

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT FOR?

Words of a Wise King

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Wisdom 6:1-9; 21-24 of Solomon 1. Pet 3:13-17

Listen therefore, O kings, and understand;
learn, O judges of the ends of the earth.

Give ear, you that rule over multitudes,
and boast of many nations.

For your domination was given you from
the Lord,

and your sovereignty from the Most High,
who will search out your works and inquire
into your plans.

Because as servants of his kingdom you did
not rule rightly

nor keep the law,

nor walk according to the purpose of God
he will come upon you terribly and swiftly,
because severe judgment falls on those in
high places.

For the lowliest man may be pardoned in
mercy,

but mighty men will be mightily tested.

For the Lord of all will not stand in awe
of any one,

nor show deference to greatness;

because he himself made both small and
great,

and he takes thought for all alike.

But a strict inquiry is in store for the
mighty.

To you then, O monarchs, my words are
directed,

that you may learn wisdom and not
transgress.

(Wis. 6:1-9)

Therefore if you delight in thrones and
sceptres,

O! monarchs over the peoples,

honour wisdom, that you may reign for
ever.

I will tell you what wisdom is and how
she came to be,

and I will tell you what wisdom is and how
she came to be,

and I will hide no secrets from you,
but I will trace her course from the begin-
ning of creation,

and make the knowledge of her clear,

and I will not pass by the truth;

neither will I travel in the company of
sickly envy,

for envy does not associate with wisdom

A multitude of wise men is the salvation of
the world,

and a sensible king is the stability of his
people-

(Wis. 6:21-24)

The wisdom of Solomon is a book of the Ancient Old Testament, regarded by the Reformers as an apocryphal book, by Roman Catholics as Deuterocanonical, and by the Orthodox as canonical. We need not take it as a basis for doctrinal teaching, but it is one of the books which has profoundly influenced the mind of the Apostle Paul. It was written down in its present form not earlier than the 2nd century B. C. (Solomon died ca. 933 B.C.)

It belongs to the type of literature known as Wisdom literature. This way of writing began probably in Alexandria among Jews who fully imbibed western or Greek culture and philosophy.

a) The kings' task, or the job of

Government is a God-given task.

(Wisdom 3)

b) Governments are responsible to God and will be judged by God severely if they do not rule according to justice and the will and purpose of God. (Wisdom 4-9)

c) The wisdom necessary for the king is the content of the whole book of wisdom, and the passages we have chosen form part of the introduction.

We have to find our own way in this matter. Listen to the first epistle of Peter.

1 Pet. 2:13-17: Be subordinate to all human institutions for the sake of Lord—to the king as supreme civil authority, or to the governors as deputed by him to discipline the evil doers and to command those who do good; for this is the will of God that through practising the good you should silence the ignorant slander of the undiscerning, though being free, and at

the same time using your freedom not as a cloak for your evil deeds but as servants of God. Respect all human beings, love the Christian brotherhood, fear God, honour the king.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is the king today? Who is Government? Who is responsible to God for Government? Will we be judged for our neglect?

2. What is the will of God for our time? How do we find out what Government ought to do everywhere in the world?

3. What are our national goals? Evaluate them in the light of what you understand to be the will of God today in our country.

4. Is there any difference in the Christian's responsibility in the State between the first century A. D. and the present time?