

Christ the King of All

By Rev. Philip H. Pockras

STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

God the Son, as the second Person of the Holy Trinity, is King over all things. This exalted position He holds in common with the other Persons of the Trinity. Jehovah God is King in His essential Deity. This no orthodox believer denies, at least in theory. As well, the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man Mediator, reigns as Mediatorial King over all things, for the benefit of His Church to the glory of the Father.

"1. Jesus Christ, as mediator, governs all creatures and all their actions for his own glory. Submission is due to Him from all men and angels. All men, in every possible relation and condition, are under obligation to promote His gracious purposes according to His Law. The holy angels minister, under His direction, to the heirs of salvation. Eph. 1:20-22; Heb.2:8; Phil. 2:9-11; Ps. 2; Heb. 1:4.

"2. Jesus Christ, as Head over all things for the sake of the Church, rules in perfect wisdom and justice over all parts of His creation including wicked men and devils. He makes them, and all their counsels and efforts, serve God's glory in the plan of redemption. Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:22-23; John 17:1-5; Luke 9:26" *The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, Chapter 8: "Of Christ the Mediator" (1980).

This teaching, unknown or poorly understood within much of the evangelical church, is one of the doctrinal linchpins of the Reformed Presbyterian Church throughout the world. Historically, Christ's Mediatorial Kingship has been asserted, during the whole of the RP Church's existence, against several errors: Popery and Erastianism in Britain, and secularism in other nations in which she has been planted. As we look to Scripture, we see this doctrine taught in both Testaments.

"1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, [saying], 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. 7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou [art] my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give [thee] the heathen [for] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [for] thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish [from] the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed [are] all they that put their trust in him." (Ps 2)

"13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion [is] an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom [that] which shall not be destroyed." (Dan 7:13-14)

"18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen." Mat 28:18-20)

"20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [him] at his own right hand in the heavenly [places], 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:20-23)

"5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)

Certainly, more references could be multiplied. Enough have been cited to show, however, that there is a distinct Dominion given to Messiah. This Mediatorial Dominion is distinct from, additional to, and coterminous with that Dominion which He retains essentially as the Second Person of the Godhead. Note that this additional Dominion is **given** to Him. It is bestowed upon Him. The reasons for this bestowal by the Father are given, too. This bestowal is a reward for Christ's "doing and dying." The Mediatorial Dominion is by purchase. Further, we see that this economy is bestowed in order to bless Christ's body, the Church.

The extent of this Mediatorial Dominion is universal. This is absolutely necessary for Messiah, as He must rule over all things in order to make them work together for good for those who love Him, and who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). It may be objected that the reprobate cannot be under His Mediatorial Reign, for how could He be a Mediatorial King to those who do not benefit from His work of redemption? Let us remember that, in our common experience, we see many who live lives of continual criminality, yet we do not deny that they are under the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate. So it is with the reprobate. Indeed, they get no benefit from the King; only judgment and condemnation (Mat. 25:31ff). Nonetheless, the King sovereignly directs them and all their ways, that His church may be benefitted and the Father made glorious.

Again, it may be objected that the doctrine of a universal Mediatorial King derogates from the dignity, glory, activity, and even the immanence of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Further, Christ's high dignity as the only-begotten Son is lost sight of. In reply, it should be noted that the orthodox church concurs that the Lord Jesus Christ is Zion's only King and Head. Does anyone seriously believe that, in the church, the dignity, glory, and activity of the other Persons of the Godhead are in any way impaired? Is there a soul who maintains that teaching that Messiah alone is King of Saints removes the presence of the Father and the Spirit from the Church? And who will say that such teaching leads to the eclipse of His Deity? Who? Such a man, in any orthodox Protestant denomination, would be condemned in the courts of his church for maintaining such positions. If Christ's Mediatorial Kingship in the church be so obviously acceptable, then there should be no objection of this sort to teaching that He holds sway over all the creation.

One further objection comes to mind. It is that someone else exercises sovereign rule over all things extraneous to the Church. An objector may say that this someone is the Son in His essential Deity. It must be remembered that, although Christ has two distinct natures, He is one Person, one Savior. "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13a) remains a relevant question just at this point. Such an assertion goes against clear Scripture teaching already cited, declaring Christ's universal dominion as the Mediator. Some bizarre attempts at "exegesis" have been tried in order to elude this conclusion, but such attempts would have been laughable had the subject not been so solemn and majestic.

If not the Son Himself, then perhaps another Person of the Godhead, or the undifferentiated Deity rules in all things extraneous to the Church, it may be said. A problem arises in connection with this proposal. God has determined all blessing, all redemption, all things necessary to the accomplishment of His gracious purposes, to come through the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant, of course, cannot be separated from Him Who is its Head. To attempt to approach God apart from a Mediator in these post-Fall times is fatal. To seek any blessing from the Holy and Righteous Judge, deeply offended at sin, is absurdity. To expect anything but God's wrath and curse, apart from a Mediatorial administration, is folly. If all things extraneous to the Church are in the hands of God essentially, then the Church cannot repose in confidence and trust that all will work for her good. Might they not work for wrath upon her who is still stained, wrinkled, blemished, impure and unrighteous in her current experience? Should she not cower at the approach of the Holy One, strong to smite? Of course she does not, because all things are now ordered through the Covenant of Grace for her benefit. All things, internally and externally, are under the feet of her glorious and loving Husband, the King. His Father becomes Her Father in heaven, strong to save, not the offended Judge mentioned. Her Beloved's Spirit is sent abroad to be at work as the King's agent. All Providence, at the King's command, is ordered for her ultimate good, ultimate purification, ultimate salvation. In the Universal Mediatorial Dominion, and only in it, blessing is certain.

APPLICATIONS

I. For the Church

As noted above, there is a general concensus among Reformed churches that Christ is Mediatorial King of Saints. The Church is His Kingdom of Grace, His "special Kingdom". As we look at this particular aspect of Christ's Mediatorial Kingship, we should assume that there would be implications for doctrine, discipline, government, and worship. In these four areas, it must be asserted that the Word of Christ alone determines matters, either as it is "expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence...deduced from Scripture" (WCF 1:6). Therefore, the Church of Christ, and every branch of it, must see that it holds and practices the directions of Him Who is Head and King of Zion. Everything that is truly attained from Scripture must be held tenaciously and perseveringly. Anything that is added must be excised. That which has been dropped must again be carried aloft. This is the reason that the RP Church has retained what she believes to be Scriptural doctrine, although it keeps her apart from other brethren whom she holds dear. This is why the RP Church has tried, though grieving over much of her own inconsistency and negligence, to maintain Scriptural church discipline, especially in the matters of common confession, testimony bearing, and the Sacraments. This is why the RP Church still professes to believe in *jure divino* Presbyterianism. This is why the RP Church, despite unpopularity and ridicule, retains what she believes to be Scriptural worship principles and practices. These things she believes to be binding upon all the Church of Christ, not mere quirks of her own little circle. Any change on her part must occur as she is convinced that she has erred in her understanding of the Word of God, as has happened in the past. Of course, this is the required basis for change in any part of the Apostolic Church.

This leads to a consideration of church union. That this is a desirable goal, and commanded by Christ no one can deny. Can it come legitimately by the scuttling of the truth of the Bible? Our Savior has commanded His disciples to disciple the nations, teaching them to observe everything that He has commanded (Matt 28:18-20). Putting aside one part of Christ's commandments in order to effect another is wrong. The one is sinfully ignored and the other is not truly brought about. Both end up lost. Union must be a union in truth. Any true union within the Church of Christ must be a union in the truth, where the formerly divided brethren come to a concensus in their understanding of the King's gracious decrees. Further, there should then be a corporate pledging of allegiance to the King. In the past, this has been called "public social covenanting".

2. For the State

Christ is King of nations as well as saints. Nations are distinctly part of His universal Mediatorial Dominion. They are part of His Kingdom of Power, His "subordinate Kingdom". A very obvious *a fortiori* argument to this point could be inserted here, but there is no need. Suffice it to say, that since a universal Dominion is demonstrated, there can be nothing remaining outside it, but what is specifically excluded. We have such an exclusion from Messiah's sway mentioned, but it is not the Civil Magistrate/Civil Government/Nation. "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under [him, it is] manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him." (1 Cor 15:27).

That Christ, as the Mediatorial King, claims the allegiance of earth's nations is quite explicit in Scripture passages already cited. To these testimonies we could add more: "1 O clap your hands,

all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. 2 For the LORD most high [is] terrible; [he is] a great King over all the earth. 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah. 5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7 For God [is] the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. 8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, [even] the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth [belong] unto God: he is greatly exalted." (Psalm 47) In connection with this citation, it ought to be remembered just Who it is that has ascended. It is not God considered in His unity, nor the Heavenly Father, nor the Holy Spirit, nor yet the Son essentially considered, but Messiah. He is the One addressed as God in Psalm 47. The fulness of revelation that we now have in these last days shows us that it is God-man Who is ascended, Who is King, Who reigns over nations, before whom officials, as officials, assemble to learn and to do His will.

Further witness to Christ's Mediatorial Kingship over the nations can be found in Revelation: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (11:15) Of Him Who rides forward to conquer the nations with the sword of His Word we read, "And he hath on [his] vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (19:16)

Further official statements on this doctrine as currently confessed by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America are in its *Testimony*, chapter 23, "Of the Civil Magistrate", pp. A69 - A78 in its Constitution.

From time to time different objections to this teaching come forth. One of the most common comes from misunderstanding the words of our Savior when, before the judgment seat of Pilate, He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36) Some say that these words are in conflict with a notion of nations formally pledging allegiance to Christ as King. The apparent tension relaxes when we remember what Jesus means when He says that His Kingdom is not of this world. He surely does not mean that it is a purely privatized affair, or something irrelevant to matters of this earth, something of grace as opposed to nature, or something noumenal as opposed to the phenomenal. He does mean that His Kingdom is of a different order, not merely one more kingdom in the midst of many others. He does mean that it is one that acknowledges Him as its immediate supreme overlord, instead of others claiming that role. He does mean that the weapons of conquest are the preaching and teaching of His Word, which bring sinners and societies under Him. He does mean that it is established by the power of the Spirit, rather than that of man. He does mean that it is established in the righteousness and holiness of heaven, not the pride and cruelty of man. This Kingdom is **in** the world, although not **of** the world. The nations of this world, along with all else, can, should, and shall be explicitly under the aegis of Christ the King.

Another objection commonly mentioned is that this doctrine seems to force a union of Church and State, with one or the other in ascendancy. While some have perverted this teaching to such

an end, proper practical application militates against either an Erastian or Romanist conception of church-state relations. It remains true that Christ alone is Head of the Church, not a pope nor yet a civil magistrate. The proper civil powers remain in their place, too. Scripturally, both Church and State have distinguishable subjects, different ends, different officers, and different sanctions, among other things. Both, nonetheless, are under the same Mediatorial King, the King of Zion and the King of kings. Both Church and State are under the same obligation to covenant with Him in their own appropriate ways, yielding loyalty to their Lord. Both are obliged to support each other in appropriate ways, that the King may be glorified by men in their public lives. Both are obliged to conform to God's Law, in ways proper to each institution. The State is under constraint in these areas just as much as the Church, in order that it may fulfill its role as God's ordinance, His ministry for good (Romans 13:2,4). Especially in those nations where the Gospel has been preached, to "Kiss the Son" is an absolute necessity for the national well-being. To resist or refuse such submission is to invite total national annihilation from the offended "King on Zion's hill."

In this matter of national submission to Messiah, the Church of Christ has a prominent responsibility. Part of her duty in supporting the State is declaring what is true and false, what is right and wrong, as defined by the Old and New Testament Scriptures. The Church catholic must declare that the State is morally compelled to own Messiah as King and His Law as the law of the land. She must declare the State immoral at these extremely critical points, if it does not repent. Christians, in such a case, in such as we live now, cannot participate in any action that would entrap them in such immorality themselves. There can be no unqualified allegiance sworn to immoral constitutions of government that do not themselves swear allegiance to Christ.

In connection with this national submission, often called "national reform", the Church has the duty of calling the nation to formal public social covenanting with the King. This follows approved Scriptural example in the times of Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nehemiah, and others. Some may say that the situation of OT Israel was unique. It is true that, in OT times, Israel was unique among the nations of the world in containing the visible Church, and that no nation in these last days can ever make a legitimate claim to be the sole Christian nation. This precludes no land, however, from covenanting to be *a* Christian nation.

In the matter of putting men into civil office, the Christian citizen must recall, first, that only personally godly men who espouse Scriptural righteousness and justice are worthy of office (Deuteronomy 17:14-20, 2 Samuel 23:3), not those who are of a certain political party or those considered the "lesser of two evils". Further, these candidates must, themselves, hold to the Christian view of civil government that has just been explained. To elect a man to office who has no conscience qualms about swearing to uphold and defend, without proper qualification, a Christless constitution of government involves both him and the elector in treason to Jesus.

Many, when receiving these teachings for the first time, react negatively. They call them quixotic, out of touch with the rampant ungodliness within our nation. Such principles are unrealistic, they declare. In initial reply, a simple question is appropriate: "But aren't they Biblical?" If so, then no matter how contrary to common sense they may initially seem to be, we must embrace the doctrines and emplace their practical applications. Many are the times that God has blessed faithful obedience to His Word despite what appear to be pretty long odds, as

man perceives. Who knows but that, as we follow the command of Christ to call the nations to repentance in this matter, we shall see them turning contritely to their King by the power of His Spirit? So it happened with Nineveh in the days of Jonah. Our preaching and teaching Christ's Mediatorial Kingship over the nations will pull people from their pietism and privatization of Christianity. It will prepare the people of God, the Body of Christ, for proper action when the time comes to enact changes in the constitution of civil government, changes that will reflect proper, godly national submission to Messiah.

Another word that may spring up in the mind of some is "triumphalism". It must be admitted that, historically, the Reformed Presbyterian Church has been postmillennial. Even now, whether they call themselves postmillennial or amillennial, most members of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church would consider themselves to be optimistic in their eschatology. This optimism, however, is not absolutely necessary in order to hold to the doctrine of Christ's Mediatorial Reign over the nations, as is known from personal acquaintance. Is it "triumphalist" to teach and act on plain teachings of the Bible? If so, let us triumph in being "triumphalists"! *In hoc Christo vinces!* (In this Christ conquer!) Really, though, this name-calling is no more profitable in this discussion than that of my fellow theological/eschatological optimists who castigate "pessimillennialists".

CONCLUSION

This, then, is a very condensed presentation of the doctrine of Christ's Mediatorial Kingship, with some practical application. The Reformed Presbyterian Church believes it to be Biblical and binding on all the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ. Much of this material may be new to brethren in other branches of the Church, even those branches very near in most points of doctrine, discipline, government, and worship.

The Interchurch Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America originally assigned this essay in the spirit of obedience to the church's *Covenant of 1871*. In the actual engagement, paragraph 4, we read, "That, believing the Church to be one, and that all the saints have communion with God and with one another in the same Covenant; believing, moreover, that schism and sectarianism are sinful in themselves; and inimical to true religion, and trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one Catholic church over all the earth, we will pray and labor for the visible oneness of the Church of God in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order. Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we will strive to maintain Christian friendship with pious men of every name, and to feel and act as one with all in every land who pursue this grand end. And, as a means of securing this great result, we will by dissemination and application of the principles of truth herein professed, and by cultivating and exercising Christian charity, labor to remove stumbling-blocks, and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness."

It is hoped that this essay will lead to a better understanding of this vital, yet much overlooked, doctrine; a greater unity in the Church of Jesus Christ; and a determination to work for the recognition of Christ's crown rights in the nation. May He Who is Head and King of the Church, Zion's only Potentate; He Who is King of kings and Lord of lords bring it to pass, to the praise of His Name and the glory of His and our Father!

*By Philip H. Pockras, minister
Belle Center Reformed Presbyterian Church
Belle Center, Ohio*

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boyle, Samuel E. *The Christian Nation*. Pittsburgh: The Christian Government Movement, n. d. [1971].

Edgar, William. "The National Confession Position." In *God and Politics*, pp 176-99. Edited by Gary Scott Smith. Foreword by John H. White. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1989.

Hodge, Archibald Alexander. *Evangelical Theology*. 1890; Reprint ed., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976.

McAllister, David. *Christian Civil Government in America*. 6th ed. Revised by T. H. Acheson and Wm. Parsons. Pittsburgh: National Reform Association, 1927.

Oburn, William. *The Dominion of Our Savior Jesus Christ as Mediator*. Galion, OH: By the Author, 1878.

Palmer, Benjamin Morgan. "Christ's Universal Dominion." *The Southern Pulpit* I:9 (September, 1881): 526-36.

_____. "Sermon, Preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Ga., December 4th, 1861, at the Opening of the First General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America." *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, 1861*.

Reformed Dissenting Presbytery. *An Act, Declaration, and Testimony of the Reformed Dissenting Presbyterian Church, in North-America*. West-Union, Ohio: Reformed Dissenting Presbytery, 1839.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*. Pittsburgh: Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America Board of Education and Publication, 1989.

Reformed Presbytery. *Act, Declaration, and Testimony*. Ploughlandhead, Scotland: 1761; reprint ed. with added historical and declaratory supplement, Philadelphia: Reformed Presbytery ["Steelite"], 1876.

Symington, William. *Messiah the Prince*, 2nd ed. Edinburgh: John Johnston, 1840.

Thornwell, James Henley. "Relation of the State to Christ. (A Memorial)." *The Collected Works of James Henley Thornwell. Vol IV: Ecclesiastical*, pp. 549-56. Edited by B. M. Palmer, 1875; reprint ed., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1986.

United Presbyterian Church of North America. "The Testimony of the United Presbyterian Church of North America," *The Subordinate Standards of the United Presbyterian Church of North America*, pp 535-92. Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1903.

Note: William Symington's tremendously important *Messiah the Prince* and the *Act, Declaration, and Testimony* from 1761 are currently in print and obtainable from [Still Waters Revival Books](#) Edmonton, AB.