

THE MISSION OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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1. "Her mission in this world is to sustain the appointment by the Father of his Son, Jesus Christ, to be ruler over the nations, and to antagonize Satan's authority and influence, especially in civil government, this being his stronghold, his only hope."
2. "[Satan] is not bitterly opposed to the salvation of individual souls, nor to religion in the church or in the family. He scarcely makes a note of these things. . . . But when an effort is made to reform that moral person, the State, does he manifest the same indifference that he seems to do in the other cases? Not at all. He is up in arms at once, and marshals not only his own minions, but draws largely on the church of Christ for help, and gets it too, either in open warfare or indifference and sneers. Notwithstanding, the State must be saved; the stronghold must be reduced, and the lawful captive delivered."
3. "The mission of our church, therefore, is to set forth prominently, the claims of Jesus Christ on nations, as his moral subjects who must submit to his scepter, or be dashed to pieces by his iron rod, and to bear a consistent testimony against all immorality, whether it be infidelity, secretism, intemperance, the liquor traffic, Sabbath desecration, and everything that supports Satan's kingdom, and every organization or association that ignores Christ and [therefore] is of the devil and must be antagonized."
4. "That this, then, is our great work, the work we are especially fitted for and to which we should give all our energies seems very clear. The great work of other churches is the salvation of individual sinners, and we heartily wish them unlimited success in this work. If they are not successful in this work, we cannot be successful in our work, as we must have Christians to work on, and that we cannot succeed in making them ourselves, a comparison numerically with other churches will make plain. Perhaps we might be credited with one in seven hundred, probably less. If the evangelization of individuals be our work we have been a failure, and have no right to keep up a separate organization. If this is not our work, the money and labor spent in missionating among the unconverted in our own country for the purpose of evangelizing them, was money and labor spent in vain as far as doing our church's work is concerned, and would have accomplished much more for the kingdom of Christ if applied to national reform work. It is not wisdom for us to spend money and labor in a field that others can work seven-fold better than we can do; if we do, we will have this for a complaint some day, "mine own vineyard have I not kept." It is impossible for us to do our own work and other peoples' too."
5. "In this work of National Reform, foreign missions should receive due consideration, as it is yet a duty we owe to our King to plant the National Reform tree in every nation on the face of the earth. . . . **Covenanters! Read your own history; your future success under God depends on it.**"

¹ RP Testimony 25.2: "It is the mission of the Church to preserve, maintain and proclaim to the whole world the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the whole counsel of God; to gather into her fellowship those of every race and people who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and promise obedience to Him; to build them up in their most holy faith, and train them to be faithful witnesses for Christ in all his offices; to maintain the ordinances of divine worship in their purity; witness against all evil; and in every way to seek the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth."

MESSIAH THE PRINCE by WILLIAM SYMINGTON

Jesus Christ, as the God-man, presently exercises a kingdom of supreme power and authority over all things in heaven and earth, having been made "head over all things for the church", that He might destroy the kingdom of Satan, establish His kingdom of grace among all nations, and hasten the arrival of His kingdom of glory.

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I. ITS SPIRITUAL ORIGIN pp. 35-36

- "Lawful civil authority in general, is, doubtless, an ordinance of God. But, as respects the immediate origin of each individual kingdom, it is an ordinance of man. Whether taking rise from hereditary succession, from conquest, or from usurpation [tyranny], dominion among men is natural in its origin." (p. 35)
- "[Christ's] dominion originates solely in the immediate divine appointment, in the spiritual grant of his Father from all everlasting in the covenant of grace. 'My Father hath appointed unto me a kingdom' [Lk 22:29]. To such an origin, no kingdom of this world can lay claim." (p. 36)

II. ITS SPIRITUAL ENDS pp. 36-37

- "The immediate ends for which kingdoms are set up among men are, of course, worldly ends. The administration of public justice, the preservation of peace, the advancement of morals, and the establishment of social order are immediately contemplated by civil authority. These, right and proper in themselves, are different from, and inferior to, the ends of Christ's mediatorial dominion." (p. 36)
- "Those [ends of *Christ's* mediatorial dominion] bear a closer relation to the value of the soul, the greatness of the human mind, the vastness of human desires, the immortal destiny of man. To give light to them that are in spiritual darkness, to rescue from the tyranny of sinful passions, to purge the conscience from dead works, to renovate the heart, to sanctify the life, to swallow up death in victory, and to shut the mouth of the infernal abyss — in one word, to save the soul — is the grand end of the mediatorial dominion." (p. 36)
- A worldly kingdom has to do with the lives and property of men, that of Christ with their hearts and consciences. The one has a respect to their interests in the world that now is, the other to those in the world that is to come. The one aims at making men good subjects, the other at making them true saints. The ends contemplated by the kingdoms of this world terminate in time, but those contemplated by the dominion of the Mediator point forward to, and can be consummated only in, an eternal state of being." (p. 36)

- "Not but that earthly dominion may be so conducted as to subserve the interests of the soul and of eternity, just as the dominion of the Mediator cannot but produce the temporal interests and social advantages of mankind. But we speak now, not of the collateral or indirect tendencies of each, but of their direct and immediate ends, which are in the one case worldly, and in the other spiritual. 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. 14:17)." (pp. 36-37)

III. ITS SPIRITUAL ADMINISTRATION pp. 37-38

- "[Christ's kingdom] is administered, as are the kingdoms of this world, by office-bearers, government, and law. But these are of a character different from those which obtain in other cases. Here the officers are not persons invested with magisterial authority, and armed with civil weapons; but pastors and teachers, elders and deacons, endowed with ministerial authority, whose weapons are not carnal, but spiritual." (p. 37)
- "They bear not the sword; but, entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, view it as their prerogative to 'open or shut' the doors of ecclesiastical privilege according to character. . . But physical violence they may never use to produce a constrained submission." (pp. 37-38)
- "Standing armies, well-stored magazines [armories], swords, and muskets form no part of their equipments. No. 'If my kingdom,' says Christ, 'were of this world, then would my servants fight; but now is my kingdom not from hence' (John 18:36). The instruments [which he approves] are:"
 1. **The Bible:** the Word of God which is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, the sword of the spirit, the sharp two-edged sword which goeth out of the mouth of him who is Alpha and Omega.
 2. **The Cross:** the preaching of which is the most effectual means of turning men from darkness to light, of thinning the ranks of Satan, and increasing the number of true adherents to the Captain of Salvation.
 3. **The Example of [Christ]:** who is the great pattern of perfection, whose contempt of the world appeared in that 'he had not where to lay his head'; his meekness in 'bearing the contradiction of sinners'; his patience, in that 'when he was reviled, he reviled not again'; and his active benevolence, in continually 'going about doing good'. (p. 38)
 - "These, under the hallowed influence of the Holy Spirit of all grace, are the means of enlightening, renewing, sanctifying, and consoling men, and of thus bringing them to be, and qualifying them to act as, subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom." (p. 38)

IV. ITS SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES pp. 38-39

- "[Christ's Kingdom] disclaims all sympathy with the maxims on which the governments of this world are too often administered, maxims which are, not seldom, infidel, fallacious, and ungrateful." (p. 38)
 1. "Personal virtues are not necessary in public men."
 2. "It is [of little concern] how much private wickedness may abound in a land, provided only that public tranquility [peace] and obedience to the laws can be preserved."
 3. "A state of warfare warrants us to treat an enemy without pity, sincerity, or even humanity."

V. ITS SPIRITUAL NATURE pp. 39-40

- "Almost every thing connected with this kingdom is spiritual. The King himself is no worldly prince, but the Lord from heaven, who is a quickening spirit. The subjects are a spiritual community, consisting of persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit as an essential and indispensable qualification to their admission; for "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" [John 3:3]. . . Thus, in whatever light we contemplate it, the spirituality of Christ's kingdom stands forth as a prominent and well-established feature. . . Well mightest thou say, O Jesus! 'My kingdom is not of this world.'" (p. 40)

- “The subjects of this spiritual kingdom, after being separated by grace from the world lying in wickedness, continue for a length of time in this lower region of human existence before they are prepared for being transferred to that brighter, and higher, and more spiritual sphere in which they are to exist forever.”
- “Although not of this world as to their character, they are in this world as respects their place of abode. While as saints they number among the ranks of Christ’s spiritual subjects, as men and as citizens they occupy their places and act their parts in the offices and institutions of civil society.
 1. So long as the saints have bodies, this kingdom can never be so strictly spiritual as to exclude all sort of connection with matter.
 2. While God has a visible church in the world, there will be required outward [constructions] for the ordinances of worship, and temporal [funds] for the support of ministers and institutions.
 3. The dominion of Christ... includes all creatures without exception; not merely the church (visible and invisible), but all things, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, moral and immoral, individual and social, ecclesiastical and political.
- “The kingdom of Christ is truly spiritual; yet, connected with this kingdom, it seems there may be many things which are properly secular. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world; yet many worldly things are connected with Christ’s kingdom. . . The dominion of the Messiah may extend over many things besides the church, and may comprehend many creatures besides the saints, and yet embrace nothing but what is somehow or another fitted to be a service to these. . . Whatever power the Mediator possesses is for the good of the church (p. 41-42).
- “But for the church, would the sun continue to shine, the rain to fall, the earth to vegetate? Would the wheels of providence continue to revolve, or the pillars of the universe to be upheld? No. The church is the great conservative element of the world and all that is in it; nor is there any thing which is not capable of being rendered, by infinite wisdom and power, subservient to the interests of God’s covenant society.”
- “We call [Christ’s kingdom] a spiritual kingdom, inasmuch as the great design of its existence is spiritual, notwithstanding that, among the things connected with it, there may be many that are material.”
- “The view now given of the kingly office of Christ is one of great importance. The tendency to take a carnal view of his kingdom is deeply seated in the human heart, and has appeared in various forms.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What are some more recent examples of this ‘carnal view’ of Christ’s kingdom and how have they impacted the witness of the contemporary American church?**

2. **Has the “social gospel” — *in any of its various forms, whether liberal or conservative*, — actually succeeded in restoring the moral fabric of our civilization? Why or why not?**

3. **What would it look like for Christians to engage in political and/or social reform efforts in a way subservient to the spiritual agenda of the gospel?**