

## PART I

# PREFATORY AND INTRODUCTORY

*“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in 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” — (Matt. 28:18-20. Common English Version.)*

Or more literally thus: *“And Jesus came near and spoke to them saying: All authority is given to me in heaven and on the 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 Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age.”*

These are the words of Jesus to His eleven Apostles a short time before His ascension to the throne of the universe. He had, ere this, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; He had been buried; He had risen from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures; He had on sundry occasions appeared to some or to all of His Apostles, and given them many infallible proofs of his resurrection and personal identity; and now, on a mountain in Galilee, and in the presence of about five hundred of His disciples (1 Cor. 15:6), He appeared to them again, in order to ordain and appoint them as His ambassadors to the nations; or, as Mark says, to send them out to “preach the Gospel to every creature.”

How very appropriate, then, is the preface that is here given to this Commission! “*All authority,*”<sup>1</sup> says Christ, “*is given to me in heaven and on the earth.*” These men were now about to engage in a most difficult work in a work that was fraught with consequences of the very highest importance to their entire race. They were about to go forth as the Apostles of a religion on which were suspended the destinies of mankind; a religion that was opposed to all the other religions of the world, to much of the literature, philosophy, politics, manners, and customs of the world; and which would, therefore, of necessity arouse against them the violent opposition of all the kingdoms, principalities, powers, and authorities of the whole earth. (See Matt. 10:21, 22, 31-36, etc.)

But to meet and overcome such opposition, they had no power in and of themselves. They were all men of the lower ranks and walks of life: men of but ordinary talents; of but little learning, wealth, or means of any kind. And hence to go forth on such a mission, with so great a disparity of power and influence, would have been madness and folly in the extreme.

Our Saviour knew this perfectly; and He had therefore provided for them all the help that was necessary. The same infinite wisdom that had in the beginning weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, had now fully solved the great problem of man’s redemption; and had also now fully provided all that was really necessary, in order to make the mission of the Cross a grand, and glorious, and final success. This is all implied and guaranteed in the preface and sequel of this extraordinary Commission “*All authority is given to me in heaven and on the 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 Spirit teaching them to observe all things whatever I have

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<sup>1</sup> The word *exousia* means properly *authority*. Christ, as the eternal Logos, had always possessed infinite power (*dunamis*); though the supreme authority had hitherto been exercised by the Father. But even this is now given to the Son for a limited time, and for a specific purpose.

commanded you: *and, lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age.*”

This was enough. The Apostles needed nothing more; they desired nothing more. They now went to Jerusalem; waited there a few days for the promised aid of the Holy Spirit; and as soon as it was received, and they were endowed with the necessary power from on high, they commenced their work of faith and labors of love, in the midst of the greatest enemies of the Cross. But whether they were in Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, or the uttermost parts of the earth, they did and said all in the name of the Lord Jesus. They felt that *their* agency was comparatively but as nothing. They knew that the treasure had been put into earthen vessels, in order that the excellency of the power might appear to be of God (2 Cor. 4:7). And hence they never arrogated any honor to themselves; but in all their words, and in all their deeds, the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. They said to kings and princes, just as they said to the lowest and humblest peasants of their realms, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry with you, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

This will be made plain and obvious to all, by merely citing a few brief extracts from their recorded discourses. On the ever-memorable day of Pentecost, when Peter stood up with the eleven before the assembled thousands, from nearly all parts of the civilized world, he said to them in the conclusion of his discourse: “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, HE *hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear*. For David is not ascended into the heavens but he saith himself, Jehovah said to my Lord, *Sit on my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool*. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both LORD and CHRIST.”

Now, when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Then Peter said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you *in the name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

In like manner he also testified to the vast multitude that had run together to witness the marvelous cure of the healed cripple, recorded in the third chapter of Acts. When Peter saw the wondering crowd he said to them, “Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.* And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and turn, in order that your sins may be blotted out, and that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. And He will send Jesus Christ, who before was preached to you; whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; *him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul who will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.* Yea,

and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days.”—(Acts 3:12-24.)

On the next day, when Peter and John were required to make their defence before the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas, the high-priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest—Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them all: “Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, *that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which has become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*”—(Acts 4:8-12.)

Many other examples and illustrations might be given; but these are sufficient. They indicate very clearly that Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, risen, and glorified, was the burden of all the Apostles' preaching. He is everywhere represented by them as the living, reigning, and Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth but, at the same time, as being ever ready to receive and save to the uttermost all who will come unto God by Him.

The result was grand and glorious beyond all description. The word of the Lord increased and prevailed mightily. Everywhere, from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Samaria to Rome, and from Rome to the ends of the earth, the Gospel was demonstrated to be the power of God for salvation to every believer.

And just so it would have ever been, had the professed heralds of the Cross but continued to preach Jesus Christ, and Him crucified and glorified as the power of God and the wisdom of

God. Never since the fall of man did Satan obtain so great a triumph over the cause of truth and righteousness, as when he persuaded the Church to substitute tradition for revelation, philosophy for inspiration, and the authority of priests, popes, and councils, for the authority of Christ and of His Apostles. This is all in direct violation of the constitution and laws of the kingdom of heaven. The decree of God is, that Christ shall reign absolutely over the Church in His own proper person, and through the agency of His Apostles, as long as time endures.

The following passages will, I hope, make this plain and obvious to all. In Isaiah 9:6, 7, for instance, the prophet, under the influence of plenary inspiration, thus speaks of the character, extent, and duration of the Messiah's reign. "Unto us," says he, "a child is born; unto us a son is given; and his name shall be called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE FATHER OF THE EVERLASTING AGE, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. *Upon the throne of David (he shall sit), and over his kingdom (he shall rule), to order it and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever,*"<sup>2</sup> that is, as long as time shall last. His kingdom will, in this sense, be an everlasting

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word *olam* and the Greek *aion*, variously rendered *forever*, *everlasting*, *eternal*, etc., are both *relative terms*; and as such they may be applied to any age or to any period. Thus, for example, in Exodus 21:6, the word *olam* is applied to a period of service; and it simply means that the servant should serve his master as long as he lived. In Exodus 40:15, it is used to describe the duration of the Levitical priesthood; and it means here that this priesthood would last throughout the entire Jewish age; or as long as the old covenant would be of binding obligation. In Genesis 49:26, it is applied to the hills; and in this case it comprehends all future time. This is also evidently its meaning in Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 2:44, etc.

From such premises, some have hastily inferred that these words *olam*, *aion*, *everlasting*, etc., always refer to a limited period; and that they never mean duration without end. But be it carefully observed, *that these terms, though relative, are always perfectly exhaustive of the period or cycle to which they are applied.* If they refer simply to the period of a man's life, they exhaust it; if to future time, they exhaust it; and if to eternity, they in like manner also exhaust it. And hence, when Christ says, in Matt. 25:46, "These shall go away into everlasting (*aionion*) punishment, but the righteous into everlasting (*aionion*) life," He means, beyond all doubt, life and punishment without end. Eternity has no such periods as time has; at least none such are revealed to us. And hence the word *aionion* in Matt. 25:46, and all other similar cases, has no limitations. It is exhaustive of eternity.

kingdom, and He will have no successors in office.—(Daniel 2:44.)

Still more definite, if possible, is the testimony of the Apostle Paul. In his first letter to the Corinthians, for example, while speaking of the triumphs of Christ over sin and death, he says: “*Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed.* For he (God) hath put all enemies under his (Christ’s) feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”—(1 Cor. 15:24-28.)

These passages, then, settle very clearly and definitely the question as to the extent and duration of Christ’s authority. And the following testimony of Matthew is equally conclusive touching the authority and administration of His Apostles. “When Peter asked Christ what should be the special honors, rights, and privileges of himself and his eleven apostolic colleagues, He said to them, “Verily I say to you that ye who have followed me (during the period of my earthly ministry), *in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*”— (Matt. 19:28.)

From this passage we may learn—

1. *That the period of the regeneration here spoken of is simply the period of Christ’s mediatorial reign, extending from the day of Pentecost,*

A. D. 34,<sup>3</sup> to the end of the day of judgment, when Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. It is very appropriately and significantly called the regeneration, because that during this period all the saints will be regenerated, both spiritually and physically, and the very earth itself will be renovated by fire, and prepared for the descent of the New Jerusalem.—(Rev. 21:1-27. See also Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:18; 2 Peter 3:13, etc.)

2. *That the twelve tribes of Israel are here put symbolically for the Church of Christ.* This is in perfect harmony with the figurative style and typical nomenclature of the Bible. At an early period of the world's history, Abraham was, by the appointment of God, made the father of two families: the one according to the flesh, and the other according to the spirit. The former was composed of all the natural descendants of Abraham; the latter, of all who are of the faith of Abraham. Out of the former were elected the twelve tribes of Israel according to the flesh. These were placed under the Old, or Sinaitic Covenant, and constituted the Church of the Mosaic economy (Acts 7:38). Of the latter is composed the Church of Christ under the laws and ordinances of the New Covenant. These two Churches stood to each other in the relation of type and antitype, and hence it is that the names, titles, and attributes of the former are often by analogy given to the latter. Thus it is, for instance, that Christians are called *Jews* (Rom. 2:28, 29); *the seed of Abraham* (Rom. 4:11, 13, 16); *Israelites* (Rom. 9:6, and Gal. 6:16); *the circumcision* (Phil. 3:3). And thus it is also that the Church of Christ is called "*the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*" in the passage under consideration.

If any further evidence of this is needed, it may be found in the scope and history of the New Economy, under which "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bar-

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<sup>3</sup> I here use A. D. (*Anno Domini*) not in its *technical* but in its *proper sense*, to denote the year of Christ's coronation, reckoned from the real epoch of His birth. This, the reader is aware, occurred about four years previous to the epoch from which Dionysius the Small reckoned in his system of chronology.

barian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). Nothing could, therefore, be further from Christ’s purpose and intention than to intimate, either here or elsewhere, that, during His mediatorial reign, His Apostles would sustain any peculiar relation to the Jews, or Israelites, according to the flesh. His order to them was simply this: “Go and make disciples of all the nations; baptize the converts, and then teach them to walk blamelessly in all the laws and ordinances of the New Covenant.” And, for their encouragement in all their works of faith and labors of love, He simply added that He himself would be with them even to the end of the world.

3. *That the authority of the Apostles over the Church of Christ is still plenary and absolute.* This is very clearly and forcibly indicated by their sitting on twelve<sup>4</sup> thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel during the entire period of the regeneration. It is true that in one sense the Apostles are now dead, as are also all their contemporaries. But in another sense they still live, and will continue to live, until at least the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father. By the laws and ordinances which they have given to the Church, they still judge her, and will also finally judge her at the last day (John 12:48). And hence it follows that whatever is now done according to the teaching of the Apostles, is also now done by the authority of Christ. Whatever the Church now so binds on earth, is bound also in heaven; and whatever the Church looses according to this rule, is loosed also in heaven (Matt. 28:18).

From all these premises, then, it is evident that the proper order of the Church of Christ is really the same now that it was in the days of the Apostles. No change in any of her laws, ordinances, rights, privileges, and obligations, has ever been made by

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<sup>4</sup> The number of the Apostles, including Matthias and Paul, was thirteen; and so also there were really *thirteen* tribes of the children of Israel. But, nevertheless, the number *twelve* was commonly used in a sort of technical or appropriated sense, to denote all the tribes of Israel. And just so the same number seems to be here used to designate all the Apostles of Christ. Or it may be that, as Paul was born out of due time, he is not included in this remark.

divine authority. Christ, as her ever-living head, is still invested with supreme authority, and is just as ready to cooperate with His people now as He was eighteen hundred years ago. He still says, not only to the Apostles, and to the Church collectively, but also to every disciple who is walking according to the apostolic rule, “*Lo, I am with you always.*”—(See John 14:23, and Rev. 3:20.)

The authority of the Apostles is also the same, and their work is nearly the same. If they were here to-day in their own proper persons, they would but repeat what they did and said eighteen hundred years ago. They would not add one iota to what is recorded by their authority in the Holy Scriptures; nor would they in any wise change, modify, or abrogate a single precept which they have left on record. As law-givers, their work is finished, and they now live in their writings merely to judge the people, and to execute the will of God through the agency and instrumentality of the Church. To her is now committed, under their instructions, the work of this Commission, She has now but to go, as did the Apostles, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things which the Apostles have commanded; and then Christ will, according to His promise, be with her all the days, even to the end of the age.

But, in order that she may do this successfully, she must herself first fully understand the terms of this Commission as they were understood by the Apostles, and as they have been defined by their labors. But to understand all this aright will, of course, require a careful analysis of the Commission itself, and a critical discussion of all its elements in the light of all the acts and teachings of the Apostles. To this investigation I therefore respectfully invite the attention of the reader in the course of the following chapters.

This is a sample of the material contained in  
*The Great Commission of Jesus Christ to His Twelve  
Apostles: Briefly Defined and Illustrated*  
by Robert Milligan

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