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CONTINUING

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To err is human. To blunder might almost be said to be the peculiar property of, if **Errors and Blunders.** not the wise man, yet the man of learning—more or less. There is such a thing as pure error: a blunder is, on the other hand, essentially confusion, and he who blunders is, in the very nature of the case, "mixed." He is not like the lost horse wandering in the steppes: he is like the sleepy horse stumbling in the path. The very core of a blunder is, therefore, incongruity: and it is on this account that it ordinarily strikes us as amusing; for incongruity is the soul of humor. The incongruity may indeed pass beyond the limits of the amusing to the absurd, and may be such as to call out rather indignation than a smile; but in any case, it is the presence of mismatched elements in the phenomenon which raises it from the plane of a mere error into the dignity of a blunder. The late Mr. EDWARD A. FREEMAN, in his inimitable way, genially defines a blunder accordingly thus:—"A blunder is a work of art. An utterly stupid man, an utterly ignorant man, may

make dull mistakes and dull confusions; he cannot make a good blunder. To make a good blunder needs cleverness, and it needs knowledge—imperfect knowledge certainly, but still some knowledge, not utter ignorance." Indeed, it does not always imply ignorance at all,—sleepiness rather. The best blunders are but the nods of Homers; and a Homer is as necessary for their production as the nod.

We see the blunder in its most genial form when no ignorance is argued at all. In **Various Kinds Of Blunders.** these cases, it creates nothing in the hearer but a diverted smile, in which the perpetrator joins without embarrassment. Instances may be found in Dr. HERRICK JOHNSON'S declaration that Peter "covered before a barmaid" (Lectures on the New Testament, Etc.: The American Tract Society, 1881, p. 7), and Dr. CHARLES WADSWORTH'S explanation, in one of his printed sermons, that the Epistle to the Colossians "had been penned by two private secretaries, Tycheus and a young colored man, Onesimus." Neither writer so

shall know of the doctrine. Those who are in a receptive condition never stand long outside, looking at the symmetry and beauty of the illustration—they enter, and from within they see the light of God's marvellous truth shining through its windows. There is a tremendous difference between the inside and the outside.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

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According to the united testimony of the synoptists our Lord's first message on his appearance in public was the nearness of the kingdom of God, Mk. i., 15; Matth. iv., 17; Luke iv., 19. The fourth Gospel insofar agrees with this, that it shows Jesus at the beginning of his ministry introducing the subject of the kingdom to Nicodemus, Jno. iii., 3. But, while in the synoptists the kingdom remains the central theme to which all the other elements in our Lord's teaching are more or less distinctly related, in the Johannine discourses we hear no more of it after this one reference. Its place here is taken by other more abstract ideas, preëminently that of life.

The first thing to be noticed in the synoptical passages above quoted is the absence of every attempt at a definition of what the kingdom of God means. Jesus occupies historic ground from the outset. It is *the* kingdom, the well-known kingdom with which he presupposes familiarity, not merely on his own part but also on the part of his hearers. Our Lord did not come to found a new religion, but simply to usher in the fulfilment of something promised long beforehand. In the Old Testament God is frequently represented as the King of the Universe not only, but also as the King of Israel in a special, redemptive sense. He became so at the time of the deliverance from Egypt and the organization of Israel on the basis of the covenant, Ex. xix, 4-6, cpr. Deut. xxxiii, 4, 5. In this sense God's kingdom first meant a present, real relation between Himself and his people, not something whose realization was expected from the future. Through the supernatural giving of the law and its administration and his direction of the course of history Jehovah exercises the functions of King in Israel. Later on, however, the conception of the

kingdom, without losing its older meaning, obtains a distinctly eschatological sense. This development coincided with the development of Messianic prophecy, and both took place in dependence on the institution and further development of the human kingdom, especially that of the Davidic line. When the human king had been installed as the vice-gerent of God, it became apparent, that in this representative form the perfect realization of the kingdom could not be a matter of the present, but would have to belong to the future. The kingdom is thus projected into the Messianic age. It is especially in the book of Daniel that this idea becomes prominent. The future kingdom is here described as the supernatural, universal, everlasting reign of the God of Heaven which will overthrow and replace the great world-monarchies.

In the Jewish literature which lies between the Old and the New Testament we also find the kingdom of God spoken of. It here again designates both the already existing reign of God over the world and Israel, and the future extension and enforcement of that reign in the Messianic era. Here for the first time the phrase *ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* appears, the exact counterpart of which is not yet found in the Old Testament. It has been recently suggested, that at the time of our Lord's earthly life the phrase was not in common use to designate the sum of Messianic expectations, other phrases such as "the coming aeon" being much more familiar, but this is hardly borne out by the Gospels themselves, which in Luke xvii, 20; Mk. xv, 43* introduce the phrase as popularly known. It is quite possible, however, that the very reasons for which our Lord made it the watchword of his gospel, prevented its becoming a favorite with contemporary Judaism. For the Jews were not supremely interested in what the Messianic age was to be from its highest, ideal, theocentric point of view, but rather in what it was to bring of material enjoyment to themselves, and the latter the name "kingdom of God" did not adequately express.

Our Lord never gives the name "kingdom of God" to the Old Testament theocracy, but always denotes by it the new form which God's reign is to assume in the near or remote future. The law and the prophets are until John, from that time the kingdom

*Compare Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, i, 79 seq.

of God is preached. In Matth. viii, 12, the Jews are called "sons of the kingdom," not as actual possessors but as heirs of the same. And in the same sense Jesus declares that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to another nation, Matth. xxi, 43. He thus attaches Himself to the eschatological Old Testament usage. We here observe the same difference in point of view as when in Dogmatics we speak of the one covenant of grace in its two dispensations, whereas Scripture is wont to speak of these as two distinct covenants, the Old and the New.

Besides the phrase "the kingdom of God," which is found in all four Gospels (also in Acts, Romans, I Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, II Timothy), we meet with the phrase *ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν*, which is peculiar to Matthew. This phrase has been explained on the basis of the Jewish custom to use "heaven" as a substitute for the name of God, against pronouncing which scruples were entertained, and traces of which custom are found even in the New Testament. Compare Lk. xvi, 21; xx, 4. On this view the two phrases "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of Heaven" would be entirely equivalent. The explanation is undoubtedly correct insofar as it finds in heaven a circumlocution for God. But it is not likely that the motive which led Jesus to put the one for the other was a desire to avoid the use of the divine name as such. Heaven stands for God not as a mere conventional substitute, but adds a new element to the conception expressed by the latter. Heaven is the center of all supernatural influence that is brought to bear upon the lower world. To say that a work is done by God leaves the mode of its accomplishment undetermined, to say that it is done from Heaven is the strongest possible affirmation of its strictly supernatural origin. Heaven means God in a special mode of activity; compare Dan. ii, 44; vii, 13; Matth. xvi, 17; xviii, 35; Rom. i, 10; I Cor. xv, 47; II Cor. v, 1, 2. Heaven is also, as the abode of God, in relation to earth the ideal pattern to which all things here below ought to conform. In this sense to say that a thing is "of heaven" means not only that it is "of God" in general, but in that specific sense in which the heavenly realities agree with God's nature; compare Matth. vi, 10. Finally, heaven is in the consciousness of Jesus the goal towards which every aspiration of the disciple in the kingdom ought to tend; compare Matth. vi, 19-21.

It is no longer possible to determine the exact proportion in which the two phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of Heaven" were used by our Lord. It seems likely that Matthew most faithfully reflects the original preponderance of the latter name, and that Mark and Luke, writing for Christians from the Gentiles, made freer use of the more intelligible "kingdom of God."

The question may also be put whether in these two phrases the word *βασιλεία* has the abstract sense of "reign" or the concrete one of "realm." In the Old Testament the corresponding Hebrew term is with reference to God regularly used of the royal authority exercised by Him. This abstract meaning well suits the connection when the kingdom in the Gospels is said to be proclaimed or announced; it also suffices where a coming near, a being near, an appearance are predicated of it, or when men are said to see and hope for it. But it is different when the Gospel speaks of a sitting at meat, or an eating of bread in the kingdom of God, of a calling or inviting into the kingdom, of a being fit for or worthy of the kingdom, of its being shut or people being cast out from it, of the kingdom as a good which is to be sought, which is given, possessed, received, inherited, taken away. In all these cases the word certainly has concrete associations. Both the abstract and the concrete sense, therefore, find support in the usage of Jesus.

The most important question connected with this central idea of our Lord's preaching concerns the exact nature of the order of affairs designated by it. Did He mean by the kingdom a new state of things suddenly to be realized in external forms, more or less in harmony with the current Jewish expectations, or did He mean by it, primarily at least, a spiritual creation gradually realizing itself in invisible ways? For convenience sake these two conceptions may be distinguished as the eschatological and the spiritual-organic conception, provided it be kept in mind that these two are not logically nor historically exclusive. It is necessary, however, to make the distinction, because in modern writings both have in turn been pushed to an extreme in which they become exclusive each of the other. The tendency at present among those who believe that Jesus was conditioned by his age and environment is to make his conception of the kingdom largely eschatological. On the other hand, where the originality and uniqueness

of Jesus' teaching as over against the Old Testament and Judaism and Apostolic doctrine, are strongly emphasized, the opposite tendency appears, viz. : to eliminate as much as possible the eschatological elements and to ascribe to Him the idea of a kingdom entirely spiritual and internal. A careful review of the evidence shows that the organic and eschatological conceptions are both present in our Lord's teaching. In reference to the eschatological side it is almost superfluous to establish this in detail. Our Lord repeatedly speaks of the kingdom as a state of things lying altogether above the sphere of earthly and natural life, being so different from the natural conditions that it could not be evolved from the latter by any gradual process; compare Matth. viii, 11; xiii, 43; Mk. xiv, 25; Lk. xiii, 20, 29; xxii, 16, 29, 30. It is of more importance to collect the references to the kingdom as a present, spiritual reality. In Matth. xii, 20, Lk. xi, 19, our Lord appeals to his casting out of demons by the Spirit of God as proof of the advent of the kingdom. According to Lk. xvii, 20, He declared that the kingdom does not come with observation, but is among or within men. And Lk. xvi, 16, makes the kingdom begin from the days of John the Baptist and immediately succeed the law and the prophets as the comprehensive name for the Old Testament dispensation. Both the present reality and the organic-spiritual character of the kingdom are most clearly taught in the great kingdom parables, Matth. xiii, Mk. iv, Lk. viii. In several of these parables the point of comparison is taken from vegetable life, for the express purpose of illustrating the organic mode of its coming. According to all three Evangelists Jesus was aware of having revealed in these parables a relatively new thought concerning the kingdom, which He designates "the mystery of the kingdom," Mk. iv, 11. This mystery, this new truth, we may find in the revelation that the kingdom is realized gradually, imperceptibly, spiritually, for in comparison with the Jewish exclusively eschatological expectations this was so novel and startling a thought that it might be fitly called a mystery. Some modern advocates of the eschatological view have tried to escape from this conclusion by assuming, that in the original form of the parables, as they were delivered by Jesus, not the kingdom of God but the preaching of the word, as preparatory for the establishment of the kingdom, was referred to, and that the introductory

formulas, as they now stand, were added by the evangelists, but there is no critical evidence to support this view. These formulas are not all alike and in part so idiomatic that one can hardly fail to detect in them Jesus' own manner of speech; compare Mk. iv, 30.

Both these aspects of the kingdom, thus represented in our Lord's teaching must be carefully guarded from current misconceptions. The doctrine of an eschatological kingdom must not be confounded with the ordinary Jewish expectations of the coming age. The latter were national, political, sensual. It was inevitable that these expectations should more or less color the understanding of what Jesus taught concerning the kingdom not merely among the people but even among his disciples. But we have no right to identify our Lord's own ideas with such misunderstandings. What forms the contrast of God's kingdom in Jesus' mind is never any political power, *e. g.*, that of Rome, but always a superhuman power, *viz*: that of Satan. The principles of the most unrestricted catholicity of the Gospel are clearly given in his teaching, though the conclusions are not formally drawn, evidently because the time was not ripe for this. The eschatological statements about the kingdom are free from all sensualism. It is true, our Lord speaks of the future blessedness in terms of eating and drinking, lying at table, celebrating a banquet, inheriting the earth. But it should be remembered that already in the Old Testament such descriptions are often meant figuratively, that in some cases where Jesus employs them the figurative character is written on their very face, and that we have at least one explicit declaration of His, which denies the continuance in the future kingdom of the sensual enjoyments of this present life, Mk. xii, 25. On the other hand, in understanding such things spiritually we must not go to the opposite extreme of emptying them of all solid content. In that case all difference between the organic and eschatological kingdom would fall away. We have no right to believe that these figures refer exclusively to internal processes. Decisive against this is that our Lord believed in a bodily resurrection. The eschatological kingdom will according to Him have its own external environment, and its own external forms of life. Only, these are to be of a higher order than those which belong to the earthly state of existence, in consequence of

which great differences prevail between the two. By saying, therefore, that Jesus speaks in "figurative" terms, we take the word "figurative" in that specific sense which it receives from the principle of parallelism between the heavenly and the earthly spheres. What He says about the forms of eternal life is not arbitrarily chosen, but taken from things which in their very nature are a copy of the higher world. Thus they give a real revelation concerning that world and yet do not lie open to the charge of expressing a sensualistic conception of the eschatological kingdom.

It is equally necessary, however, to guard against misconception the other side of our Lord's teaching, that which relates to the organic-spiritual kingdom. That the kingdom first of all has its seat in the internal sphere, by no means implies that purely natural processes are here at work. The circumstance that many of the kingdom parables are taken from the province of vegetable life, has given countenance to this error. The point of comparison, however, is in these parables nowhere the naturalness, but everywhere the gradualness and invisible character of the process. Nor should the spiritual side of the kingdom be confounded with the purely ethical, as is often done in modern representations of the subject. The organic kingdom cannot be limited to the ethical sphere. It extends much farther and includes much more than "the reciprocal activity of mankind on the principle of love." It is associated in the teaching of Jesus with numerous things that, if a distinction between ethics and religion be made, will have to be called specifically religious. In the Lord's prayer the petitions "thy kingdom come" and "thy will be done" are followed by the other petitions, "forgive us our debts" and "lead us not into temptation." Undoubtedly the church also with all its fulness of life is one of the forms in which the kingdom embodies itself, Matth. xvi, 10, 19. Last of all, the final renewal of the world with all its eschatological implications belongs to the coming of the kingdom, so that the latter must necessarily have a wider scope than that of the Christian's ethical activity or the inner life of the soul.

But what is the relation between these two aspects of the kingdom? If sometimes the kingdom is described as coming in the future so absolutely as if it did not yet exist, and if sometimes it is

represented as existing in the present so completely as if no further coming of it were required, do not the Gospels here involve themselves in a hopeless contradiction? The answer to this must be that our Lord's conception was that of one kingdom coming in two successive stages, and that insofar the old dogmatic distinction between a kingdom of grace and a kingdom of glory not quite adequately reflects his meaning. In the great kingdom parables the two stages are clearly set forth as forming one process. The harvest belongs to the growing and ripening of the wheat. Nevertheless the figure also implies that the coming of the kingdom in the end will be due to a direct divine interposition. Though the harvest fitly crowns the process of growth, yet it is not something naturally resulting from the growth itself. The difference between the organic and the eschatological coming of the kingdom and the resulting difference in its two successive states may be formulated as follows: (a) The one proceeds gradually, the other in a crisis with sudden developments accumulating at the end. (b) The organic kingdom comes in the internal, invisible sphere, so that its realization is a hidden process; the eschatological kingdom comes also in the external, visible sphere, so that its realization will be a manifest act observable by all. (c) The eschatological coming of the kingdom does more than merely make externally manifest what internally was already there before. The entire language which Jesus employs in regard to it presupposes that it will bring blessings transcending those of the present stage of the kingdom. All imperfections will be done away with, all enemies vanquished, the wheat and the tares will no longer be permitted to intermingle, the full satisfaction with righteousness and the beatific vision of God will be enjoyed. It is true, our Lord always emphasizes that the heart and essence of the kingdom may be possessed in the present life. But it is plain that He could not have spoken so absolutely of the eschatological crisis as *the coming of the kingdom*, had not the thought been in his mind, that after all only the end of the world can bring the full and adequate possession of even those spiritual blessings in which the kernel of the kingdom consists.