nation to its Benefactor, is one of the brightest strains in the Old Testament, and is not confined to the Old Testament, but runs on into the Talmud, and is deeply implanted in the consciousness of the Jewish race.

Even Paul the Pharisee felt all this. But what of Paul the Christian? For him it was not lost, but transformed and indefinitely strengthened. We must remember that all the Jew felt for Israel as a nation St. Paul took over bodily, and claimed for the Church of Christ. The covenant relation of God and His people still subsisted, but with a nearness and with a sense of reality that could not attach to it before. The mighty acts of the Lord which the Christian recalled and on which he placed his hope and his confidence were not far back in the distant past, but they centred in the life and death and resurrection of One whom the generation then living had seen and known, to whose words they had listened, and whom their hands might have handled. And further, the influence which we associate with the gift of His Spirit was one of which they had actual experience day by day.

Can we not understand the extraordinary vividness with which it all came home to the mind of the Apostle, and which he tried in his turn to convey to the outer world? His whole life was one prolonged effort to convey to the world outside what Christ had done for them that loved Him.

It was but natural that St. Paul should throw his description of this into the forms supplied to him by the Old Testament. The Old Testament was saturated with the conception of the righteousness of God. The history of Israel was the expression of the working of that righteousness. And it lay very near

at hand to regard the whole great Divine process which constituted Christianity as an expression of the same righteousness. It was the righteousness of God which set it in motion. Through the operation of that righteousness it became the power of God unto salvation to every one that believed, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The righteousness of God showed itself in the desire to produce in man a righteousness which should be the reflexion of itself. Justification and sanctification are the technical names for the process. We should try to think of them not as technicalities but as the actual living effects that men like St. Paul felt in themselves and saw in the hearts and lives of the brethren around them.

And now let us compare this sketch of what the Apostle meant by the righteousness of God with the teaching of the Gospels about the Kingdom of God or of Heaven.

The righteousness of God, as we have seen, was not a passive righteousness, but an active energizing righteousness. It was simply God at work in the world. And the Kingdom of God also, if we try to express it in unmetaphorical language, was just the same thing—it too was *God at work in the world.*

St. Paul's phrase, borrowed straight from the Old Testament, lays stress upon the moral character of the process, which had its root in the moral character of God from whom it sprang. His essential righteousness was the moving cause and the active persistent force at work behind and through the whole.

The 'Kingdom' or 'reign of God' is slightly more neutral in form. It does not lay the same stress upon the moral nature of the Kingdom or reign. But this is implied, and implied close at hand, even if it is not expressed. It is enough to say that it is the Kingdom, or reign, *of God.* God asserting His sovereignty in the world must needs assert it in the form of righteousness. If we say that it is His love which impelled Him, we have also seen that righteousness, as it was conceived in the Old Testament and as St. Paul conceived it, included a large element of love. And in like manner the Kingdom, realized among men, necessarily expressed itself in righteousness. 'The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

The points of contact are evident. God may put forth His

sovereignty either on the large scale or on the small. He may make it seen by broad movements in the world, by the founding and growth and spread of His Church, or by the working of His gracious influence in the hearts of individual believers. Parables like the Leaven or the Mustard-seed cover both at once. For the Divine seed may be as a germ in the heart, and the Divine leaven may work in the heart as well as in a society making its conquests in the larger world.

Then so far as that society reflects its origin it must do so by its righteousness, and as an instrument for the propagation of righteousness; while for the individual, righteousness is the wedding-garment in which all the guests of the Kingdom must be attired.

And in both cases, the fruit of the Kingdom as of the energizing righteousness of God is peace and joy. 'The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field' (Matt. xiii 44). Compare this with the description of the effects of righteousness by faith in the Epistle to the Romans: 'Being therefore justified—or put into this condition of righteousness, the righteousness which comes from God—by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and let us rejoice—or exult—in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but let us also rejoice—or exult—in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us' (Rom. v 1–5). There we have a detailed description of the 'joy of the kingdom.'

The parallelism thus runs through all the stages. The greatest emphasis in both cases is on the point of origin. The energizing righteousness is the righteousness of God; the Kingdom is the Kingdom *of God* or of heaven; that means that it is God's sovereign power, the influences and forces that come from Him, at work among men. Both express themselves as righteousness; both make their presence felt in a settled temper of exultant joy.

The language is different. That of the Gospels turns on a

phrase that runs all through the Old Testament, beginning with the Books of Samuel and ending in the Book of Daniel, to be kept alive in the popular Messianic expectation. The language of St. Paul is based perhaps mainly on that of the Psalms and the second part of Isaiah. But the content of the two cycles of language and of thought is substantially the same; or it only throws into relief slightly different aspects of that which has a fundamental identity. The central and cardinal point of the Christian dispensation is the same, whether we call it the 'righteousness of God' or the 'Kingdom of heaven.' In either case it is the goodness and love of God, actively intervening to guide, redeem, sustain, and bless His people.

W. SANDAY.