

# "THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH AND STATE"<sup>1</sup>

from

*Plain Sermons*  
*On Subjects*  
*Practical and Prophetic*

by Alexander McCaul

*“Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,  
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”*

*Psalm 2:8*

The past week has witnessed one of the most solemn and interesting scenes which can be exhibited in the history of nations. All that national affection, reverence, wealth, and skill could offer of this world's glory and grandeur, has been combined to celebrate a youthful and beloved sovereign's investment with the crown of her forefathers. But it was not the pageantry of worldly pomp; nor the magnificence of royal splendour; nor the congregation of the wise, the mighty, and the noble of all the kingdoms of the earth, that could fix the eye of the Christian, or stay the current of his thoughts. It was the approach of royalty to the altar of the Most High; the public and solemn recognition of the God of her fathers, as the fountain of sovereignty; and the solemn dedication of herself, her majesty, and her monarchy, to the service of Christ, that moved the Christian's heart with gratitude, and filled his mind with the bright visions of hope for the future in time and in eternity. God's command is, "In all thy ways acknowledge him;" and God's promise, "and he shall direct thy paths." The unsophisticated Christian mind believes that the Divine command and promise are as applicable to kings and kingdoms, as to individuals; rejoices that such an acknowledgment is made by the sovereign of a great and powerful nation; and looks for the fulfilment of the Divine promise in the guidance of the royal steps, and the blessings resulting to the people. The Christian rejoices to think that this acknowledgment has been made publicly, solemnly, and religiously; and that the sovereign of a Christian people has not been ashamed to confess, that Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords; to lay her crown on His altar; and to acknowledge that the Divine gift is her best right to its possession, and the Divine blessing the only pledge of her wearing it for her own happiness and her people's welfare.

The Christian blesses God that the State is not heathen or infidel, neither ignorant of God nor forgetful of his ways; that there is in this land not only a church of Christ of which the sovereign is a member, but that the monarchy itself is consecrated to God, and the power of the State devoted as an offering to his service. There are, however, some who call themselves Christians, and yet assert that the monarchy and the state should be neutral in Christ's cause—promise him no allegiance, and yield him none—that a Christian nation ought not to be a Christian church, but that Church and State should be perpetually separate. Yea, that the unity of the Church and State is contrary to the principles of the Gospel, and injurious to 'the interests of Christianity. Let us then, by the help of God's revealed will, look forward to that happy day when the Gospel shall exercise its most intense influence, and Christianity appear in the perfection of its glory, and consider what will then be the relative position of Church and State. To this our text naturally leads. It contains the Father's promise to Christ of universal empire: "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

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<sup>1</sup> Preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, on Sunday Morning, July 1, 1838, the Sunday after the coronation of her most gracious Majesty the Queen.

These words teach us, in the first place, that the Christian church shall be co-extensive with the limits of the world, and embrace within her maternal arms all the families of the human race. She shall no longer appear as a small society separated from the majority of mankind; but as the great multitude which no man can number, of all the kindreds, tongues, and nations—the general assembly of all the children of men. The knowledge of God shall no longer be like the river that proceeded out of Eden, and sent refreshing streams into the neighbouring lands, but like the waters of the mighty deluge that covered the whole face of the earth. Such is the expectation implied in the promise, “that the heathen shall be Christ’s inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession.” As the Creator and Preserver of all things, the earth and all that therein is, is and ever has been, the Lord’s. But so long as the heathen, ignorant of his salvation, have gods many and lords many, they are not the Redeemer’s inheritance; and so long as the uttermost parts of the earth are the habitations of cruelty, and the abodes of error, they cannot be called his possession. It is only by the conversion of all nations to the faith of Christ that this promise can be fulfilled; the promise therefore is a warrant for expecting their conversion, and is abundantly confirmed by prophecies of similar import. Thus it is said in Psalm xxii. 27, “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” The prophet Isaiah tells us, “That the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” And Malachi says, that “From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, God’s name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto his name and a pure offering.”

The New Testament leads us more clearly to the conclusion that this universal profession of Christianity shall not be a mere form, for it declares that the work of the Christian ministry is to continue “until we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

The first feature, then, in the consummation of Christianity, is that all nations shall confess the faith of Christ, and every individual be a member of his church; and as this is true of all nations generally, it will be true of each individually; and therefore every member of a commonwealth will be a member of the church, and every member of the church a member of the commonwealth; that is, the Church and State shall be in fact identical.<sup>2</sup> From this we might safely infer that the Gospel of Christ will be the supreme law of every land, and the rule of conduct for the nation as well as for the church. The individuals who compose the one then constitute the other also; and, as all are true Christians, it is impossible to suppose that they can have any standard of right and wrong but the revealed will of God: or, that when legislating for the nation, which is then the church of God, they can have any other principles of action than those set forth in the Gospel. Inasmuch as the church and state shall then be inseparably one, every national act will be an act of the church, and every act of the church an act of the commonwealth. I do not mean to confound the civil and the spiritual authorities, and to say that the civil rulers shall be the spiritual rulers, or that the spiritual rulers shall possess the civil authority. By the word Church I understand the whole body of believers, both priesthood and people; and by the State, the whole nation, comprehending governors and governed. When all are true Christians, and all compose the same body, each will know his own place, each respect the office committed by God to another. The priesthood will not aim at supremacy. The civil governor will not invade the rights of the priesthood. Both shall appear as Divine institutions for promoting the welfare and happiness of the church. The nation grafted into the mystical body of Christ, will be the church. The church, including

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2 "We hold, that seeing there is not any man of the Church of England but the same man is also a member of the commonwealth, nor any member of commonwealth which is not also of the Church of England; therefore as in a figure triangle the base doth differ from the sides thereof, and yet one and the self same line is both a base and also a side: a side simply, a base if it chance to be the bottom, and underlie the rest: so albeit properties and actions of one do cause the name of a commonwealth, qualities and functions of another sort the name of a church to be given to a multitude; yet one and the self-same multitude may in such sort be both."--(Hooker, Eccles. Pol. book viii. Oxford, 1820. Vol. iii. p. 288.)

every member of the commonwealth, will be the nation.

But this identity is not mere matter of inference. It is implied by the words of the text, and confirmed by the whole analogy of Scripture. Not individuals, but nations and countries are here promised to Christ: "I will give thee the heathen (or the nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." These words necessarily lead us to ask, In what sense a nation can become Christ's inheritance, and a country his possession, the answer to which must be sought in similar passages of the word of God. There we find that there is a nation which is called God's inheritance, and a land which is spoken of as his possession—the people and land of Israel. In Dent. iv. 20, it is said to the people of Israel, "The Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance." And in Joshua xxii. 19, the land of Canaan is called "The land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth." The promise of the text therefore is, that, in the consummation of the Christian dispensation, all nations and countries shall stand to Christ in the same relation in which the people and land of Israel stood to Him in the Old Testament dispensation; that is, inasmuch as the great peculiarity of Israel was, that they were both the nation and the church of God, and the peculiarity of the land of Israel, that it was the place where the worship of God was nationally established: each of the heathen nations shall be a church and nation of Christ: and in every land the worship of Christ shall be nationally established. In the relation in which the people and land of Israel stood to God, the Church and the State were identical: when therefore God promises to take the heathen lands into the same relation, it inevitably follows that Church and State shall then be identical also.

This conclusion, deduced from a single passage, is fully confirmed by the general analogy of Scripture. A few passages shall suffice for the present, to shew that not merely faith in Christ's religion, but civil obedience and national devotedness to the cause of Christ, forms the great burden of prophecy. The prophets do not promise the conversion of individuals, but the homage of nations. In the Psalm from which the text is taken, it is national and legislative as well as religious opposition that is particularly noticed as vain and sinful. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed." When therefore David says, at the end of the Psalm, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth:" it is plainly legislative and national obedience that is required. In like manner, in Psalm lxxii. 11, national obedience and the homage of the state are promised. "Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." In Daniel's description of Christ's universal kingdom it is said, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." And in that vision we are expressly told that it is the kingdom which is taken away from the four idolatrous empires that shall be given to the saints of the Most High. Heathen rule is therefore to cease, and every state is to be Christian. The prophetic promise of the New Testament is still more express, announcing that "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

That a kingdom of this world means a nation with its government—that is, the State—cannot be denied. That the kingdom of Christ is his church, is equally certain. When therefore it is said that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of Christ, it means that they have become the church of Christ; it asserts, in language the most unequivocal, that when the Gospel has accomplished its destined triumphs; when Christianity is seen in its state of perfection; when the church of Christ shall appear in unsullied purity; when the kingdom for which we pray shall come, God's name be hallowed, and his will done on earth as it is in heaven; then church and state shall be identical. It is not that modern fiction, an alliance between church and state, but their perfect identity, which is here promised. An alliance between church and state is as absurd to right reason, as it is opposed to fact and foreign to Scripture. History has left no record of a compact entered into between the church and state. The Scripture contains no trace of such alliance ever having existed. Reason declares that such a

state of things is impossible. Either the state is composed of the unbaptized, and then an alliance is unlawful; or it is composed of the baptized, and then the state is part and parcel of the church, and to talk of alliance is absurd. The sacred history tells us of a nation where church and state were identical. The prophecies announce a happy time when this identity shall be universal.

But this development of God's purposes was not given to gratify our curiosity about the future. It was intended to guide us into present truth. This prophetic fact leads to certain important inferences to which I shall now direct your attention. It teaches us, first, that the temporary alienation of the church from the state which has existed in various eras of the world's history, is not the result of Divine institution, but the offspring of human wickedness. If when God's final purpose is accomplished, and man's regeneration is complete, the church and the state shall be one, it is plain that a state of things opposed to God's purpose can not be of Divine institution; that a state of things, which shall cease when all men are true Christians, could only have arisen from a state of mind adverse to the spirit of Christianity: and this conclusion is amply confirmed by a consideration of the facts from the beginning of man's history.

When the church of God had been founded on the promise of the seed of the woman as Redeemer, church and state were identified in the family of Adam, and he the earthly head of both. The first who rent this unity was Cain; who, driven from the presence of the Lord for his sin, built a city and established a dynasty of his own. After the Deluge the first who appears to have separated from the tents of Shem was Nimrod, the founder of Babel, upon whom and his companions God sent the confusion of language as a judgment for their wickedness. The church of God then continued in the family of Shem until the prevalence of idolatry led God in mercy to choose the family of Abraham, in which, both in its patriarchal and national existence, church and state were again identified. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were in their families the head of both. The first of Abraham's descendants who wilfully separated from the covenant family of God, was Esau, the despiser of his birth-right. When Israel became a nation, by God's command the church and state were one, until in Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and his idolatrous succession, a separation was effected, and the state appeared as the church's enemy. When Christianity arose, the Roman empire was idolatrous; and this idolatry necessarily prevented the possibility of union. No recorded command of Christ either caused or perpetuated the separation. It was founded altogether in the existence and dominance of idolatry and the wickedness of man. I do not mean to deny that God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: or, that in his providence he employed the opposition of the powers of an idolatrous world, to display and demonstrate the Divine origin of the Gospel: but this I confidently assert, that the then existing idolatry was the off-spring of human depravity, and the separation between church and state the fruit of that idolatry.

Thus history confirms the conclusion drawn from the prophetic delineation of Christianity triumphant, that the temporary separation between church and state that has existed in various eras of the world, has not been the result of Divine institution, but the offspring of human depravity. In the patriarchal dispensation, in the Mosaic dispensation, and in the glorious consummation yet to be expected, the unity of church and state is a Divine institution. The separations have been effected by men like Cain, Esau, and the son of Nebat.

What then is the duty of Christians? Is it to imitate the conduct of idolaters, and forcibly effect a separation; or is it to hold up before our eyes the future glories of the church as our model, and to endeavour to imbibe the blessed spirit of that time when the heathen shall be Christ's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession? Is it to determine to hold down Christ's church in that imperfect and crippled state which was the result of idolatrous tyranny, or by all means in our power to approximate her to that state in which she shall appear in the period of her perfection and the hour of her glory? No doubt it is the duty of every Christian to aim at perfection in himself and in the church; it is therefore his duty, when in a land where church and state are not one, to aim at the removal of

every thing which can interrupt such unity; and in a land where this unity exists, to use every lawful endeavour to preserve it and make it more complete. In so doing he is a follower of God, who, in all the dispensations of his grace and the dealings of his providence, has been preparing and advancing the glorification of Christ's church, and the perfect re-union of all things which sin has separated, for he hath made known unto us "the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."

If man had never fallen the very distinction of church and state could never have arisen in the human mind. When God created man in his own image, it was not his purpose to erect a worldly society of worldly men for objects bounded by the horizon of time and sense, for such, and nothing more, is the state when separate from the church; but to raise up a family of worshippers, striving after spiritual perfection, regarding his will as their law, his glory as their object, and eternity their destination—that is, in creating the race of man he intended the foundation of a church. Sin marred the Divine work; it alienated man from God, made him forget his destination, and taught him to regard this fallen world as his home, and the glories of it as the highest object of his ambition; and hence it was possible that states and nations could arise actuated by no regard to God's glory, or man's eternal felicity, whose views terminated altogether in worldly splendour, enjoyment, and riches. These are the kingdoms of this world, and such were the empires of Babylon and Assyria, of Persia, Greece, and Rome. God was not in all their thoughts. Sometimes they persecuted his church: sometimes they protected and sheltered it; but never did they rise beyond the degree of kingdoms of this world—feofs [fiefs] of the kingdom of darkness, and vassals of the prince of this world.

But it was not for the purposes of selfish aggrandisement or worldly enjoyment that God instituted the powers that be. The eternal God kept eternity in view in all his institutions; and therefore not only preserved a church in the midst of the general apostacy, but exhibited that church as a state, in order to shew that the civil power as well as the spiritual authority, the machinery of the state as well as the constitution of the church, was intended for the promotion of man's spiritual welfare and eternal happiness. The idea of a state, therefore, separate from the church, is earthly, sensual, devilish; conceived by Satan; brought forth by apostate man, and nursed by idolatry. The man, therefore, who aims at separating the state from the church, however good his intentions, is trying to perpetuate one of the cursed consequences of sin, to preserve one of the works of the devil, to defeat the purposes of God, and to delay the triumph of the Gospel and the universal felicity of man. The man who pronounces the unity of church and state to be unlawful, gives the lie to the Scriptures, both of the Old and new Testament, and condemns the Divine constitution of the kingdom of God. He is endeavouring to stir up the State to imagine a vain thing, to take counsel against the Lord and his anointed. So far as in him lies he is persuading the nation to do that for which Christ shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We learn, secondly, the true relative position of the civil and spiritual authorities. They do not stand as two independent powers, deriving their right of dominion from different sources—the one from this world, and the other from God, and each presiding over a separate and distinct corporation; they are both institutions of the same God and intended to exercise authority over one and the same body, the church. Such was the fact in the patriarchal dispensation; such was the law in the Mosaic economy; and such we have learned from prophecy is to be the constitution of the church when Christianity is perfect. There shall still be kings and kingdoms; but of the former, we are told that they shall do homage to the Son of God, and of the latter that they shall be kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ—that is, every king shall be a Christian, and every kingdom a church. The church therefore shall be the subject of the royal government, and the monarchic office exist for the welfare and good government of the church.

And hence we see the falsehood of the Romanist doctrine now adopted by some Protestants, concerning the absolute independence of the church on the state, and the unlawfulness of state interference in ecclesiastical matters. The doctrine rests upon the supposition of a necessary and perpetual separation of church and state, and the belief that the condition of the church during the first three centuries, is a perfect exhibition of its Divine and perpetual constitution. We have seen that both these suppositions are false. The separation was not the result of Divine institution but of human depravity; and, when this depravity shall be subdued, the separation shall cease. The constitution of the church, whilst the civil power continued idolatrous, was imperfect, for it wanted one of the two authorities which God ordained for its government and advantage, which it ever had where the will of God was executed, and which it shall have when Christianity shall have attained its destined glory and development. In that day when every plant that Christ's heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted out, the sovereignty and the priesthood shall still stand and flourish in the garden of the Lord, and their continuance prove their Divine origin, and the purpose for which they were instituted.

This is the only doctrine which can produce permanent peace between the civil and spiritual authorities. If the royal power be looked upon as a mere worldly ordinance, there is a specious pretence for priestly ambition deriving its authority from Christ to aim at Papal supremacy. If the spiritual power and the church be beyond the civil jurisdiction, endless jealousies, and wanton invasion of priestly rights must follow, and the contests of the middle ages be for ever perpetuated. But, if both be Divine institutions for the government and well-being of the church, each must be satisfied with the position appointed by God, and each will cheerfully acknowledge God's gift to the other. The priesthood will find that in submitting to royal supremacy, it is not surrendering Divine rights to a power inferior in origin to itself. The monarchy, in preserving the utmost limits of spiritual power and independence, will be assured that it is not fostering a rival or hostile influence, but protecting an institution which has God for its author, and the temporal and eternal welfare of the kingdom for its end. The church at large will be satisfied, that when, within the limits marked out by God, the civil power interposes in its concerns, it is only fulfilling one of the duties of its office, and accomplishing one of the ends of its institution. Thus the harmony of church and state, the monarchy and the priesthood, is based upon the unwavering foundation of Divine appointment, and secured by the only principle which can resist the gusts of human passion—the fear of God.

This subject teaches us, lastly, that national security depends upon national obedience to the Son of God. The Divine purpose is that the heathen shall be Christ's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth his possession, and all the powers of earth and hell cannot prevent its accomplishment. Nations may either submit willingly, or yield to the weight and fury of the Divine indignation; but submit they must. The Psalm from which the text is taken is God's proclamation to all the kings and potentates and nations of the earth to consecrate themselves, their power, and their glory, to the service of Christ, or to prepare for the utmost exercise of the Divine vengeance. He declares to them his unalterable decree to make Christ universal King. He expostulates with them upon the folly and vanity of taking counsel against the Lord and his anointed, and reminds them of the dreadful destruction which must be the consequence of resistance. "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

This Psalm is in truth a summary of God's will respecting kings, legislators, and nations—a compendium of royal, legislative, and national duty—the charter of their happiness and prosperity. The king of Israel was commanded, upon the accession to the throne of his forefathers, to write a copy of the law of Moses, and to study therein, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, to the end that he might prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel. To the kings, and rulers, and nations under the Christian dispensation, God has given the second Psalm to be written upon the tables of their heart, that they may know and perform their duty and be blessed; or at least that they

may be aware that national ruin and eternal destruction will be the consequence of disobedience. Here they are told that the condition, upon which the stability of the throne and the welfare of the nation rests, is obedience. They are reminded that the very end of their institution is the promotion of Christ's glory and the edification of his church; and are told that if they answer not the end of their appointment, they shall be broken with a rod of iron, and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The history of the world shews that God is at no loss for means to accomplish his threats. The continual change of dynasty in the kingdom of the ten tribes when the reigning family favoured idolatry; the overthrow of the heathen empires which opposed the progress of Divine truth; the calamities that have descended upon those royal houses and once mighty kingdoms which were the great enemies of the Reformation; yea, the history of the British monarchy is itself sufficient to shew that God's menaces are not vain words; but that when His wrath is kindled, even but a little, his enemies perish from the way. Let us then all remember, that if we desire the peace and prosperity of our country, we must seek it in the maintenance of truth and the practice of piety. If the Gospel of Christ be nationally honoured, the glory of Christ nationally promoted, and the commandments of Christ nationally obeyed, the throne shall be established, and the people happy. But if false religion be nationally encouraged, the progress of Divine truth nationally impeded, and forgetfulness of God nationally practised, the storm of Divine vengeance will shake the foundations of the throne, overthrow the fabric of national greatness, and bury national prosperity in its ruins.

This nation must, like every other nation in the world, be Christ's inheritance, these ends of the earth his possession. To us, our sovereign, our legislature, and the people, God has mercifully left the alternative to yield a willing obedience, or to be awed into submission by the terrors of divine judgments. It is for us then to determine whether we will thankfully accept God's mercy, or enter into a fearful contest with the Almighty. Let us be thankful that in the last week a public act of national submission to Christ has been performed, and a national acknowledgment of Christ as the source of all power, has been made. Let us be doubly thankful that this national act was not a mere general acknowledgment, but a definite recognition of the reformed faith as the true faith of Christ, and of our church as the true church of Christ. It was on a reformed altar that the crown of this kingdom was dedicate—by a reformed prelate, that our Sovereign was anointed—the reformed faith, that Her Majesty has sworn to maintain inviolate; and a solemn recognition of the principles of the Reformation, which all the estates of the kingdom assisted to witness and confirm. Let us therefore earnestly pray that God would give her Majesty grace to continue Her reign according to this beginning; that he would grant Her the piety of the sixth Edward, the courage of Elizabeth, and the conscientious firmness of Her royal grandfather; that so God's blessing may ever rest upon Her kingdom, and the peace of God rule in Her heart; Her reign be long and glorious, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away Her never-ending reward.