

II. The Reformed Two Kingdoms Doctrine: An Explanation and Defense

By David VanDrunen with Response by Jeffrey C. Waddington

The reason for interest in the topic of this article does not seem difficult to discover. Reformed Christians wonder, especially in an election year, how they should think and act politically, in ways that reflect the truths of God's revelation while also living peacefully under a common political system with unbelievers. They wonder how they should glorify the one true God with all honesty, industriousness, and justice in their earthly vocations while not refusing to learn from and do business with their non-Christian neighbors. Though historically the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine was intimately connected to many distinctive pillars of the Reformed system of faith and practice, it seems to be the perennial Christian debates about the "public square" or "Christianity and culture" that have brought the two kingdoms doctrine back onto the Reformed radar after a period of neglect. The Reformed two kingdoms doctrine provides a powerful model for working through such important questions and, I believe, is a biblically compelling paradigm that should resonate with how many Reformed believers already live and that has great potential to clarify and reinvigorate Reformed theology and ethics.

I have two main goals in this article. The first is to argue that a two kingdoms doctrine is a standard part of orthodox Reformed theology. If this claim is true, then rejection of the two kingdoms doctrine *per se* entails rejection of at least one aspect of the Reformed system of doctrine (and perhaps other aspects that are organically connected to the two kingdoms idea, particularly in Christology and ecclesiology). The second goal is even more important, for me at least: to argue that the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine is well grounded in Scripture and can be helpfully appropriated and applied by Reformed believers today. In pursuing these goals, I hope to provide a good deal of evidence against the slanderous accusation, made by some people in recent years, that the two kingdoms doctrine compromises God's reign over all things and discourages Christians

from energetic engagement in their earthly vocations. To the contrary, Reformed theologians developed the two kingdoms doctrine precisely in order to explain how God in Christ reigns over all the universe and why earthly vocations are lawful and God-glorifying. The two kingdoms doctrine, I believe, continues to be important today for reasons like these.

To accomplish these goals I first offer a brief discussion of what the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine is and present evidence of its wide acceptance among Reformed theologians for a very long time. Then I make my own biblical argument for this doctrine, one that seeks both to modify the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century versions of the doctrine in certain respects (related to the revised views on church-state relations in most contemporary Reformed circles) and to fortify the scriptural basis for the doctrine, primarily through a stronger connection to the biblical covenants. I conclude with a number of practical considerations that I

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hope will help readers reflect on the concrete usefulness of the two kingdoms doctrine.¹

THE TWO KINGDOMS DOCTRINE IN THE HISTORY OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

Though I wish to spend the bulk of my space in this article presenting a biblical case for the two kingdoms doctrine, in this first section I discuss some historical issues. My goals in this section are primarily three: to offer a basic explanation of what the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine is, to offer a number of pieces of evidence for the existence and practical importance of this doctrine in the earlier Reformed tradition, and to discuss the obscuring of the doctrine in more recent Reformed thought. I hope to provide strong evidence that, though people are free to disagree with the two kingdoms doctrine or to debate its practical implications, there is a Reformed two kingdoms doctrine that has been a standard part of the Reformed tradition, and that any claim that the two kingdoms doctrine is somehow at odds with classic Reformed theology is simply untenable. To put it more strongly, to oppose the two kingdoms doctrine is to oppose a standard aspect of orthodox Reformed theology.² (Opposing the two kingdoms doctrine in general, I note, is different from disagreeing with a given theologian's particular way of explaining, defending, and applying the doctrine.)

By "the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine," I refer to the idea that God in his Son rules all things, but rules

them in a twofold way. On the one hand, God, as creator and sustainer, rules the natural and social orders, even using ordinary human institutions such as the state as instruments of his reign. On the other hand, God, as redeemer in Christ, bestows salvation upon a chosen people, whom he rules unto everlasting life through the ministry of his church. The two kingdoms, therefore, correspond to this twofold divine rule. The terminology used in Reformed theology to name these two kingdoms was not fixed. John Calvin, we will see momentarily, used the terms "civil" and "spiritual," respectively. Many later Reformed theologians referred to the "kingdom of power" and "kingdom of grace." In my own recent writing and teaching I have come to prefer the terms "common" and "redemptive" (terminology I will use in my discussion of biblical teaching below).

Many people wonder about the relation of this Reformed two kingdoms doctrine to the "two cities" idea developed by Augustine. The basic answer, I believe, is that the "two kingdoms" and "two cities" are distinct, though compatible, doctrines. Augustine saw the two cities as ultimately eschatological realities. All believers belong to the city of God while all unbelievers belong to the other city. The former is characterized by love of God above all, while love of the creature above the creator marks the latter. In the present life, citizens of the city of God are on pilgrimage in this world and mingle with unbelievers, even sharing many things in common here and now, even though their ultimate commitments and eschatological destinies are radically different. Neither the church nor the state can be identified with either of these cities, for both are mixed communities populated by believers and unbelievers.³

In developing their two kingdoms doctrine, Reformed theologians were not rejecting this compelling Augustinian vision, nor offering a modification of it. Their two kingdoms doctrine, rather, was seeking to address a somewhat different issue, namely, how God exercises his rule in the world. Thus, while neither church nor state can be simply equated with the spiritual and civil kingdoms, Reformed theologians closely associated church and state with these two kingdoms, respectively, as important means for the exercise of God's rule. Also, Christians are citizens of both kingdoms, as subjects of both God's providential and redemptive reigns (whereas in Augustine's scheme they could be citizens of one city, and one city only).⁴

In these next paragraphs I offer a few examples of this Reformed two kingdoms doctrine in operation among notable theologians of the sixteenth and especially seventeenth centuries. I will not give any attention to the

1. For a shorter article that follows the same basic outline and same basic argument as this one, see David VanDrunen, "The Two Kingdoms and Reformed Christianity: Why Recovering an Old Paradigm is Historically Sound, Biblically Grounded, and Practically Useful," *Pro Rege* 40 (March 2012): 31–38. My thanks to the editor for her permission to use and revise parts of that article in the present one.

2. I have presented a much more detailed case for these claims in David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

3. See generally Augustine, *The City of God*, available in many translations and editions.

4. James K. A. Smith has critiqued my interpretation of Augustine in a recent article: "Reforming Public Theology: Two Kingdoms or Two Cities?" *CTJ* 47 (2012): 122–37. I do not find anything here, however, that compels me to modify this paragraph (which is the position I tried to explain in *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*). Augustine's two cities doctrine and the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine are not competitors, but complements. One unfortunate move that Smith makes is to portray an embrace of the two kingdoms as an embrace of Luther or Lutheranism, despite the fact that, in *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, I distinguish Lutheran and Reformed versions of the two kingdoms idea and focus attention almost exclusively on the Reformed version.

two kingdoms doctrine as developed in other traditions, such as the Lutheran, whose conception of the doctrine was similar to the Reformed in many respects, but not identical. Neither will I explore different ways in which various Reformed theologians applied the two kingdoms doctrine. My goal here simply is to show the presence of the basic doctrinal idea, along with just a little bit of theological context.

To mention one familiar sixteenth-century Reformed theologian, John Calvin explicitly taught a two kingdoms doctrine. He writes, for example: “Let us observe that in man government is twofold: the one spiritual, by which the conscience is trained to piety and divine worship; the other civil, by which the individual is instructed in those duties which, as men and citizens, we are bound to perform.... The former species has reference to the life of the soul, while the latter relates to matters of the present life, not only to food and clothing, but to the enacting of laws which require a man to live among his fellows purely, honourably, and modestly.... We may call the one the spiritual, the other the civil kingdom.”⁵ One way in which Calvin applied this doctrine was through distinguishing the work of church and state. He explains that the church’s authority is a “spiritual government” and is “altogether distinct from civil government,” due to the “distinction and dissimilarity between ecclesiastical and civil power” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.11.1, 3). His later treatment of civil government also utilizes the two kingdoms distinction and warns against those who “imprudently confound these two things, the nature of which is altogether different,” for “the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very widely separated” (*Institutes*, 4.20.1).

Such a two kingdoms doctrine was alive and well in the mature Reformed orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. First I mention two eminent theologians from the Continent, Francis Turretin of Geneva and Wilhelmus à Brakel of the Netherlands.

Turretin’s work provides an example not only of how Reformed theologians continued to see the two kingdoms doctrine as crucial for understanding the work of church and state but also of how they grounded the doctrine in Reformed Christology. At the beginning of his discussion of Christ’s kingly office, Turretin writes: “Before all things we must distinguish the twofold kingdom, belonging to Christ: one natural or essential; the other mediatorial and economical.” In other words, God, through Christ his Son, rules the world in a twofold manner. The Son’s “natural or essential” kingdom is “over all creatures” while the “mediatorial and economical” kingdom is “terminated specially on the church.”

The former pertains to his rule over the whole world through creation and providence, and the latter pertains to his rule over his church through the work of redemption.⁶ Turretin later explicitly uses this distinction to explain the difference between civil and ecclesiastical authority. Among many differences he mentions, he says that the former is grounded in God’s work of creation and can be held by any person, while the latter is grounded in Christ’s work of redemption and should be held only by Christians (Turretin, 3.278–80).

The same doctrine is evident in à Brakel, a prominent late seventeenth-century figure in the Dutch Second Reformation. He begins his treatment of Christ’s kingly office by identifying a threefold kingship of Christ: “(1) as God (being coessential with the Father and the Holy Spirit), He rules over the *kingdom of power*, to which all creatures belong; (2) as Mediator He rules over the *kingdom of grace* upon earth; and (3) as Ruler over the *kingdom of glory* in heaven, of which both angels and all the elect are subjects.”⁷ The first two of these categories correspond to the traditional two kingdoms, while the third refers to the final, consummated rule of Christ “after the end of this world” (à Brakel, 1.564). Regarding the kingdom of power (Calvin’s “civil kingdom”), à Brakel refers to Christ as “King over everything,” though “it is the Lord’s wisdom and goodness to govern all things mediately, and thus to govern one man by means of another. For this purpose the Lord has instituted governments... (1.561). Regarding the kingdom of grace (Calvin’s “spiritual kingdom”), à Brakel calls Christ “the King of His Church,” for God “has established a special King to rule over this [special] people: the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator.” Christ exercises his reign over the kingdom of grace “(1) in the gathering of His church...; 2) in protecting her against her enemies...; and 3) in governing her by His Word and Spirit.” This kingdom of grace “is not of this world, but heavenly,” and its blessings and weapons are “spiritual,” rather than carnal and of this world (1.562–63). He goes on to discuss the distinction between church and state in light of these doctrines. He says, for example, that “church and state are fully separate from each other. The one is heavenly and the other earthly.... The one is not to meddle in the affairs of the other” (1.565).

5. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 3.19.15.

6. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992–97), 2.486.

7. Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, vol. 1, trans. Bartel Elshout, ed. Joel R. Beeke (originally published in Dutch in 1700; Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 1999), 561.

Turning from the Continent to the Scottish Presbyterians we find the same ideas present. Examples are abundant, for instance, in Westminster divines Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie, whose defense of the two kingdoms doctrine was often driven by their defense of Presbyterian church government and authority, against the threat of encroachment by the civil magistrate. Gillespie distinguishes the “twofold kingdom of Jesus Christ” in the following way: “one, as he is the eternal Son of God, reigning together with the Father and the Holy Ghost over all things; and so the magistrate is his vicegerent, and holds his office of and under him; another, as Mediator and Head of the church, and so the magistrate doth not hold his office of and under Christ as his vicegerent.” Shortly thereafter he speaks of how “orthodox Protestant writers” “assert the great difference between that which the Scripture saith of Christ as he is the eternal Son of God, and that which it saith of him as he is Mediator,” and how they particularly “assert a two fold kingdom of Jesus Christ,” in contrast to Socinians who “stiffly hold that Christ hath but one kingdom.”⁸ In light of such distinctions, Rutherford remarks: “That presbyteries meddle with civil business, is a slander. They meddle with public scandals that offendeth in Christ’s kingdom.”⁹

This teaching about the two kingdoms found its way into the Westminster Standards as well. One example is in the explanations of the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, which embrace the terminology of “kingdom of power,” “kingdom of grace,” and “kingdom of glory” observed above in à Brakel (WSC 102; WLC 191). The catechisms also, when dealing with Christ in his mediatorial office of king, focus upon his building up and defense of his church (WSC 26; WLC 45). The Westminster Confession of Faith 25.2 can even say that the “visible church” “is the

kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ” (that is, the kingdom of grace). Concerning the relationship of church and state, the Confession states: “Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary” (WCF 33:5 in the original; 33:4 in the American revision).

The Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of course, did not share the view of religious freedom that most Reformed Christians embrace today, and did not apply the two kingdoms doctrine in that direction. Even while perspectives on religious freedom shifted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, making traditional two kingdoms distinctions remained common in Reformed theology through this period. In the United States, prominent Presbyterian theologians—from the North, South, and Border States—embraced the two kingdoms doctrine, grounded in the nature of Christ’s kingship.¹⁰ In the Netherlands, Herman Bavinck affirmed that “the kingdom of Christ is twofold,”¹¹ and even Abraham Kuyper, often invoked as the great opponent of the two kingdoms, utilized many aspects of the traditional two kingdoms doctrine in his creative theological work on issues of culture and worldview. Especially noteworthy here, I believe, is how he rooted the realities of common grace and special grace, respectively, in the work of the Son as mediator of creation and as mediator of redemption.¹² Kuyper’s work, in my judgment, offers some interesting and helpful ways forward for revitalizing the two kingdoms doctrine today. For example, Kuyper helpfully associated common and special grace with the civil and spiritual kingdoms, respectively, and understood the civil kingdom in more expansive terms than the work of the state (the main focus among earlier theologians).

These last points bring me to a few concluding thoughts for this section. For one thing, it is unhelpful when people suggest a dichotomy between holding a “two kingdoms” view and being “Kuyperian,” as if a person could only be one or the other. Kuyper himself was largely working within two kingdoms categories, and his thought can be plausibly regarded as one particular utilization of the traditional Reformed two kingdoms doctrine. Reformed people today who consider themselves Kuyperian, and who mean by this that they seek to glorify and serve God in all their vocations, have no reason to look upon the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine as their enemy. (It has been encouraging to me, in fact, to hear many people raised in “Kuyperian” circles to tell me, after learning about the Reformed two

8. George Gillespie, *Aaron’s Rod Blossoming* (London, 1646; reprinted Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1985), 90.

9. Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex* (1644; reprinted Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1982), 216.

10. E.g., see Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 599–609; Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (reprinted Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 550–51; and Stuart Robinson, *The Church of God as an Essential Element of the Gospel* (reprinted Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2009), 65–66 (Part III, Section 5).

11. Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 371–72.

12. See Abraham Kuyper, “Common Grace,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 165–201. A full translation of the larger work from which this is taken, *De Gemeene Gratie*, is to be published in the near future.

kingdoms doctrine, that this is what they have always believed, but did not know what to call it.)

A second concluding thought, however, is that some real opposition to traditional two kingdoms ideas has arisen and even flourished over the last century, among many of those who see themselves as followers of Kuyper. I refer to these as “neo-Calvinists” (others use the term “neo-Kuyperian”)—this is a common name and I do not intend to use it pejoratively. It is not my burden here to critique critics of the two kingdoms, but to set forth a positive case for the doctrine, so I will say just the following briefly. I think it is important to note that many things taught by prominent neo-Calvinists are theologically important and fully consistent with the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine, such as the goodness of creation, the pervasive effects of the fall, the legitimacy of all lawful human institutions and vocations, and the antithesis between believing and unbelieving thought. But notable proponents of neo-Calvinism, as I have argued elsewhere, display apparent ignorance of the traditional Reformed two kingdoms doctrine, identify just one kingdom of God (whose coming coincides with the redemption of all things even now), and refuse to see the visible church as the unique manifestation of the redemptive kingdom of Christ in the present age.¹³ (I will interact briefly in the next section with some supporting ideas often defended by neo-Calvinist writers, such as the notion that redemption in Christ allows Christians to take up Adam’s original task aright, so as even to build the stuff of the new creation here and now). Through its considerable influence, especially in historically Reformed Christian colleges and in Christian day schools, neo-Calvinism has had an important role to play in the eclipse of the two kingdoms doctrine in many Reformed circles in the twentieth century.

A BIBLICAL ARGUMENT FOR RECOVERING THE REFORMED TWO KINGDOMS DOCTRINE

In this section I present a biblical case for the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine.¹⁴ It is a revised and expanded case: revised in that I agree with the changes to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Belgic Confession, adopted by many Reformed and Presbyterian churches, regarding religious freedom and the civil magistrate’s duties with respect to religion, and expanded in that I place the two kingdoms doctrine in the broader context of biblical covenant theology and thereby seek to situate it more explicitly in the fabric of the entire story of Scripture. I first discuss the doctrine in relation to the pre-lapsarian covenant of works, then identify its

origins in the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants in the Old Testament, and then conclude by considering the nature of the two kingdoms in these last days, that is, in the New Testament era.

The Pre-Fall Foundations of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine

Why begin a biblical consideration of the two kingdoms doctrine with the opening chapters of Genesis? It is not because God created Adam and Eve to live in two kingdoms in Eden; indeed, Genesis 2:15 itself portrays Eden itself as God’s holy temple,¹⁵ and if ever there has been a one kingdom setting in human history, this was it. The reason I consider the doctrine here is particularly because Genesis 1–2 describes the beginning of the human cultural task and because the biblical description of Christ as the Last Adam makes understanding the First Adam theologically important. The biblical Two Adams teaching, in fact, manifests one significant difficulty in the neo-Calvinist paradigm and offers, I believe, an initial reason to prefer the two kingdoms doctrine to it.

Reformed Christianity has traditionally referred to the relationship that God made with Adam before the fall into sin as the “covenant of works” (or “covenant of life”). I assume that I do not need to defend this doctrine for an article in *The Confessional Presbyterian*, but it is worth quoting WCF 7.2 and then adding a few observations: “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.” My first observation is that this obedience required of Adam included (perhaps we might even say, especially consisted in) the so-called cultural mandate of Genesis 1:26, 28. God made human beings in his image in order to “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens

13. Among popular neo-Calvinist books, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (1st ed.) (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); and Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

14. For a more extensive biblical case, which follows the same basic outline as that presented here, see David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), especially chapters 2–5.

15. For evidence, see e.g. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 70–76.

and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”¹⁶ Thus he commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Of course the special commands concerning the Garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Genesis 2:15–17 brought Adam’s fidelity into special focus, but Adam’s “perfect and personal obedience” would obviously have included his broader cultural commission.

A second observation is that the “life” promised to Adam for obedience was an eschatological life and not just ongoing life in the original creation. (To be clear, since some people misunderstand Reformed two kingdoms proponents at this point, I am not saying that God would annihilate the first creation and make a new creation *ex nihilo*, but that God would bring the protological first creation to consummation in an eschatological new creation.) Most Reformed theologians came to hold this position, and I heartily endorse it. Creation was “very good” (Gen 1:31), but God never intended it, in its original form, to be the final home of his human image-bearers. Reformed theologians have rightly seen evidence for this idea in the symbolic presence of the tree of life in Eden and the sabbatical structure of the creation week. God himself finished his work in this world and then entered his triumphant rest in Genesis 1:1–2:3, and if Adam was truly to image God in his exercise of dominion, he too would have to work in this world, not indefinitely and purposelessly, but toward the completion of his work and the attainment of an eschatological rest with his Lord. The Epistle to the Hebrews endorses this understanding of Genesis 1–2 when it affirms, “it was not to angels that God subjected *the world to come*,” and then goes on immediately to quote Psalm 8 to speak of the creation of man (2:5–8). In other words, God, from the beginning, destined human beings to rule the eschatological new creation. The author of Hebrews proceeds to point to Christ as the one in whom this original destiny is finally fulfilled after the mess the human race made of this world (2:9–10). Christ’s work of salvation did not establish a new destiny

for human beings, but achieved the attainment of the original destiny after Adam failed to do so. In Christ we may indeed share God’s seventh-day rest with him after all (4:1–11).

My third and final observation is a necessary consequence of the first two: Adam’s original cultural mandate was inextricably linked to the promised reward of eschatological life, conditioned upon his obedience to the mandate. This means that if Adam were to fail, and thereby disqualify the human race for eschatological life in the new creation, the mandate in its original form would, strictly speaking, no longer be promulgated to Adam or anybody else. The original cultural mandate without an eschatological goal as reward for perfect obedience would no longer be the original mandate *per se*. Of course, Adam did fail and disqualify the human race for eschatological life in the new creation (Gen 3). Now, it may be (and, I will argue below, it is indeed the case) that God would give a similar cultural mandate to the fallen human race in a different context, but this would not be *Adam’s* mandate taken up anew.

This last point brings me to the initial issue, mentioned above, at which I believe it necessary to engage contemporary neo-Calvinism critically. While popular contemporary neo-Calvinist writers do not teach that redemption in Christ brings us back to Eden to take up Adam’s task afresh, they do teach that redemption in Christ enables us to take up Adam’s cultural task again in the midst of history,¹⁷ with the result that (at least in the case of some of these writers) our redeemed work actually helps to build the stuff of the new creation.¹⁸

That this has proven to be a vision of history inspiring and compelling for many Christians cannot be denied, but it is biblically untenable for several reasons. For one thing, Adam’s mandate required “perfect” obedience, and however sanctified contemporary Christians may be in the performance of their vocations, their very imperfect cultural accomplishments are not really the fulfillment of *Adam’s* mandate. And in any case, Scripture tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ was the *Last* Adam (1 Cor 15:45; cf. 1 Cor 15:21–22, 47–49; Rom 5:12–19; Heb 2:5–10). In the verses just cited, the New Testament authors are clear that Christ, as *Last* Adam, completed the work of the first Adam, perfectly and once-for-all. He has obeyed God’s law flawlessly, exercised perfect dominion over this world (including the conquest of Satan rather than capitulation to him), and entered into the eschatological new creation by his resurrection and ascension. And if Christ is the *Last* Adam, no one else after him is another Adam. We share citizenship and an inheritance in the new creation by faith in Christ, whose

16. Quotations of Scripture are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

17. E.g., see Wolters, *Creation Regained* (1st ed.), 11, 57–60, 63–64.

18. E.g., see Plantinga, *Engaging God’s World*, 137–38. Anthony A. Hoekema puts it, “Through our kingdom service the building materials for that new earth are now being gathered;” see *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 287.

work to achieve this great reward for us is fully sufficient. It is for these reasons that I have suggested that those who hold traditional Reformed views of Christ's active obedience and justification by faith alone should feel uncomfortable about the neo-Calvinist paradigm (and favorably inclined toward the two kingdoms doctrine, for reasons I need to explain more fully below).¹⁹ I say this not to be uncharitable,²⁰ and certainly not to deny that many neo-Calvinist brothers and sisters hold orthodox Reformed views of soteriology, but simply because we should all strive for theological consistency and I trust that all who do love the Reformed doctrine of salvation would not wish (even unintentionally) to hold a view of Christianity and culture in tension with it.

As I come to the end of the subsection, where does this leave us? In general, these biblical considerations should leave us profoundly grateful for God's sending his Son to be the Last Adam and win for us an eschatological inheritance that we could never have attained otherwise. But with regard to the Christianity and culture question specifically, it should lead us to the conclusion that the responsibilities God has given to us (after the fall) to engage in a broad range of cultural vocations in this world must be conceived as something different from Adam's original mandate (even if they are similar to it in important respects). Thus I now turn to the rest of Scripture to explore how to understand humanity's cultural vocation after the fall and its relation to the work of salvation in Christ. The two kingdoms doctrine helpfully addresses these issues.

The Origins of the Two Kingdoms in the Old Testament

In the previous section I laid some important groundwork for the two kingdoms doctrine by examining some issues related to the pre-fall covenant of works (though pre-fall Adam did not live in two kingdoms). Now I explore the actual origins of the *two* kingdoms of God through the lens of the biblical covenants God has enacted after the fall. To accomplish this, I believe it very important to distinguish two basic covenants God has made with human beings in the post-fall world, a covenant of common grace, by which God providentially maintains this world and all human beings in it, and the covenant of grace (whose major administrations are the Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and new), by which God brings salvation to his chosen people through Jesus Christ. My basic argument is that the two kingdoms correspond to these two covenants. These two covenants are the means by which God in his Son exercises his twofold rule.

By the *covenant of common grace* I refer to God's

covenant with Noah after the flood, recorded in Genesis 8:20–9:17.²¹ Three characteristics of this covenant identify it as a covenant of common grace (and thus distinct from the covenant of grace) and also address the issue left unanswered at the end of the previous subsection, namely, how we are to understand the human cultural vocation after the fall (since Adam's cultural mandate, *per se*, does not apply).

A first characteristic of this Noachic covenant is that it is *universal*. Literally nothing in all creation is left out of this covenant. Its provisions extend to the "ground" or "earth" (Gen 8:21; 9:13) and to the very cosmic forces of nature ("seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night"—8:22). It includes not only every subsequent human being ("I [God] establish my covenant with you [Noah] and your offspring after you"—9:9) but even "every living creature of all flesh" (9:10, 15, 16, 17). The Noachic covenant differs from the covenant of grace, therefore, in that the latter is particular, not universal: the various administrations of the covenant of grace separate a part of the human race from the rest of it and bestow unique blessings upon a special, chosen people.

A second characteristic of the Noachic covenant is that through it God promises only the blessing of

19. See *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 21; cf. 50–51.

20. To my regret, Keith Mathison claimed that it was uncharitable, in his otherwise gentlemanly review of *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*; see <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/zk-or-not-zk-question-review-david-vandrums-living-gods-two-kingdoms/>. (Though Mathison says here that I was uncharitable in claiming that only proponents of the two kingdoms doctrine could adhere to the Reformed doctrine of justification consistently, what I actually suggested was that if one adheres to the Reformed doctrine of justification consistently one should not find these neo-Calvinist views attractive; Mathison, therefore, subtly and presumably unintentionally, changed the meaning of what I wrote.)

21. Many Reformed theologians have taken this post-diluvian covenant with Noah as an administration of the covenant of grace, for what I believe are insufficient reasons. But among notable Reformed theologians who interpret this covenant as a distinct covenant of common grace (without necessarily using that terminology), as I do here, see e.g. Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, 2 vols., trans. William Crookshank (1822; reprint, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1990), 2.239 (originally published in 1677); à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, 4.384; A. Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1945), 11–100 (originally published in 1902–04); Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 3, *Sin and Salvation in Christ*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 218–19; Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 56, 62–63; Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 164, 244–62; and Michael Horton, *God of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), chap. 6.

preservation. More specifically, in distinction from the covenant of grace with its promise of redemption from the curse of sin, the covenant with Noah only promises to preserve the world and the human race from the worst effects of sin and to maintain some measure of order in the cosmos and in human society. As noted above, God promises to preserve the regular cycles of nature, the integrity of the ground, and the perpetuation of human and animal life from the destructive effects of a worldwide flood (8:22; 9:11–16). He also promises to keep safe boundaries between animals and humans (9:2) and ordains the continuation of human procreation, eating, and the administration of justice (9:1–7). But God offers no promise to forgive sin or to bring an eschatological new creation. Even the sign of the Noahic covenant, the rainbow, differs from the signs of the covenant of grace (such as circumcision, Passover, baptism, and the Lord's Supper) in that it symbolizes not the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin but God's restraint in not destroying the world again with a flood (9:12–17).

A third characteristic of the Noahic covenant is that God puts it into place not permanently, but *temporarily*. It is in place for a very long time, in fact, as the language of “everlasting covenant” in 9:16 indicates, but from the outset God gives this covenant an expiration date: he promises the blessings of preservation “while the earth remains” (8:22). A time is coming when the earth will no longer remain, but while it does this covenant will not fail.

For all of these reasons I believe it sound to view this covenant as a covenant of common grace. And I suggest that it is proper and helpful also to see the enacting of this covenant as the formal establishment of the *common kingdom*. (I say “formal establishment” because common grace and the common kingdom evidently existed previously, from the time of the fall to the flood, but only here does God explicitly establish their terms by means of a formal covenantal arrangement.) God rules and preserves all things in his Son by his mighty hand of providence (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3), and Genesis 8:20–9:17 makes it clear that he does so by means of the Noahic covenant. To put it another way, the Noahic covenant is God's means for administering his reign in the common kingdom.

This biblical material also explains the nature of the cultural vocation of the human race after the fall into sin. The original cultural mandate to Adam, per se, cannot continue, since that mandate promised eschatological life upon the condition of perfect obedience. But in the Noahic covenant we see a revised cultural mandate.

Or, as I like to put it, here is *the original cultural mandate refracted through the Noahic covenant for a fallen yet preserved world*. God still calls human beings to a species of dominion over the world, insofar as they continue to be fruitful and multiply (9:1, 7), rule over and eat animals (within certain bounds) (9:2–4), and enforce justice against wrongdoers (9:6). This mandate is similar, but not identical, to that given to Adam in Eden. Its substance necessarily looks somewhat different in a fallen world and, significantly, it involves no promise of eschatological life. Thus, there indeed continues to be a cultural mandate for the human race, but God delivers it in refracted form in a way that reflects his temporary purposes for preserving this fallen world for a time.

Having identified the Noahic covenant as God's means for administering the common kingdom, I now turn to the covenant of grace, God's means for administering the *redemptive kingdom*. I do this briefly, both because I assume *The Confessional Presbyterian* readership's basic familiarity with doctrine of the covenant of grace and because I already pointed out key aspects of this covenant when discussing the Noahic covenant above. But to be clear, I note a few aspects of the covenant of grace. First, it is *particularistic*, that is, made with a part of the human race and not with the human race as a whole. In the Abrahamic administration God entered into a covenant with one man's household, in the Sinaitic (Mosaic) administration God entered covenant with the nation of Israel, and in these last days God has entered the new covenant with the New Testament church (which, while extending to people from all over the world, still does not count every human person as a member). Second, the covenant of grace is *redemptive*, that is, it promises not to preserve the world from the effects of sin but to provide an ultimate solution—salvation—from sin. Faith in God's promises resulted in justification for Abraham (Gen 15:6; cf. Gal 3:11; Rom 4), the Mosaic covenant was filled with types and shadows of Christ to come, and Christ calls the final administration of this covenant “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). Finally, the covenant of grace is *eschatological*, that is, God put it into place not temporarily, but in order to reach its ultimate realization in the new creation, where God's redeemed people will glorify and enjoy him forever. The longstanding promise of the covenant of grace—“I will be your God, you will be my people” (Gen17:7; [Dt 26:17–18]; Jer 31:33; 32:38–40; Ez 34:23–25, 30, 31; 36:25–28; 37:26–27; 2 Cor 6:16–18; Heb 8:10)—is climactically proclaimed after the end of the present age when the new heaven and new earth are revealed (Rev 21:3).

It is proper, I suggest, to recognize this covenant of grace as the means by which God administers the *redemptive kingdom*. God not only rules the whole world through his general providence, but also has established Christ as the special king of his redeemed people. Through this covenant God in Christ bestows the blessings of salvation on them, gathers them into a worshiping community, makes them citizens even now of his heavenly city, and will at last bring them into everlasting residency in that new creation.

What does it look like for believers to live in two kingdoms, that is, under God's twofold reign? The two most important places in the Old Testament for us to look, I believe, are at the experience of Abraham and the patriarchs and the experience of the exiles in Babylon. I highlight these two based upon a clue provided in the New Testament. First Peter, an epistle with a great deal of instruction on the nature of the Christian life in the midst of the larger world, calls us "sojourners and exiles" (2:11). By this Peter indicates that the New Testament church's experience is similar in important respects to the experience of Abraham and the patriarchs (who are called sojourners numerous times in Genesis: see Genesis 12:10; 15:13; 20:1; 21:34; 23:4) and of the Babylonian exiles. (There are certainly dissimilarities between their experiences as well, which I mention below.) Living as a sojourner or exile, I suggest, is precisely to live as a citizen of two kingdoms simultaneously, or to put it another way, to live as participants in both the covenant of common grace and the covenant of grace.

I consider first the case of Abraham the sojourner. As one with whom God entered the covenant of grace, Abraham was separated from the pagan idolatry of his neighbors, through faith and the sign of circumcision. He no longer could have spiritual fellowship with the pagans outside his extended family, which constituted the community of the covenant of grace at this time. As the New Testament comments, Abraham was "looking forward to the city with foundations," "seeking a homeland," and desiring "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:10, 14, 16), which indicates that though Abraham was living amidst the cities of this world, the city of his ultimate citizenship was not of this world. But the character of his earthly sojourn also displays the reality of God's covenant with Noah. God had promised to preserve the natural and social orders through this common grace covenant, and Abraham, along with his unbelieving neighbors, continued to share a common life together in a great many respects. Abraham was willing to join sides in a military conflict among the pagan cities of the land (Gen 14:1–16). He engaged in

economic transactions with his neighbors, such as his real estate purchase from the Hittites (Gen 23). When he came into conflict with pagan magistrates, he submitted to quasi-judicial inquiries in which he reasoned with them in terms of the "fear of God" and "things that ought not to be done" (Gen 20). Perhaps most remarkably, Abraham and Isaac both entered into covenants (the same Hebrew word used in Scripture for divine covenants) with Abimelech, the king of Gerar; that is, they entered formal, oath-bound treaties with pagans to live alongside each other peacefully (Gen 21:22–34; 26:26–33).

It is good to recognize that at this point in history the covenant of grace (and hence also the redemptive kingdom) was in a fledgling and immature state. The covenant of grace community could only see Christ from a far distance, did not have formal offices of authority, and did not have an evangelistic mission to gather other peoples into its fold. But the believers of this time were truly sojourners, living under two covenants simultaneously, one regulating their earthly political and economic lives in common with their pagan neighbors and the other identifying them as a community of faith whose true citizenship was in a heavenly country. Because of this, I judge, we find a good example of a two kingdoms experience, one to which the New Testament points as a paradigm for the church today.

The experience of the Israelite exiles in Babylon was similar in crucial respects. Before commenting on the exilic experience, however, I need to make a few comments about Israel's previous life in the Promised Land under the Mosaic law. At an ultimate level, of course, the Israelites of this time were still "sojourners" (e.g., 1 Chr 29:15; Ps 39:12), insofar as they too endured the sufferings of this present world and needed to recognize that their true hope was in a heavenly, eschatological realm. But the experience of theocratic Israel in the Land was not, as such, an exemplification of the two kingdoms. This experience was meant to typify and foreshadow the arrival of God's people in the eschatological new creation. Unlike Abraham—who as a sojourner lived among, traded with, and entered political covenants with his pagan neighbors—Israel in the Promised Land under the Mosaic covenant was obligated to destroy the unbelieving inhabitants of Canaan and commanded *not* to make covenants with them (see Deut 7:2). Israel's entrance into the Promised Land was not to symbolize sojourning, but arrival—arrival in the holy place of God's dwelling where no unholy people were allowed. At the same time, the ordinary provisions of the Noahic covenant continued to prevail everywhere else in the world

even during this period. The Israelites themselves were allowed to interact with pagan nations outside the Land in ways different from how they were to deal with those in the Land (e.g., see Deut 20:10–18; 1 Kings 5; 10:22).

In light of these things, one can understand the crisis the Israelites felt when trying to figure out how to respond to exile and also understand the answers provided by the prophets. In Jeremiah 29 the prophet sent the exiles a letter instructing them how to live now that they found themselves expelled from the Promised Land (away from which much of the Mosaic law was inapplicable). I believe the basic thrust of Jeremiah's epistle can be summarized simply yet accurately in this way: resume living like the sojourner Abraham. Jeremiah told them to pursue ordinary cultural activities in their new home alongside their pagan neighbors, building houses, planting gardens, getting married, and having children (29:5–6). Remarkably, they were even to seek the welfare of and pray for Babylon—this the great enemy of Jerusalem!—because their own earthly prosperity was now tied to Babylon's (29:7). The Noahic covenant was still in force and a measure of common life among believers and unbelievers was appropriate here. And yet this was truly to be a *two* kingdoms experience, because Israel was not to give up their religious particularity and their identification as a people whose true home was elsewhere. After seventy years, Jeremiah explained, they were to return to the Promised Land with their fortunes restored (29:10–14). They were to build homes and plant gardens, but not get too comfortable there, for one day they would leave them. They were to seek Babylon's peace, but not try to turn it into a new Jerusalem, for the real Jerusalem was still their home and future destiny. These exiles, then, were truly sojourners, peaceful and productive residents of a place that was not their permanent home.

The godly protagonists of the book of Daniel—Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—provide a concrete glimpse of what obedience to Jeremiah's letter looked like. As common participants in the covenant with Noah, these four Israelites entered the Babylonian civil service, studied in its schools, and rose in the ranks of the Babylonian (and later Persian) court (see Dan 1:1–6, 17–21; 2:48–49; 3:30; 5:29; 6:1–3, 28)—in fact, “with regard to the [Persian] kingdom” Daniel's fellow civil servants could find “no error or fault” in him and thus discovered no “ground for complaint” against him (6:4). Yet Daniel and his friends refused to give up their identity as Israelite participants in the covenant of grace, whether that meant being thrown into a fiery furnace for not bowing down to a statue or being tossed into

a lions' den for refusing to pray to the emperor (Dan 3, 6). In fact, Daniel, who as a prominent public figure must have led quite a comfortable life in exile, continued to long for Israel's restoration after seventy years, when they could leave exile behind (Dan 9).

Just as Abraham's life as a sojourner exemplified life under two covenants (and thus two kingdoms), so also did the life of the Israelite exiles in Babylon. Under the Noahic covenant they shared many ordinary cultural activities in common with their unbelieving neighbors, with whom they were to pursue peaceful and productive relations as far as possible. But as participants in the covenant of grace they were set apart from the world, trusting and worshiping the true God alone and recognizing that their ultimate loyalty was to a kingdom not of this world. Despite the real and important redemptive-historical differences between Christians today and these Old Testament saints, the New Testament calls us sojourners and exiles, summoning us to recognize the two kingdoms character of our lives today. To this New Testament era I now turn.

The Two Kingdoms in the Last Days: New Testament Considerations

For present purposes what matters most, of course, is how we Christians today are to understand our place in this present world, but we cannot really understand the New Testament teaching on this matter without the Old Testament background. I suggested above that Peter's reference to Christians as “sojourners and exiles” (1 Pet 2:11) points us to the experience of Abraham and the Babylonian captivity as a kind of two kingdoms paradigm. In this new subsection I attempt to show how the New Testament itself confirms that conclusion. Christians today are sojourners and exiles in that God calls them to live as peaceful and productive members of the various societies in which they find themselves, sharing a range of ordinary cultural activities in common with their unbelieving neighbors, as joint participants in the covenant with Noah; but they recognize simultaneously that they are set apart from this world through their membership in Christ's church, through which they know that their ultimate citizenship is in heaven, a city that is to come, a kingdom not of this world (Phil 3:20; Heb 13:14; John 18:36).

First I offer a few words about Christians' present participation in the covenant of grace, and through it the redemptive kingdom. To summarize, believers in the present era no longer live under the Abrahamic or Mosaic administrations of the covenant of grace, but

under the new covenant, and participate in the new covenant through their membership in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Throughout the New Testament, those who come to faith in Jesus Christ do not remain solitary individual believers but become part of Christ's church. This is another point that I assume needs no defense for readers of *The Confessional Presbyterian*. That this church is the community of the new covenant people is evident from many considerations, prominent among them its sacraments. People who come to faith (with their children) receive baptism as sign of their entrance into the visible church, and baptism symbolizes our union with Christ and thereby our being heirs of all the covenant promises given to Abraham long ago (Gal 3:27–29; cf. 3:7–4:7). The Lord's Supper also marks our union with Christ and with each other (1 Cor 10:16–17), and the cup of this Supper symbolizes "the new covenant in my [Christ's] blood" (Luke 22:20). To join the church and share in its life, therefore, means that one participates in the new covenant community.

This participation in the church as the new covenant community also means sharing in the life and power of the kingdom proclaimed by Christ. In his earthly ministry the Lord Jesus did not identify the kingdom of heaven (or, kingdom of God) with any earthly institution, except one: the church. As he said to Peter and the other disciples: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:18–19). These verses—along with Matthew 18:15–20, which sets forth the steps of church discipline and repeats the language of the binding and loosing of the keys of the kingdom—are the only places in the entire Gospels that refer explicitly to "the church." Though the witness of the entire New Testament is that this kingdom is ultimately an eschatological, heavenly kingdom, Christ has appointed his church to be the earthly community in which the ministry, power, and life of this kingdom is manifest in the present age (thus justifying the teaching of WCF 25.2 noted above).

In short, as the saints in the days of the patriarchs participated in the covenant of grace and redemptive kingdom through membership in Abraham's household, and as the saints under the Mosaic law participated in them through membership in the nation of Israel, so the saints of the present day participate in them through membership in the New Testament church. And our

experience today is "better" and has "more glory," to borrow language from Hebrews and 2 Corinthians 3. The types and shadows of the old have given way to the realities of the new. God gives to his church today a missionary task to call in people from all tribes and nations, something anticipated but not pursued in previous times. The Holy Spirit is poured forth on the church in a measure far surpassing the experience of the old covenant saints. Why? To bring our reflections back to the beginning of this larger section, it is because Christ the Last Adam has come and completed the work of redemption; he has ascended and taken his seat at the right hand of his Father, who has given all authority to him (see Matt 28:18; Eph 1:20–23). And because Christ is glorified these blessings are now bestowed on his people in such great abundance (Acts 2:32–33).

But the New Testament also teaches that the life of New Testament Christians is a *two* kingdoms experience. All authority in heaven and earth has always belonged to God through his Son, and now it belongs specifically to Christ as the God-Man. But I believe our Reformed fathers were correct to see Christ's present reign as still a twofold kingship. God established the covenant with Noah "while the earth remains" (Gen 8:22), and thus it is still in effect today. God through his Son still ordains that believers and unbelievers live together under his providential rule and share many ordinary cultural labors in common. And thus like the patriarchs and the Israelites in Babylon, Christians in the New Testament church are sojourners and exiles, heirs of a heavenly inheritance but still living in a world that, in its present form, is not their ultimate home.

This is evident, for example, in the trans-national character of the church. The new covenant community does not exist as a geo-political nation, nor does it exist only within the bounds of one nation. Rather, the church seeks to spread to all nations and to gather people of every ethnic and socio-economic background into its fold. Its fate is not tied to any one nation or political system. As a sojourner in the world, the church seeks to sojourn *everywhere* in this world, wherever there are sinful human beings who need to hear the gospel.

But the church exhibits its sojourning character not only through this relative independence of the rise and fall of earthly nations, but also in its recognition of legitimate authority structures that continue to exist in this world. In the Noachic covenant God ordained the power of the sword to enforce human justice, and did so for all human beings in common. And thus the New Testament acknowledges that civil magistrates continue to have authority to bear the sword and to be God's

avenger against those who do wrong, and furthermore that Christians are under obligation to submit to such authorities (Rom 13:1–7; Matt 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13–17). Christ and his apostles said such things even though the magistrates of their day were pagans, and in many cases rather brutal ones at that. Other authority structures in addition to the state also continued to exist under the Noahic covenant. Christ and his apostles never needed to ordain marriage or family relationships, for example, for these already existed as established by God at creation and re-established under Noah, as blessings for the whole human race. Thus the marriage of non-Christians is legitimate, such that those who are married when they convert to Christ remain in their pre-existing state of marriage with its concomitant obligations (see 1 Cor 7:12–16).

Further evidence of the two kingdoms character of the Christian's earthly sojourn is the way Scripture calls us to work in this world. For example, in one of the places where Paul encourages Christians to work hard at their daily vocations (1 Thes 4:11), he adds that they should do this "so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one" (4:12). He presumes that Christians will not be working in their own private ghettos, but in view of and alongside of unbelievers. Government jobs? Those too seem acceptable. When military personnel and tax-collectors repent of their sins and heed the preaching of the word in the New Testament, they are told to be honest and content, but never told to leave their posts (Luke 3:12–14; cf. Acts 10:24–48). It is perfectly right for believers to associate with unbelievers in their daily vocations. As Paul explains, the church must cut off sexually immoral, greedy, idolatrous (etc.) people from the fellowship of the church, but this does not apply to ordinary interaction with such people "of this world," else we "would need to go out of the world" (1 Cor 5:9–11)—and this, he implies, we are not to do.

To summarize, the New Testament confirms that Christians today live under two kingdoms of God, and are required to fulfill a variety of lawful endeavors in service to God and neighbor under each. Christians are to work hard in this world, with and for unbelievers in their ordinary vocations, and to submit to legitimate authorities established by God under the covenant with Noah. But Christians must never forget where their ultimate allegiance lies. For through union with Christ and membership in his church they are indeed sojourners

and exiles (1 Pet 2:11), like Abraham knowing that here they "have no lasting city" but seeking "the city that is to come (Heb 13:14). They continue to buy and have dealings with this world, but remember that "the present form of this world is passing away" (1 Cor 7:29–31). Their "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20) and they "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE REFORMED TWO KINGDOMS DOCTRINE

In this final section I build upon the biblical-theological foundations laid in the previous section and suggest several concrete, practical implications of the two kingdoms doctrine. I hope that these reflections will not only help to show how the two kingdoms doctrine may shape a person's daily Christian walk but also further alleviate some of the fears that some Reformed people have about the idea of two kingdoms. Thus, I conclude with three specific practical implications and then two brief related reflections.

First, the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine helps to maintain for Christians that necessary but difficult balance between active engagement in their various cultural vocations and a Christ-centered heavenly-mindedness. Appreciating the reality of God's common kingdom, especially as administered through the Noahic covenant, should remind us that all lawful vocations, even the most seemingly menial, are legitimate and honorable before God. Precisely through these ordinary vocations God is pleased to preserve and bless the human race and creation more broadly, as he promised in the Noahic covenant. Ultimately God is the one who feeds and clothes us, but he is ordinarily pleased to do so through farmers, butchers, and weavers.²² Any accusation that the two kingdoms doctrine promotes a low view of common human vocations entails a strange caricature of what this doctrine has historically meant. Yet understanding these vocations through the lens of the Noahic covenant also serves to remind us that these vocations, and the institutions that support them, are temporary and provisional. The Noahic covenant and its provisions are in effect only "while the earth remains" (Gen 8:22). Not only will those important Noahic tasks of procreation and retributive justice (Gen 9:1, 6–7) no longer be necessary in heaven, but also all of our ordinary earthly vocations are shaped by the limitations and fallenness of this present world and, at least in their present form, will come to an end with the dawn of the new creation. Appreciating that we also participate in

22. This picks up a point made by Martin Luther; see Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), especially chapters 2–3.

the redemptive kingdom, through the covenant of grace, reminds us that there is a kingdom that endures forever, which can never be shaken (Heb 12:28). Thus, even while we pursue our earthly vocations gratefully and industriously, our citizenship in the redemptive kingdom summons us to seek the things above (Col 3:1–4) and to set our hearts not on earthly treasures that fade but on heavenly riches that endure (Matt 6:19–21). The Reformed two kingdoms doctrine, therefore, provides a healthy corrective to both a fundamentalism that disparages ordinary vocations and a this-worldly emphasis that loses sight of the “unseen” things that are “eternal” (2 Cor 4:18), the latter temptation being one to which neo-Calvinism, I fear, is not immune.

Second, the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine provides very helpful assistance in understanding the legitimacy of both church and state and their significant distinctions. God has ordained both church and state (e.g., Matt 16:18–19; Rom 13:1–7), but their differences are striking. The state wields the sword (Rom 13:4), while the church’s “weapons” are only the word, sacraments, and a non-coercive discipline (e.g., 1 Cor 5:4–5; 2 Cor 10:3–5). The state enforces justice against wrongdoers (e.g., Rom 13:3–4), while the church shuns retribution and instead pursues repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (e.g., Matt 18:12–35; Gal 6:1–2). God raises up people of all sorts of religious background to hold legitimate political office (e.g., Rom 13:1–2), but requires that only mature and godly Christians can hold ecclesiastical office (e.g., 1 Tim 3:1–7). To see state and church as two aspects of one kingdom of God cannot do justice to this biblical evidence. The redemptive kingdom of Christ does not advance by the point of the sword or retributive justice (e.g., Matt 5:38–42). The state enforces retributive justice against evildoers, and people of whatever religious belief can legitimately hold political office—because the state is grounded in the common kingdom of the Noahic covenant, which God established to do justice (Gen 9:6), for all people (Gen 9:9). To the church, on the other hand, Christ entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to gather a people defined not by enforcement of justice but by the forgiveness and reconciliation achieved through Christ’s atonement (Matt 16:18–19; 18:15–20; 1 Cor 5:4–5; Gal 6:1–2). This two kingdoms doctrine, therefore, helps guard against both Anabaptist and theocratic tendencies. On the one hand, against Anabaptist traditions it affirms the legitimacy and God-ordained character of the state and its work of pursuing justice. On the other hand, against theocratic temptations it refuses to identify the state and its work with the advance of Christ’s

redemptive kingdom through the ministry of the gospel. Thanks to the two kingdoms doctrine, in other words, Christians are not left with the dilemma of *either* shunning or Christianizing the state. The state is legitimate and God-ordained without being holy.

Third, the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine helps us to appreciate and understand both the *antithesis* and *commonality* that should characterize our various cultural pursuits in this world. On the one hand, the doctrine illuminates the antithesis between believing and unbelieving thought by displaying why there is no neutral realm of human existence. Even the most mundane and seemingly insignificant areas of life are encompassed by the Noahic covenant and thus accountable before God, under his lordship and law. Christians must maintain critical vigilance in all pursuits, recognizing the pervasive effects of sin and twisting of truth. On the other hand, the two kingdoms doctrine reminds us that under the Noahic covenant God sustains a *common* moral standard for ordinary human vocations. By this I mean not that believers and unbelievers share identical moral views, but that God himself has ordained a common moral law to govern the common kingdom. There is no unique “Christian” standard for being a good accountant, farmer, or physician. In his creation and providence God formed the world in a certain way, thereby establishing the truths of mathematics, agriculture, and anatomy. Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection did not change these truths. The result of good farming is a good crop, whether by believer or unbeliever. The result of good surgery is the patient’s recovery, whether the surgeon professes Christ or not. Christians should have very different subjective motivation as they undertake their work, and ought to be more diligent and wise in doing so (and we should pray that this would be more true in practice). But the objective standards of excellence for Christian and non-Christian in their common vocations are the same.

A doctrine of natural law, such as Reformed orthodoxy also had, is helpful for understanding this point. The biblical accounts of creation and its re-formation after the flood (Genesis 1; 8:1–9:17) display that the world has order, purpose, and meaning. Through its divinely-established structures all people know God (Rom 1:19–20) and know that conduct out of accord with these structures deserves God’s judgment (Rom 1:32), and thus God holds all people “without excuse” before him (Rom 1:20). Though as sinners they suppress this truth they know (Rom 1:21), God’s common grace preserves even in pagans a sense that there are “things

that ought not to be done” (Gen 20:9). This natural law is the common moral standard by which God governs and judges the common kingdom. It is *God’s* law, but not a *uniquely Christian* moral standard, for it obligates all people whether or not they are redeemed by Christ.

Finally, I conclude this section with brief reflections meant to address two areas where some Reformed people seem to have concerns about the two kingdoms idea. The first concern is that the two kingdoms doctrine does not provide sufficient motivation for active pursuit of our ordinary cultural vocations. Does not the common neo-Calvinist view that the godly products of our cultural labors will endure and have lasting significance into the age to come provide a much stronger incentive for Christians to get up each morning than what the two kingdoms doctrine (at least as I have presented it) offers? I appreciate the seriousness of this concern and the sincerity with which I have heard Reformed Christians express it. My response is twofold. First, though I believe biblical teaching points us away from the idea that cultural artifacts themselves, created in the present age, will adorn the new creation, the two kingdoms doctrine offers no reason to deny that many effects of our present labors will continue to be felt in the age to come. God will publicly acknowledge our good works at the final judgment, and our mundane labors now will surely shape in many ways the identity of our relationships with those with whom we will share the beatitude of the heavenly kingdom. But even beyond this, the fact that God has commanded us to pursue our earthly vocations, and is pleased to show his love to humanity and all creation through *our* acts of love and service (as noted above), should provide more than sufficient motivation for Reformed believers to take up their vocations in this world with zeal and fidelity, despite the many hardships that often attend them.

The second concern sometimes raised against the two kingdoms doctrine is that it represents an unwarranted dualism, dichotomizing life into two separate spheres and thereby losing the unity of the moral lives we are called to live in Christ. Perhaps a one kingdom view, such as that propounded by neo-Calvinism, rightly guards against this? Here too I recognize the seriousness of the concern and understand that the two kingdoms doctrine has sometimes been warped in ways deleterious to the unity of our Christian lives. But the warping of a doctrine by careless or misguided advocates does not mean that the doctrine itself is wrong. In fact, fear of dualism should not lead us to despise theological distinctions, many of which are absolutely essential to maintaining orthodox doctrine. Where would

Reformed Christianity be without properly distinguishing creator and creature, body and soul, Christ’s divine nature and human nature, old covenant and new covenant, justification and sanctification, and a great many other things? Making good distinctions is a crucial mark of good theology. The two kingdoms doctrine, I suggest, is another one of these crucial distinctions characteristic of historic Reformed orthodoxy. But the two kingdoms doctrine also does maintain the larger, overarching unity of God’s rule, through affirming that God in his Son rules both kingdoms, that believers serve God and neighbor in both, and that the history of both unfolds toward a common end, the consummation.

CONCLUSION

There can be no reasonable doubt that the two kingdoms doctrine was a standard part of historic Reformed orthodoxy. This implies that Reformed people who reject the two kingdoms idea in general and embrace a one kingdom view have taken themselves out of the bounds of Reformed orthodoxy at this point (and potentially also at several other places in the Reformed system of doctrine intimately related to the two kingdoms doctrine). It would seem that the confessional Reformed community has a choice before it: either to let this doctrine slip into oblivion or to recapture and revitalize it.

Theologians who favor the former ought to interact honestly and fairly with our Reformed forebears and elucidate exactly why they were wrong to teach the two kingdoms doctrine, and then explain how to (or whether to) maintain other aspects of our system of doctrine—especially in Christology and ecclesiology—with which the two kingdoms doctrine was traditionally woven into a single fabric.

In this article I have chosen the latter route, that of recapturing and revitalizing the Reformed two kingdoms doctrine. I have argued specifically that connecting the two kingdoms more intentionally to Reformed covenant theology can strengthen and clarify the doctrine, as well as place it more clearly in the progress of redemptive history, and I have also suggested several ways in which the two kingdoms doctrine remains immensely practical on a number of fronts. While I hope my treatment will prove helpful and encouraging to the Reformed community, I also invite fellow Reformed theologians to modify or extend my analysis, based on the biblical text, for the continuation and fortification of this noble aspect of our common tradition.

Duplex in Homine Regimen¹

A Response to David VanDrunen’s “The Reformed Two Kingdoms Doctrine: An Explanation and Defense”

By Jeffrey C. Waddington

INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to be able to interact here with Dr. VanDrunen and to take up his invitation “to fellow Reformed theologians to modify or extend my analysis, based upon the biblical text, for the continuation and fortification of this noble aspect of our common tradition.” (DVD, 190). I do not write as an expert on two kingdoms theology but as one who has been, among other things, a student of theology and political philosophy for many years. I have been interested in the development of two kingdoms theology and the various reactions to it. Additionally, I make no claim to have read all the relevant literature which seems to grow exponentially by the day. My goal here is to offer a relatively brief response to Dr. VanDrunen from a Vossian/Van Tillian perspective that seeks to stake out territory *related to but different than* theonomy, establishmentarianism, or transformationalism.²

I propose to organize my response into three sections. First, I will highlight what I agree with in Dr. VanDrunen’s article. Second, I will consider those aspects of the author’s presentation with which I disagree. Third, I want to conclude with a consideration of the conundrum of the church/state relation.³

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

Lordship of Christ

I believe Dr. VanDrunen and I can agree that Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and rules over all of creation (Matthew 28:19–20). Christ’s rule is comprehensive. To quote Dutch polymath Abraham Kuyper, “there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”⁴ I think we would even agree that Christ rules over those in the church differently than he does those outside the church. Christ’s rule is complex. I also affirm the *distinction* between the state and the church.⁵ We will differ amongst ourselves

beyond these preliminary points of agreement. But I think it is essential that we clearly note this area of agreement.

Existence of Common Grace and Its Distinction from Special Grace

With Dr. VanDrunen I affirm the reality of common grace. God does show benevolence to the non-elect although it is not redemptive in any respect. I find the author’s discussion of the covenant of common grace exhibited in the Noahic covenant in Genesis 8 & 9 persuasive (DVD, 183). Of course there are also redemptive elements in God’s dealings with Noah and his family. But in the covenant with creation where God promises not to flood the whole earth ever again, common grace is clearly in view. It is true that common grace does not begin with Noah. It begins in the Garden of Eden following the fall. God could have wiped out our first parents but he chose not to. I will have more to say about common grace below where I believe Dr. VanDrunen and I would strongly differ. But that there is such a thing as common grace and that it differs from special or saving grace I think we can both affirm.

1. This is the expression “twofold government in man” which appears in John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: WJKP, 1960), 4.20.1.

2. By placing myself within the Vossian/Van Tillian camp I obviously aim to express my debt to Old Amsterdam (Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, *et al* in the so-called Neo-Calvinist school) and Old Princeton (Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, *et al*).

3. I should make it clear that even where I agree with the general thrust of VanDrunen’s argumentation, I may wish to say things differently and where I disagree with him I may appreciate his concerns.

4. Abraham Kuyper, “Sphere Sovereignty,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

5. Note that I affirm a distinction between the church and the state. The idea of separation between the church and state, most (in) famously articulated as a “wall of separation” by Thomas Jefferson, has evolved into the separation of the state and God.

*Extravagances of (Some Varieties of)
Neo-Calvinism/Transformationalism*

With Dr. VanDrunen I find some aspects of Neo-Calvinism quite problematic (DVD, 189). Of course there are varieties of Neo-Calvinism just as there are varieties of other forms of Reformed theology.⁶ What I have in mind here is the idea, repudiated by responsible Neo-Calvinists, that we can by our mere human efforts bring in the kingdom of God. The Bible is quite clear that the consummation of the kingdom is at God's discretion and will be *supernatural* and *disruptive*. Related to this is the curious assumption that there is much in this world that will continue into the next. In other words, I suspect the emphasis on *continuity* between this world and the new heavens and new earth may be overwrought. I tend to think speculation about what will carry over from this world to the next is unhelpful because it is biblically *underdetermined*. Also, I am in agreement with Dr. VanDrunen that there tends to be a relativizing, not to say minimizing, of the institutional church with its ministry of the ordinary means of grace. Again responsible Neo-Calvinists have admitted this problem and have sought to correct it.⁷

AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT
Lordship of Christ

Does Christ exercise a dual mediatorship (DVD, 179)? That is, does Christ rule over the common realm in one

6. On the varieties of Neo-Calvinism, see the work of Nelson D. Kloosterman, *Peering into a Lawyer's Brief: An Extended Examination of David VanDrunen's Natural Law and Two Kingdoms*, 6–8, 63 which is available at the *Worldview Resources International* site: <http://cosmiccye.wordpress.com/2012/07/14/an-invitation-to-reasoned-and-responsible-discourse/> (accessed 25 October 2012). See also his chapters "Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck," 65–81 and the introduction to the S. G. deGraaf lectures, 85–94, to the recent publication *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two KINGDOMS Perspective*, ed. Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2012).

7. See Kloosterman, *Peering into a Lawyer's Brief*, 63, 78–82.

8. The term "Calvinistic extra" was coined in the controversies between rival Lutheran schools in the 1620s. One can find the doctrine of the extra-Calvinisticum articulated by Athanasius in his *De Incarnatione Dei*. In light of this it may be better, as Carl Trueman as suggested, to call this doctrine the "extra-Catholicum."

9. Kloosterman, *Peering into a Lawyer's Brief*, 71–77.

10. For an interesting treatment of the dual mediatorship of Christ in the Scottish Covenanter tradition, see David McKay, "From Popery to Principle: Covenanters and the Kingdom of Christ," in *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Dr. Wayne R. Spear*. The Westminster Assembly and the Reformed Faith Series, ed. Anthony Selvaggio (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2007), 135–169.

11. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1948), 27–40 and Cornelius Van Til,

way and over the spiritual realm another way? It seems to me that Christ does rule in different ways. The doctrine of the dual mediatorship of Christ arises from a consideration of the *extra-Calvinisticum*. The so-called "extra" (which isn't the creation of Calvin by any means)⁸ simply points to the fact that the Son of God was not reduced or limited to the God-man Jesus Christ. For instance, when the Christ child was placed in a manger the Son of God was upholding the universe. The same can be said about Christ and his sitting tired and thirsty at the well in Sychar of Samaria (John 4:1–42), and even as Christ was hanged on the cross he upheld the cross on which he hanged. So it is true that the God-man Jesus Christ relates to the world in complex ways.

It is debatable whether Christ should be called the mediator of creation as well as the mediator of redemption. This is not to deny the obvious biblical teaching that Christ was the agent of creation (John 1:1–18; Colossians 1:15–20; and Hebrews 1:1–3) but that it is questionable whether the designation "mediator" is appropriate for the relationship of Christ to creation, especially in its pre-fallen state. As Nelson Kloosterman has pointed out, mediation entails estrangement or separation between two or more parties.⁹ The pre-incarnate Son of God (the *Logos asarkos*) was not alienated from His creation prior to the fall. In other words, does use of the expression "mediator of creation" suggest that the basic problem with creation is that it is *finite* rather than that it is *fallen*? However, having noted this, the expression has a long and honored pedigree within the Reformed tradition and I have no desire to quibble over words. Perhaps the expression merely is meant to affirm that the Son is Creator along with the Father and the Holy Spirit and that is a perfectly fine affirmation.¹⁰

Related to the question of the dual mediatorship of Christ is the question of how he rules the common and spiritual realms. I will have something to say about the nature of these realms in the next segment. But here I want to challenge Dr. VanDrunen's notion that Christ rules the common realm by means of natural law alone and that he rules the spiritual realm via Scripture (DVD, 178). First, I would argue that natural law/natural revelation was never meant to function in isolation from special revelation. As Geerhardus Vos and Cornelius Van Til have pointed out, natural and special revelation were meant to *function together* from creation until the consummation.¹¹ This *integral* relation is the case apart from any consideration of a fall. In other words, there is such a thing as *non-redemptive* special revelation. The illustration often given is that when God told Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil upon the pain of death (special, *i.e.* verbal revelation) he presupposed that Adam was familiar with trees and that he could distinguish between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and other trees. In this case special revelation presupposed the existence of natural or general revelation.

So it cannot be rightly said that Christ rules the common realm or sphere via natural law alone. Of course we cannot forget that the fall in fact did occur. Special revelation then took on a redemptive character. Natural revelation, which was never meant to function on its own in isolation from special revelation, is no longer an adequate basis for earthly life let alone finding favor with God. Consider one witness from the Reformed confessional tradition: in the Canons of Dort 3.3.4 we find these words,

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature *is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him--so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society.* Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.¹²

Clearly Dr. VanDrunen's understanding of the efficacy of natural law/natural revelation is significantly different from the clear and unambiguous statement made in the Canons of Dort.

Common Grace

As I have already indicated, both Dr. VanDrunen and I affirm the existence of common grace. I am afraid, however, that we disagree about its nature and function (DVD, 180). Properly understood, common grace, arising from the time of the fall in the Garden of Eden, is the extension of God's benevolence both to saints and sinners (Matthew 5:45). Common grace *serves to further* special grace. Just as natural law/revelation was never meant to function apart from special revelation, common grace was never meant to have its own hermetically sealed existence. We are familiar with the traditional explanations of the function of common grace. It serves as the "playground" for the unfolding plan of

redemption. In the theater of common grace the elect are called out from the world into the church via faith in Christ worked in them by the Holy Spirit working with his Word. Additionally, common grace makes post-fall civilization possible through the restraint of sin and the giftedness of the non-elect. That is, sin is not allowed to work itself out in the world to the extent that it could unchecked by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And as Christians often have occasion to note, unbelievers often exhibit remarkable skill and insight in this world.¹³

However, Dr. VanDrunen seems to follow the view of common grace articulated by Abraham Kuyper in his *De Gemeene Gratie*.¹⁴ In *On Common Grace* Kuyper articulates a notion of common grace which allows it to have a parallel and disconnected existence of its own, distinct and separate from special grace.¹⁵ Common

"Nature and Scripture," in *The Infallible Word*, ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1967), 263–301. See also Richard C. Barcellos, *The Family Tree of Reformed Biblical Theology: Geerhardus Vos and John Owen, Their Methods of and Contributions to the Articulation of Redemptive History* (Owensboro: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2010), 151–167, where he considers pre-fall non-redemptive special revelation in the theologies of Owen and Vos. I should note that older theologians seem to have allowed some daylight between creation and the imposition of the covenant of works. See WCF 7.1 for a possible example of this as are Francis Turretin's comments on the subject in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Geiger, ed. James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1991), 8.3.II–III. More recently Meredith Kline has offered exegetical and biblical theological support for the inseparability of creation and covenant with his notion of covenantal fiat. God spoke and it was so. See his *Kingdom Prologue* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 14–41. For a helpful discussion of this whole matter, see James Cassidy's blog entries at the *Reformed Forum* site: <http://reformedforum.org/two-kingdom-theology-and-gods-covenantal-fiat/> and <http://reformedforum.org/two-kingdom-theology-and-gods-covenantal-fiat-part-2/> (accessed 25 October 2012).

12. Emphasis mine. It is interesting that Dr. VanDrunen failed to interact with this section of the *Three Forms of Unity* in his article.

13. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: WJKP, 1960), II.2.15 (1:273–4). Augustine has addressed the truth found in the writings of unbelievers in his *On Christian Doctrine*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, trans. J. F. Shaw, ed. Philipp Schaff (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988): II.40.60 (2:554). Cornelius Van Til frequently spoke of King Solomon using pagan servants and workers and using Lebanese cedars in the building of the Jerusalem Temple in a similar vein. Specifically Solomon allowed pagans to help with the resources and manual labor but operated under the divine blueprint. See his *Defense of the Faith* 3rd edition (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1967), 223; *Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1969), 57; *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1972), 118–9; and *Christian Theistic Evidences* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1976), 64–5.

14. Abraham Kuyper, *De Gemeene Gratie*, 3 vols. (Kampen: Kok, 1931–32).

15. See John Halsey Wood, "Theologian of the Revolution: Abraham

grace and special grace run on parallel and non-intersecting tracks. This is problematic to say the least. As noted above, common grace does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of the working out of redemption. In other words, the *raison d'être* of common grace is to allow for the calling out of the elect in time and space throughout history until the consummation.

It seems to me that Dr. VanDrunen's idea of a *stand-alone common grace realm* remarkably resembles the anthropology of Medieval Roman Catholicism with its nature/grace dichotomy. Adam was understood to be created with a nature that was tilted toward sin¹⁶ and so needed an overlay—or, to change the metaphor, icing on the cake—which was called the super-added gift or *donum superadditum*. Adam's nature without the super-added gift functioned just fine¹⁷ but if he was to achieve the beatific vision he would need assistance. So in the fall, Adam lost the *donum superadditum* but his nature remained intact. In fact, British Roman Catholic counter-Reformation scholar Robert Cardinal Bellarmine echoed this sentiment when he said that “in the fall only the supernatural was lost, the natural remained unscathed. . . .”¹⁸ The Reformation clearly rejected the doctrine of the super-added gift with its idea that while the icing had been licked off the cake, the cake itself remained intact. As Francis Turretin points out, with the loss of the narrow image of God, the broader image became corrupt.¹⁹ The analogy here is that just as Adam

Kuyper's Radical Proposal for Church and State,” in *Kingdoms Apart*, 155–171, for an extended discussion of this aspect of Kuyper's thinking about common grace.

16. This is my assessment, not the assessment of Medieval scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas.

17. Here I need to note the inconsistency of the Roman Catholic tradition. On the one hand Adam in his natural state (*puris naturalibus*) functioned adequately without the super-added gift and yet because of the bent toward sin (*concupiscence*) the natural state did not function adequately. This is apart from any consideration of the need for the super-added gift so that Adam could relate to God and achieve the beatific vision.

18. Bellarmine is cited in Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*: “The Romaniſts hold original righteousness to be a supernatural gift, ſuperadded to the native gifts and power of the entire man. Bellarmine explains the reaſon why they determine this to be ſo. There was in man naturally a conteſt between the fleſh and the ſpirit, the reaſon and the appetite, from which flowed a certain diſeaſe and languor of nature, ariſing from the condition of the material. Therefore God added original righteousness as a “golden bridle,” to reſſeſs that conflict and to cover like a precious garment their nakedneſs, and as a remedy to heal that weakneſs (“De gratia primi hominis,” 5, 6 in *Opera* [1858], 4:23–29). This is the moſt common opinion among them although the Janiſeniſts and others exclaim loudly againſt it. Whence aroſe this expreſſion of the Scholaſtics: “Naturals remained untouched, but the ſupernaturals only were loſt,” I.5.11.v.

19. Turretin, *Institutes*, I.5.11.v.

in his natural state could function adequately without the *donum superadditum* so with Dr. VanDrunen's common realm under the rule of natural law man can function adequately. As we have already noted, the Reformers and the Reformed Scholastics rejected the notion of the super-added gift and understood the fall to result in a corrupted human nature. Dr. VanDrunen seems to have taken the upper/lower nature/grace dichotomy of Medieval Roman Catholicism and “turned it on its side” so that we have parallel and hermetically sealed compartments.

Influence

Although not explicitly addressed in the article under consideration, Dr. VanDrunen, along with other advocates of two kingdoms theology, tend to downplay the influence of Christians outside the four walls of the church out in the world. Admittedly influence can be sought for its own sake and this is a problem. However, Jesus did tell us to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13–16). We can debate the exact nature of what salt and light achieves, but that it achieves *something* should be granted on all sides. The concern with an undue interest in influence (usually on the part of transformationalists) is not without foundation. We are called to live faithful Christian lives in the world whether we influence anyone else or not. However it becomes somewhat silly if we go around acting like we need to keep our Christian piety within the bounds of the church building and then exercise it only on Sundays. Frankly we are called to live like Christians in the world and in some instances we will look just like non-believers and in other instances we will look different. It has been said that the early church turned the world upside down. It seems to me that the early Christians in the book of Acts, for instance, had influence in their society and culture. Consider the dispersion of Christians when Paul began to persecute the church (Acts 8 & 9). These believers spread the gospel as the apostles remained behind in Jerusalem. We can also consider the example of Daniel in the exile. Is it really the case that he and his companions (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) merely kept their antithetical Jewish views to themselves and had no influence on their culture? Or is it believable that their influence can be merely described as common? For the life of me I cannot understand this problem with influence. To be an influence peddler is problematic. To have an influence for Christ in your home, school, or workplace should not be questionable. Again, to affirm that Christians may merely

influence their surroundings is not the same as suggesting that we will bring in the kingdom of God with our influence. Nor is concern with our outward testimony in the world tantamount to works righteousness. I do not doubt that someone somewhere may mistakenly operate under the assumption that he or she is earning his or her salvation by seeking to be an influence. But abuse of a principle (that Christians should be salt and light) is no cause to disavow the principle.²⁰

The Christian Label

Dr. VanDrunen thinks that because Christian and non-Christian thought and activity occasionally overlap,²¹ there is no distinctively Christian activity or organization outside the visible church (DVD, 189). Is this really true? And can distinctively Christian attitudes be sequestered to the private subjective realm? It goes without saying that Christian activity begins with internal subjective thought process and emotions and the will. But Christian activity does not end there. When Daniel and his compatriots in exile in Babylon desired to eat a different menu than that offered by the king, or refused to bow the knee to the golden statue or disobeyed the law of the Medes and Persians and prayed to the only God who is, are we really expected to say these were merely internal states or common actions and therefore cannot be properly denominated as Christian?²² Did Abraham just exercise an internal subjective state when he trusted God and was justified (Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:1–12) or did his internal subjective believing-in-God state yield external actions that were Christian? Did Abraham not venture from Ur to Canaan? Did he not believe the Lord's promise that he would bless all the families of the earth through his seed? Did he not offer up his only well-beloved son Isaac in obedience to God? And by the way, which God did he obey? I think it was the Triune God of Scripture because that is the only God there has ever been. If this is true then natural law is Christian because it is a revelation of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit. Natural law, though it does not in and of itself reveal the Triune nature of God, it is the product of the activity of the Triune God and He, in a word, is the *Christian* God.

Worldview Thinking

Again, though not specifically mentioned in his article, Two Kingdoms advocates also have an apparent dislike of the idea of a Christian *worldview*. It seems to me that

the two kingdoms discomfort with worldview thinking is the *accidental* connection it has with Neo-Calvinist thought. By saying the connection is accidental I simply want to note that the idea of worldview thinking is true and legitimate whether or not it was championed by the likes of Abraham Kuyper. Admittedly the idea of worldview thinking (from the German *weltanschauung*) stems from the idealistic philosophical circles of Immanuel Kant.²³ But the Christian development of the idea of worldview thinking is a legitimate use of the concept. Remember what Augustine said about finding truth in strange places? When we find truth in pagan thought we need to untwist the twisted truth and cleanse it of its pagan elements and this has been sufficiently done with the idea of a worldview.²⁴

What is a worldview? It is the lenses through which we look at the world. Frankly, there is such a thing as a Christian worldview and it is the obligation of every believer to seek to develop it. Paul told us to “bring every thought captive to Christ,” (2 Corinthians 10:5) to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1–2), and to “think on things above” (Col. 3:1–17). To develop a Christian worldview is to think Christianly about God, ourselves, and the world around us. To develop a Christian worldview is to pursue the sanctification of the mind. A criticism of worldview thinking would appear to proceed on the assumption that there are areas of neutrality that have no connection with the Christian faith or that cannot be thought of differently between Christians and non-Christians. This would be consistent with a stand-alone common grace realm and it would be consistent with the idea that natural law has no connection with anything specifically Christian. But given what I have already said it should be clear by now that *there is no such thing* as a stand-alone common grace realm. A *non-Christian natural law* does not

20. I am also of the opinion that two kingdoms theology serves as a cover for political passivism. That is, two kingdoms devotees do not like the implications of the Christian faith for politics or culture and so they seek an out.

21. Or appears to overlap.

22. That these are examples drawn from the Old Testament does not prevent them from being referred to as Christian examples, unless we are prepared to grant the assumption of unbelieving Judaism that Christianity is an illegitimate development from the Old Testament.

23. See David K. Naugle's *Worldview: The History of an Idea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

24. See Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, II.40.60 (2:554) about “plundering the Egyptians,” and K. Scott Oliphint, *The Battle Belongs to the Lord* (Philipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2003), which talks about the “twisted truth” found in unbelieving thought, that needs to be untwisted in order to be of use to the Christian, 163–73.

exist anywhere.²⁵ Finally, at the very least, the desire to develop a Christian worldview is the desire to do systematic theology. That is, do any of us want to nurture gaps in our Christian thinking? That we do in fact have gaps in our thinking because we are both finite and sinful is without a doubt true. But to seek to nurture these gaps would be ludicrous.²⁶

Historical Examples

Dr. VanDrunen offers several examples of those who have held to two kingdoms teaching in the past (DVD, 178–181). He has done this more thoroughly in other publications such as his *Natural Law and Two Kingdoms* volume.²⁷ Questions have been raised about the accuracy and selectivity of the primary sources.²⁸ I believe Dr. VanDrunen has shown that Reformed stalwarts of the past have held to some notion of two kingdoms and natural law doctrines. However, the devil is in the details and it would be good for Dr. VanDrunen to answer some of these criticisms which he failed to do in this article.²⁹

Failure to Engage the Confessional Tradition

Clearly Dr. VanDrunen has mentioned the Westminster Standards in passing (with regard to the covenant of works, for instance, DVD, 181), but he has failed to engage with the doctrinal standards in any detail in this article. Dr. VanDrunen will need to do this in the future.

REMAINING QUESTION: CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS

As I noted at the beginning of this response, even though I agree with Dr. VanDrunen on some matters and disagree with him on others, there is the matter of church/state relations which we must address.

Are the only alternatives we have theonomy and autonomy? If we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord of all

creation (inclusive of the church and state, along with the family, schools, and other mediating institutions), how do we understand the Lord to rule over the world outside the church? We cannot turn to Old Testament Israel alone. Israel was unique. Despite the view of Abraham Kuyper, the church *did* exist in the Old Testament in Israel.³⁰ The church did not come into existence at Pentecost. It did come into a new phase of its existence at Pentecost, but it has been with us from the fall. Why can't we simply replicate the church/state relation found in Old Testament Israel? We cannot look naively to Israel because it was a unique church-state entity. That is why theonomy is wrong: it sees Israel as being like any other ordinary nation state. If Israel was just an ordinary nation state we can replicate and transfer wholesale its laws and practices (minus those ceremonial aspects fulfilled by Christ).

I suppose the debate remains as to whether the *Corpus Christianorum* or Christendom was a good thing. For myself I can say there is much from that era which is valuable. But the confusion of the church and state was neither a good thing nor was it biblical. Whether the state could control the church or the church could control the state, neither option was sound. But what would we do in the hypothetical situation where all the citizens of a certain country were Christian or claimed to be so? Is it the case that such a nation could never enact laws consistent with Christian thinking? And how would non-Christians be treated?

If there is no such thing as a stand-alone common grace realm and there is no such thing as a non-Christian natural law, what does this mean for how Christians participate in the public square?

So we see that the church/state relation is something we need to wrestle with for some time to come. And we have not even touched upon the relation of Christianity to culture more broadly. What about subsidiarity or mediating institutions? Are these non-Christian as well? Not at all.

CONCLUSION

I have benefitted from reading Dr. VanDrunen's article along with his other publications. He is thought provoking. I do not assume I have offered the last word on this topic. Hopefully the reader can ascertain that I have learned from Two Kingdoms theology even when and where I depart from it. I look forward to further discussion. I pray that it will create more light than heat. Till we reach agreement we can all affirm Christ's *duplex in homine regimen*.

25. Note that I am NOT saying that there are not sinful human attempts to construe natural law along non-Christian or sub-Christian lines.

26. This ought not to be confused with a desire to know everything comprehensively as God knows things, but that we ought not to seek to be illogical, unsystematic, and chaotic in our thinking.

27. David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

28. See Kloosterman, *Peering Into a Lawyer's Brief*, 10–54.

29. On the compatibility of Augustine with VanDrunen, see Branson Parler's "Two Cities or Two Kingdoms? The Importance of the Ultimate in Reformed Social Thought," in *Kingdoms Apart*, 173–197.

30. Wood, "Theologian of the Revolution," 162.