

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 19.

CHAPTER 7.
THE KINGLY OFFICE OF CHRIST IN
RELATION TO THE CHURCH.
(Continued.)

IX. The mediatorial dominion of Christ may be seen in the provision he has made for the diffusion and perpetuation of the visible church;—its diffusion over the habitable globe; and its perpetuation to the end of time.

We have already specified universality among the attributes of the visible church. Its nature is such as to admit of universal extension; and its divine Head will so order the affairs of providence, as to secure for it a diffusion proportioned to the catholicity of its character. Of this the Scriptures give positive and direct assurance. ‘The stone cut out without hands became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All nations shall serve him. All nations shall call him blessed. The whole earth shall be filled with his glory. The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’¹ It is lamentable to think how small a portion of the earth has hitherto been blessed with the ordinances of true religion. ► Taking a survey of the world, and bearing in mind such predictions and promises as those above cited, we cannot help feeling that ‘there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.’ The field of Messiah’s operations is the world; nor will he cease to put forth his power for the extension of his church, till he has made the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. The outward ordinances of visible Christianity shall be universally spread abroad; efficacy shall be given to the means of grace, by the outpouring of the Spirit; and every obstruction to the triumphant progress of the chariot of salvation shall be effectually removed. Ignorance shall be dispelled before the spreading beams of gospel light. The evidences of divine truth shall compel infidelity, which now rears its unblushing front, to hide its head. The delusions of the false prophet shall be dissipated by the drying up of the river Euphrates, that a way may be prepared for the kings of the East. Jewish obstinacy and unbelief shall be broken, and the veil taken from the eyes of that interesting people in reading Moses and the prophets. All the hideous

1 Dan. 2.35; Psalm 72.8,11,17,19; Isa. 2.2; 11.9.

forms of polytheistic paganism shall give way to the one religion of Jesus. ► That monstrous corruption of Christianity, which has so long usurped the place and claimed the honour of the true faith, shall be cast into the lake of fire. The anti-Christian leaven, which has been so extensively diffused, shall be purged out of both the churches and the nations. Every usurper of the rights and prerogatives of Sion's King shall be pushed from his seat. Every rival kingdom shall be overthrown. The civil and ecclesiastical constitutions of the earth shall be regulated by the infallible standard of God's word; their office-bearers, of every kind, shall acknowledge the authority of Messiah the Prince; and the greatest kings on earth shall cast their crowns at his feet. All enemies shall be put under his feet; and such as resist the melting influence of his grace, shall be crushed beneath the iron rod of his power. By spiritual conversion or judicial destruction, he shall effect the entire subjugation of the globe. And, at the last, there shall not be a spot on the face of the habitable earth where the true church of Christ shall not have effected a footing, nor a single tribe of the vast family of man which shall not have felt the meliorating and blissful influence of Christian laws and institutions. Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, shall then be united in one vast brotherhood,—ranged under one standard: the bond of their union, the holy cement of the Gospel; the emblem of their banner, the Cross.

The church, thus universally diffused, shall be effectually perpetuated. The government of Messiah shall not only increase, but it shall have 'no end.' It shall be 'established with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.' We have seen the provision Christ has made for a succession of ministers. Not less carefully has he provided for a succession of members throughout all generations. Even after all other enemies have been subdued, death, it is true, shall be perpetually removing to another world those who have held both public and private stations in the church; but even death cannot bring about the extinction of the church of Christ. Instead of the fathers, he takes the children. He sends forth his Spirit to accompany the ordinances with power, and thus secures a succession of spiritual men to occupy the places of those who are taken to a higher sphere of existence. The ravages that are daily made in the ranks of the disciples, by the fell destroyer, are thus repaired, and his covenant people preserved from extermination. ► Till the end of time, there shall be 'daily added to the church such as shall be saved.' 'A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born.' [Acts 2.47; Ps. 22.30,31.] Families which take great pride in their antiquity, and look back with pleasure on a long unbroken line of ancestry, have their names at length blotted from the earth. Societies which, for a length of time, make a conspicuous figure in the world, fall at last into decay, and finally disappear. Empires which have flourished for ages, and borne sway over a large portion of the earth, are destined to sink into everlasting oblivion. But the church of Christ, notwithstanding the combined assaults of which she is the object, shall continue to flourish and to exist while sun and moon endure; nay, when the sun has been changed into darkness, and the moon into blood. Christians are apt to feel discouraged when they reflect on the extensive prevalence of error compared with the limited success of the true religion, and despondingly to inquire, 'By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.' But if they can only

have faith in the mediatorial dominion, they may dismiss their fears, and confidently rely in, not merely the preservation, but the triumphant success and universal establishment, of the church. The Lord reigns: and the children of Sion may well be joyful in their King.

What, then, must be the unspeakable happiness of those who are true members of Christ's church;—a society founded, organized, and incorporated by the Redeemer himself; purchased with his precious blood; possessed of the most interesting properties; subservient to the most important ends; whose ordinances, members, office-bearers, and administration, are all so illustrious; and which is destined to attain to such permanency and extent? The honour and advantage of being connected with such a community cannot be small. It is a lamentable evidence of the extent of human depravity, that these should be appreciated by so few. The church of Christ is even now but a little flock. [Luke 12.32.]

In reflecting on the mediatorial dominion over the church and the many things which it involves, one cannot help being struck with the glory which it reflects on the character of the Mediator himself. *Head of the church, King of Sion, and King of saints*, are illustrious titles; they bespeak majesty and splendour; and are well fitted to preclude all unworthy conceptions of him to whom they belong. [Eph. 5.23; Psalm 2.6; Matt. 21.5; Rev. 15.3.] They are calculated to prevent any false inference being drawn from the more humiliating points of his history. Were we only to look at him lying in the manger of Bethlehem's inn, sitting at the well of Jacob, standing at Pilate's judgment-seat, hanging on the cross, or sleeping a lifeless corpse in Joseph's tomb, we might be induced to regard him as, indeed, a root out of a dry ground. But, when we think of him giving existence to such a society as the church, instituting her ordinances, authorizing and qualifying her ministers, giving efficacy to her laws, and protecting her from destruction; when we think on the wisdom of his government, the bountifulness of his gifts, the resistless energy and gracious influence of his administration, we are filled with high and elevated views of his character. Instead of supposing him to have no form nor comeliness, no beauty for which we should desire him, [Isa. 53.2,] we feel drawn towards him with the admiration and respect due to one who is crowned with glory and honour.

To interfere, in any degree, with the Redeemer's prerogatives as Head of the church, is conduct the criminality of which cannot well be over-estimated. Such wickedness it might well be supposed none would be found sufficiently abandoned to perpetrate. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that men should disclaim, in words, all participation in such aggravated guilt. But let us look at the testimony of facts.—In the church of Rome, the Pope claims a universal spiritual power; while professing to act only as the vicergerent of Christ on earth, he blasphemously assumes the title of *head of the church*; and, that it may not be conceived to be an empty title, he sacrilegiously presumes to alter, add to, and dispense with, the ordinances which Christ himself has appointed.—► Supremacy over the church is claimed also by the British crown. It is expressly provided for by law, that the imperial power in these realms shall have annexed to it the dignity of supreme head of the church, in virtue of which authority the monarch 'convenes, prorogues, restrains, regulates, and dissolves all ecclesiastical synods and

convocations—has the right of nomination to vacant bishoprics and certain other ecclesiastical preferments—and, as head of the church, is the *dernier* resort in all ecclesiastical causes; an appeal lying ultimately to him in chancery from the sentence of every ecclesiastical judge.’² Nor is the exercise of this supremacy confined to the Episcopal church of England. It is deserving of consideration whether, by prescribing the form of church government which is established in Scotland; by the right of patronage claimed and exercised by the state in the appointment of ministers; by enjoining the observance of days of fasting and thanksgiving without consultation with the church; and by authoritatively convening and dissolving the supreme court, the state is not guilty of such encroachments on the liberties even of the Scottish church as imply an invasion of the sole headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is truly appalling to think, in how many instances the crown rights and royal prerogatives of Sion’s King have been invaded by men, taking upon them to legislate in and for the church; to model her government and worship, in order to meet the ends of a pitiful expediency; to settle articles of faith; and even to brandish the sword of civil power over the heads of such as refused to submit to an arbitrary and unrighteous dictation. Nor is it greatly less grieving to reflect, that so many should tamely submit to these sinful encroachments, and shew so little regard for the honour of the Redeemer, as not to stand up at all hazards for his inalienable rights. The arrogance of these pretensions on the one hand, and the unfaithfulness of such compliance on the other, are alike to be reprobated. With regard to the one and to the other, the friend of the Redeemer may well feel disposed to say, ‘Tell it not in Gath;’ and be stirred up to use every means in his power to prevent the dear-bought and exclusive rights of Emmanuel from being infringed upon by any power upon earth. And as all such encroachments are as unsafe as they are sinful, such as lift their warning voice against them, and refuse to submit to them, certainly manifest more true regard for the welfare of their fellow-men, as well as more laudable zeal for the glory of their Lord and King, than those who regard them with cowardly silence or spiritless acquiescence.

=====

THE RECANTATION OF PATRICK, BISHOP OF ST. ANDREWS,
DIRECTED TO THE SYNOD CONVENED AT ST ANDREWS,
8 APRIL 1591.

“BRETHREN,—Understanding the proceedings of the Assembly in my contrare, and being now withholden by sickness from presenting myself before you, that I might give confession of that doctrine, wherein I hope God shall call me, and that at his pleasure I might depart in an unity of Christian faith, I thought good by writ to utter the same unto your wisdoms, and to crave your godly wisdoms’ assistance, not for the restitution of any worldly pomp or pre-eminence, which I little respect, but to remove from me the slanders which are raised in this country concerning the variance of doctrine, specially on my part, wherein I protest before God, that I have only a single respect to his glory, and by his grace I shall abide herein unto my life’s end.

2 Black. Com., Book 1, chap. 7. sec. 6.

“First, I confess the true doctrine of Christian religion to be publicly taught and rightly announced within this realm, and detest all papistry and superstition, like as, blessed be God, I have detested the same in my heart the space of 30 years, since it pleased God to give me the knowledge of the truth, wherein I have walked uprightly, as well here as in other countries, as the Lord beareth me record; until these last days, wherein, partly for ambition and vain glory, to be preferred before my brethren, and partly for covetousness, I have possessed the pelf of the kirk, I did undertake this office of archbishoprick, wherewith justly the sincerest professors of the Word have found fault, and have condemned the same, as impertinent to the office of a sincere pastor of God’s Word. And albeit men would colour the same, and the imperfections thereof, by divers cloaks yet the same can not be concealed from the spiritual eyes of the faithful, neither yet can the men of God, when they are put to their conscience, dissemble the same.

“Next, I confess that I was in an erroneous opinion, that I believed the government of the kirk to be like unto the kingdoms of the earth; plain contrary to the commandment of our Master Christ; and the monarchy whereby the kirk is governed, not only to be in the person of our Saviour Christ, (as it is,) but in the ministers, who are nothing but vassals under him, in an equality among themselves.

“Thirdly, That I married [performed the marriage of] the Earl of Huntlie, contrary to the command of the kirk, without the confession of his faith, and profession of the sincere doctrine of the Word, I repent and crave God pardon.

“That I travailed, both by reasoning and otherwise, to subject the kirk-men to the king’s ordinance in things that appertain unto ecclesiastical matters and things of conscience, I ask God mercy, whereupon great enormities have fallen forth in this country.

“That I believed, and so taught, the presbyteries to be a foolish invention, and would have it so esteemed of all men, which is an ordinance of Christ, I crave God mercy.

“Farther I submit myself to the mercy of God, and judgement of the Assembly, not measuring my offences by my own self, nor infirmities of my own ingyne [ingenuity], but by the good judgment of the kirk, to the which always I subject my self; and beseech you to make intercession to God for me, and to the king, that I may have some moyen [strength, ability] to live, and consume the rest of this my wretched time, for winning of whose favours, (which foolishly I thought thereby to obtain,) I committed all these errors.

“As where [whereas] I am burdened to be the setter forth of the book called The King’s Declaration, wherein the whole order of the kirk is condemned and traduced, I protest before God, that so I was commanded to write the same by the Chancellor for the time; but chiefly by the Secretar, another great courtier, who himself penned the second act of parliament, concerning the power and authority of judicature to be absolutely in the king’s power, and that it should not be lawful to any subject to reclaim from the same, under the penalty of the act, which I suppose was treason.

“Item, Where it is alleged that I should have condemned the doctrine announced and taught by the ministry of Edinburgh, and to have allowed only concerning obedience to the prince, I confess and protest before God, that I never understood, nor yet knew any thing but sincerity and uprightness in the doctrine of the ministry of Edinburgh, in that point nor in any other.

“Farther, I confess I was the author of the act, discharging the ministers’ stipends that did not subscribe these acts of parliament, wherewith God hath justly recompensed my self.

As for any violent course, it is known well enough who was the author thereof; and my part was tried at the imprisonment of Mr. Nicol Dagleish, Mr. Patrick Melville, Mr. Thomas Jack and others.

“Moreover, I grant I was more busy with some bishops of England, in prejudice of the discipline of our kirk, partly when I was there, and partly by our mutual intelligence sensyne [since], than became a good Christian, much less a faithful pastor. Neither is there anything that more ashameth me, than my often deceiving and abusing of the kirk heretofore, by confessions, subscriptions, protestations, &c., which be far from me now, and ever hereafter. Amen.

“Your brother in the Lord,

(Sic subscribitur) MR PATRIK ADAMSONE.”

=====
Discussion Questions:

1. How extensive is it reasonable for Christians to expect the Christian church to become?
A.

2. How should Christians expect all nations to become Christian, seeing there are other religions in the world which have great influence, and are embraced by many multitudes of people?
A.

3. Besides providing for the universal diffusion of Christianity, what else is provided for by the government of the Messiah?
A.

4. At the present time, how is the Church replenished in the number of disciples while many are taken away by death?
A.

5. Though this progress appears small, what should we remember by comparison, to stay encouraged?
A.

6. What criminality of men does Dr. Symington note cannot be over-estimated?
A.

7. What particularly is included in the British monarch’s claim to be head over the churches in Britain?
A.

8. Besides the offenses of those invading Christ’s headship, what else should be regarded as appalling to Christians?
A.