

# The Headship of Christ over the Nations.

A Lecture by the Rev. Andrew Symington, D.D., Paisley, 1841.

Published by the Library Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Geelong Australia. 1997

SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE - CONNECTED WITH HEADSHIP OVER THE CHURCH - PRESENT CONTROVERSIES - IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE - COMPREHENSIVE AND RECONCILING CHARACTER - PROSPECTIVE BEARINGS ON THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

By headship in the title of this lecture, we understand a headship of authority and moral supremacy, not a headship of providential rule and physical control. But while our attention is to be particularly directed to the headship of Christ over the nations in the sense of moral government, as a leading principle of the Second Reformation, we are not to exclude the providential government, by which the Redeemer controls the affairs of the nations in subserviency to the interests of his kingdom, a truth evident in the Scriptures and fraught with consolation.

As the Son of God participated with the Father and Holy Spirit in the creation of all things, he equally participates in that providence, by which all things are preserved and governed. "All things were created by him and for him, and by him all things consist."<sup>1</sup> This providence, as it embraces all things, extends to them in their relations to one another, and in their subordinate and superior interests. The Church of God is the supreme and ultimate interest to which all others are made subservient, as is justly expressed in our Confession. "As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so, after a most especial manner, it taketh care of the church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof."<sup>2</sup> The affairs of the communities called nations must materially affect the church, and it is

---

<sup>1</sup>COL. 1: 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup>WESTMINSTER CONFSSION, CHAP. V. SECT. 6.

interesting to remark, how Providence restrains, directs, and overrules them in this subserviency. The government of Providence extends to spirit as well as to matter, and, without violating the freedom of moral agents or sharing in their criminality, secretly sways an influence over the minds of men, controlling the most guilty and malignant. "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water. He turneth it whithersoever he will."<sup>3</sup> The heart of the king, the ambition of the courtier, the acumen of the senator, the views of the judge, the pen of the historian, the fancy of the poet, the tongue of the orator, the enterprise of the merchant, the inquisitiveness of the philosopher and of the traveller, the heart of the warrior, the fate of the battle, the issues of war and peace, international transactions and adjustments, the rise, division, and fall of empires, are all under divine control, fulfilling the purposed of God, and directed, at his pleasure in subserviency to his church. "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. For your sakes I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans whose cry is in the ships." He reproveth kings for their sakes.<sup>4</sup>

It is most important to observe, that this providential government of the nations is in the hand of Christ, embracing all events, great or seemingly trivial, extending to great

---

<sup>3</sup>PROV. 16: 9. 21: 1

<sup>4</sup>IS. 43: 3, 14. PS.105: 14.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

political movements, and descending to the affairs of individuals. In the vision of the prophet by the river Chebar,<sup>5</sup> of living creatures and wheels and firmament, sublimely emblematic of the providence of God about Israel, there was the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne the likeness of a man, indicating that the movements of the wheels, high and dreadful, were now under the control of Him who was to be sent forth in the fullness of time made of a woman. He rules in the raging of the sea, He stilleth the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. And that his providence descends to minute things, guiding the very steps of his servants, is finely brought out in the prayer of Paul, "Now God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ *direct our way* unto you,"<sup>6</sup> The affairs of the nations are controlled into this subserviency, and things seemingly unimportant, as well as events of the greatest magnitude, are placed in connection with results affecting essentially the individual interests of the people of God, and the social concerns of his Church. This much will be generally acknowledged. The history of individuals, the rise and progress of the Church of Christ in particular localities, will supply striking illustrations of this truth, inspiring the heart with admiration, gratitude, and confidence. But we must proceed to the more particular view of the subject.

I. Jesus Christ is the "head of every man," the "head of the body of the Church, the head of all principality and power," the "head over all things to the church."<sup>7</sup> David speaking prophetically of Christ, says, "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen, (or the nations,) a people whom I have not known shall serve me."<sup>8</sup> In all these instances, we have in the use of the word Head, the idea of

---

<sup>5</sup>Ezek. 1: 16.

<sup>6</sup>1 Thess. 3: 11.

<sup>7</sup>1 Cor. 11: 3. Col. 1: 18., 2: 10., Eph. 1: 22.

<sup>8</sup>Ps. 18: 43.

rule and government, not merely in the sense of providential and gracious influence, but in the sense of moral authority and sovereignty, as it was used by Samuel when he said to Saul, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over all Israel?"<sup>9</sup> The Headship of Christ over the nations we understand in the sense of moral sovereignty, implying a right to legislate, to command obedience, and to reward and punish accordingly. The headship of Christ over the nations is the co-relate of the subjection of the nations to God and to Christ, stated in the Introductory Lecture, as pertaining to the principles upon which the Second Reformation proceeded. This fact and the importance of it are implied in assigning it a place in the course. I am not, therefore, required to establish the fact, that this was a principle in the Second Reformation, but I am to establish it as a scriptural truth, and thus vindicate the important place which it held in the memorable Reformation referred to. And from the diversity and contrariety of view entertained on the subject, it must be taken up in the form of a Scriptural argument.

The Headship of Christ over the nations might be presumed from the circumstances of the case. Invested with a power to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him, the Redeemer must have a right to institute means for this end, and to employ these means, to give them effect, to organise a church, to protect, perpetuate, and enlarge that church, and all this is to be done *in the earth* and among the *nations*. And as the church has existence, relations, and externalities on the earth, and is capable of being affected, favourable or unfavourably, by the nations, it is, surely, greatly to be desiderated that the Redeemer have the power to rule and to restrain them. Without admitting this, how could he issue and give effect to the grand law which has been promulgated from his lips. "Go ye into *all the world*, Preach the gospel to *every creature*,

---

<sup>9</sup>1 Sam. 15: 17.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

Teach *all nations*.<sup>10</sup> The Saviour in these lofty proclamations does not unrighteously invade the kingdom of another, and usurp authority over it. No. He is only providing to make reprisals from a kingdom that had withdrawn allegiance from its legitimate sovereign, and erected the standard of rebellion in the earth; and he has received authority to reduce the rebellious, and to rule in the midst of his enemies. Without conceding the headship of Christ over the nations, his special kingdom would seem to take its rise in usurpation, and to be maintained in the earth by the sacrifice of right and of order.

Analogy leads us to conclude the headship of Christ over the nations. He is "gone to heaven, angels, authorities, and powers being subject to him,"<sup>11</sup> and he sends them forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. He is their Lord, and he rules over them, not merely by a secret invisible control, but by a moral sovereignty, commanding the services of holy angels, and restraining and avenging the rebellious. But this is not all. Marriage is a moral ordinance of God. The authority of parents and masters is ordained by God. The sabbath is a moral ordinance of heaven. And we have indisputable evidence that all these are under law to Christ. National incorporation is a moral ordinance of heaven, to be erected and regulated by the moral law, and nations as moral subjects are under law to God, and incur, by disobedience, the displeasure of God the King of nations. Will not then a fair analogy lead to the conclusion, that nations are under law to Christ? We find no exception, in this particular; nor is it easy to conceive of any principle upon which such an exception could be predicated.

But is not the headship of Christ over the nations implied in the universality of the mediatorial supremacy? "ALL power is given unto me in HEAVEN and in EARTH," - "Head of ALL principality and power," - "Angels, authorities, and powers being made

subject to him."<sup>12</sup> It is not unworthy of notice, as we pass, that the word applied to civil authority in Romans 13, is employed in the passage quoted. And the idea of universality is often expressed, not merely by a general term, but by the enumeration of particulars, and by the exclusion of all exceptions. "All principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named. He left nothing that is not put under him. He is excepted that did put all things under him."<sup>13</sup> It must be passing strange, if, after these statements, the nations are excepted from the mediatorial rule.

But there is more than presumption, and analogy, and implication on the subject. There is express specification. Mark the titles by which the Saviour is designated in the Scriptures. He is God's first-born, higher than the kings of earth. He is the governor among the nations. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth.<sup>14</sup> When described in opposition to kings who have given their strength and power to the Apocalyptic Beast, he is designated, "Lord of lords and King of kings."<sup>15</sup> These are not merely honorary complimentary decorations, appended to his name; but in their application to him they have their full amount of meaning, and a corresponding full amount of power. The Redeemer wears no empty titles, and has ascribed to him no merely nominal honours. He is not called Governor among the nations, and Prince of the kings of the earth, without *having authority* over them.

But this is not all. The Holy Scriptures contain authoritative precepts on this very subject. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings. Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."<sup>16</sup> You must be aware, that it is the

---

<sup>10</sup>Mark 16: 15., Matt. 28: 19.

<sup>11</sup>1 Pet. 3: 22.

<sup>12</sup>Matt. 28: 18. Col. 2: 10. 1 Pet. 3: 22.

<sup>13</sup>Heb. 2: 8. 1 Cor. 15: 27.

<sup>14</sup>Ps. 89: 27. Ps. 22: 28. Rev. 1: 5.

<sup>15</sup>Rev. 19: 16.

<sup>16</sup>Ps. 2.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

arisen and exalted Saviour that is introduced here as the legitimate object of obeisance to the judges and kings of the earth. It is true, that every individual to whom the gospel is addressed is under obligation to believe and to obey the Saviour. But a peculiar obligation lies upon judges and kings. It were a dangerous as an unwarranted principle of interpretation, to restrict such precepts to personal individual character, divested of all relations and official bearings, for it would go far to overturn every relative obligation whatever. It was by their office, as well as in their persons, and in their office mainly and chiefly, as exercising moral authority, and organising physical force, that the kings of the earth set themselves against Christ, and it is in the same character that they are commanded to acknowledge his authority, to give him their allegiance, and to obtemperate his law. Must not he be head of the nations whom their representatives and rulers are bound thus to honour?

But there are other precepts bearing upon this point. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well."<sup>17</sup> From the place which these precepts occupy, they must be regarded as precepts of Christ, to be obeyed in subjection to him, and they certainly imply his authority over magistrates, and kings, and their people. "It appears to me to be a dangerous doctrine to affirm that the New Testament enjoining, as it does, the *duty* of subjection and obedience on all private persons, has nevertheless imposed no *corresponding obligation* on those by whom they are governed - that it has bound over the subject hand and foot to obedience, and yet left the ruler free to act according to his own

views of expediency."<sup>18</sup> It is proper to view the above precepts as given, in connection with other Scriptures, to regulate the political conduct of Christians, at the time they were written, and in every subsequent age, without any exclusive reference to the existing authorities. They are delivered in general terms without the definite article in the Greek original. "Let every soul be subject to higher (not *the* higher) powers; whether it be to king, (not *the* king) as supreme, or unto governors." Is not he king of nations, who thus authoritatively prescribes the duty of subjects?

This truth receives confirmation from the inspired predictions. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. There was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him."<sup>19</sup> It were easy to multiply passages to the same effect, but this is unnecessary. He whom all nations are to serve, he before whom all kings are to fall, and who has received a kingdom that all people should obey him, must be, in the strictest sense of the term, the Head of the nations. No sound canon of interpretation can justify the restriction of these prophetic declarations to merely private personal subjection.

The same truth may be inferred from the very solemn comminations of the Scripture on this very subject. "Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false

---

<sup>17</sup>Rom. 13: 1. Tit. 3: 1. 1 Pet. 2: 13.

---

<sup>18</sup>General Statement of the case in behalf of National Religious Establishments, by the Rev. James Buchanan, p. 42.

<sup>19</sup>Ps. 72: 10. Dan. 7: 14.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire."<sup>20</sup> Surely He to whom kings are commanded to submit under pain of destruction; He who will strike through disobedient and impenitent kings in the day of his wrath; He who will execute judgments upon the antichristian kingdoms, must have received authority over the nations.

The great truth under consideration may be further established from taking a scriptural survey of the dispensation of the covenant of grace, from its first revelation unto the period of its greatest consummation on the earth. This covenant is established with men on the earth in the way of erecting an opposite interest to the kingdom of Satan, as is manifest from the language of the first promise, as it is usually called, in which the dispensation of the covenant is predicated on enmity to Satan. Now Satan, through judicial permission, as the punishment of human apostasy, has usurped power in this world, and set up his kingdom in the earth, not only in *individual* but in *social* man. In this way he consolidates his power, and gives perpetuity and diffusion to his interest. It is a fact of unquestionable notoriety, that Satan has embodied idolatry and crime with the civil associations and institutions of men. Religion is so natural, so constitutional a thing in man, that he cannot exist without it; and having lost that which is true and pure, he resorts to what is false and vile. From the earliest ages idolatry and vice have been embodied with the social institutions of mankind, and the kingdom of Christ, attacking these evils in the heart, seeks to achieve, preserve, and spread its triumphs, by dislodging idolatry and vice from the institutions in which they have been entrenched. Satan has his strongholds in the heart, and maintains his possessions there by influencing the civil associations of mankind. Accordingly, God began very early to separate his people from associations of the world lying in wickedness. The first revelation of mercy was given in a threatening against

---

<sup>20</sup>Ps. 2: 12. Isa. 60: 12. Ps. 110: 5. Rev. 19: 19.

Satan, which must be viewed as directed against the devices by which he deceives and enslaves. National society, at his instigation embodying false religion and immorality, exerts a malignant influence over men, and openly dishonours God; and the kingdom of Christ is set up in opposition, to recall not only individual but social man to obedience to God from whom he has revolted, counteracting the malignant influence exerted upon individual man, and bringing public honour to God. Of course he who sets up a kingdom with this object must be the Head of the nations. "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations." This we know shall be the grand result in the period of millennial prosperity, which shall be realised by binding Satan, and shutting him up in his prison to deceive the nations no more.

Let us now mark the progress of the dispensation of the covenant to this grand consummation. You will find the germ and primary element of the consummation, in the very first rise of the covenant economy. While the *individual* is bound to yield himself to a covenant God in his relations to the life that now is and that which is to come, the *parent* is under obligation, and has received authority, to provide for the spiritual and temporal good of his children, and he is to all intents and purposes a minister and magistrate in his domestic sphere.<sup>21</sup> The patriarch united in himself this twofold power, extending it over a greater number of objects, keeping them in a state of separation from the ungodliness and immorality of the world around them. Priesthood and royalty were conjoined in the patriarchal powers and functions. When God established the covenant with Abraham, the subjection of the nations was brought particularly into view. "I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her, and she shall be a mother of *nations: kings of people* shall be of her. Abraham shall surely become great, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him."<sup>22</sup> In fulfilment of these promises, the seed of Abraham, after

---

<sup>21</sup>Gen. 18: 19.

<sup>22</sup>Gen. 17: 6. 18: 18.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

long bondage in Egypt, were delivered with a strong hand, and were organised into a church and a commonwealth, God himself assuming the character of their *God* and their *king*. They had a ritual, and a judicial code based upon the moral law; and they had a distinct, though not separate, subsistence as a church and a kingdom; and were by their institutions preserved in a state of separation from the idolatrous kingdoms around them, witnessing to the unity and character of the true God, as well as to the Seed of the promise. We have a lengthened illustration of these things in the history of the Jews; a royal priesthood and a holy nation, however short they came of their high honour and great privileges. Where history fails us, prophecy continues the line of the vision, and we are told of the further and enlarged subjection of the nations to the Redeemer; a favourite theme with the prophets, of which I need not wait to adduce examples. Next appears Jesus, when the kingdom was to be taken from the Jews and given to other nations that would bring forth its fruits. Two things of great importance give continuity to the line of the covenant dispensation, in the view we have taken of it as embracing a divine headship over the nations. 1st. Christ came to fulfil the law. By his obedience he has not made void but established the law. Now the law which is established by the gospel is the moral law - a law which teaches man his duty to God and to his neighbour, and which is addressed to social as well as to individual man, and which in this latter view is the proper moral basis of national organisation and prosperity. 2nd. Jesus gave a commission to teach all nations, and this commission, as it extends to the whole world, will yet exert an influence upon the state of the nations. "The word in the original which we render teach, signifies more than the diffusion of knowledge. It conveys the idea of forming disciples; and of course includes all that instruction in righteousness which belongs to Christians. It is impossible without perversion of language, to exclude from such instruction every thing which has a political bearing. Ministers are authorised to go throughout the world, and thus instruct all

nations upon the face of the earth; and the object of their ministry cannot be said to be completely accomplished, until nations as such, shall have submitted to the rule of righteousness. Individuals, indeed, may be converted, and edified, and glorified; churches may be organised, and enlarged and comforted; and even bodies politic may experience some advantage from the Christian religion: in all these instances the honour of the deity is promoted on earth, but the object of the ministry of the word of God is not fully answered unless the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord, and all nations be made to feel the influence of Christianity."<sup>23</sup> By casting our eye on the history of Christianity, we find that it obtained a signal triumph in the overthrow of paganism in the Roman empire. The worship of idols was abolished; their statues and temples were overthrown; and the church, after a period of sanguinary persecution, had rest. The true God that made the heaven and the earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, was openly and generally worshipped. The revolution from paganism to Christianity, however much misimproved, and, through various abuses, opening a way for the revelation of the Man of sin, was nevertheless an astonishing interposition of providence, indicating what God was able to do, and what he would yet do, in fulfilling his true and faithful sayings - that the kingdom of Christ would have a glorious triumph in the earth, when Satan, that deceived the nations, would be cast down, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Then shall the promises made to Abraham have their fulfilment, and, in the glory of the millennium, Christ shall be declared King of nations, as well as King of Saints and King of Zion. Thus was the headship of Christ over the nations exhibited in the first promise, kept up in the subsequent dispensations, and is yet to receive a more glorious manifestation, when the Deceiver of the nations shall be cast into his prison. The nations have been instruments of Satan in

---

<sup>23</sup>D. M'leod's Scriptural View of the character, causes, and ends of the Present War. Sermon I.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

opposing the kingdom of Christ. the secular Roman empire is exhibited as receiving from the Dragon his power, and his seat, and great authority; so, in his overthrow shall come, in singular manifestation, "the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ." Independently of the particular views which may be taken of the fulfilment of the predictions of the "things which shall be hereafter," they afford ample evidence of the headship of Christ over the nations. This truth is embodied with the whole dispensation of the covenant. Viewed in the light of ancient history, or in the light of the Christian dispensation, or in the light of prophecy, it forms an essential element in the economy of the covenant of God, and in this way are our more general arguments confirmed.

II. Having contemplated the headship of Christ over the nations in its scriptural evidence, let us next view it in connection with his headship over the church. King of Zion, Head of the Church, is indeed the grand distinctive and prominent designation of the Redeemer's authority; but it is worthy of notice that his power, even in this special view of it, is often spoken of in terms of the universality. Thus, the commission to preach and baptise is connected with "all power being given to him in heaven and in earth."<sup>24</sup> Paul, speaking of Christ's dominion over the New Testament church, says, "To the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come; but thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him."<sup>25</sup> Thus connecting his authority over the church with universal power. Again, when speaking of Christ as raised from the dead, he says, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body;"<sup>26</sup> making his

---

<sup>24</sup>Mat. 28: 18.

<sup>25</sup>Heb. 2: 5-8.

<sup>26</sup>Eph 1: 22.

universal power subservient to his supremacy in the church. When the Saviour speaks of his giving eternal life to as many as the Father has given him, he connects it with a power given him over all flesh.<sup>27</sup> To further the great ends of his mediatorial exaltation he has received most ample powers. Having acquired a right, in terms of covenant and purchase, to the persons of the elect, he must have of course a right to go through the world, find, renew, sanctify them, and bring them to glory. When seated on the holy hill of Zion, a mandate is immediately issued from the throne of the eternal, to the judges and kings of the earth, to submit themselves to the Son.<sup>28</sup> You may perceive that headship over the nations, in respect both of physical control and moral sovereignty, is connected with headship over the church, in point of fact, and we may look into some of the wise and holy reasons in which this connection is founded.

There is reason for this connection in the previous necessities of the case. To institute means for the salvation of the redeemed, to employ these means, and to make them effectual in a world lying in wickedness, where social institutions are ungodly and immoral, requires an authority over them.

But this connection has a foundation in a title of righteous conquest. Satan is indeed the prince of this world, and reigns in it, and in the hearts of the children of disobedience, but he has been cast out by the death of Christ. The earth had become the territory of Satan, and the associations of mankind have become the instruments of his rule. The Redeemer has a right, by just conquest, to enter this territory, to disorganise the kingdom of Satan, and erect another in a state of subjection to God.

But the necessary connection subsisting among things requires this extension of power. The redeemed are related to the earth, they have material bodies that require food and raiment, they are related

---

<sup>27</sup>John 17: 2.

<sup>28</sup>Ps. 2.

to civil society, and have a title to life, liberty, equity, peace, and other privileges of well-ordered society, and therefore it is requisite that the Redeemer have power to command these things for them. Religion invades no previous natural privilege, dissevers no existing moral tie. The Redeemer is a restorer, not a destroyer.

And this connection is founded on the continued necessities of the members of the church. They are specially exposed to wrong, and require protection. The church, though not *of* this world in her origin, character, and destination, is *in* the world, and has external, visible, palpable existence in her institutions and fellowship. She is capable of being injuriously affected from without, and is entitled to protection. She has this right from Christ, and as head of the nations he commands it, and will avenge the neglect and violation of it. He executes judgment in the earth, not merely upon the general principle of *moral* retribution, but specially as the *vengeance of his temple*,<sup>29</sup> avenging the wrongs done to his elect, that cry unto him night and day.

And a connection between the headship of Christ over the church and the nations is found in the honour due to the Saviour. In respect of the glory brought to God, and the good brought to his people by his condescension and sufferings, he has a claim to be highly honoured. This is acknowledged by the angels, "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power,"<sup>30</sup> &c. This is in perfect accordance with the mind and procedure of God, who, because of the humiliation of the Saviour, has highly exalted him, and "given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue

---

<sup>29</sup>Jer. 1: 28.

<sup>30</sup>Rev. 5: 11,12.

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."<sup>31</sup> Who will, who can withhold his Amen?

Such is some brief scriptural evidence of the headship of Christ over the nations, and of the relation in which it stands to his headship over the church; a doctrine, not only opposed in some quarters, because of the consequences which it involves, or is supposed to involve, but much more overlooked in its abundant scriptural evidence and important character, by many not theoretically opposed to it. I am not altogether unaware of the distinction, drawn by eminent divines, between the essential and mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ, ascribing, of course, the dominion of the nations to the essential kingdom, and the government of the church to the mediatorial; a distinction resorted to, and dwelt upon, particularly in disputation with the Erastians. Every difficulty on this subject, it is presumed, might be easily obviated, by preserving the distinction between things founded on the moral law, and things rising immediately out of the mediatorial interposition, ascribing the latter immediately to the mediatorial authority, and regarding the former as transferred, and placed under the authority of Christ, in subserviency to the ends of his rule. It being now the fact that all things are placed under Christ, the distinction between the essential and mediatorial kingdom is only theoretical, and, while important in certain arguments, it is unnecessary to advert to it when discussing the *actual* government of the Messiah. The whole evidence we have adduced goes to establish the subjection of all things, and of course the nations, to the Mediator. But I cannot digress into this subject.

**III.** I proceed to state some results of the headship of Christ over the nations. These may be stated first in some matters of fact, and then in the obligations rising out of this headship.

1. In consequence of the headship of Christ over the nations, we have a new revelation of the moral law, which is the

---

<sup>31</sup>Phil. 2: 9.



proper basis of all national association. It embraces all rights, giving unto God the things that are God's, and unto man the things that are man's. This was the original basis on which society was founded, and is still essential to its stability and interests. Society cannot be erected upon a principle of atheism. Whatever individuals may affect, society must have a God, and if men will not have the true God, they will make one to themselves, if it should be the goddess of reason, in the person of a female, as was done by the revolutionists in France, in their paroxysms of madness. The moral law reveals the true God, and inculcates the duty of man to the deity and to his neighbour, and we know, from its very terms, that it is addressed to social as well as individual man, and, being promulgated in this form, in connection with the administration of the covenant of God, headship over the nations, according to this law, is clearly indicated. It is generally admitted that the proper foundation of civil society is laid in justice. Well, this is the whole spirit and requirement of the moral law. It is rendering to every man what is his due. Would that association be founded in justice which excluded the righteous claims of any one? Could an association, formed under the express sanction of God, be said to be founded on justice which excluded all respect to God himself? Is it not a narrow and selfish view of justice which confines it to the obligations of men to one another, and excludes Him whose claims exceed every possible obligation to creatures, as deity exceeds any creature or the universe of creatures?<sup>32</sup> Far from our minds be that selfish and atheistical justice, or rather injustice, which renders unto man the things that are man's, and refuses to render unto God the things that are God's.

2. Another result of the headship in question is a revelation of the moral ordinance of national society and of magistracy over it. The duty of national organisation, and of constituting civil rulers, the qualifications they should possess, the

---

<sup>32</sup>Dr. Pye Smith's Four Discourses on Sacrifice, &c., p. 178.

mode of their appointment, the duties of rulers, and subjects, and judges, are particularly specified in the scriptures. Precepts on these subjects form no inconsiderable portion of the sacred volume, they express the will of the king of nations, and, as they claim, they prepare the way for national subjection to him.

3. Another result of this headship is the special subjection of the nations to Jesus Christ. Civil society is the moral subject of Heaven, and is under obligation to respect God as well as its own immediate interests; but it is put under Christ. Society has nothing to fear from this. The moral law is not set aside, but established and enforced by the law of Christ. Among the Jews there was an obligation upon the ruler to write him a copy of the law in a book, and to read it all the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of the law, and the statutes to do them.<sup>33</sup> The testimony of God was put into the hands of the Jewish king when the crown was put upon his head.<sup>34</sup> It is unnecessary to dwell on those things in the case of the Jews, as furnishing matter, admonitory and instructive, on the present question, it being generally admitted that, while ceremonial rites, and specially-founded judicial statutes, have now ceased in their obligation, things founded upon the moral law are immutably obligatory, and of authoritative example. But it is highly important to observe that when the crown was put upon the head of the Son of God, and king of Zion, it is promulgated as a law of heaven, "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of the earth, serve the Lord with fear, kiss the Son." The things required imply allegiance to his crown, and obedience to his law. How can kings and judges be wise now if they do not respect the law of Christ? Let them beware lest it be said to them, "Lo! they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?"<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Duet. 17: 18.

<sup>34</sup>2 Kings 11: 12.

<sup>35</sup>Jer. 8: 9.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

4. Another result of this headship is, that the authority of God and of Christ is enforced with special certifications. "He is terrible to the kings of the earth. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision."<sup>36</sup> The judgment written in God's word against the antichristian nations afford affecting illustrations on this subject.<sup>37</sup>

5. It were unnatural to subjoin as a consequence of this headship, the special providential rule of the nations in subserviency to the kingdom of Christ, and the result of his administrations. But I am speaking of the headship of Christ in respect of moral supremacy, not providential control.

The obligations of the nations to the Redeemer form another class of co-related results from his supremacy over them. Is the moral law clearly revealed? Are the principles upon which rulers are to be appointed, to legislate, to judge, and to be obeyed, minutely specified? Is subjection to Christ specially enjoined, and this under solemn certifications? It remains to inquire what are the consequent obligations.

1. Nations, in all places where the word of God has come, are under obligation to recognise the authority of *divine revelation*. It is amply accredited, and contains much that is expressly addressed to nations and their rulers, and it is to be explicitly and reverentially acknowledged. This is due to God and to Christ. If there be an obligation upon men in forming themselves into

national society, to frame their constitution and laws in agreeableness to the law of nature as written on their hearts, there must be an increased obligation to regard, in these things, the revealed law of God, its evidence being more clear, its enactments more explicit, and its authority more confirmed. Nor can they overlook or violate the law of God innocently and with impunity.

2. Nations are under obligation to acknowledge the supremacy of Christ. The fact of the Father's investing him with this supremacy implies this much. There being ample evidence that the Sovereign of all has committed all judgment to the Son, it is the duty of nations to bow down to this rightful supremacy. If there be a previous obligation to acknowledge God, there is now an obligation to acknowledge Him into whose hands he has committed all authority. Without an acknowledgement of God, a nation as such is atheistic. A nation acknowledging idols is idolatrous. A nation refusing to acknowledge the Christian religion is infidel. A nation giving allegiance to the enemies of Christ is antichristian. Nations, enjoying divine revelation, must bow to Christ as king of nations, and acknowledge explicitly that religion of which he is the author, bright with glory to God and breathing peace and good will to men, and thus assume a moral and a Christian character.

3. Nations are required to found their laws upon the morality of the Bible. Marriage, for example, must be based upon the divine law as expounded by the Saviour, and without the authority of his law it can never be regulated definitely and rightly, nor can concubinage, bigamy, polygamy, and other evils be restrained and corrected. A defense must be thrown around human life, in terms of the divine law, and infants, the infirm, the aged, and the widow, protected from murder. The interests of virtue, and innocence, and purity, must be shielded against all licentiousness. The rights of property and of justice must be established against the invasion of cupidity and violence. The law of truth and the obligation of an oath must be established against all slander and

---

<sup>36</sup>Ps.76: 12., Ps. 110., Is.60: 12., Ps. 94: 20., Ps. 2.

<sup>37</sup>Rev. 19., &c.

perjury. And the sabbath must be enacted as a day of rest from civil labour and a season of social worship. The name of God must be protected against all profanity. These, and other things of a similar nature, can only be ascertained and established by the light of the Bible. Suppose a heathen people to be visited with the light of the gospel, and converted generally to the knowledge of the Saviour, an immediate change would be produced upon their polity and laws. The case of Rarotonga in the South sea is a fine illustration. What could the lamented Williams have done without his Bible, when consulted on the formation of a code of laws for the inhabitants of that island? And was not homage done to the king of nations, when theft, and murder, and polygamy, and sanguinary codes were done away by the introduction of the gospel, a system of righteousness, and humanity, purity, and mercy?<sup>38</sup> How different this from the laws of the ancient Spartans, Greeks, and Romans, and the Hindus of the present day? It is supremely desirable that nations enact their laws, regulate their internal policy, and conduct their international transactions, according to the laws of the king of righteousness and peace. Then "the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills by righteousness."

4. It follows from the view we now take of the Redeemer's authority, that nations are under obligation to recognise and cherish the interests of the church of Christ. The church is the most honourable association upon the earth, bringing glory to God, and exerting a most benign influence upon society. Professing faith in the doctrines of the Saviour, worshipping God in the reasonable service of divine institutions, organised in holy fellowship and order according to the will of Christ, and united in holy covenant with God, she is entitled to especial and honourable recognition. Declaring in unequivocal terms her faith, and worship, and polity, in agreeableness to the will of her Lord, she is not to be treated with neglect and suspicion, but acknowledged with

cordiality, and protected and cherished. You cannot suppose nations - christianised nations I speak of, of course - discharging their duty to this Lord, if they shall regard with cold indifference the religion of Jesus, and treat with utter neglect his church, the conservatory of the purity and integrity of that religion, and under Christ the depository and distributor of its blessings. She must be entitled to something more than mere sufferance, even countenance and support. My heart revolts at the thought of the church of Christ being *tolerated* in a kingdom!

5. The nations are under obligation to diffuse abroad the religion of Jesus, by providing for an education of youth founded upon its principles, and co-operating with the church of God in extending the kingdom of Christ. Their wisdom should be tasked in devising and arranging means; their authority exercised in giving them sanction; and their resources expended in giving them support. The rulers of nations should be friendly to Christianity, and endeavour by every means suited to its genius, and with assiduous parental care, to rear this tender celestial plant. This will give dignity to their thrones, stability and energy to their government, and diffuse peace and felicity among their people, and will prove efficiently conservative of all that is good; for literature, arts, science, refinement, and wealth, apart from religion, afford no security against national corruption and ruin.

**IV.** These few things may be viewed in the light of corollaries from the doctrine of the Redeemer's headship over the nations. In the simple and abstract form in which they have been stated, they may perhaps receive little opposition and excite little interest, but when brought forward in connection with the present controversies, they assume magnitude and importance, in consequence of which they are indignantly scouted or vehemently proclaimed. It may be proper now to submit a few things on the bearings of this doctrine on recent controversies.

1. We have in the first place persons rejecting the doctrine, so far at least as it is made to bear on what are called ecclesiastical establishments.

---

<sup>38</sup>See Williams' Missionary Enterprise, Chap. 9.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

The argument for the Redeemer's headship over the nations has been founded on the Scriptures, and not treated upon the principles of expediency, and reference has been had to the dispensation of the covenant under the Judaical economy. It is admitted, because it cannot be refused, that the Jewish nation had to do with religion and with the church of God, and that God was the God of the Jewish church, and the head or king of the Jewish commonwealth. Jehovah was at once the divine Head of the ecclesiastical constitution and of their civil government. It is admitted also that this divine Head was the same divine person who is now head over all things to the church, an admission furnishing some material for argument and animadversion, when a connection, not only enacted by divine authority, but officially vested in the person of the Son of God, is denounced in terms of strongest condemnation. It is thought a sufficient refutation of any argument derived from this source to say, that the Jews were under a theocracy, and that the case is wholly inimitable. God revealed himself to that people, dwelt among them in the symbols of his presence, and communicated to them his will by his prophets. He gave them their laws and he superintended their affairs by a special providence. But has God ceased to be the God of the church, and is he not still the king of his people? Has the moral law, which belonged to what is called the theocracy, been abolished? Read the judicial statutes on slavery, murder, theft, providing for the poor, and say whether these are altogether abolished in letter and in spirit? Had the Jewish church and nation no moral existence? Were they altogether a positive type that has passed away, leaving nothing morally exemplary and obligatory, and is there nothing corresponding to them now in the covenant people of God? Is the New Testament church altogether a novel erection, or is it not a kingdom taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles? Deny the unity of the Old and New Testament church, and how shall you reason on the subject of the sabbath, on the right of infants to baptism, and other things. Did these belong to a theocracy that

has passed away? The word *theocracy* has an imposing sound, but what is its meaning - a government of God. We might show that this God, the head of what is called the theocracy, was Christ, and, now that the Messiah has appeared, we might plead for a Christocracy. The church is this to all intents and purposes. She has her laws from Christ, and she has the promise of the presence, special providence, and protection of Jesus Christ. It will remain to be inquired whether Christ continues to hold and exercise any power corresponding to what he held before his coming in the flesh. Was he not typified by the mysterious king of Salem in royalty as well as priesthood? Was he not typified in the conjunction of these two views of character by conjunct officers, acting distinctly though not separately, Aaron and Moses, Joshua and Eleazar, David and Abiathar, Solomon and Zadok, Hezekiah and Azariah, Zerubbabel and Joshua? And when he appeared in the flesh did he not spring from the royal tribe, and not from Levi, indicating that his sacerdotal character was to settle down in a glorious royalty? His royalty will not be denied, but it is to be inquired whether besides authority in his church, it comprehends authority over the nations. His people do not cease to be subjects of nations, and his law requires their subjection in agreeableness to his will. And when, individually or collectively, they assume national office or character, they are still under him. We have made our appeal already to the Scriptures, and to the *New Testament* Scriptures. The New Testament describes his power in terms of universality which imply this, it describes him as prince of the kings of the earth and king of kings, and predicts that the kingdoms of this world shall become his. Besides, we find much of what is declared on this subject in the Old Testament, transferred to the New. Take an example in the second Psalm. It is in the Old Testament to be sure, but it is also in the New, and in different passages of it it is applied to Christ.<sup>39</sup> It is an inaugural hymn, prepared by the Spirit of

---

<sup>39</sup>Acts 4:25., 13: 38., Heb. 1: 3., 5: 5., Rev. 2: 27., 12: 5., 19: 15.

inspiration for the enthronement of Jesus after his resurrection from the dead. And while anointed king on the holy hill of Zion, kings are commanded to submit themselves unto him. We might have inferred this from the command that every knee should bow to him. But it is not left to our inference. We have the very specification in question, so far is it from being true that every thing of the kind is abolished in the New Testament. It is comprehended in the Christocracy which is now erected.

It is often objected on this subject that Christ himself disavowed all authority of this kind, when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." In reply to the question, Art thou the king of the Jews, he repelled the accusation that he was about to set up a rival temporal kingdom; an accusation designed to awaken the jealousy of Caesar and of his deputy; he also reproved the carnal expectations of the Jews on the subject of his kingdom; and in his answer he justified his own interference in the rebuke which he had given to Peter, declaring that his kingdom was not to have the power of the sword, or to be propagated by it. But can his words be construed to signify that he was to have no authority nor power over the nations, and that the nations, as such, owe him no obedience? Far from it. Remark that the very scene enacting when Christ uttered the words under consideration, was the fulfilment of what is said in the 2d. Psalm, "Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing, the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers are gathered together against the Lord and his Christ; for of a truth against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together."<sup>40</sup> So testified Peter and John, while refusing to obtemperate authority exercised in opposition to God. In this very psalm, and in connection with the very thing about which the Redeemer spake, kings are commanded to kiss the Son. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. Neither are his disciples. But they are in the world, and capable of being affected

---

<sup>40</sup>Acts 4:25.

injuriously or favourably by it, have claims, in right held of their king, upon the kingdoms of this world. His church is not a worldly kingdom, but she is in the world, her members have bodies, visible existence, external fellowship, and relations to society, and she is entitled to protection. There is a kind of visionary spirituality ascribed to the kingdom of Christ, confounding the internal principles of religion with the outward visible existence and actings of the members of the church, that would lead one to think that the church had no place among men whatever. True, Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and equally true, The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. The words of Christ in question do not contrast the Old Testament and New Testament kingdoms, but repel the accusation on which he was questioned, and reprove the false views both of his accusers and of his disciples. His words must be interpreted in consistency with the subjection of the judges and kings of the earth, asserted in the second Psalm.

Often has an appeal been made on this subject to the words, "Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts,"<sup>41</sup> but with the most unhappy application that can well be supposed, for these words were spoken just at the very time that God was employing Joshua a minister of the sanctuary, and Zerubbabel a civil governor, in directing the rebuilding of the temple, and in reference to that very work, which shows that this very precious promise does not exclude civil subjection to Christ. Nor is it better purpose to employ the words, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," excepting persons were pleading for the employment of the sword in the propagation of religion, a thing not implied in the headship of Christ over the nations, nor held by any entertaining just views of the subject. But I cannot wait upon particular objections.

In the controversy which has obtained on the subject of national Church establishments, while it is to be deplored, that so much acrimony and personal and party

---

<sup>41</sup>Zech. 4: 6.

animosity has been mingled into it, it cannot but be remarked that the controversy has turned almost exclusively on the pecuniary and political bearings of the question. The duty of a nation recognising the Christian religion, and giving countenance to the Church, is a question of very different and higher import than the question of pecuniary support. To define the establishment of Christianity, *A certain legal provision for the ministrations of Christianity*,<sup>42</sup> we reckon a partial and inferior view of the subject. The question of the external support or endowment of the church is to be looked upon as "a subsidiary arrangement, desirable when it can be obtained, but the expediency of which must depend upon the circumstances of a Church and nation." Surely there are circumstances in which in this way, "Holiness to the Lord," may be inscribed on the merchandise and hire of a nation, and provision made for a diffusive and equal distribution of ministerial labour, without any compromise of the liberty of the Church, or infringement upon free-will offerings to God, or unrighteous exaction. I am not to enter upon this question particularly. It is not main nor chief in the argument I would humbly plead, the national recognition of the king of nations, of his law and the interests of his kingdom. It is possible, in taking up this subject, to be so exclusively absorbed in the pecuniary view of it, as on the one hand, by opposing national provision for the ministrations of religion, to oppose a great principle of which the pecuniary support of the ministry is only a corollary, and on the other hand in advocating it, to overlook the terms on which such a privilege is enjoyed, and the acknowledgement necessarily involved in the connection in which it stands. The error against which we lift our warning voice is that which proscribes the subjection of the nations to Christ, and bids them let his law alone.

We protest against ascribing to the doctrine which we teach, a right to a magistrate to dictate a religion to his subjects, a thing that has no place in our theory, nor in any exemplification of it which has our

approbation. We protest against ascribing to our doctrine a right to coerce the consciences and visit with civil punishment those who cannot conscientiously acquiesce in the profession of the Church. And we protest against uniformly identifying, in reasoning on this subject, a nation and its rulers with a world lying in wickedness, for we plead only for an enlightened nation professing Christianity, giving its countenance to the church of Christ; and we object to language being used on this subject that would imply that national organisation was necessarily a negation of every thing like morality, or some positive diabolical evil whose very touch is death. It is easy to daub the doctrine in false colours, and then to hold it up to desecration, and ply upon the best feelings of the Christian heart with a bitter declamation, where in many cases there may not be enlargement of mind, or present recollection and sagacity, to deter the fallacy, and evade the impression. Let every abuse be exposed, and calls be made for its speedy reformation; but spare, O spare, the claims of the Redeemer's truth to the acknowledgement, reverence, and obedience of the nations. It is a great evil in pressing a particular point, in which the party cannot often be a very impartial judge, to be driven to a refusal of the claims of the Messiah. We are constrained to testify against the sentiment, that civil society as such has nothing to do with the Scriptures and with religion. Are the hundreds of passages, (we speak advisedly, for we have enumerated hundreds,) expressly referring to civil society and their rulers, in the word of God, to be proscribed, and to be blotted out of the statute-book of heaven? "It is time thou work, Lord, for they have made void thy law." The sentiment to which I refer is opposed to the authority of the Scriptures, to the claims of God, and the honour of the Saviour, to the best interests of man and of society. What evil has true Christianity done, or will it do? I speak to Christian men. What is there in righteousness, in humanity, in industry, in virtue, in the social affections, in the due subordination of society, in peace and order, which the law of Christ does not enforce and hallow? Take away the word of God as the

---

<sup>42</sup>Dr. Chalmers' Lectures.

standard of morals, and throw them upon human opinions of expediency, and the life of man, the virtue, the property, the purity and the character of men are no longer secure. Take away the hallowed sabbath, and all open and public respect for the name and worship and character of Deity, and the bonds of society are broken, domestic relations are dissolved, social order is thrown into confusion, and men, loosed from every sense of accountability or a future state, will become the reckless oppressors and devourers of one another. In such a state of things, where is there security to the church against aggression from without, or against oppression from within, if there be no recognition of that law which defines the place, and rights and privileges of civil and ecclesiastical society? What security can the church have, in the absence of the recognition of God and of Christ, that her liberties shall not be invaded and crushed? The idea so fondly entertained of an absolute separation of every thing like religion from the state, it might be shown, is impracticable in the nature of things, and fully to carry it out would require a set of men equally void of religion and enmity against it, a neutrality which He who knew perfectly what man is pronounces impossible. Often has the idea of a government erected and administered upon the principles of the Bible and of Christianity been scouted as altogether utopian, a pious but harmless fancy. The opposite opinion we conceive to be utopian in theory, and we cannot concede to it the redeeming quality of harmlessness, being constrained to regard it as fraught with manifold practical evils.

2. There is another class of persons with whom we have to do in this argument. They admit the doctrine of the headship of Christ over the nations, in the full extent of the terms in which it is announced, but make an improper application of it. The Papist grounds upon this doctrine the claims of the church, and of the Roman Pontiff as its head, to rule over the nations of the earth, and their subjection to his mandates; and the times have been when kings and princes have been subjected to the most debasing obeisances in the connection. It is enough to

say here that the true Head of the church has not subjected her to the nations, nor has the legitimate Head of the nations placed them in subjection to the church. - There is again, the Erastian, who holds the subjection of the church to the state. This system denies any authority in the word of God for ecclesiastical organisation at all, and allows ministers only the power of instructing men in the gospel, and persuading them to believe and obey the Saviour, without any power of government or discipline, reserving all this for the civil powers.

Erastus, in his book of excommunication, holds that Christ and his apostles prescribed no form of discipline, that ecclesiastical power belongs to the civil magistrate, and that the right of admitting members into the church, and excluding them, belongs to the civil government, and that the church is a department of the commonwealth. Although no sentiment can be more unfounded than this, if the scriptures be the standard of appeal, you may conceive with what plausibilities an ingenious mind might graft it upon the doctrine for which we plead. And we may remark, in passing, that we owe it to the fathers of the Second Reformation to have successfully combated this error, having proved the distinct independent jurisdiction of the church of Christ, and having drawn an accurate line of distinction between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities. The Second Reformation was directed, with nice discrimination and fidelity, against Erastianism.<sup>43</sup> --There is another class of persons admitting our doctrine, but who have gone into very extravagant notions about Christ's kingdom, and the reign of the saints upon the earth. They have considered themselves called to wage war against the existing governments, under a persuasion that Christ would subdue the nations under them, and give them dominion. They arose in the excitement that attended the reformation by

---

<sup>43</sup>The famous work of Gillespie on this subject is a monument of history, his learning, and his discrimination. The Westminster Confession is decided on this point, and the cxi. Propositions drawn up by order of the General Assembly, 1645, explain the different powers about religion ascribed to ministers and to civil rulers.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

Luther. Muncer and the Anabaptists in Germany took the lead; they were followed by the French prophets and the Fifth-monarchy men, some of whom, under apprehension of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah, actually took arms, and rising in open insurrection, became the victims of their own folly. There are others who contend for the personal reign of Christ on the earth with his saints, in a temporal kingdom. The glorious things spoken respecting the dominion of Christ in the kingdoms of the earth, in fanciful and fervent minds, have led to extravagant interpretations of the scriptures, and those have, in many cases, been connected with pretension to miracles, tongues, inspirations, and other reveries. But with those I have not to do, as they had no place in the Second Reformation, and were opposed to its sober and sound movements. -- But advocates of the British ecclesiastical establishments admit the headship of Christ over the nations, and draw from it some of their strongest arguments for the preservation of these establishments. A good principle may receive an improper application. It is the duty of a nation enjoying revelation as ours has done, and delivered by happy reformations from Popery and Prelacy as ours was, to give glory to the King of nations, to acknowledge his holy truth, to recognise and cherish his church, and to legislate, in consistency with its genius, for the preservation and diffusion of true religion. A judicious appropriation of its funds to these objects is a duty which the nation owes to God and his Christ. But in pleading for these duties there must be discrimination between what has a claim and what has not, and a consideration of the terms upon which civil and pecuniary privileges are conferred. Fidelity to the king of nations requires this. Upon this principle therefore, while advocating the subjection of the nations to Christ as a doctrine of the Second Reformation, we have reason to object, in terms of that reformation, and the word of God, upon which it was founded, to the national recognition and support of Erastianism and of Prelacy. The argument for the headship of Christ has been pled for

the establishments, while there has been no faithful protestation against the Erastian supremacy vested in the crown, nor against the establishment of an unauthorised popish hierarchy, nor against the breach of faith with God and with the nation in the violation of the Solemn League, nor against the visible and real, though modified, Erastian authority exercised over the presbyterian church, nor against the shedding of the blood of the saints, nor against unqualified oaths of allegiance to a monarchy invested with the prerogatives of Christ, and oaths to maintain the establishments of the united kingdom. Profession of regard to Christ as the king of nations, and allegiance to authority that has usurped his authority over the church, and established what the reformation and the word of God regard as anti-christian, are inconsistent. The abstract principle is good, as is the doctrine on which it is founded, but the concrete application cannot be justified.

3. The headship of Christ over the nations reads lessons to the contending parties in the present day, on the subject of civil obedience, and of the character of the civil constitution of these lands. In the recent controversy, one party has assailed existing evils, but with an unlawful weapon, the proscription of all reference to religion or to Christ on the part of civil authority, while the other, assuming a lawful weapon, the obligation of nations to the Redeemer, have wielded it in defence of constitutional evil and wrong; and while doing these things both have professed approbation of the civil constitutions, and appeared to have overlooked the sin against God and the Head of the nations embodied in them. The one party has protested loudly against Erastianism and Prelacy in the church in this connection, and against the appropriation, or misappropriation as they would call it, of the public monies, but have not given any faithful protestation against the state, which has inflicted the evils complained of. So far from this, they have been second to none in profession of devoted loyalty. The evils of Erastianism, Prelacy, breach of covenant and open irreligion in the state, do not seem to affect their mind as national sins, nor to have



any influence in qualifying their loyalty. Both parties, indeed, seem to vie with one another in this matter, and the glorious Revolution is the ever-recurring topic of unqualified eulogy. Fidelity to the Head of the nations requires a different course. Both seem to base their loyalty upon the fact of the existence and possession of power, and not on its moral constitution and character. The precepts of scripture enjoining obedience are urged in all things that are lawful independently of the character of the authority, and slavish principles are inculcated on both sides. The refusal to comply with certain exactions for ecclesiastical purposes has called forth accusations of disobedience to the scriptures and to the law; while the refusal, on the other hand, to obtemperate civil courts in things properly spiritual or ecclesiastical has called forth the charge of rebellion against the laws of the land. The reciprocations of the same accusations, between contending parties, might almost amuse, were the subject not so grave, and involving interests of the greatest importance. These things seem to call for definite principles on civil obedience.

It is hoped that, as a result of these things, the public religious mind may be led to a less exceptionable interpretation of the scripture injunctions on this subject. Passages quoted from the New Testament on this subject found obedience on moral character, not a mere providential existence. Light is now dawning upon the public mind on this subject. It is still repeated indeed, for the thousandth time, that "the powers that be, in the passage from the Romans, are the Roman emperor, and the provincial governors of his appointment, and that to deny that the exhortation was intended to apply to them at the time is to expose the apostle to a charge of equivocation and evasive duplicity unworthy of him as an honest man, much less of an inspired apostle." But, surely, it is not unworthy of an ambassador of Jesus Christ, to deliver a general rule of civil obedience for all ages, independently of the particular circumstances of the time. The apostle has done so in other cases of relative duty: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as

they that must give an account." We do not apply these particularly to the existing ministers of the day, resolving the obligation into the fact of existence, independently of the constitution and character of the officers to be obeyed. An unauthorised usurper of the holy ministry, an immoral church ruler could not justly, on the authority of such precepts, claim obedience. Obedience is due to civil superiors, not on the mere ground of existence, for every power, lawful or unlawful, exists -- not on the fact of the commands that are issued being lawful, for this limits obedience in every case -- not on the voice of the majority, for this is fallible and has been often wrong -- but on moral character and appointment, as the passage in the Romans, taken as a whole, abundantly confirms. Nor is this interpretation of the passage, I am happy to be able to say, peculiar to those who have protested against the civil constitution of these lands. Dr. Dick says, of the passage quoted, "the apostle, without referring to any existing government, or any form in preference to another, lays down the general duty of Christians to their superiors in the state. They are bound to submit, but that it is not a blind submission is evident from the reasons assigned, 'For rulers are not a terror to the good, but to the evil - he is the minister of God to thee for good.' So far then, as a government patronises good works, and punishes such as are evil, so far as it answers the end of its institution by maintaining order and peace in civil society, it is entitled to submission; but when, instead of protecting, it oppresses the people, we can be no more bound in conscience to recognise it as lawful, than we are to acknowledge as a minister of Christ, the man who teaches error in doctrine and licentiousness in practice."<sup>44</sup>

The doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance are going fast into disrepute, and, in the absolute sense in which they have been inculcated by Rome, as has been shrewdly observed, are doctrines that none but knaves ever preached, none but fools ever believed, and none but slaves ever obeyed. There is no just cause for alleging

---

<sup>44</sup>Lectures of Theology, civ.

that the Scriptures are the enemy of liberty, and the friend of despotism. Did they tell one party you may neglect your duty to the other, but claim what is due to him from you, there might be room for the allegation; but both on superiors and inferiors they enforce, without partiality, the mutual obligations of duty. "Religion," says Dr. Bogue of Gosport, "walks without fear into the palace of the king. She approaches him with dignity as he sits on his throne, and she proclaims with the tone of authority, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." She goes from them to the hall of judgment, and with the mien of a superior addresses herself to the judges as they sit on the tribunal, "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment. Defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked." From the courts of justice she goes out to the multitude of the people, and she proclaims through the streets of the city, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." When you have accompanied her on her progress, and heard her address to every class of men, instead of just cause of objection, is there not reason from the impartiality and rectitude of the principles displayed, to prove the Christian religion to be from God."<sup>45</sup>

I am aware that the quotations now made stand more immediately connected with civil liberty, but I have adduced them to illustrate a sound exposition of certain portions of Scriptures which have, there is reason to fear, been interpreted in a sense to palliate violations of duty to Christ on the part of the nations, and to exclude these violations from the attention and just remonstrance of Christians. In the recent controversies, with the doctrine of the headship of Christ over the nations fully before us, we are constrained

---

<sup>45</sup>Essay on the divine authority of the New Testament. Chap. VIII. Extracts to the same effect might be produced from other modern writers of different religious connections. The view given above of the passage in the Epistle to the Romans, is that which was held by Buchanan, Milton, Locke, &c.

to fear exceedingly that there has been, if not an overlooking, a want of faithful dealing with the sins of the nation. It is high time surely that the Holy Scriptures and the Redeemer's headship were applied as a test by which to prove the claims the kingdoms of the earth have upon the approbation, the affections, and the conscientious subjection of those who profess to be with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and to follow him whithersoever he goeth.

V. But leaving these considerations, let us now view the doctrine in question in its great importance. It stands in some most interesting connections.

It is essential to just apprehensions of the mediatorial sovereignty. Take it away, and there is defectiveness in the views of the Redeemer's authority and glory, there is a detraction from the prerogatives of his crown, and from the honours that are awarded him by his Father. The universality of his power was placed by himself in connection with a commission embracing all the world and all the nations. It was the last doctrine which he taught, and is embodied with the consolation of his last promise. As a fruit of what was declared in his last words on Calvary, he obtained, and he exercises that universal power, which gives effect to his last words on Olivet and on the earth, his last promise, his unique and all-wonderful farewell, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world." Yes, believers, ministers, baptised Church of Christ, "ye are complete in him who is the head of all principality and power in heaven and in earth."

This doctrine is essential to just views of the divine providence and government. Contemplate this in the light of physical control, or moral rule, and combine these views, it is all in the hands of Christ. The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into his hands. To have just apprehensions of the government of the world, we must immediately recognise the Son of God. "God is gone up with a shout, with the sound of a trumpet; sing praises to God, sing praises unto our king, sing praises, for God is king of all the earth, sing praises with understanding.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

God reigns over the nations, God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness."<sup>46</sup>

But this doctrine is connected with just apprehensions of the nature and obligations of civil society. It is the moral ordinance of God, and we have it revealed to us anew in the Scriptures. It is improper to speak of natural and revealed principles, as if these were placed in opposition. Revelation has certified the original moral-natural institution of civil association and rule, and *natural*, and *revealed* in this case, are not the same with *natural* and *supernatural*. It were well in reasonings on this subject, that this were kept in view. The Bible is the only source of certain views of the law of nature. There is a wide difference between basing the ordinance on the *light* of nature and the *law* of nature. The former is defective, and has been proved, in the world's long history, practically inefficient. We are not to reject the law of nature as presented to us in the Scriptures, and this law we have from the King of nations. The ordinance in question, is founded upon the moral relations of men to the Deity and to one another. Nor is there any inconsistency between this view of it, and the subjection of the nations to Christ. Although the duties of the nations be placed in some new connections, from the scheme of grace, there is nothing in these to mar and change it, but every thing to perfect it according to its original institution; for morality, as comprehensive of all duty, individual and relative, is not made void by the gospel, so neither is social morality. The true justice upon which civil society and social morality are based, is established by the gospel.

This doctrine gives the Christian direction in his political conduct. It furnishes a test by which to try national character, principles by which to form his estimate of the governments of the earth, and guide his conduct towards them. The moral principles upon which they are erected, and the relations on which they stand to the Head of nations, and to his kingdom, must with him be essential elements in forming his judgment.

---

<sup>46</sup>Psa. 47: 5

Nor can he regard hostility to the kingdom of Christ, or indifference to it, if such a thing can be supposed, without disapprobation. Theoretic negation, affected neutrality, (I say affected, for it cannot be real,) he cannot regard otherwise than with sentiments of grief and displeasure, for the Lord's sake, and against this he will enter his solemn protest, even although he may regard the neglect of the kingdom of Christ as a less evil, than its prostitution and degradation.

This doctrine reads a lesson on the guilty and perilous predicament of the antichristian nations. In the common language of Protestants, and of the venerable reformers in our land, antichristian is a word of definite meaning and application. The secular Roman empire is represented under the emblem of a Beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. "These have one mind and shall give their strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is King of kings and Lord of lords." The ten horns are ten kingdoms receiving power contemporaneously with the Beast. It is generally, I may say unanimously, admitted, that our country once belonged to these horns, being geographically within the boundaries of the Latin empire, and her people having submitted to the Latin Roman religion. How far soever the Reformation may be regarded as having dissolved our connection with seven-headed Beast, there is reason to fear, that there has been a returning to its sins, and to connection with it. The reformers viewed prelacy as anti-christian, and protested against it as such. Civil and ecclesiastical powers are combined in the Supremacy still vested in the crown, to the great prejudice of the liberty of the church. Popery has been legally authorised in some parts of our dominions, its interests abroad have been restored by our arms, and the blood of thousands of our people, and it is supported at home from the public treasury. The blood of the saints has been profusely shed in our land, and lies still in a great measure unrepented of. The doings of the nation in the shedding of it, are not only not repented of, but are by many vindicated and

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

gloried in. To the kingdoms of Europe, in league with the antichrist, and to our own Britain, particularly in its sins, viewed constitutionally and in administration, the headship of Christ over the nations presents a somewhat awful aspect. Let us see our sin, confess, repent, and forsake, lest we perish when the wrath of the reigning Lamb, warred against, is kindled but a little. He is terrible to the kings of the earth, and will strike them through in the day of his righteous judgment. The headship of Christ over the nations vindicates the aim of the Second Reformation in faithfully opposing Popery and Prelacy, and all embodiment of their interests with the civil constitution, with the prerogatives of the Prince, and the laws of the land. The reformers did honour to the King of Zion in pleading for the liberty and independence of his kingdom, and asserting his sole headship over the church, and they did honour to the King of nations, when they required the kingdom to constitute, appoint rulers, enact laws, and administer righteousness, not in hostility to his kingdom, not in utter neglect of it, but in subserviency to it, without any compromise of independent jurisdiction either on the one hand or on the other. Both departments, the Church and State, have many things in common to both, and embracing what was common, and defining what was special to each, to prevent interference and collision, the reformers acted upon the only principle on which the difficult problem of union of Church and State can be solved, and presented a model worthy of imitation in its principle, and in much of its detail. The reformers understood the import of the illicit connections, between the kings of the earth and the Woman sitting upon many waters, and could draw the distinction between illegitimate connection with an apostate Church that had cast off her lawful husband and submitted to another, and the legitimate protection thrown, by a lawful power, around the undefiled Spouse of the Redeemer. Had these two things been identified by them, as they have been by singular indiscriminate on the part of many of the posterity, they would have nauseated with holy abhorrence the most distant

approach of such an evil. But while they regarded the only King in Zion as the legitimate Husband of the Church, they saw in his headship over the nations, a right on his part to employ them in casting protection around her externally, when in circumstances that required it.

Let the argument we attempt to plead, vindicate the confessors and martyrs of Jesus for refusing their unqualified allegiance to the powers which enthralled and persecuted the church, and for resisting unto blood, in striving against the encroachments of the kings of the earth upon the liberties and privileges of the church of Christ. Their sufferings were great, and the imperfections of men, and the infirmities of imperfect saints must have mingled into their spirit, their sayings, and their doings, but we owe them a debt of gratitude that has not yet been discharged. "They were men, and they had their faults, and there is no sanctity about their faults rendering it unlawful to point them out; but let us remember, it is one thing to perceive them and another thing to judge them, for this last requires that we be able to take the altitude and circumference of those virtues with which they were connected. What renders a pygmy haunch-backed would be but a small wen on a giant. We should also recollect that we are in danger of falling into the error of the tyro in the use of the telescope, who fancied that he had discovered a spot on the sun, when it was only a speck which he had unskillfully left on the lens on his instrument."<sup>47</sup> The views we have taken of the headship of Christ explain and vindicate the views which the martyrs took of the reigning powers, and must be their apology, if such a term may be used, and such a thing be required. They regarded fidelity to the head of the nations, as requiring them to testify against, and to disown inferior authorities when acting treasonably against the supreme. Upon this principle they acted, particularly toward the latter end of the persecution, and something may surely be

---

<sup>47</sup>Sermons by the late Dr. M`Crie, p. 66.

said in their vindication.<sup>48</sup> The doctrine of the headship of Christ over the nations

---

<sup>48</sup>In illustration of this I may introduce a similitude employed by Mr. Fuller when reasoning on another subject altogether. "A ship's company rise against their officers, put them in chains, and take the command of the ship themselves. They agree to set the officers ashore on some uninhabited island, to sail to some distant port, dispose of the cargo, and divide the amount. After parting with their officers, they find it necessary, for the sake of self-preservation, to establish some kind of law and order. To these they adhere with punctuality, and act upon honour with respect to each other, and propose to be very impartial in the distribution of their plunder. But while they are on the voyage one of the company repents and becomes very unhappy; they enquire into the reason; he answers, 'We are engaged in a wicked cause.' They plead their justice, honour, and generosity to each other. He denies that there is any virtue in it; 'nay, all our equity, while it is exercised in pursuit of a scheme which violates the great law of justice, is itself a species of iniquity.' 'You talk extravagantly; surely we might be worse than we are if we were to destroy each other as well as our officers.' 'Yes, wickedness admits of degrees, but there is no virtue or goodness in all our doings; all has arisen from selfish motives. The same principles which led us to discard our officers, would lead us, if it were not for our own sake, to destroy each other.' 'But you speak so very discouraging, you destroy all motives to good order in the ship; what would you have us to do?' 'REPENT, RETURN TO OUR INJURED OFFICERS AND OWNERS, AND SUBMIT TO MERCY.' 'O! but this we cannot do: advise us to any thing which concerns the good order of the ship and we will hearken to you.' 'I cannot bear to advise on these matters; RETURN, RETURN, SUBMIT TO MERCY.' - Fuller's Works, Vol. ii. p. 491.

In the case supposed, the penitent individual must perceive that his own consent, the consent of the company, the obligations of order and justice, and his own safety could not produce a cheerful and conscientious submission to the captain. The penitent individual would now see that if he had had the views which he now entertains of the case, it would have been his duty to have protested against the original association, declined all participation in it, and submitted to be set ashore with the lawful officers. And now, although it were a vain thing in him, single handed, to resist the company, and although he is not to commit suicide by leaping overboard, he cannot approve of this association, he cannot feel pleasure in this society, and he will embrace the earliest opportunity of being rid of it.

It will surely be admitted that a case of this kind is possible in the matter before us. Civil government may be so immoral in its constitution, and become so immoral in administration, as to invalidate its authority. There are evils and imperfections in all human constitutions and administrations, which do not invalidate the authority nor exempt from the obligation of subjection to all lawful commands for conscience sake. And evil may be so incorporated with a constitution, and with the legislative, judicial, and executive authorities, as to render a government, instead of the ordinance of God for good, the device and engine of man for evil, to which no submission can be given. The great practical question then is, When is the evil of such a nature and magnitude as to produce a state of things exempting from all obedience for conscience sake? If I could not incorporate with a society that agreed to neglect, not to say condemn, the being and character of Deity, and if I could not incorporate with a society one of whose articles

supplies an important truth for the testimony of the church. It is the will of the Father that every tongue should confess that Christ is Lord. He is Lord of all, and of course Lord of lords. This should have a distinct place in the church's confession. I greatly mistake if this is not one part of the testimony of the two witnesses in the little book contained in the Apocalypse. What is the antichrist continuing during the 1260 days, and testified against during that period by the two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth? It is an apostate heathen church in league with a tyrannical civil power, it is a perversion, a criminal and pernicious perversion of ecclesiastical and civil order. The testimony is given in behalf of the scriptures, in behalf of Christ, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, and in behalf of the application of his word and law to the two great departments of social order, church and state, ministry and magistracy, religion and morality. We are the more confirmed in this view from the reference in the passage referred to, to Joshua, and Zerubbabel, priest and governor, types of the Saviour in his priesthood and royalty, and, of course, of his priesthood and royalty taking effect in due time on the earth, in the ordinances of the christian church, and in civil rule erected according to the mind of God, and made holiness to the Lord by being placed under

---

was to keep the church as such in a state of subjection to the civil authorities, it must be a matter of difficulty to recognise, approve, and cheerfully unite with a kingdom that has done so, really or virtually denying divine revelation, or embracing a false religion. Suppose a people to have neglected their lawful head and set up another, and suppose the head to have been able, pious, and of incorruptible integrity, and unimpeachable disinterestedness, and unabounded patriotism, and suppose this done in the face of the most solemnly ratified compacts, and suppose this head to be your father, and his murdered children your brothers, how would you feel, how should you feel towards that government? What is the moral estimate which you should form of it? And how would you feel, or ought you to feel towards those who are timidly conniving at the wrong and injustice? Let the question be brought, not to the test of tender feeling, but to the test of stern morality and principle. And if this rejected head is not the father of your flesh but of your spirit, if this head is the Saviour who has agonised for you, and redeemed you with his blood, must the question be hushed, principle set aside, and sympathies quenched in cold insensibility? I speak of general principles, and leave you to make the application.

the feet of Christ. I cannot venture upon this subject; but the finishing of the testimony of the witnesses brings into view anticipations, in the first instance at least, of a gloomy character, though ultimately bright and glorious. The headship of Christ over the church has been sealed with the blood of martyrs. Whether his headship over the nations may not become yet a ground of suffering I shall not say. But the reign of antichrist is coming to a close, and the dragon may come with great wrath because he knoweth that his time is short. It were wise to be prepared at least for commotion and change. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall be no more until He come whose right it is, and I will give it him. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and one came like the Son of man, and there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that *all nations* and languages should serve him."

**VI.** The doctrine of Messiah's headship is comprehensive in its range. It embraces man in the two constituents of his nature, soul and body; in his twofold interests, spiritual and temporal; in his twofold relation, to the church and the state, and in the duties which he owes to each and to both - it combines holiness and morality in their nature, identity, and relationship - it provides for the necessities of the church and of the state - it protects both, and makes both to exert a salutary influence, each upon the other. Remove the state from all relations to religion and to Christ, and there is no security whatever that the church shall not be enthralled and persecuted. A theoretic neutrality you may plead, but a real neutrality it is impossible to effect. And though you could effect it, there is no security on the other hand that the church shall not encroach upon the independence of the commonwealth. Does ecclesiastical history read no lessons to us on this subject? Let the claims of the antichrist bear witness. The doctrine we have had under review *unites* ministry and without *blending* them, it supplies salutary and effective restraints upon the jealousies and contentions to which both are liable, and is calculated to diffuse the blessings

of order and peace, by harmonising interests that are distinct but not contrary, and which have much that is common. The doctrine of the Redeemer's headship provides for bringing all the relations of life, and all the institutions and improvements of society under the hallowing influence of christianity. In this connection the arts and sciences, and the very wealth of society will become Holiness to the Lord, and be consecrated to the God of the whole earth. This doctrine contemplates not only uniting the different members and branches of society in a given locality, but uniting the kingdom at large in peace and friendship. As the King of nations, the Redeemer is a head, in whom, sacrificing their jealousies and strifes, they may all unite in righteousness and peace. How much is it to be desiderated that Christians, all over the world, beholding truth in Christ himself, and taking an enlightened and enlarged view of the extent of his honours and the comprehension of his kingdom, would lay aside their strifes, and join in one holy confederacy in promoting his glory, the interests of his church, and the welfare of the kingdoms and commonwealths of the whole earth. We despair not of such an issue, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken, "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one."<sup>49</sup>

**VII.** The subject of the Redeemer's headship has important prospective bearings. Whether we view the predictions concerning the destruction of antichrist particularly, or contemplate those of the universal spread of the kingdom of Christ over all the earth, this subject invests them with a hallowed interest. During the reign of antichrist the nations in its interest have a hostile character, but, as a result of the overthrow of that great enemy, we have assurance that the kingdoms shall learn righteousness, and yield obedience to the Saviour. The seventh angel shall sound, and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. "Since the captivity of Judah, about 588 years before the Christian era, until the present day,

---

<sup>49</sup>Zech. 14: 9.

## The Headship of Christ over the Nations

scarcely an instance has occurred in the whole history of the nations of a kingdom or commonwealth regulating their polity upon pure scriptural principles. Many nations, it is true, have pretended to be Christian, and religion has been scandalised by their unholy interference. Many Christians have also been deceived and misled into a belief that the kingdoms of the nations were so constituted as to merit their acquiescence and pious support; but the Prince of the kingdoms of the earth, who gave this revelation to his servant John, teaches us that now for the first, the kingdoms of this world ARE BECOME the kingdoms of God and of Christ. Hitherto they have been thrones of iniquity, having no fellowship with God, characterised as *beasts* and *horns* of beasts, both by Daniel and the writer of the Apocalypse. Servants and admirers, and apologists, and eulogists they have had in abundance, but there was not a voice raised in heaven in their commendation. They were to be feared but not approved by the saints of the Most High. Now indeed the last woe produces an effectual change, the powers of this world perish in his wrath, and the voice of the church is raised in approbation of the salutary alteration."<sup>50</sup>

With respect to ourselves and our land, let us be admonished of our sin, and danger, and duty. Is there not sin with us against the Lord and his Anointed, in constituting an earthly monarch the Head of the Church of Christ? Is there no sin in giving legal establishment and support unto a popish hierarchy? Is there no sin in befriending, by legal enactments, by arms, and by wealth, the Antichrist? Is there no guilt attached to our land from the blood of the martyrs of Jesus? Is there no sin in keeping the church in a state of thralldom? In these and similar things do we not participate with Babylon in her sins, and expose ourselves to a share in her plagues, when the *kings of the earth*, and the merchants of the earth, and the shipmasters and sailors shall bewail her desolations? I speak of *national* sin, and beg to ask, Is there on the part of the Christian

---

<sup>50</sup>Dr. M'Leod's Lectures on Revelation; Lecture Seventh.

community in our land fidelity to the king of nations, in testifying against these sins, and standing aloof from them? Are the praises with which the glorious Revolution is lauded, and the unqualified allegiance given to it, by the oath of God, consistent with sound Christian discrimination, with Christian principles, and with duty and allegiance to the Lamb standing on Mount Zion? Let those who advocate for present establishments, consider these things, testify against Supremacy usurped over the church of Christ, and let them contend that the crown of the church shall be restored to the only Head able and worthy to wear it. And let those who are decrying all establishments, and who seem to be absorbed in one very partial view of this matter, the abolition of all pecuniary provision for the ministers of the sanctuary by the state, as though this were a panacea for all our ills, show faithfulness to Christ and to the land, in testifying against the national antichristianism and sins, which expose our land to the rebukes of heaven, and to participation in Babylon's plagues, and let them tremble, by denying to the Saviour the crown of the nation, to harden a sinful kingdom in apostasy and rebellion. These things stand in immediate connection with our present duty and the preservation of our national character and privileges. Let both parties in the recent controversy, and let all beware of trusting in our national wealth, our intellectual improvement, our advancing refinement, or even on the Christianity which is in the land, but not in the *nation*, for there is such a distinction. Greece had wisdom and learning above all other nations of the earth; What is she now? Rome had power; where are its swift flying eagles now? Tyre had extensive wealth; where are its princely merchants, and its ships of ivory benches now? We require morality and religion to save us as a nation in a day of retribution. Faithful national separation from the sins of Antichrist is the only hope of national escaping in the day of her plagues. These things are painful, but they are necessary and they are safe.

Viewing this subject in connection with the predictions respecting the universal

### The Headship of Christ over the Nations

spread of the kingdom of Christ, it presents much that is pleasing. We know that the Redeemer has received the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession, and that he shall inherit all nations. The Jews shall be restored to the church, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. All ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. The pagan nations shall be turned to the Lord, and shall found their social institutions upon the principles of true religion. Suppose the population of a heathen island or kingdom to be converted to Christianity, and the inhabitants to become generally the subjects of its saving influence, and it is not an impossible or improbable case, what would be the results. 1. They would erect themselves into a church to walk in the fellowship of divine ordinances according to the will of Christ. 2. Besides this, would they not regulate their civil association and laws by the word of God, and in subserviency to the true religion? The idolatry embodied in it they would cast out. The theft, the murder, the impurity, the falsehood, the polygamy, and other evils formerly sanctioned or connived at, would now be interdicted in terms of the divine law, and officers fearing God would be appointed. They would do homage to God and to Christ, in enacting laws according to the will of God and in the spirit of the gospel. Is there any Christian that could oppose this? Would a Christian missionary be warranted to interpose and say, Have nothing to do with the bible in your civil affairs, you have nothing to do with God and with Christ here, and have nothing to do with Christian character, or scriptural principles in the appointment of your rulers. No. We may differ on this subject while on the antichristian territory, but on heathen ground we should probably not far disagree. It would be difficult in this case to support the theory of an absolute dissection of religion from things civil; and though for the sake of consistency the theory were brought forward, it would be urged in vain, for the impulse of a divine fear and subjection to God and to Christ, in recent converts, would carry them over every suggestion of hesitancy or doubt upon the subject. 3. And in the

circumstances I have supposed you can conceive of a distinction drawn between the civil and ecclesiastical departments, each being directed and limited to its special and proper object. The ecclesiastical would be exercised about things spiritual, and regard individuals as members of the church; the other would be occupied about external things, and regard persons as members of the commonwealth. In the one, the conversion and edification of the soul would be contemplated as the proper end; in the other, external safety, liberty, and prosperity. In both, however, the end contemplated would be the divine glory in promoting human happiness; in one view of it, in the one case, and in another view of it in the other. 4. You can suppose in this case that these associations would be independent of one another, and have distinct officers and functionaries. The rulers of the church, being members of the state, are subject to it personally; and the officers of the state, being members of the church, for we have supposed their conversion to Christ, will be personally subject to the jurisdiction of the Church. 5. You can suppose both departments respecting and directly acknowledging one another. The church would acknowledge the commonwealth, and require of its members subjection to it in all lawful commands. In like manner the state would acknowledge the church, and provide that its rulers be her members and fellowship be protected in their Christian liberty in the worship of God from all hindrance and contempt, if such things should at any time arise. 6. Both departments would co-operate in promoting, each in its own sphere, the glory of God and of Christ. And to secure co-operation and prevent all collision, you can suppose an instrument drawn up acknowledging God and Christ, and defining the different departments of church and commonwealth, according to the word of God, upon the footing of which they pledge themselves to God and to one another. This would secure the independence of each, and the co-operation of both in what pertained to them in common, and it would be found to be of essential utility. The island or kingdom



**The Headship of Christ over the Nations**