

Luther on the Two Kingdoms

"If anyone attempted to rule the world by the gospel and to abolish all temporal law and sword on the plea that all are baptized and Christian, and that, according to the gospel, there shall be among them no law or sword – or need for either – pray tell me, friend, what would he be doing? He would be loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts and letting them bit and mangle everyone, meanwhile insisting that they were harmless, tame, and gentle creatures, but I would have the proof in my wounds." (LW 45:91, *On Temporal Authority*, 1523; emphasis added here and hereafter)

"We must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds. Neither one is sufficient in the world without the other." (LW 45:92; *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, 1523)

"What men write about war, saying that it is a great plague, is all true. But they should also consider how great the plague is that war prevents. If people were good and wanted to keep peace, war would be the greatest plague on earth. But what are you going to do about the fact that people will not keep the peace, but rob, steal, kill, outrage women and children, and take away property and honor? The small lack of peace called war or the sword must set a limit to this universal, worldwide lack of peace which would destroy everyone." (LW 46:96; *Sermon: Whether soldiers, too, can be saved*, 1525-26)

"Here, then, is the difference between this King and worldly rulers: They are concerned about people managing house and home, governing lands and subjects, acquiring money and property, becoming rich and powerful - all for the present time. Our Christ-King, on the other hand, wants us to know how to inherit the kingdom of heaven, how to be saved and become eternally rich, so that we may finally enter the other better life. Over there, eating, drinking, and working to sustain physical life will no longer be necessary, as it always is in this world. Yes, there these bodies of ours will be more beautiful, more lovely than the dear sun itself! There we will no longer be sad, weak, or sick, but everlastingly happy and healthy, strong and vigorous." (House Postil I:368)

"Constantly I must pound in and squeeze in and drive in and wedge in this difference between the two kingdoms, even though it is written and said so often that it becomes tedious. The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other. In the devil's name the secular leaders always want to be Christ's masters and teach Him how He should run His church. Similarly, the false clerics always want to be the masters . . . and to teach people how to organize the secular government." (LW 13:194, *Commentary on Psalm 101*, 1534)

"The Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none; and the perfect dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (LW 31:344; *The Freedom of a Christian*, 1520)

"Now since everyone must pray this prayer, so it follows that no one is innocent in respect to God's kingdom. To understand that is to understand that there are two kingdoms." (LW 42:38, *Lectures on Genesis*, 1519, this commentary was actually written and preached as sermons for the benefit of laypeople during the period from 1516-1517.)