

**MESSIAH THE PRINCE,**  
Or, The Mediatorial Dominion of Jesus Christ.  
By William Symington.  
Sabbath Afternoon Studies: Part 31.

CHAPTER 9.  
THE MEDIATORIAL DOMINION  
OVER THE NATIONS.

(The Results Expected from Complete Secularization.)

*Fifthly.* To say that the church and the state, that national society and true religion, are capable of existing together in harmonious co-operation, and of producing a mutually advantageous effect on each other, is, however, not saying all that may be said on this subject. We may go farther, and affirm that injurious consequences of the most frightful kind, would spring from insisting on their being entirely separated. The amount of pernicious consequences that should, in this way, ensue, it is impossible fully to depict. Society must, of course, in this case, forego all the advantages which, as we before observed, may be derived to it from religion, and religion all the advantages which may be derived to it from the countenance, encouragement, and support of the civil power. Not only must religion struggle, unbefriended and unaided, in its benevolent attempts to pervade the great mass of society with its principles, and to diffuse its light among the poor and the illiterate; but civil society must become essentially and avowedly infidel. ► If the nation must have nothing to do with religion, then, in the constitution of the country, there can be no acknowledgment of God, no recognition of the Bible. Electors may, in this case, feel themselves at full liberty, in the choice of their rulers, to throw aside all respect for religion, and allow themselves to be wholly swayed by the all-powerful influence of party politics. The rulers even must be set free from the trammels of an oath, which is a religious matter, and exempted from all obligation to recognise God in their official enactments. Every allusion to divine Providence may be justly characterised as ‘cant and humbug.’ There must be no prayers in the national assemblies. There must be no appeal to the divine law in the senate-house. The judge on the bench must be precluded from referring the unhappy culprit whom he condemns, to the solemnities of a judgment to come, or even of recommending him to betake to the blood of atonement for the salvation of his soul. The Sabbath of the Lord may be employed, with impunity, in every kind of business and sport. And the nation, although as we have seen a moral subject of Messiah, must be debarred from ever expressing its allegiance to its King!

*Sixthly.* But is such a separation as is contended for, practicable, even were it proved to be desirable? We venture to think that it is not. We see not how, in any case, there can be found a basis of national policy at all, where there is an entire disregard of all the sanctions of religion.

But the separation is rendered more difficult still wherever Christianity exists. So extensive are the obligations, so powerful the principles of the religion of Jesus, that, where these are felt, it will be found utterly impossible to disregard their influence, even in the ordinary transactions of civil life. The ruler, if a Christian, will not feel himself at liberty to disregard the motives and the interests of religion, in the discharge of his official functions; neither will the subject, either in the choice of his rulers, or in his obedience to the laws. The very existence of the Christian church in a land, must render it impossible to legislate and act in the same way as if it had no existence there. In short, things civil and religious are so closely interwoven, in the circumstances and very constitution of man, that, to effect an entire separation between them, may safely be pronounced chimerical,—impossible if it were attempted, and foolish and wicked in no ordinary degree if it were possible.

It is easy to say, in opposition to the whole argument maintained on this subject, that Christ did not call in the aid of the civil power in support of his church at the commencement; that it flourished notwithstanding, and in spite, too, of bloody persecutions, during the primitive ages; and that, from the time of its alliance with the state, its purity and prosperity began to decline. The case assumed in the latter part of this statement is, as has been often shewn, not matter of fact. The corruptions of the Christian church, as already hinted, were in existence long before the time of Constantine, and the decline of her prosperity can be traced distinctly to other causes than the countenance extended to her by that distinguished individual. And, as to Christianity's having been established at first without the aid of the civil power, this circumstance would form an unanswerable objection to any one who should maintain, that religion could not exist or prosper without the aid of the civil magistrate. But this, be it remembered, is not our opinion. ► The question is not, whether religion can exist without national support, but what is the duty of nations towards the religion and church of Christ. And, if her primitive prosperity without the countenance of the state is to be pleaded as a valid reason why the church should always remain in the same circumstances, might we not, with equal propriety, contend that there should be no such thing as a course of preparatory education required of ministers; nay, that it is desirable that the civil authorities in a land should, not simply let religion alone, but that they should persecute it with all their might, as it was by means of unlearned men, and amid fire and blood, that the church, in that age, prospered and flourished? What the Head of the church may choose to do for her protection and support, in extraordinary circumstances, and in order to subserve the purpose of setting in a clearer light her spiritual independence and divine vitality, can form no rule of procedure in other circumstances. ► It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. It is our duty, while we observe with devout adoration the workings of his providence, to take as our guide the dictates of his holy and infallible Word. Nor does it become us to prescribe to God the manner in which the expression of his will, in any case, shall be conveyed to us. The want of a direct precept can form no valid objection, in the matter under consideration, any more than in other cases, such as infant baptism and the Christian Sabbath, for which no direct injunction can be pleaded, and whose obligation is admitted, on

much the same sort of grounds as those on which the duty of nations to encourage and aid the true religion is supported.

Such are some of our reasons for maintaining that it is the duty of nations, in virtue of their moral subjection to the Messiah, to have respect to the interests of his church. The grand basis of this obligation, we beg to remind our readers, is the moral supremacy of Christ over the nations. From this, as we have already seen, springs the duty of extending their countenance and support to his church. The other arguments may be regarded as corollaries from this great principle or axiom. Indeed, both the church and the state being placed under the mediatorial dominion,—being, so to speak, only different moral provinces of the same King,—separate departments of one vast moral empire, it is not easy to conceive of them being so irreconcilably opposed as to be incapable of subsisting in close and friendly alliance with one another. The titles, *King of saints*, and *King of kings*, imply nothing contradictory. They are inscribed on the same escutcheon; they sparkle on the same diadem; and, apart from the prejudices engendered by party contentions, one should think that they can call up, on being named, no feeling of incongruity. Let us not, then, be found guilty of attempting to put asunder what God has joined together.

It is impossible, in connexion with the duty of nations toward the church, not to lament that the kingdoms of the world have been so little careful to select the true religion as the object of their fostering care. The continental nations have, for the most part, extended their favour to that church which is the Mystery of iniquity, and which is emphatically antichristian. They have given their power to the Beast. Instead of favouring the chaste Spouse and Bride of Christ, the kings of the earth have taken to their embrace the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth; and, by so doing, have furnished the enemies of all alliance between church and state, with a plausible, though ill-founded objection.

By our own nation, it is deeply to be lamented, civil countenance has been extensively given to the same false and pernicious system, both in the colonies and in Ireland. The Protestant establishment of England itself, is, to a considerable extent, an establishment of error, being essentially prelatical, and otherwise loaded with a burdensome mass of unscriptural and superstitious ceremonies. Even the Presbyterian establishment of Scotland, in so far as the creed and government of the church were prescribed by the state at the Revolution Settlement, and ordained because agreeable to the wishes of the people rather than founded on the Word of God, and inasmuch as a decidedly Erastian power is both claimed and exercised over the church, particularly in the appointment of her ministers, is highly objectionable. Both the church and the state, it ought ever to be borne in mind, in entering into alliance for the purpose of securing the mutual advantages which such an alliance is calculated to subserve, are bound, in duty to Christ, to have respect at once to the *character* of the ally with whom they unite, and to the *nature* of the alliance that is formed between them. Both of these are indispensable to a legitimate and useful alliance.<sup>1</sup> ► Neither must the state, on the one hand, confer support on

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1 These are the topics discussed by Mr. Samuel B. Wylie in sections 5 and 6 of his 1803 publication, *The Two Sons of Oil*. The former section discusses, The Character of the Civil Government from

error and superstition, nor the church, on the other, enter into association with an immoral and antichristian power. And, even supposing the state and the church to be both what they ought to be, care must be taken that the union formed between them, be not such as involves an encroachment of the one on the prerogatives of the other. It must be such as is perfectly consistent with the spiritual independence of the church, such as leaves her in the free and unfettered enjoyment and exercise of all the privileges and immunities that belong to her, by the grant of her glorious and divine Head.

How far this rule has been violated, with regard to the existing establishments of our land, it is not our present object to inquire, or to shew. But it certainly becomes the friends of these institutions to consider, whether much of the opposition with which they are assailed and by which their very existence is threatened, may not arise from this source; and whether, for their stability and security, a thorough searching into every defect, an unsparing reform of every abuse, a complete purgation of every evil, may not be the course which true policy, as well as fidelity to Messiah the Prince, would seem to dictate. It is the existence of these abuses, they may rest assured, that has given weight and influence to the objections of their opponents; and we would, with all possible earnestness, counsel their speedy and complete rectification. It is certainly much to be regretted, that a certain class, in their zeal against great and undeniable evils, have permitted themselves to be carried beyond this legitimate object of assault, and have assailed a glorious and Scriptural *principle*. For this they are undoubtedly to be blamed. ► But it concerns those of the other class to bear in mind, that the whole blame does not rest with their opponents. Not a little of it is chargeable upon themselves, for countenancing and perpetuating those abuses of a good principle, which have brought the very principle itself into danger and disrepute. And having called upon the one party to attend to an immediate and thorough reform, we would earnestly and respectfully entreat the other to restrict their opposition to the evils in question. They will find here ample employment for all their artillery. In this department, while they conduct the warfare like men breathing the spirit of the Gospel and seeking the interests of truth, let them spare no arrows. But oh! let them beware of pointing a single shaft against the sacred principle of Christ's moral supremacy over the kingdoms of the world. Let them shrink from entertaining a sentiment, or maintaining a theory, which would go to pluck from the head of Emmanuel the crown of the nations, and to blot from his escutcheon the resplendent title, *King of kings and Lord of lords*.

There are those who occupy neutral ground; who are connected with neither the one party nor the other; who stand aloof from existing establishments, on account of what they conceive to be wrong in them, and who yet feel themselves bound to contend for the principle that

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which Right Administration in matters *Circa Sacra* is Expected; and the latter discusses, The Character of the Church to which Protection is Due from a Rightly Ordered State. It is not the expectation of Covenanters that religious establishment will always be, regardless of circumstances, an institution of benefit to society or pleasing to the Lord. Whenever any moral duty or institution is examined and weighed, it ought to be assumed that due regard is paid to the author of that institution in his own purposes and the many other laws he has appointed to operate in harmony with the subject considered.—JTK.

nations ought to have some respect for religion. Such we would recommend to keep their ground firmly, and to turn to good account the influence their peculiar position enables them to exercise. They may find it difficult to steer clear of taking a side, in a controversy which is waged with much fierceness. But let them be persuaded that by doing so, they must impair their usefulness. At once their duty and safety are to STAND STILL. Not that we mean that they should stand still in idleness or unconcern,<sup>2</sup> but that they should continue to occupy the ground to which they believe those who have erred, on the one side and on the other, must ultimately come. ► Let them contend earnestly for the truth of the great principle, the adoption of which in its purity, is, they are persuaded, to bless, in the end, both the church and the nations, with contentment, peace, holiness, and glory. And let them hold up to the view of all the banner of CHRIST'S CROWN AND COVENANT, that both civil and ecclesiastical societies may come under its protection, and do homage to the King in whose name it is unfurled. By identifying themselves entirely with the one or with the other class of combatants, they must give up something for which it is important they should strive, and can only subserve, at the best, the

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2 At this place the author's son, as editor of editions in the 1880s, inserted a note.

He referred to how he had found a marginal comment on this point from his father in his related lecture. It included the brief caution, 'Not that there should be no negotiating with other churches with a view to union.' From this, and his knowledge of his father's disposition, he speculates that Dr. Symington (our author) would have embraced changes among the majority of Reformed Presbyterians in 1863, looking toward church union, which eventually led to the absorption of nominal (New Light) Reformed Presbyterians into the Free Church of Scotland. The editor attempts to support his guess at what his father would do, and give credit to the compromising unions of later times, by referring to how his father held to "the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms not as an instrument of sectarian isolation, but as a bond of union."

It should be noted that the changes among Reformed Presbyterians in 1863 led to rupture among brethren, dividing them into "Old Light" and "New Light" Synods. The changes did not tend toward church unity. What began in 1863 was a loosening of principles, so that discipline among Reformed Presbyterians would not be enforced with respect to Use of the Elective Franchise (voting) and swearing the Oath of Allegiance. But it was another thirteen years before a union was effected with the Free Church of Scotland among those of looser principles. Further, we ought to dismiss an implicit slander of the editor, and consider: Which church received the Solemn League and Covenant as a "bond of union"? The Free Church of Scotland did not. The Reformed Presbyterian Church did. The Solemn League was no more "an instrument for sectarian isolation" for Reformed Presbyterians than it had been for those who swore it during the times of Reformation and later Persecution. However certain it is that Dr. Symington, the previous editor's father, looked upon this Covenant as a "Bond of Union" (along with many other Reformed Presbyterians,) so certain we may also be that he would have persisted in fellowship with those Presbyterians who continued to receive and respect the Solemn League as such.

The sentences from the author which follow this point, will set these things in a light clear enough. While it is possible that his own disposition may have developed over time, (which is true of all disciples of Jesus in this life,) yet the words of the text itself are clearly designed to warn that retreating from the position he has presented will leave men involved in the cause and strife of one party or another, no longer contending for that which will find, in the many things concerned here, the approbation of the Almighty. His own words present this more distinctly.—JTK.

interests of a party: but, by holding fast the position they now occupy, they may be of service to the general cause of the Redeemer.

The friends of truth, the subjects of Him who is King in Sion, must stand prepared to surrender the applause of man whose breath is in his nostrils; must value, above everything, the approbation of the Almighty; and aim, at all times, at being able to say in sincerity, We serve the Lord Christ. By taking a decided stand on their own proper ground, without being moved from it by the dread of singularity, and without suffering themselves to be swallowed up in the devouring vortex of party strife, or of latitudinarian indifference, their very position of apparent neutrality will carry in it a distinct and palpable testimony for the truth as it is in Jesus. *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown!* [1 Thess. 5.21; Eph. 6.13-15; Rev. 3.11.]

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#### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the fifth argument in favor of the proposition stated by Dr. Symington for Religious Establishment, or the duty of a nation to legally recognize, favor, and support the true religion?
  - A. There are “injurious consequences of the most frightful kind” which “would spring from insisting on” the entire separation of Church and State as institutions which must not help one another.
2. With respect to the selection of rulers, what effect does Dr. Symington foresee as developing in evangelized nations, if they adopt a plan for the separation of Church and State in which the State becomes entirely non-religious?
  - A. Electors will feel themselves at liberty “to throw aside all respect for religion, and allow themselves to be wholly swayed by the all-powerful influence of party politics.”
3. What is the sixth argument in favor of the proposition stated by Dr. Symington for Religious Establishment?
  - A. The separation contended for is not practicable, even if desirable; especially wherever Christianity exists.
4. When it is alleged that Constantine’s favor shown to the Christian Church was followed by a time of decay in the Church, what should be remembered to avoid drawing incorrect conclusions?
  - A. The corruptions in the church were in existence long before the time of Constantine. 2 Thess. 2.7.
5. Is the grand basis on which we argue for the obligation of nations to show official support for the Christian religion found in the benefit this will have for society, or in something else?
  - A. Something else: “their moral subjection to the Messiah.”
6. What must be lamented very generally, even where nations have shown respect to religion?
  - A. We lament that “the kingdoms of the world have been so little careful to select the true religion as the object of their fostering care.”
7. In resolving upon any kind of alliance between church and state, what two things must the Christian be concerned about before he consent to or approve that alliance?
  - A. (1) The *character* of the ally united with (on each side); and (2) The *nature* of the alliance thus formed.