

SUNDAY MORNING NOTE



“THE FORD MEN IN EARLY 21ST CENTURY”

“Holy Week: Of the Meaning of the Resurrection”

Dear Ford Men:

What does the **Resurrection** of *JESUS* really mean?

Is it inherently a “**political**” event?

Did *JESUS* of Nazareth come to establish an *eternal* kingdom—
as an **extension of King David's**, and was this very thing achieved with
His **Resurrection** from the grave?

Does *JESUS* and His **holy Church** now reign with him on earth, today— or are Christians supposed to simply live as though the earthly laws, governments, and the pleasure of this life are **ALL THAT THERE IS NOW**, but we Christians are to do nothing but wait on the Second Coming of *JESUS* ?

Are there any **Crosses** that we have to bear, today?

If so, what are they, and how are those **Crosses** manifested?

And what is the nexus between the **Cross** and **Easter**?

This morning, I read a Facebook post which Dr. Bernice King posted, titled “Resurrection Sunday.” She is the daughter of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And she posted a Quote of MLK’s, stating:

“Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the *strength* to *fight vigorously* the evils of the world in a *humble and loving* spirit.”

I think that this MLK quotation correctly summarizes his feelings and thoughts about **Christ’s resurrection** and what it actually meant: it means that We Christians should take strength from the fact that **Christ arose from the dead**, and, as such, He overcame **Evil**, as we should likewise proactively overcome the same **Evils** in our own day.

Recently, someone posted a YouTube and a Facebook post with a *quotation* from the renowned Reformed pastor John MacArthur, claiming that, from his perspective, **Martin Luther King, Jr. was “not a Christian.”** See, attached link:

“John MacArthur, Christianity Today and MLK: Was Martin Luther King Jr. a Christian?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=084M3a0vBhs&si=OocTiai_6LjZYiYr&fbclid=IwAR2dHs_wQelpRVAUN394uS5o31x0SJatEn_JhWZ-VomczFqavx7hW8T2f04_aem_AQ63TGzkc-GUrP6BjfvRYfFAIfa71z4xGwz0Cv-zk7eOLSBvPGemLEBuJqUmlmPgPGMmFK1T8WpKizCigF6UodwF

While I do not take a *bellicose attitude* towards my white or black Christian brothers who take this perspective, I do believe that I have a very firm theological basis for *disagreeing* with them.

For one thing, I have realized that the **(a) material and social needs** and **(b) constitutional-legal-political needs** of a select group of persons can be **drastically different**, thus requiring pastors, elders, and ecclesiastical leaders to emphasize different aspect of the Sacred Scriptures, **according to the needs of people** or the assemblies or the congregations which they are leading.

For example, in the landmark U. S. Supreme Court opinion in *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1857), Chief Justice Roger B. Taney wrote for the majority of his colleagues on that esteemed Court, stating:

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)

Id. at p. 404-405, stating:

The question before us is whether the class of persons described in the plea in abatement compose **a portion of this people**, and are **constituent members of this sovereignty**?

We think they **are not**, and that they **are not included**, and were **not intended to be included**, under the **word "citizens" in the Constitution**, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. On the contrary, they were at that time considered as a subordinate and inferior class of beings who had been **subjugated by the dominant race**, and, **whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority**, and had **no rights or privileges** but such as those who held the power and the Government might choose to grant them.

Id. at p. 407, stating:

It becomes necessary, therefore, to determine who were citizens of the several States when the Constitution was adopted. And in order to do this, we must recur to the Governments and institutions of the thirteen colonies when they separated from Great Britain and formed new sovereignties, and took their places in the family of independent nations. We must inquire who, at that time, were recognised as the people or citizens of a State whose rights and liberties had been outraged by the English Government, and who declared their independence and assumed the powers of Government to defend their rights by force of arms.

In the opinion of the court, the legislation and histories of the times, and the language used in the Declaration of Independence, show that neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves nor their descendants, **whether they had become free or not**, were then acknowledged **as a part of the people**, nor intended to be included in the general words used in that memorable instrument.

It is difficult at this day to realize the state of public opinion in relation to that unfortunate race which prevailed in the civilized and enlightened portions of the world at the time of the **Declaration of Independence** and when the **Constitution of the United States** was framed and adopted. But the public history of every European nation displays it in a manner too plain to be mistaken.

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race either in social or political relations, and so far inferior that they had **no rights which the white man was bound to respect**, and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. **He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic whenever a profit**

could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded **as an axiom in morals as well as in politics which no one thought of disputing or supposed to be open to dispute**, and men in every grade and position in society daily and habitually acted upon it in their private pursuits, as well as in matters of public concern, without doubting for a moment the correctness of this opinion....

Id. at p. 420, stating:

The African race, however, born in the country, did owe allegiance to the Government, whether they were slave or free, but **it is repudiated**, and **rejected** from the duties and obligations of citizenship in marked language.

How, then, may the social, material, constitutional, and legal conditions of black or African American Christians be suitable for a **genre of Christian sermons** or **Christian theological doctrines**—tailored by **White pastors** and **White theologians**-- that do not touch upon Black America's economic impoverishment, social dislocations, constitutional derivations, and legal impairments?

This question does not insinuate that the sermons and theological doctrines of White Christians are wrong. Rather, it does mean that their emphasis is often *not suited to the dire needs of black/African American people.*

The **Resurrection of Christ** means, as Augustine of Hippo has concluded that "[t]he Church, then, begins its reign with Christ now in

the living and in the dead,”¹ and that “the saints reign with Christ during the ... time of His first coming.”²

And so, When Christ was resurrected from the Dead— as we celebrate **this Easter**—we are to understand that, “**All power is given unto me in heaven an in earth.**” (Matthew 28:18).

The Resurrection- **Easter Sunday!**

Christ now reigns....

The **saints now reign** with him....

And **how precisely does this reign now take place?**

The **House of Abraham** is the marker: “they shall keep the way of the LORD, **to do justice and judgment**; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (Genesis 18:19)

Similarly, in *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo says that the saints shall judge and render judgment, stating: “**what the Church does... in those days, in the words, ‘And I saw seats and them that sat upon them, and judgment was given.’**”³

But, then, **Augustine of Hippo** goes on to describe how, “**justice and judgment**” are fundamentally what it means to be a Christian, stating:

¹ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 725.

² Ibid., p. 727.

³ Ibid. (quoting Revelation 20: 4).

Now, he does **judgment and justice** who lives aright.... Therefore to do **justice and judgment** is of God.... Therefore 'in the midst of the earth,' that is, while our soul is shut up in this earthly body, **judgment and justice** are to be done, which shall be profitable for us hereafter, when 'every one shall receive according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.'⁴

I often disagree with some of my Christian brethren who focus on doctrine, as opposed to **orthopraxy** or **right practice**, and who fail to recognize that orthopraxy is what really, really, really counts—see **Luke 10: 25-37**.

I am reminded now, suddenly, of a scathing critique given by R. H. Tawney in his classic work, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, whereby, in the midst of the new, burgeoning transatlantic slave trade, the Church of England **could find nothing better to do or think about than to argue over church doctrine**, than to focus any attention upon the true meaning of **"who is my neighbor?"** and to alleviate the injustices then being done to **the Native Americans**, whose lands were being fraudulently taken, and upon the African, who was being snatched from his homeland and taken to, and enslaved in, North America.

Now came **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**, with a radical new perspective on the Christian religion, and for Dr. King the **"Resurrection of Jesus Christ"** meant that he, as a Child of God, had license to go out

⁴ Ibid., p. 577.

into the world and do “justice and judgment,” from the vantage ground and perspective of the descendants of African slaves.

I know that the from the perspective of White Christians, grave economic insecurities also compel them into a sort of “pseudo-conflict” with the Black-led Civil Rights Movement, and this fuels the insecurities and the comments made by Pastor John MacArthur and others—“pouring over doctrine,” that is often taken out of context.

But, in terms of Christianity—the differences in emphasis between the “White Church” and the “Black Church” are very real, and they have an economic foundation which cannot be ignored, if those differences are to be correctly understood. See, e.g., Nancy DiTomaso, *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality Without Racism* (New York, N.Y.: The Russell Sage Foundation, 2013).

But the point that I am making, is that the RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST means that He now reigns—and that black/ African American Christians ought to reign with him, in their quest for freedom, as did Frederick Douglass, as did Martin Luther King, Jr.

This in no way contradicts the fundamental EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLE—which is often the emphasis of many White Churches-- that a man must be BORN AGAIN to enter into the Kingdom of God (John 3: 5).

But it does mean that being *BORN AGAIN* includes, as Augustine of Hippo has acknowledged, doing “Justice and Judgment” during our present lifetimes.

This is what it means to be *BORN AGAIN* it means to be **RESURRECTED IN CHRIST!**

Have a Happy Easter!

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