

## ARTICLE IV.

## THE RELATION OF DAVID'S FAMILY TO THE MESSIAH.

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FOR the clear understanding of a large part of the Messianic prophecies, it is necessary that we rightly apprehend the relation of David's family to the Messiah.

And, first of all, we must remember that this relation had for its basis a pure act of Divine sovereignty. The sovereignty of God does, indeed, underlie the whole constitution of the church from the beginning. Abraham was not constituted the father of the faithful by his own act, but by the act of God. The covenant came not from him but from God, in the form of a free sovereign promise: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."<sup>1</sup> By the same sovereignty Isaac was made the heir of the promise given to Abraham, and Ishmael was rejected. And, lest any one should say that the ground of this preference lay in the fact that Isaac was the son of the free woman, and Ishmael of the bond woman, he afterwards chose Jacob, and rejected Esau, his twin-brother, before the children had been born, or done either good or evil, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."<sup>2</sup> The same sovereignty was afterwards displayed in the selection of Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, of Joshua to be their military chieftain in the conquest of Canaan, and of the Judges who successively delivered them from the oppression of the surrounding nations; but, especially, in the appointment of the tribe of Levi to the general ministry of religion, and the family of Aaron in that tribe to the priesthood.

And when, in compliance with the request of the Israelites, a king was to be set over them, God did not leave to them the selection; he exercised his sovereign prerogative in a twofold way.

By his own immediate act he designated Saul as the man whom he had chosen; and, when he had now been solemnly

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 9: 11.

installed in the kingly office, he placed him on probation, not for himself personally, but for his family. After Saul's first offence in the matter of the burnt-offering, Samuel said to him: "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would he have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."<sup>1</sup> The very prerogative which was afterwards conferred upon David's royal line: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever,"<sup>2</sup> is here named as one that would have been given to Saul and his house, had he continued to obey God. The language of Samuel addressed to Saul after his second offence in the matter of the Amalekites: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king;"<sup>3</sup> "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou,"<sup>4</sup> must be interpreted in harmony with the subsequent dealings of God with Saul and David. It was not the purpose of God to depose Saul personally from the kingly office and put David in his stead. This David understood perfectly. He always spoke of Saul as "the Lord's anointed," and twice rejected with abhorrence the proposal to take his life, when the providence of God had placed it in his power, saying: "Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"<sup>5</sup> It does not appear that Saul's jealousy of David respected himself personally. It was in behalf of his children that he feared the son of Jesse. "As long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground," said he to Jonathan, "thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die."<sup>6</sup> The oath which he exacted of David in the wilderness of En-gedi, in immediate view of the fact that David had spared his own life, was that he would not cut off his posterity. "And now, behold I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 13: 13, 14.<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 7: 16.<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. 15: 23.<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. 15: 28.<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam. 26: 9.<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam. 20: 31.

wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house."<sup>1</sup> The words of Samuel, then: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou," have respect to Saul and David as the heads of two families. The Lord had, that very day, in his declared purpose, taken the kingdom from the house of Saul, and transferred it to the house of David.

And when another king was to be selected in place of Saul's house, we see another twofold exercise of God's prerogative. He did not leave the choice to the people of Israel, nor to his prophet, but retained it in his own power; and the whole matter was conducted in such a way as to manifest in a remarkable manner his sovereignty. The elder sons of Jesse were rejected one by one, and the youngest, who had been left in charge of the sheep, was chosen.

Passing now to the time when David, after the overthrow of Saul's house, had been invested with the sovereignty over all Israel, we find him also placed upon probation with reference to his posterity. It was not till he had fought the battles of the Lord through a long period of years, and his obedience had been subjected to a thorough trial, that he received the memorable promise recorded in the seventh chapter of the second book of Samuel. By this promise the kingdom was confirmed to his seed forever. "The Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son."<sup>2</sup> It is manifest that this promise respects not Solomon in his simple personality, but Solomon in his house. It insures the kingdom to Solomon's family forever. One of the ideas included in the words: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son,"<sup>3</sup> is that of *heirship*, and the good indefeasible title connected with this. It is not Solomon alone, in his individual character, whom God takes into the relation of sonship, but Solomon's royal line, including, in a special and incommunicable sense (as will be hereafter shown), the Messiah, to whom this line extends, and in whom it is perpetuated forever.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 24: 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Vs. 11—14.

<sup>3</sup> אֲנִי אֶבְרָכְךָ וְאַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתָיִם.

But there was yet in David's mind a ground of solicitude which the Divine promise anticipates. For the transgression of Saul his family had been rejected. Might not the same thing happen to David's house through the iniquity of his descendants? This question is met in the words which follow: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever."<sup>1</sup> The precise import of these words will be presently considered at large. It is sufficient here to say that they contain the explicit assurance that the prerogative of occupying the throne of Israel, however its actual exercise may be limited through the iniquity of David's children, shall never be *transferred* to another family.

We have seen that the relation of David's family to the Messiah had for its basis an immediate act of Divine sovereignty. It remains to inquire concerning the interior nature of this relation. But, before we proceed directly to this work, it seems necessary to consider a difficulty which has probably forced itself upon the mind of every thoughtful student of the Old Testament. The difficulty is this: Admitting that Jesus of Nazareth was, in some true sense, the successor of David on the throne of Israel (according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David"<sup>2</sup>), how can we reconcile with the promise of God to David: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever," the historic fact that, for several centuries preceding the advent of Christ, David's posterity were excluded from the exercise of the royal prerogative? The promise seems to imply a continuous succession of kings from David's family on the throne of Israel. By the prophet Jeremiah it is stated with still greater strength: "Thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;"<sup>3</sup> and it is made more explicit, also, by being immediately connected with a similar promise to the house of Levi: "Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually."<sup>4</sup> That this difficulty was deeply felt by the ancient servants of God during the decline of

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<sup>1</sup> Vs. 14—16.<sup>2</sup> Luke 1: 32.<sup>3</sup> Jer. 33: 17.<sup>4</sup> Jer. 33: 18.

the theocracy, is manifest from the eighty-ninth Psalm, which cannot, with any probability, be ascribed to an earlier period than that immediately preceding the exile. After a highly wrought poetic expansion of the original promise to David, the writer proceeds to draw the sad contrast between this, and the existing condition of David's house. "But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground," etc.<sup>1</sup>

The general principle of solution for this difficulty has already been indicated. Although God, for the iniquity of David's children, *withdrew* from them *the exercise* of the royal prerogative, he never *transferred* it to another family, but *reserved* it for the promised Messiah, who was to be of the house and lineage of David. With the original promise God had connected a threatening: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."<sup>2</sup> The nature and extent of the chastisement were left undefined. It might be carried to any degree of severity not inconsistent with the limiting clause: "But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee."<sup>3</sup> It is not necessary to assume that either David himself, to whom the promise was made, or the succeeding prophets before the captivity who referred to it, understood the exact limitation of the annexed threatening. That was one of the "secret things" reserved for a future providential development. It was, however, entirely reasonable to suppose that the chastisement of a line of kings might involve their actual exclusion from the throne for an indefinite period of time, and the subjection of their kingdom to the yoke of a foreign conqueror. When Manasseh was bound in fetters and carried to Babylon,<sup>4</sup> no one would think of calling this a violation of the Divine promise to David. All would see that it was but the fulfilment of the annexed threatening. But if an individual successor of David might be deprived of the exercise of kingly power, why not the line of succession, for such a period as God should determine, provided only that the throne was made sure, in the final issue, to David's house? In this wide and general sense is the promise interpreted in the hundred and thirty-second Psalm. "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy

<sup>1</sup> Vs. 38—45.    <sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 7: 14.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. 7: 15.    <sup>4</sup> 2 Chron. 33: 11.

body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them; their children also shall sit upon the throne forevermore."<sup>1</sup> In the promise which is several times repeated in the Old Testament: "that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem,"<sup>2</sup> the main idea is, that God will not finally alienate from the house of David the throne of Israel by giving it to another family. This is manifest from the connection in which the words originally occur: "Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his [Solomon's] hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee [Jeroboam], even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light (Heb. נֹרָא, *lamp*, i. e. *offspring*, to make his house visible, as it were, and keep it in view) always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen to put my name there."<sup>3</sup>

And if we turn to the passage of Jeremiah already referred to, we shall find that the prophet's language, strong as it is, assumes, nevertheless, the *suspension* of the kingly power in David's family, and the captivity of the nation as events just at hand. It was uttered near the close of Zedekiah's reign, while the king of Babylon's army was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet himself was shut up in the court of the prison which was in the king's house.<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah had prophesied that the Chaldeans should prevail against Judah, and carry both king and people into captivity; and he had himself several years before fixed the period of this captivity at seventy years.<sup>5</sup> We cannot, in the face of this explicit prophecy, interpret the language of Jeremiah to mean that there shall be an uninterrupted succession of kings of David's line exercising royal power in Jerusalem. An examination of the context shows that he has reference to the preservation of David's family during the coming calamities, and its future restoration to the kingly office *in the person of the Messiah*. He first predicts the restoration of Judah and Israel to their own land after their captivity,<sup>6</sup> and then adds: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good

<sup>1</sup> Vs. 11, 12.<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 11: 36. 15: 4. 2 Kings 8: 19. Ps. 132: 17.<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 11: 34—36.<sup>4</sup> Jer. 32: 1, 2, compared with 83: 1.<sup>5</sup> Jer. 25: 11, 12.<sup>6</sup> Jer 33: 6—13.

thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness."<sup>1</sup> The "Branch of righteousness" which is to grow up unto David is undeniably the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> It is under his reign that "Judah shall be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely." Then follow immediately the words already quoted: "For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel,"<sup>3</sup> which is twice repeated with a solemn asseveration: "Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers."<sup>4</sup>

It is not to be supposed that the prophet saw this glorious era in its chronological connections. It was the Messiah's day itself which he saw, and not its location in time. Here the remarks of Barnes on the character and nature of prophecy are altogether in place: "From this view it also follows that the prophecies are usually to be regarded as seen *in space* and not *in time*; or, in other words, the time would not be accurately and definitely marked. They would describe the *order*, or the succession of events; but between them there might be a considerable, and an unmeasured interval of time. In illustration of this we may refer to the idea which has been so often presented already—the idea of a landscape. When one is placed in an advantageous position to view a landscape, he can mark distinctly the *order* of the objects, the succession, the *grouping*. He can tell what objects appear to him to lie *near* each other; or what are apparently in juxtaposition. But all who look at such a landscape know very well that there are objects which the eye can-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 33: 14—16.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Isa. 11: 1. Jer. 23: 5. Zech. 3: 8. The Messiah is a *branch* or *scion* from the stem or stump of David's house, which is here compared to an ancient tree which has gone to decay, and of which only the root is left alive under ground. The very term contains an exact and striking prophecy of the condition of David's royal line at the advent of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. 33: 17.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. 33: 20, 21, 25, 26.

not take in, and which will not be exhibited by any description. For example, hills in the distant view may seem to be *near* each other; one may seem to rise just back of the other, and they may appear to constitute parts of the same mountain range, and yet *between* them there may be wide and fertile vales, the *extent* of which the eye cannot measure, and which the mind may be wholly unable to conjecture. It has no means of measuring the distance, and a description of the whole scene as it *appeared* to the observer would convey no idea of the distance of the intervals. So in the prophecies. Between the events seen in vision there may be long intervals, and the length of those intervals the prophet may have left us no means of determining."<sup>1</sup> The chronological position of such prophecies must, as he afterwards remarks, "be determined either by the actual *admeasurement* as the events occur; or by direct revelation either made to the prophet himself, or to some other prophet." This view of the nature of prophecy derives strong confirmation from a consideration of the *uses* which it subserves in the economy of redemption. These are plainly, not to gratify our curiosity by enabling us to arrange beforehand the events of history in their exact chronological order and extent; but, *first*, before its fulfilment, to sustain and animate God's people in the dark periods of their history by holding out to them the promise of a bright future; *secondly*, after its fulfilment, to strengthen their faith in God's word as a true Divine revelation, and in all its remaining unfulfilled promises.

The sum of the argument, then, under this head, is, that the covenant with David, now under consideration, conferred upon his family an indefeasible title to the throne of Israel for all coming ages, while the annexed threatening left God at liberty to chastise both the nation and its reigning family in any way and to any extent not involving the final rejection of David's house.

We now proceed to consider directly the interior nature of the relation between David's family and the Messiah. The prophecies of the Old Testament declare, as we have seen, that David's throne shall be established forever; the writers of the New Testament affirm that these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for-

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Commentary on Isaiah, § 7, III. 5.

ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."<sup>1</sup> He himself claimed to be the promised king of David's line, when he publicly entered Jerusalem riding upon an ass, allowed the multitudes to spread their garments before him in the way, in recognition of his kingly dignity, and approved of the shouts of the children in the temple, when they said: "Hosanna to the Son of David."<sup>2</sup> In what sense, then, is he the successor of David and his sons upon the throne of Israel?

Here it is necessary, first of all, that we apprehend correctly the nature of both David's kingdom and the "kingdom of heaven" established by Christ. If the views entertained by many concerning the former kingdom, are low and unworthy, there are afloat in the religious world ideas respecting the latter which are more ethereal and romantic than scriptural. The combined effect of these errors is to hide from view the essential unity of these two kingdoms upon which the word of God so strongly insists. What we have to say on this subject will be included in the following propositions:

I. *The primary element of David's kingdom was the visible church of God.* That from the call of Abraham to the advent of Christ, God had a visible church in the world, will hardly be denied by any one. If this did not shine forth from every page of inspiration with such clearness as to need no demonstration, it could be abundantly established from the words of the Apostle Paul: "And this I say, That the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."<sup>3</sup> "It was *added*" to the Abrahamic covenant for a special purpose — "because of transgressions," and for a limited period — "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." It does not then *annul* this covenant and take its place. Rather did the Abrahamic covenant interpenetrate the Mosaic as a life-giving principle. It was its redemptive, and therefore its main, element. Without the principle of faith contained in

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1: 32, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 21: 7—16; and the parallel passages in the other Gospels.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 3: 17—19.

the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic economy would have been, from the beginning, just what the Jews of our Saviour's day made it by eliminating from it this principle — a dead mass of meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances;”<sup>1</sup> “weak and beggarly elements;”<sup>2</sup> a “letter” that “killeth,” and not a “spirit” that “giveth life.”<sup>3</sup> The promise made to Abraham, and conditioned upon faith alone, was, so to speak, the soul of the Israelitish theocracy, while the Mosaic economy was only the body wherewith God was pleased for a limited period to clothe it. The church was embodied in the State, not annihilated by it. And it was embodied, not as an incidental and subordinate element, but as the great central principle, to which everything else was made subservient. The State existed for the church, not the church for the State. It was because the kingdom of David embosomed in itself the divinely appointed institutions of religion — that is to say, the church of God as a visible organization — that God conferred upon it such preëminence above all other kingdoms, and gave to it such “exceeding great and precious promises.” These promises were not made to the Israelites in a merely political capacity, as one of the nations of the earth which God chose to regard with especial favor, but to the Israelites as the true visible church of God.

But David was, as we have seen, the divinely appointed head of Israel. He was, therefore, the earthly head of God's visible church. The wars in which he was engaged with the surrounding nations, who sought to destroy Israel, were wars for the preservation and enlargement of God's earthly kingdom. His victories were victories in behalf of the truth; for, under that economy, the cause of the truth was identified with the cause of the Israelites, the divinely constituted depositaries of God's truth. Here it is necessary that we guard against a narrow and exclusive view of the instrumentalities employed by God in different ages for the perpetuation and enlargement of his cause in the world. These instrumentalities must always be in harmony with the outward form of his kingdom, and must vary as that form varies. By the Mosaic institutions God was pleased to give to his church a national and political, not, as afterwards, an ecumenical and purely spiritual form. Under such a national form, conflicts, sword in hand, with the surrounding nations were altogether in place; and in the direction and issue of these con-

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 9: 10.<sup>2</sup> Gal. 4: 9.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. 3: 6.

flicts God displayed in a glorious manner his supremacy and infinite perfections, for the furtherance of the cause of truth and the instruction of all coming ages.

Let this truth, then, be remembered, that the primary element of David's kingdom was the visible church of God; and that David, being by Divine appointment the earthly head of Israel, was also the earthly head of the church embosomed in Israel.

II. *Christ is, in a true and proper sense, the head and king of the visible church.* It is not probable that any of our readers will deny this proposition; but there is danger that some may etherealize its meaning till it becomes a very tenuous and unsubstantial idea. To avoid error here, it is necessary that we carefully distinguish between the *invisible* reign of Christ in the hearts of his true disciples, and his *visible* kingdom in the world. His invisible kingdom (which is, of necessity, above the sphere of human organizations, and administered by him alone) consists of all who have a vital union with him by faith; his visible kingdom is the entire body of those who are associated together as his professed disciples. That the visible kingdom of Christ has for its main end the advancement of the inward work of grace in men's hearts, is a truth which shines by its own light. Still, it must not be confounded with this work. It is an earthly organization established by God's direction; carried on in its outward form by human instrumentalities; and, as such, liable to errors, abuses and false membership. "One of the most common appellations," says Dr. John M. Mason, "by which she [the church] is there [in the New Testament] distinguished, is, 'the kingdom of heaven.' This can be but one; or else it would not be a kingdom, and the kingdom, but several. And this one must be visible, because its ordinances are administered by visible agency.<sup>1</sup> Nay, it is only *as visible*, that it admits of the exercise of any part of its government by men. The church invisible, which eludes every human sense and faculty, cannot be the object of human functions. And, to preclude mistake in this matter, our Lord informs us that his kingdom, while in the world, shall, like other kingdoms, have false as well as true subjects. That hypocrites shall so intermingle with saints as to render their separation in the present life impossible by any means which will not exterminate both. Such is the manifest import of the parable of the 'tares,' Matt. 13: 24—30."<sup>2</sup> And again:

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 18: 19. 28: 19, 20. John 20: 21—23.

<sup>2</sup> Essays on the Church. No. 1.

"The Scriptures, the Sabbath, the solemn assembly, the sacraments, the ministry; in a word, the whole system of instituted worship, is visible. Now, is it not a most incredible thing, that the church and the ordinances committed to her, should be of opposite natures? Or rather, that the ordinances should have a solid, external existence, and the church to which they are given, no such existence at all! A visible Bible, visible ministry, visible worship, visible sacraments, visible discipline, and no visible church! Nothing but a phantom, a metaphysical idea, as the repository of God's truth and institutions!"<sup>1</sup> And once more, commenting on the words of the Apostle Paul: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," he says: "The question is, what are we to understand by 'the body of Christ?' That it signifies a *whole*, is as plain as that words signify anything. Then, *what* whole? Not the church at Corinth, far less a particular congregation, unless the commission of the apostles, and the use of spiritual gifts, extend no further. Not the church of the elect; for there are no 'schisms' in that body, *as such*. A schism which cannot be perceived is no schism; and the moment you render it perceptible, you are in the visible church." . . . "It can be no other than what we have called the *Visible Church Catholic*."<sup>2</sup>

Over this "Visible Church Catholic" the Lord Jesus reigns in a true and proper sense. That he exercised the prerogatives of her king while he remained on earth is certain. All the ordinances peculiar to the New Testament economy are of his direct appointment. He selected the primitive preachers of the Gospel and endowed them with miraculous powers. Was it then by his ascent to heaven from the Mount of Olives that he vacated the throne? The Scriptural account of his ascension is the very reverse of this. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."<sup>3</sup> In what character did he sit down on the right hand of God, except that of supreme Head of his church, and that he might administer the government of the world for her good? "Who is gone," says the Apostle Peter, "into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him."<sup>4</sup> And again: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the Church*. No. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Mark* 16: 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> *1 Pet.* 3: 22.

Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."<sup>1</sup> Jesus himself, immediately before his ascension, asserted his kingly power over his visible church, and its perpetuation to the end of the world, in the strongest and most explicit language. "And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>2</sup> The original words here rendered, "teach all nations," mean literally, "make disciples of all nations;"<sup>3</sup> and this we know, from the apostolic mode of procedure, included the idea of gathering all nations, so far as they could be brought to receive the Gospel, into the visible church. It was, then, in the work of establishing over all the earth his visible church, through which, as an instrumentality, he carries forward his invisible work of grace in men's hearts, that Christ enjoined upon the apostles (and, by necessary implication, upon all his ministers "even unto the end of the world") that they should teach men to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, and promised his presence with them to the end of time.

We must not suffer our Lord's personal absence from his visible church to obscure the great and glorious truth that he remains, in a true and proper sense, her Head and King. If earthly monarchs, in furthering the interests of their kingdoms, can be personally absent from their dominions for indefinite periods of time, without vacating the throne, much more can the King of kings. He sits on the right hand of God, because that is the most suitable position from which to administer "the kingdom of heaven" with which the Father has solemnly invested him. In the ascension gift of the Holy Spirit, he has made good to the churches the loss of his personal presence. "I will," said he in reference to his departure, "pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."<sup>4</sup> And again: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."<sup>5</sup> In this glorious vicegerent his people have all that they need. They want no

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2: 36.<sup>2</sup> Matt. 28: 18—20.<sup>3</sup> μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.<sup>4</sup> John 14: 16.<sup>5</sup> John 16: 12, 13.

earthly head to be lord over their faith, and he has appointed no such head. It was the Comforter whom he promised to guide them into all the truth, not some "sovereign pontiff," to thrust upon them his pretended infallible decisions.

III. *The church of the Old Testament is identical with that of the New.* Here we might adduce the unanswerable argument of the author whose words have been already quoted, that there are numerous promises made to the *Jewish* church, in her public capacity, which can be fulfilled only to the *Christian* church, such as the following: "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising — the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."<sup>1</sup> But we prefer to exhibit the direct proof from the words of inspiration.

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, introduces an extended argument to show that the Abrahamic covenant was not annulled by the introduction of the Mosaic Law; but is, on the contrary, the covenant under which all believers are now the seed of Abraham, and heirs to the promise: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," which promise is fulfilled in Christ.

*First*; the Mosaic law did not annul the covenant made with Abraham. "And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ," — Christ being the substance of the blessings which it promised — "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."<sup>2</sup> The promise made to Abraham, then, was standing in the Apostle's day, and it is standing now.

*Secondly*; the covenant made with Abraham is that under which all believers are now the seed of Abraham, and heirs to the promise: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." "Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."<sup>3</sup>

*Thirdly*; the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 60: 3, 5; quoted in Essay 1.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 3: 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 3: 7—9.

a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."<sup>1</sup> And again: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>2</sup>

This reasoning is absolutely conclusive for the unity of the church in all ages. It was in and through the covenant made with Abraham that God established his visible church in the world. The covenant remaining unchanged, the church, of which the covenant is the soul and centre, remains unchanged also. The outward rite of circumcision was not essential to the covenant. That was added several years afterwards, as something suitable, indeed, but not essential. Much less was the livery of the Mosaic law essential, which was superadded, after the lapse of more than four hundred years. Of these additions, the former, the rite of circumcision, might be changed, and the latter, the Mosaic law, abrogated, without affecting the covenant itself; for, beyond contradiction, what has been added to a covenant already valid, may be changed or taken away at the pleasure of the original authority, without injury to its validity.

But the same Apostle introduces another chain of argumentation, the entire force of which rests upon the assumption of the unity of the church under the Old and New Testaments. He compares the Jewish church to an olive-tree, from which the unbelieving Jews are broken off, and into which the believing Gentiles are grafted. "And if some of the branches," he says, "be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; boast not thyself against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee."<sup>3</sup> "Thou," the Gentile, "bearest not the root, but the root thee." Then the good old olive-tree which God planted in Abraham's day, was not dug up by the roots at Christ's advent, that it might give place to a new olive-tree, but the believing Gentiles were grafted into it; and thus was fulfilled the original promise to Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." From Abraham to the trump of the archangel there is one olive-tree, of which Christ is the root, and all believers are its branches.

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3: 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 3: 29.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 11: 17, 18.

IV. *Christ is, in a true and proper sense, the successor of David on the throne of Israel.* If we abide by the words of the angel Gabriel: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," the question is settled without further discussion. But we have seen that the kingdom of which David was the earthly head, is for substance the same as that over which Christ reigns at the right hand of God. Had God's church been only an incidental and subordinate appendage to David's kingdom, then, indeed, would the case have been different. But we have seen that the visible church was its primary element. It was, therefore, the element from which it took its character as a peculiar kingdom; the element in and through which alone could be fulfilled the promise: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever."

It is no valid objection to this view that Christ is the head of the visible church in a higher sense than was David. Christ is David's "*root*" and "*Lord*," by whom "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible." He is "before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preëminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."<sup>1</sup> As such he is "the head over all things to the church, which is his body,"<sup>2</sup> in a high and incommunicable sense. But this is not inconsistent with Christ's being also, as the same Scriptures teach, the "*offspring*" and "*son*" of David, and, as such, his successor, in a true and proper sense, on the throne of Israel. As the lower sense does not exclude the higher, so neither does the higher, the lower. There is a common idea belonging to the office of both David and Christ. Each was, by Divine appointment, constituted the head of his visible church, the former with limited powers and prerogatives, such as are competent to a mere man; the latter with a plenary investiture of "all power in heaven and in earth," for which his Divine nature qualified him.

Nor is it any valid objection to this view that Christ administers his kingdom under another outward form. Let us look at the nature and extent of this change.

The initiatory rite of admission to the church was, under

<sup>1</sup> Col. 1: 15—19.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 1: 22, 23.

David, circumcision; under Christ, it is baptism. But circumcision was not an essential part of the original covenant with Abraham, for it was added to the covenant several years after its original establishment. It is manifest that what could be added to the covenant could also be taken away or changed, without affecting its validity. We hold, as a truth admitting of clear demonstration, that the rite of baptism has, by Divine appointment, taken the place of circumcision.

Again; Christ has set aside the whole Mosaic ritual, and what was closely interwoven with this, the national character of the church, to make room for an ecumenical and more spiritual form. But the Mosaic ritual was, as we have seen, superadded at a later date for special and temporary ends, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ, the promised seed, having come, its abolition followed as a matter of course. And with regard to the ecumenical form which Christ has given to his church — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," — that was one of the original provisions of the Abrahamic covenant. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," — this is the original broad foundation of God's church. Did "the kingdom of heaven," as administered by Christ, embrace anything less than the whole world, it would not rest on the primitive platform.

Finally; Christ administers his government from a heavenly, and not from an earthly, throne. But this change naturally connects itself, as we have seen, with his Divine nature. He is not only the son of David, but also, in a high and incommunicable sense, the Son of God; and, as such, it is suitable that his throne should be in heaven at the right hand of his Father.

The changes that have been enumerated respect only the outward form of "the kingdom of heaven," not its inward substance. Its great foundation principles remain the same through all generations, and in them lies its unity under the Old and New Testament. Jesus Christ has, in a true and proper sense, received "the throne of his father David," for he has received that "kingdom of heaven" of which David was, by Divine appointment, the visible earthly head.

We are now in a right position to understand and interpret that large section of the Messianic prophecies which is based on

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3: 19.

the original covenant with David's family that has been under consideration. This includes, among other Psalms, the second and seventy-second; the eleventh chapter of Isaiah; the thirtieth chapter of Jeremiah with the two following; the thirty-fourth, thirty-sixth, and thirty-seventh chapters of Ezekiel; and many other passages scattered throughout both the larger and the smaller prophets, which it is not necessary here to enumerate. The fundamental idea in all these prophecies is the perpetuity of David's kingdom, and its final ascendancy over all the earth. The principal point of difference, when we compare them among themselves, is that some of them, as the two Psalms above named, take no notice of the intervening depression of David's family, while, in others this is a very prominent feature of the portraiture. This is to be explained from the different positions which these passages hold in the chain of Messianic prophecy. The second Psalm, for example, was written while the theocracy was in the zenith of its glory, assaulted by powerful foes, yet always prevailing against them. That the spirit of prophecy should here have brought to view the future depression of David's kingdom, would have been altogether unnatural and out of place. He exhibits only its Divinely sustained and imperishable vigor. It is a kingdom that must triumph over all assaults, because God has established it, and given to its Divinely constituted head, the family of David, the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.

But there are other Messianic prophecies of the class now under consideration, such as the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, which were written during the wane of the Jewish power; and these contain, as is natural, intimations of a further depression; a hewing down, so to speak, of David's royal tree, out of whose root shall arise, at a future day, the promised Messiah.

Others, again, were written at the beginning of the Babylonish captivity, or under the full pressure of its calamities, when the children of David, to whom God had confirmed the kingdom forever, had been violently thrust from the throne of their ancestors, with no prospect of speedy restoration. Such prophecies always abound with promises of a future restoration of David's throne in the person of the Messiah.

If, now, we leave out of view the primary element of David's kingdom, and that which alone gave to it the high prerogative of perpetuity and universal dominion, the visible church of

God embodied in it, we shall be under the necessity of adopting, in the interpretation of prophecies of this class, one of the two following methods.

*First*, we may say that some parts of them refer wholly to Christ, and others wholly to David and his family, all real connection between David's kingdom and that of Christ being excluded. If we attempt to carry this principle through the entire web of these Messianic prophecies, assigning some parts to Christ alone, and others to David alone (since it is clearer than daylight that all which they contain cannot be applied to Christ himself), we shall soon find ourselves involved in a labyrinth of difficulties from which no Ariadne's thread of legitimate exegesis can extricate us. Our only expedient will be to break through its walls by main force in defiance of all laws of interpretation.

*Secondly*, we may say that they refer to David and his kingdom *only as typical* of Christ, the real reference being to Christ alone. But if David's kingdom did not include in itself the visible church of God as its main element, the element from which it received its distinctive character, then it has perished utterly and forever. The Messiah's kingdom is not the restoration and enlargement of David's kingdom so often promised in these prophecies; but it is wholly another kingdom. If we attempt to carry this principle through the Messianic prophecies which are based on the original covenant with David and his family, we shall find ourselves again at war with their plainest declarations concerning the relation of David's kingdom to that of the Messiah. The promise is not: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be a *type* of a kingdom that shall be established forever;" but: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever."

But as soon as we admit the essential identity of David's kingdom with that of Christ, all becomes plain and natural. The kingdom over which David presides is the true kingdom of God; and, for this reason, it shall be established forever, with David's offspring on the throne. The magnificent promises made to David concerning his house, have respect to his entire royal line from Solomon to Christ, taken as a whole, not to Solomon alone, or to Solomon and his successors on the earthly throne of Israel; and they are promises which have for their ground the appointment of David's family to the headship of the visible church.

In interpreting the promise of God to David by Nathan, and the numerous subsequent prophecies that are based upon it, we must be careful to avoid the two opposite extremes of excluding the descendants of David who succeeded him on the earthly throne, and of limiting our view to them. The promise: "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name," manifestly refers to Solomon; the words which immediately follow: "And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever," show that the reference is not to Solomon in his simple personality, but to Solomon as the head, after David, of a royal line that is to be perpetuated forever. In one word, it is to the *headship* of the visible church that these promises are made; and since this headship includes a line of earthly kings (exiled indeed for a period from the throne, as a chastisement for its sins, but not finally rejected), and terminating in Christ the King of kings, it follows that a series of prophecies which has respect to the history and development of the church under the entire line, the earthly heads as well as the heavenly Head in whom David's line terminates, must naturally contain expressions which apply:

*First*, to the earthly kings alone, such as the following: "If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men."<sup>1</sup> For without these the picture could not be complete. The conduct of the earthly heads has a true bearing on the history of God's dealings with his people, and ought, therefore, to be brought into view.

*Secondly*, to Christ alone, since his office infinitely transcends that of any of his earthly predecessors, and he must have attributes and perform works which cannot be ascribed to them in any sense. As an example we may take the following words of Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom; to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 7: 14.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 9: 6, 7.

*Thirdly*, to the earthly kings in a lower, and to Christ in a higher sense; since there is a common idea which belongs to the office of both, and therefore truly includes both. Here belongs the declaration: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son."<sup>1</sup> The prerogative of sonship belonged to the kings of David's line in so far as they were, by a special act of God's sovereignty, taken into a peculiar relation to himself, and invested with an indefeasible title to the headship of his visible church. "If children, then heirs," so the Apostle reasons; and his argument applies alike to the believer's title to heaven, and to the title of David's children to the throne of Israel. But, over and above all this, Christ, the last heir of David, in whom his kingdom is perpetuated forever, is the Son of God in a high and incommunicable sense; and, in the same high and incommunicable sense, is he the "heir of all things."<sup>2</sup>

And here it is pertinent to show in what sense David and his successors on the earthly throne constituted a true type of Christ. They were such both in their *headship*, and their *sonship*. It belongs to the nature of a type that it shadow forth something higher than itself.<sup>3</sup> It was the true kingdom of God, the church in her visible organized form, over which they reigned, and to the headship of which they had, as the earthly sons of God, an inalienable title. But neither in their headship could they approach to the infinite fulness of Christ, whom God hath given to be "the head over all things to the church;" nor in their sonship could they do anything more than represent in a typical way the sonship of him who dwelt from eternity in the bosom of the Father. Just as the priesthood of Melchisedek and that of Aaron and his sons typified the higher priesthood of Christ, so did the headship and sonship of David's royal line typify the headship and sonship of him who was both the Root and Offspring, both the Lord and the Son of David. But here there is a very noticeable difference which must be carefully kept in mind. Christ was not the *successor* of either Melchisedek or Aaron in the priestly office. That he was not the successor of Melchisedek is manifest; for a principal point of agreement between Melchisedek and Christ lay in the fact that the former

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 7: 14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 1: 2.

<sup>3</sup> It is in this sense that the law of Moses, especially the ritual part of it, is called "a shadow of good things to come." Heb. 10: 1.

was "without descent,"<sup>1</sup> that is, as Robinson well expresses it, "a priest not by right of sacerdotal descent, but by the grace of God." That he was not the successor of Aaron is yet plainer; because he was "after the order of Melchisedek," and not "after the order of Aaron;" and one "whose descent is not counted" from Aaron.<sup>2</sup> The priesthood of Melchisedek and that of Aaron, having accomplished their appointed end, that of prefiguring Christ in his priestly office, passed away forever.

But in his kingly office Christ is not "without descent;" but is "of the house and lineage of David;" and the throne which he occupies is "the throne of his father David." The kingdom over which David reigned, since it embodied in itself the true visible church of God, was not so much a *type* of the kingdom of Christ as that kingdom itself, although in a less spiritual form. But David's *presidency* over that kingdom, since it could only shadow forth the fulness of Christ's kingly office, was truly typical of that office. So also was the relation of sonship which he and his successors on the earthly throne held to God, typical of the high and incommunicable relation which Christ holds to the Father as his only begotten Son. Christ is, therefore, in his kingly office, both the great Antitype of David, and also his true lineal successor. David, again (and in David his earthly successors who reigned on Mount Zion), is, as the divinely constituted earthly head of the visible church, both the type of Christ, and his true predecessor; the kingdom of grace, which was, as has been shown, the very substance of David's kingdom, being, from Abraham to the archangel's trump, one and indivisible.

This view of the relation of David's family to the Messiah renders the interpretation of those prophecies which are based on the original promise to David very plain and simple. We are not under the necessity of anxiously inquiring what belongs to David's kingdom and what to Christ's, as if the two kingdoms were distinct from each other; or as if, at most, the kingdom of David were only a shadowy *type* of the Messiah's kingdom. It is of one and the same kingdom, unchanged in its inward essence, under all changes of outward form, invincible in its nature, and everlasting in its duration, of which these prophecies speak. What parts of them apply exclusively to its earthly rulers and

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *ἀγενεαλόγητος*, without genealogy; not so much one whose genealogy is unknown, as one whose genealogy is not taken into account.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews, seventh chapter, *passim*.

its temporary national form, and what to its Divine Head and its final ecumenical form, can be, in general, determined without difficulty from a consideration of the subject-matter. But the main body of them consider this kingdom in its imperishable, invincible nature and high prerogative, as one established and sustained by the power of God, and destined successively to encounter and overcome every form of opposition from without and corruption from within; till, under the headship of the Messiah, it shall attain to universal dominion over all nations, and fill the earth with knowledge, holiness and happiness. Here nice distinctions between David and Christ are entirely out of place. It is to the kingdom of David, in so far as it contains in itself the visible church, of which Christ is, from the beginning to the end of time, the central life-giving power, that the promises are made. David's family are, by God's appointment, constituted the earthly rulers of this church. As such, they are, *so long as they remain true to their office*, acting in her behalf; all their victories over the surrounding hostile nations are her victories; and, since she is invincible, they are invincible also.

Their triumphs are not only earnest and pledges of her final triumph over all the earth, but are themselves a part of that triumph. The words of God: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion,"<sup>1</sup> although they have their highest fulfilment in Christ, have yet a true application to them as Christ's predecessors on the throne of David, and placed, by Divine appointment, at the head of a kingdom which must stand firm against all the assaults of its enemies, and endure to the end of time. But, *if they prove false to their high office*, and turn the power wherewith God has entrusted them for the welfare of his church against her, he will violently thrust them down from their kingly dignity; but will preserve the throne of their father David for David's last and great successor, in whom every promise made to David's house shall find a perfect fulfilment.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 2: 6.