

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

MARTIN LUTHER'S TWO KINGDOMS, LAW AND GOSPEL, AND THE CREATED ORDER: WAS THERE A TIME WHEN THE TWO KINGDOMS WERE NOT?

JONATHON DAVID BEEKE

Christ's 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. Neither does the gospel introduce new laws for the civil realm. Instead, it commands us to obey the present laws, whether they have been formulated by pagans or others.

As demonstrated in the epigraph, a quotation taken from Philip Melancthon's *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531),¹ the distinction between the spiritual and earthly kingdoms was a readily accepted teaching in the nascent Protestant churches. Already in 1525, Martin Luther was convinced he had sufficiently and clearly articulated what he meant by the existence of two kingdoms; that confusion might exist on this topic was, for Luther, incomprehensible: "There are two kingdoms, one the kingdom of God, the other the kingdom of the world. I have written this so often that I am surprised that there is anyone who does not know it or remember it."² Almost five hundred years later, understanding Luther's exact meaning of the two kingdoms and two governments (*Zwei Reiche und Regimente*) remains a somewhat enigmatic and therefore hotly contested question.³ Indeed, any attempt to answer this historical question is a

Jonathon Beeke is a Ph.D. student at Westminster Theological Seminary.

¹ *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), *The Apology*, 231.2-3.

² Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehman; 55 vols; Philadelphia and St. Louis: Fortress and Concordia, 1955-1986), *An Open Letter On the Harsh Book Against the Peasants*, 46:69 (hereafter *LW*). See also *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Schriften)* (72 vols.; Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-1993), 18:389 (hereafter *WA*).

³ It is particularly in the relating of church and state that Luther's two kingdoms sparked the greatest debate. Historically, Luther has been accused of being both too conservative and too liberal. Beginning with his contemporary Thomas Müntzer, many have criticized Luther for allowing the state an authoritarian role, whereas others, beginning with Peter Frarin in 1566, have suggested that Luther allowed for the overthrow of civil order. At the heart of this debate lies Luther's concept of the two kingdoms. Cf. David M. Whitford, "Cura Religionis or Two Kingdoms: The Late Luther on Religion and the State in the Lectures on Genesis," *CH* 73 (2004): 41. For a more detailed account

daunting task. Surely the staggering collection of Luther's writings—over one hundred and twenty volumes in the Weimar edition—and the countless monographs, articles, and collected essays devoted to this reformer must give pause to the interpreter of Luther.⁴ As if this were not enough to scare away the neophyte, the subject of our study, Luther's two kingdoms, sits high atop this ever-increasing mountain of literature. The present article must therefore be selective. It is the purpose of this study then to examine Luther's two kingdoms distinction in connection with his discussion of the prelapsarian order, a relationship often overlooked in secondary scholarship. It is my intent that with the placement of these two discussions side by side we will come to a fuller understanding of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine (*Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*).⁵ The assumption of this article is that Luther's two kingdoms distinction is indeed understandable; while the ensuing pages cannot interact with everything related to this topic, certainly, as demonstrated in the above quotation, the reformer himself believed what he was saying was not beyond the grasp of his audience.

Before detailing the narrower concern of this article, it is necessary first to sketch briefly secondary scholarship's interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century, it was fairly common to politicize Luther's thought; the two kingdoms doctrine was often

of this debate see also the compilation of essays in *Lutheran Churches—Salt or Mirror of Society? Case Studies on the Theory and Practice of the Two Kingdoms* (ed. Ulrich Duchrow; Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1977). As an aside, it can be noted here that Whitford's essay is in response to the thesis argued by James M. Estes who believes that Luther's position shifted from the 1520s to the 1530s. Estes believes Luther's mature thought and Melancthon's *cura religionis* were substantially similar and evolved in dialogue with each other. For Estes's latest contribution see his *Peace, Order and the Glory of God: Secular Authority and the Church in the Thought of Luther and Melancthon, 1518–1559* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 111; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005).

⁴ Brady's comments reflect this justified fear: "Here stand the great editions, range on range, topped by the frowning Karakoram of the Wiemarana, which dares the scholar to mount its slopes. There is the scarred plain of criticism . . . further on are the dry beds of bibliography, down which rush without warning, once a year, the floods of new literature. The wanderer longs for a quiet vale, furnished modestly with a few texts and aids, and watered by brevity, clarity and simplicity. A forbidding—but not forbidden—landscape." See Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Luther and Society: Two Kingdoms or Three Estates? Tradition and Experience in Luther's Social Teaching," *Lutherjahrbuch* 52 (1985): 197.

⁵ It is important to note that Luther himself never attributed the term "doctrine" (*Lehre*) to his distinction of the two kingdoms; rather, the term "two kingdoms doctrine" derives from Karl Barth, who first used it in 1922. Admittedly, continued use of this label may give the impression that Luther presented a systematic and wholly consistent application of the two kingdoms; this, however, was not the case. Yet, despite the more recent attempts to deny this label, I continue to use the term "two kingdoms doctrine" for several reasons: (1) While Luther's presentation was by no means systematic, I am hereby assuming he reflected biblically upon his distinction and meant to present a general teaching (which is also a viable translation of *Lehre*) for the welfare of the church; (2) I continue to use this label due to its pervasive and continued use in the secondary literature, which, I believe, is useful as a verbal shorthand for a complicated subject (as does Estes, *Peace, Order and the Glory of God*, 38 n. 97); and (3) the connections between Luther's thought and the more systematic formulations of the period of orthodoxy are thus made more explicit. For an unfavorable view of the term see Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (ed. and trans. Roy A. Harrisville; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 154-55.

equated with the separation of church and state, with the understanding that each sphere is autonomous in its own right (often labeled *Eigengesetzlichkeit*).⁶ Once each realm was thought to have its own autonomy, the perverted use of Luther's two kingdoms by the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazism) was not an illogical step.⁷ As William Wright notes, "The rise of National Socialism in Germany provided the context for the ultimate application of the concept of the double autonomy of the worldly spheres of life."⁸ Reacting against this application, but not recognizing it as a spurious interpretation, critics such as Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, Karl Barth, and Johannes Heckel labeled Luther's thought respectively as "cultural defeatism," "law-gospel quietism," and "Augustinian dualism."⁹

While remnants of politicizing the Lutheran two kingdoms construct remain, more recent research rightly criticizes this simplistic interpretation.¹⁰ Especially after World War II, a growing tendency was to recognize the pervasive character of the two kingdoms throughout the whole of Luther's theology.¹¹ In this context,

⁶ The term *Eigengesetzlichkeit* is thought to be first used by Reinhold Seeberg in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (1917). Ernst Troeltsch and Hermann Jordan also echoed this view with the use of their similar *eigene Gesetze*. For more on this history see the excellent survey provided by William Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of God's Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 18-23.

⁷ Lazareth notes especially the notorious *Ansbacher Ratschlag* (*Ansbach Counsel*, June 1934) and its connection with Hans Sommerer, Paul Althaus, and Werner Elert who all supported the racist Aryan Paragraph (1933). See William H. Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 8-9. Lazareth does note, however, that only a small number of Lutheran theologians "actually espoused the Nazi Party line" despite the common perception that it was the Lutheran worldview which gave rise to the German National Socialism.

⁸ Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 31.

⁹ Karl Barth writes, for example, "To a certain extent, Lutheranism has provided a breathing space for German paganism, and has allotted it—with its separation of creation and law from the Gospel—something like a sacral precinct. It is possible for the German pagan to use the Lutheran doctrine of the authority of the state as a Christian justification for National Socialism, and it is possible for the German Christian to feel himself invited by the same doctrine to a recognition of National Socialism. Both have in fact occurred." Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme, 1938–1945* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1945), 113; quoted in Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 11-12. For more on Reinhold Niebuhr and Heckel see the remainder of Lazareth's chapter; the former's position can be found in his *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941); for Heckel's critique see his *Lex Charitatis: Eine juristische Untersuchung über das Recht in der Theologie Martin Luthers* (ABAW 36; Munich: Beck, 1953). For more on H. Richard Niebuhr and his critique see his *Christ and Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), 154-91, which labels Luther's position as dualistic, which is, in Niebuhr's opinion, logically connected to cultural conservatism.

¹⁰ For an example of a recent politicization of Luther's two kingdoms see Gary M. Simpson, "Toward a Lutheran 'Delight in the Law of the Lord': Church and State in the Context of Civil Society," in *Church and State: Lutheran Perspectives* (ed. John R. Stumme and Robert W. Tuttle; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 30.

¹¹ Especially instrumental in this evaluation was Heinrich Bornkamm who writes, "It is self-evident that all the other threads which link Luther's two kingdoms doctrine with the whole of his theology call for an equally careful examination, not in order to protect the doctrine from criticism but because it will be illuminated by each of these relationships." See his *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Context of His Theology* (trans. Karl H. Hertz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 31.

Luther's two kingdoms distinction was examined in connection with his many other dualisms; Brian Gerrish thought of the two kingdoms as a worldview wherein grace and works, theology and philosophy, and spirit and body are all connected.¹² In contradistinction to the Barthian *Königsherrschaft Christi* (royal rule of Christ), scholars especially recognized the connection between Luther's law and gospel distinction and the two kingdoms; to conflate the two kingdoms under one redemptive umbrella, as Barth would have it, is paramount to conflating law with gospel.¹³ As Gerhard Ebeling demonstrates, maintaining the two kingdoms distinction is necessary for the proclamation of the gospel message (which deals with the judgment of God [*coram Deo*]), a matter which is closely related to but distinct from the judgment of the world (*coram mundo*).¹⁴ The necessity of retaining this distinction has been more recently substantiated by Robert Kolb and Charles Arand who note the connection between Luther's affirmation of two kinds of righteousness (passive and active) and two dimensions of reality.¹⁵

From this all too brief survey on the interpretation of the two kingdoms, one thing is evident: understanding Luther's two kingdoms is crucial for a proper understanding of his whole theology. While recent scholarship correctly notes that Luther often identified the spiritual kingdom with gospel (and its corollary of passive righteousness) and the civil kingdom with law (and its corollary of

¹² Brian Gerrish, *Grace and Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 119. Here Gerrish writes, "All the 'doublets' we have listed come back, in the last analysis, to this crucial doctrine. . . . Luther is thinking of the two kingdoms as two dimensions of existence." One could further add Luther's twofold distinction between *Deus revelatus* and *Deus absconditus*, as well as his *theologia crucis* and *theologia gloriae*.

¹³ See the essays in *God and Caesar Revisited* (ed. John R. Stephenson; Luther Academy Conference Papers 1; Shorewood, Minn.: Luther Academy, 1995). Ulrich Asendorf writes, "From the Lutheran standpoint, however, this new viewpoint [as expressed by the *Königsherrschaft Christi*] represented a crude misunderstanding of the two kingdoms as well as a mixing of the kingdoms and subsequently of law and gospel." See his "The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 11. Similarly, John Stephenson writes, "But the two kingdoms doctrine is not identical . . . with the mere separation of civil from ecclesiastical power, for this facet of the Lutheran heritage grows out of the law-gospel distinction apart from which it has no subsistence." See his "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine," 60. On Barth see especially his critique of the Lutheran law/gospel hermeneutic in his essay "Gospel and Law," in *Community, State, and Church: Three Essays* (introduction by Will Herberg; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1968), 71-100.

¹⁴ Gerhard Ebeling, "The Necessity of the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," in *Word and Faith* (trans. James W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 386-406.

¹⁵ See Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 26, who write, "The distinction between the two kinds of righteousness allowed the reformers without qualification to extol the gospel by removing human activity as a basis for justification before God. At the same time, it clarified the relationship of the human creature to the world in which God had placed him or her to live a life of 'active righteousness' for the well-being of the human community and the preservation of the environment. The two kinds of righteousness, however, are inseparable from one another. The passive righteousness of faith provides the core identity of the person; the active righteousness of love flows from that core identity out into the world." See also Robert Kolb, "Luther on the Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church* (ed. Timothy J. Wengert; Lutheran Quarterly Books; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 38-55.

active righteousness), yet this discussion is often disconnected from the original created order. It is both necessary and instructive to examine Luther's two kingdoms theology in connection with his comments on the prelapsarian order, the latter of which demonstrates his conviction that law alone was operative in this sinless state. For sinless Adam, gospel was not necessary, and therefore his membership in paradise was, according to Luther, governed by way of law.¹⁶ This article argues then, that a consistent and logical reading of Luther's two kingdoms reveals it to be a *postlapsarian* reality; although Luther himself at times wrote to the contrary, his overall presentation must necessarily recognize that Adam's paradise-kingdom was singularly spiritual, one that was maintained and guaranteed by his active obedience to God's law, Adam's fulfillment of the *mandatum Dei*. Since law held this very different function before the entrance of sin, Luther could then in the prelapsarian world equate what is in the postlapsarian world distinguished as sacred and secular. It follows therefore that a definitive two kingdoms distinction can be said to exist only subsequent to the presence of sin.

In order to develop the argument of this article we must first briefly outline the historical precursors to Luther's two kingdoms thought, and subsequently compare and contrast the thoughts of these forebears to the main contours of Luther's understanding. While other texts will be touched upon, it is sufficient for the purposes of this article that we give special attention to Luther's *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* in order to understand his position. Having examined to what degree and on what basis Luther distinguishes the two kingdoms, we will then examine his exegesis of Adam's state, focusing in this section on his Genesis lectures. Our primary concern here will be to determine whether Luther uses the distinguishing characteristics of the two kingdoms to understand this pre-fall state. Of central note in this section is the different use Luther attributes to law before Adam's revolt as compared to the post-fall period. Based upon our findings we will finally evaluate the relevant secondary scholarship, questioning the validity of their common assumption regarding the *created* origin of the two kingdoms.

I. *Historical Precursors*

It is a well-documented fact that Luther relied on his monastic order's name-sake for much of his two kingdoms doctrine. Writing shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire, Augustine constructed his *City of God* (426) as a theological response to this tragic event.¹⁷ Augustine argued that two cities, the *civitas dei* and

¹⁶ I must hasten to add here that Luther did not conceive of perfect Adam's fulfillment of the law as a burdensome or oppressive task. Rather, to live in accordance with the law of God was sinless Adam's highest joy and delight. Thus, while Luther does use legal terminology to describe Adam's pre-fall state, post-fall images of a criminal before a judge, or even of a reluctantly (grumbling) obedient child do not apply. For express examples of Luther connecting obedience and joy in the pre-fall state see nn. 66 and 73 below. For this cautionary note I am especially grateful for the advice given by Timothy J. Wengert.

¹⁷ English citations are taken from Augustine, *The City of God* (trans. Marcus Dods; introduction by Thomas Merton; New York: Modern Library, 1950). The present brief summary is by no means

the *civitas terrena*, exist in antithetical relation. Thus he writes, “The one [city] consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after their kind.”¹⁸ David VanDrunen remarks that Augustine’s two cities stand in perpetual and eschatological tension; in Augustine’s thought they are divided as to their respective ends and thus “there is no overlapping or dual membership.”¹⁹ Augustine believed the opposition of these two cities finds its source in the corruption of the unclean faction of angels. Just as God separated the light from the darkness, calling only the light good, so also the angelic darkness, that “unholy company,” separated itself from the righteousness of God and determined to follow a course of evil.²⁰ With the diabolical deception of Adam there arises then the formation of two cities: “Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God.”²¹ For Augustine it was significant that Cain was the one who built a worldly city, whereas Scripture does not record Abel’s building of a city; rather, the saints below possess a heavenly city and are for the present sojourners on earth, waiting for the promised kingdom to be given to them.²² While Luther adopted Augustine’s eschatological antithesis, and even at times employed the language of two cities, Luther, it will be seen, stressed more positively the divine origin of not only the spiritual but also the civil government.²³

A second, more negative, precursor to Luther’s thought is found in the medieval concept of the two swords, most commonly connected to Pope Boniface VIII’s *Unam Sanctam* (1302). Stated briefly, the assumption of the two swords theory (based on Luke 22:38) was that Christ invested the highest authority on

intended to be an entire analysis of Augustine, or for that matter, any of the historical precursors to Luther dealt with below. For further material on Augustine see Johannes van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine’s “City of God” and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Vigiliae Christianae 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991).

¹⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 14.1.

¹⁹ David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Emory University Studies in Law and Religion; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 27. VanDrunen’s first chapter is especially helpful in assessing the many historical precursors to the Lutheran and Reformed formulations of the two kingdoms; for much of this section I rely on and am indebted to VanDrunen’s work.

²⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, 11.9-20.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.1. Interestingly, Luther’s formulation is strikingly similar to Augustine’s here: “We must divide the children of Adam and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world. Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God, as Psalm 2 [6] and all of Scripture says.” See LW 45:88; WA 11:249. Elsewhere, Luther specifically credits Augustine and follows him in this area: “For Christ also calls Abel righteous and makes him the beginning of the church of the godly, which will continue until the end (Matt. 23:35). Similarly, Cain is the beginning of the church of the wicked and of the blood-thirsty until the end of the world. Augustine treats this story in a similar way in his book *The City of God*.” See LW 1:252; WA 42:187. See also ch. 5, entitled “Cain and Abel: Law Judges before God,” in Lazareth, *Christians in Society*.

²² Augustine, *City of God*, 15.1.

²³ VanDrunen, *Natural Law*, 60-61.

earth with two swords: spiritual and temporal authority. Of course, Pope Boniface VIII was this highest authority. But since the pope was too holy, he could not administer the temporal sword and had therefore to delegate this power to civil magistrates. John Witte notes that even in Luther's day many of the "strong German bishops and ecclesiastical princes" were operating on Boniface's hierarchical assumption.²⁴ This hierarchical ordering assumed that the lowest orders are to be governed by intermediaries on behalf of the superior; as Boniface writes, "Therefore, if the earthly power errs, it shall be judged by the spiritual power, if a lesser spiritual power errs it shall be judged by its superior, but if the supreme spiritual power errs it can be judged only by God."²⁵ Lost is the antithetical tension of Augustine's *City of God*; it is therefore not surprising that Luther rejected this theory, despite acknowledging its recognition of two authorities.

A third and final precursor we must briefly deal with is William of Ockham who, in the final years of his life, wrote a great deal on political issues. In *A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government* (c.1340), Ockham denies the validity of the medieval two swords theory (even labeling it heretical), arguing that the power to make societal laws resides in the common people, a right established by divine law. This power is then transferred to the civil leader (emperor) by the people.²⁶ Interestingly, Ockham delineates this power as a postlapsarian reality; before the fall all things were available to everyone and thus there existed a

²⁴ John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 109.

²⁵ As quoted in VanDrunen, *Natural Law*, 35-36.

²⁶ For example, after citing Augustine's exegesis of John 18:36 (Jesus' statement, "My kingdom is not of this world"), Ockham argues Peter himself did not claim temporal authority. Ockham writes, "It was useful for spreading the faith in blessed Peter's care, and for his reputation, that he should not claim temporal jurisdiction and rights of secular persons or assert that they were his subjects, but allow rulers of the world to enjoy their honors, following the example of Christ who (according to blessed John Chrysostom) 'did not deprive the world of its providence and rule.'" See William of Ockham, *A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government* (ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade; trans. John Kilcullen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.16. Ockham also argues that Pope John XXII's position is "unreasonable," "erroneous," and "heretical," for "it must first be known that the power of making human laws and rights was first and principally in the people; and hence the people transfer[red] the power of making the law to the emperor" (3.14). See also his *Dialogus inter magistrum et discipulum de imperatorum et pontificum potestate*, translated as *On the Power of Emperors and Popes* (trans. Annabel S. Brett; Durham: University of Durham, 1998). For more on Ockham's position see John Kilcullen, "The Political Writings," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (ed. Paul Vincent Spade; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 305-25; and VanDrunen, *Natural Law*, 36-42. For the formative influence of Ockham's nominalist thought mediated through Gabriel Biel see especially Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000). While Oberman acknowledges the significant influence of nominalism for the Reformation, certain discontinuities were marked. Significant for this article is Oberman's perceptive analysis of Biel's comparison between pre- and post-fall time: "The difference between the deficiencies of Adam's nature before and after the possession of original justice is certainly not a qualitative but a quantitative one: the difficulties have increased, the struggle has intensified" (128). Oberman illustrates how this paved the way for his formulation of the *facere quod in se est*. On this point Luther departs from Biel, asserting Adam's position pre-fall was qualitatively different than those following after him.

common *dominium*, but after the corruption of humanity an exclusive lordship (*dominium proprium*) was necessary. In other words, Ockham believed the power to appropriate or administer the temporal realm was granted by God as a necessary restraint of sin, a position strikingly similar to Luther after him.²⁷ Ockham therefore argued from Rom 13:1 (also like Luther) that God establishes the empire directly; temporal authority does not stem from the mediation of the church, as Boniface VIII believed. According to Ockham there is a clear distinction between the authority given to the church and that given to the state; the clergy are responsible for spiritual matters, whereas the emperor is responsible for worldly concerns.²⁸ While the political versus ecclesiastical slant of Ockham most likely influenced Luther's thought, Wright rightly argues that Luther's concerns were much broader than Ockham's: "Luther's broader view of Christian reality as existence in two separate realities or kingdoms did not issue from Ockham's treatment of the two swords." Wright continues, "There is no evidence that the latter taught about such a distinction or connected it with law versus grace, visible versus invisible, or active versus passive righteousness."²⁹

While relying on the terminology and distinctions of his forebears, Luther's two kingdoms doctrine is a significant development of Augustine's two cities and Ockham's critique of the medieval papacy. As demonstrated below, Luther related the existence of two kingdoms to his theology of God, Jesus Christ, man, salvation, and the church. Due to this wider connectivity, it is appropriate then to examine Luther's analysis of Adam's creation and its significance for his two kingdoms theology. First, however, we must sketch the nature of his position on the two kingdoms.

II. Luther and the Two Kingdoms

To some extent we have already noted the labyrinth of interpretations (or as Johannes Heckel described it in 1957, *Irrgarten* [labyrinth or maze, lit. "garden of errors"]) that seeks to untangle Luther's exact understanding of the two kingdoms.³⁰ Already we have seen the errors of a reductionistic (politicizing) interpretation of Luther's thought, and therefore our task is to reflect accurately the whole of Luther's position. It is impossible in a work this size to give a fully detailed, exegetical presentation of Luther's two kingdoms, and I must for this

²⁷ See especially Ockham, *A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government*, 3.7.

²⁸ Kilcullen summarizes Ockham: "In *spiritual* matters (i.e., matters relating to eternal salvation and peculiar to the Christian religion) that are *of necessity* (as distinct from those that are supererogatory or merely useful), the pope *regularly* has over Christian believers (not unbelievers) full authority on earth. In temporal matters he regularly has no authority at all (though he is entitled by divine law to a reasonable supply of temporal goods, not necessarily in the form of property, for his sustenance and for carrying out his duties)" (Kilcullen, "The Political Writings," 313).

²⁹ Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 109.

³⁰ See Johannes Heckel, "Im Irrgarten der Zwei-Reiche-Lehre. Zwei Abhandlungen zum Reichs- und Kirchenbegriff Martin Luthers," *Theologische Existenz Heute* 55 (1957): 3-39.

reason rely on the summaries of others.³¹ Nevertheless, it is imperative to assess these secondary formulations on the basis of selections from the Reformer himself. Perhaps no fuller or more succinct summary of the two kingdoms exists than that given by John Witte, which I quote at length:

God has ordained two kingdoms or realms in which humanity is destined to live, the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom. The earthly kingdom is the realm of creation, of natural and civic life, where a person operates primarily by reason and law. The heavenly kingdom is the realm of redemption, of spiritual and eternal life, where a person operates primarily by faith and love. These two kingdoms embrace parallel forms of righteousness and justice, government and order, truth and knowledge. They interact and depend upon each other in a variety of ways. But these two kingdoms ultimately remain distinct. The earthly kingdom is distorted by sin, and governed by law. The heavenly kingdom is renewed by grace and guided by the Gospel. A Christian is a citizen of both kingdoms at once and invariably comes under the distinctive government of each. As a heavenly citizen, the Christian remains free in his or her conscience, called to live fully by the light of the Word of God. But as an earthly citizen, the Christian is bound by law, and called to obey the natural orders and offices of household, state and church that God has ordained and maintained for the governance of this earthly kingdom.³²

³¹ An excellent analysis is found in W. D. J. Cargill-Thompson, *The Political Thought of Martin Luther* (ed. Philip Broadhead; Sussex and New Jersey: Harvester Press and Barnes & Noble, 1984). Especially pertinent is ch. 3 entitled "The *Zwei-Reiche* and *Zwei-Regimente-Lehre*." Cargill-Thompson helpfully notes the conceptual distinction (albeit overlapping one) between *Reich* (realm) and *Regiment* (government): "In a sense the second is contained in the first or is a particular expression of the first, for the idea of 'Reich,' as we have seen, involves the idea of government, so that the two kingdoms are at once two realms and two orders of government. Nevertheless, at the risk of introducing a degree of precision which is perhaps somewhat alien to Luther's own mode of thought, it is possible, for purposes of analysis, to draw a distinction between the concept of the *Zwei-Reiche* in the broader sense of the two realms of human existence, and that of the *Zwei-Regimente* in the sense of the two orders of government which God has instituted for these two realms of existence." Cargill-Thompson does warn, however, that this precision is "not reflected . . . in Luther's vocabulary" (42).

³² Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 5-6, 105-6. Wright wrongly accuses Witte of politicizing Luther's two kingdoms since he "compared Luther's view of two kingdoms to Oliver Wendell Holmes's view of American law." See Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 19 n. 12. Witte's point, however, is not that Luther's two kingdoms equaled Holmes's jurisprudence, but that there was certainly an overlap in their respective positions such that both positively valued the existence of natural law. Cf. John Witte, Jr., "Between Sanctity and Depravity: Law and Human Nature in Martin Luther's Two Kingdoms," *Villanova Law Review* 48 (2003): 727-62. Wright fails to acknowledge the holistic interpretation Witte proposes of the two kingdoms as evidenced in the cited quotation.

As an aside, Witte's summary is not holistic enough. Glaringly absent in this short quotation is any mention of Luther's eschatological angst (*Anfechtungen*), and thus Luther's definitive language of the Kingdom of God and that of Satan. As Oberman argues in his monumental biography of the German reformer, both Christ and the Devil were equally real for this man; in brushing aside this cosmic war, one inevitably brushes aside the hermeneutical key for understanding Luther. A modern Luther "in the mild glow of constant progress toward Heaven" is certainly anachronistic; what Oberman argues for in his unconventional biography is a Luther who lived *sub specie aeternitatis*, one who constantly experienced the angst of the imminent, chaotic Last Days and the Devil's real and threatening presence. See Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (trans. Eileen Walliser-Schwarzbart; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), esp. 12 and 104.

Assuming for the present that Witte here presents a reliable summary of Luther's two kingdoms, it is immediately apparent that this can only be true given a fallen context. The earthly kingdom "distorted by sin" and "governed by law"; the heavenly kingdom "renewed by grace" as the "realm of redemption" and thus ordered by "Gospel"; the presence of "faith"; the label of a "Christian"; all of these designations presume the historic entrance of sin through Adam's disobedience and the subsequent promise of redemption accomplished by the incarnate Jesus Christ. In short, before sin, the multifaceted dimension of human life was uniquely integrated and centered in the one spiritual kingdom of God; with the presence of sin, an *unnatural* antithesis arose between two kingdoms.

Before turning to Luther himself, it is helpful to note the comprehensive character that Witte further attributes to the two kingdoms framework. Far from being a simple political division between church and state, Witte argues that the two kingdoms theory was simultaneously a distinct ontology and anthropology.³³ Furthermore, he argues that this doctrine "drew to itself" a distinctive ecclesiology, epistemology, and soteriology. First, all of reality, all things visible and invisible, is comprehended in Luther's two kingdoms doctrine. Luther's "ontological picture" then views reality as consisting of a heavenly, spiritual kingdom (only believers are members of this kingdom), and an earthly, natural kingdom (both believers and unbelievers are members), both of which are governed by God. Secondly, Witte notes that the two kingdoms entail a twofold nature of the Christian; as Luther often asserted, the Christian is *simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously bound and free, "flesh and spirit, sinner and saint, 'outer and inner man.'"³⁴ As such, the Christian is a dual citizen (*Bürger zweier Reiche*) in the present age. Were Luther simply to emphasize the ontological distinction between the antithetical reign (*regnum*) of Christ and the reign of the Devil, his position would not be much different than Augustine's. And yet, Luther firmly held to the Christian's dialectic nature; as justified saint the Christian is a heavenly citizen, incorporated by the gospel, but as sinner the Christian remains an earthly citizen, called to obey the law set by earthly powers.³⁵

³³ For what follows see Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 89-105.

³⁴ For Luther's use of this language see, e.g., his *The Sermon on the Mount* (1532) where, in his exegesis of Matt 6:33 ("But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well") he writes, "For our condition in the kingdom of Christ is *half sin and half holiness*. What there is in us that belongs to faith and to Christ is completely pure and perfect, since it is not our own but Christ's, who is ours through faith and who lives and works in us. But what is still our own is completely sinful. Yet under Christ and in Him it is concealed and blotted out through the forgiveness of sins; and daily it is put to death through the same grace of the Spirit, until we have died to this life altogether." See LW21:205 (italics added); WA 32:469.

³⁵ In his 1539 disputation on Matt 19:21, Luther states, "The Christian *qua* Christian moves within the first table of the law, but he also exists apart from the kingdom of heaven as a citizen of this world. Hence he has a dual citizenship, being subject to Christ through faith and to the emperor through his body." The Latin text reads, *Christianus ut christianus est in prima tabula, solus extra regnum coelorum est civis huius mundi. Ergo habet utrumque politeuma, subiectus Christo per fidem, subiectus Caesari per corpus*. See WA 39.2:81, 16-18.

Thirdly, Luther taught that the hidden church, the *communio sanctorum*, is wholly identified by the spiritual reign of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the visible church is a mixed group, comprised of saints and sinners, and thus belongs for the present to the earthly kingdom.³⁶ Fourthly, Luther distinguished between the epistemological bases of law and gospel, of reason and faith, and he united these to the earthly and spiritual kingdoms respectively. Finally, as indicated above, Luther held there were two forms of righteousness, an “active” or “proper” righteousness and a “passive” or “alien” righteousness, which, in turn, corresponds to two types of justification: the former avails a civil righteousness before men, but the latter a spiritual righteousness before God.³⁷ As Witte demonstrates, Luther’s two kingdoms theory is thus connected to the whole of his theology. Yet, an element of caution must be employed: one must not conclude from the above overview that Luther used the two kingdoms distinction as a systematic grid for organizing his theology. Luther was not a systematician; his terms (*Reich*, *regnum*, *Welt*, *weltlich*) were not always precisely defined.³⁸ Rather, Luther believed that Christian or unbeliever; home, church, or state; one’s

³⁶ For more on Luther’s view of the church see especially Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (trans. Robert C. Shultz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), chs. 22–24 entitled “The Church as the Community of Saints,” “The Office of the Ministry,” and “The True Church and the Empirical Church.”

³⁷ Cf. Luther’s sermon *Two Kinds of Righteousness* (1519), in *LW* 31:297-306; *WA* 2:145-52. He writes, “There are two kinds of righteousness, just as man’s sin is of two kinds. The first is alien righteousness (*iustitia aliena*), that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith.” Defining the second, he writes, “The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness (*iustitia propria*), not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness.” See also n. 15 above.

³⁸ Cf. Estes, *Peace, Order and the Glory of God*, 38 n. 98. Timothy Wengert’s analysis of Philip Melancthon’s “Politics” is helpful in this regard. Wengert argues that Melancthon “formalized” Luther’s argument in his debate over the Erasmian attempt to conflate law and gospel, or the two kingdoms. Thus, rather than Melancthon representing a significant shift from Luther’s theology, Wengert argues that Melancthon’s position was one of clarification, fully consistent with Luther’s thought. In dependence on Luther, and on the basis of Col 2:23, Melancthon argues for the existence of two kingdoms. Wengert quotes from Melancthon’s 1528 *Scholia*: “Therefore let us carefully discern these two kingdoms: the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of Christ, as we have urged many times up to this point. The kingdom of Christ is found in the hearts of the saints who according to the gospel believe that they have been received into grace on account of Christ, who are renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit and taste eternal life, who show forth their faith in good works and on account of God’s glory do good to all, so that they invite many to knowledge of the gospel. They tolerate all things, nor do they allow themselves to take up arms in a desire for vengeance against those who have injured them. They obey the magistrates with great care, they hold public offices (if such are entrusted to them) with vigilance and courage. If duty demands, they punish the guilty and fight in battle. However, they do not rush in to seize public offices of their own accord, but if forced by their calling they take them up. Furthermore, the kingdom of the world, as I have often said, is a legitimate order that defends peace with the authority of magistrates, with laws, judgments, punishments and war.” As Wengert effectively demonstrates, the debate Melancthon had with Erasmus was not over “good letters” or the merits of rhetoric (a profitable enterprise in itself), but over the nature of the gospel. See Timothy J. Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melancthon’s Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ch. 7 (the quotation is from p. 131).

vocation; the source of knowledge; relationships between husband and wife; in short, everything, is in one way or another subsumed under the sovereign, providential rule of God expressed in the two kingdoms. At the heart of Luther's two kingdoms doctrine lies his pastoral concern for a clear presentation of the gospel, a message which affects every area of life.³⁹

It is imperative then that Luther's holistic aim not be set aside as we examine his particular treatises addressing the two kingdoms doctrine. One such work is his *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed* (1523).⁴⁰ As the subtitle suggests, Luther's concern here is to define and thus limit the boundaries of the secular ruler. The work is divided into three parts: first, he defends the divine origin of the temporal authority; in the second section, the bulk of the treatise, he argues that life, property, and external affairs (as distinct from the soul) are the domain of the temporal government; and thirdly, Luther concludes with directives the wise prince should follow.

Nearly three years after composing *Temporal Authority*, Luther reflected back on his work, boldly declaring, "Indeed, I might boast here that not since the time of the apostles have the temporal sword and temporal government been so clearly described or so highly praised as by me."⁴¹ True to his word, Luther did indeed elevate the office of the temporal leader, arguing from passages such as Rom 13:1, 1 Pet 2:13-14, Gen 4:14-15, and Gen 9:6 that the sword of judgment wielded by such leaders is a God-appointed sword.⁴² Although Luther does say, "The law of this temporal sword has existed *from the beginning of the world*," he is clear that the temporal sword or government was instituted by God because of sin, as a necessary restraint on sin, and thus inaugurated by God in a post-fall context.⁴³ Because the sword serves this particular function, Christians, members of Christ's kingdom, do not need the temporal government; because they are righteous in Christ they do not require the constraining, compelling function of the law as their desire excels the demands of the law.⁴⁴ Luther thus argues that

³⁹ Cf. David C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 112-25.

⁴⁰ While emphasis here rests upon this one work (originally *Von Weltlicher Oberkeit*, found in *WA* 11:229-81), Luther refers to and utilizes the two kingdoms concept throughout his writings. For a sampling of such references see Hugh Thomson Kerr, ed., *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1943), 213-32. One must use Kerr's work with caution as quotations are placed in *loci* format (something foreign to Luther), and they are divorced from their literary and historical contexts.

⁴¹ *LW* 46:95; *WA* 19:625. The quotation comes from Luther's *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* (1526).

⁴² Luther makes the same point in his exegesis of Ps 82, stating, "But Moses calls them [princes] gods because all the offices of government, from the least to the highest, are God's ordinances, as St. Paul teaches (Rom. 13.1); and King Jehoshaphat says to his officials (2 Chron. 19.6): 'Consider, and judge rightly; for the judgment is God's.' Now, because this is not a matter of human will or devising, but God Himself appoints and preserves all authority, and if He no longer held it up, it would fall down, even though all the world held it fast—therefore it is rightly called a divine thing, a divine ordinance." See *LW* 13:44; *WA* 31.1:191-192.

⁴³ *LW* 45:86 (italics added); *WA* 11:247. See n. 76 below.

⁴⁴ *LW* 45:89; *WA* 11:249-50. Luther writes, "If all the world were composed of real Christians, that is, true believers, there would be no need for or benefits from prince, king, lord, sword, or law.

unbelievers, those who strictly belong to the kingdom of the world, are bound by the temporal government. The Christian, however, is not *bound* by law but willingly subjects him or herself to it. The very different righteousness practiced by each, touched on above, thus follows: "For this reason God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that—no thanks to them—they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace."⁴⁵ In brief, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual government produces righteousness in Christians before God (*coram Deo*), whereas the temporal government merely ensures righteousness before men (*coram hominibus*).⁴⁶

But external peace or righteousness, the righteousness that is practiced before men, is also a concern of the Christian. While Luther claims the sword has no place among Christians themselves (they *willingly* serve or submit themselves to the law), the Christian must nevertheless promote the welfare of the temporal government. Specifically, this is necessary for the welfare of the community. Luther writes, "You are under obligation to serve and assist the sword by whatever means you can . . . [f]or it is something which you do not need, but which is very beneficial and essential for the whole world and for your neighbor."⁴⁷ Here Luther's directive is particularly forceful: when it comes to the Christian's personal concerns, this is the realm of gospel (or matters of God's kingdom inwardly), which includes suffering abuse; but when it comes to one's neighbor,

Where there is nothing but the unadulterated doing of right and bearing of wrong, there is no need for any suit, litigation, court, judge, penalty, law, or sword. For this reason it is impossible that the temporal sword and law should find any work to do among Christians, since they do of their own accord much more than all laws and teachings can demand, just as Paul says in 1 Timothy 1 [:9], "The law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless."

⁴⁵ LW45:91; WA 11:251.

⁴⁶ Luther writes, "For this reason one must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds. Neither one is sufficient in the world without the other. No one can become righteous in the sight of God by means of the temporal government, without Christ's spiritual government." See LW45:92; WA 11:252. Cf. Luther's *Commentary on Psalm 82* (1530) (LW13:72; WA 31.1:218), where he writes, "Thus we see that, over and above the righteousness, wisdom, and power of this world, there is need for another kingdom, in which there is another righteousness, wisdom, and power. For the righteousness of this world has an end, but the righteousness of Christ and of those who are in His kingdom abides forever."

⁴⁷ LW45:95; WA 11:254. In his *On War Against the Turk* (1529), Luther also makes this point. After years of pressure, Luther was compelled to present his position on the ever-present threat of war from the Turkish forces. While in his 1518 *Explanations of the Ninety-five Theses* Luther argues to fight against the Turks is paramount to opposing God, who visits iniquities with this rod (see LW31:91-92; WA 1:535), he modifies his position based on his assertion that the temporal government must protect the common welfare of its subjects. Thus, war *should* be waged on the Turks, but not under the ensign of the church; the pope's soldiers crying "Ecclesia! Ecclesia!" is nothing other than an affirmation of the devil's *ecclesia*. Rather, war against the Turks, who hurt the interests of the community, ought to be conducted "at the emperor's command, under his banner, and in his name." Cf. LW 46:183-85; WA 30.2:128-30. For more on Luther and the Turkish threat see Gregory J. Miller, "Luther on the Turks and Islam," in *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections*, 185-203.

the good of the public, this is the realm of justice (or matters of the earthly kingdom).⁴⁸ This fits the dialectical nature of the Christian as discussed above; the believer is, as it were, two persons. John Stephenson summarizes these two persons as follows: “The Christian as he exists before God and for himself (*Christperson*), and the Christian in society (*Weltperson*), clad in a particular office (*Amt*)—for example, that of parenthood or governmental authority—which entails responsibility for others.”⁴⁹ Christ’s words of Matt 5:39—“Do not resist evil”—apply then *only* to Christ’s followers in the sense that they must not use the sword for their own welfare (as *Christperson*), while at the same time encouraging and using the law for the public good (as *Weltperson*). Romans 13 and Matt 5 are in this manner reconciled.

It follows then that leaders of the spiritual kingdom (God’s shepherds) must not intrude on the domain reserved for leaders of the secular kingdom (God’s executioners or hangmen), and vice versa.⁵⁰ Luther, however, thought the pope and princes of his day completely turned things “topsy-turvy”; he thus complains, “[The bishops] neatly put the shoe on the wrong foot: they rule the souls with iron and the bodies with letters, so that worldly princes rule in a spiritual way, and spiritual princes rule in a worldly way.”⁵¹ While the pope illegitimately rules souls by the sword, the princes illegitimately allow all manner of avarice and insurrection. This mingling of the two kingdoms is nothing less than the work of the devil, as Luther adamantly avers:

Constantly I must pound in and squeeze in and drive in and wedge in this difference between the two kingdoms, even though it is written and said so often that it becomes tedious. The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other. In the devil’s name the secular leaders always want to be Christ’s masters and teach Him how He should run His church and spiritual government. Similarly, the false clerics and schismatic spirits always want to be the masters, though not in God’s name, and to teach people how to organize the secular government. Thus the devil is indeed very busy on both sides, and he has much to do. May God hinder him, amen, if we deserve it!⁵²

In his exegesis of Ps 101, Luther points to King David as an excellent example of a godly prince who wisely separated the two kingdoms; in spiritual matters David was a servant of the Lord, but in secular matters he judiciously ruled his people,

⁴⁸ Luther’s comment here deserves fuller quotation: “In the one case, you consider yourself and what is yours; in the other, you consider your neighbor and what is his. 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 actually commands it.” See *LW*45:96; *WA* 11:255.

⁴⁹ John R. Stephenson, “The Two Governments and the Two Kingdoms in Luther’s Thought,” *SJT* 34 (1981): 328.

⁵⁰ *LW*45:113; *WA* 11:268. “It pleases his divine will that we call his hangmen gracious lords, fall at their feet, and be subject to them in all humility, so long as they do not ply their trade too far and try to become shepherds instead of hangmen.”

⁵¹ *LW*45:109, 116; *WA* 11:265, 270.

⁵² *LW*13:194-95; *WA* 51:239.

thus promoting public justice. As Luther more fully develops in the final section of *Temporal Authority*, the judicious ruler relies on reason, the equitable application of natural law, when dealing with his temporal realm.⁵³ This, of course, should not be for the ruler's own welfare, but for the public good. This model is precisely how Luther interprets David's kingship, an assertion he proves from David's statement in Ps 101:5a, "I destroy him who secretly maligns his neighbor."⁵⁴ Put simply, for matters not related to the soul, reason, law, and the voice of the heathen are to be heard; for internal matters, faith, gospel, and the voice of Scripture are to be heard.⁵⁵

From the above overview of Luther's two kingdoms it is evident that he distinguished the two realms based on their two very different concerns: the spiritual kingdom concerns itself with ultimate matters, whereas the earthly kingdom concerns itself with penultimate matters. This is clearly summarized by Luther in his 1526 treatise *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*:

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 (*coram mundi*). 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.⁵⁶

To confuse the two kingdoms is to confuse law and gospel. Obedience to the law promises temporal rewards, whereas gospel promises eternal life. It is for this

⁵³ Luther's use of natural law in connection with the two kingdoms is an interesting study deserving more consideration. The common misconception of Luther that he was altogether against reason needs to be challenged. Rather, Luther believed reason had a specific place and served a specific purpose as he writes at the end of *Temporal Authority*, "Therefore, we should keep written laws subject to reason, from which they originally welled forth as from the spring of justice. We should not make the spring dependent on its rivulets, or make reason a captive of letters." See *LW*45:129; *WA* 11:280. See also the helpful section in VanDrunen, *Natural Law*, 62-66. Also helpful, but more critical, is Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 151-66. Braaten's primary concern is to distinguish an ecumenical basis for human rights, transcending the Lutheran, Reformed, and Roman Catholic traditions. He writes, "We have argued that the law [Braaten does admit natural law has a 'latent deism'] is the common denominator for an ecumenical theology of human rights" (157, 159).

⁵⁴ *LW* 13:197-208; *WA* 51:241-50. For more on Luther's commentary on Ps 101 (1534/35) see Estes, "Peace, Order, and the Glory of God," 193-205.

⁵⁵ Estes summarizes Luther's position on the value of heathen words: "Whoever wants to learn how to rule well in secular matters should read Homer, Virgil, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Livy, and the others who were God's heathen 'prophets' in secular affairs just as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah and others were his prophets in spiritual matters." See Estes, *Peace, Order and the Glory of God*, 204; cf. *LW* 13:199; *WA* 51:243.

⁵⁶ *LW* 46:99-100; *WA* 19:629.

reason Luther must consistently “pound in and squeeze in and drive in and wedge in this difference between the two kingdoms.”⁵⁷ But was this “wedge” between law and gospel present from the beginning of time? Indeed, one must tread carefully to make the case that, on Luther’s own terms, there was a time when the two kingdoms were not. To determine if this is the case, we turn now to his exegesis of Adam’s prelapsarian condition.⁵⁸

III. *Luther and the Created Order*

In his recent book on Luther’s two kingdoms, William Wright makes the sweeping assertion, “The two kingdoms were part of God’s creation ordinance.”⁵⁹ Wright points to the following quotation from Luther as evidence: “Man was created for his physical life in such a way that he was nevertheless made according to the image and likeness of God—this is indication of another and better life than the physical. . . . Thus Adam had a two-fold life: a physical and an immortal one.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Luther does at times suggest a two kingdom framework that began with creation:

In a certain way we indeed have a free will in those things that are beneath us. By the divine commission we have been appointed lords of the fish of the sea, of the birds of the heavens, and of the beasts of the field. These we kill when it pleases us; we enjoy the foods and other useful products they supply. But in those matters that pertain to God and are above us no human being has a free will; he is indeed like clay in the hand of the potter, in a state of merely passive potentiality, not active potentiality. For there we do not choose, we do not do anything; but are chosen, we are equipped, we are born again, we accept, as Isaiah says (64:8): ‘Thou art the Potter; we Thy clay.’⁶¹

Although the above comment is found in Luther’s exegesis of Gen 2:7, one must question whether he has a pre-fall or post-fall condition in mind. In other words, is Luther here denying “active potentiality” to sinless man, or sinful man? Is he here likening Adam’s condition to that of fallen humanity, namely, that Adam had a bound will? It is significant to note that Luther already introduced Adam’s

⁵⁷ See n. 52 above.

⁵⁸ For this material see WA 42:1-176.

⁵⁹ Wright, *God’s Two Kingdoms*, 119.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* The quotation is from Luther’s Genesis commentary found in LW1:57; WA 42:43.

⁶¹ LW1:84-85; WA 42:64. In his exegesis of the first two chapters of Genesis, Luther often moves back and forth from Adam’s good creation to the post-fall context. The quotation given here must be understood in context: Luther is cautioning against the danger of synergism, an application he derives from the statement that Adam was “a dead and inactive clod before he is formed by the Lord.” Just prior to this quotation Luther writes, “This helps us to learn something about the properties of free will, a subject with which our opponents concern themselves so extensively.” It is imperative to determine which context Luther is describing here. From the reference to his opponents and the frequent reference to “we” being in a state of *passive* potentiality, it seems evident that Luther is describing a post-fall state. Even though his comments are in the context of Gen 2:7, he is here not describing Adam’s condition. This does not seem to be the same interpretation as found in Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 65-66.

fall in his earlier comments of Gen 1:11 and 26, suggesting one must not simply assume a sinless Adam is in view.

To complicate the matter further, Luther often spoke of his own personal creation alongside that of Adam's; as the first article of his *Small Catechism* teaches, belief in God the Father as creator of heaven and earth includes the belief "that God has created *me* together with all that exists." With this emphasis on the creation of the individual, Luther continues, "God protects *me* against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without merit or worthiness of mine at all!"⁶² Johannes Schwanke concludes that Luther here "links God's grace in the doctrine of creation with the doctrine of justification."⁶³ Yet, Schwanke is not careful to distinguish Adam's sinless condition from fallen humanity's; on Schwanke's terms, both pre-fall Adam and sinful Luther (or any descendent of Adam) need to hear the good news of justification. But was it the case that righteous Adam, apart from any merit of his own, received God's fatherly and divine protection from all danger and temptation? More precisely, did Luther teach this? To better assess this question we turn now to a fuller analysis of Luther's comments on creation as found in the first several chapters of his Genesis lectures.⁶⁴

According to Luther, the Genesis account recorded by Moses is historically accurate. The creation of the world and all creatures in the space of six days is not a didactic allegory; it literally took place.⁶⁵ Adam did in fact exist, and his good and perfect creation is confirmed in the first chapters of Scripture. Adam was a real man who had feet, eyes, and ears just as any man or woman does today, and yet he was holy and innocent; he was "intoxicated with rejoicing toward God and [he] was delighted also with all the other creatures."⁶⁶ As if to stress Adam's sinless state, Luther conjectures, "Before sin Adam had the clearest eyes, the most delicate and delightful odor, and a body very well suited and obedient for

⁶² *Book of Concord*, 354-55.1-2 (italics added).

⁶³ Johannes Schwanke, "Luther on Creation," in *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections*, 89.

⁶⁴ The Genesis lectures (*Enarrationes in Genesin*) reflect a full decade (1535-1545) of the mature Luther's thought and are therefore an excellent source of material. It should be noted, however, that the Genesis material is the stenographic notes of Luther's students, later edited and published in four volumes. On this basis Peter Meinhold, in his *Die Genesisvorlesung und ihre Herausgeber* (1936), argued these lectures were compromised due to the editing of later Melancthonian supporters and are therefore not to be trusted. More recent scholars, however, have argued for the veracity and benefit of studying the Genesis lectures. Cf. Oberman, *Luther*, 166-67; John A. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis and the Formation of Evangelical Identity* (Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2008). Especially helpful is Maxfield's introduction "Why the Genesis Lectures?" wherein he notes Luther himself wrote a preface and postscript to the first edition of the Genesis lectures, thus signaling his approval of this work. See also Whitford, "*Cura Religionis* or Two Kingdoms," 42-43 n. 9.

⁶⁵ LW1:5; WA 42:5. Here Luther writes against Augustine's belief of instantaneous creation, "We assert that Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively, i.e., that the world, with all its creatures, was created within six days, as the words read. If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the job of teacher to the Holy Spirit."

⁶⁶ LW1:94; WA 42:71.

procreation.”⁶⁷ Luther was convinced of the glorious creation of Adam; this man possessed the clearest intellect, memory, and will, and his “eyes were so sharp and clear that they surpassed those of the lynx and eagle . . . [and] he was stronger than the lions and the bears.”⁶⁸ Without sin, Luther thought it may have even been possible that an infant, as is the case with chickens, could walk immediately after birth!⁶⁹

To the modern mind Luther’s imaginative and idyllic portrayal of sinless Adam is at best humorous; many would think it laughable. Yet, for Luther, an Adam who could “command a lion with a single word” was very different than the Adam who became “disfigured by the leprosy of sin.”⁷⁰ Nowhere is this stark difference so clearly outlined as in Luther’s discussion of the *imago Dei*, which he summarizes as follows: “Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived in a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other great danger, and was content with God’s favor.”⁷¹ Luther cautions against the medieval interpretation of the *imago Dei*, which, following Augustine who relied on Aristotle’s categories, believed it to be in the soul’s threefold power: memory, intellect, and will. This is a “dangerous opinion,” opines Luther, for on this basis the devil could also be said to possess the image of God. Rather, Adam’s creation as the *imago Dei* was “something far different,” something “unknown” to us, a foreign excellence that we can only relatively know because of our constant experience of the opposite.⁷² The *imago Dei* for Luther was much more comprehensive than the medieval interpretation; it encompassed the whole of Adam’s life, his obedience before God (*coram Deo*) and his neighbor (*coram hominibus*).

⁶⁷ LW1:100; WA 42:76.

⁶⁸ LW1:62; WA 42:46.

⁶⁹ LW1:102; WA 42:78.

⁷⁰ LW1:64; WA 42:48.

⁷¹ LW1:62-63; WA 42:47.

⁷² LW1:60-63; WA 42:45-47. Lohse incorrectly assumes from these statements of Luther that he was not intending to give an historical account of Adam. In fact, Lohse believes Luther is using Adam merely as a teaching model. Lohse writes, “In making this statement Luther was aware that all statements about the condition of the first man prior to the fall are inappropriate insofar as the object referred to is no longer known. For this reason *he may not be understood as intending to historicize the Genesis narratives of humanity’s creation*. On the other hand, he guarded against construing the narrative in purely symbolic fashion. What concerned him here is ‘that we, who are alive now, who hear the Word, are drawn into what is said of Adam.’” This last reference is a quotation from Bengt Häggglund, “Luthers Anthropologie,” in *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546: Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag* (ed. Helmar Junghans; 2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 1:71. See Lohse, *Luther’s Theology*, 244 (italics added). But Adam as a teaching model (i.e., not an historical figure) was not known to Luther; to put it bluntly, Luther was not a child of liberal higher criticism, as Lohse would have it. As we have seen, Luther continually referred to Adam as a man possessing a body, arms, ears, legs, and any other body part a man has today. Indeed, for Luther Adam was a real man, a person occupying historical time and space, who was created perfect and upright and promised eternal life dependent upon his continued holiness. As Luther argued, to deny a real Adam is to deny the historical reality of original sin; it follows, if Adam’s sin was not real, neither is ours, and the historical reality of Jesus Christ is thus deemed unnecessary. See especially Luther’s affirmation of an historical Eden (obliterated by the Flood) in his comments on Gen 2:8 (LW1:87-91; WA 42:66-69).

In fact, even Adam's perfect knowledge and dominion over the natural realm were part of this glorious image of God.

Luther's holistic interpretation of the *imago Dei* is closely connected to his discussion of Adam's original righteousness (*iustitia originalis*). While created holy and upright, maintenance of the *imago Dei* was entirely dependent on Adam's continued obedience. Thus, Luther defines original righteousness in terms of Adam's works of obedience: "If we follow Moses, we should take original righteousness to mean that man was righteous, truthful, and upright not only in body but especially in soul, that he knew God, that he obeyed God with the utmost joy, and that he understood the works of God even without prompting."⁷³ Paralleling his discussion of the *imago Dei*, Luther conceived of original righteousness in terms of Adam's obedience both before God (*coram Deo*) and before all creation (*coram hominibus*). He writes, "It is part of this original righteousness that Adam loved God and His works with an outstanding and very pure attachment; that he lived among the creatures of God in peace, without fear of death, and without any fear of sickness; and that he had a very obedient body, without evil inclinations and the hideous lust which we now experience."⁷⁴ In the commission of original sin, however, Adam completely lost this original righteousness, thus destroying or obliterating the *imago Dei*. Original sin is not simply the sophistic reading of concupiscence; it is the complete reversal of God's plan for Adam. Luther paints a bleak picture of fallen humanity:

Original sin really means that human nature has completely fallen; that the intellect has become darkened, so that we no longer know God and His will and no longer perceive the works of God; furthermore, that the will is extraordinarily depraved, so that we do not trust the mercy of God and do not fear God but are unconcerned, disregard the Word and will of God, and follow the desire and the impulses of the flesh; likewise, that our conscience is no longer quiet but, when it thinks of God's judgment, despairs and adopts illicit defenses and remedies. These sins have taken such deep root in our being that in this life they cannot be entirely eradicated, and yet the wretched sophists do not mention them even with a word. Thus, as it always is with correlatives, original sin shows what original righteousness is, and vice versa: original sin is the loss of original righteousness, or the deprivation of it, just as blindness is the deprivation of sight.⁷⁵

There is then an absolute divide between the condition of sinless Adam and the condition of sinful humanity in fallen Adam. What could be accomplished by Adam's obedience cannot be accomplished by his descendents'.

Luther's interpretation of Gen 2:16-17 illustrates most effectively the great difference he saw between the pre- and postlapsarian periods.⁷⁶ Interestingly, it is in his exegesis of this passage that Luther speaks of the pre-fall establishment

⁷³ LW1:113; WA 42:86.

⁷⁴ LW1:113; WA 42:86.

⁷⁵ LW1:114; WA 42:86.

⁷⁶ The passage reads, "And He commanded him, saying: Eat from every tree of Paradise, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil do not eat." For what follows see LW1:103-10; WA 42:79-83.

of the two estates, namely church and home (the civil estate was unnecessary in this context).⁷⁷ It is important for Luther that the church was established before the home; this priority, he believes, demonstrates the promise of eschatological life for the secular.⁷⁸ Yet, the church is established by a command of God, by his law. The commanding word of God was Adam's Bible, a brief sermon as it were "written on a tablet"—a clear allusion here to the Decalogue. Luther believed God's command was specifically given to Adam on the sixth day. Adam would have then dictated this word of God to Eve, and then gathered the next day, the Sabbath, not around the tree of life, but around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If Adam had continued in his innocence, each Sabbath he would

⁷⁷ Church, home, and state (or the *ordo ecclesiasticus*, *ordo economicus*, and the *ordo politicus*) were the three estates or hierarchies Luther outlined by which God governs creation after the fall. Luther writes, "The first government (*Regiment*) is that of the home, from which the people come. The second is that of the 'state' (*civitas*), that is, the country, the people, princes, and lords, which we call the temporal government. These [two governments] embrace everything—children, property, money, animals, and so on. The home must produce, whereas the city must guard, protect, and defend. Then follows the third, God's own home and city, that is, the Church, which must obtain people from the home and protection and defense from the state. These are the three hierarchies ordained by God, the three high divine governments, the three divine, natural, and temporal laws of God." As quoted in John Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 93; cf. WA 50:509. Cf. Lohse, *Luther's Theology*, 245-47. An all too common assumption, reproduced here by Lohse, is that Luther thought of the three orders (including the order of temporal government) as present from the beginning of creation. Kolb and Arand also make this assertion, but do not cite any positive reference; they write, "In his earlier years, Luther tended to treat this order [temporal government] as a postlapsarian necessity. But in his later years he recognized the human need for organization in society." Cf. their *Genius of Luther's Theology*, 61. The impression given here is that Luther did allow for civil government before the fall, whereas even in his later years he believed this to be a postlapsarian result. Paul Althaus argues along similar lines, stating, "Thus everything that Luther understands as secular government has a basis antecedent to the dominion of sin, that is, in the elementary necessities of this life." See his *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (trans. Robert C. Schultz; 1965; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 48. Luther consistently denies the state has precedence before sin; in 1530, for example, Luther writes, "God will not have the world desolate and empty but has made it for men to live in, to till the land and fill it, as is written in Genesis 1:29, 30. *Because this cannot happen where there is no peace* [presumably, before the fall there was peace], He is compelled, as a Creator, preserving His own creatures, works, and ordinances, to institute and preserve government and to commit to it the sword and the laws." See Luther's *Commentary on Psalm 82*, LW 13:45 (italics added); WA 31.1:192. For more on the three orders see LW 41:177-78 (WA 50:652-53); LW 3:217 (WA 43:30); LW 13:369-71 (WA 31.1:409-11).

More helpful in this regard is Mickey L. Mattox's "*Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*": *Martin Luther's Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the "Enarrationes in Genesis," 1535-45* (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 92; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 87-91; 253-54. Relying on Bornkamm, Mattox correctly distinguishes between the dominion over creation and the government between and among humans. Dominion over creation was given to both male and female pre-fall, as Luther often asserts, but the establishment of the state is clearly a result of sin.

⁷⁸ After describing the institution of the Sabbath in Gen 2:3, Luther comments, "Adam would have lived for a definite time in Paradise, according to God's pleasure; then he would have been carried off to that rest of God which God, through the sanctifying of the Sabbath, wished not only to symbolize for men but also to grant to them." From this Luther concludes that secular and sacred (or physical and spiritual) were wed together: "Thus the physical life would have been blissful and holy, spiritual and eternal." See LW 1:80; WA 42:60.

have gathered his family around this tree, the temple-grove symbolizing God's command. Luther describes the nature of this hypothetical worship:

He would have admonished his descendents to live a holy and sinless life, to work faithfully in the garden, to watch it carefully, and to beware with the greatest care of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This outward place, ceremonial, word, and worship man would have had; and later on he would have returned to his working and guarding until a predetermined time had been fulfilled, when he would have been translated to heaven with the utmost pleasure.⁷⁹

Future life was to be attained by Adam were he to maintain his perfect obedience, his faithful service both in physical (tilling and guarding the garden) and spiritual duties (obeying the divine command not to eat of the forbidden tree). If Adam were to stray in the demands set before him, both *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*, the promised eschatological life would be cut off. In the garden then it was *active* obedience that was required of Adam. No substitute, no blood sacrifice, was necessary; "Only this He wants [of Adam]: that he praise God, that he thank Him, that he rejoice in the Lord, *and that he obey Him by not eating from the forbidden tree.*"⁸⁰

But, Luther asks, was it really possible that Adam's state was based on his obedience? Could it be true that God gave holy and righteous Adam a law to follow? Luther confesses he once doubted this doctrine (*doctrina*) due to the shaking of a fanatic.⁸¹ It may seem from 1 Tim 1:9, where Paul writes, "no Law has been given to the just," and Rom 4:15, where Paul writes, "where there is no Law, there is also no transgression," that since Adam was just, no law was given to him. The logic continues: if there was no law, then Adam's commission of original sin was really no sin at all! Luther condemns this as the scheming of the devil (*studium Diaboli*). His answer to this devilish syllogism is consistent with our above analysis: the law Paul speaks of is altogether different from the law given to Adam. Luther states, "For nothing else follows from this [syllogism] than that the Law given to the unrighteous is not the same Law that was given to righteous Adam."⁸² The law Paul speaks of, the law that condemns and kills, the law that states no person shall be justified by the works of the law, is a law inaugurated upon the commission of sin. It seems then that pre-fall law could justify a person, that is, Adam's obedience to the law originally given him could demonstrate his righteousness.

⁷⁹ LW1:106; WA 42:80.

⁸⁰ LW1:106 (emphasis added); WA 42:81. Luther does seem to contradict himself, especially on the subject of pre-fall sacrifice. He writes, "On [the seventh day Adam] would have given his descendents instructions about the will and worship of God; he would have praised God; he would have given thanks; he would have *sacrificed*, etc." LW1:79 (italics added); WA 42:60. Compare this to: "For [God] does not prescribe the slaughter of oxen, the burning of incense, vows, fastings, and other tortures of the body" (LW1:106; WA 42:81).

⁸¹ The reference here is most likely to John Agricola, the context being the Antinomian disputes. Cf. Maxfield, *Luther's Lectures on Genesis*, 153. Cf. WA 42:81, *Porro hic monendi estis contra Pseudopphetas, per quos Satan sanam doctrinam varie conatur depravare. Recitabo autem exemplum meae Historiae, quomodo a fanatico spiritu sub initia huius doctrinae sim vexatus.*

⁸² LW1:109; WA 42:83.

Although Luther does not state this explicitly here, his reasoning is perceptively close, for, as he notes, the Antinomian fanatic fails on two accounts: “The first consists in this, that the Law before sin is one thing and the Law after sin is something else; the second consists in this, that ‘righteous’ does not have the same meaning after sin and before sin.”⁸³ While Luther does not expand this point here, in keeping with his reasoning it is not too much to say that the difference in righteousness he speaks of is the introduction of an alien or passive righteousness.

Until this point we have enumerated several distinctions Luther makes concerning the state of Adam. According to Luther, Adam was created righteous, being the very image of God. And yet, Adam was required to maintain this righteousness by his active observance of God’s law. No intermediary was given to act on his behalf. Based upon his complete and continued obedience Adam could expect a future, blessed life. Furthermore, the creation of the church in paradise—an undivided church at that time—was the visible manifestation of Adam and Eve’s consummate end. As eschatological tension was absent from this paradise church (Adam and Eve were not *simul iustus et peccator*), surely Luther thought of the prelapsarian period as a clear expression of the spiritual kingdom. Earlier we demonstrated Luther’s distinction between the two kingdoms as one tied to the distinction between law and gospel; the law’s end is an active, external righteousness with temporal (penultimate) benefits, whereas gospel grants a passive, spiritual righteousness with eternal (ultimate) benefits. Granting that this is the central distinction Luther makes between the two kingdoms, a contradiction arises when applying this criterion to his comments on the prelapsarian order: the government of the Edenic spiritual kingdom was one centered upon law. To my knowledge Luther never expressly stated whether or not the two kingdoms distinction applies to the pre-fall created order; to assume it does pits Luther against himself, signaling a misunderstanding of his two kingdoms distinction or his doctrine of creation.

IV. Conclusion: A Challenge and a Way Forward

Based on the foregoing analysis, the assumption that Luther conceived of a natural, created distinction between the secular and spiritual kingdoms needs to be challenged. Earlier we alluded to Wright’s defense of such an assumption; according to Wright, the two kingdoms distinction was “basic to [Luther’s] understanding of God’s creation of man.” The two parts of human life, the physical life of “eating, drinking, begetting, growing,” and the spiritual life of the “quickening spirit,” are for Wright evidence enough to assert a pre-fall distinction of two kingdoms.⁸⁴ Embedded in this assumption lies the fear of injecting a theology of works into the pre-fall order; if the two kingdoms distinction is so

⁸³ LW1:109-10; WA 42:83, *Est itaque in hoc Argumento vicium compositionis et divisionis, quia mutilus textus adducitur. Deinde est ibi dublex aequivocatio: Prima in eo, quod aliud est lex ante peccatum, et aliud post peccatum, Secunda, quod iustus quoque non eodem modo dicitur post peccatum, et ante peccatum.*

⁸⁴ Wright, *God’s Two Kingdoms*, 118-19.

closely connected to that of law and gospel, it follows that if unmerited grace is operative in sinless Adam's case, a two kingdoms framework exists from the beginning of time. This, it seems, is the concern of William Lazareth who fails to distinguish the ethical demands placed on sinless Adam and his sinful descendants. For Lazareth, the historical and ethical (matters *coram hominibus*) has always had a distinct *telos* from the eternal and religious (matters *coram Deo*). In short, since "religious syncretism" is not possible after the fall, neither is it possible before the fall. Thus, Lazareth must assume holy Adam was assured eternal life upon an evangelical promise. This is precisely how he interprets Luther's distinction between pre-fall law and post-fall law (discussed above): "Luther is keen to rescue God's pre-fall command from antinomianism without resorting himself to an unevangelical legalism in treating the primal and eschatological law of creation (*lex non scripta*)."⁸⁵

Certainly Luther's post-fall distinction of the two kingdoms denies any notion of a syncretistic religion; indeed, the Reformers adamantly taught fallen humanity cannot enhance their standing before God through any merit of their own. It is on the basis of grace alone, made possible through the merits of Jesus Christ, that spiritual life is available to the sinner. As demonstrated above, however, Luther did not teach this was the case for sinless Adam. Rather, the very opposite was the case: it was upon the completion and maintained obedience to law that Adam was originally promised (graciously) eschatological life. As noted above, the fundamental difference Luther saw between the pre- and postlapsarian worlds was not presented in the systematic fashion of later generations—neither should we attempt to mold it in such a manner. Fear of anachronism, however, should not keep us from recognizing the substantial continuity between Luther and later Protestant theologians.

While it is impossible to develop fully this claim here, I propose in conclusion that significant continuity exists between the covenantal framework of seventeenth-century Reformed theologians and the one (pre-fall)/two (post-fall) kingdom(s) doctrine as held by Luther. Although much more work is necessary here, evidence of continuity is found in the work of Francis Turretin (1623–1687), Theodore Beza's successor at the Academy of Geneva. It is significant that Turretin adopted both a covenantal framework and a two kingdoms distinction. Concerning God's relation with humanity, Turretin distinguished two historical covenants: the *foedus naturae* (pre-fall) and *foedus gratiae* (post-fall). Turretin explains the distinction:

This double covenant is proposed to us in Scripture: of nature and of grace; of works and of faith; legal and evangelical. The foundation of this distinction rests both on the different relation (*schesei*) of God contracting (who can be considered now as Creator and Lord, then as Redeemer and Father) and on the diverse condition of man (who may be viewed either as a perfect or as a fallen creature); also on the diverse mode of obtaining life and happiness (either by proper obedience or by another's imputed);

⁸⁵ Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 65, 73.

finally on the diverse duties prescribed to man (to wit, works or faith). For in the former, God as Creator demands perfect obedience from innocent man with the promise of life and eternal happiness; but in the latter, God as Father promises salvation in Christ to the fallen man under the condition of faith.⁸⁶

As Adam broke covenant with God, failing to live up to the perfect obedience required of him, the law's promise of eschatological life was forever cut off for him and his descendents. In the covenant of grace, however, spiritual life is again promised through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Given Adam's fall and the subsequent promise of a mediator, Turretin argues Christ possesses a twofold kingdom: "one natural or essential; the other mediatorial and economical." Over the former Christ reigns as eternal *Logos*, but over the latter as God-man (*theanthrōpos*). The former kingdom, Turretin writes, is common, including all creatures, over which Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equally reign (naturally), whereas the latter kingdom is particular, a peculiar economy of grace, over which Jesus Christ reigns economically.⁸⁷ Turretin's two kingdoms distinction is thus distinctly presented in postlapsarian terms.

While the technical and systematic formulations of Turretin will not be found in Luther, arguably the content of their theology is remarkably similar. Earlier we noted the array of interpretations and applications of Luther's two kingdoms, and yet most interpreters have divorced this subject from Luther's doctrine of creation. Very few have thought to relate Luther's thought on these subjects to the formulations of the Protestant orthodox. While such a proposed critical interaction will not solve all problems, surely it would provide some help in navigating Heckel's still baffling maze.

⁸⁶ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; trans. George M. Giger; 3 vols.; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992–1997), 1:575.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:486.