

Two Kingdoms: Simul iustus et peccator: Depoliticizing the Two Kingdoms Doctrine

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In 1821 James Madison responded to a letter from Rev. F. L. Schaeffer, who had sent Madison a copy of his address at the cornerstone laying of St. Matthew’s Church in New York. Madison compliments Schaeffer on his “cordial attachment to a particular creed, untinged with sectarian illiberality. It illustrates the excellence of a system which, by a due distinction, to which genius and courage of Luther led the way, between what is due to Caesar and what is due to God, best promotes the discharge of both obligations.”¹ It isn’t made clear in what way Madison got his ideas from Luther. Jefferson, of course, had used the phrase “wall of separation” in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association,² and Roger Williams, while not using the phrase, certainly described such an arrangement. John Locke, in *A Letter on Toleration* (1689) appears to base his arguments on biblical texts, though he may well have been aware at least of Luther’s treatise *On Temporal Authority*. But the phrase is used neither in the Constitution nor the Bill of Rights. Whatever similarities there might be between the Lutheran teaching on the two kingdoms and the constitutional doctrine established in the first amendment they ought not be regarded as the same thing.

In the past one hundred years, a number of issues touching on the first amendment have been faced by the Christian churches and others in this country, including the Selective Service laws, military chaplaincy, ministers and Social Security, school prayer and federal aid to education, and as well as the more recent questions of abortion, same-sex marriage, and end-of-life issues. These and many other issues involve our Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms based on Matthew 22, Romans 13, etc. on both a constitutional and theological level. The questions are about the relationship between church and state and between the Christian and civil affairs and civil rights. The two spheres of concern, however, are not the same and must be dealt with on different bases – in the first case, rational, historical, political arguments that seek to understand

¹ James Madison, *Letters and other writings of James Madison Fourth President of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co, 1867 Vol III), 242. This St. Matthews was apparently founded in 1643, was a founder of the New York Ministerium, and joined the Missouri Synod in the 1880s.

² Jefferson’s letter reads in part: “Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.... Th Jefferson, Jan. 1. 1802” (<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>).

the meaning of the first amendment, and in the other case the scriptural teaching and our Lutheran confession of what Scripture teaches. But this must be done in such a way that the biblical teaching is not politicized, or otherwise mixed with, or subordinated to secular principles.

Two Kingdoms and Separation of Church and State

The principle of the separation of church and state is not directly addressed in the Constitution itself, but is addressed in the so-called “establishment clause” in the Bill of Rights: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Since ratification many cases have come before the Supreme Court leading to further definition of the principle of the separation. Lutherans and others have mistakenly tended to translate these concerns into concerns about the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. There may also be some good reason to argue that the idea of “Separation of Church and State” cannot really be deduced from the First Amendment’s establishment clause, though the Supreme Court has said otherwise.³

In a recent study of Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine, William J. Wright comments that “Until the mid-nineteenth century, Luther’s ideas on the two kingdoms had not been greatly politicized, even though the concept had been absorbed into the state-church constitutions of the German territorial and dynastic states.”⁴ Wright’s study shows that this movement began a steady progression away from the original context of the Lutheran doctrine toward a political theory which was ultimately realized in the German Christians in the German Evangelical Church who lived with and along side of the National Socialist ideology, even at the points where it explicitly contradicted biblical, Christian principles and teaching.

At the outset, we need to understand that the two kingdoms doctrine is not equivalent to the principle of the separation of church and state, and also that the two kingdoms doctrine is not simply Holy Scripture’s teaching on government. Gerhard Ebeling saw that “anything like the modern separation of Church and State which is what people usually have in mind, is a totally

³ In *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947), Justice Hugo Black concluded: “Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups, and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect ‘a wall of separation between church and State’ so that the connection has been pretty much enshrined” (<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/330/1/case.html>).

After citing the paragraph from Jefferson’s letter, the Supreme Court stated in *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878), “Coming as this does from an acknowledged leader of the advocates of the measure, it may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment thus secured. Congress was deprived of all legislative power over mere opinion, but was left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order” (<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/98/145/case.html#164>).

⁴ William J. Wright, *Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2010), 20. This book among other things includes a detailed bibliography of both primary and secondary literature, which has sent me to sources of which I was not previously aware. In addition, reading the recent biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer by Eric Mataxas sent me back to restudy Hermann Sasse’s 1930 and 1935 writings on Church and State in connection with the *Kirchenkampf* in Germany in the early 1930s.

inadequate picture of the scope of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms."⁵ Scripture's teaching in Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, and other passages about government is true and divinely given, but that is not the point of the two kingdoms doctrine. Even so, the biblical doctrine of the two kingdoms *confirms* the validity of the principle enunciated in the first amendment, and also makes it clear that it is pleasing to God that Christians should fully partake of the rights and privileges of citizenship. The two kingdoms doctrine also teaches that according to Scripture government is divinely instituted, so that there is no room for a gnostic or monastic flight from government and society even in a pagan world. Wright points out that "the nineteenth- and twentieth-century political doctrine, falsely ascribed to Luther, constitutes a misappropriation of Luther's original teachings," and that this spurious view is in radical contradiction to the sixteenth century doctrine of Luther, which was incorporated into the Lutheran confessional writings.⁶

That is not to say, however, that the principle of the separation of church and state has nothing to do with the biblical doctrine we find in our church's confessional writings and in the writings of Martin Luther. It is quite obvious that there is a connection when we read in Augustana "*one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular*" (AC XXVIII, 12). That said, a discussion of the biblical teaching on church and state becomes hopelessly muddled if we do not accurately observe the biblical setting of the two kingdoms doctrine and its place in Lutheran theology and see its relation to the gospel.

Scripture and the Confessions

As one can see in most treatments of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, the *sedes doctrinae* are located in these passages: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's" (Matthew 22:21/Mark 12:17); "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36); "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1 ff.); "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him..." (1 Peter 2:13 ff.); and "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). And certainly, the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:10) has something to say about where the Christian lives. Other passages flesh out this doctrine, but these are the foundational texts.

Our Lutheran Confessions summarize these passages in the Augsburg Confession and Apology, Articles XVI and XXVIII. Melancthon writes in Apology XVI:

We confessed [in AC XVI] "that it is permissible for a Christian to hold public office, to render verdicts on the basis of imperial laws or other established law, to prescribe just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve in the military, to enter into legal contracts, to own property, to take an oath when magistrates require it, or to contract marriage."... This entire topic on the distinction between Christ's kingdom and the civil realm has been helpfully explained in the writings of our theologians [chiefly Luther]. Christ's

⁵ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought* (Fortress 1970, Mohr, 1964, Tübingen), 178

⁶ Wright, 18.

kingdom is spiritual, that is, it is the heart's knowledge of God, fear of God, faith in God, and the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time, it permits us to make outward use of legitimate political ordinances of whatever nation in which we live, just as it permits us to make use of medicine or architecture, or food, drink, and air.

Melanchthon here threads a careful passage between the Anabaptist, Enthusiast rejection of a legitimate participation in civil affairs, and the Roman Catholic assertion that the ecclesiastical estate has authority over the civil estate. But Melanchthon simply summarizes what Luther had written, especially in his treatise *On Temporal Authority*. The chief focus in AC & Ap XVI is on the legitimacy of Christian involvement in government in opposition to the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts.

AC & Ap XXVIII, on the other hand, is a critique of the Roman doctrine of ecclesiastical authority, especially the assertion that ecclesiastical power trumps civil power, a position Luther had attacked earlier in his 1520 *Letter to the Christian Nobility*. In AC XXVIII, the line between the two kingdoms is drawn:

[The] power of the keys or of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God's Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals.... Not bodily but eternal things are given in this way, such as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.... [S]ecular authority deals with matters altogether different from the gospel. Secular power does not protect the soul, but using the sword and physical penalties, it protects the body and goods against external violence. That is why one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular.

It should be noted that "mix or confuse" is not necessarily to be read as "separate." As I remember Kurt Marquart saying (quoting someone, perhaps himself): "The most important distinction in the world is the distinction between 'distinct' and 'separate'."

To the Augustana and Apology articles can be added Luther's remark in SA IV, 1-3, that the pope's arrogant seizure of secular power is diabolical, but then comments parenthetically "the only exception concerns the area of political government, where God sometimes allows much good to come to a people through a tyrant or scoundrel." In *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* Melanchthon shows that Christ did not give the apostles the power of the sword, and also cites Boniface VIII's claim "that the pope is lord of the kingdoms of the world by divine right" (Tr 30-34).

What becomes clear in these summaries of the biblical texts by the Augustana and Apology is that the doctrine of the two kingdoms is not presented as a political theory. It is important to the context that Part I of the Augustana (Articles I-XXI) were cobbled together from the Schwabach and Marburg⁷ articles, along with Part III of Luther's *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper*, after

⁷ Schwabach Article 14: "In the meantime, until the Lord comes in judgment and all political power and lordship are abolished, we should maintain and be obedient to secular authority and lordship as a walk of life

arriving in Augsburg and finding John Eck's *Four Hundred and Four Propositions* maligning and misquoting the Lutherans and also attributing Anabaptist and Enthusiast ideas to them, so that the purpose of the Lutheran presentation was to show that the Lutherans *were* faithful to catholic theology, and part II was essentially the *Torgau* Articles, written before the Lutherans left for Augsburg, complying with the Emperor's demand that the Lutherans give an account of the changes the Lutherans had made in church practices.

Rather than a doctrine of political authority, the two kingdoms doctrine is established from the doctrine of the divine institution of the spiritual and the civil estates. The doctrine is rooted in the justification of the sinner as the central doctrine of the gospel, summarized in Romans 1:16f. In the more thorough explication of these texts, and in critique of both Anabaptist and Roman Catholic theology, Luther systematically lays out the ground for this distinction. It follows necessarily from the underlying reality of the life of the Christian in this world as *simul iustus et peccator*.⁸ In his sermon on the two kinds of righteousness, in the preface to Galatians, and in numerous other places, Luther defines the reality of the Christian in those terms, and in terms of a life perfectly righteous *coram Deo* [before God], and life as a sinner *coram mundo* or *hominibus* [before the world or man]. The Christian lives in God's two divinely given realms, but as a different entity in each, and each is governed by God in a different way, with a different power.⁹

Two Kingdoms as the Christian View of Reality

There is something misleading about the terminology *two kingdoms*, *two governments*, *two realms*, etc. The terms all have to do with the *polis* or *civitas* which appear to suggest a political doctrine. Wright, as we will see, holds that the doctrine of the two kingdoms, or realms, led to other distinctions between two kinds of righteousness, and even law and gospel. I am not sure that Wright is correct in suggesting that the two kinds of righteousness follows from the two kingdoms doctrine, but I believe Wright is correct when, with others like Bornkamm, and Kolb-Arand, he sees the real thrust of the two kingdoms doctrine as Luther's view of reality. It belongs to God's justifying work, in which the alien righteousness of Christ is the righteousness

ordained by God to protect the upright and to curb the evil. A Christian, if properly called to such a walk of life, may well serve or even exercise leadership in it without damage or danger to faith and salvation. Romans 13 [1-7] and 1 Peter 2 [13-16]." Kolb-Nesting, 87.

Marburg Article 13: "[We believe] that all government, secular laws, courts, and ordinances, wherever they are, exist as a true, good walk of life. They are not forbidden as some papists and Anabaptists teach and maintain. [We believe] that a Christian who is called or born into this walk of life can quite well be saved through faith in Christ, etc., just as in the walk of life of a father and mother, husband and wife, and so forth." Kolb-Nesting, 91.

⁸ *Simul iustus et peccator*: The Latin term used to describe the biblical doctrine "at the same time saint and sinner."

⁹ See Kenneth Hagen's discussion of this in *God and Caesar Revisited*, 28, 29. According to Wright (32 ff.), the terminology "The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms" came out of the discussions of the German *Kirchenkampf* of the 1930s. In one respect, the name doesn't do justice to the teaching, since there is at least one other kingdom contrasted to that of Christ, and that is the kingdom of Satan, which also became the subject of some confusion in the debates before and after World War II. However, most usually, Luther is speaking of the two — the kingdom of Christ, and the secular or temporal kingdom. The term is inadequate in another sense in that Luther sometimes writes kingdom (*regnum*, *reiche*) and other times "power," "government" or "authority" (*postestas*, *regimente*). He does not seem to be consistent in the way he uses them: sometimes they are synonymous and sometimes different.

with which man stands before God. The reality is that this justified man in this world and according to his flesh is *simul iustus et peccator*, standing both fully righteous *coram Deo* and still corrupt *coram mundo*. God communicates with these two natures with the gospel on the one side, and with the law on the other. This view of man's existence necessitates describing it in terms of two realms or two spheres of existence, and one must virtually see the Christian as being two persons at once.

While Luther offers summaries or short statements of the distinction in *On Temporal Authority, Whether Soldiers too Can be Saved*, and "The Argument of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians," (Luther's preface to his 1535 Galatians Commentary LW 25, 4 ff.), most reference to, or use of the two kingdoms doctrine comes in his exegetical works and sermons—in Genesis, Romans, Galatians, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Sermon on the Mount. Even though some of the sharpest and most precise statements of the two kingdoms doctrine came in polemical works, even there Luther is never far away from his Greek and Hebrew text. While in a few writings, Luther approaches the issue of two kingdoms with systematic clarity, chiefly in *On Temporal Authority*, a great deal more is added to the matter as Luther uses the concept in other connections and in his commentaries in passing. Nothing in the Augustana and Apology in these articles adds to what Luther had already worked out in his 1523 treatise, *On Temporal Authority*.¹⁰

Luther's argument in this essay on secular authority is important as a starting point for Luther's idea of the two kingdoms. Following his introductory letter, Luther refers to his earlier writing "To the Christian Nobility" as "setting forth their Christian office and functions" (LW 45, 83). But he must change his tactics, since the Catholic princes are, as he calls them, the pope's "lackeys and bullies" (85). The teaching is then set forth in six theses in dialectical form. The first one we will quote in full:

First, we must provide a sound basis for the civil law and sword so no one will doubt that it is in the world by God's will and ordinance. The passages which do this are the following: Romans 12, "Let every soul [*seele*] be subject to the governing authority, for there is no authority except from God; the authority which everywhere [*allenthalben*] exists has been ordained by God. He then who resists the governing authority resists the ordinance of God, and he who resists God's ordinance will incur judgment." Again, in I Peter 2[:13-14], "Be subject to every kind of human ordinance, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors, as those who have been sent by him to punish the wicked and to praise the righteous."

The law of this temporal sword has existed from the beginning of the world. For when Cain slew his brother Abel, he was in such great terror of being killed in turn that God even placed a special prohibition on it and suspended the sword for his sake, so that no one was to slay him [Gen. 4:14-15]. (85f.)

¹⁰ The American edition's title is perhaps not so well chosen, since it would seem that "temporal" would better translate *zeitliche*. Luther's word, *weltliche*, might best be translated "worldly," but since that word carries some different baggage, "secular" is probably the better word to use.

While in his exegetical writings, Luther finds the divine institution for secular authority or government in many places, the two key texts are cited here and are also cited by Melancthon.

In the second thesis, Luther presents the dialectic of Christian existence found in the Sermon on the Mount and other passages describing the Christian ethic “Do not return evil for evil,” (1 Peter 3:9). The Sophists (Roman Catholic, Thomist theologians), Luther says, distinguish between those who are perfect and those who are imperfect, and these commands are “‘counsels’ for the perfect.” But that will not work; these words are meant for all, and Christ condemns to hell all “who do not love their enemies.” So the words have to be interpreted in a different way “so that Christ’s words apply to all alike,” and he then points out that perfection and imperfection do not have to do with outward works, but with what is in the heart (87).

In the third thesis Luther contrasts the two kingdoms. All mankind “are divided into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world.” The first class are the true believers who have their perfection in the gospel. What it is that makes them perfect is here only implied, but these true Christians do no wrong: “It is impossible that the temporal sword and law should find any work to do among Christians” (89).

Who are these “true Christians” Luther has described? In his treatise *The Freedom of the Christian*, Luther had already spelled out what it meant to be a true, perfect Christian: “Since, therefore, this faith can rule only in the inner man, as Rom. 10[:10] says, ‘For man believes with his heart and so is justified,’ and since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer work or action at all, and that these works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inner man” (LW 31, 347).

Luther places those who are not Christians in “the kingdom of the world, under the law,” and the “few true believers, and still fewer who live a Christian life,” (LW 45, 90) are in the kingdom of God, and then distinguishes them: “one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds” (92).

The final two theses explain how it is that the true Christian lives in the kingdom of the Christ and wields the sword and law in the secular [*weltliche*] kingdom. The Christian does not need the sword and the law for himself, but the law and sword are most beneficial to the world to “preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked,” so the Christian “pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves, helps and does all he can to assist the governing authority” (93f.). He also explains in thesis six that the Christian does not need the law, and as a Christian does not resist when evil is done to him, but ones neighbor does need the law and sword. So the upshot here for Luther is “In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the gospel and suffer injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns the person or property of others, you govern yourself according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact in other places it commands it” (96).

In the essay *Whether Soldiers too can be Saved*, written three years later, Luther offers a more compact description of the two kingdoms:

That is the sum and substance of it. The office of the sword is in itself right and is a divine and useful ordinance, which God does not want us to despise, but to fear, honor, and obey, under penalty of punishment, as St. Paul says in Romans

13 [:1–5]. For God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be forced to become good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword. And although God will not reward this kind of righteousness with eternal life, nonetheless, he still wishes peace to be maintained among men and rewards them with temporal blessings. He gives rulers much more property, honor, and power than he gives to others so that they may serve him by administering this temporal righteousness. Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness. There is no human ordinance or authority in either, but each is a divine thing entirely. (LW 46, 99f.)

Luther's expressions "real Christians, that is true Christians," (89), "few true believers and still fewer who live a Christian life," (90) are problematic and might be construed as asserting degrees of Christians—only those who have achieved a certain level of sanctity being strictly in the kingdom of heaven. The treatise on *Secular Authority* was written in 1523, before the outbreak of the antinomian controversy, which centered chiefly on John Agricola's confusion about the law and the gospel, after which Luther would guard his description of Christians and the law more carefully. However, Luther had already drawn some attention to his statements about the nature of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*. He had done so in his Romans commentary. In a metaphor about a sick man and a doctor who has begun to cure him, Luther asks, moving a little too quickly from the metaphor to God's justification of the sinner, "Now, is he perfectly righteous? No, for he is *at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man*" (LW 25, 260; emphasis added). Notwithstanding that there are some questions about Luther's understanding of justification in his Romans commentary, it shows that he is already thinking in the terms of *simul iustus et peccator*, which later on became the key to Luther's understanding of the justified child of God living in this world. In the Romans lectures of 1516, the *scholia* contain the expression two times. However, in later arguments, if not using the expression, Luther describes it. In the 1521 dispute against Latomus, Luther writes:

This is a most glorious pardon which comes through baptism. Surely, if you look at it carefully, it is almost greater to accept as righteous him who is still infected by sin than him who is entirely pure.... I am neither the first nor the only man to say this since the [days of the] Apostle. Augustine's words are these: "*All sin is forgiven in baptism, not so that it no longer exists, but so that it is no longer imputed.*" *Do you hear? Even after forgiveness there is still sin, but it is not imputed.* (LW 32, 209; emphasis added)

And in his 1536 Disputation on Justification:

[W]e are justified daily by the unmerited forgiveness of sins and by the justification of God's mercy. Sin remains, then, perpetually in this life, until the hour of the last judgment comes and then at last we shall be made perfectly righteous. For this is not a game or delusion, that we say, "Sins are forgiven by

faith and only cling to us, because that newness of life has miraculously begun.”
(LW 34, 367)

Thus, when in his discussions of the secular kingdom Luther talks about the true Christian, he is hardly speaking of Spener's *pietati*, of those who have reached a higher level of sanctification, but of those who are justified through faith and whose sins are no longer imputed, even though they do sin. The true Christian is not called that in contrast only to the unbelievers, but also to the nominal Christian who looks to the law and his own works for righteousness.

As a result, it becomes clear that this teaching about the two kingdoms is not a political schema that Luther has worked out simply to refute the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts, or to subdue two warring parties, the noblemen and the peasants, but that it is in fact a central, guiding principle which organizes all sorts of things around the central doctrine of justification through faith.

Further clarity is added in Luther's 1535 Galatians commentary. As he sets out the teaching on two kinds of righteousness in the Prologue, Luther writes:

We set forth two worlds, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform good works. ... [B]y the righteousness of the Law we do nothing even when we do much; we do not fulfill the Law even when we fulfill it. Without any merit or work of our own, we must first be justified by Christian righteousness, which has nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law or with earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. (LW 26, 8)

On Galatians 2:14 (Paul's dispute with Peter), Luther writes:

Therefore whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian. I admit that in the time of temptation I myself do not know how to do this as I should. The way to distinguish the one from the other is to *locate the Gospel in heaven and the Law on earth*, to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly and divine and the righteousness of the Law earthly and human, and to distinguish as sharply between the righteousness of the Gospel and that of the Law as God distinguishes between heaven and earth or between light and darkness or between day and night. Let the one be like the light and the day, and the other like the darkness and the night. (LW 26, 115; emphasis added)

Here, the intimate connection between law and gospel, the heavenly and earthly kingdom, and the two kinds of righteousness is made explicit. It is also clear that since his 1519 sermon "Two Kinds of Righteousness," Luther has not shifted from his starting point:

There are two kinds of Christian righteousness, just as man's sin is of two kinds. The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith, as it is written in 1

Cor. 1[:30].... Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness, and all that he has becomes ours; rather he himself becomes ours....[H]e who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. (LW 31, 297f.)

On the other hand, "The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness" (299).

Thus, when Luther has distinguished between real believers or Christians and others, he certainly is not describing relative ranks of faith, nor is he speaking language of the Enthusiasts, Pietists, or Wesleyan perfectionists, but strictly the language of the reality of the Christian life, *simul iustus et peccator*.

Consequently, the teaching of the two kingdoms cannot be treated as a political doctrine, however excellent a social contribution it might be—and which may have influenced the thinking of John Locke, and then James Madison on the first amendment. Rather, this teaching about the two kingdoms becomes an overarching understanding of the nature of the Christian life in this world, which becomes for Luther an organizing tool or diagram to help Christians understand their relationship to the two realities in which God has placed them—the kingdom of Christ and his righteousness, and the kingdom of men, where sin and law remain until death. How is the Christian to understand Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and the other preachments to Christians in the New Testament, e.g. Philippians 3:20 setting the Christian's citizenship in heaven? Were it not for the reality of *simul iustus...*, the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts might have been right, but of course, the fact was that they did not grasp the fundamentals of the central biblical teaching—the righteousness of faith.

Politicizing the Two Kingdoms

In the middle of the nineteenth century, according to Wright, a politicization of Luther's two-kingdom doctrine began. Until that time, there did not seem to be so much interest in the doctrine outside of Lutheran theological circles. It may be that Madison's letter to Pastor Schaeffer is a root for the tendency in some circles to connect the doctrine of the two kingdoms and the doctrine of the separation of church and state—and the assumption that the first amendment is a doctrine of the *separation* of church and state.

In 1975, in preparation for the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution, the essayist for the Bethany Lutheran College Reformation Lectures was its former president, B. W. Teigen, lecturing on "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and its Significance for the American bicentennial." Dr. Teigen did not present the two-kingdom doctrine as a political doctrine, but it was interesting that in the discussion which followed there was a debate as to whether or not the American Revolution was legitimate or not.

Wright believes that the original understanding of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms as found in Luther's own writings, and as summarized in the Book of Concord, underwent a perversion and became a *spurious* two-kingdoms doctrine. It was this perverted doctrine which

enabled the German Christians to embrace National Socialism and was also a convenient excuse for Karl Barth to reject Luther's two-kingdom doctrine, as well as natural law, and the distinction between law and gospel.¹¹

Wright points first to Christoph Ernst Luthardt who wrote, "Both the other great community circles of human society, domestic economy and state (*Haus und Staat*), in which the Christian stands belong to the territory of the natural life. Over these the Gospel does not have to make arrangements, for the Gospel has to do with the spiritual life. Reason underlies the natural life, as the source of all natural law and has its own authority and order, to which the Gospel does not have the call to alter." Wright responds that this is one of the more objectionable facets of the modern view, "that in the institutions of the natural world reason is the source of natural law.... The natural world, in this case, would be autonomous or free of God's law, so that people could make their own rules as they go about their lives and work."¹²

The Apology makes it clear that reason and natural knowledge are not the same thing, nor is the former the source of the latter: "Of these two parts the adversaries select the Law, because human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law (for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind); [the natural law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments]" (Ap IV, 7, Triglotta).¹³ In writing this, Melanchthon certainly is summarizing Romans 2:14-15: "for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them." It is thus clear that there are not two moral codes, but only one. Revealed law and natural law do not differ in content, but in how they come to be known, as well as the accuracy and detail in which reason understands them.

Robert Kolb and Charles Arand describe the most contemporary version of this misunderstanding of the two kingdoms:

In the twenty-first century, even though monasticism is rarely viewed as a viable option, dividing life into a sacred sphere and a secular sphere continues to persist. Such a division brings with it, however, two quite different temptations. First such a division will always create the possibility that Christians may regard one realm of existence as superior to another.... Practically speaking, this happens when Christians regard questions related to salvation as the only really important matters that deserve their attention....

¹¹ For a discussion of the doctrine of the two kingdoms in Reformed theology, from Calvin to Barth, see John Stephenson, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine in the Reformed Tradition," in *God and Caesar Revisited*, 59 ff.

¹² Quoted in Wright, 21.

¹³ The Triglotta English translation combines elements of the Latin and the German: "Ex his adversarii sumunt legem, quia humana ratio naturaliter intelligit aliquot modo legem, (habet enim idem iudicium scriptum divinitus in mente); von diesen zwei stücken nehmen nu die Widersacher das Gesetz für sich. Denn dieweil das natürlich Gesetz, welches mit dem Gesetz Mosi oder Zehen Geboten übereinstimmt in aller menschen Herzen angeboren und geschrieben ist, und also die vernunft etlichermaß die Zehen Geboten fassen und verstehen kann." Die Bekenntnisschriften.

Secondly, such a bifurcation of reality allows for secular existence to claim autonomy for itself from the spiritual sphere.... Western life has thus relegated and confined the spiritual to the realm of the private life of each individual. Such a division of life creates a dilemma for Christians, who find themselves living a divided and conflicted existence in which the two spheres are pitted against each other and have no relation with each other.¹⁴

The net effect of the view of the doctrine of the two kingdoms that developed in the nineteenth century was to posit a separation and autonomy of the two kingdoms from each other which permitted one to live in both kingdoms under completely different laws, the civil law completely autonomous, unrelated to the law of God. That thinking made it possible for German Christians to accept what they deemed merely civil laws even when clear moral law was opposed. More recently for example, the same thinking has made it possible for several notable congressional figures who professed to be Roman Catholic to see no connection between their religious profession and their acts as legislators. No doubt the same has also been true of Evangelicals and certainly some Lutherans in various legislative positions.

In his 1984 book, *The Naked Public Square*, Richard John Neuhaus complained:

[I]n earlier discussions of these questions it was common to attribute the modern "liberation" of politics to the influence of the sixteenth century Reformation. As discussed earlier, Luther in particular developed a rough doctrine of "two kingdoms" that seemed to grant autonomy to the secular realm. Many Christians, far from being grateful to Luther, have accused him and his doctrines of being the cause of the evangelical church's political passivity, notably in the face of Hitler's totalitarianism. Other scholars, more sympathetic to Luther, point out that the two-kingdom doctrine was very rough indeed, that it did not separate the two kingdoms but merely tried to illuminate the twofold nature of the rule of the one God over all things, sacred and secular.¹⁵

¹⁴ Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 110. Kolb and Arand describe the Christian's existence in the two realms in the context of the two kinds of righteousness. A similar misunderstanding of the two kingdoms doctrine is found in Gustav Wingren's dissertation *Luther on Vocation*. Kenneth Hagen's critique of Wingren's book argues that "Wingren confuses Luther's two kingdoms when he identifies exclusively the dying to sin with learning to die in one's vocation. Luther does speak here of belonging to an estate (in this example, the estate of marriage), with its toils and sufferings, 'in order that he may grow used to pleasure and sorrow, avoid sin, and prepare himself for death better than he could do outside of this estate'.... Wingren: 'The Christian is crucified by the law in his vocation, under the earthly government; and he arises through the gospel, in the church under the spiritual government.'" For Wingren it seems that when the Christian is freed from the law, he is free from his vocation.

"Wingren's mistake is to link vocation with law, without clearly distinguishing the civil from the spiritual use of the law. Both Wingren and American Evangelicalism confuse the first and second uses of the law. For them, the law, civil and spiritual, is to bridle the flesh, to restrain sin, to punish transgressions. But for Luther, the vocations are a part of the civil orders of creation...." "A Critique of Wingren on *Luther on Vocation*," *Lutheran Quarterly* XVI, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 252.

¹⁵ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 174.

Actually, the two kingdom doctrine wasn't as rough as Neuhaus thought, but was quite thoroughly worked out. Nonetheless, Neuhaus correctly saw that it was a mistake to attribute such a view to Luther's doctrine, even as it sometimes appears Lutherans today have seen the two kingdoms doctrine simply as a doctrine separating church and state so that the two are completely autonomous and unrelated. In fact, they are distinguished, but not with an impenetrable barrier. Christians live in both, and participate in both. God has created both and exercises his power in both, but in two different ways.

Two Kingdoms and the Church in the World

What applies to the individual Christian here may also be applied to the outward church in this world, where the church has a legal status as a property-holding corporation in the form of a local congregation or a larger collective body as synod, district, diocese, or denomination. It too will be seen as living in two kingdoms. The church in its essence consists only of the congregation of all believers, the *communio sanctorum*, both in heaven and on earth. There is no spot or blemish in this church, since it is made up of saints clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Ephesians 5). In that respect it belongs solely to the kingdom of Christ. But the outward church in this world also lives under law and reason. It struggles against sin, both moral and theological, operates within the bounds of the federal and state constitutions, and lives under the laws of the land. This outward church enters into contracts, seeks legal redress according to the laws of the land, and defends its interests in the courts and under the law. It is especially here that Luther's attack on the Roman Catholic Church's usurpation of power over secular rulers comes to bear. If the outward church needs to correct the state from departing from natural law, then its leaders do so *iure humano*. But acting *iure humano* is not wrong; it is wrong to elevate law *by human right* to mandate by divine right.

It is clear that Luther acknowledges that the church, as an entity in the world, and the church's ministers, just like the individual Christians, have functions that belong to the secular kingdom, and therefore operate by the rules of the secular kingdom. The pastors and superintendents, as leaders of the church, will make judgments on public morality, and will defend natural law when the state permits or promotes violations of it. One may dispute whether the pastors and bishops act in such matters in their ecclesiastical office, or in their role as individuals.

Not everything done by the church insofar as its outward organization is concerned is the administration of the office of the keys. The church trains the young in catechesis, instructing them in Christian teaching. That is an exercise of the keys, or the kingdom of the right. But alongside of that, the church, through its schools, trains Christian youth in the useful arts and occupations. To the extent that the church acts as agent for works of charity and for the good of the community, it is working in and for the kingdom of the left. When the ministers officiate at marriages, they were in Luther's time as well as ours acting not only in the kingdom of the right, by offering God's blessing on the marriage, but were officiating over a worldly institution—established by God, but for life in the world, not for life in heaven.

One of Luther's most practical and concrete writings to deal with two kingdoms issues is his preface to the 1523 Leisnig *Ordinance of a Common Chest*. It is written under his name, with the addition of the title "Ecclesiastic." When asked by the leaders of the parish at Leisnig to give them advice on electing their own parish priest (one who had been deposed by the abbot when the priest accepted the evangelical faith) and also about establishing a common chest (parish

treasury), Luther wrote a preface, which was attached to the ordinance written by the Leisnig Council, and approved by Luther. The ordinance deals not only with calling a pastor, but also with matters that clearly belong to the secular kingdom such as holding property and having a treasury. Luther's preface is labeled "Suggestions on how to deal with ecclesiastical property Martin Luther, Ecclesiastic" (LW 45, 169). Luther's preface concludes, "If God were to grant that these suggestions be carried out, not only would we have a well-filled common chest for every need, but three crying evils would diminish and eventually cease" (begging, misuse of the ban, and so called *zinskauff*) (176).¹⁶ Then follows the "Fraternal Agreement" which is in effect a set of bylaws for calling pastors and administering the Common Chest which was to support the parish and its school: "The parish assembly, shall have the authority and duty, with the advice and approval of our elected pastor and preacher and others learned in the divine Scriptures, to call, appoint and dismiss a schoolmaster for young boys" (188).

One thing that becomes clear in this document is that Luther already understood that the Christian congregation, as well as the called and ordained clergy had two sides – operating simultaneously in the kingdom of the right and the left. The principle that operates here is expressed in AC XXVIII:

However, where Bishops possess secular authority and the sword, they possess them not as bishops by divine right but by human, imperial right, given by Roman emperors and kings for the secular administration of their lands. That has nothing at all to do with the office of the gospel.... Whatever other power and jurisdiction bishops have in various matters such as marriage or tithes, they have them by virtue of human right. However, when bishops neglect such duties, the princes are obligated – whether they like it or not – to administer justice to their subjects for the sake of peace.... (AC XXVIII 19, 29)

Thus, when Luther involves himself in the marriage problems of Philip of Hesse, even though he was hardly in the position of a common citizen, but a teacher of the church, he still spoke not by divine right, but by human right.

Likewise in the 1524 treatise *Trade and Usury* Luther has hardly stepped out of his offices as teacher and priest but nevertheless writes on issues that involve ethics and the kingdom of the left. Luther makes this distinction at the outset: "It is our purpose here to speak about the abuses and sins of trade, insofar as they concern the conscience. The matter of their detrimental effect on the purse we leave to the princes and lords, that they may do their duty in this regard" (LW 45, 247). Luther is involved in a theological refutation, for one thing, against two evangelical clerics who had argued that since civil law was invented by the pagans, and canon law by papal legislation there should be a return to the precepts of Moses. Along the way, however, Luther not only refutes that kind of thinking, but argues against injustices and bad practices that arise from trade and money lending. He urges a Christian attitude, which he

¹⁶ See 175fn13 and also LW 45, 235 where the editor's introduction to *Trade and Usury* explains the *Zinskauf*, also called *Rentenkauf*. By using the word *kauf* the transaction was exempted from the condemnation of usury.

clearly derives from the Sermon on the Mount, but yet describes an ethical way of doing business, and urges examples from Moses, Solomon, and others.

The Duality of Persons

This duality of offices in one person is addressed explicitly in the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁷ In the section on Matthew 6:19-21, Luther comments:

A sharp distinction must be made between the Christian and the man of the world, between a Christian person and a secular person.... Of course a prince can be a Christian, but he must not rule as a Christian; and insofar as he does rule, his name is not "Christian" but "prince." The person is indeed a Christian, but his office or his principedom does not involve his Christianity. Insofar as he is a Christian, the Gospel teaches him not to do injury to anyone.... But it would not make for a good administration if you were to preach that sort of thing to the prince.... So you see that each status or office is properly distinguished from the other; and yet they are combined in one person and, so to speak are contradictory.... Thus every human being on earth has two persons: one person for himself, with obligations to no one except to God; and in addition a secular person, according to which he has obligations to other people. (LW 21, 170 ff.)

The duality of the believer is also spelled out in this dialectic:

Now if someone asks whether a Christian may go to court or defend himself, the answer is simply no. A Christian is the kind of person who has nothing to do with this sort of secular existence and law.... A related question is this: May a Christian be a secular official and administer the office and work of a ruler or a judge? This would mean that the two persons or the two types of office are combined in one man.... There is no getting around it, *a Christian has to be a secular person of some sort*. As regards his own person, according to his life as a Christian, he is in subjection to no one but Christ, without any obligation either to the emperor or to any other man. But at least outwardly, according to his body and property, he is related by subjection and obligation to the emperor.... (LW 21, 108 f.; emphasis added)

And he then returns to the original question:

It is permissible for you to use orderly procedure in demanding and obtaining your rights, but be careful not to have a vindictive heart.... Thus you are not forbidden to go to court and lodge a complaint against injustice or violence, just so long as you do not have a false heart, but one that remains as patient as it was before. (LW 21, 111)

¹⁷ LW 21. See the editor's introduction. The commentary on the Sermon on the Mount was first presented as sermons, probably transcribed by others, and published in different editions after 1532.

On Matthew 5:5, Luther writes,

What does it mean, then, to be meek? From the outset here you must realize that Christ is not speaking at all about the government and its work, whose property it is not to be meek, as we use the word in German [*sanfftmüt*, LW note 8], but to bear the sword (Romans 13:4) for the punishment of those who do wrong (1 Peter 2:14)... Here we have two different persons in one man. The one is that in which we are created and born, according to which we are all alike—man or woman or child, young or old....He is not talking about this person here, letting it alone in its own office and rule, as He has ordained it. He is talking merely about how each individual, natural person is to behave in relation to others. (LW 21, 23)

In his 1523 *Temporal Authority* Luther wrote even more pointedly on Christ's words "Do not resist evil" (Matthew 5:39): "A Christian should be so disposed that he will suffer every evil and injustice without avenging himself; neither will he seek legal redress in the courts but have utterly no need of temporal authority and law for his own sake. On behalf of others, however, he may and should seek vengeance, justice, protection, and help and do as much as he can to achieve it" (LW 45, 101).

Conclusions and Casuistry

While there is much more Luther material dealing with the two kingdoms doctrine—including the Genesis, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes commentaries as well as in sermons—which add rich fabric to the distinction between the two kingdoms, a clear understanding of Luther's view emerges from the key writings we have reviewed. There is a clear, biblical teaching on the two kingdoms, which Luther has treated systematically in some of his writings, made use of in his exegetical writings, and is summarized in the Augsburg Confession and Apology. This doctrine shows the Christian what it means, according to God's Word, to live at the same time in the world and in the heavenly kingdom.

In another sense, however, the doctrine of the two kingdoms represents a structure or even a *Weltanschauung* which is drawn from Scripture and which Luther himself uses as an organizing principle in diverse essays, especially the exegetical ones.

Both Kenneth Hagen and William Wright see the two kingdoms doctrine as an organizing principle or world view. For Hagen, "the two-kingdom theology does not gain a great deal set in relation with other key ideas. It is really a theological construct, a *Weltanschauung* to set up the whole picture."¹⁸ Wright has it in similar terms: "The concept represented Luther's Reformation worldview or *Weltanschauung*. When it is understood as such, it proves to be essential for clarifying all of Luther's views."¹⁹

¹⁸ Hagen, *God and Caesar*, 19.

¹⁹ Wright, 15.

One way of summarizing the two kingdoms doctrine is the diagram that follows the conclusion of this paper. The diagram is suggested by Hagen in his essay in *God and Caesar Revisited*,²⁰ though the arrangements and details are mine.

One of the applications that must be drawn from this study is that we cannot treat idea of the separation of church and state, as well as the First Amendment's establishment clause, as a biblical doctrine, although one might be able to argue it as a doctrine of natural law.

Likewise, it is inadequate to speak of the separation principal as equivalent to or even similar to the doctrine of the two kingdoms. The place of the doctrine of two kingdoms in Scripture is not to set forth a political doctrine or theory of government that may be urged on secular society. The essential function of the two kingdoms doctrine is to show Christians how it is that they live in the world in two kingdoms both of which are creations of God, and how their lives as redeemed children of God are lived in the worldly realm. It belongs to the reality of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*, not to the reality of the unbeliever. The doctrine of the two kingdoms, as revealed in Scripture does not speak to the secular, unbelieving ruler, except insofar as it is known from natural law and through reason. Yet the Christian ruler may certainly be helped by it.

Nevertheless, the biblical texts which deal with the kingdom of the left make it clear that government is a creation of God to which all men owe obedience, and in which the Christians participate, and that participation is pleasing to God.

Another point that we may glean from this study is that this doctrine does not provide us with rigid, inviolable borders between church and state, so that we always know how to solve the conflicts between the two. Our Lord sees the border clearly; we don't. What is clear is that the powers of the two are not to be mixed or confused. But since both the individual Christian and the church live in both and wield the powers of both kingdoms, it is not always so easy to see the lines of demarcation from the side of our lives in the secular kingdom.

Practically speaking, the separation of church and state principle is spelled out for us by legal precedent and court cases, as well as the Internal Revenue Service. They are our civil law, and we live in accord with such civil laws, even when we find them unwise. In such cases, we deal with them with the same political processes open to all citizens. The Christians and their congregations are bound to those laws, except when they contradict what God has clearly commanded. But since we will not find the rigid set of rules we might look for in the two kingdoms doctrine, there are questions of casuistry, where principles come into conflict.

Our people need to be instructed carefully in the meaning of the two kingdoms teaching so that they do not confuse this doctrine with the civil doctrine enunciated in the first amendment, or the broader concept of separation of church and state. A couple of examples may be helpful. The Minnesota vote on an amendment to the constitution prohibiting gay marriage is now past—and lost. There already was a law on the books in this state limiting marriage to one man and one woman, and of course laws can be changed fairly easily. So can constitutional

²⁰ Hagen, 18, 28f.

amendments, though with a higher bar. But the matter of amending the constitution is a civil matter, and some Christians who believe homosexuality to be contrary to God's law, natural and revealed, also were not convinced that making laws by amendment is a wise course, and so voted against the amendment. The line between political judgment and moral judgment is often less than distinct. Direct involvement on the part of church members and leadership would be necessary in the case that a law were passed compelling the churches to accept unrepentant homosexuals and gay couples into church membership, compelling our ministers to perform marriages of homosexual couples, or compelling our churches to accept homosexual clergy. If the penalty for not doing so were to lose our exemption from corporate taxes, we would have to refuse and tighten our belts.

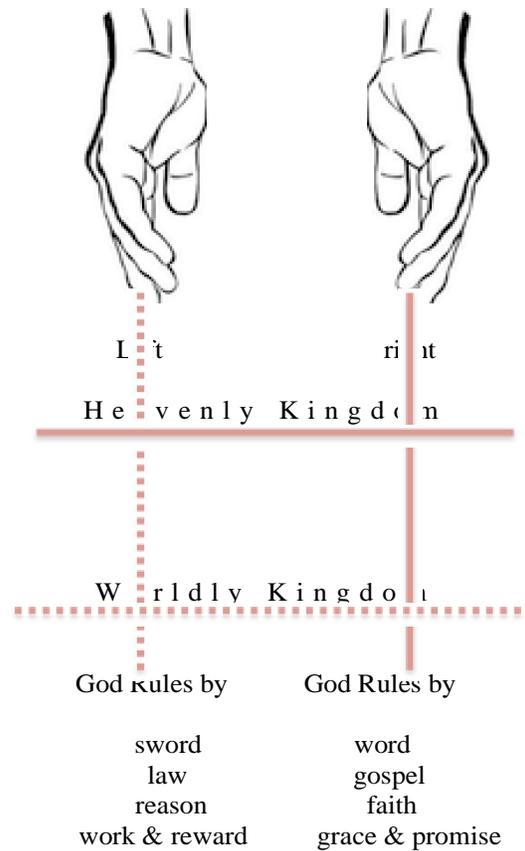
The question of the HHS mandate is another case immediately at hand. It would be one thing for tax funds to be used for abortions, as objectionable as that would be. We might protest it, and inveigh against it. But it is quite another thing when the churches and their supported institutions are ordered to provide support by purchasing insurance for abortifacients or clinical abortions. I believe that it was consistent with the doctrine of the two kingdoms for President Harrison to participate in the panel appearing before the congressional sub-committee, and for presidents Moldstad and Schroeder to sign the open letter "Free Exercise of Religion: Putting Beliefs into Practice." They did so as church leaders, defending the constitutional guarantee of the First Amendment, not as defenders of the biblical two-kingdoms doctrine. Any subterfuge of acting merely as individuals is hardly necessary. The only distinction necessary is that they not act directly in their spiritual office as bishops, but as leaders of their churches which live in the civil realm, and that they act *jure humano*. It seems to me that AC and Ap XXVIII recognize such a possibility.

There may be other cases as well where our pastors and church leaders may act or write as Luther does in his advice on the establishment of the Common Chest under his title "Ecclesiastic," or when he writes his 1524 essay *On Trade and Usury*, without asserting that he was merely acting as a private person. In this treatise, Luther was not writing against interest as we know it, but against a corrupt and evil system which stole from the common man, Christian and unbeliever alike. As noted above, Luther distinguished between matters of conscience and political, social, or economic matters: "It is our purpose here to speak about the abuses and sins of trade, insofar as they concern the conscience. The matter of their detrimental effect on the purse we leave to the princes and lords, that they may do their duty in this regard" (LW 45, 247). Given this distinction, it is proper for churches and church leaders to address the state on clear matters of conscience, when proposed legislation would violate natural law and burden consciences on matters such as life issues, marriage and family, racial discrimination, education, freedom of religion, and freedom of conscience. This would include specific contemporary issues under discussion today such as legalization of abortion on-demand as established by *Roe v. Wade* (1973), redefinition of marriage to include gay couples, and discrimination against married couples so as to discourage marriage. Whether it is a matter of upholding the principles of the second amendment or the teaching of the two kingdoms, we hold that the state is obligated to uphold natural law, not simply because it is taught in Scripture, but because its reality is known also to reason and is the basis for an orderly society in which moral conscience and religious freedom are essential.

The application of the principle of the two kingdoms to specific situations is certainly fraught with dangers. Christians who act in the civil realm, even as they are true believers, remain sinful and prone to errors in judgment. Therefore, our pastors and bishops must remain aware of their calling as ministers of the gospel, whose office of exercising the power of the keys is given by Christ himself. And in addition to seeing to it that they do not mix or confuse the powers of the two realms, they also must not act in such a way as to confuse the flock, or to bring dishonor on the office of the gospel. What is permissible and what is wise or discrete may not always be the same thing. We also need to guard against divinizing conservative political positions with a conservative, confessional theological position, just as we are sometimes too quick to demonize liberal social doctrine.

So we can certainly learn also from Luther's mistakes in our lives in the kingdom of the left, his miscalculations in his writings at the time of the Peasants' War, and in his debatable solution to Philip of Hesse's marital dilemma. Our misjudgments and errors in such things are serious enough and they have consequences, but we rest assured that they neither hasten nor delay the day of our Lord's coming, when the kingdom of the left will be no more, and our weaknesses in carrying out his will in the kingdom of the world will be wiped away. Meanwhile, we believe as saints, and we live as Christians in a world where our corrupt natures stumble and err. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

God's two
Governments and Kingdoms
Regimente and Reiche



The Two Regiments

The two powers are exercised by God. But the power of the left is only used to govern the worldly kingdom, and the power of the right is only used in the heavenly kingdom or spiritual realm.

The Christian is an instrument of both powers, in their proper realms.

To say that the Christian lives in the worldly kingdom as a Christian is not to say that he does not hold the powers of the left, nor that he turns the gospel into a governing power in the worldly kingdom.

The Two Kingdoms

The Heavenly Kingdom is both in heaven and on earth – the church militant and the church triumphant.

The Worldly kingdom includes both believers and unbelievers. The Christian lives there as a Christian, but the powers of the heavenly kingdom are not used to govern the worldly kingdom.

Illustration, Kenneth Hagen, *God and Caesar Revisited*:

Luther...lived in both of the horizontal kingdoms: in the visible earthly kingdom as a citizen of Wittenberg and in the invisible heavenly Kingdom as a Christian in the company of all the saints and angels. Furthermore, Luther was an instrument of God's left hand as professor, father, and civil judge, and an instrument of God's right hand as priest and preacher. Furthermore, Luther's doctrine of *Anfechtung* meant he was in daily struggle with Satan....

Diagram based on a description suggested by Kenneth Hagen.

Regiment refers to governance or power and *Reich* to a kingdom or state. The governance of the left hand is the *potestas gladii* (power of the sword –law) and the right hand is the *potestas clavii* (power or office of the keys –gospel).

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