

IS CHRIST COMING AGAIN?

by

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CHAPTER TWO

THE KINGDOM OF GOD—ITS EVOLUTION

The most common word in the English language, at the present moment, is “Evolution.” The phrase that Darwin adopted to express a purely speculative theory, has attained the distinction of a fad in the so-called scientific world; and some ministers of religion, to prove that they also are scientific, have taugth their tongues the shibboleth.

It should not be forgotten that the truest things are seldom in supreme favor. Splendid facts do not often attain the eminence of superior fads. Popularity is ephemeral, and when the wave of excitement created by the adoption of the term “evolution” is past, sober second thought will show that the Scriptures, sanely interpreted, and Science, properly demonstrated, bear a common testimony as to the origin and development of things; and that the only evolution to be found in either, and in both, is the development of the individual, with its improvement of species; not that which starts an entirely new species, nor so changes an old one as to make a new one of it.

The Kingdom of God knows neither spontaneous generation nor transmutation of species.

That use of the word, once determined (and surely the drift of both scientific and theological thought is now in the direction of such definition), Evolution will fitly describe the progress of the Kingdom of God. In fact, long before Darwin or Huxley opened their eyes to the natural light of the world, Jesus, who is the **“true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into it,”** was saying, **“So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear”** (Mark 4:26-28). In that single phrase he formulated at once scientific and Scriptural development, and showed how the Kingdom of God will follow its lines in rooting, flowering and fruiting.

We propose at this time to follow that analogy to its natural limits in the discussion of the Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM ROOTS

itself in the hearts of the saved.

While aware that such a phrase is not in accord with the most common interpretation of the Kingdom of God, we are perfectly willing to have it subjected to the infallible test, **“To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no light [morning] for them”** (Isaiah 8:20).

When we say that the Kingdom roots itself in the hearts of the saved, we appreciate that the expression involves and necessitates certain others that must be set in order.

First, *The world cannot germinate the Kingdom of God.*

The King of Glory, in His origin, is contrasted with Adam after this manner, **“The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven”** (I Corinthians 15: 47). Going back to Daniel’s vision, one will find the same contrast between world-kingsdoms and the Kingdom of God. The world-kingsdoms are represented by a great image (Daniel 2:31); and while its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay (Daniel 2:32-33), it was not only **“in the world”** but **“it was of the world.”** Even its finest parts, its head, and breast, and arms, were yet of the earth, earthy!

But the Kingdom to come was represented by a stone **“cut out without hands,”** and hurled, as if from heaven, upon the image breaking it in pieces, and grinding it until it became **“like the chaff of the summer threshing floor,”** and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. It found its location and development in the earth; but it came down from heaven.

The characteristics of this Kingdom, then, are these:

- It is not of man, nor by man, but the God of heaven sets it up (Daniel 2:44).
- It is not temporary, but eternal!

The great kingdoms symbolized in the dream by parts of the image pass away; the coming Kingdom will never be destroyed; nor shall the Sovereignty thereof be left to another people (Daniel 2:44); but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

The source whence it comes is not from the plain where men dwell; but out of the mountain, which, in the Word, is the figure of the heavenlies and the place of the Divine presence.

- In Exodus 15:17, the **“mountain”** is described after this manner, **“The place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in.”**
- In Exodus 19:3, **“Moses went unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain.”**
- The Psalmist sings, **“Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain”**
- In that Messianic Psalm, 72:3, is it not written, **“The mountains shall bring peace to the people”** etc.?

This figure involves the fact of which Jesus spake when He said, “**My kingdom is not of this world**” (John 18:36); and also the partial explanation of many passages that make the Kingdom of God “**of heaven**” and “**heavenly**.”

That it is located in the earth in no wise necessitates either that the earth be its author or its sustainer. The Chinese lily is capable of growth and reproduction without the slightest contact with the soil; the water and air, which are of the first heaven, sufficing both for the production of seed and its germination and development—a figure in nature which Campbell Morgan must intend to employ for illustration when he says,

“You can not grow the tulips of the Kingdom of God
except you get the bulbs from heaven.”

“The Word” is not the Kingdom in embryo.

One who has sought diligently to be a good student of the Bible feels ashamed of his superficial reading, and surprised at the oversight of his brethren, when he comes suddenly upon such an interpretation of “the Parables of the Kingdom” as that once put forth by Campbell Morgan; and has his attention called to the fact that when Jesus came to explain the “**Kingdom**” in the parable of the Sower, he did not make the abstract Word of God the seed of the Kingdom; but rather, the Word—incarnate, and incarnate only; saying, “**When any one heareth the word of the Kingdom, and understands it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the wayside. And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth, because of the word, straightway he stumbleth. And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word, and the care of the world, and the deceitful-ness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it’, who verily beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty**” (Matthew 13:19-23).

It will be noticed also, if one follows that marvelous thirteenth chapter of Matthew, that the next parable continues the same figure, “**The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that soweth seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.**”

Tares and wheat are the figures not of truth and error, but of good and evil men, for Jesus himself also explained this parable, saying, “**The field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one**” (Matthew 13:38).

What point all of this gives to that marvelous statement in the epistle to the Corinthians, “**The Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power**” (I Corinthians 4:20).

The abstract word has no power.

The world never saw such an illustration of the truth of John Watson's words as the Kingdom of God is to exhibit:

“Do you wish a cause to endure hardness, to rejoice in sacrifice, to accomplish mighty works, to retain forever the dew of its youth? Give it the best chance, the sanction of love. Do not state it in books; do not defend it with argument. These are aids of the second order; if they succeed, it is a barren victory—the reason only has been won; if they fail, it is a hopeless defeat, the reason has now been exasperated. Identify your cause with a person.”

Christ did link His cause to human lives! The Kingdom of God roots itself in the hearts of the unsaved.

The saved alone, then, are “the seed of the Kingdom”

“**The good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom**” (Matthew 13:38).

Mark you, they are described as “**the good seed**” There is a distinct difference between the seed and the fruit of the seed. To argue that because the Scriptures say, “**The good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom,**” therefore the kingdom is already in the earth, is exactly the same as if I should argue, when, in May, I have one day sowed some radish seed, that I have in hand a crop of radishes; or melon seed, that I can immediately present melons. Such argument ignores alike the difference between the seed and the fruit of it, and the necessary intervention of a season in order to make one bring forth the other.

If there is any one thing that the Kingdom parables in Matthew 13 make perfectly evident it is the distinction between the seeds of the kingdom and the flowers and the fruit of the same. The principle involved in social settlement work is according to the Divine plan; its weakness has resulted from the circumstance that those who have most fostered this movement have too often reduced it to a physical plane, and have sought to show the submerged tenth how to wash their hands and faces, make and mend their garments, sweep and air their homes and cultivate flowers in their front and back yards—results of importance, but still, of secondary consideration!

The man that has been planted in the black hole of Chicago, as Harry Monroe was once planted there, to be tidy in person, chaste in speech, careful in conduct, that those that see him might derive subsidiary benefits from these circumstances, but above all, to live Christ by precept and by practice, he is “**the good seed**” that brings forth thirty, or sixty, or a hundredfold. Morgan was quite correct when he said, “Plant the Son of the kingdom in the midst of an age that is against the King and he will exert an influence for the kingdom.”

- Such a seed was Paul to the paganism of the first century;
- Such a seed was Luther to God-forgetting Germany
- Such a seed was Judson to heathen India;
- Such a seed was Livingston to darkest Africa.

Bruce (p. 54) speaks of “a kingdom of grace in order to a kingdom of holiness.”

A slight change only, and his language would be scriptural, “**Salvation by grace**” or “the experience of grace,” in order to the kingdom of holiness. Paul writes to the Colossians, of Him “**who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption**” (1:13-14), which, for Gentiles at least, is the revelation of that “**mystery,**” “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (Colossians 1:27).

To them it is written, “**When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away**” (I Peter 5:4).

For a long time before the Republic of Cuba was a realized fact the seeds of it existed in those who, in spirit, had revolted from Spain and were ardently at work to induce their fellows to throw off the tyrannical yoke and elect a new ruler. The seeds of republicanism were everywhere in Cuban soil when as yet the Republic had not appeared. And wherever, today, you find a Christian man or a Christian woman these are “**the seeds of that Kingdom**” for the appearance of which we pray, “**Our Father which art in heaven, thy Kingdom come**”

The business of the church is to go on diligently scattering the seed until the Master, the Son of Man, shall pronounce the harvest ready, and, “**shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire . . . then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**” (Matthew 13:43).

But this last Scripture anticipates and plainly suggests certain other processes in the development of the Kingdom, namely those of flowers and fruits.

THE KINGDOM FLOWERS

in the Savior’s Reappearance. Having begun with, Christ’s own parable of the seed, it behooves us to abide by that symbolism to the end of this study. We call your attention, therefore, to three essential and scientific facts concerning the flower period of the plant— *Flowers are the product of seed, sustenance and season.*

Concerning the *seed* of the Kingdom we have spoken sufficiently; regarding the *sustenance* of that seed but briefly; and a few more words may be justly added.

We have already seen that plants that were by nature of the earth and earthy, can, under the hand of man, be separated entirely from the soil and sustained to the point of perfect development by water and air. It is hardly to be supposed impossible, therefore, that God can take the man, who by his first birth, is of the earth, earthy, and in the process of regeneration grant him another nature, and separate him from the world; nor is it impossible for God to bring to this spiritual nature sustenance from heaven.

The manna of the Old Testament did not come out of the ground, nor, as some naturalists have maintained, fall from the trees. God’s ancient Israel were “**fed with the bread of heaven**” (Psalm 105:40).

It is a remarkable circumstance that *air and water*—able to sustain natural life—are in the Scriptures, *symbols of the Spirit and of the Word*. The Greek term most often translated “**spirit**” is also rendered “**air**.” When Jesus was talking with Nicodemus he emphasized this symbolism by saying, “**The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit**” (John 3:8).

Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, almost identifies water and the Word, by saying, “**Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**” (Ephesians 5:25-26). The Spirit and the Word— these sustain the seed.

That which remains therefore to be further elaborated is the question of the *season*.

Dr. Goodspeed (p. 103) says: “It does not directly concern us, in this discussion, to inquire in what sense the kingdom was present during our Lord’s life, and in what sense still to come. We believe, however, the distinction is to be found in this—while the kingdom, as a spiritual rule in the hearts of men, had begun, during our Lord’s life, as He taught its principles and gained followers, it was not until He had completed His atoning work and had been gifted with ‘**all authority in heaven and earth**’ (Matthew 28:18) to administer its government and advance it among men, that it was formally instituted.”

Dr. Goodspeed is right in this statement, but wrong in his induction. When did the High Priest count His atoning work complete? When the blood of the lamb was shed? Nay! When he had carried that blood within the vail? Nay! A careful study of Leviticus will show that that work was only complete *when he came forth from the Holy place to array himself again in his glorious garments*. The testimony of the Word is clear that Christ is now engaged in the office of intercession; the atonement is complete only so far as the offering of the Lamb of God is concerned (Hebrews 9:11-12). “**So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation**” (Hebrews 9:28).

All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Jesus, but it is all too evident that the time of its exercise in the earth is not yet. “**I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession,**” but the promise, like that made to Abraham and his seed, is to be fulfilled only after what men regard a long season, but to Him to whom “**a thousand years . . . are but as yesterday, when it is past**” or as “**a watch in the night,**” it is “**a little season.**”

If the tiny flower, destined to adorn nature for a few brief hours, requires an entire summer to bring it to blossom shall the time to pass before the Rose of Sharon shall break upon the world with His eternal beauty, be regarded as too long? Not so in the opinion of the apostle Paul, who reminds us “**Ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry**” (Hebrews 10:36, 37).

Flowers are the glory-period of the plant's development.

So the flowering period of the Kingdom is when the **“Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels”** (Matthew 16:27); **“and shall sit on the throne of His glory”** (Matthew 19-28); and **“then shall ye also appear with Him in glory”** (Colossians 3:4). This is the blessed hour for which **“the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,” “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”**

It is a singular circumstance that the analogy of this growing seed may be tested to such minutia of application.

In nature the season essential to the producing of a flower is a comparatively long one, while the actual process of blooming requires so short a time as often to take careful watchers by surprise.

My revered teacher, Dr. John A. Broadus, says, “I remember, once, a neighboring professor sent us invitations to his home for a summer evening, saying that he had a century plant which seemed about to bloom, and asking us to come and watch with him till it blossomed. It was a delightful occasion, you may fancy. With music and conversation we passed on through the pleasant summer evening hours, on till past midnight. Then we gathered around and gazed on the plain, wonderful thing that had lived longer than any of us had lived; and now, for the first time, was about to blossom for the admiration of beholders.”

“Surely,” said Dr. Broadus, “Jesus Christ is the blooming Century Plant; the beautiful Millennium Flower” — the glory of the Kingdom of God. **“When the chief Shepherd shall appear [be manifested],”** and all believing ones have **“received the crown of glory that fadeth not away”**; when the King shall have come, what adornment will the world suddenly receive!

The most bewitching little landscape that ever marked one spot of earth at midsummer season will seem plain indeed beside; its whole glorious beauty, when every believer's grave shall have given birth to a body fashioned like the glorious body of the Lord, and every believing mortal shall, in the wink of an eye, put on immortality. No wonder Gordon remarks that when the chief apostle, bounding forward in thought to this period, speaks of its **“far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”** (II Corinthians 4:17) his language becomes well nigh untranslatable, he so joins hyperbole to hyperbole in his efforts to express its transcendent blessedness.

Flowers are the promise of the perfected harvest.

It is easily evident to careful students of the Word that the coming of Jesus and the establishment of the kingdom is only the beginning of the Kingdom's glory. Hence, the significance of Paul's statement, **“Christ must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.”** That involves the grinding to powder of the world-kingdoms of Daniel's visions; that involves the conversion and restoration of Israel — the burden of Old Testament prophecy; that involves the fulfillment of the promise of the nations for an inheritance; the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

Oh, it is a glorious prospect — this millennial period, when the Kingdom of God shall be flowering into full beauty!

When George Lorimer was yet alive he said, “As I understand it, the kingdom reveals, in what the author of *‘Ecce Homo’* calls ‘The Divine Society,’ what will ultimately be realized in the social state; but when that, time arrives, the spiritual empire will always be grander than the earthly commonwealth; will encompass it with its gracious environments and atmosphere. It, with its heavenly influences.

“I have somewhere read of Mr. Whymper having announced that he had traced in a piece of mica-schist an exact miniature of the peak of the Matterhorn, whence he had chipped it with his hammer. He says that the same causes which sculptured the huge homogeneous mass, shaped also each of its parts in the likeness of the whole. And similarly the social state derives its essential character from the Kingdom, is fostered by it, grows out of it, is even a part of it; and surely it cannot be hard to believe that the Son of Man designed by this relationship to demonstrate the possibility of the ideal being actualized, and of the dream becoming the blessed commonplace of the awakened future.”

THE KINGDOM FRUITS

in the Father’s supremacy.

The earthly supremacy of the Son is for a season only.

At this point Pre- and Postmillennialists are well nigh in agreement! Whether the thousand years are to be accepted as literal, or as a symbol of a considerable period, they consent alike that it will come to an end. We are disposed to let that period stand for what the Scriptures say.

In the many references in the Word of God, to this glorious era of the Kingdom, while other expressions often refer to it, the **“thousand years”** is distinctly mentioned in but a single chapter. It is significant, however, that in that chapter it is mentioned not once, nor twice, nor even thrice, but four, five and six times. One great essential to the millennial period is the chaining of Satan, and we are told that the angel **“laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, that is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”**

Equally important to that millennial period is the lifting of deception from the minds of men, and we are told that the nations should be deceived **“no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.”**

The gracious promise to the risen, of association with Christ in places of power through the millennial period, is recorded in this statement, **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”** Again, when the end of the millennium has been reached, it is described after this manner, **“When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,”** etc. (Revelation 20:2, 3, 6, 7).

If one insists that the promise of Isaiah, “**Out of Zion shall come forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem**” (2:3) refers to a time past and finds its sufficient fulfillment in the fact that the first church was organized in Jerusalem, and from that center the Gospel was proclaimed, he is immediately embarrassed by his inability to explain why the rest of that promise has so signally failed, for it is written, “**He shall judge between the nations and shall decide concerning many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more**” (v. 4).

No, it is rather the Prophet’s vision of the triumph of the Kingdom of God yet to come in the earth—the peaceful and glorious era of the millennium.

The earthly supremacy is by the Son only.

The promise of the nations for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession was made to the one of whom the Lord said, “**Thou art my Son**” (Psalm 2: 7, 9). “**As in the days of old, the Lord delighted in Solomon to set him on the throne of Israel,**” (I Kings 10:9), so in the days to come, in answer to the request of Jesus, God will grant Him His heart’s desire—the whole earth—not withholding the request of his lips, laying “**honor and majesty upon Him,**” who is “**the King of kings, the Lord of lords**” (Psalm 21:2, 3, 5).

Finally, the heavenly supremacy is by the Father.

In discussing the “**last things**” Paul speaks of “**Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming** (beginning of the millennium). **Then cometh the end** (the end of the millennial age) **when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He (Christ) must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet . . . But when He saith, All things are put in subjection, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him . . . that God may be all in all**” (I Corinthians 15:23-28).

We agree with Nathaniel West that “The eternal state will differ as greatly from its previous form in the millennial state, as the millennial form will differ from our present form. . . . A painless, tearless, sorrowless state, the reproach taken from the Jew, the veil taken from the nations; and death swallowed up in victory; the Bridegroom rejoicing over His Bride; a festive Jubilee; the Lord dwelling with His people—eternal splendors streaming everywhere” (West, “*The Thousand Years,*” p. 14).

With this also comports perfectly the teaching of Revelation. The twentieth chapter of that wonderful book begins the Millennium with the appearance of Jesus Christ and ends the Millennium with the judgment of the unrighteous dead and the doom of the devil. Then John saw a new heaven and a new earth— “**The Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,**” and “**I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God**” (Revelation 21:2, 3, 4).

Ah, then, it is not only a Kingdom of God on earth in its process of rooting, and a Kingdom of God on earth in full flower, but also the Kingdom of God finding its final fruitage in heaven.

- In the root period—the Church on earth—the Third Person of the Trinity presides; it is distinctly the age of the Spirit (Acts 2:17-20).
- In the flowering period—the Kingdom of God on earth—the Son, or the Second Person in the Trinity, sits upon the throne, all power in heaven and in earth being given unto Him (Psalm 72:1-20).
- In the final period the Kingdom of God in Heaven, the Spirit and the Son yield into the hands of the Father their perfected work that “**God may be all in all**” (I Corinthians 15:28).

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