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Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

This chapter of theology was by our earlier dogmatists commonly dealt with in their *Prolegomena*, where they treated of the nature and the principles and source of theology. It was not unreasonable to dwell on the source of doctrine before exhibiting the substance of Christian doctrine as comprised in *Theology proper*, *Anthropology*, *Christology*, *Soteriology*, and *Eschatology*. This was the more pertinent as the principal positions of Bibliology, especially the divine origin and authority of the Bible, were generally conceded, and to impugn the inspiration of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments would have been looked upon as preposterous by theologians of all churches and schools. The great ancestors of modern Protestant theology, Zwingli, Calvin, Melancthon, never theoretically or dogmatically assailed this stronghold of scriptural theology. Even Calixt, the Noah of the present generation of neologists in what is called the Lutheran Church, did no more than plant the first germs of unscriptural Bibliology for future development and would probably have been amazed and appalled at the growth of thorns and thistles gone into seed in these latter days.

The Pulpit.

SERMON ON THE CHRISTIAN AMENDMENT QUESTION.

TEXT: Ps. 72, 11: "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."

"Christ Jesus Lord of Nations," this is the title of a small pamphlet issued by the National Reform Association. The object of this little pamphlet is to show that we, the people of the United States, ought to acknowledge the divine authority of our Saviour Jesus Christ in our Constitution and make His Word, the Bible, our fundamental law, and its moral and civil code the basis of all civil legislation. It appeals to all true Christians in the land to use their endeavors for the achievement of such results, and points out the great benefits that must necessarily result from such a change in the character of our Government. It says: "As the Constitution now is, the vilest men may be elected to office. A religious test is forbidden and no moral test is required. Slaveholders used to be presidents. So if the people now see fit to elect adulterers, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, profane and godless politicians, or even bulldog prize-fighters, the Constitution now opens the door of office to them. But conform the human Constitution to the divine and we would hope to see every department of State under the administration of good men and then a reign of righteousness." Two years ago the Association brought into the halls of the United States Congress a monster petition, signed by thousands upon thousands, asking Congress to insert in the preamble of our Constitution a clause by which the people of the United States acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lord of our nation. And though this petition was laid

on the table by the committee in charge, they do not give up hopes, but still expect a day to come, when this nation will, as a people, acknowledge the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The intentions of the National Reform Association people are sincere. They would like to stem the torrent of ungodliness and depravity which they see growing with alarming rapidity in our beloved country. They would like to secure righteous legislation for the suppression of crime. They would like to raise the standard of the gospel and see all the inhabitants of the land rally around that standard and everybody be a professed Christian.

And, above all things, they claim to be backed by Scripture. In their little pamphlet they quote more than ten passages of Holy Writ in defence of their position, and they introduce them by the following words, "Our first and fundamental proposition is this, Christ Jesus, the divine Mediator, is Lord of nations—of all nations—and so of this nation. No truth is more clearly and generally taught in the Word of God. Here are specimens of its testimony, some prophetic, some mandatory, and some inferential from titles belonging to our King." They call attention to the fact that Christ is especially called "King of nations," "Ruler over the nations," "Prince of the kings of the earth," "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Now the question is, Are they really backed by Scripture in demanding of us to change the character of our Constitution by acknowledging therein the divine authority of our Saviour Jesus Christ, or not? When God says of Jesus Christ in the words of our text, "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him," does He mean to say that every government, as such, should pay homage to Jesus Christ and make His Word the basis of secular legislation, or does He mean something else? It is certainly manifest from this passage in the seventy-second Psalm that Christ is the Lord of nations. For if they are

to serve Him, He must be their Lord. But the question is, In what sense is Jesus Christ the Lord of nations? Let us consider this question with the aid of God's Holy Spirit.

IN WHAT SENSE IS CHRIST JESUS THE LORD OF NATIONS?

The answer is,

- I. *Not in the sense of a worldly ruler.*
- II. *But in the sense of His majesty and saving power.*

I.

"All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him." Does this mean that kings and rulers shall place their temporal power into the hands of Christ? that national governments should be religious organizations with Christ at the head as a worldly ruler? Verily not. There is not the slightest intimation in our text to justify such an explanation of its words. Moreover, such an explanation would be in direct contradiction to the Word of God and altogether inconsistent with the clearest passages of Scripture.

When the eternal Son of God came into the flesh, when He became man and declared Himself the Messiah who was to come and who had been promised to the patriarchs and by the prophets, what did the Jews—not even excluding the disciples—expect of their Messiah? They expected in Him a worldly ruler, a sovereign, a king who would subdue the Romans that had taken away the sceptre from Judah, would drive them out of the land, and restore the glorious kingdom of Israel. And what did Christ do? Did He comply with the wishes of the Jews? Did He tell them openly or secretly, I am the ruler of the Jewish nation, I shall restore the throne of David and Solomon? Did He make an attempt to eject the Roman intruders and to wrench from their hands the government of the people? Not in the least. Scrupulously, as it were, He kept His hands clean from politics. When, at a certain time, He

had fed thousands of people with a little bread and a few fishes, and they wanted to crown Him King, He withdrew and concealed Himself so that they could not find Him. When the Pharisees desired to test Him on this very question and entangle Him in His talk, when they asked Him, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" what did Christ answer? He made them produce a penny and, pointing to the image and superscription thereon, told them, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," thus declaring church and state to be two distinct domains that should not be intermingled and confounded. Jesus would not have the least thing to do with temporal matters that were properly to be decided by the courts. When, at a certain time, some one asked Him, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," did Christ feel inclined to do so? did He take upon Himself the duties of an impartial temporal judge? Far from it. He resented the very idea embodied in that man's presumption, and said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And, finally, when Christ was arraigned before Pilate on the very charge of having declared Himself a worldly ruler, on the charge of claiming to be the king of the Jews, then and there was the time for Christ to define His position on this political question, then and there was the time for Him to state unambiguously whether He had anything to do with the Jewish government as such, or not, and, in general, whether He is to be regarded by the nations and governments of this earth as their worldly ruler in temporal affairs, or not. Did Christ before Pilate make any statement to this point? He did in the most unambiguous terms. And what was it? He said, "My kingdom is *not* of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."

"My kingdom is *not* of this world." Oh that the mis-

guided people who vainly imagine that Christ's name in our Constitution and the enforcement of spiritual laws by worldly magistrates, inflicting temporal punishment upon the transgressors, would prove beneficial.—Oh that such people would bear in mind that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, that the worldly government and the kingdom of our Savior are two different realms, strictly to be kept apart and not to be intermingled! They would, then, perceive that they are not fighting for the Lord, but directly against Him, that they are constantly mis-applying Scripture in defence of their erroneous position, that they are actually adopting the principle of the papacy, which is, to promulgate the gospel not by means of the Word alone, but by means of the sword and temporal power, and that no good will result, if they should succeed, but that they will only rear a race of hypocrites and ruin the church of God. Not in the sense of a worldly ruler is Christ Jesus the Lord of nations.

2.

But He is the Lord of nations in the sense of His divine majesty and saving power.

“All kings shall fall down before Him; and all nations shall serve Him.” He is Lord of nations in the sense of His divine majesty. He is God. He is above all. Kings and rulers of nations are sometimes vested with great power and surrounded with grandeur and splendor. But no Solomon in all his glory, no Alexander the Great with all his conquered territory can compare with Christ Jesus. He is more than Solomon and more than the most powerful earthly ruler. In this sense He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the Prince of the kings on earth. There were and there are still powerful nations, firmly established governments. But what became of the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian government? What became of the proud Roman empire that once boasted of ruling the earth? Their

time has expired long ago. There is a Lord of nations, a Supreme Governor who rules over all in His divine majesty, who establishes and again dethrones kings and rulers, who bids nations come and go, and who, according to His divine Providence, maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. In this sense He is the King of nations and the Ruler over the nations.

He is that also in the sense of His saving power. Now-a-days we are accustomed to the divine truth that all men, in all nations, can be saved, that Christ has shed His precious blood for all and gained heaven for all. But this truth was not so easily comprehended in former times. In the time of the old dispensation it pleased God to select one nation, to make that nation His chosen people with the exclusion of all the remaining nations of the globe, and to entrust to that single nation His promises and testimonies. Though God wanted all men to be saved also in the time of the Old Testament, the true visible church was that of the Jews, and the accepted form of worship that established at Jerusalem. But this state of affairs was not to remain forever. Time and again God had His prophets tell the people of Israel that a time would come when the kingdom of the Lord should not be confined within the limits of a single nation, but extend over the whole world. And that is the true meaning of our text and all similar passages of Scripture. When God says in the Old Testament, "All kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him," He means to say therewith, In the time of the new covenant salvation shall not be confined to a single nation or land, but it shall be universal. In the time of the new covenant there shall not be but one single king to bow before the Savior, but kings of many lands shall fall down before Him. He can and would save them all, no matter what people they may represent or what may be the form and character of their government.

Furthermore, in the time of the new dispensation salvation shall not be limited to one single nation, but all nations shall serve the Lord. He wants the gospel brought and proclaimed to all, no matter to what race they belong, or how far distant they be. There is implied in our text an exhortation to do missionary work among the nations, to urge kings to lay down their crowns and sceptres before the King of kings and people of all nations, to believe in and follow Christ, their Redeemer. When thus the gospel is proclaimed to kings and nations, not every king and every individual will accept it. Sometimes we see very little fruit. Nevertheless, the gospel is not preached in vain. The Word of God shall not return void. The divine seed will eventually fall upon good soil and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. To this day some of the mightiest rulers upon earth humble themselves before Christ, knowing that, after all, they are no better than the rest of fallen mankind, that they are lost and condemned sinners, who in no other way can be saved than by grace, through faith in Christ, the Redeemer. And thus, to this day, the Psalmist's words are verified that all kings shall fall down before Him and all nations shall serve Him, inasmuch as kings and people of all nations believe in and follow Christ and are saved by the preaching of the gospel.

We shall, therefore, not take part in this modern movement which aims to dethrone Christ by placing Him upon the throne of a worldly ruler, but rather oppose it with all lawful means. Let us constantly bear in mind that Christ's kingdom is not an earthly, but a spiritual kingdom. Let us not weary in our blessed missionary work. Let us win souls for our beloved Savior at home and abroad. And thus our divine Lord Jesus will be evermore and more what He is and has been, the Lord of nations. Amen.

H. S.
