The Kingdom of God is as if a man cast seed into the ground.
The Kingdom of God

A study book for all young people who, as soldiers of The Salvation Army, serve the Kingdom without frontiers.

By

FREDERICK L. COUTTS

SALVATIONIST PUBLISHING AND SUPPLIES, LTD.
JUDD STREET • KING'S CROSS • LONDON, W.C. 1

1951

BRENGLE MEMORIAL LIBRARY
THE SALVATION ARMY
SCHOOL FOR OFFICERS’ TRAINING
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. What is the Kingdom?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Entrance into the Kingdom</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Laws of the Kingdom</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Is the Kingdom like This?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. The Frontiers of the Kingdom</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. The Kingdom without Frontiers</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Members of the Kingdom</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. The Attractiveness of the Kingdom</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Deeds demanded by the Kingdom</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Deeds in the Kingdom to-day</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. Thy Kingdom Come</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM?

Reach for your New Testament and turn to Mark i. 15. There you will read the first recorded words of the public ministry of Jesus. 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.'

Now turn over to Acts i. 3. (Look it up for yourself!) There Luke states that, before the Master's return to the Father, He spoke to His disciples 'of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.'

From first to last Jesus preached 'the gospel of the kingdom' (Matt. iv. 23). He began parable after parable with the phrase: 'The kingdom of God (or Heaven) is like ...' In the four gospels there are over one hundred references to the Kingdom. John the Baptist declared that the Kingdom was at hand (Matt. iii. 2), but Jesus announced that in His deeds and words the Kingdom had come with power. To His disciples He said: 'Into whatsoever city ye enter, say unto them, the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you' (Luke x. 8, 9). And to His critics He declared: 'If I with the finger (which here means 'power') of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you' (Luke xi. 20).

What is the meaning of this four-word phrase
which lies at the heart of all that Jesus ‘began both to do and to teach’?

The words themselves were not new, and the ideas they expressed went back to the dawn of Israel’s thought about God.

As we know from our reading of the Old Testament, God was worshipped as the Creator and Ruler of the universe which He had called into being. For example, Amos (ix. 7) described Him as the Disposer of the destinies of all nations—the Philistines and the Syrians no less than the Israelites. But though He gave to all nations ‘their inheritance’ (Deut. xxxii. 8), He chose one race above all others to be His own, to do His will and to make known His purposes throughout the world. Thus to Israel God was their very own God and they were His very own people.

We meet this idea, for example, when Gideon was asked to become king after his defeat of the Midianites. ‘I will not rule over you,’ was his answer, ‘neither shall my son rule over you: The Lord shall rule over you’ (Judges viii. 23). In like fashion Samuel told the nation that ‘the Lord your God was your King’ (1. Sam. xii. 12). And in his word-pictures of a new and better life for Jewry after the humiliation of the exile, Ezekiel described how Jehovah would be enthroned in the Temple, showering benefits upon His people, and protecting them from hostile nations who would seek to do them harm.

Hand in hand with this thought of the kingdom (or rule) of God, went the term ‘Messiah’ or ‘anointed of the Lord.’ From the age of David and Solomon onward, it was held that the Messiah who was to come would be ‘of the house and lineage of David.’ That is to say, the memory of David was idealized as that of a powerful and righteous king, and the Messiah would be a David
come to life again—only more so! A David plus, if you like.

At one or two points in Jewish history other world leaders were hailed as Messiah—Cyrus, king of Persia, is one example (Isa. xlv. 1). But the nation soon went back to the house of David and, a couple of centuries before Jesus came, the Jews were thinking of the Messiah as one who would overthrow their enemies and set up His kingdom on earth among them. This would be God’s kingdom, over which the Messiah would reign, making His own people—the Jews—the world rulers of the age.

Hold on just a moment longer—for we are nearly at the end of this long but necessary historical lane. We know how the political fortunes of the Jews sank lower and lower during the century before Jesus was born. The brief splendour of the Maccabees spluttered out and, quarrelling among themselves, the Jews opened the way to the Roman occupation of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. But the more hard-pressed these people became nationally, the more ardently did they long for the coming of the deliverer Messiah. Indeed, all sorts of pretenders sprang up, one and another giving out that he was Messiah (Act. v. 36, 37). The tragedy was that any boaster, making this claim, could lure the flower of Jewish manhood to a useless death.

On one occasion 5,000 men demanded that Jesus become their King (John vi. 15). They were ready at His command to march anywhere against any one. Had the Master agreed there is no knowing what manner of revolt might have swept the country.

But Jesus had not come to set up a kingdom of the Jews, with Himself as its national Head—and here we come close to one of the principal
reasons why His countrymen fell out with Him. He did not fit in with the hopes of the nationalists whose ideas about the coming kingdom were Jewish, exclusive and based on force. Nor, on the other hand, did He gain the support of the leaders of organized religion in His day, whose ideas of the Kingdom were just as Jewish and exclusive, but based on certain comprehensive rules of conduct hallowed by centuries of usage.

The Kingdom which had come with power in His person, declared Jesus, was inward, spiritual and comprehensive, knowing no limits, no frontiers, no boundaries. In it no sword was to be drawn, no war waged, no power—save that of unwearying love—employed. It was not to be one kingdom among many, struggling for place among the kingdoms of this world by deceits and stratagems. It was to be The Kingdom—the only one of its kind and, though without visible organization, would grow from the smallest of beginnings to be so all-embracing that men would wonder how it had come to include so great ‘a multitude . . . of all nations, and kindreds . . . and tongues.’

This Kingdom has been described as God’s secret society. No human being can make you join it but, if you are a faithful subject, no human being can expel you from it. There are church rolls and Army rolls and junior rolls—but there is no man-kept roll of the Kingdom. ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His.’ Some who wear the badges of the Christian faith are not—unfortunately—members of the Kingdom, but all who are born ‘from above’ enter the Kingdom. As Jesus told Nicodemus, nationality—the pride of the Jews in the first century, and still the pride of many people in the twentieth—is of no consequence in His kingdom. Jesus released His disciples from the political associations of Israel.
Grace, not race, would bring a man into this Kingdom, and he who does the will of the King belongs to the Kingdom.

No test could be more searching and yet no gate stands open more widely to all.

II. ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM

If the gate to the Kingdom stands so widely open, how is it that so few enter in thereat, and what must a man do to enter the Kingdom? The familiar conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus may give us an answer.

The visitor, a member of the highest governing body in Jewry, was plainly anxious to come to some understanding with Jesus. He sought the Master out, and began with deferential compliments which were probably sincere. But these Jesus straightway brushed aside with the declaration that any one who wished to enter the Kingdom must be ’born again.’

Taken somewhat aback, Nicodemus replied that he was ’old’—that is, a man of experience and authority, ’a ruler in Israel.’ Did that count for nothing? Had a man in his position to break with it all and begin again? That was asking almost too much. It would be as difficult for him to do that as to enter ’the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born.’

Beside, as we have already noted—and cannot note too often—the Jews thought that the Kingdom was theirs by right. Why should any of them need to be ’born again,’ much less so respected a religious leader as Nicodemus?

The Master’s answer was that pride of place or race counted for nothing in the Kingdom. Descent from Abraham of itself secured no entrance.
Even John the Baptist had said that by the banks of the Jordan (Matt. iii. 9). All who would enter must ‘be converted, and become as little children’ (Matt. xviii. 3). That does not mean become childish. A child is one who is freshly starting out on life. His is a new beginning. So every would-be entrant into the Kingdom—Jew or Gentile—had to begin life anew—i.e. be ‘born again,’ and the only power who could accomplish this change was that of ‘the Spirit.’

By this time Nicodemus may have felt more than a little hurt. He had taken time and trouble to call on Jesus in order to come to terms with Him—an affair of give and take—and there was Jesus dictating His own terms with small regard for His visitor’s position or feelings! But the night wind sighing in the olive trees provided the Master with an apt answer for the disapproving Nicodemus, for the Hebrew word for ‘wind’ and ‘Spirit’ was the same.

The wind blows as God wills; its motions, though mysterious, are ordered. The wind itself cannot be seen, but the signs of its presence can be plain enough. So being ‘born again’ might be thought by some to be a mystery, but the results of such a new start would be plain for all to see.

Nicodemus had no need to wait till he knew everything about the wind before he spread his sail before it. So he who began life anew by trusting in the power of God to effect the needed change would soon be conscious in himself of the results of that act of committal. All that was asked of any man was this willingness to break with the past, and a desire to do the will of the Father as revealed by Jesus.

No one needed to think he was being asked to bite off more than he could chew. Strength to do the Father’s will would come as a man purposed in his
heart to do it. He would learn by practice, as he
who would learn to swim must begin by taking
the plunge. The lad who said that he would get
into the water as soon as he could swim is a figure
of fun. Always there has first to be the act of
adventurous obedience which breaks with the past,
and which God takes as a sign of a man's good
faith. Then will come from above the strength to
live as befits a member of the Kingdom.

Now various habits of thought and action may
prevent a man from making this required break.
With some, the hindrance is a bad physical habit,
though in the Army's ranks are many who can
testify to the way in which God has set them free
from some besetting temptation of the appetites.

But an idea can be as fettering as a habit—and
just as big a stumbling-block to entrance into the
Kingdom.

For example, the Jews could not get rid of their
fixed idea that, by virtue of birth and circumcision,
they were bound to get into the Kingdom. On
this point they clashed with Jesus again and again.
When He reminded His hearers in the synagogue at
Nazareth that God had shown mercy to a Gentile
widow and a Gentile general, they were so angry
that they would have killed Him there and then if
they could (Luke iv. 23–30).

Jewish teachers sometimes compared the King-
dom to a banquet at which their race would sit
down with the patriarchs and prophets while
the Gentiles, shut outside, wept and wailed and
gnashed their teeth. Jesus took hold of that
piece of imagery and turned it against them
(Luke xiii. 24–30; Matt. viii. 11, 12). Inherited
privilege would not get a man into the Kingdom
of God. The only passport was this break with
the past, this new start expressed by the term
'born again.'
Now no one must run away with the idea that Jesus was for the Gentile but against the Jew, or for the Jew but against the Gentile. The Master was against no man. His invitation was to all who were weary and heavy-laden. When He found faith in Israel, He commended it—and when He found faith in a Gentile centurion, He praised it unreservedly as well. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mattered to Him. The Kingdom was open to all who sincerely desired to do the Father’s will.

So to-day no one should think that belonging to a particular social group, or party, or income level, or class, or race counts for anything in God’s sight. To hold that idea is to make the same mistake as did the Jews. No particular country is ‘God’s own country,’ though every country is His own in the sense that it belongs to Him and all the people in it as well. There is no special blessing on a man because he is a Bantu, a Britisher, or a Brazilian. But there is every blessing upon the Bantu, the Britisher and the Brazilian who, as members of the Kingdom, seek to do the will of Him who is Lord of that Kingdom.

For a recent illustration of this truth in practice, hear again the story of a wooden hut given by the British Civil Control in Germany for conversion into a hostel for homeless girls. The hut itself had to be transported from a point as distant as Plymouth from London, and in this task a Yorkshire relief worker was helped by a German Salvation Army Captain. The Roman Catholic civic authorities in Cologne offered rent free a piece of ground which three young Quakers helped to clear, who were helped by some convicts from the local prison and a group of Salvation Army men cadets from their training college at Herne. A Scot was appointed to assist the German matron
in running the hostel, to the expenses of which the city fathers are making a grant.

Now read Gal. vi. 15, and thank God daily that you can belong to a Kingdom where a man is treated as a man, and not damned in advance because his skin is coloured or his nose hooked.

III. THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

From entrance into the Kingdom turn now to the principles which govern the conduct of those who are members of the Kingdom. Perhaps 'principles' is a better word than 'laws,' for law suggests obedience to some external restraint, whereas a principle is a truth which rules us from within.

These principles, then, are only two in number but, to help us to understand how they work, Jesus gave a number of illustrations of them in action, and these we know as the Sermon on the Mount. For the moment, it is enough for us to note that those who have entered the Kingdom are called upon to love God and their neighbour 'with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul.' That is to say, these two principles of love to God and man unite feeling, thought and will in Christian action.

Now love is one of the most used and most abused words in the English language, for it is employed to cover every kind of deed from the most heroic form of self-sacrifice to the basest form of lust. Much current use of the word is merely sloppy, and in some minds the Christian call for love in action is confused with emotionalism. Let's get this right.

In the world of Christ's day there were in general use several words which are all now
First of all, there was one which was used to indicate passionate physical attachment, the nature of which can be inferred from the fact that our word 'erotic' is derived from it. Plainly this has no connection with the Christian understanding of love.

Then there was a word—also translated love—which stood for the friendship which binds together two people who have known each other for a long time. Such a companionship existed between David and Jonathan but, noble though the idea is, it is not what the New Testament means by love.

A third word covered what we mean when we say that 'blood is thicker than water'—the family relationship. This has its proper place in life, but it is still not what we are after. Indeed, the first believers had to take a little used Greek word and mark it, so to speak, with the sign of the Cross, in order that it could stand for that disinterested action which is more willing to give than to receive.

For love, as taught and practised by Jesus, is vastly different from mere liking or emotional fondness. Liking often has no moral value at all. I may like a man because he plays up to me, and I am foolish enough to take his flattery at its face value. I may like another because he shares my all too human weaknesses. Birds of a feather prefer to flock together.

It is not wrong to suppose that Jesus can hardly have liked all the people He met. Would He care for the ways of the crafty Caiaphas, or did He like the means by which Judas secured His arrest? What we can say with conviction is that He certainly loved them all—Caiaphas and Judas as well. That is, He continuously and consistently sought their highest welfare. For that is what the
New Testament means by love—not an affair merely of the emotions, though emotion may play its due part. Nor only a matter of the mind, though enlightened intelligence may tell us that we ought to seek our neighbour’s good as our own. But love as exemplified by Jesus was an activity in which feeling, thought and will were equally conjoined. In other words, the life of love in the Kingdom is not a preference for heart over head, but a union of both in the service of others.

Looking at this truth from another angle, the Christian principle of love is more lasting and purposeful than fondness or preference. Fondness, as such, cannot be commanded at will. We care for certain people—for what reason? We don’t care for others—for what reason? A boy and girl ‘fall in love’—that is, they find themselves gripped by an emotion over which they may have little control. Often they have no wish to control it; they prefer to be swept off their feet by it.

Such feelings have a place in life and to be genuinely ‘in love’ is a sanctifying experience. That adjective is not out of place, for real love does not turn inward upon itself but outward upon another. The true lover tries to understand the beloved—his or her strengths and weaknesses. Thus the tie which binds them together is transformed from a fugitive impulse into a genuine seeking of each other’s good. Understanding action supplements earlier emotions. A love which desired only the feeling of being loved would be a selfish sentiment. Truly experienced, love can redeem a person from his egoisms.

All this has been set out to make it clear that the love we are asked to display as members of the Kingdom is not the enemy of human affection, though rising superior to it. What we are called upon to manifest is a steadfast goodwill which
conquers dislike, which is not quenched by hate, which is not overcome of evil but which overcomes evil with good. (A more detailed description of this gift of grace is to be found in I Corinthians xiii.) And it if be argued that this is more than can be expected of any earthly being, the answer is that this activity is not self-induced but born of the love of God shed abroad in the human heart.

Love in the New Testament sense is more than occasional acts of kindness, gracious and praiseworthy though such are. Ordinary folk whom we call ‘sinners’ are capable of frequent acts of kindness. In every European city bombed during the war, companions in misfortune were kind to another. Neighbour helped neighbour. One shelter dweller sought to cheer another. As Jesus said, the publicans love those who love them. But the love which He exemplified is born of a new relationship to God, and this is active with or without external stimulus. In short, Christian love is a consecration to God which controls the whole of a man’s actions for all time.

After all, is this not the essence of the blessing of holiness? General Bramwell Booth thought so. Said he: ‘The rest of a sanctified heart is really the rest of love. Love becomes the rule of our lives, whether we live or die, work or rest, suffer or rejoice.’ It is certainly the law by which those who have entered the Kingdom must live.

**IV. IS THE KINGDOM LIKE THIS?**

Reach for your New Testament again and turn this time to Matt. xi. 1-6. Read it now—or else what follows will not be so well understood.

John the Baptist—in prison when he sent to Jesus asking: ‘Art Thou He that should come, or
do we look for another?—had spent himself in proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. Like an Old Testament prophet in appearance and language, dressing simply and living sparingly, he had called his hearers to repentance in preparation for the coming Kingdom.

As we have noted, the Jews had dreamed about this Kingdom for centuries and, as Babylon, Egypt and Rome lorded it over them in turn, the more fiercely did they long for the day when He who was to come would make their enemies His footstool. Instead of being bullied, Israel would one day exult in the cringing submission of the bullies. The Messiah could not—indeed, would not—do any less for them, and such a reversal of events would justify them in the sight of men as the people whom God delighted to honour.

John the Baptist was a child of his age, and while we cannot say with certainty that he shared these popular (though mistaken) notions of what the Messiah would do, what he said makes it clear that he expected something revolutionary to happen. The axe was to be laid at the root of the tree. The chaff was going to be burnt up. The threshing floor was to be thoroughly cleaned out (Matt. iii, 10, 12). Final judgment was approaching. The end of the age was at hand. And into the wilderness went John with this message which was burning in his bones, because it was thought that in the wilderness would the Messiah appear to deliver his people, as Moses had so delivered them twelve centuries earlier.

The personality and message of John were so compelling that something like a national revival swept the country. Nothing like it had been known in Jewry since the days of Josiah—but that reformation had been set going from above, by the king's command.

15
This time people flocked to John of their own accord. The whole of central and southern Palestine turned out to hear what he had to say (Matt. iii. 5). Even the Pharisees and Sadducees came to discover what was happening—not that John greeted them with any soft words. 'Snakes in the grass' (Matt. iii. 7) he called them. He had reason to fear that their presence might hinder the preparation of a body of people who would be ready for the Messiah when He came. But the Baptist need not have worried. The vigour and sincerity of his appeal was such that 'Jerusalem and the whole of Judea and all the Jordan district...confessed their sins.' This was John's hour. He had the ear of the nation. An Elijah had come to life again (Matt. xi. 14).

But just as Elijah fell foul of Ahab and Jezebel, so John the Baptist fell foul of Herod and Herodias (Mark vi. 17) and he found himself imprisoned at Machaerus, a gloomy pile overlooking the Dead Sea, one of the strong points in the southern defences of Palestine. The once free man was caged; the outspoken herald of the Kingdom was silenced.

The long hot days of summer dragged on with John still in prison, his spirits drooping. Was this to be the end of his burning words? Was he doomed to eat his heart out in a rocky dungeon? Could he have been mistaken in his faith that the Kingdom was at hand?

It almost looked as if he was. At any rate, there had been no startling changes. Rome still held Palestine. The quislings they employed, of whom Herod Antipas was one of the chief, were still in office. The high priestly families were continuing to make a comfortable living out of the temple revenues. The wicked were generally flourishing like the proverbial green bay tree.
John began to think that he had misread the signs of the times. Perhaps he had been wrong in supposing that any great revolution would take place. So two of his followers, who had come to visit him in prison, were sent with a question to Jesus. Those who have read the Scripture portion first mentioned will know what that question was and the reply Jesus made.

In one sense nothing cataclysmic had happened. No tree had yet fallen to any axe. The threshing floor looked just as dirty. Wheat and tares were growing together in the same old way. Nothing seemed to be changed—*and yet everything was changed*. For Jesus had come, and He was meeting the physical and spiritual needs of men and women (Matt. xi. 5). That this was happening was proof that the Kingdom had been set up, for wherever the deepest needs of men are being met by the Spirit of God, there the Kingdom is established. No longer did men need pathetically to await some far-off event beyond the horizon of time, or mourn while a new régime was being set up at the cost of human suffering after the manner of this world’s conquerors. The Kingdom which Jesus told John was in existence fought against nothing but sin, and its weapons were not for men’s hurt but for their healing.

Any one ever tempted to despair because he thinks the Kingdom tarries should keep this truth in mind. Perhaps we are tempted to yield to discouragement as was John, and wonder whether our early entusiasms were not mistaken. We set out to work for Christ and fondly dreamed of the triumphs which we would proudly lay at His feet. But it just hasn’t worked out that way. No sinful Jericho has fallen to our trumpet notes. No eager crowd has thronged our Jordan to be baptized for the remission of sins. Instead, in some dingy hall,
we struggle to teach half a dozen lads the elements of Bible truth. Or, with a few faithfuls, we make a round of the streets we know so well. We sing, we pray, we testify—and then announce that our time for standing there is up, whereupon we march—or walk if the company be very few—to the next stand. Nothing spectacular seems to happen. Is this the way the Kingdom comes, we ask? Is this what it is like? Ought we not to look for another? Perhaps another church? Another leader?

The answer to these all-too-human questionings is that wherever the needs of men are being met by God, there the Kingdom is present in all its divine power and glory. Into whatever obscure, upstairs, two-rooms-knocked-into-one kind of hall the risen Lord enters, there is the Kingdom at full strength. Where He is present, none can add to the effectiveness of the Kingdom and none take away from it.

Is this a bit different from what you once fancied? Maybe; but don’t take it to heart too badly. We have all to learn to distinguish between shadow and substance. Where the saving power of Jesus is manifest, there is the Kingdom. Recognize Him! Renew your allegiance to Him! For at your side in all you undertake in His name is He who should come.

V. THE FRONTIERS OF THE KINGDOM

reach once more for your Bible and look up the disciples’ question in Acts i. 6: ‘Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ ‘To Israel’ is the all-important phrase, for in it is summed up a struggle which had been

18
going on since the Exile between two conflicting ideas of Israel's place in, and mission to, the world. Was the Kingdom for Israel only, or was it to embrace the world?

Scholars have called these constrasting ideas 'universalism' and 'particularism'—but nobody need get alarmed over these two unfamiliar words. They sound more difficult to understand than they really are, but once we grasp their meaning, we shall have a clearer idea of yet another principle of the Kingdom.

As we know, the surrender of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. marked the last stage in the collapse of the one-time independent states of Israel and Judah. Samaria had fallen over a century before, and now the pick of Judah was deported to Babylon, there to mourn the lost glories of their native land (Ps. cxxxvii. 1-6). But among these displaced persons was a poet-prophet whose name we do not know,* but to whom was given a new conception of the place and purpose of Israel in the world.

This unknown prophet held up before the exiles a nobler ideal than any revival of the past military splendours of David and Solomon. His call to his countrymen was to be true to their vocation as missionary people, carrying the faith which was their supreme glory to all the nations of the world. This (he declared) was the reason why God had 'chosen' Israel—not that she might occupy a place of greatness in the world as men commonly count greatness, but that she might be the means which God could use to make known to all men His saving purpose. Could there be any higher greatness than that?

Here, then, was the reason for Israel's 'election': it was an election, not to world

* 'The Timeless Prophets,' chapter X.
supremacy, but to missionary duty. If Israel had been honoured by being marked out as God's peculiar (or 'very own') people, it was to the costly and taxing honour of service. Hence the prophet's declaration: 'Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified . . . I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth' (Isa. xlix. 3, 6).

And again: 'Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee . . . that thou mayest say to the prisoners: Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves' (Isa. xlix. 8, 9).

All this means that God was making known His will that all men could be saved. Repentant Nineveh would find Him merciful (Jonah iv. 11). A Moabitess could play her part in His economy (Ruth iv. 17). Neither the Philistines, the Ethiopians, nor the Syrians were outside His plans (Amos ix. 7). 'All the ends of the earth' could look to Him 'and be saved' (Isa. xlv. 22). And it was Israel's mission, not merely to know 'the just God and Saviour' herself, but to make known His saving power to all.

For this cause she had been 'chosen.' Her greatness lay in her knowledge of the living God, and this was far too valuable a treasure to keep to herself. Knowledge is small use unless it is shared, and Israel was being called upon to share her knowledge of God's salvation with the Gentiles. This is something of what Bible scholars have in mind when they speak of 'universalism.'

But prophets are often voices crying in the wilderness, and this poet-prophet was no exception. More practical minds (so-called) were concerned, not with Israel's mission to the world, but with the necessity of keeping Israel separate
from the world. This is known as 'particularism,' and among those who laid greatest stress on the necessity for this were Ezekiel, (and later) Nehemiah and Ezra.

Now in our admiration for the superb ideal of the unknown prophet, we must not be unjust to those who fought to preserve the faith of Israel from heathen influences. The Daniel stories give us some idea of how stern a struggle that was, for there were Jews who forgot the faith of their fathers and, when in Babylon, did as Babylon did.

By contrast, a reformer like Nehemiah would not allow any Jew under his authority to marry outside the race, and existing mixed marriages were forcibly dissolved. Ezra made obedience to the Law the hallmark of a good Jew. Everywhere and at all times, in order to preserve what they felt was the most valuable thing in their national life—their faith, these men insisted on the separateness of the Jew. In their differences from other men lay, they felt, their hope of salvation. Theirs was 'a garden walled around' conception of religion, though, to be fair to them, there was always a gate in the wall to admit those foreigners who desired to embrace their faith. But such converts were regarded as the glory of Judaism, not of the Father whose loving purpose was as wide as the world itself.

The passing of time made these men, and their successors, build the wall of exclusiveness higher still, and we can understand the reasons which prompted them to do so when we remember how the Jew had to fight to maintain the purity of his faith against the corrupting influences of a Gentile world. This he succeeded in doing, but only at the cost of making the gulf between the Gentile and himself almost unbridgeable.
This was the state of affairs which prevailed when Jesus came. He fulfilled the intentions of the poet-prophet, but the heirs of the idea of absolute separateness were the Pharisees. No wonder they ranged themselves in opposition to the Master, and in this first-century situation the conflict between these two ideas reached its sharpest form. For if one was right, the other must be wrong.

VI. THE KINGDOM WITHOUT FRONTIERS

The Galilean stage was thus set for a clash between the good and the best. In one camp were the Pharisees—heirs of the separatist ideas of an earlier Judaism and, standing alone, yet not alone, Jesus—fulfilment of the sublimest hopes of the Old Testament.

The Master early made known the truth for which He was prepared to live and die (Luke iv. 16–31). At Nazareth He took part in a synagogue service and, at the request of the leader, read from the roll of the prophet Isaiah. The selected portion began with Isaiah lix. 1, 2, which might either have been the 'lesson for the day' or the choice of Jesus Himself.

What is to our point are the illustrations which Jesus used in His subsequent comments. He reminded His hearers that it was a Gentile widow to whom Elijah was sent, and it was a Gentile soldier whom Elisha healed. At no point had God's mercy and power been limited to the Jews. In the same vein, Jesus later announced that He recognized as mother and brethren, not only those who were bound to Him by ties of blood, but all who shared His desire to do the will of the Father (Mark iii. 31–35).

This truth about the universal sweep of the
Kingdom was stated and restated by Jesus in various parables, of which one more example (Mark iv. 30-32) can suffice. Look up this passage now.

'A grain of mustard seed' was a proverbial Jewish expression for a very small thing, but so tiny a beginning was destined to grow to be a bush or tree so large that 'the fowls of the air'—a common Rabbinical expression for the Gentile nations—would lodge in the branches thereof.

The phrase would also recall to Jewish hearers the imagery of Daniel iv. 10-12, where the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar was likened to a giant tree in whose branches 'the fowls of the heaven dwelt.' Daniel understood this to signify the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's dominion. So the Master's parable meant that the reign of God, as yet but a living seed, would in time overspread the world.

After Jesus had returned to the Father the significance of what He had been saying about the extent of His kingdom began to be more clearly understood by His followers.

Stephen was one of the first to perceive that what was local and peculiar in Judaism could be discarded in order that the will of the Father of all men might be done on earth as in Heaven. At his trial, the first martyr declared that the law of Moses—so dear to the Jews—was neither God's first word (Acts vii. 2, 3) nor His last (vi. 52); that the ancestors of the race had managed without a temple (vi. 44) and, in any case, no man-made temple could contain the Maker of Heaven and earth (vi. 48, 49); and that, as a people, they had no cause for thinking themselves superior to any other race, for they had consistently rejected the messengers whom God had sent them (vi. 9, 25, 35, 52).
Much of this was implicit in what Jesus Himself had said, and the rest was a matter of history—but to have it underlined in so forthright a fashion was more than the Sanhedrin could stand (vii. 54).

The next increase in the ever-widening circle was when a group of Samaritans were received into the Church—and this by one who had formerly wanted to call down fire from Heaven on a Samaritan village (compare Acts viii. 14 with Luke ix. 51-56).

Then Philip accepted an African into the fellowship of Jesus on a simple profession of faith (Acts viii. 38) and, shortly after, Peter welcomed another Gentile convert in the person of the Roman centurion, Cornelius.

This was the biggest stride forward yet, for to eat with a man implied a much closer relationship than preaching the gospel to him, or even baptizing him. In the thought of that day, to share a meal with another meant to enter into some kind of communion with him—and opposition to such fellowship was the last barrier to be overthrown.

‘I will buy with you, sell with you . . . ’ declared Shylock, ‘but I will not eat with you’—and Peter was charged with eating with Gentiles (Acts xi. 3). Diet played an important part in religion in those days, and it was no light thing when Paul declared that ‘the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking’ (Romans xiv. 17. r.v.). We may say that we know that well enough, but it took a word from God (Acts x. 19, 20) to assure Peter that it was right for him to pioneer equality in social relationships between Jew and Gentile in what was regarded as so intimate a matter.

So the work of breaking open long-closed doors and of throwing down ancient barriers went on. There was no colour bar in the Early Church.
A Negro, a North African and a relative of the Edomite Herod (Acts xiii. i, 3) dedicated two Jews to their first missionary journey. Within less than twenty years of the death of Jesus the Church declared that, subject to four simple provisos (Acts xv. 29), Christian Jew and Christian Gentile were to be welcomed on equal terms.

To appreciate what this meant, remember that Jew and Gentile were as opposed and hostile terms in the first century as Dutchmen and Spaniard in the sixteenth, or Briton and Boer in the nineteenth. Yet in Christ one of the great world divisions was bridged, and over this breaking down of what he called 'the middle wall of partition' (Ephesians ii. 14) Paul rejoiced again and again.

Now anyone who grows discouraged because this Christian ideal seems to win its way so slowly to-day, should remember that the organized missionary enterprise, as we know it, dates back only to 1709. The word 'international' itself was coined by Jeremy Bentham in 1780—less than two hundred years ago. 'The word, it must be acknowledged,' he wrote, 'is a new one, though it is to be hoped, sufficiently intelligible.' Now take down any reputable directory and see how many international societies there are—some for business, others for science, art, recreation, but each testifying in one way or another to the fact that all men everywhere need one another's fellowship and help.

'Of His kingdom,' declared a Syriac version of Luke i. 33, 'there shall be no frontier'—and the almighty power of God is behind our weakest efforts directed to accomplishing that end.
VII. MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM

WHAT kind of people are those who belong to this Kingdom without frontiers?
First of all, they have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour of their lives, and then—but only then—seek to live out His teaching.
This order must be observed, for the teaching of Jesus is intended for those who are His pledged followers.

Look in the Gospels where you will, you will find little account of what Jesus said to publicans and sinners. We know that He went into their homes and was glad to be in their company for He had come to seek and to save those who were lost, but we have no record of what He said to them at their meal tables. The sins He denounced were mostly those of religious people such as the Pharisees; the rules of life He gave were for His disciples. It almost seems as if He never laid down any laws when eating and drinking with those who were classed as sinners, for He knew that His laws could not be kept without His Father’s grace. So it was to His disciples that ‘He opened His mouth.’

Now many of the Master’s rules of life are to be found in what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. The word ‘rules’ is hardly the best one here, however, for—to take one example—Matt. v. 1–12 is more a series of illustrative statements of cause and effect than an extract from Orders and Regulations for Believers, Part I, Chapter V, section 3 . . . and so on.
To begin with, the word ‘blessed’ means ‘O the happiness of . . .’ or ‘How fortunate are
the . . .’ These verses are not direct commands bidding us become poor in spirit, or mourners, or meek, though reading them we may well desire to cultivate these graces. Rather are they statements of what happens when a man is poor in spirit, or a mourner, or meek. His is the kingdom of Heaven; he is comforted; he inherits the earth. Similarly, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy because they are filled. The pure in heart are fortunate for they see God.

Again, this does not mean that we are commanded by Jesus to display a particular quality in order that we may be sure of having it shown to us in return. ‘Sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.’ But he who is merciful, that is, displays an intelligent and lively sympathy with others, will find the heart of God and man alike open to Him. Happy fellow! says Jesus.

Take one beatitude only to serve as an illustration for all. The third reads: ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth’.

Now meekness—or humility, as Moffatt translates it—is not a popular virtue. Uriah Heep has done it great disservice with his ‘We are very 'umble.’ Some of us may also have been put off by ‘the devil’s darling sin—the pride that apes humility,’ which is pride drawing attention to itself by sporting humility as a conspicuous cloak. But, as Archbishop Temple used to say, humility is not thinking little about oneself; it is not thinking about oneself at all—a happy state of mind and soul which comes about when all our attention is given to Jesus.

During World War II, when General G. L. Carpenter lived just outside St. Albans, I used to see him standing in a bus queue or quietly sitting in a barber’s shop, chatting to the man next to him till it was his turn for attention. Had he done
this to draw attention to his characteristic abhorrence of all forms of ostentation, he would have been guilty of the very vice from which he was so singularly free. But when he behaved in this way, because he thought so little of his own convenience and creature comfort, then he was truly acting in the spirit of Jesus. The Master said that those who thus thought nothing of themselves would be greatest in the Kingdom.

Now why this emphasis on humility? We shall be able to answer that question better when we recall the harm done by pride, its opposite number.

Pride in a man's heart separates him from God and from his neighbour. Pride makes a man think himself independent of God, as it causes him to fancy that he is superior to his fellows. Some vices—cruelty, lust, sloth—arise from our animal nature but, as has been pointed out, pride comes straight from Hell and can spoil all our other virtues.

That was what was wrong about the Pharisee. It was quite true that he was neither immoral nor unjust, nor did he behave like the publican. He lived a most respectable life and, in his religious practices, went much further than was expected of him. But his pride in his virtues spoiled his good deeds and so all his giving and fasting and good living were poisoned at their source.

For example, we Salvationists have given the title of Self-Denial to a particular week in the year, but the spiritual exercise which goes by that name was much practised when Jesus lived (Matthew vi. 16). The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke xviii. 12), and national fasts were held in times of public peril or grave disaster (Ezra viii. 21; Joel i. 14). But this practice, excellent in itself, became an occasion for parade when men
donned sackcloth and ashes to be seen of their fellows. What might have been a means of grace was turned into a source of hypocrisy. Pride in fasting made fasting of no more worth. Indeed, men would have done better not to fast.

C. S. Lewis has remarked that Satan is quite happy to see us brave and good-natured and honest—so long as we remain proud. For when we commence to take pride in our virtues, thinking so well of ourselves that we attribute our good conduct to our own wit and wisdom, it will not be long before our pride will have a fall. In the opening chapters of Scripture, Satan is represented as a serpent whispering to Eve that disobedience to one particular command would make her and her husband as gods! And they fell for the suggestion.

Ever since pride has been the worst—and the commonest—of the deadly sins. Many folk consider immoral conduct to be the most serious transgression of the law, and I agree that it is a sorry affair. Seen at close quarters it has little glamour, for usually it is furtive and always it is coarsening. But though virtue goes out of those who indulge in it, Jesus could say to one who had thus fallen: 'Go, and sin no more.' It was for the proud at heart He reserved His sternest words. For pride is no involuntary weakness of the flesh; it is a settled attitude of the soul which shuts a man out of the Kingdom.

Easy as it is to mark pride in another, it is just as difficult to notice it in ourselves. Yet one lad will be proud of his cornet playing; another of the nice home where he lives; another of the school tie he can sport. One girl will fancy her looks, while a second will think that her boy friend is definitely a cut above the rest. All simple, foolish things—yet do we not detest them in others? Must they not then be detestable in ourselves?
The remedy is not to keep on saying: 'I will be humble'—for there the 'I' keeps cropping up even in our good desires. The way out is for us to think most of Jesus and to do our work for His sake. Then our interest and attention are turned away from ourselves and upward to the only One in whom we can rightly glory. For when we stand in with Jesus, we just cannot think of ourselves at all. And that is the humility which is commended in the Kingdom.

VIII. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE KINGDOM

THIS rather sober and painstaking discussion of what the Kingdom is, and of what those who are members of the Kingdom should be and do, must not blind us to its superb attractiveness. For on the lips of Jesus it sounded a most inviting proposition—so much so that any one who wanted to get in on the ground floor of a good thing would make haste to join it. If for so many the Kingdom has no such interest to-day, there are possibly two reasons.

One is that we who belong to the Kingdom may be sadly misrepresenting it (but more of this in the next chapter), and the other that many of those who are outside cannot tell the difference between paste and pearl. Gilt looks the same to them as gold; the counterfeit as the genuine. They are blind to the worth of the Kingdom as a city crowd fails to see the stars at night for the garish neon lights winking out the virtues of a particular brand of soap powder or the excellence of a variety of beans. If a bright young thing prefers Alfred Aniseed and his Aspidistras playing 'Yes, sirree' to 'Sheep may safely graze,' it is not Bach who is weighed and found wanting. It is we who are judged by our preferences.
Yet no wide awake reader can go through the gospels without realizing that the cry that the Kingdom was at hand constituted good tidings of great joy.

It is true that John the Baptist’s proclamation sounded rather stern, with his warnings about the wrath to come and the axe being laid to the root of the tree. But he was in the line of Elijah and Amos—great and good men who felt that the most convincing way in which God could show His power was in the utter destruction of everything that was in opposition to His will—great and good men but less than Jesus. And, added the Master, the least in the kingdom is greater than John (Matt. xi. 11). The Saviour had stern words for those by whom they were deserved, but the announcement that the kingdom of God had come in power was, on His lips, the best news ever.

Jesus employed all manner of friendly and familiar illustrations to make this plain.

It was, said He in effect, like a wedding feast coming unexpectedly in the middle of a famine, with the doors open to all and all seats free. Walk up! Walk up! And what was more, the feast was specially for those who could hardly remember when last they had enjoyed a good meal—the vagrants and penniless who lived in the ditches and under hedgerows. It was open house for them and they could eat their fill (Luke xiv. 16–23).

Or again, said the Master, the Kingdom is like a merry party thrown by a bridegroom for his friends on the eve of his wedding (Luke v. 34). Are there tears? Crocodile tears maybe. Are there condolences? Another good man gone west. But mock condolences. Every one is really feeling on top of the world.

Elsewhere Jesus said that the Kingdom was
like a father welcoming home a long lost son, with both parties feeling that this was a far, far better thing than either of them had ever done before. So much a better thing that the father staged a feast with fatted calf as the principal dish (Luke xv. 11-32), followed by a dance with all hands joining in, the boss leading off with the kitchenmaid, while the local fiddler nearly sawed his arm off. And if you tell me there were no fiddlers in Galilee, I shall retort by reproaching you for lack of imagination!

(In passing, don’t you find the gospels delightfully human documents with all these stories of eating and drinking? Aren’t we all boys at heart, loving nothing better than a good tuck-in? Recently I heard two elegantly attired and self-assured ladies talking in confident tones. ‘My dear,’ said one, ‘the meal was simply marvellous. I never enjoyed anything so superb in all my natural. The chef—wizard fellow—attended to us personally, and the too, too ravishing hors d’œuvres were followed by . . . and then by . . .’ They probably thought themselves a couple of blasé sophisticates, but they were no better than Billy Bunter and his pals rejoicing when the tuck-shop at Greyfriars was stocked with a fresh batch of goodies. Never forget, either, that Jesus Himself came eating and drinking, all so freely and naturally as we do that His enemies called Him a glutton and a tippler!)

But, to get back to the music and dancing, a good time was had by all except for one sulky fellow who would not join in the fun. The man like a bear with a sore head was outside the Kingdom. The gaiety was within.

Or, said Jesus again, the Kingdom is like a merchant who has spent all his life in the pearl trade, but who unexpectedly comes across a jewel
that is better than any he has ever seen. Man and boy, he has been in that line of business more years than he cares to remember, but this pearl is really the best ever (Matt. xiii. 45, 46).

Or again, Jesus compared the Kingdom to a peasant ploughing a field and suddenly turning up a hoard of buried treasure (Matt. xiii. 44). By one stroke of fortune he is rich, rich beyond the dreams of avarice!

Elsewhere the Kingdom is likened to a woman finding a greatly treasured wedding ornament which she had lost. She had turned her place upside down looking for it, and was she pleased when she found it again! So pleased that she rushed out to tell her neighbours what had happened, inviting them to share her joy. She just had to tell somebody.

Now this is what the Kingdom is—astoundingly good news that demands to be told; news that one cannot keep to oneself; news such as might make those who cannot share it a trifle envious. Jesus said as much to His disciples. ‘Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them’ (Luke x. 24). But those who have seen and heard must surely tell. How can they do otherwise? So some ardent fellow might come rushing up: ‘Congratulate me, my dear chap. I’ve just got engaged to the most wonderful .. .' And he goes burbling on, as if he did not know that in such circumstances every Cinderella is a princess and any girl looks the most wonderful ever!

Now these are only human hints which suggest what the good news must have sounded like to those who first heard it. Here was promise to mortal man of triumph over those two ancient enemies—
sin and death. Now men could know what they had never fully known before—how to live right both with God and man. And what the first believers felt about it all is shown by such phrases in the Acts of the Apostles as: ‘did eat their meat with gladness,’ ‘filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost,’ ‘great joy in that city,’ ‘rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer.’

This is what the good news of the Kingdom should mean to us and, when it does, we shall not be able to keep quiet about it!

IX. DEEDS DEMANDED BY THE KINGDOM

In the previous chapter we noted that one reason why some folk show little or no eagerness to enter the Kingdom might be because we who belong to it so imperfectly display its virtues. Our deeds do not match our words.

Now this is an all-important point—so much so that we must try to think it through.

First of all, in the Kingdom deeds speak louder than words. In fact, words do not count at all unless they are matched by deeds, and this is in complete harmony with the whole Biblical tradition.

For example, in the Old Testament God is known by His deeds—what various writers call ‘His mighty acts’ (Psalm cvi. 2). What He is, is revealed by what He does. When Moses came to Horeb, God declared that His name was I AM THAT I AM. In the Revised Version margin this is given as I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE—which means that God is a God of action who makes known His character by what He does.
No one need be puzzled by this. Of a person discovered in some unexpected act of good or ill you say: ‘I never thought he was that kind of man.’ What he does reveals what he truly is. He is generous who behaves generously; courageous who acts courageously; kind who is kindly. Handsome is as handsome does! So, to get back to our earlier thought, God proved that He was a Father by acting in a fatherly manner (Psalm ciii. 13). His words were His deeds, and His mightiest deed was the Word who ‘was made flesh’ (John i. 14). With God word and deed have always agreed.

This same correspondence was insisted on by those great souls who made known the will of God before Jesus came. Time and time again the prophets laid it down that words and deeds must agree.

Two examples only must suffice, though many abound. One of the best-known is to be found in Isaiah i. 10-18, and if ever you speak on v. 18 you should always study the preceding eight verses. These sentences belong to an age when many folk wrongly supposed that they could win God’s favour by offering a prescribed ritual on specified days—yet all the while behaving unjustly and greedily in business and social life.

‘I am sick of slaughtered rams, of fat from fatted beasts,’ declares the prophet in God’s name. ‘The blood of bullocks and of goats is no delight to Me . . . Your hands are full of bloodshed’—a stinging rebuke this, if you will but imagine the would-be worshipper at prayer, arms upraised, hands uplifted, palms upturned. God sees those palms. What colour are they?

‘Away and wash them,’ cries God through His prophet. ‘They are bloody!’ And whose blood? That of children whose fathers have been killed.
and of widows who are almost dying of starvation (v. 17).

About a century-and-a-half later another prophet said much the same thing. Once again the demand is that deeds and words agree, and in case you have not a Moffatt translation here are the spoken words in full (Isaiah lviii. 5–8).

To droop your head like a bulrush,
To lie in sackcloth and ashes—
Is that what you call ‘fasting,’
A day the Eternal would approve?
Is not this My chosen fast
The Lord, the Eternal, asks,
To loosen all that fetters men unfairly,
And to relax its grip,
To free poor debtors from their bonds,
And break what binds them?
It is to share your food with hungry men,
And take the homeless to your home,
To clothe the naked when you see them,
And never turn from any fellow-creature.
Then shall light dawn for you,
With healing for your wounds;
You shall advance, your goodness in the van,
And the Eternal’s glory as your rearguard;
The Eternal will answer when you call,
And, when you cry, He will say, ‘Here am I!’

With all this said before Jesus came, it could but be expected that He who was the crown and fulfilment of all that had gone before should Himself insist that deeds mattered more than words. He expects more than a sentimental attachment to His person, calling Him by sweet names and singing honeyed choruses about Him. Of course it is right to hymn His praises, but our highest praise is to do what He commands.

Jesus Himself said as much: ‘Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?’ Again: ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he
that doeth the will of My Father.’ And again: ‘Ye are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you.’

This explains why the New Testament calls the Christian life a ‘way,’ and why the first followers of Jesus were called people of ‘the way’ even before they were called Christians. They were men and women of a certain way of life, and by that way they were known. Saul (afterward called Paul) asked for ‘letters to Damascus’ so that he could arrest any he found ‘of this way,’ but neither the name nor the idea died out. Later in Ephesus there arose ‘no small stir about that way’ (Acts xix. 23). Even Felix ‘had a rather accurate knowledge of the way’ (Acts xxiv. 22, Moffatt).

To follow Jesus then is not only to wear a certain kind of distinctive dress, or to clap out happy choruses, or to go to the Army three times on Sunday. Those are all good things, but each is a result, not a cause. They will follow as and when we practise a certain way of life in which creed and conduct agree. Thanks to the means of grace, the pattern can be followed; the way can be trod.

X. DEEDS IN THE KINGDOM TO-DAY

Now why is it so necessary that creed and conduct should agree.

To begin with, the man in whose life deeds and words do not tally is self-deceived. In the parable of the two houses, he is the one who built his dwelling on sand. He thought it was safe enough and it looked as secure as his neighbour’s
home—until the storm undeceived him and his place caved in about his ears.

Now this kind of self-deception which fondly imagines that the difference between words and deeds is of small consequence is to be found in all walks of life.

For example, there is the man who can be heard voicing his views any summer's day at Old Trafford (or the Oval or Trent Bridge), telling the world what should or should not be done by the batsman at the wicket. 'Sithee!' he says, 'if I'd been aht i't middle, I'ahd 'ave late cut that spinner for fower!' Perhaps he thinks he could, and perhaps one or two impressionable innocents are found nearby to agree with him.

His second cousin is to be found in the front row of the gallery in many an Army hall when a musical festival is in progress. 'Appalling style that soloist has!' he will say in a stage whisper which is heard by the entire centre block of seats. 'Now if I'd been taking that cadenza . . .' And it may well be that he thinks he could have done something wonderful with it.

But ask the one to bat or the other to play—and their claims to be expert are revealed as the flimsiest of poses. Their boasting recoils on their own head. They are shown up as self-deceived. And while 'shooting a line' may cause little but 'arty larter' on the part of onlookers at work or at play, in the moral realm it is a tragedy which discredits the doer and breeds cynicism in the hearer.

In the second place, the man whose words and deeds do not agree hurts the cause he intends—or pretends—to serve.

For example, an election address may contain promises of a good time to be had by all, but the longer those high-sounding declarations remain
unfulfilled, the greater the discredit on the party making them. Those fulsome sentences do them more harm than good.

A five-year plan may set a target and raise high hopes of a country. But what if—in the current jargon—that plan be not implemented? It recoils like a boomerang upon those who conceived it.

Even a bad man will prefer consistency in conduct—and how right he is. That was why the behaviour of Ananias and Sapphira was so blame-worthy and was dealt with so drastically. It was the first recorded instance of inconsistency in the Early Church. Those two people pretended to give all they had to the work of God, while keeping back some for themselves. To want the security which a nest egg is supposed to provide was not in itself wrong, though it compared unfavourably with the generosity of those who had given all they had. But the sin of this married couple lay in the fact that words and deeds did not match. And if such inconsistency had been allowed to pass unchecked, who knows where the rot would have ended?

Finally, the man whose deeds do not agree with his words betrays the Kingdom from within. The Christian faith has never been permanently set back by outward opposition. It is an anvil which has worn out a good many hammers. Be assured that, despite all you read in scare columns or hear in wild conversation, no 'ism that ever was, or is, or shall be, can destroy the Christian religion. But that faith has been betrayed time and time again by those who claim to be its friends. Whenever the gates have been opened to the enemy, they have been opened from within.

A known disciple of Jesus led the Master's enemies to the place where they could arrest Him.
'One of you which eateth with Me shall betray Me,' said Jesus in the Upper Room—and that cry has been wrung from His heart many times since. It is always the friends of Jesus who let Him down.

'What drives poetry out of the world?' was a question once put to Goethe.

'Poets!' was his reply.

So, were we to ask who can do the most harm to the cause of Jesus, the answer would be, 'His followers!' Neither the world nor the devil can harm the Kingdom, but we can. That is one of the frightening privileges of friendship with Jesus. We are put in the place where we can sell out on Him. It is those who 'have tasted the good word of God' and 'fall away' who 'crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame.'

How can we watch that we do not fail Jesus in a peculiarly distressing way?

The answer is that if we love Jesus enough we will keep His commandments. But if we do not, we will not.

The truth is as simple as that—and as uncompromising. In fact, if we do not love Him we cannot keep His commandments, for only love will prompt us to do so. Love is the source of obedience. Love and obedience are two parts of the one relationship between a man and his Saviour, but there is no doubt which comes first. To try to obey Jesus without first loving Him is to have an engine without steam, a car without petrol. Love comes first, for it is when we care for Jesus sufficiently that we will obey Him whatever the cost. It is 'love unquestioning' that follows, dares, triumphs.

Here lies the hope of victory for the unhappy lad or girl who feels that words and deeds have not matched up. Love Jesus enough—and you will
obey Him. By this I do not mean that you have to
go all sentimental or feel some great emotional lift
of the heart. Such feelings may occur, but they are
an effect, not a cause. To love Jesus is simply to
belong to Him—and to go on doing what you know
He wants you to do whether you find the prospect
thrilling or not.

Doing His will consistently like this will keep you
continually in His presence and, continually in His
presence, His love will fill your life. In return
you will come to serve Him not because you
must, but because you want to. Loving Him, you
will keep His commandments and, keeping His
commandments, you will abide more securely in
His love.

XI. THY KINGDOM COME

OUT of the many illustrations which Jesus
gave of the Kingdom we will take one more
—the parable of the mustard seed (Matt.
xii. 31, 32).

Now ‘a grain of mustard seed’ was a pro-
verbial Jewish expression for the smallest possible
quantity. Yet this tiny seed, sown in a field in
the haphazard and risky fashion of first century
farming (read again Matt. xii. 4-7), grew to be a
sturdy tree of anything from eight to twelve feet
high under whose branches the birds could find
shelter.

While no one parable tells us all there is to
know about the Kingdom, yet this word-picture
says three important things about it, the first
of which has to do with the certainty of its growth.

Once the mustard seed had been planted a
process began which went on until a tree which
could stand up to all weathers was fully grown.
Though so small, the mustard seed was amazingly hardy and could germinate under the most adverse conditions. Further, once sown in a field, it was almost impossible to eradicate it, for it was as hard to get rid of as any weed.

So with the Kingdom. Once established, it cannot be disestablished. Now set up, it cannot be overthrown. Planted on that unpromising hill called Calvary, it will continue growing though the rate of growth is not always the same. This year is A.D., and neither devil nor man can make it B.C. God has entered the world in Christ, and now we cannot have a world without Christ— and this is true whether men admit it or not. Jesus has entered into the life of mankind ‘like a dye, the stain of which no washing can remove; like a drop of God’s blood which remains ineffaceably there.’

Jesus just cannot be set aside. He cannot be ‘liquidated.’ His Church—which is where He is present with any two or three of His people— lives on even in those parts of the world where the hearts of men are seemingly most set against Him—and we must not think that such places lie only east of the Oder-Neisse line. They are to be found on both sides of the Atlantic. But Jesus cannot be bowed off the stage of life. He is there whether men like it or not, and—often ignored, frequently hated, sometimes attacked—there He still remains and will remain until God’s purpose in and through Him is fully and finally accomplished.

Next look at the phrase about ‘the birds of the air.’ Here is another piece of Jewish imagery and, in the Old Testament, Ezekiel used it to represent the nations of the earth (xxxi. 6). This was its meaning in rabbinical literature as well. ‘The birds of the air’ lodging ‘in the branches
thereof’ means that all peoples have a place in the Kingdom.

This is an article of faith dear to every Salvationist. The earliest issues of ‘The Officer’ (a magazine written by and for officers) carried on the title page a drawing of a white hand clasping a coloured one, thus symbolizing the unity of the Army.

God desires that the peoples of the world should be members of the one family. We know that was His first intention from the stories we have of the early history of mankind which describe the human race as descended from the same parents and speaking the same language. Paul may well have had this truth in mind when he said that God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.’ (Acts xvii. 26). ‘In nothing,’ wrote George Scott Railton, ‘does the utter departure of mankind from the will of God appear more glaringly than in ... the human race, intended to be a family under one Father, torn into nations, tribes and communities, feeling almost completely severed from one another as though they were different beings altogether.’

Though much of the earth lies black under the frosts of hate, we can still go on sowing this truth about the oneness of all men in the Kingdom. The seed has life and spring will witness its survival.

Last of all, this parable emphasizes the difference between a seemingly insignificant beginning and a triumphant end. The tiniest of seeds became a stout tree. (The Talmud speaks of boys climbing its branches as they would those of a fig tree.)

The work of Jesus in an obscure province in the south-eastern corner of the Roman Empire
hardly looked like the dawn of a new age. The Jews, who were nearest to it, did not think so. Could a carpenter's Son out of Nazareth be the Messiah? As for the Romans, they hardly bothered their heads about it. Apart from Pilate, it is doubtful whether any Roman of rank ever heard of Jesus during His lifetime. To them the death of Caesar in 44 B.C. was a far more significant event than that of Jesus in A.D. 29. Yet they were all wrong—as are all those to-day who, in the notorious phrase of H. G. Wells, rate Jesus as 'a back number.' He will outlast them all.

The life and teaching of Jesus was God's establishment of the Kingdom, and He who set it up will see to its final triumph. We know it to be the Father's good pleasure to bring the Kingdom to its final power and glory. Our task, as dedicated soldiers, is to serve the Kingdom here and now in the spirit of Jesus. The rest we can leave with God who knows His business much better than we do. Keep this in mind, and you will be neither disturbed nor disheartened by the changes and chances of life.

Finally, the Kingdom is not to be identified with any particular economic, political or social order on earth nor is it limited to the members of any one church.

The Kingdom is not Utopia, nor the welfare state, nor is it allied to any particular régime, east or west.

The Kingdom is not of this world, though its servants will seek to redeem the world in which they live after the pattern set by their Master. They will try to be the salt—and prevent the world turning hopelessly sour; the leaven—and save it from going flat.

Yet, again like their Master, they will seek first the Kingdom which is 'of God.' If Jesus would
not serve Rome, neither would He work for the Jewish dream of the kingdom of ‘our father David.’ His love and loyalty were wholly and unalterably pledged to ‘the Kingdom of My Father.’ There our heart and treasure should lie as well. As General Bramwell Booth wrote: ‘One sinner saved by grace will outlast the British Empire.’ That goes for all other empires also. Only the Kingdom abides.
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

CHAPTER I
1. Why did the Jews long more and more ardently for a Messiah as the years went by?
2. Illustrate by various sayings of Jesus the truth that the Kingdom is (a) inward, (b) spiritual and (c) comprehensive.
3. What do you think of the description of the Kingdom as ‘God’s secret society’? How can this be related to the public witness expected of members of the Kingdom?

CHAPTER II
1. What do you understand by being born again?
2. In what way can a fixed idea hinder a person from entering the Kingdom? Give an illustration from (a) the Bible and (b) life to-day.
3. Is it right to call every country ‘God’s own country’? How does this apply to (a) China, (b) India, (c) Russia and (d) your native land?

CHAPTER III
1. What is the meaning of the word ‘love’ as used in the New Testament?
2. Is there any difference between loving and liking? Illustrate your answer from daily life.
3. General Bramwell Booth thought that ‘perfect love’ was the best description of the blessing of holiness. Do you agree, or can you think of a better?

CHAPTER IV
1. Why did the message of John the Baptist meet with such a response from all sections of Jewish society?
2. Did Jesus come up to John the Baptist's expectations of what the Messiah would be and do? Support your answer by scripture references.

3. How can we tell when the Kingdom is present in power?

**Chapter V**

1. Discuss the meaning of universalism in the Old Testament.

2. Discuss the meaning of particularism in the Old Testament.

3. How, when and where did the clash between these two ideas reach a climax?

**Chapter VI**

1. From the words of Jesus give an illustration of the way in which God's love was shown to Gentiles in Old Testament days.

2. Read Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts vii. 1-53) and discuss how he broke with conventional Jewish teaching.

3. 'There was no colour bar in the Early Church.' Can this practice be followed to-day?

**Chapter VII**

1. Can the teaching of Jesus be practised apart from the grace of God? Give reasons for your answer.

2. What is the best definition you can give of humility?

3. Salvationists often sing: 'I'm a wonder unto many' (S.B. No. 240, v. 4). How can this be related to the virtue of humility?

**Chapter VIII**

1. Why was Jesus charged with being 'a gluttonous man and a winebibber'?
2. ‘The man like a bear with a sore head was outside the Kingdom’? Can you give any evidence for the truth of this statement to-day?

3. What can we do to present the Kingdom more attractively?

CHAPTER IX
1. Find three other passages where Old Testament prophets declared that words and deeds must agree.

2. Find as many sayings of Jesus as you can where the same truth is expressed.

3. What is the right relationship between ‘being’ and ‘doing’?

CHAPTER X
1. Add a parallel illustration from daily life to the two given on p. 38.

2. Emerson declared that ‘a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds’. Relate this statement to the demand for consistency in the life of a Salvationist.

3. Discuss the relationship between love and obedience.

CHAPTER XI
1. What has turned B.C. into A.D., and why cannot the clock be put back?

2. Relate the original intention of God to the saying of General Bramwell Booth: ‘Every land is my fatherland, for all lands are my Father’s.’

3. How can you best serve the Kingdom?
The Timeless Prophets
'A model aid to Bible study' (‘Church Times’).
'Will set many on their first steps to understanding the relevance of the Testament to the life of the twentieth cen ('Christian World').

The Battle and the Breeze
'This book deserves to be a best seller . . . can hold its own in any company' ('Sunday School Chronicle').

Short Measure
'Gets over most successfully without any high pressure sentiment' ('The Friend').

Our Father
In the Dinner Hour
'It is a very long time since we read anything so forthright . . . so much to the point as this' ('Sunday School Chronicle').

LIBERTY BOOKLETS
The First Salvationist (William Booth)
*Salute to a Mill Girl (Martha Chippendale, M.B.E.)
*I Had No Revolver (Edwin Sheard)
*Down in Demerara (Alexander Alexander, O.F.)

***
Half-Hours with Heroes (Collins)
True Stories for Young Folk.
*Temporarily out of print.

SALVATIONIST PUBLISHING AND SUP'
JUDD STREET, KING'S CROSS, LON'

SALVATION ARMY
ONE SHILLING
Collection