

Kingdom and Powers

The Christian and Politics

Review

- Politics: The activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power.
- Nation of Israel: Called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (set apart)
- Babylon: Representative of all earthly empires
 - Those kingdoms are controlled by Satan
- Jesus didn't fit any of the political categories of his day (or today)
 - He came to usurp and destroy the kingdoms of this world
 - He does this through the "upside-down" means of the Kingdom of God
 - Power "under" vs. power "over"
- The Church belongs to the Kingdom of God, not any kingdom of this world
 - Therefore, we live as exiles and sojourners in the world
- *Christendom* = the time and place where Christianity has the power "over"
- Two Kingdoms
 - KOW trusts the power of the sword to control behavior (law)
 - KOG trusts the power of self-sacrificial love to transform hearts (gospel)
- No such thing as a Christian Nation
- Church's role in politics is to be the Church
 - Prophetic Witness: Speak truth, act in love

How do we live as Exiles in Babylon?

- Settle in (Vocation)
- Seek peace and prosperity (Subversive Submission)
- Pray

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper (Jeremiah 29:7)

He has sent this message to us in Babylon: "It will be a long time. Therefore build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce." (Jeremiah 29:28)

Vocation: God working through us

- From Latin, *Vocans*
- Behind the term is the notion that all legitimate work is a distinct calling from God
- "Masks of God"
- Vocation requires that we act as good citizens
 - That we don't withdraw
 - That we don't act outside of our callings

God is graciously at work, caring for the human race through the work of other human beings. (Veith, *Spirituality of the Cross*)

“God doesn’t need our good works, but our neighbor does.” – Martin Luther

“The Christian cobbler should make good shoes, not poor shoes covered in crosses.” – Martin Luther

Subversive Submission

- Subversive = power under
- Submission
 - Submit (*hypotasso*)
 - Means to “place under”
 - “to order oneself under, or according to, a given relationship,”

Romans 13:1-4

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Bearing the sword is the government’s domain
Bearing the cross is the church’s domain

Romans 12:17-21

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 13:6-7

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. ⁷ Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. ¹⁶ Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

1 Peter 2:11-12

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

"For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see our people lack aid from us." (Emperor Julian the Apostate, 331-363 AD)

Summary of Subversive Submission

- Live good and peaceful lives in the place you find yourself
- Give respect and submit to the authority of the rulers, not blind obedience
- God has ordained them for our good and to punish evil

When can/should we disobey and to what extent?

- Interferes with religious liberty
- Acts unlawfully
- Renders harm to its own people
- Participates in unjust wars

Catholic political philosopher and anti-Communist activist Tomáš Halík writes: It is not possible to retreat in the face of violence; it is necessary to protect and defend the innocent . . . One can only turn one's own cheek, if there is hope that it will put a stop to evil, but not the cheeks of others. They must be defended. (Wright and Bird, 118)

What do governing authorities deserve from us?

- Obedience
- Dissent
- Civil disobedience
- Uncivil disobedience

Christian teaching affirms that obedience and respect for government is the norm even if the government is imperfect or unjust in some matters. Civil disobedience is reserved for unjust laws, and uncivil disobedience should be reserved only for violent authoritarians. (Wright and Bird, 119)

Daniel 3:13-18

¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Acts 4:18-20

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. ²⁰ For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Where do we go from here?

- Theology over ideology
- Influence by subversion, not power
- Recognize your media consumption is a discipleship issue
 - Ground.news
 - Neutral, independent guide providing source bias ratings, source factuality ratings, coverage bias, Blind Spot
 - Uses three independent news monitoring organizations to assess the political bias of the publication: [All Sides](#), [Ad Fontes Media](#), and [Media Bias Fact Check](#).
- Discern your mind/motives
 - Are you capable of entertaining real doubt about your beliefs, or are you operating from a position of certainty?
 - Can you articulate the evidence that you would need to see in order to change your position?
 - Can you articulate your opponent's perspective in a way that they recognize?
 - Are you attacking ideas or the people who hold them?
 - Are you willing to cut off close relationships with people who disagree with you, particularly over relatively small points of contention?
 - Are you willing to use extraordinary means against people who disagree with you? (violence, threats, forcing people out of jobs, celebrating misfortune)