

## II. On the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ

Has there ever been an RP student not asked “What are the distinctives of the RP Church?” It’s one of the few questions during the entire process that the student can prepare for with full certainty that it will be asked. And said student dare not forget the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ in his response! Sure, the RPCNA is better known today as “that Psalm singing church,” but historically, the Covenanters found unity with other Reformed bodies on issues of worship, secret societies, etc. Where the RPs separated from most of the rest of the churches was on the issue of the Mediatorial Kingship and its application to political government.

Christ Jesus is King of Kings, reigning over church and state, and all of creation. And civil leaders are called to honor and acknowledge Him. Was this not the very essence of the National Covenant, Solemn League and Covenant, the reason the Covenanters fought and died, were slaughtered in the killing times, and rejected the Glorious Revolution? Surely this was the key point of division between the Covenanters and the Seceders in Scotland. And coming to America, issues of Christ and State prevented our RP forefathers from joining the merger to create the ARP. And while the other Reformed churches continued to sing psalms, why were the Covenanters known as the folks who would not vote or hold government jobs in America? It was the doctrine of the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ and the practice of political dissent.

In 1967, political dissent was abandoned. Two years later, the Covenanter church came to an end, and a new denomination was formed with the union of the Covenanters and Seceders. It’s been said that the Seceders kept their theology, while the Covenanters kept their name. “That the name and titles of the new denomination will be those now in use by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of N. A.” (1968, p. 38). But did we lose our identity? Immediately before calling for the establishment of the Committee on Understanding the Times, Priorities and Administration writes, “At the heart, it may well be that we have not identified clearly enough the particular purpose of the denomination” (1989, p. 87). Our purpose, our reason for independent existence, used to be the vigorous defense of Christ’s Kingship over the nations.

In place of political dissent, we presently have a doctrine of cautious participation in the affairs of non-confessing civil government. The present system certainly eliminated some of the difficult requirements of RP membership. Yet it is unclear if there was a positive impact on the health of the church after 1967. The next 20 years saw substantial decline: 5,644 total members in 1967, 5,111 in 1987 (-10%), while the population of the USA saw a 20% increase. This led to the establishment of the Committee on Priorities and Administration, tasked with turning things around. More, it is difficult to connect with a heritage of saints who fought, died, and suffered for a doctrine which has since been dismissed.

But, issues of the '67 decision aside, your committee has growing concern with adherence to our present system of applying the Mediatorial Kingship to the state, specifically the United States. Take, for example, the 2012 presidential election. On the one hand, RP elders were publicly blogging about the acceptability of voting for the lesser of two evils. Meanwhile several of our elders actively campaigned for the Mormon Romney. (Check out Mr. Romney's Facebook page, and see how many of your friended elders "liked" him.) Is this what the previous generation intended when formulating our current position and Testimony? Your committee is not seeking to accuse the above elders or suggest that this is contrary to the law and order of the church. We merely raise the question.

Even from the pews, does a Biblical perspective on civil government reign? We fear Tea Party talking points are more likely to be found on the lips of many of our members instead of a robust, reformed, theology of the State.

Further, with the "internationalization" of the RP Synod, we wonder if the Testimony is too specifically tied in its application to the USA. At least one of our presbyteries has found it necessary to eliminate one of our political statements from its adopted Testimony. And we wonder if our current position statements adequately translate the Mediatorial Kingship position into significantly different nations and cultures, such as Venezuela or India.

More, in light of the cultural shift well underway in the USA, we must wrestle again with the question of the moral status of the RPCNA's home base. Our ancestors looked upon slavery and abortion and wondered about our "One Nation Under God." Is it not high time to look at abortion and contraceptives in the Affordable Care Act, the rise of gay marriage, and even the epidemic of sexual assault within the US military, as potential indicators that the American government may not be the godly—or even morally neutral nation—we wish it were?

We therefore call for the establishment of a study committee to consider the application of the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ within today's RPCNA. Because of the international membership of RPCNA presbyteries, we believe the focus should be on general principles, which the presbyteries within specific nations could then use to formulate more detailed application. (A synod declaration should apply to both Atlantic and Japan Presbyteries, but Japan's application need not apply to Atlantic.) Further, we suggest that said committee should be composed of elders representing the diversity of nations with the RPCNA. Thus,

### **Recommendation #2:**

That Synod establish a study committee to consider the Biblical basis of the doctrine of the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ, and present principles for application in the context of today's RPCNA. This committee is to be composed of seven men, at least three of whom are serving congregations outside of the United States.