

MESSIAH THE PRINCE,
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.
By William Symington.
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 23.

CHAPTER 8.
THE MEDIATORIAL DOMINION
OVER THE NATIONS.
(Continued.)

[Continuing “the Acts of Christ’s regal administration towards this class of his subjects.”]

Seventhly. It is thus easy to see how the mediatorial dominion over the nations is connected with the gathering of a Church, and the setting up of a spiritual kingdom in the midst of them. The preservation of this Church, the protection of this kingdom, is another purpose for which Christ wields the mediatorial sceptre. There is much, very much, in the nature and spirit of the civil institutions set up among men, which tends to endanger the Redeemer’s covenant-society. The indifference with which her interests are regarded, and the seductive attempts made to induce her to barter away her spiritual liberties, and to permit herself to be degraded into a political engine, not to speak of the positive hostility with which she may be directly assailed, are evils against which she requires to be guarded, and into which, if left to herself, she would be sure to fall a prey. ► There is much, in the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion, that is opposed to the immoral principles and practices, patronised and acted upon by the nations of the world in general; so that she could not continue to exist among them uncorrupted and independent, unless protected by One who can control, modify, and overrule all their counsels and doings. Without this, the Church would not long be tolerated pure and unfettered; but would either be crushed beneath the iron rod of despotic power, or be extirpated by the flames of persecution. To her blessed and glorious King, who is Governor among the nations, is she indebted for so overruling the hearts and conduct of men in power, as to throw around her a shield of safety. Considering the dangers of the Church, and the character of the nations, we could have no hope of her continuing to subsist, were it not for the feature of mediatorial dominion now under review.

Eighthly. It only here remains to notice, that, in this capacity, the Mediator will ultimately bring about an entire change in the character and constitution of the nations of the world. To the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy, such a change is indispensable. At present, the nations are all, more or less, in a state of hostility to the Redeemer; either sunk in criminal apathy, or extensively pervaded with pagan and anti-christian leaven. A numerous and influential class have given their power and strength to the Beast. The authority and law of the Redeemer are

not regarded; his glory is not contemplated; the true interests of his Church are opposed or forgotten. It will be otherwise, however, in the end. When 'kings shall be nursing fathers and their queens nursing mothers' to the Church; when 'the Zion of the Holy One of Israel shall suck the breast of kings;' when 'the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;' the nations of this earth will assume an aspect very different from the present. [Isa. 49.23; 60.16; Rev. 11.15.] ► The basis of their organisation will then be the Word of God, and the aim of their administration, the glory of Christ: their officers shall be peace and their exactors righteousness; and the spirit which shall pervade all their actions, shall be the pure spirit of the Gospel. But by whom is this change to be effected? How is this marvellous revolution to be brought about? By the overruling providence and gracious energy of Him who is Governor among the nations. He will shake all nations with the thunder of his power, till everything connected with them that is opposed to his cause is overthrown, and they are led to hail himself 'as the Desire of all nations.' [Hag 2.7.] He will purge out the leaven of infidelity and antichristianism with searching scrutiny, and liberally infuse the opposite principles till they leaven the whole lump. ► He will overturn, overturn, overturn, till he come whose right it is; and he will give it him. The secular tyrannies of the Latin Earth shall be broken to pieces, shall become like the chaff of the summer thrashing floor, and be carried away by the wind till no place be found for them; and the kingdoms that shall succeed will be actuated with the spirit of that kingdom which is represented by the stone cut out without hands, which is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. Thus to purify, sanctify, revolutionise, nay, Christianise, the nations of the world, is what none but he could perform; and were it not that he is Head of the nations, as well as Head of the Church, we should have to despair of these glorious anticipations being ever realised.

III. If it is admitted that the Messiah is invested with dominion over the nations, towards which, in consequence of such investment, he performs the acts of administration, of which we have been speaking, it follows as a natural and unavoidable inference, that there are DUTIES which the nations owe to the Mediator.

If the Mediator is the King of nations, nations are the subjects of the Mediator, and all the duties which subjects owe to their prince must be due by them to him. It is vain to plead exemption from moral responsibility for bodies politic, or civil office-bearers, as such. Associations, composed of such as are individually, morally responsible, must be morally responsible collectively. An aggregate of moral subjects must itself possess a moral character. Every society of moral beings is itself a moral being or subject. ► That a nation is not a responsible moral subject, is a sentiment monstrously inconsistent in itself, and fraught with consequences of the most hideous description. By means of its laws and its rulers, a nation is capable of putting forth acts as strictly of a moral character as those of any individual. This view of the matter is not more consonant with sound reason than with Scripture: for we there read, in express terms, of 'an ungodly nation;' 'an hypocritical nation;' 'a rebellious nation.'" [Psalm 43.1; Isa. 10.6; Ezek. 2.3.] The same principle is admitted in the common language of mankind. We are accustomed every day to speak of national virtue, national honour, national

faith, national sin;—phraseology which distinctly recognises the moral character and obligation of nations, as such. Nor is at all difficult to conceive, how every precept of the decalogue may be as expressly kept or violated by a body politic as by a private individual. Such being the case, we can be at no loss to perceive, either that nations are under moral obligations to Christ, or what are the specific duties they owe to him.

First. It is the duty of nations and their rulers, to have respect to the glory of Christ in all their institutions and transactions. No principle can less admit of dispute than that it is the duty of subjects to honour their king: and if Christ is King of nations, and magistrates subjects of the Messiah, they must be held bound, in virtue of their relative characters, to pay all possible respect to his honour and glory. The spirit of the divine command—‘Honour the king,’ carries in it thus much. Indeed, from the relation in which we all stand to God, we are bound to have respect to his honour in everything as the grand end of our being. ‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ On the same principle, kingdoms and civil rulers, from the relation in which they stand to the Redeemer, are bound to subordinate all that belongs to them to his honour. It is not enough that they have respect to the public good, to the promotion of social order and happiness among men; such is, doubtless, the grand immediate end they are to contemplate; but, as moral and responsible subjects, they are, in seeking this end, to look higher, and to have an ultimate regard to the honour of him to whom they owe their being, preservation, and powers. ► Like all other moral creatures, they are to have respect to the highest possible end in all that they do; and certainly no end can they ever propose to themselves, at all so dignified and illustrious as the display of the glorious excellency of the Prince of the kings of the earth, who possesses undisputed sovereignty over all. This object, therefore, they are bound to keep distinctly before them, in the formation of their constitution; in the establishment of their various institutions; in the shaping of their policy, whether domestic or foreign; in the selection and appointment of their functionaries, whether supreme or subordinate; in their legislative enactments; and in all their separate acts of administration. Not an establishment are they at liberty to set up; not a law are they entitled to pass; not a step are they free to take; not an alliance are they permitted to form, without having supreme regard to this high and glorious end. Hostility, or even indifference, to this, partakes of the very essence of rebellion against their sovereign Lord. The true feeling of loyal subjection to a lawful prince, requires more than a mere selfish regard to the subject’s own immediate interests. A devoted regard to the prince’s honour, and a willingness to maintain his dignity against every infringement, enter essentially into the nature of loyalty. ► For disregard of this, Nebuchadnezzar of old was subjected to the fearful punishment by which he was driven from among men, and had his dwelling with the beasts of the field, until seven times passed over him. ‘The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, Thy kingdom is departed from thee; and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, until *thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he*

will' (Dan. 4.32). And what was the crime for which the impious Belshazzar had the ominous sentence so miraculously inscribed against him? 'Thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, *hast thou not glorified*' (Dan. 5.23). ► These are cases which it well becomes civil communities and their office-bearers deeply to ponder, as not only involving by implication the duty of nations to consult the glory of the Messiah in all things, but as holding out a solemn warning of the danger to which the neglect or violation of this duty necessarily exposes. And, oh! when we reflect, how little reason we have to suppose, that, in the great majority of national concerns and transactions, this end is at all regarded by civil communities, we may well tremble at the fearful retribution that awaits them, if they repent not. How few, alas! of those who conduct public affairs in the political world, give evidence of being actuated by the high motive in question. A patriotic regard to the good of the community, is the highest object to which, in general, any ever pretend to have respect; and there is reason to fear that not seldom they come far short even of this: while a regard for the glory of the Mediatorial king is neither thought of nor professed.

Secondly. It is the duty of nations, as the subjects of Christ, to take his law as their rule. They are apt to think it enough that they take, as their standard of legislation and administration, human reason, natural conscience, public opinion, or political expediency. None of these, however, nor indeed all of them together, can supply a sufficient guide in affairs of state. Of course, heathen nations, who are not in possession of the revealed will of God, must be regulated by the law of nature: but this is no good reason why those who have a revelation of the divine will should be restricted to the use of a more imperfect rule. It is absurd to contend that, because civil society is founded in nature, men are to be guided, in directing its affairs and consulting its interests, solely by the light of nature. Might not the same be said with as much propriety, of many other relations of human life, such as parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, [employers and employees,] the duties of which we never think of exempting from the control of a preternatural [*beyond-nature*] revelation? Nay, might it not, with equal propriety, be maintained, as was formerly hinted, that as certain religious duties, such as prayer and praise, are founded in nature, we are in the performance of them to have no respect either to the authority or directions of the Holy Scriptures? ► The truth is, that revelation is given to man to supply the imperfections of the law of nature; and to restrict ourselves to the latter, and renounce the former, in any case in which it is competent to guide us, is at once to condemn God's gift and to defeat the end for which it was given. We contend, then, that the Bible is to be our rule, not only in matters of a purely religious nature, in matters connected with conscience and the worship of God, but in matters of a civil or political nature. To say that in such matters we have nothing to do with the Bible, is to maintain what is manifestly untenable. To require nations, who possess the sacred volume, to confine themselves, in their political affairs, to the dim light of nature, is not more absurd than it would be to require men, when the sun is in the heavens, to shut out its full blaze and go about their ordinary duties by the feeble rays of a taper [*a candle*, Isa. 50.11]. ► Indeed,

if nations are moral subjects, they are bound to regulate their conduct by whatever laws their moral Governor has been pleased to give them; and as they are the subjects of the Mediator, they must be under the law of the Mediator as contained in the scriptures. He has not placed his moral subjects in ignorance of his will, nor left them to search for it amid the obscurities and imperfections of a law which sin has effaced and well nigh obliterated. In the Holy Scriptures of truth, he has given them a fairer and more complete exhibition of the principles of immutable and eternal justice, than that which is to be found in the law of nature.

We have only to look into the volume of revelation itself, to have these reasonings confirmed. The people of Israel were instructed to regulate their national concerns by a revealed standard, and were taught to regard the possession of God's revealed statutes and judgments as a national distinction for which they were bound to be grateful. Nor is there anything said, which would warrant us to conclude that this was to be regarded as peculiar to that people. 'Behold,' says Moses, 'I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it: keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. And what nation is so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?' [Deut. 4.5,6,8.] ► In strict conformity with this, the chief magistrate was to have a copy of the law, according to which he should act in the discharge of his official duties. 'And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.' [Deut. 17.18-20.] ► The same principle is illustrated in the instructions given to the rulers, judges, and kings of Israel. To Joshua it was said, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.' [Josh. 1.8.] When the days of David drew nigh that he should die, he charged Solomon, his successor on the throne, thus: 'Be thou strong and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.' [1 Kings 2.1-3.]

We wait not to quote those passages, in which nations and their rulers are encouraged to obey the law of God by the promise of suitable rewards; are cautioned against disobedience by appropriate threats; and are spoken of as actually punished for their transgression of this rule. What has been already adduced is sufficient to shew that the Jews, at least, were bound to regulate their national concerns by the revealed will of Jehovah: and the inference from this is neither obscure nor illegitimate, that nations, like them in possession of revealed truth, are still

bound to take it as their supreme rule, standard, and guide, in all their civil affairs. Neither do we wait to inquire what parts of the judicial law given to the Jews, are binding upon Christian states. ► We build at present upon the broad and undeniable *fact* that nations as such, and civil magistrates in their official capacity, when the matter of revelation was less extensive than it is now, were bound to make it their rule of duty; and from this we deduce the natural and reasonable inference, that civil communities blessed by God with the perfect revelation of his will, are under obligation, at all times, to shape and model their political conduct by the dictates of this infallible standard. The principle on which they were at any time bound to do so being a moral principle, they must be held bound to do the same at all times: what is moral is neither of local nor of temporary obligation. If nations are not bound by the Word of God, they are not responsible or punishable for acting contrary to it, but may, at pleasure, revel with impunity in the violation of every branch of revealed truth;—a degree of licentious indulgence which, however agreeable to the taste of the infidel, cannot fail to shock the mind of every Christian.

When we look into the New Testament, we find even in it many things respecting the nature, origin, and ends of civil government; the qualifications, duties, and claims of civil rulers; and the obligations of subjects towards magistrates, both supreme and subordinate. For what purpose, we ask, are these placed in the sacred volume? Surely not to be overlooked, but to be read, pondered, and obeyed. They are certainly designed to be of use; but this they cannot be, if nations as such, and men in their civil capacity, are not under their authority as parts of revealed truth. When, therefore, we find civil rulers, king and judges, commanded to *be wise* and to *be instructed*, must we not understand them as required to go to the Bible for the instruction they need, and to extract from this sacred repository their lessons of political wisdom? It thus appears satisfactorily established, that nations are under the obligation of the revealed will of Christ in general, and bound to regulate their transactions by it, in as far as it contains what is applicable to such, whether in the form of principle, precept, or example.

And if this is the case with regard to revelation as a whole, it will not be denied to be so with regard to the moral law in particular. Nations, as such, are under the obligation of the moral law; they are bound to regulate their affairs by the principles and precepts of the decalogue. Every precept of that law they are bound to obey.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What is the seventh act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A.
2. What is the eighth act of kingly administration which Christ exercises toward the nations?
A.
3. Seeing Christ has this Mediatorial Dominion over the nations, what should be considered in its light?
A.
4. What are the first two duties we should notice, which the nations must observe as subjects of Christ?
A.