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THE VICAR OF CHRIST.

III.

Suppose Peter had been the "Prince" of the Apostles, did he have the power to give this lordship to his successor? And if he had the power, did he do so? Where is it written in the Bible? Where is it written in History?

1. The Emperors recognized no "Vicar of Christ."

Pope Leo X, in the Lateran Synod of 1516, said, "It is manifestly established that the Roman Pontiff for the time being, as having authority over all councils, has alone the full power of convoking, transferring, dissolving;" a claim made no earlier than 785 by Hadrian I. — This is manifestly untrue.

The Emperor Constantine called the First General Council at Nicaea, in Bithynia, in 325; the Emperor made the opening address; the Emperor presided for a time; the Emperor formally confirmed the acts of the council; some of the main sessions were held in the Emperor's palace; the ecclesiastical president was Bishop Hosius of Cordova, not the Roman Bishop Sylvester or his Legates.

The Second General Council, at Constantinople, in 381, was called by the Emperor Theodosius alone. The Pope was neither present nor represented. The Emperor alone confirmed the acts of the Council.

After the division of the Roman Empire, in 395, the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III called the Third General Council, at Ephesus, in 431; the Emperor bade the

THE PROOF TEXTS OF THE CATECHISM WITH A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY.

THE SECOND ARTICLE.

(Continued.)

CHRIST OUR KING.

Christ's kingship was foretold in the Old Testament. "Thou hast put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," Ps. 8. And what Daniel saw in the night vision he thus describes: "Behold, one like the *Son of Man* came with clouds, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a *kingdom*, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him," Dan. 7, 13. 14. Christ is a king. Hence the enquiry of the wise men from the East was: "Where is He that is *born King* of the Jews?" Matt. 2, 2.

According to the various subjects and diverse modes of government Christ's kingdom is threefold: 1. the *kingdom of power*, pertaining to all creatures; 2. the *kingdom of grace*, pertaining to the Church militant; and 3. the *kingdom of glory*, pertaining to the Church triumphant.

In that final interview with His disciples in Galilee, and as a prelude to His last Great Commission, Christ speaks of Himself as the King of the universe. He said:

Matt. 28, 18: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

The sphere of His kingdom is indicated by the phrase: "*in heaven and in earth.*" How vast is that kingdom! He possesses all power "*in heaven*" — all the holy angels, authorities, powers, the cherubim and the seraphim, are His willing servants. And "*in earth,*" too, "all things are put under His feet." His kingship is world-wide, universal. A grand, a majestic truth! Christ rules and reigns over all, whatever it

may be, however powerful it may be, wherever it may be, "in heaven or in earth" — all, all is in His kingdom, the heathen that rage, the kings of the earth and its rulers, aye, the very devils in hell not excepted. His is all power without any limitation. Over all He mightily rules and reigns. This is His kingdom of *power*!

And why is it so called? Because the means whereby He rules in this kingdom is, as stated in the text, "*all power.*" "*All power,*" *all authority,* clearly is *omnipotence.* If His omnipotent word goes forth, who can withstand? And so, "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, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision," Ps. 2.

Of this "all power," this omnipotence, Christ says, It is "*given to me.*" The divine nature of Christ possesses omnipotence as an *essential* attribute, but this essential attribute, by virtue of the personal union, becomes a *communicated* attribute of the human nature. The man Christ is almighty. The God-man was not exalted to royal dignity and power after His resurrection or ascension, but was *born* a king, Matt. 2, 2. 6; Luke 2, 11; Is. 9, 6. This "all power," given unto Him according to His humanity, He manifested before His exaltation by numerous miracles, thus proving the truth expressed in our text and in that other saying of His: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father," Matt. 11, 25. He rebuked the winds and the sea, and they obeyed Him, Matt. 8, 27. He walked on the sea, Matt. 14, 26. He cast out evil spirits with His word, and healed the sick, Matt. 8, 16. With a single word He felled His captors, John 18, 6. He spoke to him that was dead: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise; and he . . . sat up and began to speak," Luke 7, 14. 15. The winds, the sea, the evil spirits, the devil, sicknesses, enemies, death — all are subject to His power.

This truth affords great *consolation* for us, since our King so regulates the whole universe and all things upon earth as to contribute to the glory of His divine name and to the gathering and preservation of His Church. "We believe according to the working of His *mighty power*," Eph. 1, 19. By virtue of His omnipotence the spiritually dead Lazaruses are made spiritually alive. The Church is gathered through His almighty Word. And this His Church He protects against all enemies, aye, against the very devil himself, for as He, the King, said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. 16, 18. Why, the very connection in which the words of our text stand to the Last Great Commission of our King prove the same majestic truth. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye *therefore* and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." As if to say: Ye ambassadors of mine, be not afraid! Ye are to wage war against the formidable kingdom of Satan, to destroy its bulwarks, and upon its ruins ye are to plant the cross, the emblem of the Crucified One. What a task! But fear not ye! "Go ye *therefore*," since mine is all power, go ye therefore and build my Church. Though you will no longer enjoy my *visible* presence, *invisibly* I will be with you, guide you, protect you in the performance of your sacred office. "Disciple the nations, baptizing them," etc., and when the last one according to God's decree has been brought into the Church, then will the end come and the scaffold of this world will be torn down, since it has served its purpose; the *una sancta*, the holy Christian Church, will be complete. So, then, this "all power," His omnipotence, wherewith our King mightily rules over all creatures, has but one object in view—the gathering and the preservation of His Church, which is called His kingdom of *grace*.

This universal kingship of Christ is not apparent to the

natural eye. As the writer of Hebrews says: "But now we see not yet all things put under Him," Hebr. 2, 8. It is an article of faith which we are to lay hold of for our consolation. In yonder life, when the mists will have been lifted from our eyes and our vision will be clear, when we no longer know in part, we shall see that this whole universe, together with its governments, rulers, and ordinances, lay in the hollow of Christ our King's hands and were made subservient to His gracious purpose—the building of the kingdom of grace. And what is this kingdom?

John 18, 37: *Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

In the trial before Pilate, Jesus had said, "My kingdom is not of this world," etc., v. 36. He spoke of His special kingdom of grace, which, though *in* the world, is "not of this world." Pilate asks, "Art Thou a king, then?" Jesus, asserting that He, indeed, is a king, and describing the true character of His kingdom, makes answer: I am a king; I am a *born* king; I am a king of the *truth*. Who are His subjects? "*Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" Every one "that is of the truth," that is born of God, whose heart has been conquered and won by the truth unto which He bears witness, belongs to this kingdom. This is a mark of the true subjects in this kingdom: they hear *His voice*. Who hears His voice? The Christians, the believers. And these, collectively, constitute His kingdom. Wherever the believer may live, to whatsoever nationality he may belong, whatsoever language he may speak—in the eyes of Christ he belongs to that "holy nation" of which Peter speaks, 1 Pet. 2, 9. This kingdom Christ rules by *His voice*, the Gospel, the Gospel of grace. Hence it is not a worldly kingdom, but a *spiritual* kingdom. Another name for this kingdom is the Church, the communion of saints.—Of this same kingdom the following passage treats.

Matt. 21, 5: *Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass.*

The context speaks of Christ's royal entry into Jerusalem. By it, the Evangelist avers, the prophecy recorded in Zech. 9, 9 was fulfilled. Zechariah describes the New Testament kingdom of peace and grace. The King of Zion, whom, according to the context of the prophecy, the heathen also shall serve, v. 10, is the Messiah, the son of David, He, whom the multitudes pronounce to be "Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee," Matt. 21, 11. The subjects of this kingdom are denominated "the daughter of Zion," the daughter of Jerusalem, *i. e.*, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who represent the people of Israel. But the true, the spiritual Israel is meant, the Church of God, God's people, as contradistinguished from the heathen world. Zech. 9, 3—8. Accordingly, when the announcement is made to the daughter of Zion: "Thy King cometh unto thee," the Christian Church is accosted, *i. e.*, the believers gathered from among Jews and Gentiles, for they are the true, spiritual Israel.

To "the daughter of Zion" Christ comes "*meek.*" Thereby the Evangelist indicates the rule of this kingdom. Christ rules therein with "meekness," *i. e.*, by His grace, by His Word of grace, the Gospel of salvation. "Thy King cometh unto thee, *meek.*" "Flee not, be not despondent! Your king does not approach you as He did Adam or Cain, or as at the time of the flood, or when He visited Babylon, or Sodom and Gomorrah. Nor does He come to you as He did to the people of Israel on Mount Sinai. He makes His advent not in anger to take you to account; wrath is all laid aside, there is nothing but meekness and kindness. He purposes to treat you in such a manner that your heart may be of good cheer, love, and confidence toward Him, to cling to Him and seek shelter in Him." (Luther, Erl. ed. X, 13.) — In other words, by means of His Word Christ rules over the *hearts* of His subjects; hence this kingdom of grace is a spiritual kingdom. Of it Christ, speaking to the carnal-minded Pharisees, says, Luke

17, 20, 21: "The kingdom of God cometh not by observation" — its coming cannot be observed with the bodily eyes. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there!" — a definite locality cannot be assigned to it, — "for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you," it is of a spiritual nature, has its seat in the heart. There the King erects His throne and fills it with joy, and grace, and comfort, and peace that surpasseth all understanding. — And when Christ's loyal subjects die, they pass out of the world, but remain in His kingdom — the kingdom of *glory*.

2 Tim. 4, 18: *The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever! Amen.*

Having recounted several instances in which God preserved him, Paul concludes the letter proper with the words: "*The Lord,*" as He has so often done in the past, "*shall deliver me,*" also in the future, "*from every evil work*" that my enemies may concoct against me. From these words we see: the kingdom of grace is at the same time a kingdom of the *cross*. But final deliverance will surely come. In spite of all trials and tribulations here below, the King guards and protects His subjects "from every evil work," and we shall and can rest assured with Paul that He "*will preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom.*" From the Church militant the believers are transplanted into the Church triumphant, from the kingdom of grace into the *kingdom of glory*. Here "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Rev. 21, 4. Here the cross, there the crown. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face," 1 Cor. 13, 12.

As our Prophet, Priest, and King Christ is our Redeemer. As Prophet He taught the way of salvation; as Priest He merited salvation, and as King He imparts what He has merited, governs and protects us, and leads us into His heavenly kingdom. Thus Christ is our Lord.