

"Kingdom"

is a **political** metaphor, an analogical extension of monarchy vertically (referring to God's sovereignty [French], lordship [from Old English, related to "loaf" & "ward": as power, *dominion*; as territory ruled over, *seignior*]) & horizontally (referring to the traditional categories of what some television series have called "the natural kingdom").....This Thinksheet on "Ecology & Theology" looks at the power-authority-responsibility aspect of the monarchy image in its potential for optimizing the vertical & horizontal extrapolations.

1 The vertical is a **primary** image: God actually is Creator-Ruler of (as the Greeks said it) "all things," the universe & its "pleroma"-fulness (the Greek word in Ps.23.1 LXX [Ps. 24 in Hebrew & English]). The horizontals are **secondary** images, for it's still God who rules over these artificial subdivisions of his material earthly creation.

2 If God is ruler of the three "natural" kingdoms, why use the kingdom analogy for them? Because as divine law rules "all things," "natural laws" operating severally & seemingly discretely within each of the three material "realms" & giving them cohesion operate, as it were, *in loco dei*, in God's stead, with God's oversight (overrule) but neither direct action nor oversight (neglect). A rough analogy: The AP founder, Victor Freemont Lawson, had the foresight to divide \$6 million to Chicago Theological Seminary thus: half to build a magnificent complex adjacent to the U. of Chicago, half to maintain the buildings & landscape. In my analogy, "natural law" is the second half of the bequest. (Deists, I believe wrongly, reified the "natural law" metaphor: God creates but is absentee from creation, which runs along by itself [this was their favorite comparison] as a watch after it leaves the hands of the watchmaker).

3 But the theistic alternative to deism (viz, that God directly rules-reigns in "all things") is biblically & theologically & ethically & logically unacceptable. If that were true, why would Jesus have put God's kingdom-on-earth in the future (in the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom *come*....")?

And why do natural tragedies (eg, the present Mississippi-basin flooding) & human horrors (eg, day before yesterday, scores of Rio street-children shot by police, six dead) happen?

The Christian answer is that while God is present always & everywhere, he is not always so as King-Sovereign-Ruler. Sometimes, supremely in the Cross of Jesus, he's present as Victim. Often as Fellow-Sufferer with his suffering, "groaning" (Ro.8.22, "like the pain of childbirth") creation-biosphere.

4 Another way to approach this is to say that while the monarch metaphor for God is inevitable (political power analogizing divine power), it is insufficient & even dangerous. As sin is anything extended far enough in a straight line, the notion that every human conception is by divine intention is sinful. Is it blasphemous to say that the twelve million street-children crawling around Brazil's streets should not have been conceived? if conceived, not born? if born, not supported? I'm against infanticide, so I believe it would be blasphemous to propose that born street-children should be "exposed" (ie, abandoned to death). But not blasphemous to regret they weren't aborted (as they would have been in Japan, but not in Roman Catholic Brazil). And certainly not blasphemous (here all Roman Catholics would be with me) to regret their conception (though officially that church would oppose all "artificial" means to prevent their conception).

It certainly would have been blasphemous for the Brazilian government to continue its former policy of pumping urban unwanteds out into the rain forests, that precious natural & irreplaceable resource for earth's oxygen & an untold number of future pharmaceuticals (thousands of species disappearing that would be useful to us, aside from the moral question of our right to eliminate fellow-creatures).

5 Phragmites (marsh-killing grasses) is almost earth's most **cancerous** life. Not quite. We are that. And here we are royalty, kings/queens with the power-authority-responsibility to control our own breeding in the interest of prophylaxis, ie of protecting the biosphere from its enemy #1, us (eg, Rev.1.6, 5.10, & many OT reff. to humanity's royal responsibilities). Let's first be clear that we are to exercise our assignment to control our species' breeding: *how* we are to do that is a subsequent question. What the facts--eg, Brazil's 12,000,000 abandoned street children--attest is that we cannot trust God to do for us what God has put in our power to do for ourselves. We are the satraps (minor kings/queens) under the suzerainty treaties of Eden & Noah.

Phragmites, wind-born by Hurricane Bob, has been attacking our two Craigville ponds, which Doreen Spillane has for many years led the defense of. In the annual meeting of our hamlet's governing body yesterday, she said "The ponds are not ours. They belong to God, & we as stewards are responsible to him for what becomes of them." This is Psalm 24.1 properly reduced from global to local.

6 For Jesus, "the kingdom of God" (in Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek, God's sovereign lordship over his people & the whole creation) was in him making a decisive assault on evil, viz all impediments to the divine rule "as in heaven, so on earth" (in the Lord's Prayer, in miracles, in parables). The full-coming of that kingdom, which in some senses is in him "here" & in other senses "near," will mean **shalom** ("the peaceable kingdom" in which God's intention comes to fruition) & **simchah** (the joy ebbing up wherever & in whomever shalom is present in promise or fulfilment, in the Spirit).

What is innovative in Jesus vis-a-vis the kingdom of God is not **conceptual** but **personal**, his role in it (as in the address "Son of David," a messianic title reminiscent of the ancient Israelite royal ideal). The NT concept is OT: the coming earthly shalom will be for the whole creation (Hos.2.18, Is.11.6-9 & 65.17-25), not just for human beings: the King is One over all!