

Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom and Common Benefits

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Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom and Common Benefits

It is said,¹—that 'our Lord Jesus Christ has not only an essential right to the kingdom of Nature, as one God with the Father and Spirit, but has condescended, for the great ends of the divine glory and good of his chosen, to take out a new right both of donation and purchase unto all things, even in the kingdom of Nature as well as in the kingdom of Grace. And so, though both are committed to Him as Mediator, yet the one is in a subserviency unto the other, and his administration is still in a suitableness to the nature of the one and the other. Still the distinction remains between the kingdom of Nature, or common providence, and the kingdom of Grace.'

Now if all this were designed to mean no more (as to the subject in hand) but that our Lord's mediatory government and administration does extend to all outward things in the world of nature and providence, in so far as these things are supernaturally ordered unto supernatural ends in the spiritual advantage of his Church and people, or so far as ordered in the channel of love and favor to them with a subserviency to the purposes and glory of free grace in their salvation, and that all such orderings of these outward things are the proper fruit of Christ's purchase, and that all these outward things (as considered in the formality or channel of these gracious orderings) do hold of Christ and his kingdom as Mediator; If no more than this were intended, there would be no controversy on the head: for all this is heartily agreed to.

But there seems to be more aimed at of a quite different kind: As if all outward things in the kingdom of nature and providence, even considered in their material being as obvious to common sense and considered in their natural ordering to their natural ends, as if all these outward things, even thus considered, or in all respects, were now transferred over to the mediatory kingdom of Christ upon a new right of donation and

¹ [By Thomas Mair, one under discipline by the Secession Church's Synod.]

purchase. From whence indeed it would natively follow that the common enjoyment of all outward things by all unbelievers through the world as well as by all believers, yea by beasts as well as men, were properly from Christ as Mediator and through the channel of his blood.

And according to this doctrine, which is indeed the doctrine of Brae's scheme,² there was no need of giving a caution about any remaining distinction between the kingdoms of nature and grace, or about Christ's administration being still in a suitableness to the nature of the one and the other. For all the distinction or difference now left, in this case, is such as nobody could blunder into a mistake of, seeing it is no more than this: that the outward things of the world have undergone no transformation or transubstantiation of their natural and material being into a spiritual being, or of their perishing temporal nature into a durable and eternal nature, or of their natural ends and effects into such as are supernatural and spiritual. Such is all the distinction or difference left in the present case, if it be taught that all outward things of this world, in themselves considered, and in all respects, do immediately belong to the kingdom of Christ as Mediator, upon a new right of donation and purchase, or do belong to his mediatory kingdom, which is all a kingdom of grace. But one may absolutely reject this doctrine as not only without any foundation in Scripture, but also very contrary both to Scripture and reason and what greatly derogates from the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ as He is over all, God blessed forever, likewise bringing a cloud upon his glory as Mediator.

It stands and falls with the doctrine of Universal Redemption, which has been [already] particularly considered. And it is only proposed to subjoin some general observations which will be of an easy application to that subject and to the whole controversy about common benefits, as also, to the case of gospel-privileges as enjoyed by wicked men. The observations meant are these following:

² [James Fraser of Brea, *A Treatise of Justifying Faith*, 1749]

I. All divine prerogatives and administrations are to be ascribed to Him who is our glorious Mediator, though all must not be ascribed to Him as Mediator. And there is no controversy here about what glory belongs to Christ but only about the different respects in which all glory belongs to Him. For our Lord Jesus, considered as God and considered as Mediator, is still one and the same person. Wherefore, an ascribing of some things to Him as God and of other things to Him as Mediator is not an ascribing of these different things to different persons, but an ascribing of all to one and the same glorious person.

II. There ought not to be a confounding of our Lord's divine and Mediatory glory, or of his essential and acquired glory. For this must be a detracting from his Godhead. And to suppose as if all glory, or glorious characters and administrations which are ascribed to Him in scripture, were to be understood of Him as Mediator, is to deny his Godhead. Wherefore, as it was a gross error in the Eutychians of old³ to pretend a celebrating of the Mediator's glory, as if his human nature were drunk up in the glory of his divine nature, so it would be a gross error to pretend a celebrating of the Mediator's glory by teaching as if his Godhead were drunk up in the glory of his mediation or mediatory capacity.

III. There are rights and prerogatives of Christ's Godhead in the government of this world which cannot be suspended, sopited⁴ or superseded as to the exercise thereof. It is inseparable from his Godhead to govern the world of his creatures while He sees meet to preserve the same and that by an ordering all natural things of the world in their natural course to their natural ends by ordinary and common providence. And therefore, to suppose as if all this common providence were now transferred over to

³ [An early Church heresy that said that Christ had one nature, both human and divine, and not two natures, one human and one divine, as was formulated in the Council of Chalcedon, 451.]

⁴ [put to an end]

Christ's mediatory capacity and kingdom, is to suppose as if a divine administration, which is inseparable from his Godhead, were laid aside for giving place to a mediatory administration, or were brought down into his mediatory administration, which would be a material denying or degrading of his Godhead.

Moreover, the same administrations, materially considered, are in different respects to be ascribed unto Christ both as God and as Mediator. For each of his administrations, in so far as it was preparatory unto, proceeds upon, or is introduced by a satisfaction to law and justice, must be ascribed unto Him as Mediator. But the same administrations, in so far as they bear any other respects, must be ascribed to Him as God. Thus particularly, the judgment of ungodly men, considered as it terminates in their perdition, belongs to Him as God. But the same judgment, considered as it terminates in a vindicating the glory of his despised grace, or in a displaying of his glory as God-man, or in exalting the triumph of his people, does belong to Him as Mediator.

IV. The mediatory kingdom of our Lord Jesus is not of this world, and this holds true concerning the same, absolutely or in all respects. Thus, though his mediatory kingdom is in this world and the things of it are things in this world, yet no outward things whatsoever, considered as things of this world or worldly things, can be justly looked upon as belonging to his Mediatory kingdom, or as belonging to Him upon a right of donation and purchase. Nor was such a donation and purchase either needful or competent to Him who is over all, God blessed forever. But the gracious and supernatural ordering of outward material things unto gracious and supernatural ends in a channel of love and favor to his people, and with a subserviency to the purposes and glory of free grace in their salvation, all such ordering of these things, or these considered under the formality and in the channel of such gracious orderings, are of a quite different consideration, being not of this world (though in it) or not of a worldly nature. And thus, according to our

[Westminster] Confession of Faith (Chap. 5.7), the providence of God, after a most special manner, takes care of his Church and disposes all things to the good thereof.⁵

V. There can be no proper enjoyment of any benefits from Christ, as benefits of his mediatory kingdom, but in a way of communion and fellowship with Him, by faith. Thus, no common material benefits, as enjoyed by wicked men or unbelievers, can be looked upon as benefits of his mediatory kingdom, or as the fruits of his purchase. These material benefits, in the most general consideration thereof, do proceed from God as the great Creator and Preserver of the world, in which respect they are common to men and beasts. But more particularly, they always come to men in some Covenant-channel. They come to wicked men, or unbelievers, through the broken Covenant [of Works], in the channel of its curse. And so, whatever material goodness be in these things to them as suited to their fleshly nature, like the goodness thereof unto beasts, yet there is no spiritual goodness attending the same; no divine love, but wrath. Whereas on the other hand, these benefits come to believers through the Covenant of Grace in the channel of its blessing. And so they enjoy these benefits in a way of communion with Christ, as benefits of his mediatory kingdom.

VI. We are not to conclude that whatever belongs to Christ as Mediator is the matter of his purchase and the fruit of his death. Or, there are some things which belong to Him as Mediator and yet are not purchased by his death. Incarnation belongs to Him as Mediator, but He did not purchase the same. Nor did He purchase his mediatory offices, while all his purchase was made in his exercising one of these offices, with

⁵ WCF 5.7: 'As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.' (1 Tim. 4:10; Amos 9:8,9; Rom. 8:28; Isa. 43:3-5,14)

which the other two are inseparably connected. And in like manner, his exercise of these offices belongs not to the matter or fruit of his purchase. But all these things are to be considered as properly flowing from the sovereign transaction and agreement in the Counsel of Peace⁶ for bringing about his purchase and effectuating the ends thereof. Thus particularly, the outward dispensation of gospel ordinances, which belongs to the exercise of Christ's prophetic and kingly offices, is not the purchase of his death. But all the gracious effects of these ordinances, or the saving benefits which flow in that channel as terminating upon his own people, are the purchase and fruits of his death unto them, while, with respect to others, they are not enjoyed, but rejected benefits.

VII. No things can be properly reckoned the purchase of Christ or the proper fruits of his death, but such things as the vindictive justice of God could not immediately admit of without a satisfaction. All venting of the love of God upon guilty sinners by receiving them into a state of pardon and favor, or all that immediately pertains to their salvation, with the glory of Christ and free grace thereby, all this belongs to the purchase of Christ and the proper fruits of his death, being what vindictive justice could not immediately admit of without a satisfaction.

But vindictive justice could require or admit of no satisfaction in order to a preserving the natural world in its natural course after the fall, seeing that very justice in the curse of the broken Covenant necessarily required that preservation of the world for the production of the seed who had sinned and fallen in the first Covenant-head. And vindictive justice can require or admit of no satisfaction in order to the conferring of outward material benefits upon wicked men or of any outward benefits enjoyed by them, seeing their enjoyment of these benefits does not withdraw them from vindictive justice but leaves them under wrath and is actually cursed unto them

⁶ [*Pactum Salutis*, or otherwise known as the Covenant of Redemption, being the eternal covenant between God the Father and God the Son for the redemption of his elect people.]

through a channel of wrath, ripening them for destruction. So that vindictive justice leaves full room, in this case, for the exercise of divine wisdom, sovereignty and long-suffering, without requiring or admitting of any satisfaction in order thereunto. In a word, all doctrine about the shedding of Christ's blood for any of these things in order whereunto vindictive justice did not, and could not, require or admit of a satisfaction, is at best but a doctrine about the vanity of his blood-shedding, and [is] injurious to the glory of that mystery.

The End