



The Kingdom Perspective

King on the Limit of Human Authority

Hello! This is Pastor Don of Christ Redeemer Church. Welcome to The Kingdom Perspective!

Perhaps no more famous articulation of the limits of human government in recent memory than that of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail”, he responded to mainline White clergy who had criticized his tactics in fighting the “unjust laws” of the Jim Crow South.

In it, he reasons from the theology of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Paul and Jesus Himself. A human law and the application of that human law are only valid to the degree that they square with the law of God. Why? Because human law is only legitimate within the bounds given to it by divine law. Human authority has its limits.

Remember, Jesus told the corrupt Pontius Pilate: “You would have authority...at all unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). St. Paul says: “For there is no authority except from God” (Romans 13:1). Therefore, all who wield authority have a solemn responsibility before Almighty God to do so, not as they please, but as justice and mercy would require.

Moreover, all matters of the law must be properly weighted according to the balance given them in the law of God. To do otherwise is to misuse the law and so to operate in some form of lawlessness. As Jesus put it, the “weightier matters of the law” are “justice, mercy and faithfulness” (Matthew 23:23), and as the prophet Micah (6:8) admonished:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Do you walk humbly with your God? Do you exercise your rights and powers, not merely for yourself, but for the glory of God and the good of your neighbor?

Something to think about from The Kingdom Perspective.

“With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?”

~ Micah 6:6-8 (NASB95)

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