



When Kingdoms Clash

Mike Atnip

Rap, rap, rap, rap.

Something about the urgency and the firmness of the knocks on your front door tell you that whoever is standing out there needs help. Even though your digital clock gleams 1:38 a.m., you are immediately out of bed and the adrenalin flow sweeps the drowsiness from your mind.

Rap, rap, rap, rap.

Whoever is standing outside means business! Not a trace of hesitancy in those knocks!

You open the door to find the young lady from three houses down the street standing there with an anguished look in her eyes. "Oh, I am sorry to bother you in the middle of the night. But will you please help me ..."

Her story spills out. Here in the Guangxi region of China, government officials have been putting the pressure on to enforce the one-child limit. She has already had two children and paid several fines, and is now expecting the third. And just this evening a friend who works in the enforcement department has dropped in after dark to secretly inform her that tomorrow they plan to take her for a forced abortion if she doesn't volunteer to do it herself.

Now she is at your door asking for refuge. You know that helping to hide her is against the law.

Would you, as a disciple of Jesus, help her? Even if it was illegal to help her?

A confrontation of values

It is a clash of kingdoms. No, our war does not involve guns and ballistic missiles. This war is a collision of values and virtues. God said, "Go forth and multiply and fill the earth," and no murderer shall be a part of heaven. The opposing kingdom says, "We are fearful of overpopulation. You will kill your baby or we will kill it for you."

And the battle is on. Christ's kingdom against the kingdoms of this world. Christ's righteousness against the self-righteousness of those who choose their own standard of right and wrong instead of submitting to the righteousness He has spelled out in His teachings.

As citizens of Christ's kingdom, Christians are caught up in the clash with the values of earthly kingdoms in many fronts. One continuing thorny issue with the kingdoms of this world has been of self-defense and war. Jesus' ethic is to overcome evil with good. The kingdoms of this world try to quell evil with punishment and revenge. A very recent example of this is the revenge killing of Osama bin Laden. Jesus' method of conquering Osama would have been to win his heart by love, changing it from strife and warfare to one of peace and love. The kingdoms of this world "triumphed" over the hatred of Osama with a revenge killing.

But sad to say, it is very likely that the revenge will be revenged, and the hatred will be perpetuated. Hatred does not conquer hatred. Only love conquers hatred.

The clash in history

An example of a historical clash of kingdoms occurred when Europeans kidnapped (or bought kidnapped) Africans and shipped them to various parts of the world as slaves. Such morally twisted values can never be accepted by disciples of Jesus, and some of these disciples began to speak up. In 1688, the first antislavery statement in what would later become the United States of America was issued. A group of Mennonite/Quakers near Philadelphia wrote a letter addressed to other Quakers, reproving them for accepting slavery. The following is a portion of the letter, set in modern English:

These are the reasons why we are against the traffic of humans: Is there anyone that would like to be sold or made a slave for all of his life? How fearful and fainthearted are many on sea when they see a strange ship—being afraid it should be a Turk, and they should be taken, and sold for slaves into Turkey. Now how is enslaving Africans doing better than Turks do? Yea, rather it is worse for them, which say they are Christians; for we hear that the most part of such Negroes are brought here against their will

and consent, and that many of them are stolen. ... There is a saying that we shall do to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent, or color they are. And those who steal or rob men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? ... But to bring men here, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against. ... Pray, what thing in the world can be done worse towards us, than if men should rob or steal us away, and sell us for slaves to strange countries; separating husbands from their wives and children? Since this is not done as we would have done to us, therefore we contradict and are against this buying and selling of humans. And we who profess that it is not lawful to steal, must, likewise, avoid purchasing such things as are stolen, but rather help to stop this robbing and stealing if possible. And such men ought to be delivered out of the hands of the robbers, and set free ...

The brave men who signed the document started at the right place. This letter was sent to fellowbelievers who had gotten sucked into the values and ethics of this world. Imagine, Quakers buying and selling slaves! The letter was a rebuke directed toward other believers, not a political statement directed toward the government.

Even so, the letter did militate against the political kingdoms of this world. It suggested that Christians ought to “help stop this robbing and stealing” and that “such men ought to be delivered out of the hands of the robbers.” After all, if you were the one who had been kidnapped from your family and sold as a slave, would you not appreciate a helping hand if you escaped? The letter was not a call to armed rebellion, not even political involvement. It was a call for Christians to repent of their involvement in this sin of legalized kidnapping and to be ready to help those who knocked on their door in the middle of the night needing refuge.

During the next 150 years, some of the American colonies and the later United States of America would make it illegal for anyone to help a slave escape. George Washington himself (who owned or leased over 300 slaves at his death) had signed the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act that slapped a \$500 fine (appr. \$50,000 in today’s value) on those who “shall harbor



A few Quakers and Mennonites framed this first public antislavery statement in North America, in 1688. It was a statement that clashed with the kingdoms of this world.

or conceal such person after notice that he or she was a fugitive from labor.” The State of South Carolina even had a death penalty for helping slaves escape. Yet many Quakers and other believers felt a moral obligation to help those who were being unjustly kidnapped—even though the kingdom of this world called *The United States of America* made it illegal to extend the hand of love and compassion. John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker, put the national shame of slavery to verse in a poem titled *For Righteousness Sake*. The first of the five stanzas—dedicated to “friends under arrest for treason against the slave power”—runs like this:

The age is dull and mean. Men creep,
Not walk; with blood too pale and tame
To pay the debt they owe to shame;
Buy cheap, sell dear; eat, drink, and sleep
Down-pillowed, deaf to moaning want;
Pay tithes for soul-insurance; keep
Six days to Mammon, one to Cant.¹

In 1850, another Fugitive Slave Act was passed into federal law. Called “The Bloodhound Law” by abolitionists, this new law increased the fine to \$1000 and 6 months in jail for aiding an escaping slave, and gave authorities the right to deputize any citizen and force that person to aid in capturing escaping slaves. This meant that if the local sheriff came along and told you that you were now deputized to look for slaves, you were *obligated* by law to help capture runaway slaves, like it or not.

Those US citizens who realized that Christ’s kingdom rejects legalized kidnapping and cruel mistreatment of slaves were forced to choose whose laws they would allow to govern their choices: the kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of The United States of America. It was, once again, a clash of kingdoms.

A recent clash

Another very recent example of the clash of kingdoms involves an Anabaptist minister named Timothy (Timo) Miller, missionary to Nicaragua. When Timothy saw the opportunity to help a former lesbian remove her child from what appeared to be a forced acceptance of homosexual

¹ A “cant” can be a façade, or religious talk. I do not know which definition he intended here. But either way, Whittier seems to have felt that going to church while owning slaves was a “Cant.”

“marriage,” Timothy extended his helping hand. He now faces the possibility of a 3-year prison term for helping the mother of the child escape from being forced to do things contrary to God’s decrees. The values and ethics of Christ’s kingdom—which has not and never will accept homosexual “marriages” as legitimate—has clashed with a kingdom that says everyone must accept the validity of those “marriages.”

And with a clash and a bang, the war is on. Whose law trumps the other? Does the law of Vermont, which says that homosexual “marriages” are as legitimate and binding as God-ordained heterosexual marriages? Or does the law of Christ trump the self-righteous proclamations of a perverted nation? In the mind of Christ’s followers, there is no question.

A modern Mars’ Hill

Like Paul preaching on Mars’ Hill, I recently went to a place I don’t normally spend a lot of time with, to “preach.” I went online and joined in on some discussion on a national news media comment section concerning the Timothy Miller case. The following are some edited excerpts from that forum:

(Mike) People like Timothy Miller can be looked upon as kidnapers and terrible criminals, or they can be seen in the light of his Mennonite forefathers who along with Quakers helped form the Underground Railroad, in spite of President George Washington himself (who owned, leased, and used over 300 slaves at his death) signing the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act that fined those who helped slaves to escape up to \$500.

Lisa Miller has felt that she cannot morally accept the court rulings and must do as those who could not morally accept the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act and must do what they felt morally right to do—help slaves escape.

(Commentator 1) Tim Miller belongs in prison, as does Lisa Miller (who also needs mental health counseling). Hopefully the child survives the ordeal.

(Commentator 2) Kidnapping in the Name of Jesus!! Thank God I’m a Christian!!

(Commentator 3) In Mike we see yet another example of a “good Christian” —one who justifies kidnapping a



The Isaac Wenger home was a stop in the Mennonite Underground Railroad in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. This “line” helped conscientious objectors escape to the North during the Civil War.

child from her legal parent² by comparing that crime to freeing the slaves.

Kidnappers for Jesus! ... Given the severity of the problem, I’m wondering if all Christian clergy should be required to wear GPS tracking ankle bracelets, and we should establish a 2,000 ft no-clergy zone around areas frequented by children like schools, playgrounds, and residential housing? The no-clergy zone also needs to include hospital maternity wards and daycare centers.

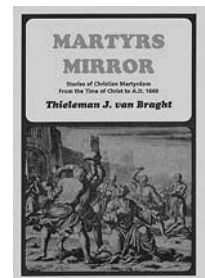
(Mike) Hmm. What about those who use the legal system to abduct a child from her biological parent? Suppose that ever has happened? Legalized abduction!

(Commentator 1) Mike, that happens every day in family law court. As this case proves, some biological parents are unfit and can’t be trusted with the welfare of their children.

(Mike) Timo Miller will be in court tomorrow. Timo is an honest man, a so-called “Anabaptist.” He will not lie about his involvement in this. (He may plead the 5th ... I don’t know.) But he is not expected to deny the fact that he and quite a large number of us who were not involved feel a conscientious and ethical imperative to aid biological parents keep their children from being turned over to those who are not the biological parent [on the basis of homosexual unions].

Civil law always subjects itself to the higher law of conscience. While we as “Anabaptists” do strive to obey civil law, we have a history book 1000 pages thick (called *Martyrs Mirror*) of those who have suffered imprisonment, beheadings, and other harassments from civil governments for doing what we feel was a moral and ethical imperative. We are thankful that the US government has treated us with

² At the time of her leaving the USA, Lisa Miller still had legal custody of her child. The commentator here (and other places) makes some broad statements, maybe just to be inflammatory.



The *Martyrs Mirror* is a history of the clash between Christ’s kingdom and the kingdoms of this world.

the greatest respect in these areas, better than any other government has.

We do not generally take part in civil government, we do not take up arms (some of us have sat in jails in practically all the wars of the USA for being conscientious objectors, and two of our young men died from mistreatment by US officials during WW I for refusing to take arms) and we do not sue at courts.

Call it “Christian Sharia” or call it what you want. We firmly believe that conscience trumps human institutions called civil law. And we have committed ourselves to die for that, if those who do not agree decide to kill us or punish us for our ethical standards.

But we do not fight back in the flesh. We will not take up arms. We will not mount a political campaign to force our convictions on others. We choose to live them and invite others to join us, but we do not force. Like our Master, we do what we understand to be right, and expect to suffer for it from those who do not understand.

(Commentator 1) Our secular civil law trumps your Christian Sharia law every time. You have no more right to violate our civil laws than does Scott Roeder.

Hopefully the other members of the child abduction ring will be captured and imprisoned too. They deserve justice.

(Mike) Scott Roeder violated civil law, and the ethics and teachings of Jesus’ law. I am sorry to have to say it for the name “Christian,” but 90% of those who claim that name do not follow Jesus’ teaching. And neither do I want to say that we “Anabaptists” do it perfectly. But Scott Roeder would be excommunicated from our congregations if he had been a member. (As would have been George Tiller also, obviously.)

We call it “the doctrine of the two kingdoms.” We live in Jesus’ kingdom by His laws, and strive to obey the civil kingdom we also live in. Sometimes the laws of the two kingdoms conflict—as in Timo Miller’s case—and we recognize that we will have to suffer from the earthly kingdom. But we have absolutely no intention

of extending Jesus’ law by force; neither military nor political force.

Want to join us? It’s a voluntary society that overcomes evil with good and does not take revenge when misunderstood. We have sat the equivalent of thousands of years in jails for our beliefs and actions. We may add a few more to that number in the case of Timo Miller.

Even so, we have no plans of changing our standard of ethics and morals.



Two Hutterites, Joseph and Michael Hofer, died at Leavenworth Military Prison in Kansas from mistreatment received from US military officials for refusing to bear arms in WW I.



(Commentator 1) I wasn’t aware that the US constitution had an exemption for Anabaptists, or that civil crimes were graded on theological effort. I think it’s more of a pass/fail kind of thing.

Hopefully the other cult members will be captured quickly and given lengthy sentences so that they can’t harm any more innocent children.

(Commentator 2) Jerry Falwell’s ministries/Liberty University with a big batch of “lawyers” (if you can call them that) are trying to keep a child from her other parent by illegal means.

(Mike) We are not a part of what Falwell/Liberty University does. Our methods and ethics are distinct from theirs. While we may both be on the same side of moral issues in some cases, our view of following Christ is quite distinct. It is a case of Baptist vs. Anabaptist in this situation.

We recognize that civil governments do not make exemptions, although in some cases they have, like in giving us conscientious objector status when we tell them we cannot in good conscience kill another human. But we fully expect that civil governments not understand us in some cases. And we will have to suffer without resistance for doing what we understand as right. Even so, we have no intentions of trying to force the civil government to our ethics. Ethical and moral decisions made by force are not a part of Christ’s kingdom.

You are still invited to join us! Be forewarned. One has to take up a thing called a cross to join us. That means you have to give up all rights to self-defense and accept the lordship of Someone higher. It hurts, believe me. I

mean, like Timo Miller. It sure would be a lot easier to lie to the judge, to sue back, to fight with a gun ...

(Commentator 1) Hmmmm ... sounds like we need to put GPS ankle bracelets on all Anabaptists and monitor them closely. I was hoping we could limit it to the clergy, but it looks like the entire cult might be involved.

Now Timo's the victim? ROFLOL.

I hope as a homophobe he enjoys prison life for many years. [End of discussion.]

Christian sharia

What do Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Evangelicals, and the homosexual movement have in common? They are all perpetuators of their values by the use of force. Each band uses political, judicial, and/or military power to enforce its moral and ethical standard on others. Judges with gavels, prisons, lawsuits, political campaigns ... these are all signs of a worldly kingdom. Be that a strict Muslim kingdom, or a liberal gay-rights agenda. For as much enmity that there is between homosexuals and organized religions that ban their perverted deeds, they all operate outside the kingdom of God when they use force to push their morality—or the lack thereof—on those who differ. In the case of Timo Miller, the State of Vermont and the homosexual movement seem bent

The only tools used to propagate the kingdom of God are teaching and example.

on forcing everyone to accept the validity of their immorality. A big batch of lawyers and law enforcement officers will see to it that we all accept their moral standard ... like it or not.

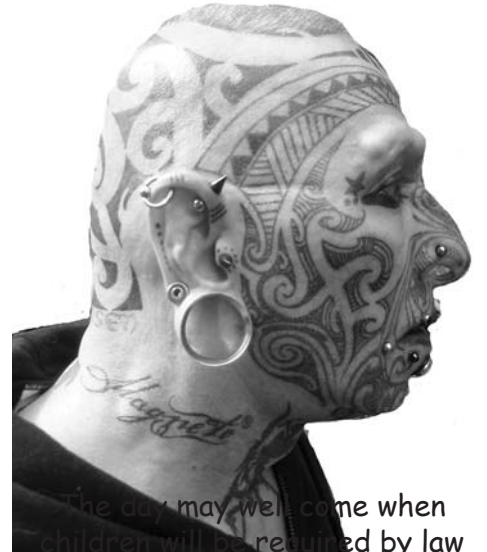
It is at this point that the kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of this world. While the kingdom of God has what is probably the highest moral and ethical standard in the world, force is never used to propagate the kingdom. It is voluntary. Either one freely decides (by faith) to become part of the kingdom of God, or he simply does not enter in. No one will force him with a sword or a lawsuit to walk in the teachings of Jesus.

And it is at this point that "kingdom Christianity" parts ways with Evangelicals, Catholics, Orthodox, and other "Christians." The only tools used to propagate the kingdom of God are teaching and example. The only "discipline" is the purposeful withdrawal of fellowship from those who say, but do not do. Where the political campaigns begin and the war drums start to roll, or the sheriff slaps the handcuffs, or the fines are imposed, there the kingdom of God ends.

The two kingdoms

The saints of God realize that they live in a world of two kingdoms. Their first allegiance is to the King Jesus and His values, teachings, and ethics. If the civil kingdom that they reside in happens to allow the citizens of Christ's kingdom to live their principles in peace, so be it! Historically, though, the majority of the time there has been a continuous battle for allegiance between the kingdom of God and the civil kingdom that Christians reside in.

We here in the USA have been blessed to live under a civil government that has been probably the most favorable towards Christ's ethics than any government in history. However, things are changing fast. One or two generations ago would probably have never seen



The day may well come when the children will be required by law to be indoctrinated with the perverted values of the pagan society that the USA is becoming.

Photo credit: Wikipedia User: Nicor

Timo Miller getting arrested for helping a mother keep her child from being forced to leave her child with an unrelated lesbian. From the looks of things, barring a national repentance and revival, it will not get any better in the following decades. The day may well come—sooner than we think—when children will be required by law to be indoctrinated with the perverted values of the pagan society that the USA is becoming. Either make "Heather Has Two Mommies" a part of your homeschool curriculum, or the Social Services will take your children ... and place them with Frank and Joe, the new "couple" just down the street who have recently been given foster care rights.

When your children are taken and placed in such an environment, the clash of the kingdoms will suddenly ring loud and clear! You will then have to make a decision as to which kingdom you will adhere to. And adhering to Christ's kingdom may find you facing a stern judge with a big gavel.

Thump!!! "Guilty! Two years of suspended jail and the loss of parental rights for ..."

Are we ready? ~