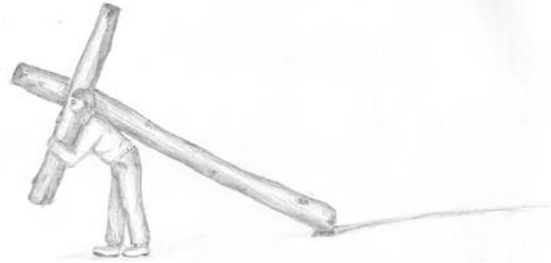
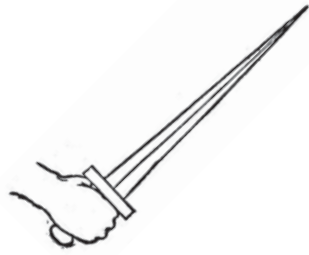


The Two Kingdoms

Hans Schnell



Introduction

The principle of separation of church and state is now generally considered a fundamental in Western civilizations. However, it was not always so. Whatever religion or church the ruler or rulers decreed “Official” was the only one accepted in that domain. Untold suffering was the result of the welding of the church to the state.

While many Christians hold to the idea of separation of church and state, many do not understand the basic reason why—which is the idea that the two entities are in two distinct spiritual kingdoms and operate on two totally different ethical and moral standards. To mix them is to mix force and free will, or to cross-breed a wolf with a sheep.

The following tract was written in 1575 by a “Swiss Brethren” named Hans Schnell. This tract has not been published in English very widely and is practically unknown. Yet it succinctly brings out the doctrine of the two kingdoms well enough to merit its publication here.

We have only published excerpts due to its length, but the full portion of the translated document can be found in the July, 1994 issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. The translation is by Leonard Gross. A special thanks to the editor of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* at Goshen College for permission to use the text. All subheadings are by *The Heartbeat of the Remnant*. The original title of about 78 words was replaced with a three-word synopsis.

The Two Kingdoms

There are two distinguishable kingdoms on earth—namely, the kingdom of this world and the peaceable kingdom of Christ. These two kingdoms cannot share nor have communion with one another.

The people in the kingdom of this world are born of the flesh, are earthly and carnally minded. The people in the kingdom of Christ are reborn of the Holy Spirit, live according to the Spirit, and are spiritually minded.

The people in the kingdom of this world are equipped for fighting against their enemies with carnal weapons—spear, sword, armor, guns, and powder. The people in Christ’s kingdom are equipped with spiritual weapons—the armor of God, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit—to fight against the devil, the world, and their own flesh, together with all which arises against God and His Word.

The people in the kingdom of this world fight for a perishable crown and an earthly kingdom. The people in Christ’s kingdom fight for an imperishable crown and an eternal kingdom.

Christ caused these two kingdoms to be at odds with each other and set them apart, one from the other. There will therefore be no peace between them. They will fight against each other until the end of the world occurs, and these two kingdoms cannot be made alike nor can they be intermingled with each other.

Also, neither can participate in nor have communion with the other. But whoever wants to make them alike or intermingle them is acting like the old serpent which in the beginning mixed lies with God’s Word.

Those who are born of the flesh persecute those who are born of the Spirit: “They will wage war upon the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and sharing with Him in His victory will be those who are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

In the end, however, Christ will crush and destroy all the other kingdoms with His power and eternal kingdom, which will remain eternally.

Separating light from darkness

To all nations the Lord has established a head. But Israel is the Lord’s portion. Therefore, to arrive at a true un-

derstanding of how to measure and distinguish the kingdom of this world from the peaceable kingdom of Christ in accord with God's order and the testimony of Scripture, each kingdom with its own nature—this, God indicated to us right at the beginning when He created heaven and earth. When He separated the day from the night He commanded the light to shine forth out of the darkness. The light God called day and the darkness He called night.

Thus Christ has chosen His elect from the darkness of this world and called them to His heavenly kingdom and enlightened them through the Holy Spirit with the true divine understanding of His eternal truth and thereby placed a bright, clear glow into their hearts; so that one can distinguish by their fruits the children of the night and darkness, and the children of the day and the light—the children of God and the children of this world.

Whoever has eyes to see, sees how the children of God, in accord with Christ's teaching, let their light shine with good works before the children of this world so that they shine amid this perverse generation like a light in all honesty. God symbolized thus for us with the dense Egyptian darkness in which the Egyptians sat, while it was day and light among the children of Israel (Exodus 10), a people in whom the day has dawned and the morning star has risen in their hearts. In order that it may also be day and light among them, God foresaw and chose them for Himself before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame and walk before Him in love.

The origin of civil government

And this took place after God made His covenant with Noah after the flood, under which covenant He commanded vengeance and punishment with the power of the sword to punish the evil and to put to death the bloodguilty and murderers, saying, "Whoever sheds human blood, by a human shall that person's blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). This vengeance to punish evil has ever since that time remained unaltered in the kingdom of this world with its temporal authority, and will remain until the Last Day of His coming, when God will annihilate all the power of this world.

Christ also testifies to this command to punish evil and to put murderers to death when He commanded Peter to keep the peace, saying: "Return your sword into its place; for whoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword." From these words of Christ we learn that the power of the sword will remain in the kingdom of this world for the

purpose of putting to death the bloodguilty and murderers in accordance with His Father's precepts, which He instituted and ordained in the second, new world.

But in Christ's kingdom peace shall be kept, as He says to Peter: "Put your sword back into its sheath and let them proceed." For that reason He quickly healed Malchus' ear again and does not want Christians to fight with the sword for their lives.

Concerning this power of the sword which God ordained and gave to the second, new world after the flood, Paul teaches us, saying: "... there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. ... For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad"; and "... the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer."

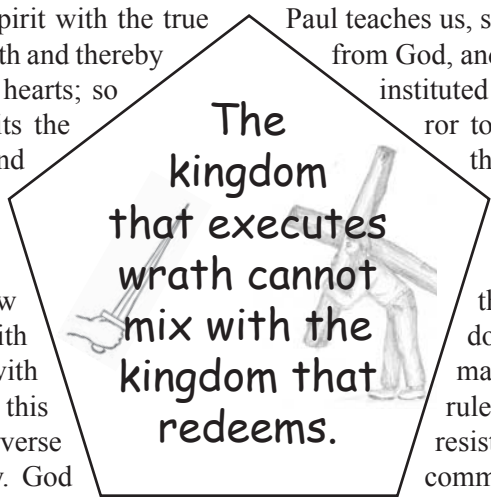
With these words Paul teaches us that the power of the sword in the kingdom of this world is ordained and commanded by God, and whoever resists the ruler, unless he orders what is against God, resists God's precepts. But if the authorities command something that is against God, I say with Peter and John: It is better to obey God than any human authority. For Eleazar and his seven sons as well as their mother refused to be compelled to eat pork against God's command. They preferred to suffer severe martyrdom patiently. Likewise, the three men in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lion's den.

Mixing vengeance with forgiveness?

Paul's words cited above prove that the vocation of being a magistrate and the vocation of being a Christian are diametrically opposed to each other, like light and darkness, like white and black, as Paul says: "The ruler does not bear the sword in vain; he is God's minister, an avenger to punish the one who does evil."

Therefore the government is a good institution in the world, in that it punishes the bad and protects whoever does good. For if there were no government, one could not exist on earth. Each person would then do violence to the other.

But Christ has given those in His kingdom a very different calling and office. For just as God has commanded the sword for the government to mete out vengeance and to put murderers to death, as Paul testifies in Romans 13, so also Paul forbids the Christian to execute such vengeance and says: "Repay no one evil for evil"; also: "Do not avenge yourselves, my dearly beloved, but rather leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, 'Ven-



geance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” Further: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

In the New Testament, Christians are forbidden every form of revenge and resistance; they are not to resist evil (1 Pe. 3). When James and John merely want to ask for permission to take revenge, Christ not only refuses them this, but reprimands them for it, saying: “Do you not know which spirit you are of?”

Born of revenge

The government has a vengeful spirit and punishes all acts of evil according to the demands of the office committed to it by God, as a minister in God’s stead, according to each one’s desert. It is the rod of His wrath and the lash of His hand with which God punishes evil.

And just as the government has a spirit of revenge and the power to avenge all evil and put murderers to death as the office appointed to it by God, so on the contrary a Christian in the peaceable kingdom of Christ has a loving, peaceable, merciful spirit in the manner of Christ’s. He forgives the penitent sinner all sin and transgression. He does not resist evil. He kills nobody physically. He does not preserve his possessions with force, but rather presents also the other cheek rather than to oppose the one who strikes him with force. He does not go to war. He does not injure and kill people, but prays for those who persecute and rob him.

In this manner God has given the power of the sword to the world, with the government serving like a servant for pay. But Christians are children in the family and the true heirs of their Father who serve out of love like children, not for servant’s wages but as natural heirs.

Vengeance is contrary to the gospel. Therefore vengeance does not enter into Christ’s kingdom. In it there is only repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Believers in Christ do not have two different kinds of spirit, for they are all baptized with one Spirit into one body and all drink of one Spirit, although there are various gifts in the church of God which are created by the same Spirit. But vengeance is contrary to the nature and manner of Christ and contrary to the entire teaching of the gospel of Christ. Therefore it does not belong in Christ’s kingdom, but in the kingdom of this world.

Born of peace

Whoever is born again through the Spirit has his Father’s nature and qualities in him and is like-minded with Jesus Christ. Christ not only forbade revenge in His kingdom, but also by His suffering on the cross left us an example for us to follow in His footsteps and prayed for His foes on the cross, which believers also do.

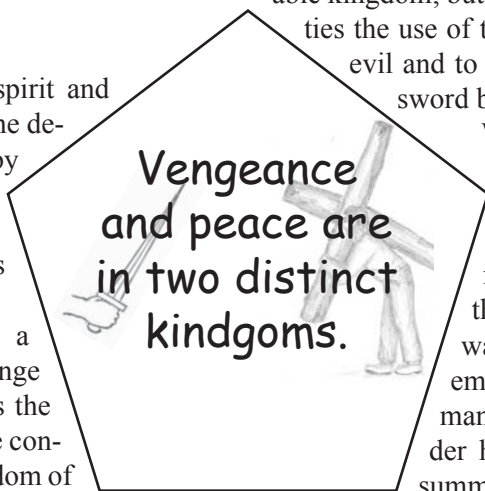
But whoever does not have the spirit of Christ is none of His, because Christ, our King of Peace, has forbidden ruling with force and executing vengeance in His peaceable kingdom; but He has committed to temporal authorities the use of the sword and vengeance to punish the evil and to govern; thus the power and use of the sword belongs to the kingdom of this world.

When Paul explained the power of the government and what its calling and function imply, he called it not only a minister of God, but also said that it is our obligation to pay taxes in order that it may offer such protection. That was at the time when Nero reigned as emperor, who was a pagan and a godless man who had the entire Roman Empire under his command, before whom Paul was summoned twice. And even though Nero, the great tyrant, out of a bloodthirsty, cruel spirit—even crueller than that of Saul—persecuted and destroyed the church of God and Christ as severely as possible, as history records, and shed innocent blood like water, nevertheless Paul called him a minister of God. For God used him as a rod of punishment until the rod was worn out; then He cast it into the fire.

Paul furthermore says that the powers that be are ordained of God. This even includes Pharaoh, who severely tormented the children of Israel. God had hardened his heart, and then aroused him, so that God might reveal in him His power and wrath. Pharaoh is called a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction, yet even he, according to Paul’s teaching, was also God’s minister.

Also the Babylonian king, whom God used as a rod of His wrath and a rod to punish His people, was a minister of God, over whom the Lord cried “Woe,” and in His anger He threatened to punish him. God calls this king His servant.

These words of Paul show that the governor was also a minister of God. To him was given the power from on high to crucify Christ. God used this Pilate as a vessel of wrath that is prepared for damnation, as it is written: “I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” For Pilate and Herod performed what



God's hand and counsel had previously planned. Through Pilate's false sentence sin was condemned by sin and removed. Through Pilate's false sentence and great sin which he committed against Christ, the sins of all of us were reconciled and annulled in Christ's guiltless death.

Thus God uses the government as His minister, whether it performs well or badly. If they are tyrants God uses them as His rod of punishment, who will, however, at the proper time be held accountable to their Superior and will have to render an exceedingly strict account, as it is written: The powerful will suffer powerful pain. But if they administer their office well and act reasonably, protect the godly, punish evil, and preserve law and justice, they will not be without reward and payment. But they are not children in the family, but slaves and servants who will not be cheated out of their pay. But those who are to inherit are the children alone, among whom all warfare, sword, and weapons have ceased and are laid aside, as has been shown above.

Thus we see that the Roman emperors and other rulers and authorities, whom Paul calls ministers of God, are a rod of God to preserve the common peace of the world and to carry out the natural law. Yet out of obstinacy and blindness they have also persecuted, murdered, and as much as possible rooted out the Christian church of God and have shed innocent blood like water, so horrible that one cannot even begin to describe it. The Holy Spirit prophesied about such persecution by the government against the church of Christ in Psalm 2, where the government is called the kings of the earth.

And by this Pharaohic obstinacy and Jewish blindness and Antiochal cruelty, the murdering and killing of Christians, the Roman government always thought it was serving God thereby. Even their hearts were darkened, and it is indeed still the case that those in the government that persecutes Christians and assails people because of their faith are smitten with gruesome and terrible blindness. Their heart is hardened like Pharaoh's; therefore they could also, no less than Pharaoh, be called vessels of wrath unless they are converted and repent.

Carry the whip, or the cross?

Thus there is a separation between the precepts of these two realms, namely that of the world and that of the church of Christ. These two kingdoms cannot be made alike or mingle with one another, as little as light and darkness, or faith and unbelief, of which neither can have part and communion with the other.

These two kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ, God has pictured and symbolized for us by the two following examples. First with Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac: they signify two peoples and two kingdoms, and each people in its own kingdom God has presented to us figuratively—but truly—each with its own regime and precepts.

Born of Sarah, or Hagar?

For Abraham had two sons; one with the maidservant, the other with his wife. The one born of the Egyptian maid was born of the flesh. But the one born of the wife was born of the promise. These two women signify the two testaments and also two different peoples.

The first testament, Hagar, the maidservant, brings forth descendants only for servitude, those who are not heirs of Abraham's family, but are rejected and obliged to serve for pay.

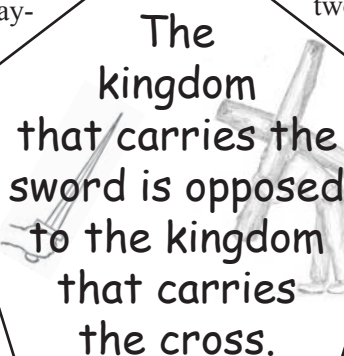
But Sarah, the wife, the "new testament," brings forth from the spirit true, legitimate children who are heirs in Abraham's family. For God established a covenant with Isaac, the son of the wife, through whose seed all the nations of the earth are blessed; wherefore Isaac's descendants are

heirs of the family, that is, of God's kingdom.

But Hagar, the maidservant, together with her son Ishmael, who was born of the flesh, is cast out of Abraham's family and does not inherit with the wife's son. And although the maidservant had many more children than the wife, she is nevertheless rejected with her children and is called the forsaken one. Ishmael was born of the maid according to the flesh. He is a wild man and his hand is against everyone. Therefore he is expelled from the family and forsaken.

What this mystery means, note: Ishmael, although he was banished and forsaken because he was not an heir with the wife's son, nevertheless also received a promise, as God says to Abraham: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make his descendants exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac." Note: The twelve patriarchs came from Isaac. They were great herders of cattle. To them God turned. Therefore they are the family heirs. But from Ishmael came twelve princes. They had their courts and fortresses.

Therefore Ishmael, born of the maidservant according to the flesh, must serve within the confines of a servant's marriage, with his twelve princes—that is, within the



The kingdom that carries the sword is opposed to the kingdom that carries the cross.

kingdom of this world—as long as the children of Hagar remain of carnal birth. And because God promised and granted to Ishmael twelve princes, together with the rule of this world, everyone knows very well what the ruling prince’s call and office consists in, namely, to rule and govern lands and peoples. As the Lord Himself says: “The worldly princes rule the nations, and their rulers govern with force. But not so with you.”

With these words the kingdom of this world is sufficiently differentiated from the kingdom of Christ, each kingdom with its rule and precepts, so that one can note which is the generation of the blessed seed of Isaac, namely, the one born of the wife, that is, of the Spirit; likewise that Ishmael, the seed of the servant, with his twelve princes, is born of the flesh and not an heir but one who receives his pay in this world. With this pay he and his must be there-with content, for they cannot inherit with Isaac. As Christ says: “Many shall come from the East and the West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. But the children of the kingdom of this world shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Children of Jacob, or Esau?

Again, God has figuratively represented to us these two peoples—namely, the people in the kingdom of this world that are born of the flesh and the people of Christendom that are born of the Spirit—in the two sons of Isaac: Esau and Jacob. As the Lord says to Rebecca when the infants were struggling together within her: “Two nations are in your womb, and you will give birth to two types of people.” God loved Jacob and hated Esau. For Esau’s descendants were a people toward whom God is eternally wrathful. For his seed lives according to the flesh, is born of the flesh and is carnally minded.

But those who are born of the flesh persecute those who are born of the Spirit. Therefore the godly Jacob had to stoop and bow before Esau until he had won his favor with friendly words and gifts and presents. Isaac’s and Jacob’s descendants beget the temporal and spiritual Israel. But Ishmael and Esau represent and beget the carnal people in the kingdom of this world. Therefore they have intermarried.

By twice presenting figuratively the oft-mentioned two kingdoms—once with Ishmael and Isaac, then with Jacob and Esau—by such repetition God wanted to encourage the world to be reasonable, to be circumspect

and truly and certainly to be aware of such matters which were figuratively indicated, presented and sketched by these two examples.

But the Antichrists are trying more and more to bring these two kingdoms together and intermingle them after the manner of the ancient serpent, as the devil also did in the beginning, mixing lies with God’s Word.

Keep the kingdoms separate!

Therefore the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ, each in its own realm, are to be kept separated from each other, as Christ Himself separated them and says: “They which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whoever among you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve.”

This demonstrates that in Christ’s kingdom here on earth none should consider himself higher than another. For that reason Christ set us an example by washing feet.

In everything the believers are bought with the precious blood of Christ and cleansed of their sins, and anointed and consecrated with the Holy Spirit as kings and priests.

Therefore they are equal to one another and none is to lift himself above another. For they are of one family and of equal rank. Rather, each shall esteem the other higher than himself.

It has now been sufficiently demonstrated that God has given to the heathen—that is, to the unbelieving world which lives according to its corrupt nature, which lies in evil and does not fear God—the government, in order to resist evil, as is written: “To all the nations God has given a ruler. But the Lord’s portion is Israel.” Therefore God gave Israel its own laws and commandments, with which it was widely separated from the heathen and in this manner differentiated, among which laws and commandments God also gave them the power of the physical sword to punish evil, to execute vengeance, and to demand an eye for an eye and body for body; thus, he who broke the law had to die without mercy.

Therefore our opponents, the supposed Christians,¹ insist on introducing into Christendom the civil power of the sword and, with it, the meting out of vengeance. But

**God
has given
civil authorities
to govern the
unredeemed.**

¹ Referring to Catholics and Protestants who persecuted Anabaptists in the name of God.

although God in the figurative law gave and commanded to Moses the vengeance and power of the sword to punish evil, this does not apply to Christians in the New Testament. For Christ, who is the fulfillment of the law, has canceled it.

The new world order—Christ’s kingdom!

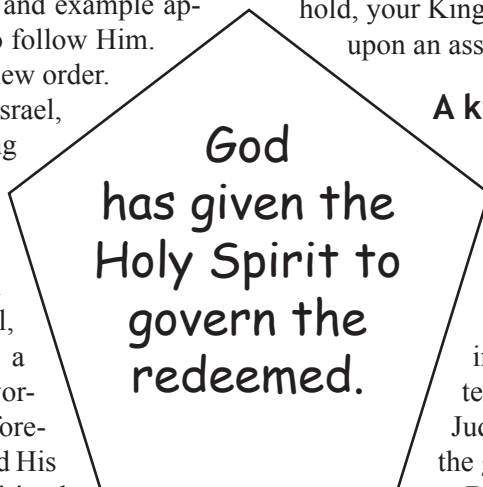
We have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that we are now no longer under Moses but with another—of course, with Him who was raised from the dead. Only what Christ teaches us by word and example applies to Christians. Therein they are to follow Him. For in His kingdom He has created a new order.

And as the figurative physical Israel, which in the law has a foreshadowing of what was to come in Christ, has many physical promises—a physical King Solomon, a temporal kingdom, and the fat land of Canaan which flowed with milk and honey, a physical, outward power, sword and rule, and a bodily priesthood with an outward worship and literal law—all this together foreshadowed the true essence in Christ and His kingdom: namely, a spiritual king, a spiritual power, sword, rule, and order, a spiritual kingdom that is not of this world, a spiritual, eternal promised land, Canaan, an eternal priesthood, spiritual law and new inner worship which is performed in spirit and in truth, foreshadowed and pictured. For just as the shadow on the wall reveals a man, so the law shows Christ and the new inward nature of His kingdom and its essence in way of His power, spirit, and truth.

Of this spiritual king, throne, kingdom, and power God speaks to David and says: “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son.” Further: “Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.” Solomon, a king of peace, foreshadowed this spiritual king, Christ, with his name and peaceable kingdom. Of this spiritual king and His reign Daniel prophesied and said: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up an abiding kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be given over to any other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these other peoples, and it shall stand forever.”

Of this spiritual king and His power, the Holy Spirit speaks through the Prophet and says: “But you, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the princes of Judah, for from you shall come forth

unto me the ruler who shall be Lord over my people, Israel, whose origin is from the beginning, and from eternity” (Micah 5:2). Of His power, throne, and kingdom the angel of God speaks to Mary and says: “The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” This Prince of Peace—who will enlarge the kingdom, and the realm of peace—will come simply and humbly, as the prophet says: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King is coming to you, . . . lowly, and riding upon an ass . . .”



A kingdom of peace

Thus this Prince of Peace and lowly King in Israel—who is likened to a lamb and was nevertheless a Lord of all lords and King of all kings—has inherited the royal throne, power, and scepter from the tribe of Judah according to the promise of God. As it is written: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come. Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

But since Shiloh—that is, Christ—has come, the power of the Jewish kingdom fell outwardly and was taken away from him, as Jacob the Patriarch prophesied. Isaiah also testifies of this: “For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings.” And the kingdom of Israel was indeed forsaken by its kings. They had no more power but were ruled and taxed by the Roman Emperor Augustus. Then the figurative royal throne, etc., was transformed into the spiritual and eternal kingdom of Christ.

But when Christ, a King of peace, came into the kingdom of Israel and was seated according to the promise of God on the throne of His father David, which He inherited, He then as a reigning Lord inaugurated in His kingdom a new spiritual regime and a new covenant which He sealed and instituted with His own blood.

For the Prince of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, which testament is not made according to the old one, which executes wrath, but He has a new peaceable kingdom in which mercy and forgiveness of sins operate, which glories in being against the law and against vengeance. As it is written: “Old things are passed away, and He who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” And again: “Old things are passed away and all things made new.”

This new Prince of Peace, who was born as King to be a Ruler in Israel, to rule Israel according to the content of the New Testament—this new Christ was also foreshadowed by Melchizedek, a king of righteousness. Christ not only inherited this promised royal throne of David, his scepter and power to be the reigning ruler in Israel, but He also received the eternal high priesthood from the tribe of Levi. Just as Christ inherited the royal throne from the tribe of Judah, he also inherited the office of High Priest from the tribe of Levi, which two high offices Melchizedek, a priest and king, foreshadowed. As it is written: “The Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind; you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” Therewith the annulling of the previous law takes place because of its weakness and uselessness.

But now that the priesthood was changed and passed on to Christ after Melchizedek’s order, as Paul says, there is made of necessity a change also in the law. Our King of Salem and Prince of Peace and eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, was confirmed in both these high offices with an oath by God; He inherited and received both the royal throne of David as an anointed Prince of Peace, and also the priesthood. This event has altered the old symbolic literal vengeful law, eliminated vengeance, annulled it and destroyed its power and has transformed it into love and mercy; this vengeance and punishment of the law is a burden that neither we nor our ancestors could have borne.

Destroy, or redeem?

For the letter of the law kills; but the Spirit makes alive. In the law sin takes the upper hand; in Christ, mercy takes even more the upper hand. Therefore He abolished vengeance. And just as a new sovereign who has just occupied a country or kingdom by inheritance in order to win the confidence of the subjects pardons and expunges all misconduct and transgressions and in addition releases all the prisoners, so also the new King in Israel annuls all the vengeance and punishment of the law in the kingdom that He inherited. He releases the prisoners, and pardons all their sins and transgressions. He makes the poor rich. He comforts the sorrowful and heals the wounded and has penitence and forgiveness of sins proclaimed among all peoples through the gracious gospel.

Note here how the office of government that executes vengeance contrasts with Christ’s teaching. Therefore, one who wants to be a magistrate must execute vengeance and punish evil. But whoever wants to be a Christian, ac-

ording to Christ’s teaching, shall not take revenge nor resist evil, and if he is struck he must suffer the consequences.

Political power, or suffering?

It is the function of government to rule, that of the Christian to drink the cup and to suffer. Therefore ruling and being a Christian are two different things. Those who do not remain in the teaching of Christ have no God. Those who abide in it have both the Father and the Son, as He Himself says: “If you abide in my word you are my true disciples.” With these words which Christ teaches us (Mt. 5) He has sufficiently abrogated vengeance in His kingdom and New Testament and has taught love for the enemy. And what Christ teaches us, He has Himself done and prayed on the cross for His enemies as an example for us that we are to follow in His footsteps.

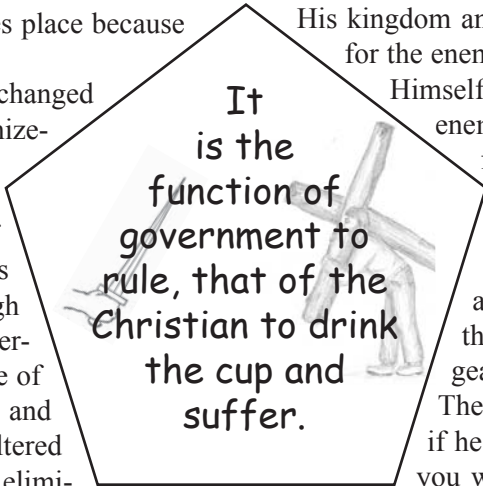
Paul has also forbidden taking revenge, saying: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. ... Dearly beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

When God wanted to avenge the innocent blood of His Son Jesus Christ, He did not use Christians, but the Roman power, the heathen emperor Titus. Thereby He punishes the perpetrators in the final destruction of Jerusalem, as Christ had previously prophesied. For when the Lord wants to punish, take revenge, or thwart evil, He does not use the fig tree and the grapevine which bear good fruit, or they would have to abandon their sweet fruit. But He takes the thorn bush, that bears sour fruit and which is rough and full of thorns. He does not take meek sheep to execute His office against evildoers, or they would have to abandon their manner and nature.

The [true] Christian church has never exercised vengeance or resisted evil. It has always suffered violence, drunk the cup of suffering, and stood under the cross and persecution to be conformed to its Lord and Master. For the servant is not above his master, and a Christian should be minded as Jesus Christ was minded.

Following the Lamb into suffering ...

If then a magistrate wants to be a Christian, he must be obedient to Christ’s teaching and follow His example. If



then a magistrate follows Christ's teaching and is minded as Jesus Christ was minded, he then may punish nobody according to the law or give vengeance, but must love the enemy, suffer blows, drink the cup of suffering, and also turn the other cheek, as Christ teaches. For the Christian church has not won the victory through domination, but through suffering and overcoming with patience, and so winning out over the world and gaining a martyr's crown through suffering.

Christ has redeemed us from the vengeance of the law and established a peaceable kingdom in which the vengeful sword is put away and broken, and warlike weapons have been recast. As Isaiah says of this peaceable people of the kingdom, anticipating the New Testament: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks. Neither shall they learn war anymore." Micah wrote similarly.

This does not refer to the world but to the peacemakers in the kingdom of Christ. They will maintain it in this manner because they are still wayfarers on earth. The Lord says to them: "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, do I give unto you." Isaiah gives further testimony to this and says: "No one will harm or corrupt anyone else on the whole of my holy mountain." And again: "No one will injure or kill anyone else on the whole of my holy mountain." Concerning these peaceable people in the kingdom of Christ, the Holy Spirit speaks through Hosea saying: "I will break the bow and the sword and remove all warfare from the land, and will have them dwell in safety."

[The true] church of God and of Christ has been obedient to the Teacher's word and has never had the power of the political government within it; nor has it ever called upon this power to eliminate the office of the hangman, but always suffered persecution until the reign of Constantine. He was baptized by Pope Sylvester, the Antichrist, the son of perdition, whose coming took place through the work of the loathsome devil.²

Therefore he received the name Christian falsely. For the Christian church was at that time transformed into the anti-Christian church. This apostasy was foretold by Paul. At this time the devil, who had hitherto been bound by the Christian church, was released from his prison and pro-

ceeded to lead the heathen astray in the four corners of the earth. For the shameful Babylonian whore has made all the heathen drunken from her golden beaker into which the wine of sorcery, that is, a false, seductive worship, has been poured.

And although this Babylonian whore lives vilely and shamefully in sin and follows a devilish doctrine, it is nevertheless called the Christian and apostolic church by supposed Christians. Hence the lawless abomination exists in the holy place where it should not be.

Don't try to mix revenge and forgiveness!

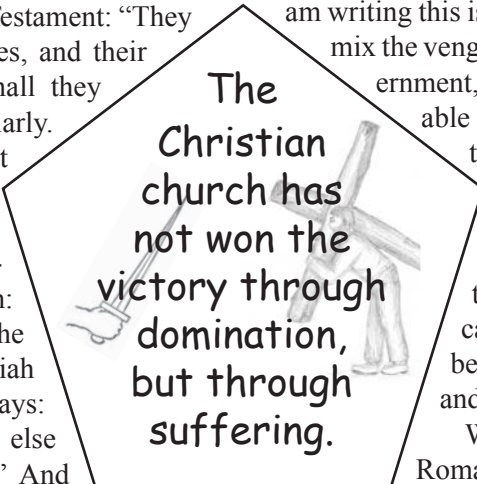
Whoever reads this, take heed of it. The reason why I am writing this is that now people want to introduce and mix the vengeful, bloodthirsty sword of secular government, along with its regime, into the peaceable kingdom of Christ after the manner of the ancient serpent, just as the devil in the beginning mixed lies with God's word. Thus they now want to mix together the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of Christ, even though one can see the evil that brought this mix into being, as well as the irretrievable misery and harm this mixing has precipitated.

When Constantine, the twenty-fourth Roman emperor, assumed and accepted the name Christian, which is indeed in itself a cause for lamenting, then the apostasy came, from which apostasy may God protect us eternally. Amen.

It has been sufficiently shown that in the New Testament Christ has annulled vengeance in the law of Moses and made it powerless and transformed everything into love and mercy. That is why the Holy Spirit likens to the raw winter the law which executes vengeance and demands body for body; but the time of grace, which Christ brought, in which through the gospel of grace only repentance and forgiveness of sins is preached, he likens to May and the pleasant summer.

For it is certain that Christ has paved this only and narrow path solely for His followers, and no emperor or king, no prince or lord, will find any other way to heaven than this way of the cross, which He Himself trod and which all those who will be saved must tread.

"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; and he makes known his covenant to them" (Ps. 25). ~



² The erroneous story of Constantine being baptized by Sylvester had been perpetuated as truth during the Middle Ages. Schnell had no way of knowing that it was a fabrication dating from about 800 AD. We leave it in the text to show how he and his brethren viewed the marriage of church and state.

Which kingdom are you a part of?

Do you bear a sword, or a cross?