

ARTICLE IV.

THE IDEA OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ON EARTH, IN ITSELF
AND IN ITS HISTORY, PROOF THAT IT IS FROM GOD.¹

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THE theme of the present lecture is this: "The idea of Christ's kingdom, in itself and in its historical origin, development, and prevalence, is proof that it is from God and that it will be realized on earth."

In unfolding this proof the following points are to be considered:

I. The Idea of Christ's Kingdom is an Existing Power in Human Thought and Action.

The thinking of Christendom is now earnestly directed upon the person and work of Jesus, the Messianic King. The number of treatises recently published on the significance of his life and work, the extent to which they are circulated, and the interest with which they are discussed, are remarkable. More than one of them have been translated into different languages of Christendom and have had a sale that is extraordinary in the history of bookselling.

This power over the thinking of our day of one who lived in an age and country so remote, is a pregnant fact. If, as careless observers say, this is a superficial age given to novel-reading, it is significant that such an age is interested in a personage of antiquity who addresses himself only to that which is most profoundly spiritual in man. If, as is more correctly said, the age is unsurpassed in earnestness, this power of Jesus is equally significant in view of the direction of that earnestness—the political and social questions urgent

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in every Christian nation, involving in some instances the constitution and even the existence of the nation; the industrial interests absorbing human enterprise; the philosophy and science apparently leading away from religion.

In the generation preceding this, other questions pertaining to the life and work of Jesus were the subjects of excited controversy. This is another fact of similar significance. So in every age of intellectual or moral earnestness since Christ came, his person and kingdom have been powerful in human thought and action.

No other personage of antiquity has power over the age sufficient to awaken general interest in any discussion or controversy respecting him. Homer is one of the greatest of the ancients. His authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and even his existence, are denied. Yet the public is utterly indifferent to the question, and it would be impossible to awaken any general interest in its discussion.

This interest in Jesus is not speculative, but practical, pertaining to him as the world's Redeemer and King. The idea of his kingdom on earth, and the expectation of its progress and triumph in fulfilment of the prophecy and promise of the gospel, have become familiar elements of human thought and determinant forces in human action. The sublime idea of the conversion of the world to Christ has become so common as to cease to awaken wonder. Its realization is the object throughout Christendom of systematic, persistent, and energetic action, and elicits every year heroic consecration and self-sacrifice. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is perpetually offered.

Besides this direct interest in the conversion of the world, modern civilization is characterized by ideas derived from the gospel of the kingdom; the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God; philanthropy; the promise of human progress; the rights of man; the removal of oppression; the reign of justice and love displacing the reign of force.

These facts must be accounted for. This idea and expectation of Christ's reign over men in righteousness, an idea

and expectation never associated with any other personage, have so penetrated human history that they demand explanation. The only rational explanation is, that the idea and the promise are from God, and will be realized on earth.

II. The Idea of the Kingdom is in itself a Proof of its Divine Origin.

The consummation which it proposes to realize on earth is the universal reign of justice and love.

This consummation is not the reign of abstract truth and right, but the reign of Christ, the Messianic King, who is the truth and the life impersonated.

It is to be realized not by the spontaneous fermentation of human thought, nor by a natural law of progress, nor by the propagation of philosophical or ethical truth, or scientific discovery and inventions, but by the divine grace in Christ coming down upon humanity from above, and establishing itself in humanity as a power of redemption. The doctrine of the kingdom presupposes the knowledge of God, of sin, of condemnation, and of all that pertains to natural religion. Its distinctive and essential characteristic is redemption as an historical action of God in humanity. It emphasizes the person and the propitiatory work, as well as the reign and administration of the King. God in Christ, the divine in the human, enters human history as Redeemer, and makes propitiation for the sins of the world. The love, which God is, and which became incarnate in Christ, comes in the Holy Spirit and establishes itself in humanity as an energy of saving grace, and abides through all human history, working redemption for man. Through him the redeeming love of God in Christ is perpetually penetrating humanity and becoming the life of the world. Thus Christ reigns and administers his government on earth. Christ, the King anointed on the holy hill of Zion, seated at the right hand of Majesty on high, all power given to him in heaven and on earth, reigns over his kingdom on earth, administering his government through the Holy Spirit, through whom the

life that is in Christ is perpetually penetrating and vitalizing humanity, evolving from the kingdom of darkness his kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

In this the doctrine of the kingdom is distinguished from philosophy, ethics, politics, and sociology. These emphasize speculative truth, law, and institutions. Christianity, on the contrary, is not dogmatic, but historical; not speculation, but action; not command and condemnation, but invitation and promise; not organization, but spiritual life. Accordingly, the abstract word Christianity is not in the Bible; but Jesus, the Christ, the Redeemer who ever liveth, the incarnate energy of God's love always active in redemption, is on every page of the New Testament, and his Messianic reign is the theme of the whole Bible.

The citizens of the kingdom are all who, renewed by the Holy Spirit, are converted from the life of selfishness to the life of faith and love, "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." These become a brotherhood, united in fellowship by their common faith in Christ, and are workers together with God to extend his kingdom through the world. The kingdom, growing from generation to generation on earth, extends also to heaven, where Christ reigns in person, and where the redeemed at death become a brotherhood of glorified and immortal saints, still honoring the same King, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, and serving him in the interest of his kingdom.

The law of the kingdom is the law of love. The life of every citizen is a life of service. Every one acknowledges his obligation or debt to all men everywhere, as much as in him lies, to bring them into the kingdom. The service and the love are sacrificial, like Christ's. His sacrificial love is the type and measure of all Christian love.

The prophecy and promise of growth and ultimate triumph are inherent in the idea of the kingdom. The idea and expectation of the conversion of the world, of human progress to the universal reign of justice and love, are essential to

Christianity and inseparable from it. They are a gift to mankind from Christ.

The promise, in its extent, reaches to all mankind. Society over all the world is to be transfigured into the kingdom of God. As to its depth, it reaches the greatest sinner. In its indirect, but necessary results, it promises the purification of society, the Christianizing of civilization and of all institutions, the carrying out into the details of social life of the principles of Christian love.

For the realization of the promise the kingdom depends not on force, but on the moral power of Christ's life and love, on the preaching of the truth as it is in Christ, and on the power of love in the hearts and lives of Christians, made effectual by God's redeeming grace, always active in the Holy Spirit.

Such is the biblical doctrine of the kingdom of Christ. It presents a complete philosophy of human history. It leaves still incomprehensible the mysteries which transcend the limits of a finite mind; it even thrusts them on our notice in startling antinomies, as if to emphasize the infinitude of God, and awe us into reverence. But within the sphere of human intelligence it meets and answers the great questions which have occupied the human mind concerning the relations of man to God, the significance of his history, the law, end, and blessedness of his being. If it were fully realized, the perfection and blessedness both of the individual and of society would be attained. As such, it is a conception complete, satisfactory, and sublime. Were it only a creation of a poet's genius, it would, as a conception, surpass every creation of genius. What epic, what drama, can be compared with the drama — if it is a drama — of man's fall and his redemption? Were it only a theory which some philosopher had elaborated in his study, it would surpass all the products of the profoundest human thought — as a philosophy of human history so perfect that no mind can add to it or detract from it or alter it, without impairing its completeness.

The existence of this conception is to be accounted for. Its completeness as a conception, its grandeur as it presents itself to the imagination, its profoundness, comprehensiveness, and satisfactoriness, as it is taken up by thought, and applied to the complicated problem of man's life and destiny, indicate that it is from God.

We proceed to seek the historical origin of this wonderful idea. We trace it to the teaching of Jesus, by whom, if it was not originated, it was introduced as a power into the thinking and civilization of the world. This brings us to the third step in the argument.

III. Christ's Preaching of the Kingdom, and of Himself as the Messianic King, demands for its consistent Explanation the Admission that the Kingdom is from God, and that Jesus is its divinely anointed King.

Jesus preached the kingdom of God as coming on earth, and himself as its Messiah or divinely anointed King, and all the germinant truths involved therein, which have been the seeds of Christian civilization. This doctrine was essential and determinant in his idea of his own mission, and was the central topic of his preaching. This remains true, if we accept only what the severest historical criticism is obliged to acknowledge.

John the Baptist had preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and had warned the people to repent in preparation for its coming. To the people repeatedly, and once, at least, to an official deputation from the Saueh-drim, he had declared that the prophesied Messianic King had come. Jesus began his own ministry by preaching: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Throughout his public ministry his preaching consisted in presenting himself to the people as the divinely anointed and predicted King, in explaining the nature of the kingdom, his own redemptive work in setting it up, and the conditions of entering it, and in insisting on its spiritual character and growth, in refutation of the persistent error that it was to be a political

kingdom, established and advanced by force. At his baptism he was proclaimed "the Son of God," which was a well-known prophetic title of the Messiah. The temptation in the wilderness turned on the question what sort of a kingdom he should set up, and by what sort of agency; and he rejects every satanic proposal to establish an outward kingdom by force, even by his own miraculous power. When, at the first passover after his baptism, he presented himself at Jerusalem and purified the temple, it was a formal and official presentation of himself as the Messianic King to the nation as such, in the person of their rulers, in the seat of the government, and the temple of the religion. The Sermon on the Mount is an elaborate exposition of the spiritual nature of the kingdom, declaring in what it makes man's supreme blessedness to consist; what is the character of its citizens, and their relation to the world as bringing to it light and salvation; what the relation of the kingdom to the law of God, and the positive and spiritual significance of its requirements; what the simplicity and godly sincerity of its members, the nature of worship, the law of beneficence, the necessity of entire consecration, the beauty and safety of faith in God, and the completeness of the new life, beginning in faith, and vitalizing and rectifying the conduct to the remotest and minutest action. In his parables and his conversations with his disciples he is continually explaining what the kingdom is, and correcting current mistakes respecting it. At last, it is for this persistent preaching of himself as the divinely anointed King that he is arrested, condemned, and crucified. At his trial he declares before Pilate that he is the King, but explains: "My kingdom is not of this world." Over his cross was written the reason of his condemnation: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

This doctrine of the kingdom is the key to our Saviour's ministry, without which it is impossible rightly to understand it. This doctrine gives the point, significance, and consistency of his particular discourses and conversations. It gives, also, the point, significance, and consistency of his

ministry as a whole, as consisting not so much in what he teaches as in what he personally is and does as the Redeemer of men, anointed to set up and administer God's kingdom of grace. If Jesus had been simply a teacher and an example, and so is to be studied as on the same plane with philosophers, lawgivers, and reformers, it would be impossible to explain why his public ministry was so short; why his teaching, considered as a system either of sociology, ethics, philosophy, or theology, was so fragmentary and incomplete; why his teaching centred on himself, presenting himself as the way, the truth, and the life, and urging regard to himself personally, "for my sake," as the motive to draw men from sin to the heroism of love; and, finally, why he suffered an ignominious death, and why that death, both in his own teaching and in that of the apostles, was exalted to supreme significance. But all this becomes significant and consistent when we know that he is not merely our teacher and example, but our Redeemer, expressing in the incarnation and under human limitations God's justice and mercy; being, in his humiliation, suffering, and death, the propitiation for the sins of the world; rising from the grave the Conqueror of sin and death; ever living to infuse his own life into humanity, and quickening in the world the kingdom of righteousness over which he reigns. Then his own preaching, while on earth, must culminate not in philosophy, nor ethics, nor sociology, nor even in theology, but in the gospel of Christ: "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Then the leading motive to the life of love must be regard to and trust in him personally; the love must spring from faith in Christ. Then his name must be above every name. And the gospel is necessarily exclusive, and declares: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Observe, also, that Jesus taught this doctrine not as an interesting speculation, but as a gospel, a prophecy and a promise certain to be realized. His own confidence in its

realization, serene amid the opposition which stormed about him, is sublime. Suppose that you had been one of his hearers. You see a young man, with the coarse garb, the hard hands, the limited education, the habits and demeanor of a laboring man. Listening, from time to time, to his teachings, his conception of his kingdom gradually forms itself in its grandeur before your mind. You become intensely interested; you admire the grand conception; but you think it a vision too beautiful to be realized, and that it would be fanatical and visionary to attempt or expect it. Especially you wonder that one so uninfluential should offer himself as the king to realize this beautiful conception, and to make his name potent to rule all hearts. But Jesus preaches the prophecy and promise of the kingdom with unwavering assurance that the kingdom is about to come, and will extend till it fills the world. It becomes evident, however, that the people of his day cannot receive his doctrine. Whenever he goes to Jerusalem he is contemptuously rejected by those in authority, who early begin to plot against his life. He is obliged for safety to retire to Galilee, and prosecute his ministry in country places. Even there few receive him, and those from the humbler walks of life. Even his own family think he is quite gone crazy, and come to take him and confine him. At last it becomes evident that he must either abandon his pretensions or suffer an ignominious death. Yet his confidence in his kingdom remains unshaken.

On one occasion, near the close of his life, Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do men say that I am?" They replied that some acknowledged him to be a prophet, some acknowledged him as Elijah, the expected harbinger of the Christ; but, even at that late period in his ministry, they could make no favorable report of any increasing readiness to receive him as the Christ. He then asked: "Who say ye that I am?" Peter said: "Thou art the Christ." Jesus pronounced a blessing on him for recognizing him as the Christ, and immediately uttered that sublime prophecy of

the irresistible prevalence of his kingdom: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." On another occasion, foreseeing that the malignity of the rulers would soon bring him to the cross, he declares that the cross itself shall be the means of his triumph: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Afterwards, in Bethany, just before his arrest, a woman anointed him with a costly perfume. Jesus, while saying that she had anointed him for his burial, yet declares the certain triumph of his kingdom: "Wheresoever this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." This faith in his great idea, declared more confidently when all outward circumstances seemed to demonstrate its futility, and worldly wisdom could only pronounce it proof that he was visionary or insane, is sublime.

It appears, therefore, that the doctrine of his kingdom and the claim for himself to be the Messianic King were central, essential, and persistent in Christ's own conception and preaching of himself and his mission. If this doctrine and claim were not true, then he was either an impostor or a visionary. But in the light of historical criticism, it is conceded that he was not an impostor. Then the only theory which remains possible is that of Renan, that he was a visionary, and his claims for himself the result of illusion. We have, now, a complete alternative. Either Jesus was the Messiah, as he claimed to be, or else he was a visionary, and in all his public life the victim of his own illusions. But the hypothesis that he was a visionary is impossible, for two reasons. First, it is an hypothesis on which a consistent, rational, and satisfactory explanation of the teaching, work, and life of Jesus as an historical personage is impossible. Secondly, because the world owes to him the doctrine of the kingdom of God on earth, with all the truths germinant in it, which from his day till now have been vital forces of human progress; and it is impossible that this grandest,

mightiest, and most beneficent idea which ever was a power in human thought and life, originated in the illusions of a visionary. If this is visionary illusion, then visionary illusion is the grandest, mightiest, and most beneficent reality in human history.

Our position, therefore, is established. The teaching, work, and life of Jesus admit no rational and consistent explanation, except on the supposition that he is the divinely anointed Redeemer of the world, and that his kingdom is from God, and is destined to prevail.

IV. Consider Christ's Doctrine of the Kingdom in Contrast with the History of Human Thought in Heathen Nations before his Coming.

This is necessary to the full force of the preceding arguments. The truths of Christianity have so become the common property of the human mind, the elements of all thinking, the law of all action, the maxims of human rights, the principles of progress, the germinant forces of civilization, that we fail to appreciate the indebtedness of the world to Jesus as their author. We must go back into the darkness, and witness the rising of that Sun. I sometimes think if we did not know Jesus so well, we should know him better.

This, however, is only what is true of all luminaries; the greater the luminary, the more it is lost in the light which it creates. When a candle is lighted, we notice the candle, rather than its light. We admire the brilliancy of the stars; they have light enough to reveal themselves, not to dispel the darkness. When the moon, "sweet regent of the sky," comes up and throws "her silver mantle" over the dark; when the still concave of the firmament seems full of solid effulgence; when every object, silvered on one side, seems to start out of the darkness, and, as you move, shifting the light and shade, to take on fantastic forms, the moon itself is seen, if at all, only as one bright object in the brilliant scene. But when the sun rises, and brings the day, we use the light, but do not look at the sun. So Jesus, the Sun

of Righteousness, is lost in the light which he creates. Modern rationalism uses the very light which Christ has given as an argument against Christianity. It asks: "What need of a supernatural revelation in the midst of all this light?" As if one should ask: "What need of the sun in the daytime, when it is so light?" Heathen philosophers attract admiration to themselves. Like the stars, they have light enough to reveal themselves, not enough to dispel the night.

The point here to be made is that before Christ heathen literature and civilization were destitute of the idea and promise of a kingdom of God on earth, and of the germinant and life-giving thoughts involved in it.

The heathen had not the idea of God as being essentially love; nor of that love as a divine energy in human history, redeeming men from sin; nor of a kingdom of those redeemed from selfishness to faith and love, growing in power and extent, and destined to fill the world; nor of the obligation of men to consecrate themselves in self-devoting love to the service of mankind in seeking first the establishment of this kingdom; nor of the sacredness and worth of the individual man — a soul worth more than the world — a man so priceless that Christ "tasted death for every man"; nor of the consequent doctrines of the equality of men before God, the sacredness of human rights, and the foundation of society and government on justice and right, instead of force.

They had not the idea of a universal religion. Polytheism is essentially divisive. National gods are embittered with the national enmities. The gods of the hills fight against the gods of the valleys. The religion gives no common ground of unity, no common and supreme god, no common divine law, no common standard of appeal, no fellowship of common faith or hope. The cleavage between the nations cuts through the deepest foundations of thought, feeling, and interest, and leaves them more hopelessly dissevered than ships driven asunder on the ocean; for it cleaves the ocean itself, and leaves them no common element in which to separate.

They had not the idea of the brotherhood of man, nor of universal philanthropy, definitely proposing the blessedness of mankind as an end. Even Plato teaches that foreigners are natural enemies, and may be conquered and spoiled, if the state has power to do it. Everywhere is the law of might, not the law of love.

Finally, the heathen had not the prophecy nor the promise of a better future for man in the establishment of a universal reign of justice and love. The idea of human progress was not a power in their civilization. Their golden age was in the past.

When we search the history and literature of the heathen world, listening for some word of hope for man, we seem to stand on the shore of the ocean in a stormy night. We hear the sound of a vast activity, but only an activity that is baleful — the roar and tumult of the storm, the moaning and hissing of the waves as they break in vain on the relentless rocks, the groaning of an everlasting unrest beneath the impenetrable night.

How, then, is it to be explained that Jesus, this young man who has never learned, comes from his carpenter's shop, and announces at once this grand doctrine of the kingdom of God on earth — a conception which answers the questions that had tasked the profoundest minds of the race without result, which comprises a consistent philosophy of human history and destiny — a conception missed by the greatest geniuses of heathen civilization, yet grasped by Jesus at the outset in its simplicity and grandeur, and proclaimed, without emendation or change, without doubt or vacillation, through his entire ministry? The only rational explanation is that he was what he claimed to be — the Messianic King.

V. The Force of the Argument is further enhanced by the Relation of Christ's Teachings to the Previous Literature of the Jews.

Here it is objected, by those who put Jesus on the same

plane with the philosophers, that his idea of the kingdom was not original — that he derived it from the Hebrew literature. But this only leads to a new line of argument.

In the first place, this literature itself cannot well be accounted for without admitting its supernatural origin.

The Book of Genesis, one of the oldest of writings, declares, in its first sentence, the doctrine of one God, the Creator of all things, and therein solves the great problem of God's relation to his works, on which human thought for centuries afterwards, where that writing was not known, expended its most powerful efforts in vain. This of itself is evidence that it is from God to every one who is familiar with these fruitless efforts, and who has noted how in the Oriental nations these efforts issued in pantheism, confounding God with his works; and in the Western nations in the deification of human heroes, retaining God's personality at the expense of his unity and his deity.

Then, on the same page, another great truth which the wisdom of the heathen has missed — the unity and brotherhood of man.

Immediately, as we turn the page, we strike the great facts of sin and redemption — man a sinner and condemned, God's promise of redemption. Here this ancient writing strikes the key-note of that wonderful series of documents, the Jewish scriptures — the great idea which, through all these varied writings, in every style of composition, by authors of the most different conditions, writing without concert and at long intervals, through more than a thousand years, is never lost; is by each new writer taken up and further developed — this promise of redemption, no glimpse of which is found in the literature of Greece and Rome — the key-note, not of the Old Testament only, but also of that divine harmony in many parts which sweeps through all human history, and swells triumphant in the music of heaven. At first, we have only the promise of redemption to come from God in some way through the human race itself — the seed of the woman. To Abraham the promise

is renewed, with the more explicit definition that blessedness is to come to all mankind through his seed. Afterwards it is successively defined still further in the line of Isaac, of Jacob, of David. In the time of Moses we first have explicit intimation that the deliverer shall be an individual person. In the time of Samuel, and more clearly in the time of David, we find the idea of a kingdom and a king. In the Psalms and prophecies the kingdom and its king are delineated with ever-increasing clearness. We wonder, as we read, at the characteristics ascribed to them: "He shall judge the poor with righteousness; protection for the widow, the fatherless, and the weak; he shall break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free; he shall bind up the broken-hearted; in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth." Such a conception of a kingdom of universal justice, peace, and love, presented not as a poetic fancy, but as a prophecy and a promise, reiterated century after century in those old days of national exclusiveness, hate, oppression, and violence; pervading the literature of a people pre-eminently bigoted and intolerant, whose literature is in exact contrariety to the national character, and therefore cannot have been the natural outgrowth and expression of the national life; pervading that literature while totally wanting in the literature of every contemporary people — such a conception cannot be explained, except as that literature itself explains it, that that people had been chosen by God to receive and perpetuate his promise of the Christ.

In the next place, we have the fact that Jesus came at the appointed time, claiming to be the predicted king. The expectation of the prophesied Messiah had saturated the thinking of the Jewish people. The critics who insist that there are no clear predictions of Christ in the Old Testament must reconcile their criticism with this fact. This expectation the Jews carried with them through all the Eastern nations in their dispersion. When the luminary is broken, all the scattered fragments shine. How came it to pass that

just at the time when the Christ was generally expected Jesus should appear and fulfil the prophecy? It can be explained only on the supposition that he was the long-predicted king.

It is often urged that history is the necessary development of the primordial forces in human nature; that each age is the necessary outgrowth from its predecessors, and literature and great men are the necessary product of the spirit of their age. But Jesus could not have been the product of his age. Before his coming the Jewish expectation of the Messiah had hardened into the expectation of a temporal king, conquering and ruling by force. The age in which he appeared was of all ages the most barren of spiritual life. Polytheism had given place to philosophical scepticism. Judaism had decayed into the formalism of the Pharisee and the unbelief of the Sadducee. Jesus was in all respects the opposite of his age, and could not have been its natural product. That the life of such a people culminated in such a personage is proof that he was from God. If the Hebrew literature of the Old Testament demands a divine intervention to account for it, the argument is strengthened and made unanswerable by the fact that the literature of that same people culminated in that later and more wonderful series of documents, the New Testament.

Thus, whether we study pagan literature and civilization, or Jewish, the courses of human history antecedent to Christ's coming converge on him. In him is revealed the truth which the thinking of the heathen world had been groping to discover: in him are met the wants which the sin-conscious heart of the heathen world had been yearning to satisfy; in him are fulfilled the promise and the prophecy revealed by God through the Jewish prophets. In this sense he is the Desire of all nations. Not Ethiopia alone, but all the nations of antiquity, stretched forth their hands unto him.

VI. It remains to consider Christ's Doctrine of the Kingdom in its Relation to the History of the World after his Coming.

If you had been one of his hearers when he was on earth,

you might have said: "This man's conception of his kingdom surpasses all human conceptions in sublimity. In depth, compass, and completeness of thought, in grandeur of imagination and loftiness of genius, in purity of heart and power of love, he is in advance of all the great minds of antiquity — so in advance that comparison ceases, and contrast alone is possible. But if he expects this conception to be realized, he must be a visionary. Has he forgotten how infinitesimal in the rush of the world's affairs is the influence of one man; and does he expect to transform the world? Has he forgotten how powerless the greatest are after they die, how shadowy the great names and systems of the past; and does he expect to lift his crumbling arm out from the grave, and sway with it the living world? Especially, has he forgotten how feeble is the greatest man to command the love of men; and does this provincial, this poor man, this man without office or honorable position or influence with the great, this unlettered man, this outcast among his own people — does this man expect to rule the world by men's love to him? Does he expect to set up his power, where power is hardest to win, in the hearts of men, so that faith in and love to him will in all generations turn the energies of human hearts into a mighty enthusiasm to deliver mankind from sin? And does he expect that this power of his personal influence, this motive which he continually urges, 'for my sake,' will at last touch all hearts, and transform society everywhere into his kingdom?"

Still more would you think him a visionary, could you then know that his public ministry is to continue less than four years; that he is to suffer the most ignominious of deaths as a leader of sedition; that he is anticipating that death as the consummation of his work, into which the motive power of his name is to be concentrated; that, making but few converts himself, he is depending for the establishment of his kingdom after his death on the preaching of those few converts, with the story of his short life and ignominious death as the subject of their preaching, and thus

sending them out, a few sheep among many wolves, he is expecting the sheep to conquer the wolves.

And your belief that he is a visionary would be still more strengthened could you then look forward through the ages and foresee the coming changes. The Roman empire, then co-extensive with Occidental civilization, will be destroyed. The imperial throne of the Caesars, at whose base then rippled the peaceful and sunlit waves of a world-wide obedience, will sink when the fountains of that great deep shall be broken up. Barbarians, whose very existence was then unknown, will overwhelm the abodes of civilization. From the consequent confusion, desolation, and darkness the kingdoms of modern Europe will slowly and painfully emerge; new discoveries and inventions will change the courses of human thought and action; a new civilization will arise, so different from the ancient as to make that difficult of comprehension to the moderns; a new continent will be discovered; new philosophy and science, new arts and agencies, new institutions and laws will possess the earth. And this man expects his personal influence to live through all these changes; and not to live only, but to vitalize, energize, and guide them; to establish itself in the seats of the ancient and decaying civilization; to meet the barbarians and to make them Christians; in the ages of darkness attending and following the overthrow of the Roman empire to cause all men to bow in outward homage to the name of Jesus, and to quicken faithful ones truly to love him, and to seek for his sake to save men from sin; to kindle revival and reformation from age to age; to follow the star of empire in its westward way; to preside over the birth and growth of nations; to live in the latest progress of art, science, philosophy, and civil polity; in advance of all spiritual thought, the law of all human action, the ideal of human perfection, the source of the hope of pardon, of purification from sin, and of peace with God; at once the source, the motive, the strength, and the goal of all moral and spiritual progress.

And if Jesus was only a man, and on the same plane with

philosophers, then he was a visionary, the greatest of all history. But, from the day when he began to preach "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," until now, his name has been a power in human thought and life; the kingdom has been in the world gathering individuals into itself, and vitalizing civilization with its divine ideas, a central force in the history of all enlightened and progressive nations. Therefore he was not a visionary.

But if Jesus was not a visionary, then he is man's Redeemer and Lord. Then, with more than the wonder of those who cried: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" we exclaim: "What manner of man is this, who rules amid the tumult of the ages, and the courses of human thought obey him, and the farthest progress of man is confessedly towards the realization of his idea?" He is man's Redeemer and Lord; his idea of his kingdom, by its existence on the earth, and by its perpetuation and power through the ages, is proof that it is from God and is destined to prevail.

The argument is now complete. The idea of a kingdom of God on earth and the prophecy of its realization are present in modern thought and among the forces that determine modern progress and civilization. The idea is so complete as a solution of the problem of man's history and destiny, so sufficient, if realized, to constitute the perfection and blessedness of society, and as a conception of the ways of God with man so comprehensive and sublime, that in itself it demonstrates that it is from God. We then trace this grand conception back to the teaching of Jesus; we consider his preaching of it in its relation to the age in which he lived, in its relation to the antecedent history of human thought, both among the heathen and the Jews, and in its power in all subsequent human history. The conclusion is irresistible that the idea and prophecy of the kingdom of God existing as a power in the world's progress and civilization can be rationally accounted for only on the ground that it is from God and is destined to prevail.

In the nineteenth Psalm the law of God is compared to the sun and the stars. As these by shining declare their divine origin and the glory of God, so does God's law by its own perfection declare its divine origin and God's glory. Similar is the argument which has now been unfolded. God's kingdom, like the sun, must reveal itself and its divine glory by its own shining, by enlightening and vivifying the world. No one doubts that the modern astronomy will prevail through the world. Its principles and laws do but express the actual realities of the starry and solar systems. The more thoroughly the heavens are explored, the more complete must be the evidence that astronomy is true. So the doctrine of Christ's kingdom expresses the divine idea of redemption, which God in his administration of human affairs is constantly carrying out to its realization.

Human history, then, must contain and express the idea, and the study of human history must give proof of God's redeeming love, working in it to establish his kingdom of grace. His kingdom is progressive, like the growth of a mustard-seed. Therefore the argument is as yet incomplete. But every new generation, and especially every epoch in human progress, adds to its force. Already it is possible from the study of human history to construct an argument that history itself demands for its rational explanation the presence and power of God in it as a Redeemer establishing his kingdom. When in the future the kingdom shall possess the earth, then history itself will have proved the truth of Christ's claims, and God's redeeming grace and his kingdom will be as demonstrable from the facts of human history as the laws of astronomy are from the facts of the starry heavens.

We, then, on this new continent and in this distant age, acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, our Redeemer and Lord. With the thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands who in the ages past have loved him, and now praise him in heaven, with all the living of every kindred and people and tongue who now trust and serve him, we

bow before him, and join the great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Him we behold a sorrowful man in the dimness of a far-off age and land, burdened and smitten by the power of sin, suffering for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Him, we behold above the convulsions of the ages, the halo about his majestic head shining as the sun down all the tract of time, his voice speaking promise and peace amid the confusion of human affairs. Him, we behold seated on the right hand of majesty on high, all power given unto him in heaven and on earth, and on his head are many crowns. Him, we joyfully confess "King of kings and Lord of lords"; we offer the prayer which he has taught us: "Thy kingdom come"; we accept the command and the promise which he has given us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"; and, in the expectation that his kingdom shall fill the earth, we consecrate our lives to his service. And, entering into the joy of all the redeemed, with all who have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, we offer him our homage: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, unto him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."