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A COMPARISON OF REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS  
OF THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD

By  
ANTHONY JAMES CARA  
A. B., Bloomfield College

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## INTRODUCTION

A COMPARISON OF REPRESENTATIVE VIEWS  
OF THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated.

As all important doctrines of the Bible are subject to various interpretations, the doctrine of the Kingdom of God is no exception. There is a wide variety of interpretations of this theme. In this thesis several of the main ones will be considered. These are representative of certain schools of thought, namely, conservative, social, and dispensational. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the views of these ~~three~~ positions on the doctrine of the Kingdom of God and to compare them.

2. The Subject Justified.

Justification of this thesis is found first of all in the important place given to the Kingdom doctrine in the New Testament. G. Vos declares, "By common consent the center of gravity in his teaching, that to which He attaches supreme importance, is the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

Robertson further adds:

There can be no question that in our Lord's teaching the Kingdom of God is the representative and all-embracing summary of his distinctive mission...It was not only the beginning of his teaching but the end as well.<sup>2</sup>

Leslie Weatherhead says, "...to Jesus the idea of the Kingdom

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1. Geerhardus Vos: The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God, p. 42
2. Archibald Robertson: Regnum Dei, p. 8

was the dominating, blazing idea which lit up his whole mind and being with its shining glory."<sup>1</sup>

The prominent place of this theme in the New Testament is readily realized when one discovers that the phrase, "Kingdom of God," or its equivalent, "Kingdom of Heaven," is found one hundred and two times in the synoptic Gospels.<sup>2</sup> Matthew's Gospel is most prolific in the usage of "Kingdom" with 49 instances; Luke's Gospel is next with 38 instances, and Mark's Gospel follows with 15 instances. This is even more impressive when it is realized that the word "church" is only mentioned twice in the synoptic Gospels. Also the many parables dealing with the Kingdom reveal the great importance of this theme in the teaching of Jesus.

Further justification for this thesis is found in the fact that whereas in former periods of the church the doctrine of the kingdom was neglected, today there is a revival of interest in this theme. Rauschenbusch states, "Some of the ablest and most voluminous works of the old theology in their thousands of pages gave the Kingdom of God but a scanty mention, usually in connection with eschatology, and saw no connection between it and the Calvinistic doctrines of personal redemption. The newer manuals not only make constant reference to it in connection with various doctrines, but they arrange their entire subject matter so that the Kingdom of God becomes the governing idea."<sup>3</sup> Robertson also points this out when he says, "The present age has been marked by the

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1. Leslie D. Weatherhead: In Quest of the Kingdom, p. 40
2. Weatherhead, op. cit., p. 7
3. Walter Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 138

attempt to go back to the fountain head with the aim of reinterpreting the fundamental idea of the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> If, therefore, scholars are taking a new interest in the Kingdom of God, and writing books and articles about it, then it is in keeping with this new interest that a thesis should be written which investigates the conceptions and interpretations of certain schools of thought on this subject.

### 3. The Subject Delimited.

This thesis is not concerned with the many and various interpretations of this theme by the host of interpreters throughout the history of the Christian church. The concern is limited to the interpretations of the present day, and further limited by choosing three representative positions from the larger number of positions. These three positions, however, are very important and influential ones, each being held by large bodies of Christians.

Furthermore, in presenting each representative view, an effort will be made to reach the lowest common denominator of the members of that group. Within each representative group there are differences and variations and it would be far beyond the scope of this thesis to try to present all the fine points of these differences. Minor variations will be ignored, but major variations that are important shall be treated.

Finally, no effort will be made to study the Scriptures directly in order to arrive at a personal interpretation of the Kingdom of God. The purpose of this thesis is to study the representative views themselves, discover their main tenets of belief concerning this doctrine, and compare them to see wherein they differ and wherein they are similar.

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1. Archibald Robertson: *Regnum Dei*, p. 357.

## B. Method of Procedure and Sources

The three representative views chosen for this study, the Conservative, the Social, and the Dispensational, constitute the chapters of this thesis. The writings and articles read fall into one of these three groups and will be used to present the main outline of each particular position. For the conservative view, the writings of Geerhardus Vos, Charles Hodge, G. Campbell Morgan, and Louis Berkhof will serve as the basis. The social view will be represented by the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch, Henry C. Vedder, Washington Gladden, Richard T. Ely, Charles S. Gardner, Reginald J. Campbell, and Francis Greenwood Peabody. The dispensational view will be gleaned from the Scofield Reference Bible and the works of Louis Sperry Chafer, Harry Ironside, and William E. Blackstone. Along with these basic writings, other relevant works and writers will be studied and referred to in order to augment and clarify the three positions.



CHAPTER I

THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

## CHAPTER I

### THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

#### A. Introduction

The question faced in this chapter is, "What is the basic belief of Conservative Christianity concerning the Kingdom?" Geerhardus Vos' book on the Kingdom serves as the basic work of this chapter, buttressed by the writings of Charles Hodge, Louis Berkhof, G. Campbell Morgan, and several magazine articles. Vos' work, "The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church," was once published by the American Tract Society and, therefore has had a wide acceptance and circulation among Christians of many denominations. It was one of several volumes in a series under the title of "The Teachings of Jesus."

It must be kept in mind that this school of interpretation maintains a very high view of the inspiration of the Scriptures. They regard the Old and New Testaments as equally inspired by the Holy Spirit, and completely reliable and trustworthy. This Divine Record is the sole instrument in building the structure of theology in general and the doctrine of the Kingdom in particular. Berkhof expresses this attitude so aptly when he says, "...the Word of God is the final court of appeal."<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Its Relation to the Old Testament Kingdom

In keeping with the principle that there is a unity of Divine purpose that binds the Scriptures together, Jesus' teachings concerning

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1. Louis Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 76.

the Kingdom are seen to be harmonious with the working of God in the Old Testament. Jesus did not project upon his hearers an entirely strange and new doctrine. Vos states, "From first to last he refers to 'the Kingdom of God' as a fixed conception with which he takes for granted his hearers are familiar."<sup>1</sup>

God, as creator and ruler of the universe, possessed a Kingdom in Old Testament history. It passed through various stages and took on different forms. Prior to the time of Abraham, God's Kingdom was evident in the families of earth that were faithful. Hodge says, "Every pious household was a church of which the parent was the priest."<sup>2</sup> Through Abraham and then Moses, God established His covenant with the nation of Israel and the Theocracy prevailed for a time. In virtue of this covenant, Vos declares, "Jehovah, besides being Israel's God, also acted as Israel's national King. By direct revelation He gave them laws and by His subsequent guidance of their history He made His rule a living reality."<sup>3</sup> Following the pure Theocracy, Israel passed through apostasies, exiles, and foreign rule. Thus while the Kingdom of Israel was being shaken and troubled, the prophets interjected comfort and new hope by setting forth Messianic prophecies that awaited future fulfillment.

Robertson writes:

Whereas other nations looked sadly back to their golden age over a long series of successive declensions, Israel alone placed its golden age in the future.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Vos, op. cit., p. 11.
2. Charles Hodge: Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 596.
3. Vos, op. cit., p. 13.
4. Robertson, op. cit., p. 11.

Christ's teachings harmonize with and amplify these Messianic prophecies.

Vos says:

Indeed in appropriating for himself the function of bringing the Kingdom, in laying claim to the Messianic dignity, Jesus seized upon that in the Old Testament which enabled him at one stroke to make its whole historic movement converge upon and terminate in himself. There is in this a unique combination of the most sublime self-consciousness and the most humble submission to the revelation of God in former ages. Jesus knew himself as at once the goal of history and the servant of history.<sup>1</sup>

The question may be raised at this point, "If Jesus' conception of the Kingdom coincided with that promised in the Old Testament and with the working of God in general, why did not Israel accept His teachings of the Kingdom?" It was due first to the fact that priests and people misinterpreted the coming Kingdom. They thought of it in terms of earthly power and glory with the exaltation of the nation of Israel. Jesus presented to them a Kingdom whose emphasis was spiritual and which placed high ethical demands upon them. Therefore, Jesus' conception of the Kingdom was a departure from the current views of the coming Kingdom. Berkhof states, "He enlarged and transformed and spiritualized it, without changing its fundamental character; and the result was that the Jews, though looking for the kingdom, yet turned their backs upon him. His idea of the kingdom was not theirs."<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, Israel rejected Christ's Kingdom program because their religion lacked spiritual vitality. Over a period of years Judaism had drifted quite far from the true spirit of Old Testament religion which was a religion of the heart. Thus, when Jesus called Israel back to true

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1. Vos, op. cit., p. 12.
2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 13.

religion in terms of His spiritual Kingdom, they would have nothing to do with it. Their final and complete rejection of Christ and His Kingdom is expressed in their cry, "We have no king, but Caesar!"

### C. Its Nature and Scope

The traditional view rejects as unworthy the conception of the Kingdom as primarily a mutual association of men forming a moral or religious organism, or a society which is an ideal one economically, socially, or ethically. It is more than that; it is spiritual and supernatural. It is God's Kingdom, it is the Kingdom of heaven, not earth.

Vos states:

To him (Jesus) the kingdom exists there, where not merely God is supreme, for that is true at all times and under all circumstances, but where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings man to the willing recognition of the same.<sup>1</sup>

Vos also points out that the Greek word, "Basileia," used in the Gospels for "Kingdom" possesses two meanings. The one is abstract, such as a rule of a king; the other is concrete, such as the land or territory ruled. The former meaning is considered the correct one.

Christ's kingship is to be understood in terms of a reign rather than a rule.<sup>2</sup> Berkhof puts it this way:

The primary idea of the Kingdom of God in Scripture is that of the rule of God established and acknowledged in the hearts of sinners by the powerful, regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit insuring them of the inestimable blessings of salvation, - a rule that is realized in principle on earth, but will not reach its culmination until the visible and glorious return of Jesus Christ. The present realization of it is spiritual and invisible.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vos, op. cit., p. 85.
2. Vos, op. cit., p. 25.
3. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 568.

Therefore, the Kingdom of God by its nature is supernatural and God rules and reigns.

The sphere or extent of the Kingdom has a twofold aspect. Hodge refers to the one aspect as the "Kingdom of Power" in which God and Christ exercise dominion over the natural universe. The other aspect he terms the "Kingdom of Grace," which is concerned with the souls of men in this world.

In regard to the Kingdom of Power, or rule of the universe, Christ has been elevated to the position of ruler by God the Father.

Hodge writes:

As Theanthropos and as Mediator, all power in heaven and upon earth has been committed to his hands...And in Hebrews 2:8, it is said, "In that he put all things (the universe) in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him." The same universality of dominion is implied in Christ's sitting at the right hand of God ...It is in virtue of this dominion over the universe, that Christ is called Lord of lords and King of kings; i.e., the Sovereign over all other sovereigns in heaven and on earth.<sup>1</sup>

Arthur W. Pink concurs with this conception of the Kingdom:

The kingdom of God signifies the rule of God, and therefore, in its widest latitude, takes in the entire universe, for the Ruler of heaven and earth governs all creatures and things; angels and demons, men elect and reprobate, animals and fishes, planets and the elements.<sup>2</sup>

The second aspect of the Kingdom is limited in its scope to God's people here on earth. It is referred to as "Christ's spiritual Kingdom" as well as the "Kingdom of grace." This Kingdom has two phases in its relationships: first, Christ's relation to the invisible church and the individuals that comprise it, and second, Christ's relationship

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1. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 600.

2. Arthur W. Pink: The Sermon on the Mount, p. 251.

to the visible church. In this spiritual Kingdom Hodge presents the complete rule of Christ over the true Christians in this manner:

He (Christ) is the king of every believing soul. He translates it from the Kingdom of darkness. He brings it into subjection to Himself. He rules in and reigns over it. Every believer recognizes Christ as his absolute Sovereign; Lord of his inward, as well as of his outward, life. He yields to Him the entire subjection of the reason, of the conscience, and of the heart. ...To acquit himself as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to spend and be spent in his service and in the promotion of his kingdom, becomes the governing purpose of his life.<sup>1</sup>

#### D. Its Time Element

##### 1. The Immanent Phase.

Because Christ now rules in the hearts of His people, the spiritual Kingdom has already come and is now here. When Jesus the Messiah appeared, the Kingdom appeared at the same time. Jesus said, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Vos says of this claim of Christ, "The underlying supposition of this argument is, that, where the kingdom of Satan is destroyed, there of necessity the kingdom of God begins."<sup>2</sup> In Matthew 16:19 Jesus gave to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." In Luke 17:21 Jesus says to the Pharisees, "...the kingdom of God is within you," a better translation would be "in your midst." In this connection Vos states:

Our Lord means to teach the enquirers that, instead of a future thing to be fixed by apocalyptic speculation, the coming of the kingdom is a present thing, present in the very midst of those who are curious about the day and the hour of its sometime appearance ...he referred to the establishment of God's rule in the midst of Israel through the spiritual results of his labors.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Hodge: Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 601.
2. Vos, op. cit., p. 49.
3. Ibid., p. 53.

Also, some of the parables of Christ teach the present reality of His spiritual Kingdom. The parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13:24-30 reveals that the faithful ones in the present Kingdom will have to live side by side with the evil ones in this world until the end of the world, when the judgment shall separate the sheep and the goats. The parable of the mustard seed found in Matthew 13:31, 32, is to be interpreted as the growth of the Kingdom from Pentecost until the coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Morgan states that "parables...give us pictures...of the kingdom as realized in the world, showing how far that realization is attained in the present dispensation."<sup>2</sup>

There naturally follows from this conception of the present rule of Christ in the heart the conviction that a Christian must recognize the will of God in every area of life, - education, vocation, recreation, etc., as well as in the act of worship. This makes for a God-centered life, where every phase of it possesses divine significance and purpose. Peter H. Eldersveld, radio preacher of the Christian Reformed Church, which emphasizes this Christian world-view, states:

A Christian must have a Christian home, and a Christian business, and a Christian school, and a Christian government, and a Christian living. If these things are not immediately available to him, he will never stop working for them. He can be content with nothing less... We cannot rescue the perishing from their pagan culture too. We are called upon to wrest not only a sinful man but also a sinful world from the grasp of the devil.<sup>3</sup>

It must not be construed, however, that this totally Christian culture for which the Christian strives is the Kingdom. The Kingdom is in

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1. Ibid., pp. 56, 57.
2. G. Campbell Morgan: The Parables of the Kingdom, p. 39.
3. Peter H. Eldersveld: Torch and Trumpet, article, A Cosmic Gospel, p. 2.



operation in so far as Christ rules in the heart and life of the Christian, who in turn puts Kingdom principles to work in his life.

## 2. The Eschatological Phase.

Despite the fact that the Kingdom is already here on earth as God rules in the hearts of His people, the Christian disciple is taught to pray, "Thy Kingdom come." It is a future hope as well as a present reality. Berkhof says:

Though the Lord speaks of the Kingdom as a present reality, he more often speaks of it as the future state of consummate happiness, in which the whole life of man and society will be in perfect harmony with the will of God. Clearly the Kingdom of God is ultimately an eschatological concept. In the epistolary literature the eschatological meaning of the term greatly preponderates.<sup>1</sup>

He states further:

The Lord directs our eyes to the future for the perfect realization of our hopes, and teaches us to do our work with an eternal, other worldly kingdom in view. He speaks of entering the kingdom as the opposite of being cast into Gehenna; identifies the kingdom with eternal life as a future possession; and speaks of it as a blessed repast which he will share with his disciples at the end of the ages. In the kingdom of the future the good and bad will be effectively and forever separated, and the fruits of the preceding development will be garnered under new and glorious conditions.<sup>2</sup>

This Kingdom will come not through a long gradual process, but its coming will be sudden, cataclysmic. It is associated and predicated upon the return of Christ, which will be sudden and dramatic. Christ will then usher in His Kingdom in its final and complete stage. Such great events as the resurrection of the dead, the judgments upon individuals and nations, the separation of the saved and the unsaved,

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1. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 18.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

etc., will take place also at the time of His return. This Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom, where only the redeemed among men will dwell. The redeemed will possess spiritual bodies. They will serve God in a perfect manner and be exalted.<sup>1</sup> In line with this thought Vos declares:

For this final state of the kingdom presupposes great physical, cosmical changes, which no force working in the spiritual sphere can produce. It is an order of things lying altogether above this earthly life, in which the righteous shall shine as the sun, in which all the prophets will be seen, in which the pure in heart shall enjoy the beatific vision of God, in which those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. Surely to effect this there must take place a great crisis, a great catastrophe at the end of which will be the very opposite of all evolution.<sup>2</sup>

Berkhof further elaborates on this point:

...the idea that man must establish the kingdom of God is quite foreign to the teachings of the Bible. The very name "kingdom of God" would lead us to expect that God himself and not man would be its founder. The words of Daniel 2:44, that the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will not be destroyed surely point to its supernatural origin. The Saviour did not command his disciples, and much less the municipality, to set up the kingdom, but rather taught his disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." In the words of that petition the Church is ever praying that God himself may usher in the new order, in which his will is perfectly done on earth.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The Relation of the Two Phases.

The present and future Kingdoms may be thought of as one movement whose development has two phases, the one temporary and introductory, the other permanent. Berkhof states:

According to the New Testament representation there will be no essential difference between the present and the future kingdom. In its eschatological form it will represent the perfection of those realities and relations that constitute the present kingdom, and will have an external visible organization.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 608.
2. Vos, op. cit., p. 77.
3. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 84.
4. Ibid., p. 19.

That kingdom (future kingdom) will undoubtedly be identical with the kingdom that is now in process of development. Yet its appearance will not be merely the final stage of the process now in operation. No more than the sanctification of the individual Christian is completed in this life by a gradual process, will the kingdom of God grow imperceptibly into its final form. Sin will still abound when the end of the present dispensation comes, and will even be alarmingly prevalent. We are taught to look for a great cataclysmic change at the coming of the Son of man, a change so great that it can be called "the regeneration." The kingdom of God that is now invisible will then appear in royal majesty. The present spiritual kingdom will pass into a higher external form, including all that is true and good and beautiful in the present creation and resplendent with heavenly glory.<sup>1</sup>

The present Kingdom then has a slow leavening process, but the future Kingdom will arrive in a cataclysmic manner. It is essentially the same spiritual Kingdom with God and His Christ ruling in the hearts of His people. Both are dependent upon the sovereign working of the almighty God. The present Kingdom may be likened to the roots of a tree; it is invisible and seldom appreciated. The future Kingdom is like the fruits of the tree; it is visible and glorious as it reaches the consummation of its purpose and destiny. The present Kingdom knows many imperfections because its members are still in the flesh in this evil world; the future Kingdom will know only perfection because its members shall have put on immortality and shall dwell in the presence of the Lord.<sup>2</sup> The Kingdom is both a present possession and a future hope. Regenerated people are now citizens of the Kingdom; they may enjoy the privileges of it and must shoulder the responsibilities of it. The Kingdom demands obedience to and service for God, the King.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 85.
2. Vos, op. cit., pp. 64, 65.
3. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 75.

## E. Its Relation to Life

### 1. The Kingdom of Power.

#### a. The Manifestation of Power

The power of Christ's Kingdom is evident in its conquests over the enemies of God. In Daniel 2:45 the image of the world-kingdoms is smashed by the stone. 1 Corinthians 15:25 says, "For He (Christ) must reign, until He (God) hath put all His enemies under His feet." When Jesus was here on earth, He could say, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Sin, Satan, and death are the enemies that ultimately will be conquered by Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Vos declares:

Here the Kingship of Christ is equivalent to the process of subjecting one enemy after another. After the last enemy, death, has been conquered, there is no further need for the kingdom of Christ: hence it is delivered up to God the Father. Christ's kingdom as a process of conquest precedes the final kingdom of God as a settled permanent state.<sup>2</sup>

The power of Christ's Kingdom is also demonstrated by the miracles which He performed. He cast out demons, healed all manner of diseases, raised the dead on several occasions, and controlled and dictated to the forces of nature. So amazed were the disciples, that they exclaimed, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" These miracles were signs of the Kingdom, manifestations of the power of God. The miracles occurred in the physical realm, but they had spiritual implications. They suggested that Christ possessed the

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1. Vos, op. cit., pp. 90-92.

2. Ibid., p. 91.

power to aid men spiritually. He Himself used His miracles to proceed to spiritual matters.<sup>1</sup> An illustration of this is in the healing of the paralytic in Mark 2. Jesus went beyond the diseases of the body; he touched upon the troubles of the soul. He said not only, "Take up thy bed and walk," but also, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Vos states:

It is especially in eschatological connections that a revelation of power is referred to, Matthew 24:30; Mark 12:24. All the supernatural phenomena that accompanied not merely the ministry of Jesus, but characterized also the history of the apostolic Church, must be interpreted in this light. It had to be shown immediatly, that the work inaugurated by Jesus aims at nothing less than a supernatural renewal of the world, whereby all evil will be overcome, a renewal of the physical as well as of the spiritual world.<sup>2</sup>

b. The Source of Power

The Holy Spirit of God was the source of power for the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here. At Jesus' baptism the Spirit came upon Him empowering Him for service. It was the Spirit that drove him into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; Vos states that the Spirit "thus appears as pursuing the end of the Messiah's moral victory over the Prince of evil."<sup>3</sup> It is by the Spirit's power that demons are cast out and that Christ performs other miracles and good works. Jesus declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor...to heal the broken-hearted,...recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."<sup>4</sup>

The Holy Spirit of God is also the source of power for the

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1. Ibid., pp. 94-98.
2. Ibid., p. 97.
3. Ibid., pp. 98, 99.
4. Luke 4:18.

members of the Kingdom of God. Man has experienced repeatedly the insufficiency of all other sources. Berkhof says:

...we are fully persuaded that the most ideal environment has never changed a sinner into a saint. Jesus does not fix our attention on the environment, but on the grace of God, operating in the heart of man. With him the spiritual renewal of individuals was the basic requirement for a new social order. I fully agree with Clow, when he says, "Christianize the social order," some men proclaim. "Socialize your Christianity," others cry in reply. Jesus would listen to both cries without being moved. He would say, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus represented the new birth as a work of the Holy Spirit of God in John 3:5. Also the Spirit is sent to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; also He guides Christians into the truth of God.<sup>2</sup> He indwells the believer and empowers him for service.<sup>3</sup> Vos declares, "...the Spirit is the source of the moral and religious renewal of man, the author and bearer of the entire Christian life with all of its graces and virtues."<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Kingdom of Righteousness.

### a. Righteousness Required

One of the attributes of God is that of holiness. Isaiah heard the song of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God..." Through Moses a holy God committed Israel to a holy law which placed the demand for righteous living upon them. The Kingdom also requires righteousness of its members, and this righteousness is a perfect one. Hodge states, "The laws of the kingdom require...that his people should be holy in

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1. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 82.
2. John 16:8-13.
3. Acts 1:8.
4. Vos, op. cit., p. 99.

heart and life. In one word they are required to be like Christ, in disposition, character, and conduct."<sup>1</sup> Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."<sup>2</sup> Jesus also warned in Matthew 5:20, "...except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven." Vos shows how this demand for righteousness is predicated on the character and nature of God:

Righteousness is always taken by Jesus in a specific sense which it obtains from the reference to God as Lawgiver and Judge. Our modern usage of the word is often a looser one, since we are apt to associate with it no further thought than that of what is fair and equitable, inherently just. To Jesus righteousness meant all this and much more than this. It meant such moral conduct and such a moral state as are right when measured by the supreme norm of the nature and will of God, so that they form a reproduction of the latter, a revelation, as it were, of the moral glory of God.<sup>3</sup>

b. Righteousness Bestowed

Jesus stated in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.." Vos says, in this connection, that men must concern themselves with seeking the Kingdom of God, and when they pursue it in terms of hungering and thirsting after it, God is pleased to bestow His righteousness upon the seekers.<sup>4</sup> First, He grants an imputed righteousness. Vos also declares:

...Jesus prepared the way for Paul...He emphasized that in the pursuit of righteousness the satisfaction of God should be man's supreme concern. This, carried to its ultimate consequences with reference to sinful man, could not but lead to the conception of a righteousness provided by God himself in the perfect life and atoning death of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 603.
2. Matthew 5:48.
3. Vos, op. cit., pp. 104, 105.
4. Ibid., p. 113.
5. Ibid., p. 117.

Second, God grants an imparted righteousness to the seeker, so that his actual life measures up<sup>to</sup> or approaches his position as a member of the Kingdom. Vos says that God changes "the heart and life of men so as to produce works which God will be able in principle to approve in the judgment."<sup>1</sup> In this same vein Berkhof states, "It is first of all a righteousness that is wrought in man by God and that satisfies His just demands and only secondarily a righteousness of moral conduct."<sup>2</sup> In the future Kingdom perfect righteousness will be the order of the day and present difficulties and imperfections will fade away. God's will then will be completely and perfectly done.

### 3. The Kingdom of Blessedness.

Just as the Kingdom for Israel had meant the blessing and the help of God, so the Kingdom for the Christian is a constant source of blessing. Vos says, "The Oriental king often bestows with royal munificence all manner of gifts upon his subjects. Thus Jesus also speaks of the kingdom under the figure of a banquet prepared by the king as a marriage feast for his son."<sup>3</sup> In connection with the Kingdom parables, Jesus pronounces the faithful as "blessed." The great value of Kingdom blessings is seen in the parable of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price; for these treasures the finder sells all his possessions.

The blessings of the Kingdom are partly negative and partly positive. The negative blessings are those which help to deliver from evil. Forgiveness of sins is the main one and this is aptly set forth

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1. Ibid., p. 116.
2. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 39.
3. Vos, op. cit., p. 127.



in the Kingdom parable of the king and his servants found in Matthew 18:23-35. On the positive side there are two outstanding blessings. One is the sonship of God with all of the privileges accruing from this intimate relationship. The other is life - a new life of fellowship with God now and eternal life with Him in the final state of His Kingdom. All these blessings result from the glorious reign of God and His Christ.<sup>1</sup>

#### F. Its Relation to the Church

##### 1. To The Invisible Church.

The invisible Church, which is comprised of all true believers in all parts of the world, is organically related to the Kingdom of God. As the Kingdom of the Old Testament was vitally associated with the Jewish Church, so the Kingdom of Christ is closely allied with the New Testament Church. Vos states:

The church is a form which the kingdom assumes in result of the new state upon which the Messiahship of Jesus enters with his death and resurrection. So far as the extent of membership is concerned, Jesus plainly leads us to identify the invisible church and the kingdom. It is impossible to be in the one without being in the other. John 3:3, 5. The Kingdom, therefore, as truly as the invisible church is constituted by the regenerate.<sup>2</sup>

Berkhof further elaborates:

...it is perfectly evident that Christ as the head of the church, is also the Lord, its Ruler, its King. Apart from him there is no authority in the Church. Certainly he is the organic head of the Church as his spiritual body; and this headship is made subservient to his kingship.<sup>3</sup>

##### 2. To The Visible Church.

The visible Church and the invisible Church are not absolutely

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1. Vos, op. cit., pp. 127-139.
2. Ibid., pp. 158, 159.
3. Berkhof: The Banner, Jan. 19, 1951, p. 73.

identical, but they are vitally related to each. The former grows out of and exists by virtue of the latter. Vos says:

...the kingdom forces which are at work, the kingdom life which exists in the invisible sphere, find expression in the kingdom organism of the visible church. ...Christ is King in this Church.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the visible church is closely related to the Kingdom. Berkhof expresses the thought in this manner:

The visible church and the kingdom may be identified to a certain extent. The visible church may certainly be said to belong to the kingdom, to be a part of the kingdom, and even to be the most important visible embodiment of the forces of the kingdom. The kingdom may be said to be a broader concept of the Church, because it aims at nothing less than the complete control of all the manifestations of life.<sup>2</sup>

Such things as the Christian state, Christian schools, art, science, and other activities could be distinguished from the visible church; they would fall into the category of Kingdom activities. However, these activities which are Christian result from the regenerate life of the church.<sup>3</sup>

#### G. Its Conditions for Entrance

##### 1. Repentance.

Vos states, "Repentance and faith are simply the two main aspects of the kingdom, righteousness and the saving grace of God, translated into terms of human experience."<sup>4</sup>

Jesus expressed the need of repentance in Matthew 18:3: "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter

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1. Vos, op. cit., p. 162.
2. Berkhof: Systematic Theology, p. 570.
3. Vos, op. cit., p. 165.
4. Ibid., p. 169.

into the Kingdom of heaven." This is the turn of repentance. Three Greek words are used in the Gospels to describe repentance. The first, *μεταμέλομαι* is a sorrow of sin, the second, *μετανοέω* expresses a change of mind and the third, *επιστρέφωμαι* a change in the direction of life, one goal substituted for another. Thus one turns completely around in his experience, away from his sin and toward God.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Faith.

Jesus emphasized repeatedly in his ministry the importance and value of faith. "Faith," he said, "could move mountains." He declared, "All things are possible to him that believeth." He severely condemns unbelief wherever he found it, even in his disciples.<sup>2</sup> Christ instructed his disciples, "You believe in God, believe also in me." John 14:1.

Hodge contends:

The laws of this kingdom require first and above all, faith in Jesus Christ, the sincere belief that he is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and cordial submission to him and trust in him as prophet, priest, and king.<sup>3</sup>

Faith and repentance result in the new birth, without which it is impossible to enter the kingdom.

## H. Summary

The conservative view, which adheres to the principle of the unity of the message of the Scriptures, regards the teachings of Jesus on the Kingdom to be in harmony with the working of God in the Old Testament. God ruled in the family, the Theocracy, and the Kingdom of

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1. Ibid., pp. 171, 172.

2. Ibid., pp. 182-190.

3. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 602.

Israel. When the Kingdom of Israel experienced disintegration because of their sins, God sent the prophets to warn of judgment and also promise a future, glorious Kingdom on earth. Christ's teachings harmonize with and amplify the Old Testament Messianic prophecies.

The Kingdom of God is spiritual and supernatural, with a transcendent God as the ruling King. The Kingdom over which He reigns is twofold; He exercises dominion over the natural universe, and also rules over the souls of men here on earth. The latter phase of the Kingdom has two phases: first, Christ's relation to the invisible Church and the individuals that comprise it, and second, Christ's relationship to the visible Church. In this spiritual Kingdom Christ is the absolute sovereign. Each Christian must recognize His rule over himself.

In its timing the Kingdom is both immanent and eschatological. Because Christ now rules in the hearts of His people, the spiritual Kingdom has already come and is now here. The Kingdom is in operation in so far as Christ rules in the heart and life of the Christian, who in turn puts Kingdom principles to work in his life. There is also the eschatological phase in which God will intervene in the life of men and with suddenness and power supernaturally establish the final form of the Kingdom. This cataclysmic phase occurs simultaneously with the return of Christ. The present and future Kingdoms may be thought of as one movement whose development has two phases, the one temporary and introductory, the other permanent. It is essentially the same spiritual Kingdom with God and Christ ruling in the hearts of the people.

The Kingdom is related to life, first, in its manifestation of power. Christ's Kingdom is in the process of making conquests over all

its enemies, among which are sin, Satan, and death. When Christ was on earth, He demonstrated the power of the Kingdom by performing all kinds of miracles. The source of power for holy living and service to God is available to the Christian through the Holy Spirit, who also empowered Christ for service. Second, the Kingdom is related to life in terms of righteousness. God, who is holy, requires righteousness of the members of His Kingdom. God not only requires righteousness, but also bestows it upon the Christian. First, He grants an imputed righteousness based on the perfect life and atoning death of Christ. Second, God grants an imparted righteousness to the seeker, so that his actual life approaches his position as a member of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is related to life, third, in its blessedness. The blessings are both negative and positive. The negative blessings help to deliver the Christian from evil; the blessing of forgiveness is the primary one. There are two outstanding positive blessings; these are the sonship of God and life--a life of fellowship with God here and now and eternal life in the future Kingdom.

The invisible Church, comprised of all true believers, is organically related to the spiritual Kingdom. The Church is the present form of the Kingdom. The same Christ rules over both; He is ruler of the Kingdom and Lord of the Church. The visible Church grows out of and exists by virtue of the life of the invisible Church. The visible Church is part of the Kingdom. Kingdom activities in all walks of life spring from the regenerate life of the visible Church.

Entrance into the Kingdom is gained by repentance and faith. One must completely turn from his sin and believe in Christ as personal Saviour.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

#### A. Introduction

The Kingdom interpreted in terms of the social gospel is a comparatively recent development; it rose to prominence in the latter part of the nineteenth century and reached its peak at the time of World War I. The name of Walter Rauschenbusch is most outstanding as the chief apostle in this movement. Hopkins says of his works that they "were undoubtedly the most significant religious publications in the United States if not the English language in the first two decades of the new century" in the field of American social Christianity. Charles Howard Hopkins states, "His books were translated into eighty foreign languages ...; he unquestionably influenced the religious life of his time more deeply than did any other individual."<sup>1</sup> The works of Rauschenbusch form the foundation of this study in the social view of the Kingdom. Other works which contribute to this study are the writings of such social gospel theologians as Gladden, Ely, Vedder, Peabody, Gardner, and Campbell. Several books which give a history and evaluation of the movement were also consulted; these were the works of Hopkins, Berkhof, McGiffert, and Hughley.

It must be borne in mind that those who hold this view have liberal ideas concerning the inspiration of the Scriptures. They consider certain parts of the message of the Bible as valid and other parts

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1. Charles Howard Hopkins: The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, p. 216.

as invalid. They make these evaluations of Scripture using as a criterion the principles of the social gospel of the Kingdom which they embrace.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Its Antecedents

The rise of the social conception of the Kingdom in modern times has been influenced by the following factors:

1. The philosophical movements of the eighteenth century, such as the Age of Reason in France, Deism in England, the Enlightenment in Germany, emphasized the worth of man, an optimistic outlook on life, the secularizing of life, and the inherent goodness of man; Berkhof speaks of the prevailing sentiment as, "God is in heaven; all's well with the world."<sup>2</sup>

2. Berkhof states that "there was also a passion for humanity ...philosophers...found the supreme end of history in the improvement of man. Says McGiffert, 'The good of man and not the glory of God, was regarded as the highest end of life, and virtue was measured by its promotion of that end.' And this good was to be realized in the present life, and not in some dim and unknown future."<sup>3</sup>

3. The theory of evolution, Berkhof states, "was fast becoming dominant in the field of biology, was also applied to history in the course of time, and furnished a scientific basis for Herder's conception of history as the education of the human race. It represents him as gradually growing into perfection" intellectually, morally, and religiously.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Post, pp. 29-32.

2. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, pp. 44, 45.

3. Ibid., p. 46.

4. Ibid., pp. 46, 47.



4. The doctrine of the immanence of God grew in popularity in the nineteenth century. This doctrine, says Berkhof, "teaches us to see humanity as one in God, if not as a part of God; to look upon history as a process in which, under the directing power of the indwelling God, His will is gradually realized in triumph of good over evil; and to hail in the increasing goodwill among men, in the establishment of just relations, and the growing reign of love - the coming of the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

5. The growth of the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man also helped in developing a social conception, for this ethical brotherhood forms a social organization dedicated to improve society.<sup>2</sup>

6. The study of sociology in the nineteenth century led people to regard society as an organic whole, a social organism which called for social service on every hand. Says Thomas Hall, "A new sense of brotherhood and social responsibility was awakened, and new longing for directness, sincerity and Christian manhood was born, and in hundreds of channels flow still the quiet waters of this phase of the religious awakening of the nineteenth century."<sup>3</sup>

7. Conventional and conservative Christianity all too often lacked a strong emphasis in the application of Christian principles to man's social relations. Certain theologians and churchmen who felt this weakness and reacted against it sought to correct this situation by a strong emphasis on the social interpretation and application of Christianity.

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1. Ibid., pp. 48, 49.
2. Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
3. Ibid., pp. 52, 53.

Rauschenbusch describes Christianity's failure in these terms:

The contributions made by Christianity to the working efficiency and the constructive social abilities of humanity in the past have been mainly indirect. The main aim set before Christians was to save their souls from eternal woe, to have communion with God now and hereafter, and to live God-fearing lives. It was individualistic religion, concentrated on the life to come. Its social effectiveness was largely a by-product.<sup>1</sup>

Vedder also scores the Christian Church; he says:

Historical Christianity has without doubt erred in its over-emphasis of the individual; the Protestantism of the last two centuries has gone to the very extreme of this assertion of the importance, the sacredness even, of the individual soul.<sup>2</sup>

He proceeds to indict the Church for its failures in the social realm:

From the time of Constantine, therefore, the ecclesiastical organization that constituted the corporate Church has remained on the side of wealth, on the side of privilege, on the side of organized injustice. The social mission of Christianity has been completely forgotten, or, if not forgotten, ignored. Christianity...proceeded to accomplish many things for the benefit of men, but they were mere surface poultices. The deep ulcer of society remained unhealed. Had the ideals of Jesus remained alive in what called itself his Church, it is manifest that every day must have witnessed their conscious violation, but it is only too plain that the ideals had perished."<sup>3</sup>

Gladden has traced this weakness back to the early Church. He says that because of Roman despotism the early Christians were unable to institute programs of social reform. He continues:

Then they began to look for a miraculous return of Jesus to set up his Kingdom in the world, and they waited for him to reconstruct the social order. That expectation held them for a thousand years. When it failed, they turned their thoughts to heaven, and as the eternal life came to the front in Christian hopes, the Kingdom of God receded to the background, and with it went much of the social potency of Christianity. The Kingdom of God was a social and collective hope, and it was for this earth. The eternal life was an individualistic hope, and it was

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1. Rauschenbusch: The Social Principles of Jesus, pp. 73, 74.
2. Henry C. Vedder: Socialism and the Ethics of Jesus, p. 465.
3. Ibid., pp. 468, 469.

not for this earth. The hope of eternal life, as it was then held, was the desire to escape from this world and be done with it."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the adherents of the social view of the Kingdom seek to correct this alleged distorted conception that Christianity has possessed so long and to reestablish the social emphasis of the Kingdom taught by Jesus.

### C. Its Relation to the Old and New Testaments

The social view of the Kingdom is in harmony with the Old Testament, particularly the message of the prophets. The prophets preached social righteousness and attempted to apply ethical principles to every day life. Rauschenbusch declares:

The Hebrew prophets had concentrated their incomparable religious energy on the simple demand for righteousness, especially in social and national life. The actual life of the nation, especially of its ruling classes, of course never squared with the religious ideal. The injustice and oppression around them seemed intolerable to the prophets, just because the ethical imperative within them was so strong.<sup>2</sup>

Ely interprets the message of the Old Testament in terms of the social view; he says:

We find this in the Psalms; we find such homely subjects mentioned as interest on money, as weights and measure, as righteous judgment, as merciful consideration of the need of the poor. Beyond controversy there runs all through the Bible as a distinct aim of God's purpose for Israel the abolition of poverty, and the establishment of general social welfare.<sup>3</sup>

However, the entire message of the prophets is not to be taken to be in perfect accord with the social view. The aim of the prophets, that of seeking an ethical Kingdom of social righteousness, is acceptable; however,

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1. Washington Gladden: The Church and Modern Life, pp. 95, 96.
2. Rauschenbusch, op. cit., p. 57.
3. Richard T. Ely: Social Aspects of Christianity, p. 155.

their conception of the means of establishing such a Kingdom is not acceptable. Rauschenbusch says:

Their unsatisfied desire for righteousness took the form of an ardent expectation of a coming day when things would be as they ought to be. God would make bare his holy arm to punish the wicked, to sift the good, to establish his law, and to vindicate the rights of the oppressed. This great "day of Jehovah" would inaugurate a new age, the Kingdom of God, the Reign of God. The phrase, then, embodies the social ideal of the finest religious minds of a unique people. The essential thing in it is the projection into the future of the demand for a just social order. The prophets looked to a direct miraculous act of God to realize their vision, but they were in close touch with the facts of political life and always demanded social action on the human side.<sup>1</sup>

Discrimination must be used, therefore, in evaluating the message of the Old Testament prophets from the standpoint of the social view. Wherever the prophets speak in terms of social righteousness, they are in accord with the social gospel and their message is valid. Whenever they speak of the establishment of the Kingdom of righteousness in eschatological terms, they are in error, and this part of their message is to be overlooked. Their enthusiasm dimmed their sense of reality in this matter. The Old Testament then is not to be considered as completely reliable; it is partially valid, and discrimination must be used in determining which parts are worthwhile and which are not; the principles of the social gospel should be used to determine this.

As with the Old Testament, the principles of the social view of the Kingdom are in accord with certain parts of the New Testament. The teachings of Jesus in the Gospels are not only valid but they form the foundation of the social interpretation of the Kingdom. Those who hold to this view see in the gospels the great teacher who sets forth wise

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1. Rauschenbusch, op. cit., pp. 57, 58.

principles, challenges men with high ethical goals, and encourages them to work for a Kingdom of social righteousness. To Jesus the Kingdom of God was the organizing center of all of his teachings: his Sermon on the Mount was its platform.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the gospels the remainder of the New Testament tends to shift the emphasis from the social conception of the Kingdom of the present in this life to the emphasis on individual salvation in relation to the Kingdom of the world to come. The conception of the Kingdom is replaced by the conception of the Church. The apostle Paul is especially responsible for this distortion of the teachings of Jesus through his epistles and position of leadership in the Church. The contention of Vedder is that "the new faith became the Christianity of Paul rather than the Christianity of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Vedder elaborates on this point:

But there is nothing to indicate any purpose of Jesus to found a Church. Nobody would ever conclude from the study of the gospels that he had any intention whatever of establishing a special organization for the propagation of his teachings. The only sayings that look in that direction are in the gospel of Matthew, and the doctrine of the Church that has been deduced from them must be either a misunderstanding of something that Jesus did say, or the putting into his mouth by a later generation of something that he never said and that never entered his mind. He desired a new social organism, not a new organization, and entire regeneration of mankind, not the association into a close corporation of a regenerate few. All outward, formal organization is foreign to his ideas, as the gospels make him known to us. It was Paul who introduced into the Christian assemblies the synagogue organization, according to the Christian records as we have them.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, one must use discrimination with the New Testament. It, like the Old Testament, is only partially reliable; the writings of Paul . . .

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1. Rauschenbusch; The Social Principles of Jesus, p. 56.
2. Vedder; op. cit., pp. 444-448.
3. Ibid., pp. 438, 439.

are to be questioned while the teachings of Jesus are to be accepted and followed.

D. Its Nature

1. Social.

The nature of the social view of the Kingdom is first of all, and obviously, essentially social. Berkhof speaks of this view as a "conception of the Kingdom that finds its essence and supreme purpose primarily, if not exclusively, in the social organization of humanity, that makes this idea central in its theology, and even looks upon it as the final aim of God in the history of the world."<sup>1</sup> Rauschenbusch says, "The Kingdom of God is humanity organized according to the will of God."<sup>2</sup> Gardner speaks of it in these terms:

And certainly whatever else may be included in that meaning, it must signify a social order, a system of human relations, progressively realized, in which the will of God is the formative principle and all the functions of which are organized and operated for the purpose of helping all men to realize the spiritual possibilities of humanity.<sup>3</sup>

Vedder speaks of Jesus as having the consciousness of a social mission; he says, "He desired a new social organism, not a new organization (the Church), an entire regeneration of mankind, not the association into a close corporation of a regenerate few." This new order has no place for individualism; it relates each life to total humanity and society.<sup>4</sup> Speaking in this vein Campbell says, "The Kingdom of God as Jesus understood it could never have been anything less than...a social order in which every individual unit would find his highest happiness in being and

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 45.
2. Rauschenbusch; A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 142.
3. Charles S. Gardner: The Ethics of Jesus and Social Problems, pp. 84,85.
4. Vedder, op. cit., pp. 438, 439.

doing the utmost for the whole."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Ethical.

The nature of this order is ethical as well as social. Ely declares:

Christianity is primarily concerned with this world, and it is the mission of Christianity to bring to pass here a Kingdom of Righteousness and to rescue from the evil one and redeem all our social relations.<sup>2</sup>

Berkhof says of the social view of the Kingdom:

In the modern conception of the Kingdom of God the ethical...looms large. Moreover the ethics of the Kingdom are socially conceived. The emphasis falls...on the activity of man...on the relations in which he stands to his fellowmen. The definitions given clearly indicate that the Kingdom is first of all a matter of ethical relations. It is the ideal social order, in which the golden rule is the law of life, and the spirit of service and of mutual helpfulness reigns supreme.<sup>3</sup>

In particular it is the ethical teachings of Jesus which must be incorporated into the social order. Berkhof says in this connection, "The ethics of Jesus are regarded as authoritative, because they are adjudged to be the highest utterance of the moral consciousness of the race."<sup>4</sup>

Not only are the literal ethical teachings of Jesus valid, but also those modern ethical concepts which are in harmony with the spirit of Jesus.

Rauschenbusch states:

Christianizing the social order means bringing it into harmony with the ethical convictions which we identify with Christ. A fairly definite body of moral convictions has taken shape in modern humanity. They express our collective consciousness, our working religion.<sup>5</sup>

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1. R. J. Campbell: Christianity and the Social Order, p. 148.
2. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 98.
3. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 61, 62.
4. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 52.
5. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order, p. 125.

Ely says, "The spirit of Christ should be infused into the social movement under consideration, and the social forces which are producing this upheaval of the world should become mighty ethical forces."<sup>1</sup>

E. Its Time Element

1. Its Immanent Phase.

The Kingdom of God is immanent because it concerns itself with this world and this life. Ely says, "Christianity is primarily concerned with this life..."<sup>2</sup> McGiffert states:

The Kingdom of God, which has usually in Christian history been identified with the heavenly kingdom lying in another world beyond the grave, or with the Christian church itself - an institution in the world but not of it - is now widely interpreted as the reign of the Christian spirit on this earth, or the control of all human relationships and institutions by the spirit of human sympathy, love and service.<sup>3</sup>

The Kingdom is, therefore, now in operation to the extent that the Christian spirit is reigning over modern life. It has been growing in strength down the centuries since Christ. Gardner, in speaking of it in terms of growth, says:

Evidently the Kingdom in His thought is a growth, a development, the unfolding of a principle of life, in its subjective as well as in its objective phases. There is, indeed, no aspect of the thinking of Jesus more characteristic than this. Again and again does He emphasize the principle of development. It is somewhat surprising, in fact, to see how large a place in His thinking this great principle has, which is so pregnant and so fruitful in modern thought. To feel this, one has but to recall the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven, which illustrate by natural processes both the subjective and objective phases of the Kingdom's development. The process of organizing a character or a society in conformity to the will of God takes place by a general law that prevails throughout the realm of nature, which is also a manifestation of the divine thought.

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1. Ely, op. cit., p. 148.
2. Ibid., p. 98.
3. Arthur Cushman McGiffert: The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas, p. 275.



Character must grow as a tree grows; social influences must spread as the fermentation of the leaven spreads. ...Jesus expected to see the entire social order regenerated by a gradual process...He projected into the world a great dynamic organizing social principle, or energy, which was to spread and to penetrate through and through the social organism, transforming it from within; so that ultimately all its activities would be performed in a new spirit, and all its forms changed and adapted to express the character of the new life which should animate it.<sup>1</sup>

That the Kingdom is immanent must be associated with the concept of God as immanent. An immanent God makes possible an immanent Kingdom. Rauschenbusch says that when one believes in the immanent God, "all history becomes the unfolding of the purpose of the immanent God who is working in the race toward the commonwealth of spiritual righteousness and liberty."<sup>2</sup> He further elaborates on how vital and close God is to humanity:

God is not only the spiritual representative of humanity; he is identified with it. In him we live and move and have our being. In us he lives and moves, though his being transcends ours. He is the life and light in every man and the mystic bond that unites us all. He is the spiritual power behind and beneath all our aspirations and achievements. He works through humanity to realize his purposes, and our sins block and destroy the Reign of God in which he might fully reveal and realize himself. Therefore, our sins against the least of our fellowmen in the last resort concern God. Therefore, when we retard the progress of mankind, we retard the revelation of the glory of God. Our universe is not a despotic monarchy, with God above the starry canopy and ourselves down here; it is a spiritual commonwealth with God in the midst of us. Jesus always and deliberately and energetically bound man and God together. This identification of the interests of God and man is characteristic of the religion of Jesus. Wherever God is isolated, we drop back to a pre-Christian stage of religion.<sup>3</sup>

It must be pointed out, however, that the process of establishing the Kingdom is entirely a natural one. God is so infused in the life of humanity that his help is regarded in terms of a natural process rather

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1. Gardner, op. cit., p. 69, 75.
2. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order, p. 121.
3. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 49, 50.

than supernatural intervention. Berkhof says in this respect:

What is the character of God's work in the establishment of the Kingdom? It does not appear to be a special supernatural activity, but simply part and parcel of the moral government of the immanent God, Who is guiding the universe towards that all-comprehensive goal, - a moral Kingdom that will include all his rational creatures, an ideal social order. God is in the world as "Universal Will," as the "Invisible King," and as the "deeper Self of man." When we rise to a consciousness of the indwelling God, He becomes our inspiration, and by the perfect example of Jesus Christ, as his supreme self-revelation, and as the perfect incarnation of the divine in human form, lifts us out of our sordid selfishness into a life of love and brotherliness. And as we travel along life's highway, the indwelling Spirit of God sustains us and guides our faltering steps. There is nothing miraculous or supernatural in this saving process, and in the establishment of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Its Eschatological Phase.

Theologians who adhere to the social view do not hold to a sudden, supernatural coming of the future phase of the Kingdom. They do not believe in a supernatural God who will arbitrarily intervene in the affairs of men and impose his will upon them by bringing about a cataclysmic change in the Kingdom. Such apocalyptic prophecies allegedly uttered by Jesus are explained away.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Kingdom is both present and future; it is here and yet it is coming. Rauschenbusch explains, "Like God it is in all tenses, eternal in the midst of time. It is foyus to see the Kingdom of God as always coming, always pressing in on the present, always big with possibility, and always inviting immediate action."<sup>3</sup> It may be thought of in terms of a process which has already begun - the reign of God on the earth; and this process is being advanced at present and

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 65, 66.
2. Gardner, op. cit., pp. 69-73.
3. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, p. 141.

will be brought to completion sometime in the future. Man may rejoice in the present victories of the Kingdom, and must work with anticipation toward its complete victory. It is a gradual process which demands man's constant contributions.<sup>1</sup>

Vedder predicts a bright future as a result of this process:

Beginning in individual hearts, the Kingdom is intended to work outward like leaven, until all society is affected. Insignificant as the mustard seed, it shall become a tree. It shall make the disciples of Jesus the salt of the earth, the light of the world. The world shall eventually be transformed into the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

#### F. Its Relation to Life

##### 1. In Terms of a Realm of Love.

The dominating element in the conception of God is that he is a God of love. Jesus helped the world to conceive of God as such. As Rauschenbusch states:

So we have in Jesus a perfect religious personality, a spiritual life completely filled by the realization of a God who is love. All his mind was set on God and one with him. Consequently it was also absorbed in the fundamental purpose of God, the Kingdom of God. Like the idea of God, the conception of the Kingdom was both an inheritance and a creation of Jesus; he received it and transformed it in accordance with his consciousness of God. Within his mind the punitive and imperialistic elements were steeped out of it, and the elements of love and solidarity were dyed into it. The Reign of God came to mean the organized fellowship of humanity acting under the impulse of love.<sup>3</sup>

Love is an indispensable requirement in the working of the Kingdom. Love should pervade all of the Kingdom and should motivate each Christian. It is the key in solving the problem of society. Rauschenbusch speaks of this as the "Realm of Love."<sup>4</sup>

1. Hopkins, p. 128.

2. Vedder, op. cit., p. 347.

3. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 154, 155.

4. Ibid., p. 54.

2. In Terms of a Commonwealth of Labor.

Rauschenbusch points out the close relationship between the "realm of love" and the "commonwealth of labor." He says:

Being the realm of love, the Kingdom of God must also be the commonwealth of co-operative labor, for how can we actively love others without serving their needs by our ability? If the Kingdom of God is a community of highly developed personality, it must also be an organization for labor, for none can realize himself fully without labor. A divinely ordered community...would expect from all their contribution of labor.<sup>1</sup>

In offering himself in Christian service the individual is fostering a sense of fellowship with other members of society. Also, he avoids the pitfall of mysticism on the one hand, which tends to dim his sense of the realities of common life, and ascetism on the other hand, which tends to make daily activities less noble. Rauschenbusch says concerning this, "A religious experience is not Christian unless it binds us closer to men and commits us more deeply to the Kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

Every Christian is given the task of striving for the establishment of the social ideal. Rauschenbusch declares:

Every man must have a conscious determination to help in his own place to work out a righteous social order for and with God. The race must increasingly turn its own evolution into a conscious process. It owes that duty to itself and to God who seeks an habitation in it. It must seek to realize its divine destiny. "Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!" This is the conscious evolutionary program of Jesus. It combines religion, social science, and ethical action in a perfect synthesis.<sup>3</sup>

G. Its Social Implications

1. The Brotherhood of Man.

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1. Ibid., p. 55.
2. Ibid., pp. 103-106.
3. Rauschenbusch: The Social Principles of Jesus, p. 76.

All men are vitally related to each other as brothers belonging to one great human family which constitutes a closely knit social organism. There is a sense of solidarity that binds them together in a common goal and destiny. Campbell states, "The Kingdom of God as Jesus understood it could never have been anything less than a universal brotherhood."<sup>1</sup> This idea of brotherhood is based on the conception of God as the universal Father of all so that all men are the children of God.

Vedder declares:

That God is our Father, that this is God's world, that we are all God's sons, bound by the tie of brotherhood into one great family - these are the corner-stones on which all the social teachings of Jesus rest. It was because he believed these things so firmly that Jesus had the courage to attempt the establishment of the Kingdom of God, a society ruled by God's spirit of unselfish love. His social ideal may be summed up by saying that his aim was to make all men brothers, by making them consciously sons of God; and that his firm conviction was, that only by brotherly love, thus implanted and sustained in human hearts, can the problems of society be solved.<sup>2</sup>

Gladden scores the conception of an indignant God who is angry with sinning man. He says:

The great gulf which the traditional theology had fixed between man and God does not exist; that the human and the divine are not contrasted natures. The fundamental fact is that God is our Father and we are his children. He is not only the Former of our bodies, he is the Father of our spirits.<sup>3</sup>

Vedder would not deny to anyone the continuous flow of the love of God; he states, "And if God is the Heavenly Father of all, it follows that every man is still his child, however, sinful, wandering, or degraded."<sup>4</sup>

It follows then that the tramp in New York's bowery has something in common

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1. Campbell, op. cit., p. 148.
2. Vedder, op. cit., p. 371.
3. Gladden, op. cit., p. 77.
4. Vedder, op. cit., p. 354.

with the successful broker of Wall Street; they are brothers; all men everywhere without exception are brothers. God is the Father of all and all are thus children of God.

Because men are the children of God and brothers in a great human family, life is to be counted as sacred and precious. One must adopt a proper attitude of sympathy and helpfulness. Vedder presents an ideal picture of what the brotherhood of men would be like if and when the teachings of Jesus are incorporated into every day life:

Therefore the practical ethics of Jesus are the ethics of the family life enlarged - as brothers and sisters the whole world are to live together in peace and mutual helpfulness, conscious of a common interest, and fully aware that the welfare of one is the welfare of all. Selfishness is excluded, because it is destructive of family life, which demands unity, and therefore the constant voluntary sacrifice of the individual for the common good.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. A Definite Social, Political Order.

Inasmuch as the social gospel theologians and churchmen are looking for the Kingdom in terms of the ideal social order, there is much dissatisfaction over conditions within the capitalistic system of government. Rauschenbusch particularly dislikes the following features of capitalism: first, competition, which contradicts fraternity and is the law of animals in the jungles; second, "the dictatorial and monopolistic character of great corporations," which subjugate the workers and exploit them selfishly, and possess too much power in politics; third, "the evil effects of modern economic organization as evidenced in adulteration of foods, short weights, spurious advertising, overproduction, and similar practices...which are perilous not only to the consumer but also to business and national morality"; fourth, the profit motive which stamps

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1. Vedder, op. cit., p. 392.

capitalism as "a mamonistic organization with which Christianity can never be content." He evaluates capitalism as "an unregenerate part of the social order, not based on freedom, love, and mutual service, as they are, but on autocracy, antagonism of interests, and exploitation. Furthermore, he maintains, capitalism "splits society into warring classes, perpetuates inequalities by its distribution of property, suppresses the Christian sense of the worth of personality, the love of freedom, and independence of action. If we can trust the Bible, God is against capitalism, its methods, spirit, and results."<sup>1</sup>

Gladden evaluates capitalism in these terms, "That it had been sadly perverted we all confess; we acknowledge with shame that it has become, in large measure, the instrument of injustice and oppression."<sup>2</sup>

Since capitalism is such an evil, unChristian system, it must either undergo a radical change or be replaced by an entirely new system. Rauschenbusch sets forth the following call to action:

Our business is to make over an antiquated and immoral economic system; to get rid of laws, customs, maxims and philosophies inherited from an evil and despotic past; to create just and brotherly relations between great groups and classes of society; and thus to lay a social foundation on which modern men individually can live and work in a fashion that will not outrage all the better elements in them. Our inherited Christian faith dealt with individuals; our present task deals with society.<sup>3</sup>

This is the process of Christianizing the social and economic and political order. In setting forth the terms of this process, the tendency is to move toward and embrace socialism, and provide it with a Christian basis and

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1. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 221-224.
2. Gladden, op. cit., pp. 154, 155.
3. Rauschenbusch: Christianizing the Social Order, pp. 41, 42.

motivation. Some men will go as far as to support the liberal principles of Socialism, while others will embrace unreservedly Socialism itself. Some regard it as a means toward an end while others regard it as an end in itself. Rauschenbusch never committed himself definitely to the political Socialist movement, but he leaned heavily in that direction. He said that a person would be a better Christian for being a Socialist and a better Socialist for being a Christian.<sup>1</sup> These words of his are also very revealing:

The Christian sense of the sanctity of life and personality and of the essential equality of men re-enforces the Socialist condemnation of the present order. The religious belief in the Fatherhood of God, in the fraternal solidity of men, and in the ultimate social redemption of the race through Christ lends a religious quality to the Socialist ideals.<sup>2</sup>

He advocated socialization of property, municipal control and management of monopolies and utilities, and social security. He considered the labor movement as the most important fact of modern life and indispensable to the establishment of the new social order.<sup>3</sup>

Campbell went still further than Rauschenbusch. He not only advocated socialistic principles, but he embraced Socialism. He considered Socialism a true and worthy companion of the social Kingdom movement; they are harmonious, having the same goals. He speaks about Socialism with enthusiasm:

The Socialism which is developing so generally in antagonism to conventional Christianity is far nearer to the original Christianity than the Christianity of the churches. The objective of Socialism is that with which Christianity began its history. Socialism is actually

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1. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 226, 227.
2. Ibid., p. 227.
3. Ibid., pp. 225, 226.



a swing back to that gospel of the Kingdom of God which was the only gospel the first Christians had to preach; the traditional theology of the churches is a departure from it. I do not mean, of course, to make the foolish statement that primitive Christianity was identical with the Socialism of today; it was not, but it was far nearer to the Socialism of today than to the official Christianity of today. Indeed, we may say that its aim and purpose were so nearly akin to those of present-day Socialism, that the latter may, without the least exaggeration, be described as the inheritor of the true Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of sentiment was so strong that in 1906 the Christian Socialist Fellowship was organized as a direct result of the influence of the Christian Socialist magazine, whose purpose was:

To permeate churches, denominations and other religious institutions with the social message of Jesus; to show that Socialism is the necessary economic expression of the Christian life; to end the class struggle by establishing industrial democracy and to hasten the reign of justice and brotherhood upon earth.<sup>2</sup>

This magazine claimed a subscription membership of two thousand clergymen in 1909 and twenty-thousand clergymen in 1918. Rauschenbusch was one of its contributors. The Christian Socialist Fellowship printed this statement of principle: "A Fellowship of brothers and comrades pledged to the support of the International Socialist Movement as the means of hastening that good time of God and Man, which we believe to be very near at hand." It invited to their conferences all men and women "who thoroughly believe in the Christianity of Socialism and the Socialism of Christianity - who are loyal to the Socialist party and believe that socialism should also have a distinctly religious expression." This Fellowship disbanded in 1924 in the face of violent post-war anti-socialist feelings.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Campbell, op. cit., pp. 19, 20.
2. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 235.
3. Ibid., pp. 235-244.

### 3. The Religious Significance of Secular Life.

Whereas formerly secular activities were considered less important than religious activities, the social Kingdom position elevated secular life to great importance and gave it religious significance.

McGiffert says:

It is widely recognized today that wherever a man is interested in something else than the life of the mere senses, or is elevated to something else than his own selfish welfare, there is religion. Whether it be art, or science, or philosophy, or patriotism, or humanitarianism, or the worship of God that thus takes him out of himself and lifts him into the region of the spiritual and ideal, the essence of religion is his.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, all of life's details, vicissitudes, and fortunes are to be interpreted in terms of religious significance. Peabody declares:

The pettiness of toil, the routines, the insignificance of life, - even its pain and bitterness, - are swept into the movement of his mighty hope, and become a part of its greatness instead of an obstacle to its course. Thus the teaching of Jesus gives meaning to many an obscure life, caught in the perplexity of the modern world.. A man cries out for the interpretation of his experience, and finds it as he prays, "Thy Kingdom come." This transfiguration of common life is what Jesus offers to men in his vision of the Kingdom of God. He looks upon the striving, struggling world of social movement as contributing to that social intention.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes such a high evaluation is placed on secular activities that religious activities tend to become insignificant. Berkhof says:

The line of demarcation between the sacred and the secular is obliterated. The ordinary daily duties of man are said to be just as sacred as his religious exercises. In fact, they represent his supreme interest in life...little importance is attached to strictly religious functions, such as prayer and meditation and worship, except as means for the promotion of social services.<sup>3</sup>

#### H. Its Relation to the Church

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1. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 79.
2. Francis Greenwood Peabody: Jesus Christ and the Social Question, pp. 120, 121.
3. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 60.

The Church is not to be equated with the Kingdom of God; it is only a part of the Kingdom. The Church is limited to a comparatively small segment of mankind, the fellowship of Christians. The Kingdom includes all of humanity; it is a fellowship of the children of God. The Kingdom is an end in itself; the Church is not an end in itself but a means toward that end.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the Church is an important instrument to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Other agencies helping to do this are the State, unions, schools of art and science, philanthropic societies, etc. The two most important agencies are the Church and State.

In speaking of the task of the Church, Rauschenbusch says:

Since the Kingdom is the supreme end of God, it must be the purpose for which the Church exists. The measure in which it fulfils this purpose is also the measure of its spiritual authority and honour. The institutions of the Church, its activities, its worship, and its theology must in the long run be tested by its effectiveness in creating the Kingdom of God. For the Church to see itself apart from the Kingdom, and to find its aims in itself, is the same sin of selfish detachment as when an individual selfishly separates himself from the common good.<sup>2</sup>

Campbell speaks with a strong emphasis on the Church's influence for this life and this Kingdom. He says:

I maintain that the Church has nothing whatever to do with preparing men for a world to come...The Church exists to make the World a Kingdom of God, and to fill it with his love...The whole paraphernalia of doctrine and observance is utterly useless and worse than useless unless it ministers to this end.<sup>3</sup>

The Church, therefore, cannot satisfy itself with a strictly spiritual ministry consisting of preaching and administering the sacraments. This

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1. Gardner, op. cit., pp. 76-78.
2. Rauschenbusch; A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 143, 144.
3. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 69.

kind of limited ministry is selfish. It must devote its energies mainly to the social life of man, and thus its ministry would be broadened to include all men, and it would then contribute toward establishing the social Kingdom.

### I. Its Messiah

Jesus Christ was a spiritual leader subject to human limitations. He did not possess a knowledge of the future and He was at times mistaken about things in the present. He was forced to change His plans when they were found to be unsuccessful. Vedder says concerning this:

Jesus declared that his Kingdom was not of this world, that he came to establish a spiritual Kingdom, not a political; but from all his teaching it is plain that his Kingdom was to be in this world. In the beginning he seems to have hoped for an ethical reformation of the Jewish people. When disappointed in this, he centered his hopes in a small group of carefully picked disciples, whom he might prepare by his instructions to continue his work when the enemies he had provoked should succeed in cutting short his own career.<sup>1</sup>

Campbell reveals further his limitations:

Christianity began as the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. Its Founder did not invent this name, and neither He nor His followers knew that they were promulgating a new religion which would last for many centuries after His death, and would become interwoven with a new civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Reference has been made to the need for discrimination in the message of the Bible. As far as Christ is concerned, His teachings dealing with the social and ethical life of man are valid, but his ideas of a future intervention of God in a cataclysmic manner to establish the Kingdom are not valid. He was mistaken as to the means of bringing in the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Vedder, op. cit., p. 438.
2. Campbell, op. cit., p. 21.
3. Ante, pp. 30-32.

Jesus, therefore, was human and subject to the limitations thereof. And yet He was also possessed of divinity, a divinity not inherent by nature as the unique Son of God, but by virtue of His character. He so consecrated Himself to God and dedicated His life to the ideal of the Kingdom that He progressively assumed divinity. He is not a supernatural person working out a supernatural redemption. He belongs to this world; His life was lived in an attempt to improve the world.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is the example for the world. He shows how men must avail themselves of divinity and grow in divine personality. He is the Master, the teacher, who instructs men who must try to possess His spirit and adopt His method of life.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus Christ is not the Messiah in the sense that He is now personally at work building His Kingdom and will some day reign supreme. Rather He, as a unique spiritual leader, initiated a movement known as the Kingdom of God. After His death His followers carried on this movement. However, the spirit of His personality still influences the world today. His teachings are the great legacy which He has given and they are all important.<sup>3</sup>

#### J. Its Conditions for Entrance

Entrance into the Kingdom is thought of in terms of an awakening of the individual as to the real nature of life and the Kingdom which permeates life. Berkhof says on this point:

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1. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 149-155.
2. Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 130, 210.
3. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 146-166.

Since man...is divine,...he needs no regeneration in the traditional sense, but simply an awakening of his higher self. He must become conscious of his true condition, and alive to the social significance of his life. His conversion is simply turning from a self-centered life to a life that centers in society. The change is brought about, when he makes Christ his exemplar.<sup>1</sup>

Once a man is awakened "he must," according to Rauschenbusch, "appropriate it and enjoy every approximation to the perfect society."<sup>2</sup>

#### K. Summary

The social view of the Gospel is a comparatively recent development, rising in the latter half of the nineteenth century and reaching its peak at about World War I. The rise of this movement was influenced by such factors as eighteenth century philosophy with its emphasis on the worth and inherent goodness of man, the passion for the improvement of man, the theory of evolution, the doctrine of the immanence of God, the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man, the study of sociology, and the lack of social application by the traditional Church.

The Old Testament message is partially in harmony with the social view. The message of the prophets in dealing with social evils and attempting to foster social righteousness is valid. Their ideas on the means of establishing the Kingdom, namely the future, apocalyptic intervention of God, are not valid. In the New Testament the teachings of Jesus form the foundation of the social Kingdom. However, His words concerning its eschatological coming are to be discounted. The epistles of Paul and others are not valid inasmuch as they changed the emphasis

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 64.
2. Rauschenbusch: The Social Principles of Jesus, p. 63.

from that of the Kingdom to that of the Church, and thus narrowed the vision from that of the mass of humanity to that of a comparatively small group of Christian believers.

The nature of the Kingdom is, first, social. The Kingdom concerns itself with total humanity and society as a whole. The individual and his religion are vitally related to the whole of community life. Second, the Kingdom is ethical; it is concerned with the application of moral principles to the life of humanity, so that ultimately social righteousness prevails. In particular it is the ethical principles of Jesus that form the foundation of the ethics of the Kingdom. However, modern ethical principles which are in harmony with the spirit of Jesus' teachings are also authoritative and should be incorporated into the ideal of the Kingdom.

As far as the time element is concerned, the Kingdom is immanent rather than eschatological. It is in operation now, in this world and in this life. There will be no such thing as a future, supernatural intervention of God which will establish it. Its future phase is thought of in terms of a fulfilment of the present process of growth and enlargement. This process is a natural one, consistent with man's present experience and growth. An immanent God must be associated with the immanent Kingdom and the process now in operation. God is so infused in the life of humanity that His help is regarded in terms of a natural process rather than supernatural intervention.

Its relation to life is expressed in terms of love and service. God's Kingdom is a "realm of love" where He dwells in relation to humanity on the basis of love and where His people accept this virtue as the

motivating force of their lives. Jesus helped the world to conceive of God as the Heavenly Father, possessing perfect love for His people. His people must possess this love also. People whose hearts are filled with love seek to express it in Christian service; this is called the "commonwealth of labor." The mystic and ascetic experiences of men are not to be coveted, for they tend to detach men from ordinary life. Christians must relate their lives to the society surrounding them in terms of loving service.

The social implications of the Kingdom are far reaching. First, the social organism, known as the Kingdom, is bound together by the conception of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal Brotherhood of man. God is not an angry, vindictive God, ready to pounce upon the sinner to destroy him. He is a Father who loves all men, even the worst of them. Therefore, all men are brothers of a great family, the whole human race. People should feel a sense of solidarity and seek to be loyal, sympathetic, and loving to their brothers. Second, there is a tendency on the part of the social Kingdom adherent to embrace a definite social-economic order, namely, Socialism. Capitalism possesses many evils, such as competition, over-production, profit-motive, false advertising, etc. which are contrary to Kingdom ethics. Socialism, on the other hand, possesses aims, principles, and purposes which are in harmony with a social interpretation of the Kingdom. The political movement known as Socialism was considered as the most effective means of instilling into modern society the principles of the social Kingdom. Third, the social principles of the Kingdom imply that secular activities are just as important and sacred as religious activities.



The Kingdom is related to the Church as a whole to one of its parts. The Church is confined to its constituents, which make for a comparatively small portion of mankind. The Kingdom includes all humanity. Also, the Church is one of several instruments, along with unions, schools, art, and science, which are being used to help establish the Kingdom.

Jesus, its Messiah, was subject to such human limitations as disappointment in His plans, changes of ideas, and mistaken conceptions concerning the future. He was the initiator of the Kingdom by the force of His personality and teachings. He is not presently reigning, nor is He destined to come at some future time to establish His Kingdom.

Its condition for entrance is merely that of awakening to the fact of the Kingdom being present and participating in its promises and demands.

CHAPTER III

THE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

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### THE DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF THE KINGDOM

#### A. Introduction

The dispensational view is a highly developed type of premillennialism; all premillennialism, however, is not dispensational. A moderate or simple type of premillennialism or chiliasm was widespread in the first three centuries. The Church of this period looked with expectation for the literal return of Christ to set up His Kingdom on the earth and deliver the Church from her persecutors. Blackstone says, "It is admitted on all sides that the premillennial coming of Christ, and His reign with His saints upon the earth a thousand years, was the faith of the early church."<sup>1</sup>

In the last century a highly developed form of premillennialism was born and grew steadily until it numbers thousands of enthusiastic adherents today. It originated at Plymouth, England among the Plymouth Brethren, some of whose leaders were Darby, Kelly, Newberry, and Chapman. Malachi Taylor brought this system to New York. The greatest cause of its growth is due to the widespread circulation of the Scofield edition of the Bible, whose notes present dispensational teachings.<sup>2</sup> Berkhof, in speaking of the rapid growth and popularity of this position says:

There is a great deal of concerted action and of definite propaganda, that is positively unique in the history of Premillennialism. Several educational institutions are actively engaged in disseminating the seeds of Millenarianism. During a number of years Blackstone's "Jesus

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1. William E. Blackstone: Jesus Is Coming, p. 66.
2. Philip Mauro: The Gospel of the Kingdom, pp. 20, 21.

Is Coming" was freely distributed among the graduates of our theological seminaries. Since 1878 so-called "Prophetic Conferences" were held in various large cities, for the study of unfulfilled prophecy, and the discussion of the doctrines of Premillennialism. In addition to that many summer Bible Institutes and evangelistic campaigns are largely directed to the propagation of premillennial teachings, and the well-known Sunday School Times of late became an open exponent of these principles. The result of all this is that now a wave of Premillennialism is sweeping over our country.<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the dispensational view of the Kingdom, one must know what is meant by "dispensation." Scofield states, "A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect to some specific revelation of the Will of God."<sup>2</sup> He further says, "Each dispensation may be regarded as a new test of the natural man, and each ends in judgment--marking his utter failure."<sup>3</sup> There are seven dispensations in the Bible that cover the whole life of man, past, present and future. These seven periods are:

1. Innocency. "Man was created in innocency, placed in a perfect environment,...The woman fell through pride; the man, deliberately ...the dispensation of innocency ended in the judgment of the Expulsion."<sup>4</sup>

2. Conscience. Fallen man possessed the knowledge of right and wrong. With an awakened conscience he "was responsible to do all known good, to abstain from all known evil, and to approach God through sacrifice." Man failed and this dispensation ended in the judgment of the flood.<sup>5</sup>

3. Human Government. After the flood man is given the responsibility of governing the world of men for God. "The responsibility rested

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1. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 135.
2. The Scofield Reference Bible, note to Genesis 1:28.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., note to Genesis 3:23.

upon the whole race, Jew and Gentile...both Israel and the Gentiles have governed for self, not God." The failure of Jewish rule brought the judgment of captivities. The failure of Gentile rule will bring the judgment of the smiting of the image in Daniel, chapter two.<sup>1</sup>

4. Promise. God made a covenant with Abraham that held a promise of a great seed and a great land. The descendants of Abraham were to inherit God's blessings while they dwelt in the land. This dispensation lasted until "Israel rashly accepted the law. Grace had prepared a deliverer (Moses), provided a sacrifice for the guilty, and by divine power brought them out of bondage; but at Sinai they exchanged grace for law." Although the dispensation of Promise ended, the Abrahamic covenant was not abrogated; it is unconditional and eternal. The era of law was disciplinary until Christ, the seed of promise, should come. "Only the dispensation, as a testing for Israel, ended at the giving of the law."<sup>2</sup>

5. Law. "This dispensation extends from Sinai to Calvary - from the Exodus to the Cross. The history of Israel in the wilderness and in the land is one long record of the violation of the law. The testing of the nation by law ended in the judgment of the Captivities, but the dispensation itself ended at the Cross."<sup>3</sup>

6. Grace. This dispensation begins with the death and resurrection of Christ. The Gospel is to be preached to all people and all who believe are blessed with salvation. "Law blesses the good; grace saves

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1. Ibid., note to Genesis 9:1.
2. Ibid., note to Genesis 12:1.
3. Ibid., note to Exodus 19:8.

the bad. Law demands that blessings be earned; grace is a free gift. The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation. The immediate result of this testing was the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and His crucifixion by Jew and Gentile. The predicted end of the testing of man under grace is the apostasy of the professing church, and the resultant apocalyptic judgments."<sup>1</sup>

7. Kingdom. This period, sometimes called the dispensation of the fullness of times, is the last of the ages of human life on the earth. It is the time when Christ will reign in righteousness and peace over the earth for a thousand years. This Kingdom age will begin when Christ returns in power and glory to set up His reign."<sup>2</sup>

To the dispensationalists the Bible is the Word of God. It is wholly inspired, completely reliable, and absolutely authoritative. Berkhof says they adhere generally to "the literal interpretation of Scripture, and especially of prophecy...but Millenarians do not deny the presence of figurative language in the Bible, nor the resulting necessity of interpreting this according to the rules of rhetoric."<sup>3</sup>

#### B. Its Relation to the Old Testament

The dispensational view of the Kingdom is vitally connected with the covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the future glory of God's people on the earth. The covenant with Abraham promised a great nation with an eternal inheritance. The Law did not abrogate this promise; neither did the scattering of the Jews in 70 A.D.

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1. Ibid., note on John 1:17.
2. Ibid., note on Ephesians 1:10.
3. Berkhof: The Kingdom of God, p. 137.

rule out this promise. The Jews will return to their own land and this covenant will again become operative. Ironside says that the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional and therefore its appearance in the future is inevitable. He lists the promises of this covenant:

- (a) "I will make of thee a great nation."
- (b) "I will bless thee, and make thy name great."
- (c) "Thou shalt be a blessing."
- (d) "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee."
- (e) "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). An additional promise is given in verse 7 - "Unto thy seed will I give this land."

In various forms, these promises are repeated again and again to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob. To them was committed the Oracles of God, and thus they were blessed and made a blessing. When we turn to the four Gospels, we come face-to-face with the "Promised Seed" through Whom the blessing was to come to all the world. But alas, "He came to his own and his own received him not." So we have the sad record of His rejection and crucifixion and, for the time being, Israel's national history as a divinely favored people comes to a close. Have then, the promises of God failed? Not at all, for in the prophetic writings of both Testaments it is clearly predicted that because of their sins they would be scattered throughout the entire world, and this is and has been their state for nineteen hundred years. It is plainly predicted that there will be a great national return to God when they shall recognize in the once rejected Jesus their rightful King and Saviour. Then they will be restored to their own land and the Abrahamic covenant fulfilled in the largest possible way.<sup>1</sup>

The Kingdom is more definitely dealt with in the Davidic Covenant, the elements of which shall form the pattern of the coming Kingdom. It is important to realize that this covenant with David is an eternal covenant. Chafer states:

In the Davidic Covenant the final consummation is again foreseen in that this covenant is unlimited in respect to time. It is the detail and duration of this covenant that gives it preeminent value as the logical starting-point for all kingdom study in the Scriptures. The portion of the Davidic Covenant which has to do with eternal rule

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1. Harry A. Ironside: The Lamp of Prophecy, pp. 87-91.

and government is as follows: "Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7: 11-17.

This covenant, as herein stated, secures an established Kingly order which will continue forever. The element of perpetuity in this kingly rule was not conditioned in Jehovah's oath by sin in the Davidic house. Chastisement was provided in case of disobedience, - chastisement which fell upon the nation in the captivities and the dispersion, - but the eternal purpose of the covenant is not abrogated: "Thy throne shall be established forever."<sup>1</sup>

Along with these two covenants, the Abrahamic and the Davidic, there are many Old Testament passages which are Messianic in character; some refer to Christ's first coming while others pertain to His second coming and the Kingdom of the future. Chafer says in this respect:

Some of the prophets spoke before the exile, some during the exile, while others spoke after a remnant, but not the nation, had returned to their land. While they spoke with individual purpose and style, they were united as one voice on certain great themes...they saw their own future blessings, the form and manner of which are too accurately described by them to be misunderstood. Their prophecies expanded into magnificent detail the covenanted reign of David's Son over the House of Jacob forever...passages...concerning the coming King and His kingdom..<sup>2</sup>

Premillenarians, therefore, base their conception of the Kingdom upon a literal interpretation of the covenants and Messianic passages of the Old Testament.

### C. Its Relation to the New Testament

#### 1. The Kingdom Offered.

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1. Lewis Sperry Chafer: The Kingdom in History and Prophecy, pp. 19, 20.
2. Ibid., pp. 26, 27.



The New Testament, especially the Gospel of Matthew, presents Jesus as the rightful and legal King of Israel. John the Baptist sought to prepare the people for His coming by announcing that the Kingdom of God was at hand and that repentance was imperative on the part of all the people. The Kingdom was about to be presented. During His ministry Christ presented Himself as the King and offered His Kingdom. Chafer declares:

He fulfilled every prediction that described Israel's Messiah King and the manner of His coming, at a time when all the records and genealogies were intact. He came of the tribe of Judah, a Son of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem of Judea. Such claims could not then be made by an impostor without arousing the violent opposition of the rulers of the nation. His claim to be King was never challenged, so far as title was concerned. He met every prediction concerning Israel's Immanuel King. He was that King.

In Christ, then, the kingdom covenant made to David had its confirmation..., it being one of the promises made unto the fathers. Israel's kingdom was faithfully offered to them by their King at His first appearing.<sup>1</sup>

Ironside says that Jesus and His disciples went everywhere "proclaiming the kingdom and declaring that the door into the kingdom now was open but the people must be regenerated to enter into it. The day had come when the kingdom of heaven was to be set up on the earth, provided the people were ready to receive it. Christ presented Himself to Israel as the promised Messiah."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Kingdom Rejected.

Christ met increasing opposition as He went about teaching Kingdom truth. The religious leaders rejected His claims of deity and

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1. Ibid., pp. 29-51.

2. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 21, 59.

thought of His miracles in terms of Satanic powers. The people ultimately cried out for His crucifixion rather than His coronation. In rejecting Jesus Christ the King, Israel unwittingly rejected the Kingdom. For the coming of the Kingdom is dependent upon the coming of the King.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Kingdom Postponed.

a. The Age of Grace

Inasmuch as the nation of Israel was not spiritually ready to receive the Kingdom, as witnessed by their rejection of it, the establishment of the Kingdom was postponed until some future day when Israel would gladly receive it. Ironside states on this point:

The day had come when the kingdom of heaven was to be set up on earth, provided the people were ready to receive it. The offer of the kingdom met with ever-increasing rejection until finally it was completely set to one side, when our Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is taken from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." That nation is not the Gentiles as such, but that nation refers to regenerated Israel in a coming day, and, in the meantime, the kingdom has been, as it were, deferred, and the gospel of the grace of God is going out to all the world. God has not changed His purpose, but He is not now setting up His kingdom in this world. That kingdom waits the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Thus not only did Israel reject the Kingdom, but God rejected them as members of the Kingdom and withdrew His blessings upon them as a nation. Their hopes and dreams for a glorious Kingdom on earth over which the Messiah should reign were blasted by their own unbelief.

Having withdrawn the offer of the Kingdom, God instituted a new age, the Age of Grace, which is the sixth dispensation in the plan of God. The transition from the presentation of the Kingdom to the Age

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1. Ibid., pp. 21, 66.

2. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 54, 55.

of Grace is manifest in the ministry of Jesus. In Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus upbraids the cities where He had accomplished mighty works, but, the people did not repent. He warns them of the judgment to come. Speaking of this passage, Scofield states:

The kingdom of heaven announced as "at hand" by John the Baptist, by the King Himself, and by the twelve, and attested by mighty works, has been morally rejected. The places chosen for the testing of the nation, Chorazin, Bethsaida, etc., having rejected both John and Jesus, the rejected King now speaks of judgment.<sup>1</sup>

In this same chapter, in Matthew 11:28, Christ gives the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

In a footnote to this verse Scofield points out:

The new message of Jesus. The rejected King now turns from the rejecting nation and offers, not the kingdom, but rest and service to such in the nation as are conscious of need. This is a pivotal point in the ministry of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

In Matthew 16:13-18 further indication is seen of a transition in the ministry of Jesus concerning the Kingdom. He receives the report from His disciples that the people regard Him to be one of several of the prophets. This constitutes continued rejection of Him as Messiah. Chafer, speaking on this point, says:

In connection with this new evidence of rejection He again reflects upon the joy that was to be His through His cross: "On this rock I will build my church." This is the joy that was set before Him, and which would be realized only by His rejection and sacrificial death.<sup>3</sup>

The death and resurrection of Christ ushered in the new dispensation of the grace of God. The Gospel is preached to all nations, and individuals who respond are saved and become members of the Church, which

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1. Scofield, op. cit., note on Matthew 11:20.
2. Scofield, op. cit., note on Matthew 11:28.
3. Chafer, op. cit., p. 60.

is spoken of as the "Body" of Christ and the "Bride" of Christ. Christ is not to be thought of as the King of the Church. He is the "Head" of the Church and therefore exercises Lordship over its members. He is the "Bridegroom" of the Church, and loves Her and walks in fellowship with Her. In the present age God is calling out a people for His name; He is offering pardon and forgiveness to Jew and Gentile; He is building the invisible Church of true believers; He is preparing the Bride for Her marriage to the Bridegroom.<sup>1</sup>

b. The Eschatological Kingdom

This present Age of Grace will be terminated at the second coming of Christ, who will, at that time, establish His Kingdom on earth with great power and glory. His coming and the establishment of the Kingdom will be sudden and cataclysmic. He will come not as the submissive Lamb, as in His first coming, but as the conquering Lion who brings judgment with Him.<sup>2</sup> Chafer reconstructs this picture of Christ from the Scriptures:

He comes in "power and great glory." Behold Him as lightning shining from the one part of heaven even unto the other. He has a "rod of iron" in His hand with which to dash the nations "in pieces like a potter's vessel." "His eyes are as a flame of fire" and "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations." That wicked one He shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. He is "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." "His glory covereth the heavens, and the earth is full of his praises. And his brightness is like the sun; rays stream from his hand; and there is the hiding of his power. Before him goes the plague, and burning pestilence follows his feet. He stands and measures the earth:

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1. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 54-64.
2. Chafer, op. cit., pp. 130-140.

he looks and makes nations tremble; the everlasting mountains are broken in pieces, the eternal hills sink down: His ways are everlasting."<sup>1</sup>

No one knows the exact time of Christ's coming, but, there will be certain signs in "the last days" of the present dispensation of the Age of Grace which will herald His coming. There are at least seven of these "signs of the times"; they are:

1. The prevalence of travel and knowledge is prophesied in Daniel 12:4, which says, "Shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased." Modern times have seen the fulfillment of this prophecy.<sup>2</sup>

2. Perilous times is another sign, mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1: "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come." In the physical realm trouble will come in the form of pestilence, famine, earthquakes, cyclones; in the political realm it will come in the form of rearmament, wars and rumors of wars.<sup>3</sup>

3. Spiritualism is mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:1: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." Blackstone claims that modern Spiritualism, in its delving into the spirit world, and Christian Science, a "doctrine of devils," are present fulfillment of this prophetic sign.<sup>4</sup>

4. Apostasy within Christendom is another sign, mentioned in

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1. Ibid., pp. 139, 140.
2. Blackstone, op. cit., pp. 228, 229.
3. Ibid., pp. 230, 231.
4. Ibid., p. 231.

2 Thessalonians 2:3: "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,..." Blackstone, speaking on this theme, says:

The Laodicean, or the last state of the Church, is one so sickening that the Lord says He will ~~spew~~ it out of His mouth. There is to be a dearth of faith especially in regard to the coming of the Lord. With the great Greek church wedded to politics, the Catholic church worshipping Mary in the place of Christ...and the Protestant churches so largely stiffened with formalism and honey-combed with infidelity, we see the apostasy moving forward with such rapid strides that we again conclude that the end is near.<sup>1</sup>

5. World-wide evangelism is significant in the return of Christ. Matthew 24:14 quotes Christ: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations, then shall the end come." In the modern missionary movement the gospel has been preached to all nations, although there are millions of people within certain nations and territories who have not had the gospel preached to them.<sup>2</sup>

6. The accumulation of great wealth on the part of individuals is mentioned in James 5:1,3: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you...Ye have heaped treasures together for the last days." The industrial age has produced the modern millionaire, thus making the fulfillment of this prophecy possible.<sup>3</sup>

7. The restoration of the nation of Israel in her national homeland is a most important sign. Jeremiah 31:7-10 is quoted as supporting this doctrine: "...publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnants of Israel. Behold I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coast of the earth,...a great company

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1. Ibid., pp. 231, 232.
2. Ibid., pp. 233, 234.
3. Ibid., p. 234.

shall return thither. He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock." Paul confirms this prophecy in Romans 11:25,26.

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Anti-semitic agitations in many countries have caused the Jews to desire their own country where they may live in peace. The Zionist movement is one expression of this desire.<sup>1</sup> Three startling developments in this present century are offered by the dispensationalist as proof that this prophecy is now in the process of being fulfilled. The first development was the proclamation by Great Britain during World War I of the Balfour Declaration which stated that Great Britain looked with favor upon the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People."<sup>2</sup> The second development has been the actual influx of Jews from many parts of the world into the land of Palestine. The third development was the establishment of the state of Israeli in recent years, thus creating a modern nation of Jews residing in their ancient homeland. However, the Jews will progressively experience opposition and interference in their land and eventually an invasion from the North by Soviet Russia and her allies, which will seek to acquire the great wealth of the country and exterminate the hated Jews at the same time. It is at this point that Christ will return to destroy the invaders and set up His millennial Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Blackstone, op. cit., pp. 234-238.
2. Harry Rimmer: Palestine the Coming Storm Center, p. 30.
3. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 87-92.

The dispensationalist concludes from a study of these signs and their alleged fulfillment in the present day that the world is now living approximately in "the last days" of the Age of Grace; Christ will soon return to set up His Kingdom upon the earth. Blackstone states, "Now if Israel is beginning to show signs of national life and is actually returning to Palestine, then surely the end of this dispensation "is nigh, even at the doors."<sup>1</sup>

#### D. Its Nature

##### 1. The Davidic Kingdom Restored.

###### a. Theocratic Reign on Earth

It is upon this very earth, where man has so signally failed in his attempt to rule, where nations have so obviously failed to dwell together in peace and harmony, that the Kingdom will be set up. Chafer states:

The Bible revelation regarding the kingdom presents the purpose, process and final realization of a divine government in the earth. This objective is the heart of the kingdom prayer: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Psalm 2:8). "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9). "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." (Isaiah 42:4). "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one." (Zechariah 14:9).<sup>2</sup>

This earthly Kingdom will be established by Christ when He returns with great power and glory.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it will be a Theocracy based on the "Theocratic-Davidic arrangement, God ruling in and through David's Son,

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1. Blackstone, op. cit., p. 236.
2. Chafer, op. cit., pp. 9, 30.
3. Cf. Ante, pp. 61, 62.



the covenant and the promises based on it relating to David's throne and kingdom."<sup>1</sup> The following passages are offered by Chafer in support of this claim:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jeremiah 23:5). "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:...with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his reins" (Isaiah 11:1-5). "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezekiel 37:4).<sup>2</sup>

b. Israel Regathered and Converted

It has been pointed out in a previous section of this thesis that in "the last days" of the Age of Grace the Jews will gravitate toward the ancient land of their forefathers, spurred on by anti-semitism in many parts of the world. Even now the Jewish State of Israeli exists. When the powers from the North, namely Russia and her allies, invade the Holy Land to appropriate its wealth and to liquidate the Jews, then Christ will appear to defend God's chosen people and destroy the invading armies.<sup>3</sup> The Jews now assembled in the Holy Land are not believers in the true Messiah, and neither will they be at the time of the invasion. However, when Christ delivers them from their enemies, their eyes will be opened, and they will mourn and repent of their sins. Their conversion will once again place them in fellowship with God and the Davidic Covenant will

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 145.
2. Chafer, op. cit., pp. 27, 28.
3. Cf. Ante, pp. 61-65.

again become effective. Scofield finds this taught in Zechariah, chapters twelve through fourteen.<sup>1</sup> The following passages are relevant:

In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem... I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him,.. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.<sup>2</sup> And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one.<sup>3</sup>

Chafer suggests these passages in this connection:

"Behold I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in my anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath: and I will bring them again into this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Jeremiah 32: 37, 38). "And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me: and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me." (Jeremiah 33:7,8).<sup>4</sup>

c. Extending to the Nations

When Christ returns, He will confront the nations of the world with judgment and blessing. He will separate the righteous nations from the wicked nations, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Nations guilty of evil, especially in mistreating the Jews, will receive punishment. Nations found to be righteous will be blessed with the privilege of taking their places in the Kingdom to be ruled by Christ on earth.<sup>5</sup> Ironside offers the following passage, Matthew 25:31-34, to support this idea:

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1. Cf. Scofield Reference Bible, notes on Zechariah, chapters 12-14.
2. Zechariah 12:8-10.
3. Zechariah 14:9.
4. Chafer, op. cit., pp. 33, 34.
5. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 137, 138.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The land of Palestine, and the city of Jerusalem, will assume great importance in the life of the nations. The rule of the Messiah will emanate from Jerusalem, which will become the metropolitan city of the converted nations. Isaiah 2:3 says: "...out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Also, the nations of the world shall look toward Jerusalem in religious faith, and their people shall make pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Micah 4:2 reads: "And many nations shall go, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Zechariah 8:22 confirms this thought: "Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." Under these conditions the nations shall regard the Jews as highly exalted and value their friendship. Zechariah 8:20-23 says, "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you." Thus, the present course of action in so many nations, that of antisemitic activities, will be completely reversed in the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 137.
2. Chafer, op. cit., pp. 30-37.

## 2. Temple Worship Restored.

The dispensationalist believes that when the Davidic Kingdom is restored, its ancient temple worship will be reinstated. Ezekiel, chapters forty to forty-six, tells of the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, and the resumption of the priesthood and sacrificial offerings. These sacrifices will then have no atoning significance, for the sacrifice of Christ is final and all sufficient. Berkhof says the dispensationalist prefers to speak of these sacrifices as "retrospective," "commemorative," or "sacramental."<sup>1</sup> Scofield adheres to this viewpoint as seen in his words:

Doubtless these offerings will be memorial, looking back to the cross, as the offerings under the old covenant were anticipatory, looking forward to the cross. In neither case have animal sacrifices power to put away sin.<sup>2</sup>

### E. Its Relation to Life

#### 1. Righteousness required.

The Kingdom will be ruled by "the Righteous Branch," whose reign will be one of righteousness. Isaiah 32:1 reads: "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." Therefore, righteous living will be required of all people, as individuals and nations. Isaiah 26:9 reads: "judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." And the work of righteousness shall be peace." Therefore, righteousness on all levels of life will prevent wars between nations.<sup>3</sup> Whenever and wherever in the earth there is any violation

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1. Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 147, 148.
2. Scofield, op. cit., footnote to Ezekiel 43:19.
3. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 125, 126.

of the standards of righteousness which God has set up, there will be swift correction, for, if necessary, Christ will rule with "a rod of iron."

The Sermon on the Mount will be the basis of righteous living; it will guide and motivate man in his relationship with his fellowman and the reigning Messiah. Chafer says on this point:

It should be borne in mind that the legal kingdom requirements as stated in the Sermon on the Mount are meant to prepare the way for, and condition life in, the earthly Davidic kingdom when it shall be set up upon the earth, and at that time when the kingdom prayer,<sup>1</sup> "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," has been answered.

## 2. Blessings Bestowed.

In the Kingdom age man will dwell in peace in a warless world. In the present age man is following after the advice of Joel 3:10, which reads: "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong." However, this will be reversed in the future as is seen in the prophecy of Isaiah 2:4: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Poverty will not be known then, for Micah 4:4 says that every man shall sit "under his vine and under his figtree." Sickness will just about disappear from the earth; Isaiah 33:24 reads: "And the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick..." Sickness will be a possibility, but it will occur when one willfully disobeys God. Therefore, men will live long lives in that period, possibly spanning the entire millenium if they live within the will of God. Death will not be prevalent during this period, but death will take place where it is inflicted by God in judgment upon

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1. Ibid., p. 49.

the wilful sinner. Righteousness, good health, long life, honest and satisfying toil, prosperity, peace, spiritual joy and praise will characterize the life of man in the millenium.<sup>1</sup>

#### F. Its Relation to the Church

Previously in this chapter it was pointed out that the Kingdom was offered to the Jews by Christ when He was here on earth. They were not spiritually ready to perceive this truth. They rejected the Messiah and in so doing, they also rejected the Kingdom. Christ then postponed the Kingdom until some future day when He will interrupt the flow of history and with power and judgment establish the Kingdom at His coming. In the meantime the Lord is building His Church, which is called His "Body." God is calling out from among the Jews and Gentiles, individuals who respond to the message of the Gospel, which is being preached in all the world. The New Testament never refers to Christ as the "King" of the Church; rather it names Him "Lord" of the Church. Also, He is the "Head" of the "Body" which is the Church, and, as the "Head," He directs and controls the "Body" and exercises Lordship over the members of it.<sup>2</sup>

Chafer draws this distinction:

To Israel He is Messiah, Immanuel and King: to the church He is Lord, Head and Bridegroom. The covenants and destinies of Israel are all earthly; the covenants and destinies of the church are all heavenly.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Church is not synonymous with the Kingdom, but is to be distinguished from it, yet, the Church will be vitally related to the Kingdom when it is established. Near the end of this age Christ,

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1. Ironside, op. cit., pp. 121, 126.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 59-61.
3. Chafer, op. cit., p. 87.

the Bridegroom, will/for His Church, the Bride; in 2 Thessalonians, chapter four, the dead in Christ will be raised and they and the living Christians will be caught up to meet Christ in the air; this is known as the Rapture. While the people left behind on earth will experience a seven year/period of troubles called the Great Tribulation, the Church will be with Christ in heaven where the Marriage of the Lamb will take place. At the end of the seven year period Christ will return with the saints of His Church to judge the nations and to establish the Kingdom. This is known as the Revelation of Christ. As the Bride of the King, the Church will share in the reign of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Chafer confirms this in these words:

As bride and consort the church will rightfully share with Him His reign. The purpose of this age, evidently, is not to form a kingdom by securing subjects of the King: it is the calling out and perfecting into His very image those who will be co-reigners with Him in His yet future kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the Church of this present age does not provide members for the Kingdom in the next age, that is, members to be ruled over; but, rather the Church provides leaders who, with Christ, will rule over the members of the Kingdom. Berkhof, in breaking down the membership of the Kingdom, says that Jesus Christ is its sovereign Citizen, the translated saints are its most honored citizens, the Israelites are its most natural citizens, and the regenerate Gentiles are its adopted citizens.<sup>3</sup>

#### G. Its Requirements for Entrance

The members of the Church will enter into the life of the Kingdom

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1. Blackstone, op. cit., pp. 72-83.
2. Chafer, op. cit., p. 87.
3. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 143.

by virtue of their coming with Christ when He returns to establish the Kingdom. In this present age one must meet the conditions of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ in order to obtain salvation. All who meet these conditions comprise the Church Universal, the Bride of Christ, and they will accompany Christ on His return and enter into the Kingdom to help rule and reign.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews will enter the Kingdom by a mass conversion experience and faith in Christ as their Messiah and Saviour. They will be in the land of Palestine and living in unbelief when Christ will return to deliver them from their enemies who will have invaded their land. Zechariah 12:9,10 tells us that the Jews will look upon Him "whom they have pierced ...and mourn." Then a fountain will be opened up to the Jews for sin and uncleanness.<sup>2</sup>

The Gentiles who are not destroyed at Christ's coming will be privileged to hear the message of forgiveness and they will respond in repentance and faith which will enable them to enter the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

#### H. Summary

The view of the Kingdom presented in this chapter springs from a highly developed form of premillennialism, known as dispensationalism. Dispensationalism is a comparatively modern movement, getting its start in the last century, and making great strides in popularity among the clergy and laity. The Scofield Reference Bible of this century has been most influential in the propagation and spread of this system of interpretation. Under this system the Bible is interpreted according to seven

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1. Cf. Ante, pp. 59-61.
2. Cf. Ante, pp. 66-67.
3. Chapter, op. cit., pp. 151, 156, 157.



dispensations in which God tests man. These seven periods of time cover the span of man's life in this world. These seven dispensations are: the age of innocence, the age of conscience, the age of human government, the age of promise, the age of law, the age of grace, and the age of the Kingdom. The world is now in the age of grace.

The dispensational view of the Kingdom is vitally connected with the prophecies and the covenants of the Old Testament. The covenant with Abraham promised a great nation with an eternal inheritance, which was neither abrogated by the giving of the law, nor cancelled by the scattering of the Jews in 70 A.D. This covenant will again become operative with the Jewish nation in the Holy Land when the Jews are regathered and converted to the returned Messiah. The Davidic Covenant also will become operative in the future; this covenant more specifically sets a pattern of the nature of the Kingdom and the Person of the King. Many other Old Testament passages are Messianic and pertain to the coming Kingdom. Premillenarians base their conception of the Kingdom upon a literal interpretation of these covenants and Messianic passages.

In the Gospels of the New Testament, especially the Gospel of Matthew, the Kingdom is offered to the people, first through the preparation of John the Baptist, and then by the King Himself, Jesus Christ. The Jewish nation was not spiritually enlightened, as it should have been. They failed to believe that Jesus was their Messiah and in rejecting Him as such, they rejected <sup>the</sup> Kingdom. Because of this, Jesus withdrew the offer of the Kingdom and postponed its coming until His return in glory. Having withdrawn the offer of the Kingdom, God instituted the present Age of Grace, which is the sixth dispensation.

This present Age of Grace will be terminated at the second coming of Christ, at which time He will establish the Kingdom on earth with great power and glory; the Kingdom's coming will be sudden and cataclysmic. Certain signs of "the latter days" of this Age of Grace will indicate that the end of the sixth dispensation is immanent, that Christ's coming to establish His Kingdom is at hand. These signs seem to be in the process of being fulfilled in this day, indicating that the world is approximately in the "latter days" at the present time.

The Kingdom to be established by Christ will be a restoration of the Davidic Kingdom, which then will exist in its perfected state. The Kingdom will be a Theocratic reign upon the earth. Christ, David's Son, as legal heir will visibly rule the earth in the millenium. In this Davidic Kingdom the Jews will be the prominent citizens. Near the end of this present Age of Grace the Jews will flock to Palestine as refugees and the nation will be regathered from many parts of the world. Christ, at His coming, will destroy their enemies and deliver Israel, who then will repent of their sins of unbelief and become converted. The rule of Christ will extend to the nations of the world. Jerusalem will be the capital city of the Kingdom age, for the rule of Christ will flow forth from it. Under these conditions the Jews will be a favored and privileged people and the nations will regard the Jews as highly exalted and value their friendship. Another important phase of the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom will be the reinstatement of temple worship, the resumption of the priesthood and the renewal of the practise of animal sacrifices. However, these offerings will be memorials, looking back upon the one complete and perfect sacrifice of Christ.

The Kingdom will be vitally related to life in that age. Because the King who will rule is the "Righteous Branch," His reign will be one of righteousness. Therefore, righteous living will be required of all individuals and nations. The Sermon on the Mount will form the basis for man's ethical and spiritual responsibilities. The Kingdom will not only require righteousness of its members, but, it will also bestow great blessings upon them. War, disease, poverty, and death will all but be abolished in the Kingdom. Sickness and death will occur only when man rebels against the rule of Christ, Who will punish them and send afflictions as judgments. Otherwise, man's life will normally be characterized by good health, long life, satisfying toil, prosperity, peace, spiritual joy, and praise.

The Kingdom is not to be thought of in terms of the Church. When the Kingdom was postponed, God instituted the Church, which He is building in this Age of Grace. In response to the preaching of the Gospel in all parts of the world, many people, both Jews and Gentiles, believe and are saved by the grace of God. God is incorporating these believers as individuals into His Universal Church, which is referred to as the Body of Christ. As Head of the Body, Christ is Lord; He is never called King of the Church in the Scriptures. Christ thus exercises Lordship over His Church and all Christians are subject to Him. When Christ establishes His Kingdom on the earth, the Church will be vitally related to it. The Church is spoken of as the Bride of Christ and when Christ rules in the Kingdom, the Church will share in that reign. The Church of the present age will provide leadership in the Kingdom age.

Repentance and faith in Christ will be required of the Church,

the restored Jewish nation and the Gentile nations in order to enter the Kingdom. The Church, which Christ will bring with Him to help rule in the Kingdom on earth, is now being formed of those individuals, both Jews and Gentiles, who repent and turn to Christ in saving faith. Re-gathered Israel must become converted and turn in faith to their Deliverer and Messiah when He comes. The Gentiles who are not judged at Christ's coming will hear the message of forgiveness and be required to turn from their sins and believe in Christ in order to enter the Kingdom.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF THE CONSERVATIVE, SOCIAL  
AND DISPENSATIONAL VIEWS

## CHAPTER IV

### COMPARISON OF THE CONSERVATIVE, SOCIAL AND DISPENSATIONAL VIEWS

#### A. Introduction

The three views of the Kingdom, the conservative, the social, and the dispensational, studied individually in preceding chapters, are dealt with together in this chapter in an effort to compare them and discover their similarities and differences. The section headings are patterned as far as possible after the headings found in the preceding chapters. The three views are discussed under each of these headings.

It is well to keep in mind that all three views use the Bible to support their positions. To the conservative and the dispensationalist, the Bible is the reliable and inspired Word of God whose authority is final and before which man's mind and reason must bow. Their differences in views are accounted for by differences in interpretation of the Scriptures. The social theologian does not accept the Bible as the reliable, revealed and inspired Word of God. It is a record of man's religious experiences. Discrimination must be used in determining what passages are valid and useful and which are not. One must be guided in this process of selectivity by keeping in mind the social principles of the Kingdom. Therefore, the Bible is not the final authority for the social view of the Kingdom but rather certain passages of the Scriptures support and strengthen the Kingdom's social principles.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 29-32.

## B. Their Relation to the Old Testament

The conservative view regards Old Testament history in terms of the rule of God, the King, over the individual life, the family, and the nation of the people of God. God always possessed a Kingdom throughout the Old Testament. It passed through various stages, and took on different forms. God's Kingdom was expressed in terms of His rule in the families of earth prior to the time of Abraham, then in terms of a pure theocracy, especially under Moses, and then in terms of the Kingdom of Israel. But when the Kingdom of Israel did not fare well because of their sins, and experienced apostasies, captivities, and other troubles, God sent His prophets to warn them and also to prophecy of a coming Kingdom which would be the ideal one. These Messianic passages are to be interpreted spiritually or figuratively rather than literally. The Jews, in Jesus' day, expected the Messiah to come and establish an earthly Kingdom, but He "transformed and spiritualized" this conception.<sup>1</sup>

The dispensational view is also vitally related to the Old Testament, but unlike the conservative view it interprets passages relevant to the Kingdom in a literal sense rather than a figurative sense. Great importance is attached to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, which at present are not effectively in operation, but will be in the Kingdom age. Other passages which are Messianic supply further details of the nature and pattern of life of the Kingdom. All these prophecies will be literally fulfilled when Christ sets up His Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ante, pp. 5-8.

2. Ante, pp. 4-6.

The social view relates the Kingdom to the Old Testament passages which deal with social righteousness, especially the messages of the prophets. Although the conservative and dispensational views both accept the Old Testament Kingdom prophecies as the sure Word of God that must be fulfilled, they differ in the interpretations of these passages; the conservative holding to a figurative fulfilment and the dispensationalists, a literal fulfilment. The social view, on the other hand, regards the eschatological utterances of the prophets as wishful thinking and, therefore, invalid; the prophets' demands for social righteousness and the application of ethical principles to every day life are relevant to the Kingdom and, therefore, valid and valuable as a guide. Therefore, the adherents of the social position use discrimination in order to determine what is valid and what is invalid in the message of the Old Testament. The covenants of the Old Testament have no present bearing on the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Their Nature

The conservative regards the nature of the Kingdom as essentially spiritual and supernatural. Inasmuch as it is the Kingdom of God, it is of heaven, not earth. His Kingdom is to be found among men wherever God rules in the hearts of His people. Vos states, "The Kingdom exists...where God supernaturally carries through his supremacy against all opposing powers and brings man to the willing recognition of the same."<sup>2</sup> The dispensationalist believes the Kingdom will be spiritual,

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1. Ante, pp. 29, 30.
2. Vos, op. cit., p. 85.



but it is distinctly an earthly Kingdom over which Christ will rule. When it comes, it will be the "final realization of a divine government in the earth. This objective is the heart of the Kingdom prayer: 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'"<sup>1</sup> The adherent to the social view believes that the Kingdom is essentially social and ethical. Berkhof speaks of this view as a "conception of the Kingdom that finds its essence and supreme purpose primarily, if not exclusively, in the social organization of humanity."<sup>2</sup> And Ely says that the mission of Christianity is to establish a Kingdom of righteousness in which man may redeem all his social relations.<sup>3</sup>

To the conservative, this invisible, spiritual Kingdom on earth is primarily concerned with the spiritual lives of the elect. Thus, Christ is King of only a segment of humanity, namely, the invisible, Universal Church of Jesus Christ. The social adherents deplore this position, which they consider narrow, inadequate, and untrue of the Kingdom program of Christ. Vedder declares, He (Jesus) desired a new social organism, not a new organization (the Church), an entire regeneration of mankind, not the association into a close corporation of a regenerate few."<sup>4</sup> Christ's new order has no place for individualism; it relates each life to total humanity and society. The dispensationalist believes that the rule of Christ will be world-wide, embracing all nations and peoples. Three distinct groups will comprise the Kingdom; they will be

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1. Chafer, op. cit., p. 9.
2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 45.
3. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 98.
4. Vedder, op. cit., pp. 438, 439.

the saints of the Church, the converted Jews and the converted Gentile nations.

In the thinking of the conservative and the dispensationalist, the Kingdom is supernatural; and Christ is the King who rules. The former emphasizes the spiritual, loving, persuasive rule of Christ in the heart and life of the believer, who recognizes the Kingship of Christ and voluntarily submits to His rule in glad surrender. The latter emphasizes the absolute and forceful rule of Christ over His subjects in the coming Kingdom; if necessary, Christ will rule with a rod of iron. The subjects in His Kingdom are given no choice; they must submit to His rule or suffer the consequences of His judgments. By and large, they will gladly submit to His rule.<sup>1</sup> The social view places its emphasis on a natural process rather than the supernatural. God is immanent rather than transcendent; His help and rule are thought of in terms of a natural process now in operation, the direction and progress of which are determined by the actions of man. Berkhof, in speaking of the social view says; "The emphasis falls...on the activity of man...on the relations in which he stands to his fellowmen."<sup>2</sup> There is no present nor will there be a future rule of Christ. It was the man Jesus who was the initiator of the Kingdom movement; He is not to be regarded as an eternal Christ who is destined to rule the Kingdom.

#### D. Their Time Element

##### 1. Their Immanent Phase.

The conservative believes that the Kingdom has already come

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1. Ante, pp. 69, 70.
2. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 61.

by virtue of the coming of Christ and is in operation at the present time. Jesus said in Matthew 12:28, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." Wherever Christ rules in the hearts of believers, His Kingdom is present and in operation; His people are called upon to put Kingdom principles to work in their lives and recognize the will of God in every area of their lives.<sup>1</sup> The social adherent also believes the Kingdom is present; he is vitally interested in the present phase of the Kingdom, almost to the exclusion of the future phase. The Kingdom of God is immanent because it concerns itself with this world and this life. Ely says: "Christianity is primarily concerned with this life..."<sup>2</sup> There is little or no stress on a heavenly Kingdom beyond the grave in another world. He emphasizes the immanency of God, whereas, the conservative emphasizes the transcendency of God. The latter speaks of the rule of Christ from heaven. The former adheres to a natural process in which God is fused with the activities and actions of man; McGiffert says, in this respect, that it is "the reign of the Christian spirit on this earth, or the control of all human relationships and institutions by the spirit of human sympathy, love and service."<sup>3</sup>

The dispensationalist believes the Kingdom is not now present; it is in a state of postponement. Christ offered the Kingdom to Israel, but the Jews were too blind to perceive His Messiahship. He withdrew the offer of the Kingdom and God instituted the present Age of Grace during

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1. Ante, pp. 10-12.
2. Ely, op. cit., p. 98.
3. McGiffert, op. cit., p. 275.

which God is calling out a people for His name and building the Church of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Their Eschatological Phase.

Both the dispensationalist and the conservative hold to the doctrine of a divine intervention and the cataclysmic establishment of the Kingdom by great force and power at the return of Christ. Although the conservative believes in a present phase of the Kingdom, he also looks for a future phase of the same Kingdom. It will not come through a long, gradual process of the immanent phase; but its coming will be sudden, cataclysmic. Christ will come and usher in the final and complete form of the Kingdom. The present and future Kingdoms may be thought of as one movement whose development has two phases, the one temporary and introductory, the other permanent. The King, who now rules in the hearts of believers, will come and establish the Kingdom in its final and complete form. Such great events as the resurrection of the dead, the judgments upon individuals and nations, the separation of the saved and the unsaved will take place at His return. This Kingdom will be an everlasting one, where only the redeemed among men will dwell; the redeemed will possess spiritual bodies. They will serve God in a perfect manner and be exalted. This will be the eternal Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The dispensationalist, who does not hold to an immanent Kingdom, believes that Christ at His return will establish on earth His Millennial Kingdom, which will bless the Jews and Gentile nations for a long period of time, if not exactly a thousand years. This will be the seventh and

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1. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 608.

last dispensation or age in the life span of man on the earth. At the end of the Millenium Satan will be released and will gather many people together to rebel against the rule of Christ, who will destroy them. After this the great white throne judgments will take place and God will establish His eternal Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The exponents of the social view reject all thoughts of a future supernatural intervention which will usher in the Kingdom with suddenness and force. They believe, however, that the present Kingdom has a bright future. The process now in operation will continue, as men work with anticipation toward its complete victory. Vedder speaks of the Kingdom in terms of its growth throughout all society; "It shall make the disciples of Jesus the salt of the earth, the light of the world. The world shall eventually be transformed into the Kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

The social view then, emphasizes the Kingdom which is now present, but which will grow in a natural process, to the exclusion of a future cataclysmic Kingdom. The dispensational view, on the other hand, denies a present Kingdom and emphasizes the coming Kingdom to be established by Christ. The conservative view is a balance between these two extremes; it holds to a present spiritual Kingdom and looks forward to a future, eternal Kingdom which will be established when Christ returns.

#### E. Their Relation to Life

All three views stress the demands of righteousness upon the lives of the members of the Kingdom. These demands are based upon the

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1. Ante, pp. 65-68.
2. Vedder, op. cit., p. 347.

character of God. The conservative and the dispensationalist emphasize the holiness of God. Hodge, a conservative, says: "The laws of the Kingdom require...that his people should be holy in heart and life. In one word they are required to be like Christ, in disposition, character, and conduct."<sup>1</sup> The dispensationalists point out that the Kingdom will be ruled by "the righteous Branch," whose reign will be one of righteousness. Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 32:1 are referred to; "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." Therefore, righteous living will be required of all people, individuals and nations. However, there is this difference between these two views: in the conservative view Christ demands righteousness but, He does not force obedience; in the dispensational view Christ not only will demand righteousness, but He will use force to make people conform to His standards. He will rule with a rod of iron and will inflict punishments upon those who rebel against His reign of righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

The social view also demands righteousness, but this is based on the love of God rather than His holiness. The dominating element in their conception of God is that He is a God of love. Jesus helped the world to conceive of God as such. Rauschenbusch states:

So we have in Jesus a perfect religious personality,...filled by the realization of a God who is love. The reign of God came to mean the organized fellowship of humanity acting under the impulse of love.<sup>3</sup>

Love, therefore, should pervade all of the Kingdom and should motivate each Christian to work for righteousness in all of society.<sup>4</sup> Whereas,

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1. Hodge, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 603.

2. Ante, pp. 69, 70.

3. Rauschenbusch: A Theology for the Social Gospel, pp. 154, 155.

4. Ante, pp. 13, 14.

personal righteousness in relation to God is stressed in the other two views, it is social righteousness, the individual in relation to society, which is stressed by the social adherent.

The blessings which are bestowed upon Kingdom members are all spiritual ones according to the conservative. There are negative blessings which help to deliver from evil; forgiveness of sins is the prominent blessing. There are two outstanding positive blessings; one is the sonship of God with all of the privileges involved, and the other is eternal life, which provides fellowship now in this life and in the life to come.<sup>1</sup> According to the dispensationalist, the blessings of the Kingdom will be both spiritual and physical. Its members will receive forgiveness of sins, and new life; they will know the joy of fellowship with the visible Christ in their presence. They will enjoy physical blessings, such as prosperity, peace among the nations, good health, and long life. It will be possible for men to live through the entire period of the Millenium if they live within the will of God. For if they rebel against the righteous rule of Christ, He will inflict punishments of sickness and death upon them. Thus, it is an ideal Kingdom, a Utopia; it provides for the physical and spiritual needs of the world. The social gospel theologian thinks of the blessings of the Kingdom in terms of man's social relationships, within the social order. All men are related to one another as brothers belonging to one great human family, which constitutes a closely knit social organism. There is a sense of solidarity that binds them together. Because men are the children of God and brothers in a

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1. Vos., op. cit., pp. 127-129.

great human family, life is to be counted as sacred and precious. One must adopt a proper attitude of sympathy and helpfulness. Vedder presents an ideal picture of the blessings which are possible if the teachings of Jesus are incorporated into every day life:

Therefore the practical ethics of Jesus are the ethics of the family life enlarged--as brothers and sisters the whole world are to live together in peace and mutual helpfulness, conscious of a common interest, and fully aware that the welfare of one is the welfare of all. Selfishness is excluded, because it is destructive of family life, which demands unity, and therefore the constant voluntary sacrifice of the individual is for the common good.<sup>1</sup>

#### F. Their Relation to the Church

In the thinking of the conservative, the Church and Kingdom are organically related. The invisible Church, which is composed of all true believers in all parts of the world, is identified with the Kingdom. Vos declares:

The Church is a form which the kingdom assumes.. Jesus plainly leads us to identify the invisible church and the kingdom. It is impossible to be in the one without being in the other. The kingdom, therefore, as truly as the invisible church, is constituted by the regenerate.<sup>2</sup>

The visible Church is also closely related to the Kingdom for, as Vos says, "The kingdom-life which exists in the invisible sphere finds expression in the kingdom-organism of the visible church.. Christ is King in this church."<sup>3</sup> The Church is not to be equated with the Kingdom, for the Kingdom is slightly broader than the Church. Such things as Christian schools, arts, sciences, and other activities could be distinguished from the visible Church; however, these Kingdom activities result from the regenerate life of the Church. Therefore, the Kingdom is broader

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1. Vedder, op. cit., p. 392.
2. Vos, op. cit., pp. 158, 159.
3. Ibid., p. 162.



than the Church in certain Kingdom activities carried on outside the Church by true members of the Church. But, the members of the Kingdom are identical with the members of the invisible Church; Christ, the King rules in their hearts and lives. All men are not, therefore, members of the Kingdom.

The social view differs on several points. The Kingdom is far broader than the Church. St. Paul is to be blamed for shifting the emphasis from the social conception of the Kingdom/<sup>to</sup> that of the Church, and narrowing the work and the people of God to a select few, and making individual salvation for a world to come important, rather than development and strengthening of life in the present world.<sup>1</sup> The Church is limited to a comparatively small segment of mankind, the fellowship of Christians. The Kingdom includes all of humanity; it is a fellowship of the children of God. The Kingdom is an end in itself; the Church is not an end in itself but a means toward that end.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the Church is an important instrument to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Indeed this is its primary and almost sole purpose. Campbell speaks with a strong emphasis on the Church's influence for this life and this Kingdom. He says:

I maintain that the Church has nothing whatever to do with preparing men for a world to come.. The Church exists to make the World a Kingdom of God, and to fill it with his love.. The whole paraphernalia of doctrine and observance is utterly useless and worse than useless unless it ministers to this end.<sup>3</sup>

Other agencies helping to do this are the State, unions, schools of art and science, and philanthropic societies. The two most important agencies

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1. Ante, pp. 31, 32.
2. Gardner, op. cit., pp. 76-78.
3. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 69.

are the Church and State. The conservative and dispensational views emphasize that the Church will not be responsible for bringing in the future Kingdom. It will be established by Christ when He returns. Both of these views also agree that the work of the Church is to preach the Gospel, work for the salvation of lost souls, prepare men for the life to come in the eternal Kingdom.

The dispensationalist, unlike the conservative and social theologian, does not associate the Church with the Kingdom but rather distinguishes the one from the other. This present dispensation is the Age of Grace in which God is calling out a people for His name and building the Church, which is called His "Body." The future dispensation will be the Kingdom Age, in which Christ will reign as Messiah. He is not the "King" of the Church, but rather He is called "Lord" of the Church or "Head" of the "Body." Also Christ is the "Bridegroom" of the Church, His "Bride." As the "Bride" of the King, the Church is destined to accompany Christ when He returns to establish His Kingdom and she will help rule over the Kingdom. Thus, the Church of this present Age of Grace will provide leadership and rule in the future Age of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the Church, as viewed by the dispensationalist and conservative, has been instituted by God; it is spiritual, Christ-centered and controlled; its work is to make converts and glorify God; it looks forward to the Coming of Christ who will establish the Kingdom. The conservative, who identifies the Church with the present Kingdom, anticipates the establishment of the eternal Kingdom at the return of Christ.

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1. Ante, pp. 71, 72.

The dispensationalist, who teaches that Christ postponed the Kingdom, believes He will establish the Millennial Kingdom on earth at His return and after the Millennium, the eternal Kingdom will be established. The social gospel adherent believes that Jesus initiated the Kingdom movement but Paul and others substituted the conception of the Church for that of the Kingdom and thus perverted Christ's teachings. The Church for centuries has been too narrow-minded, too exclusive, too other-worldly minded, too individualistic, too detached from society. Its job now is to work toward the realization of the Kingdom of God on the earth by transforming the social order. It must cooperate with other agencies, such as unions, the Socialist Political movement to establish a society of justice, prosperity, freedom, and happiness.<sup>1</sup>

#### G. Their Conditions for Entrance

Repentance and faith are the conditions required for entrance into the Kingdom according to the conservative and dispensational positions. Man by nature and practise is a guilty and condemned sinner who must turn from his sin and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ, who wrought redemption for man by virtue of His atoning death. From the conservative standpoint the Christian becomes a member of the present spiritual Kingdom at his conversion. According to dispensational teaching the Christian becomes a member only of the Church at his conversion; however, he is destined as a member of the Bride to enter the Kingdom which Christ will establish and he will share with Christ in the rule of the Kingdom. When Christ returns to earth to deliver regathered Israel

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1. Ante, pp. 45, 46.

from the enemies, the Jews will repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to their Messiah in faith; thus the Jews will enter the Kingdom by means of a mass conversion. The Gentile nations not destroyed in judgment at Christ's coming will also be given opportunity to repent of their sins and exercise faith in Jesus Christ and enter into the Millenium.<sup>1</sup>

The exponents of the social view minimize man's sin and magnify God's love, so that repentance and faith in a Saviour are unnecessary. Gladden scores the conception of an indignant God who is angry with sinning man. He says:

The great gulf which the traditional theology had fixed between man and God does not exist; that the human and the divine are not contrasted natures. The fundamental fact is that God is our Father and we are his children.<sup>2</sup>

And Vedder would not deny to anyone the continuous flow of the love of God; he states: "And if God is the Heavenly Father of all, it follows that every man is still his child, however, sinful, wandering, or degraded."<sup>3</sup> Entrance into the Kingdom is spoken of in terms of an awakening of the individual as to the real nature of life and the Kingdom which permeates life. Berkhof says:

Since man...is divine,...he needs no regeneration in the traditional sense, but simply an awakening of his higher self. He must become conscious of his true condition, and alive to the social significance of his life. His conversion is simply turning from a self-centered life to a life that centers in society. The change is brought about when he makes Christ his exemplar.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ante, p. 73.
2. Gladden, op. cit., p. 77.
3. Vedder, op. cit., p. 354.
4. Berkhof, op. cit., p. 64.

### H. Summary

This chapter reveals that there is significant agreement between the conservatives and dispensationalists on the essential elements of the Christian faith in reference to the Kingdom. They both believe in the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, His atoning death, His return in glory and power. They agree that the Church is a spiritual organism, composed of regenerate individuals whose new birth was brought about by repentance and faith. They both believe the work of the Church is to glorify God and preach the Gospel in order to make converts. They both look to the future, beyond this life, for the consummation of the work of God now in process. They both teach that the eschatological Kingdom will be established suddenly, in a cataclysmic manner by Christ at His second coming. Therefore, despite their differences of interpretation, they are brothers in Christ and may enjoy the bond of fellowship. Their main difference is that the conservative believes that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Kingdom will be fulfilled spiritually while the dispensationalist believes that they will be fulfilled literally. The conservative who believes in a present, spiritual Kingdom, looks for the eternal Kingdom to be established at the return of Christ. The dispensationalist, who denies the present spiritual Kingdom, looks for the millennial Kingdom to be established at the return of Christ.

This chapter also reveals that despite some similarities with the conservative and dispensationalist positions, the social position is basically and irreconcilably opposed to them. The social theologians do not believe in a divinely inspired Bible, an eternal and perfect Christ, the atonement, the need for repentance and regeneration, the second coming

of Christ, or an eschatological, cataclysmic Kingdom. Under these conditions a real bond of fellowship with conservatives and dispensationalists is impossible.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

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### SUMMARY

In this thesis three representative views of the Kingdom of God are presented and then compared with one another.

In chapter one the conservative view is presented. The Kingdom of God possessed antecedents which date back to the history of man in the Old Testament. God ruled in the family, the Theocracy, and the Kingdom of Israel. When the Kingdom of Israel was beset by sins, apostasies, and captivities, God sent the prophets who prophesied of a future Kingdom of God. Jesus came to amplify these prophecies to fulfill them. The Kingdom of God is spiritual and supernatural with the eternal and transcendent God as the ruling King. It has an immanent phase and an eschatological phase. Christ now rules over His spiritual Kingdom in the hearts of believers. He will establish the eternal Kingdom with power and suddenness at His second coming. These two phases of the Kingdom are part of one movement whose development proceeds from the first phase, which is temporary and introductory, to the second phase, which is permanent and final. It is essentially the same spiritual Kingdom with God and Christ ruling in the hearts of the people.

The Kingdom is related to life, first, in its manifestation of power, as witnessed by Christ's conquests over all His enemies, among whom are sin, Satan, and death. His source of power is also our source of power for holy living and service, namely the Holy Spirit of God. Second, He grants an imparted righteousness to the seeker, so that his actual life approaches his position as a member of the Kingdom. Third, the



Kingdom is related to life in the blessings it bestows. The primary negative blessing, which helps to deliver the Christian from evil, is forgiveness of sins. The two outstanding positive blessings are the adoption as the sons of God, and eternal life.

The Kingdom is identified with the invisible Church, whose members are true believers who recognize the Kingship of Christ over their lives. The Church is the present form of the Kingdom. The visible Church is made possible by the regenerate life of the invisible Church. The visible Church is part of the Kingdom. Entrance into the Kingdom is gained by responding to the Gospel which the Church preaches. Repentance and faith in Christ as personal Saviour are required.

In chapter two the social view of the Kingdom is dealt with. The Old Testament partially supports the social view. The prophets' exhortations dealing with social righteousness and ethical standards are valid; their prophecies concerning a future Kingdom to be established suddenly by a coming Messiah are discounted.

The nature of the Kingdom is, first of all, social, concerned with total humanity and society as a whole. Second, the Kingdom is ethical, concerned with the application of moral principles to the lives of humanity, so that ultimately social righteousness prevails. The Kingdom is immanent rather than eschatological. A natural process of growth and development is now in operation. An immanent God is linked up with this growth; His help is thought of in terms of a natural process rather than supernatural intervention. There will be no future Kingdom established by divine power in a cataclysmic manner.

The Kingdom is related to life in terms of the "realm of love"

and the "commonwealth of labor." God's greatest attribute is love, which guides His dealings with humanity. His children must also be motivated by love in their relationship with one another. When love motivates people, they are willing to offer themselves in glad service.

There are three implications of the social Kingdom. First, the Kingdom, as a social organism, is composed of people who are all brothers in one great family, with God as the universal Father. Second, there is a tendency on the part of the social Kingdom adherent to embrace a definite social-economic order, namely Socialism. Third, the social principles of the Kingdom imply that secular activities are just as important and sacred as religious activities.

The Church is only a small part of the Kingdom, which includes all of humanity. The task of the Church is to work for the further development of the social principles of the Kingdom along with other agencies such as unions, the State, philanthropic organizations.

Jesus, by the force of His personality and teachings, was the initiator of the Kingdom movement. But, being human, Jesus was subject to limitations and mistakes. He is not now reigning, nor destined to reign.

Its condition for entrance is that of awakening to the realization of the existence of the Kingdom and participating in its promises and demands.

In chapter three the dispensational view is presented. Basic to this view is the conception of seven dispensations, or periods of time, in which God tests man, and during which man's life in this world is spanned.

The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants and certain prophetic passages of the Old Testament form the foundation of the Kingdom. These prophecies concerning a Millennial Kingdom on the earth will be literally fulfilled.

Christ in His first coming offered the Kingdom to the Jewish nation, but through spiritual blindness, they rejected it. The Kingdom was then withdrawn and postponed until Christ's second coming. God instituted the present Age of Grace, which is the sixth dispensation. This Age of Grace will be ended when Christ comes to establish His Kingdom, which will be the seventh and final dispensation. The Bible gives certain signs, which, when they are fulfilled, will indicate the immanency of the coming of Christ.

The Kingdom which will be established will be a restoration of the Davidic Kingdom. Christ, as the legal heir to the throne, will visibly rule the earth from Jerusalem, which will be the capital of the world. The Jews will be prominent and all peoples will honor them. In keeping with the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom, temple worship will be instituted, the priesthood resumed and the practise of animal sacrifices renewed. However, these sin offerings will be memorials of the atonement.

The "Righteous Branch," whose reign will be a righteous one, will demand righteous living on the part of individuals and nations in all areas of life. Great blessings, such as good health, long life, prosperity, peace, spiritual joy, will characterize the life of man.

The Church is not the Kingdom nor a means of establishing the Kingdom. During this Age of Grace God is building the church, of which

Christ is Lord, Head and Bridegroom. At Christ's coming the Church, as the Bride, will share in the reign of Christ over the Kingdom. Thus the Church of the present age will provide leadership in the future age.

Repentance and faith will be required of the Church, of the restored Jewish nation, and the Gentiles in order to enter the Kingdom at Christ's coming.

Chapter four presents a comparison of the three views. It shows that despite their differences, the conservative and dispensational positions have much in common, especially in the area of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. These two positions are agreed on the following: the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the atonement, the need for cleansing and regeneration, salvation through repentance and faith in Christ, the present rule of Christ over the church, the spiritual nature of the Church, the evangelistic task of the Church, the second coming of Christ, and the establishment of a Kingdom by Christ at His return. These are essentials of the faith and where people embrace these, there is a bond of fellowship despite some differences. Their differences spring from differing opinions respecting the manner in which the Old Testament Kingdom prophecies will be fulfilled. The conservative believes in a spiritual fulfillment while the dispensationalist believes in a literal fulfillment. This leads the conservative to hold to a present spiritual Kingdom while waiting for Christ to come to establish the eternal Kingdom. It also leads the dispensationalist to look for Christ to come to establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth which will be Davidic in character.

The social view of the Kingdom is in basic and serious disagreement with the other views despite a few similarities. The social

theologian denies the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity and infallibility of Christ, the atonement, the ultimate judgment of God upon the sinners, the need of repentance and faith in a personal Saviour, the second coming of Christ, and the establishment of an eschatological Kingdom. They insist the nature of the Church is social rather than spiritual. The task of the Church is to establish a Kingdom of social righteousness rather than to evangelize and to make converts. It should be primarily interested in life in this world rather than the life in the next world. All of these differences are vital and open a gap which cannot be bridged.

Therefore, the conservative and the dispensationalist are in agreement with each other on a number of items in their views on the Kingdom, and these similarities are extremely important ones. The social Kingdom adherent occupies a position which cannot be reconciled in any sense of the word with the other two positions. The differences involved are too great and too numerous.

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