

lurks in that term. A nation is a political organization, having no personality or individuality apart from the individuals which compose it, and can exercise no faith, and has no proper conscience or will. In the common phrase, "the Christian world," we combine two things as mutually hostile as light and darkness.

How, then, are we to conceive of the kingdom, during this present evil age? To answer this question we must first remember that this is pre-eminently the age of the Spirit—the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. It opened with His advent, and is especially the period of His personal administration. His peculiarity is *invisibility*. He is never represented as incarnate. He took, for special and temporary reasons, the form of a dove and of tongues of fire; but He has no proper form or body. During this age He is administering the kingdom instead of the King, and hence during this period the kingdom also is marked by *invisibility*. No emphasis is ever laid upon externals, but upon internals. Unseen by men, "the kingdom of God is within you" or "among you," invisibly present in individual souls, clective rather than collective, marked by intensity rather than extensity. Obviously the visible Church is not the kingdom; for while the Church embraces a militant body of true disciples contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, there is also within it a termagant body warring against its peace, and even an apostate body fighting against the truth and the faith. Within the same outward human organization God sees at once the true "circumcision," the "concision," and the "excision."

During this present evil age the kingdom undoubtedly exists, but it is in human hearts, and its conquests are one by one—its extension, like its exhibition, is individual. As every vessel that floats a flag on the sea, or every soldier that wears a uniform on the land, represents the kingdom of man, so every loyal disciple is a little empire ruled by the King. Hence the vice and risk of *statistics*. At our peril do we lay stress upon counting up converts or parading numbers. "Numbering the people" brought David only the choice between plague, famine, and war; in the spiritual sphere it brings to the Church the peril of all three at once.

We are not justified by Scripture in expecting during this age the real triumphs of Christ's kingdom. This being an evil age, evil will permeate and dominate it to the end. Christ, as the second Adam, recovered, in His temptation, the sceptre which Satan had wrested from the first Adam four thousand years before; but Christ does not actually mount His throne of this world until His "return." Meanwhile, Satan usurps that throne as prince of this world and god of this age, and claims the riches, wisdom, and power of this age to bestow them upon whomsoever he will (Luke 4: 6), and many facts seem to support his claim. If Satan is now unbound and evil is triumphant, of course the saints are for the time correspondingly in humiliation, bound by fetters of restraint and restriction, and the Church is in the wilderness.

The phrase "kingdom of the heavens," which is peculiar to Matthew,