

ARTICLE IV.

THE DIVINE AGENCY IN THE ESTABLISHMENT, ADMINISTRATION AND TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

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THE kingdom of Christ is not originated and advanced by the spontaneous development of humanity ; but a redeeming power comes down upon humanity from God, and enters into human history as an always-working energy, quickening men to spiritual life and transforming society into the kingdom of God. This thought is repugnant to the rationalism and naturalism of this age ; but it is distinctive and essential in Christianity, and must be recognized in any truly rational philosophy of human history. It is the subject which is now to be considered : The Divine Agency in the Establishment, Administration, and Triumph of Christ's Kingdom.

The historical course of the divine action in redemption, as set forth in the scriptures, is familiar, and needs only to be indicated. The divine energy of redemption enters human history at its very beginning and declares itself in promise. It appears in the call of Abraham and the promise to all the world through his seed, giving a distinct organization to God's kingdom in the call of a chosen people, to be his, as the prophets continually insist, not by outward descent, but by his covenant and promise, and their faith and obedience ; a kingdom, as Paul explicitly demonstrates, differing in form, but the same in essence with the same kingdom as it afterwards appeared in the Christian church. Centuries after the call of Abraham the Jewish state appears, itself a Theocracy, within which the germinant kingdom is secluded and protected, as a chestnut in its prickly bur, until it is ready

to drop and become the germ of a great tree. Then God is in Christ, makes propitiation for the sins of the world, subdues the power of darkness and death, and makes world-wide the power of attraction by which, from the Saviour's cross, he draws all men to himself. This saving power is perpetuated in the Holy Spirit "poured out on all flesh." Christ at the right hand of the majesty on high, administers his kingdom by the invisible agency of the life-giving Spirit. By this the energy of redeeming grace widens its scope, intensifies its action, multiplies its agencies, and makes itself more and more manifest as a spiritual power established in human history, quickening a spiritual church, directing human thought and action, guiding the forces of civilization, and transforming society into Christ's kingdom. Finally, Christ will come a second time to judgment and will present his kingdom, completed and glorious, to the Father.

Here is a divine action running through human history, working the redemption of man from sin. We will confine our attention to some of the general characteristics of the divine agency in the establishment, administration, and triumph of Christ's kingdom.

I. The Divine Agency is Historical.

Here is the starting-point of the difference between Christianity and Rationalism.

Christianity, being essentially redemption, is necessarily historical. It is the promised Christ of the Old Testament, the living Christ of the New Testament, the Christ reigning and life-giving in the dispensation of the Spirit. Christianity, therefore, is not primarily doctrine, but history; not philosophy or ethics, but the historical action of divine love redeeming man from sin. It is history in the past, life-giving energy in the present, promise for the future.

Rationalism, on the contrary, is the doctrine that human reason, without supernatural intervention, is sufficient for all man's spiritual needs. God moves above and before man in the undeviating and majestic movement of nature. Man

stands beneath, gazes on the grand panorama, and learns all respecting God that is needful for his spiritual welfare.

Rationalism is in agreement with Christianity in acknowledging the spirituality and personality of man, the endowment of man with reason, by which philosophy is possible, the existence of a personal God and of his moral government. In the same particulars rationalism is in antagonism to the naturalism which resolves mind into physiological phenomena, and thought and volition into forms of mechanical force, which confines the sphere of inquiry to phenomena and their uniform sequences, which denies that man is "the interpreter of nature," able to explain its phenomena by their rational principles, laws, and ends, and which acknowledges no personal God. Christianity presupposes theism and all the moral and religious truths which reason discovers. In respect to these truths it is not antagonistic to rationalism, but takes them up into itself. Christianity is itself the true rationalism, because it presupposes all the religious and moral truths which reason discovers, and because it claims to be itself the rational explanation of the facts of man's nature and history. Christianity has no conflict with reason; it is in itself the highest rationality, and it always appeals to reason as the arbiter of its own claims.

Notwithstanding this agreement, rationalism is in sharp contrast with Christianity. It teaches that the knowledge of God gained by human reason from the divine action in nature is sufficient for man's welfare. The difficulty with man is, therefore, his ignorance, not his sin. He needs instruction, not redemption. He is himself the originator of his own progress and perfection; and intellectual acquisition and culture make the only factor in human progress. Man is to think himself into the kingdom of God. Rationalism, therefore, is abstract and speculative, not historical. It is a philosophy. It coincides with dogmatism in insisting on intellectual belief of doctrine rather than on spiritual life; its gospel, its glad tidings of great joy, will be found somewhere in metaphysical speculation. Hence it rejects Chris-

tianity, and becomes antagonistic to it. It values Christianity only as Christianity enunciates ethical and philosophical truths, not as the historical action of God's redeeming grace. The permanent in it is the abstract truths, common to the religions and philosophies of the world. The historical facts are transient and unimportant. Jesus sinks to the level of Socrates and Confucius. When we have extracted from his story the truths which he taught, the history may be thrown away, as a merchant throws away the broken boxes after the goods are taken out, or as a chemist destroys a plant in distilling from it a drop of essential oil.

The chief priests and elders had the effrontery to say before the crucified Jesus: "Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." Let him leave the sacrifice of redemption unfinished, and conform to our ideas of the Messiah, and we will receive him. The same is the challenge of the rationalist to-day: "Come down from the cross; cease to offer thyself as the world's Redeemer and Lord; accept our ideas, and present thyself as one of the philosophers, — as one of us, for we also are philosophers, — and we will receive thee. Humanity is wiser than any individual; and we have the light of nineteen centuries which thou hadst not, and have surveyed all the philosophies and religions of the world, of which thou wast ignorant. Abandon the pretence that thou art the Redeemer of the world, and we will receive thee among the enlightened minds of human history, such as we are." There is a spice of self-appreciation here analogous to that which Goethe hits in his epigram on the pantheist: "What is the use of your jeers about the All and the One? The professor is a person; God is not."¹

Rationalism, allying itself with Christianity in opposition to naturalism, aims to establish intermediate between the two a rest for the intellect and the heart. But, denying historical redemption, by the necessity of its own principles it gravitates steadily towards naturalism; it builds its half-way house within the line of perpetual frost, and the glacier

¹ Werke i. p. 198. Sprüche in Reimen.

on which the structure rests bears it steadily downwards, and buries its fragments in the fields of eternal ice. It needs but a slight scrutiny to demonstrate this tendency; for rationalism involves irreconcilable inconsistencies, and does not admit a logically complete and systematic statement.

1. In rejecting miracles on the ground of their impossibility, it is precluded from admitting the existence of a personal God.

A miracle is always possible, if there is a personal God. This J. S. Mill affirms: "A miracle is no contradiction to the law of cause and effect; it is a new effect, supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause. Of the adequacy of that cause, if it exists, there can be no doubt; and the only antecedent improbability which can be ascribed to the miracle is the improbability that any such cause had existence in the case."¹ The argument against miracles founded on their impossibility has force only as part of a naturalism which rejects God. Trench compares it to the giant Antaeus, "unconquerable so long as permitted to rest on the earth out of which it sprung, but easily destroyed when once it is lifted into a higher world."² Rationalism, assuming as an axiom the impossibility of a miracle, suddenly drops into naturalism.

2. The same tendency is inherent in the rationalistic doctrine of the sufficiency of human reason. God acts in nature. Man, observing God's action in nature, attains knowledge of him, and that knowledge is sufficient for man's spiritual welfare.

But here is a God submerged in nature, imprisoned in its uniform and necessary sequences, incapable of acting outside of nature to quicken by his grace the heart of man. God is shut out from man, and cannot communicate his grace. Man is shut out from God, and cannot commune with him. Prayer becomes impossible; for it cannot alter the fixed courses of nature, in which alone God can act. The familiar illustration is, as a man in a boat by pulling on a line may draw

¹ Logic, p. 376.

² Miracles, p. 63.

himself towards the wharf, but cannot draw the wharf towards him, so prayer may lift the soul towards God, but cannot draw God to the soul. But, if so, an honest man will cease to pray. He will not practise on himself by offering petitions which he knows God cannot answer, merely by these spiritual gymnastics to gain strength to his own soul. It will be replied that the worshipper will conform his worship to his belief, and omit all petition. What, then, is left? Thanksgiving? But he has received no grace from God; his own reason is sufficient for his spiritual needs. Confession? But God gives neither pardon for the past nor grace for the future. What, then, is the worship? An empty rhapsody, a pale meditation. But this conception of God takes from meditation itself its warmth and power. If he heeds not your prayers, he equally heeds not your meditation. You pour your confessions and praises into empty space, not into the heart of God. You have fundamentally changed the Christian conception of God. He is no longer a Father and Redeemer, with heart warm to help his supplicating creatures, but a stone colossus, moving no finger in sympathy for his wretched creatures, who cling with their tears and entreaties to his stony feet. Nature is above God; and wretched men cry in vain to insensate forces that cannot hear, to unknowing laws that cannot answer, to a universal mechanism that rolls blindly and inevitably by the necessity of its own being.

These are legitimate inferences. For if God, transcending the courses of nature, acts in the hearts of individuals and in the courses of human history, communicating his sufficient grace to quicken and to sanctify, to help men in their ignorance, their sorrows, and their work, then man's reason is no longer regarded as sufficient for his spiritual needs; but God's gracious action, coming down upon humanity and superadded to the action of human reason, is admitted. This divine action, transcending the courses of nature, is supernatural, and thus is open to the objections which are urged against the possibility of miracles. Lastly, this gracious

action of God is necessarily historical. Rationalism is no longer a mere philosophy, a mere knowing; it admits the historical element as really as Christianity, and must proceed to tell us what and when and where this supernatural action is, and what are its historical results.

Rationalism, in some of its forms, admits the gracious action of God on the hearts of individuals and in human history. It even claims a certain superiority; it expresses impatience with Christianity, as needlessly bringing the revelation of prophets and apostles and the mediation of Christ between man and God, and exalts its own superiority as teaching the immediate communion of every man with God. It is impatient with the narrowness which limits inspiration to prophets and apostles, and vaunts its superiority in admitting that all genius is inspired. It is impatient with the exclusiveness of Christianity, and boasts its breadth in accepting the truths of all religions. All these claims, if clearly scrutinized, may be found to resolve themselves into naturalism. If not, rationalism, in making these claims, is inconsistent with itself.

3. The fundamental principle of rationalism necessitates not only the denial of redemption, but also the ignoring of sin. Since reason is sufficient, and man's spiritual welfare is attained by knowledge, the evil under which he suffers is not sin, but ignorance, and what he needs is not redemption, but instruction. Rationalism is now claiming to be the universal religion, dropping the historical and transitory, and gathering into itself the truths common to all religions. But all religions begin in the sense of sin and the conscious need of reconciliation to God. Rationalism excludes these. Therefore, instead of being the universal religion, it is not a religion, but only a philosophy. It will eventually appear that as a philosophy it is a philosophy falsely so called. Finding no place for the ideas and sentiments essential in all religions, it fails to declare the full-orbed truth of reason, and usurps the title of rationalism. It is, therefore, incapacitated to give a permanent resting-place either to the intellect or the heart.

We come back, then, to our starting-point, that God's action in establishing his kingdom is historical. Any divine action which is to be a power of renovation must be performed in contact with man and in the courses of human history. Otherwise it would be powerless on man as a revolution among a people in the stars. It is not possible to say *a priori* that the divine action must have been just what it is recorded in the Bible to have been. But, if God is to redeem men from sin, the redemptive action must enter human history at some point, and go on in some definite line of events to its consummation. Otherwise the facts of redemption and of sin must be rejected; and for the historical redemption must be substituted the bald rationalistic idea of religion as a knowledge of God and a consciousness of virtue, and of man's sufficiency for himself to realize the highest possibilities of his being.

Therefore objections against the scriptural history of God's action in redemption are equally pertinent against any other line of history in which the redemptive action may be conceived to have proceeded. If they have any force, it reaches to the extent of subverting the idea of redemption as contrary to reason, and impossible. All must admit that, if the Christian history of redemption is false, no other redemption has been or will be in human history, and the very idea of redemption must be abandoned. Accordingly Strauss and other rationalists start with the assumption that a supernatural and historical action in redemption is impossible. Their historical criticism of the Gospels is not for the purpose of ascertaining whether the narrative of redemption is true; but, assuming its falsity, the criticism aims only to explain how the wonderful history came into being and obtained credence, and what residuum of merely natural events may underlie it. It is a point gained to know that the historico-critical questions are secondary. The main question between the rationalist and the Christian pertains to the possibility of redemption. If the very conception of redemption in any form is not absurd, the historico-critical objections to Chris-

tianity lose their force. In fact, historical criticism then supports Christianity. For the unresolvable difficulty to the rationalist has always been, that both the external and the internal supports of the credibility of the gospel are so strong that it is impossible to explain the existence of these narratives, and their acceptance and power, on the supposition that the fundamental fact of the narrative is impossible.

It must be added that since God's action in redemption is in human history, it must not only be consonant with the constitution of the human mind, but also be at every time and place consonant with the existing condition of the minds on which it acts. If God acts on a child or a savage, the action can be effective only so far as it is adapted to their capacity. A human element, therefore, enters everywhere into God's action in redemption, limiting its action and modifying its results. It is sufficient for our present purpose distinctly to state this principle.

II. God's Action in Redemption involves the Miraculous.

The incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God are miraculous. These are essential in redemption. The whole conception of the Messiah and his kingdom implies the miraculous. The denial of miracles is the denial of that which is essential in Christianity. The attempt to retain Christianity after eliminating all that is miraculous is futile. If the residuum of speculative and ethical truth may be called a system of religion, it certainly has no claim to be called Christianity, and those who receive that system have no claim to be called Christians.

A single thought on this great subject is all that our space permits. It is involved in the very fact of sin that if God acts to redeem the sinner, the action must be special, varying from the action which would normally have expressed the divine perfections, if no creature had ever sinned, and varying also from the normal expression of the divine perfections in the punishment of sin. This speciality of the divine action seems to involve all that is essential in the miraculous.

The idea of atonement, as averting the punishment, which would normally express the divine perfection, by a divine action which equally expresses the same divine perfection in pardoning, seems to include within itself a specialty of divine action which is essentially miraculous.

The same specialty of the divine action in redemption appears to be involved in the very idea of sin. Jesus says: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." He here teaches that light and influence sufficient for him whose heart is right are insufficient for him whose heart is wrong. If the sinner is to be saved from sin, the redeeming energy must transcend all that is necessary for those who do not sin. The abnormal action of the sinner must be met by extraordinary action of God. He cannot be reclaimed by the same action of God's love which he has already resisted in his transgression.

The great revelation of nature is open to the sinner not less than to those who have not sinned. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good." God reveals himself to sinners as really as to the righteous in their own reason, and conscience, and spiritual wants. On the one as really as the other shines the light which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." To sinless ones the external revelation becomes an inward light. The spiritual mind discerns that which the carnal mind knoweth not. But the same revelation to a sinner is inadequate, not through a defect of the revelation, but through the blinding and hardening caused by sin. The light, so far as it enlightens him, is a lurid illumination of his guilt, driving him to superstition. His degeneracy is not through the want of light, but through the power of sin perverting it. So Paul explicitly teaches in the opening of his Epistle to the Romans.

Evidently, then, if sinners are to be saved, the action of God in saving them must transcend all his action in the uniform sequences of nature, and through the human reason and conscience. The abnormal condition of the sinner

requires special action of God for his redemption—action which would itself be abnormal if there were no sin; and in that sense a suspension of uniform law; but which is the normal action to meet abnormal conditions. And this is action which is miraculous. Miracle, then, is involved in the very idea of redemption. And the abnormal condition of the sinner is the occasion and antecedent probability of the special and therefore miraculous intervention of God in redemption. Miracles are reasonable because sin is unreasonable. Miracles are normal because sin is abnormal.

And since redemption is essentially miraculous, it is impossible to determine *a priori* how far or in what ways the redemptive energy entering into human history may transcend the ordinary sequences of nature, and no objection against any miracle recorded in the Bible is valid on the ground of the impossibility or antecedent improbability of miracles.

The argument against miracles is, therefore, an argument against redemption, and finally against the existence of sin, which is the occasion of redemption. Precisely accordant has been the history of rationalism, beginning in the denial of miracles, proceeding to the denial of redemption, and issuing in the denial of sin.

III. God's Action in Redemption constitutes a Revelation.

1. God's revelation of himself is primarily by his action, and especially by his action in redemption. God reveals himself by his action in nature. Suns and planets and cosmic forces are the words in which his thoughts are written, and the secret of his being revealed. So in redemption he reveals himself by his actions. He makes known what he is to sinners by what he does to sinners. The expulsion from Eden, the call of Abraham, the preservation and education of the Jews, the incarnation, the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit, the rise of Christ's kingdom on earth under the ministry of the apostles, and the continued intercession and reign of Christ

in the dispensation of the Spirit constitute God's revelation of himself to men.

2. The revelation by words, oral or written, is secondary and subordinate to the revelation by actions. Thought and character must be expressed in action before they can be symbolized by words. A mother cannot reveal her love to her child simply by taking it on her knee and saying: "I am your mother." The word is a mere articulate sound; it has no meaning. It is only by the service of motherly love, caring for the child and encompassing it through all its life, that she can reveal herself to her child. So revealing herself she makes the word *mother*, a life-long power to her child. So it is impossible for God to reveal himself primarily by words. Were it written across the sky, with letters made of stars, "GOD IS LOVE," it would be a meaningless emblazonry, unless God by his action had first given meaning to the words. This he does in redemption, revealing his majesty, his holiness, his authority, his patience, his immeasurable love, as pure as it is tender. So he puts meaning into words. The revelation, "GOD IS LOVE," is written not in letters on the sky, but in redeeming grace acting in the history of man. Thus the name of the Redeemer is above every name, a power to subdue, to quicken, and to inspire the sinner's heart.

It may be objected that after we have acquired the meaning of words, God may reveal himself through them. True. But the very point we are making is that thought and character must be expressed in deeds before they can be symbolized in words. In the revelation, "God is love," the word God, would have no meaning if God had not first manifested himself in his works; men would never have had occasion for the word if they had not first found the Infinite Being through his works; and the word "love" would have no meaning except such as is derived from the action of selfish men. In theology we are always at this disadvantage, that the thought and character of God must be expressed by words which primarily derive their meaning from the actions of men. But the words which declare the

mind and heart of God must be interpreted through the action of God, and not through the action of men. Thus God's action in redemption gives significance to the words of revelation which are to be interpreted by God's action rather than by man's. It is God's action in redemption in Christ and in the Holy Spirit by which we are to learn the meaning of God's love.

Hence Christ is emphatically the Word of God. In him is spoken the great Word of revelation. His person, his life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and continued reign are the true revelation of God. The revelation by words is secondary and subordinate.

3. When God has revealed himself by actions, a revelation by words is possible, supplementing the revelation by action. A mother, revealed already to her child through acts of love, can take the child on her knee and explain its filial duties; and every word is now powerful with the power of a mother's love. So God, entering into human history with the energy of redeeming grace, may inspire individuals with knowledge to be communicated to others. But these private revelations must always be dependent on and subordinate to the public acts of his redeeming love. A general reveals the plan of his campaign by his acts in prosecuting it. But, as incidental to it, he gives sealed orders to this general and that, sends despatches to this one and that, takes some into his counsels, and declares, explains, and vindicates his plans. These private communications are afterwards of great use in throwing light on his plans. But they are incidental and subordinate to the grand revelation which he makes in the action of the campaign. So we have inspired communications from prophets and apostles, but all incidental and subordinate to the grand revelation in the divine action in redemption, and pre-eminently in Christ, the Living Word.

4. Revelation, therefore, is not an end in itself, but an incident to the divine action in redemption. A mother in her care of her child, a general in the conduct of a campaign, a statesman in the administration of government, reveal

themselves; but the revelation is incidental to their main purpose, and is not itself the end for which they act. So God's action in redemption is incidentally a revelation; but the revelation is not the end for which he acts.

All God's action must be sincere and hearty. It must be the expression of what God is. He cannot act merely for show or for effect. His action is the expression of what he is; it carries in it all the earnestness and energy of God. So the blessed sunlight, which reveals the sun and illumines all things, is the outpouring of the light and heat which burn with energy inconceivable in the sun, raging in cyclones of fire, bursting in volcanic eruptions which might throw up the earth as a stone into the air, streaming in cones of flame eighty thousand miles into space, and in a few minutes falling back into the burning mass. So God's love, glowing with the infinite energies of the Godhead, and pouring through all space with blessing, will certainly reveal itself; but the revelation is not the end for which he acts.

If the revelation were the end of the action, the action itself would cease to be the action of love; the revelation would cease to be a revelation of love; and the whole manifestation would cease to be a moral power quickening love in man. Any theory which represents the incarnation or any divine action as designed only to show God, and so to produce a moral impression on his creatures, is void of meaning; for God's action can reveal God and become a moral power upon man only as his action is the sincere and hearty expression and outshining of what God is. The supposition that revelation is an end in itself drives us into this erroneous theory — a conception derogatory to God, and making his action not real and hearty, but scenic and sensational. It also leads legitimately to the fundamental error of rationalism — that the evil into which man has fallen is not sin, but ignorance, or at the worst error, and therefore that he needs not redemption, but instruction.

Writers on the Evidences of Christianity often argue as if the grand design of God in all the divine action recorded

in the Old Testament and the New was to prepare the Bible as an authoritative revelation of his will, and leave the Bible in the world to effect its renovation. But it is not the written word, but the living Word; not the Bible, but God's grace in Christ and in the Holy Spirit, which is the power of salvation to men.

5. It follows that miracles are not to be regarded simply as seals of the truth of revelation, as credentials of inspired messengers, certifying their authority to reveal God's will, but as a part of the divine action in human history redeeming men from sin. As the divine love worked its way into human history, its divine energy could not always be contained in the ordinary courses of the divine action, but leaped from its overcharged conductors, and scintillated and flashed and electrified in miracles. It sometimes encountered obstacles which could not be removed by ordinary action, and which were miraculously swept away. Especially, in entering humanity in Jesus Christ, and offering the oblation of sacrificial love in the redemption of man, the action was necessarily and in its very essence miraculous. Therefore we no longer point to miracles as simply the external evidences of the divine authority of a book; we no longer draw the internal evidences of the divine authority of that book from its superior morality alone, thus sinking Christianity to the level of rationalism; but we regard Christianity as the action of God redeeming man from sin — an action which is primarily redemption, necessarily historical and supernatural, and incidentally a revelation. And we claim that Christianity is true on the grounds that it is the only rational and satisfactory exposition of the condition, history, and destiny of man in his relation to God, and the only manifestation of God which in every age meets man's spiritual necessities.

6. The objection of F. W. Newman and others, that a book-revelation is impossible, is now seen to be without force. It is founded on the supposition, itself rationalistic, though apparently accepted by some writers on the Evidences, that the Bible is simply a revelation of moral truth and duty,

and that the end of all God's supernatural action was to make and authenticate this revelation. To this it is objected that moral truth and law must always be judged by man's moral or practical reason, and therefore cannot be substantiated by outward authority, not even by miracles. Certainly, a miracle cannot prove that it is right to hate one's neighbor. But the objection is of no force against God's supernatural action in redeeming men from sin, and the revelation of his love incident thereto.

IV. The Knowledge of God revealed through his Action in Redemption is a Moral Power in the Establishment and Administration of his Kingdom.

Every action spreads its influence beyond the time and place in which the power is exerted, as a candle shines far beyond itself into the darkness; as the cholera, once when it swept around the world, originated in the filthiness and other unwholesome conditions of certain crowds of pilgrims in the East. This is true of all action, but especially noticeable in respect to memorable acts. A mother's love continues to be a moral power on the son; though he dwells in another hemisphere; and after her death it is purified and intensified into a heavenly power. The memory of the martyrs is an inspiration in every age. At the stake Latimer said to his companion: "Fear not, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as, I trust, shall never be put out." The young men praying near the haystack in Williamstown are still missionaries to the heathen. Howard still inspires to benevolence. The great name of Washington still overshadows and protects his country. "Stat magna nominis umbra." Every heroic life is a power so long as its history is read.

These are analogous to the moral influence of God's historical action in redemption. Of his propitiatory sacrifice Christ said: "It is finished," and died. His earthly life ended, and became a part of the history of the past. But in that life and death he made propitiation for our sins, and opened the

way of deliverance from their power; he triumphed over death; he disclosed the infinite love of God our Redeemer; and in all the ages his name is above every name; and his appeal: "Do this for my sake," finds a willing response. The same moral power, though less marked, is inherent in the action of God in the history of the Jews. It is a study and a guide to all generations. Thus God's past action in history is a moral power in all subsequent generations; and this must not be overlooked in considering the divine agency in the establishment, administration, and triumph of Christ's kingdom.

Here, however, it must be observed that the moral power of God's past historical action is an incidental result of that action, not its primary end. An action of which the primary end is to make itself a moral power is an action from which the essence of the moral power is left out. It is a revelation that reveals nothing. The very conception breaks down, like the conception of motion in which nothing moves. There would be no moral power in a martyrdom suffered for the purpose of creating moral power. The martyr would be a witness testifying nothing. The moral power is not in the dying, but in the character manifested in the dying, and which, under the circumstances, would equally have necessitated the dying if it were to be forever secret.

So Christ did not come into the world and die primarily to create a moral power. The supposition eviscerates itself. It has been already said that all God's action is the sincere and hearty expression of what God is. Its moral power does not lie in the action, but in the divine thought and character expressed in the action. If we leave out of Christ's work the idea of atonement, — if he did not suffer for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and was not the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, — then we leave out the essence of his moral power. God in redemption reveals his entire character in harmony. God is not a nature having instincts and wants seeking gratification. His action is not the development of a nature according to necessary impulses.

His action is the expression of reason. His love itself is the expression of reason in acts of will. Redemption, then, does not merely express a divine compassion for sinners, but also the supremacy and majesty of the eternal reason, the unchangeableness of its truth, the authority and inexorableness of its law, the grandeur of its ideals, the blessedness of conformity to it, and the impossibility of blessedness without that conformity to it. If it expressed only the fond impulses and cravings of a nature seeking its own happiness or that of others, it could not be a spiritual power potent to lead men to God.

In this line of thought we see the moral power of the Bible. It is the inspired record of God's supernatural and providential action in redeeming the world in Christ and founding his kingdom under the dispensation of the Spirit. It contains the private revelations of his will to prophets and apostles incident to his redeeming action. It reveals God as the providential and moral Ruler of the world and as the Redeemer of men from sin. It necessarily carries in it the highest moral power; it must always be the instrument in advancing Christ's kingdom; and intimacy with it and reverence for it must always be the condition of a pure, strong Christian character in individuals and in nations.

V. God's Action in the Establishment and Administration of his Kingdom is continued through all Generations in the Holy Spirit.

The energy of God's redeeming grace did not cease to act with the events recorded in the Bible. Redemption is present, not less than past.

The divine agency now is not merely the moral power of the revelation already made, but it is also the present, personal influence of God through the Holy Spirit. The analogy here is not to the memory of a departed mother, but to the mother present with her child, always ready to counsel and help, impressing her influence on it every day, and thus accumulating her moral power. The Christian life is not

sustained merely by knowledge of the truth and meditation on God's action in the past, but by the present action of God upon the soul through the Holy Spirit.

This doctrine is opposed to the doctrine of Romanism, that divine grace comes to men through the *opus operatum* of the church. It recognizes every Christian as in immediate communion with God, a recipient of God's grace. It is opposed to a certain rationalistic element which has shown itself even in the best forms of Protestantism; the impression that truth and meditation on the truth are the sole agencies in spiritual life and growth; the Lord's supper, for example, is profitable as an occasion for meditating on the love of Christ, not as an ordinance appointed to convey the influence of the Spirit to him who receives it in faith. This type of thought gives whatever ground there has ever been for the charge of Bibliolatry — a charge brought by rationalism against the churches, the only ground for which is the admission by the churches of a rationalistic type of thought. The doctrine of the Spirit is opposed to the rationalistic tendency alleged to be inherent in Protestantism. If the allegation is true, it is only because Protestantism is a protest against errors and abuses; the tendency is not inherent in Christianity, nor in the affirmation of spiritual and historical Christianity which Protestantism makes. Finally, the true doctrine of the Spirit is distinguished from the fanatical by the facts, that the work of the Spirit is the continuance and world-wide extension of God's work of redemption; that it avails itself of the moral power accumulated by God's antecedent redemptive action and the revelation which he has made of himself in the same; that, as the progress and extension of that same redemptive action, it must be in harmony with all the work of redemption which has preceded and with the revelation of the same in the word of God. So Christ explicitly teaches: "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."

In the action of God recorded in the Bible he makes an entrance into human history; educates the race for the

coming Christ and the establishment of his kingdom; makes atonement; creates the moral power of the name that is above every name. In the Holy Spirit the redemptive energy becomes a world-power, and the life of Christ flows out into humanity as a life-giving and sanctifying power.

Thus the Spirit brings us into immediate connection with Christ. His presence on earth is a token that Christ lives and reigns, administering and extending his kingdom. If a friend, going to a distant country, promises to send you on his arrival some curious product of the country, and if, in due time, the promised present is brought to you, you have in hand a pledge and token that he has safely accomplished his journey, and in that distant land remembers you and has kept his promise. So the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the present token and pledge to the disciples that Jesus, according to his word before his death, had ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high, that all power was given him in heaven and on earth, that in his exaltation he remembered his disciples and kept his promise. And wherever the Spirit touches any human heart, it is in all ages the present token of the same. The Spirit, also, continues the work of redemption. He proceeds from Christ. In him Christ acts, administering his kingdom and advancing it to its triumph. In him the life and redeeming power of Christ, confined while he was on earth to his bodily presence, diffuses itself through the world and courses through human history, more effective than his bodily presence could be: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you."

Thus in the action of the Spirit the redeeming energy of the Son of God is brought immediately upon us. We are brought into immediate contact with the Son of God, and thereby into contact with the Father, in whose love to the world redemption originates; whose love in redemption through Christ and the Spirit floods the earth with its glory and pours through the history of man. It is just as by the sunbeams we are brought into immediate contact with the

sun. So the Spirit touching human hearts with light and quickening, brings us into immediate connection with the Son of God, who is "the outshining of the Father's glory," and who reveals the otherwise unknown Father, and reveals him by flooding us with his love. Thus through the Spirit "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus redemption, with all its glory, comes upon us — redemption from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Ghost.

Thus redemption is the channel in which all the fulness of the Godhead has been poured through human history, widening and brightening from the first promise to Adam until now. So Ezekiel represents it, a fountain bursting forth from beneath the threshold of the sanctuary, at first only up to the ancles, farther on to the knees, then to the loins, and afterwards a river too great to be crossed. We cannot originate that river of life; but we can embark on it as it flows by our doors, and be borne by its shining waves on into the ocean-fulness of God's eternal love.