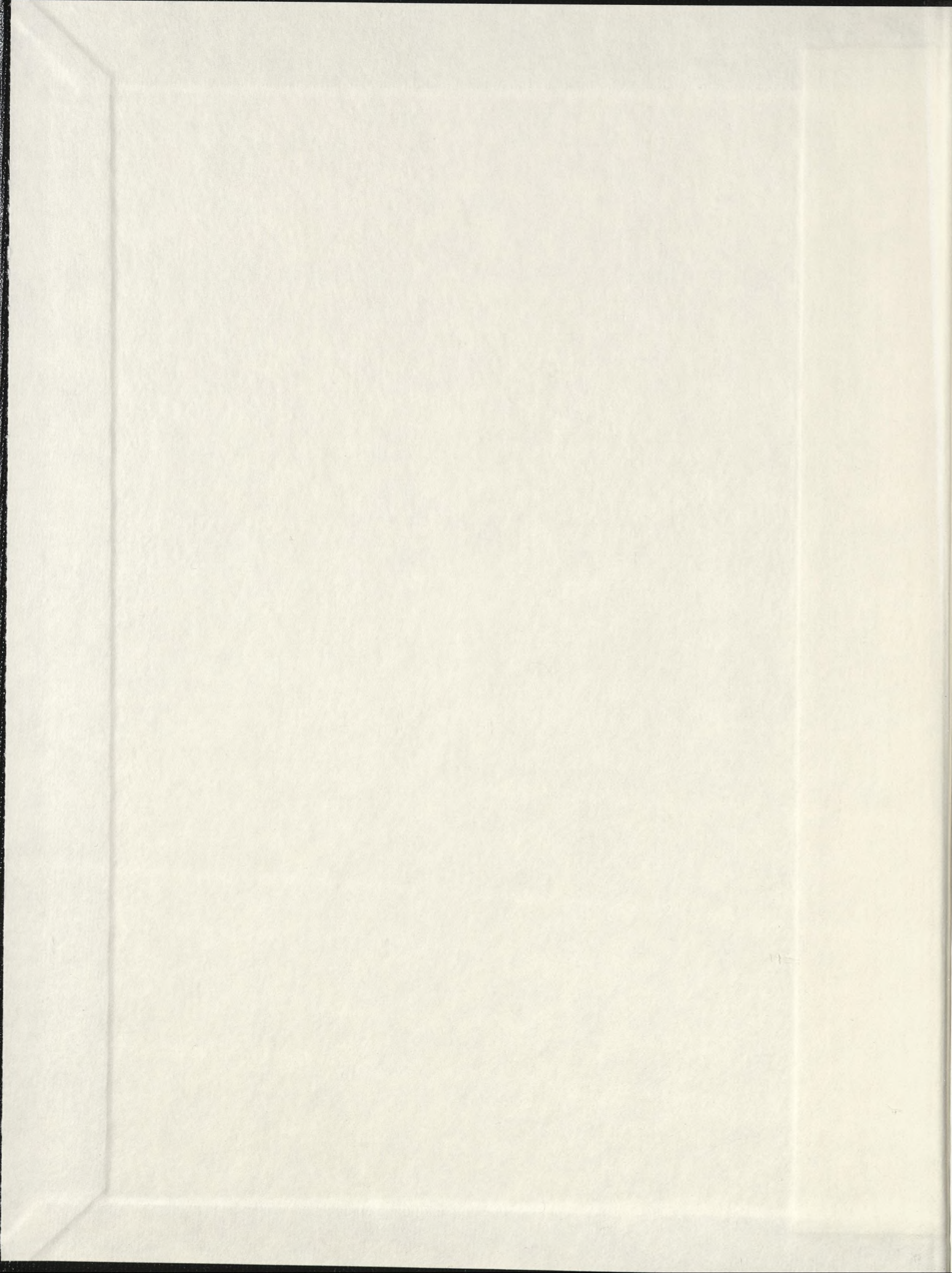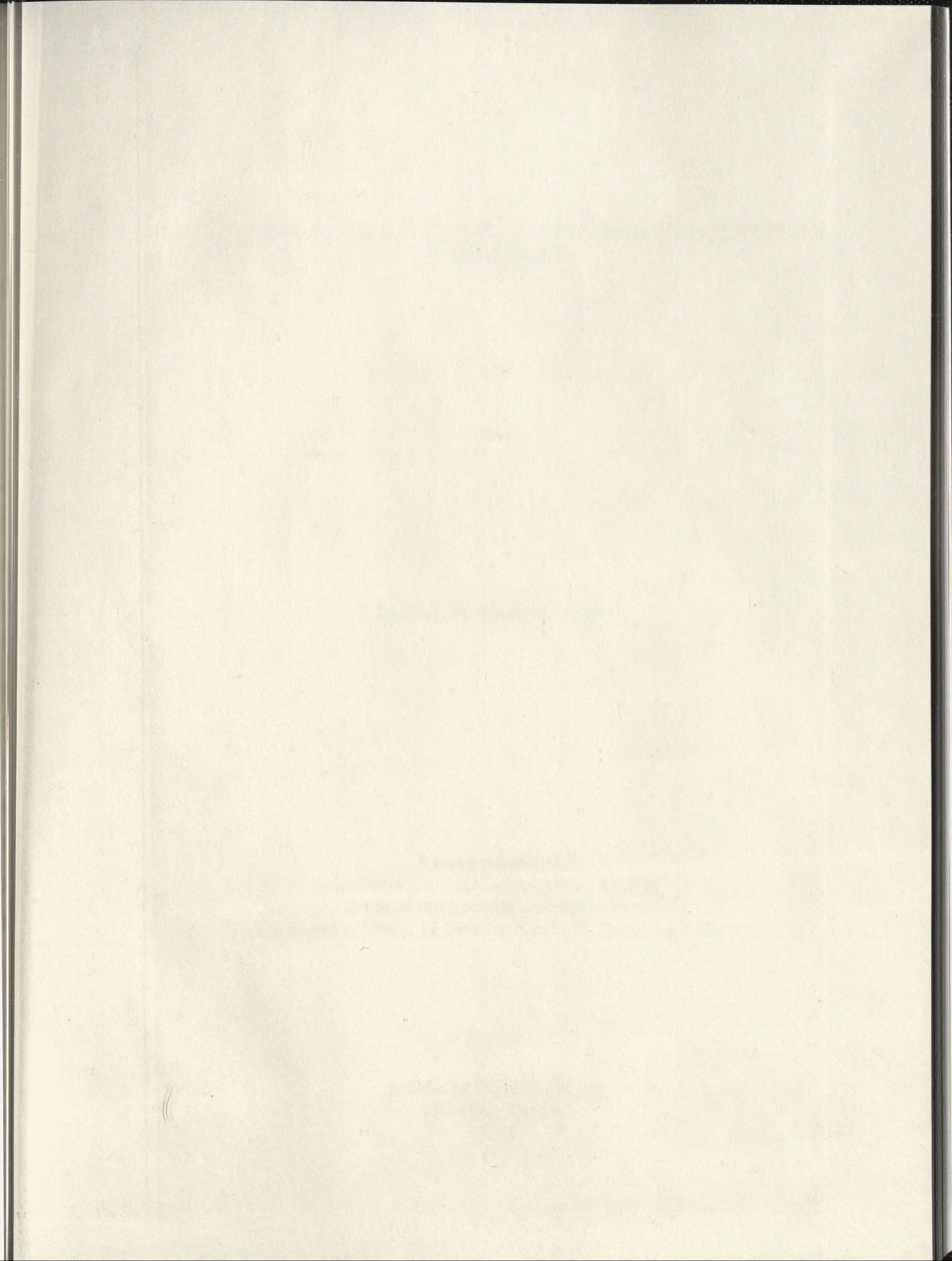# MARTIN LUTHER'S TWO KINGDOMS FOR POST-CHRISTENDOM POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

BY

JOSHUA L.W. HEATH,
B.Sc. Kin.

MARTIN LUTHER'S TWO KINGDOMS FOR POST-CHRISTENDOM POLITICAL
ENGAGEMENT

by

Joshua L.W. Heath, B.Sc. Kin.

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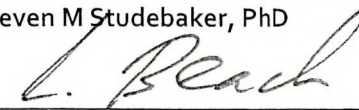Upon the recommendation of an oral examining committee,

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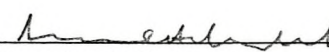is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Steven M Studebaker, PhD

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Lee Beach, PhD

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August H. Konkel, PhD

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ABSTRACT

"Martin Luther's Two Kingdoms for Post-Christendom Political Engagement"

Joshua L. W. Heath
McMaster Divinity College
Hamilton, Ontario
Master of Divinity, 2018

Martin Luther's two kingdoms has been overlooked by many as the church wrestles with what it looks like to engage with the post-Christendom political landscape. Much of this is due to the fact that a perverted version of Luther's two kingdoms was used to justify acquiescence to the Nazi party in German. Luther's actual two kingdoms theology calls for a critical engagement in politics that is motivated by love, operating through God's two governments. Luther's theology of the two kingdoms provides a way forward for political engagement after Christendom by avoiding the extremes of civic disengagement on the one hand, and a wholesale return to a Christendom synthesis on the other.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: WHY LUTHER'S TWO KINGDOMS?

From the beginning of the twentieth century the West has undergone profound changes. Christendom, the coordination and synthesis of church and government that had formed the foundation of Western civilization for over one thousand years, has all but disappeared over the course of several hundred years. As the church has emerged from Christendom, one thing has been agreed on by virtually every commentator: that whatever one thinks of Christendom in principle, there were, over the centuries, various abuses and failures. From forced conversions to the burning of heretics, these failures usually centered on the use of violence. This violence was typically not carried out by the church directly. In most cases, the violence was carried out by the government authorities. The church, because of the enormous influence it wielded within a Christendom structure, was able to bring the sword of the state down upon its enemies. In light of the drastic shift post-Christendom, the church has found it necessary to reexamine the way that the Christian community interacts with the structures of government. This thesis argues that Luther's two kingdoms theology provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context.

The first chapter of the thesis examines the history of the interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms. Luther's two kingdoms has been subject to a scapegoat hermeneutic. It is very difficult to apprehend his two kingdoms theology because of the association. It is often taken for granted that Luther's two kingdoms leads to political

quietism and acquiescence to unjust governments. This is a misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms theology. It is a misreading of history that fails to distinguish between Luther's actual theology and a particular and particularly faulty interpretation that took root in early twentieth century Germany. This first chapter traces the development of Luther's two kingdoms theology as it morphed into what came to be called the two kingdoms doctrine. The two kingdoms doctrine proposed that the political sphere was autonomous, and therefore ought to progress according to its own natural laws, outside any moral or ethical requirements. This autonomous understanding of the two kingdoms made was used to justify support for the Nazis, or at the very least, hampered resistance. This chapter examines the background of the two kingdoms doctrine, explicating the idea of autonomy in the context of naturalism and scientific determinism. It then follows the process of appropriation of the concept of autonomy into the theology of the two kingdoms, as the two kingdoms theology underwent its transformation into the two kingdoms doctrine. It demonstrates the process by which the concept of autonomy was linked to Luther himself, whether by those who sought to criticize the idea of autonomy, or by those who sought to root it in the thought of the German hero. The link between Luther and the two kingdoms doctrine during this period was created and strengthened through the writings of Ernst Troeltsh, Max Weber, Karl Barth, the Niebuhr brothers, and others. It must be noted, of course, that this chapter is not laying the blame for the faulty doctrine at the feet of these authors; many were explicitly opposed to the two kingdoms doctrine as it was being articulated. Rather, this chapter demonstrates how the doctrine developed, assimilating a dangerous concept of autonomy, and identified—wrongly, as the following chapter demonstrates—with Luther's own teaching. The doctrine of the two

kingdoms developed as a product of various historical contingencies, as the church acquiesced to the cultural assumptions, rather than as a necessary outworking of Luther's two kingdoms. The link between Luther and the faulty two kingdoms doctrine is tenuous, and forged most strongly in a period of intense conflict, where nuanced debate was hardly tenable. This chapter builds on the work of numerous scholars, in order to separate Luther from the misappropriation of his theology, so that the contributions of his theology can properly be apprehended. It is to that task that the next chapter turns.

The second chapter of this thesis examines Luther's two kingdoms. It details the content of Luther's two kingdoms theology as completely as can be expected in the limited space available. The purpose of the thesis is not to come to a new understanding of Luther's theology, but rather to apply the insights of his theology to contemporary culture. In light of that consideration, this chapter sketches in broad strokes the fundamental elements and tensions of Luther's two kingdoms theology, rather than wading into every interpretive debate. It will first outline the historical context in which Luther developed his two kingdoms theology. It will then outline Luther's two kingdoms theology, beginning by discussing the tension between Matt 5 and Rom 13. Luther's theology of the two kingdoms is more complex than it first appears. In the kingdom of God, Christ reigns as Lord in the hearts of his people through the Holy Spirit. In this kingdom there is no need of coercion, because all serve and obey, being governed, as they are, by the Holy Spirit. The temporal government exists because not every human belongs to the kingdom of God, and, as a result, God has instituted a system that restrains sin and keeps the world from devolving into violent chaos. Both kingdoms, according to Luther, are ordained by God, under God, and are kingdoms through which God works.

Because of this, the Christian, who belongs to the kingdom of God, is able to serve in the temporal government. Furthermore, the Christian, who lives by faith towards God, and by love towards his or her neighbour, is called to serve others, and therefore has a responsibility to serve in the temporal government when it is necessary. This chapter outlines the various distinctions Luther makes; between the ends and means of the kingdoms, between the realms of authorities of the kingdoms, and between the person and the office. Each of these distinctions maintain the tension in Luther's theology that are crucial to the two kingdoms. At the same time, there is a unifying force in that both kingdoms belong to God, and the Christian is never free to retreat into a ecclesiastical ghetto, but rather lives out their calling and vocation in the world. Love is the central ethic that allows the Christian to live and act in both kingdoms without sacrificing a cohesive identity. The distinctions that Luther draws allow the Christian to live the life of love in obedience to both Matt 5 and Rom 13.

The third chapter of the thesis begins the turn towards contemporary application. As Christendom has dissolved in the West, Christian communities have wrestled with how to adapt to their new position in society, and have been forced to engage with their paradigms of political engagement. This creative process has generated an enormous amount material of incredible value. Yet the question of post-Christendom political engagement has not been fully resolved; it is a continuing conversation. Post-Christendom approaches to political and cultural engagement have vacillated between the temptation to return to Christendom influence and power, and the desire for the Church to reflect the non-coercive ideals of the life of Christ. This chapter traces some of the most significant voices in this conversation since the Second World War. In particular, it

examines the Anabaptist tradition, the Reformed tradition, and Political and Liberation theology. Each of these traditions has offered much of value and contributed to a rich vision of political engagement post Christendom. This chapter outlines some of the most salient characteristics and contributions of each of these traditions. At the same time, it outlines some of the limitations of each of the traditions, demonstrating the need for another voice to provide a way forward. The Anabaptist tradition contributes a vision for ecclesiology that takes seriously Christ's call to the church to be a nonviolence and non-coercive community. However, it is insufficient for Christians who are not pacifist, since it does not provide any guidance for how a Christian ought to behave as a member of government or the temporal authorities. The Reformed tradition has recently been dominated by what has been called the transformationalist perspective. Some scholars have mounted an argument that John Calvin himself subscribed to a two kingdoms theology that diverged from the current transformationalist approach that dominates Reformed writings today. Nevertheless, this chapter engages post-Christendom trends, so it bypasses the debate about whether transformationalism is faithful to Calvin himself. Instead, this chapter notes the grand vision of comprehensive cultural engagement that is offered by Reformed writers and those influenced by this stream of thought. At the same time, it notes that, without a two kingdoms theology that differentiates between the ends and means of the kingdoms, there is nothing restraining the church from taking up the sword of the state to advance the interests of the kingdom of God through force and coercion. Political and Liberation theology are such diverse groups that it is difficult to describe them in such a way as to capture the diversity. Nevertheless, they share a concern for political justice, and insist that the gospel has implications for political

systems and the situation of those who are poor and oppressed. Some liberation theologies criticize Luther harshly, while others, whether in name or not, subscribe to a theology that aligns very closely with Luther's distinctions between the kingdoms. Where a two kingdoms theology is not in effect, liberation theologies run the risk of trying to advance the kingdom of God by force.

The final chapter of this thesis synthesizes the results of the previous chapters. In light of the limitations the approaches demonstrated by the approaches outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter shows how Luther's two kingdoms theology provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context. It first addresses some of the criticisms that have been offered against Luther's two kingdoms in a post-Christendom context. In particular, it demonstrates that whatever dualism is present in Luther does not amount to a dualism that splits the Christian life, nor the world that the Christian lives in, into contradictory, exclusive, or autonomous parts. Rather, the duality of the two kingdoms allows the Christian to live as a cohesive person in the eschatological tension between the first and second coming of Christ. In a post-Christendom context, where the misuses and abuses of Christendom are in the forefront of many minds, it is important that Christians have a paradigm for political action that allows for them to act in a way that is cohesive with their Christian identity as a member of the nonviolent kingdom of God. Luther's two kingdoms theology provides a framework for this to occur in a way that other post-Christendom approaches do not. The distinction between the kingdoms maintains a distance between the kingdoms that is necessary for critical engagement. On Luther's two kingdoms, the church calls the state to account when it takes on a sacral identity, and at the same time, does not try to incorporate the state into the kingdom of God, which, if it

were entirely successful, would usher in a theocratic totalitarianism. This final chapter argues that Luther's two kingdoms provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context. Jesus created a movement of liberation and justice without advancing a concrete model of a better society, and Luther's two kingdoms theology follows in that tradition, calling Christians to follow their Lord by serving others in love in the context where they live. The Reformed tradition offers a vision for cultural engagement. The Anabaptist tradition offers a vision for ecclesiological faithfulness. Liberation theology offers a reminder that the church must be concerned with justice. Luther's two kingdoms offers a way to pursue those visions while avoiding the danger of the extremes. Luther's theology of the two kingdoms provides a way forward for political engagement after Christendom by avoiding the extremes of civic disengagement on the one hand, and a wholesale return to a Christendom synthesis on the other.

CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF LUTHER'S TWO
KINGDOMS

This chapter examines the history of interpretation of Luther's political thought. Early

interpreters such as Philip Melanchthon cast some light on the initial reception of

Luther's two kingdoms theology, but have limited relevance to this thesis. The history of

the doctrine of the two kingdoms "is now depicted primarily as a history of its misuse.

An exception may be made for Luther himself but not without some reservations."[1] Trutz

Rendtorff observes that "the extent of agreement on this point in nearly every school of

interpretation is amazing to contemplate."[2] Developments over the last century and a half

have shaped recent appraisals of Luther's two kingdoms theology. William Wright

observes that, due to the Nazi commandeering of the Lutheran two kingdoms doctrine,

"Luther research has been affected by a scapegoat hermeneutic."[3] This chapter counters

the scapegoat hermeneutic by distinguishing between the two kingdoms doctrine

promulgated by the Nazis and the German church in the years before and during World

War II and Luther's own theology of the two kingdoms. It examines the nineteenth and

early twentieth century political interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms theology, which

came to be called the "two kingdoms doctrine" and culminated in the failure of the

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[1] Rendtorff, "Distinctions," 49.
[2] Rendtorff, "Distinctions," 49.
[3] Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism,* 179.

German church to provide substantial resistance to Nazi atrocities.[4] The crux of the doctrine was that the institutions of the natural world operated according to independent and autonomous laws, wholly disconnected from the law of God and the demands of what was seen to be merely internal piety.[5] This concept of autonomous laws governing each sphere of life came to be labeled *Eigengesetzlichkeit*.[6] Such a doctrine was completely foreign to Luther's actual thought, but the two kingdoms notion has been tainted by the association, thanks to influential figures such as Karl Barth, who "blasted Luther's ideas on political authority for being the source of Hitler's tyranny."[7] Over the years, both Neibuhr brothers, Karl Barth, and Johannes Heckel "labeled Luther's thought respectively as 'cultural defeatism,' 'law-gospel quietism,' and 'Augustinian dualism.'"[8] None of these figures, however, recognized the two kingdoms doctrine of the early twentieth century as spurious.[9] More recently, the divergence between Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms and the twisted doctrine eventually exploited by the ascendant Nazi party has been increasingly noted by scholars. The twentieth century "Luther Renaissance" has delivered valuable insights into his theology.[10] Jonathan Beeke notes that recent research criticizes the simplistic identification of Luther's two kingdoms with the twentieth century doctrine. [11]

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[4] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 17. Karl Barth is typically credited with coining the phrase "two kingdoms doctrine" in 1922 (DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer's Reception,* 95).

[5] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 21.

[6] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding,* 24.

[7] Beach, "Tale of Two Kingdoms," 37. See Barth's 1938 letter to a French pastor, printed in *Eine Schweizer Stimme*, 113, quoted in Gritsch, *Martin—God's Court Jester*, 112.

[8] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 193.

[9] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 193.

[10] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 2.

[11] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 193.

This chapter will traces the development of what Wright calls the "spurious" two kingdom doctrine.[12] This discussion shows that the two kingdoms doctrine that hobbled the German church while National Socialism rose to power was the product of historical contingencies and a multiplicity of factors. Blaming the German church's failure on Luther's teachings on the two kingdoms is historically unsophisticated and inaccurate. Roland Bainton notes that while the Lutheran church was the established church in Germany during the Nazi ascension, the Confessional Church, which opposed Hitler, was also Lutheran.[13] Furthermore, the Scandinavian countries are historically Lutheran, and, as Bainton notes, their Lutheranism "has not issued in totalitarianism."[14] Bainton's observation that in these sorts of instances "circumstance had more effect than religion upon the political theories of religious bodies" rings true.[15] Nevertheless, the connection between Luther's teaching and the two kingdoms doctrine of the early/mid nineteenth century deserves investigation. By tracing the development of the interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms theology, this chapter demonstrates that the connection between Luther's two kingdoms and submission to a totalitarian government was forged in the context of acquiescence to naturalism, and is by no means inherent to Luther's own thought.

Background of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine

The dualistic two kingdoms doctrine that gutted the majority of the German church's ability to provide substantial resistance to the Nazi atrocities did not develop in a

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[12] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 20.
[13] Bainton, *Reformation*, 234.
[14] Bainton, *Reformation*, 234.
[15] Bainton, *Reformation*, 234.

vacuum. Rather, it developed as Lutheran theology appropriated and adapted to philosophical, cultural, and scientific developments on the European continent. With the success of the forces of capitalistic Liberalism, nationalism, industrialization, and Newtonian epistemology during the period from around 1890 to World War I, scholarship trended towards determinism and naturalistic laws.[16] By the nineteenth century, enlightenment thought had pervaded the cultural milieu, and "God's direct role and involvement in life had been pushed to the mysterious edges of life by technical and scientific advances."[17] Furthermore, by this period in time a shift had occurred in the way that history was seen to operate. Rather than seeing history as controlled by decisions of the will—either God's will, or human will, or both—by the nineteenth century scholars and thinkers had come to believe that they discerned in history "ineluctable forces which are analogous to natural laws."[18] These forces were spoken of as autonomies, and different spheres of life were considered to operate according to their own immanent principles, which control and propel the developments within that sphere.[19] According to this way of thinking, within a given sphere there are "no acts of freedom and no ethical opportunities."[20] The principles that govern the sphere do not allow for true ethical action within that sphere, since within that sphere, there is no true freedom. Helmut Thielicke illustrates this perspective with an illustration from the economic sphere. The businessperson, for example, must take certain economic actions in order to remain competitive, and to forgo those actions for ethical reasons would cause him or her to

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[16] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 24.
[17] Spanring, *Bonhoeffer*, 66.
[18] Thielicke, *Politics*, 71.
[19] Thielicke, *Politics*, 71. Wright notes that "*Eigengesetzlichkeit*, or the moral autonomy of institutional life, may . . . be found in the works of Jean Bodin, Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, the Social Darwinists and most classical Liberals" (*God's Two Kingdoms*, 27).
[20] Thielicke, *Politics*, 71.

cease to be competitive and go out of business, thus ceasing to exist on the economic level at all. One then realizes that there was never any true choice on the economic level––the only choice available was whether to act according to the immanent principles of that sphere, or to leave the economic level entirely.[21] If this is indeed the case, then one's own "inner disposition or attitude, and perhaps a very private circle" are the only places where one can still "give expression to ethical concerns."[22] On this view, one either comes to the conclusion "that there is no divine command at all or one must identify the worldly autonomies with the law of God."[23] In either case, Christianity merely provides a balm for the conscience, along with, perhaps, some rules for one's private life.[24]

Within a cultural context that sees the spheres as operating with such autonomy, Luther's language of two kingdoms lent itself to a migration of ethics towards inner piety.[25] During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the church was increasingly put in a position of subservience to the state, by both confessional and liberal theologians.[26] The 'evangelical' church in Germany under Hitler's Third Reich held that "race, folk, and nation" were orders or spheres of existence.[27] On the basis of autonomy, they should therefore be allowed to function free of ecclesiological critique or moral requirements. The Nazis appealed to this inward migration of piety and the concept of autonomy to legitimize their actions. One German pastor, for example, reported that the Nazis would say to him, "Pastor, you take care of the people's spiritual needs. Let us

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[21] Thielicke, *Politics*, 72–73. Thielicke
[22] Thielicke, *Politics*, 73.
[23] Busch, *Barmen Thesis*, 36.
[24] Busch, *Barmen Theses*, 36.
[25] Thielicke, *Politics*, 73.
[26] Chung et. al. *Liberating*, 47.
[27] Werpehowski, "Karl Barth," 230.

handle their temporal needs."[28] Luther, on the other hand, had no compunction about speaking to the temporal needs of the people, savaging the princes for "sleigh riding, drinking, and parading about in masquerades" rather than fulfilling their duties for the good of their subjects.[29] One can therefore only imagine the language he would have used to denounce the Nazi's suggestion.

Thielicke does acknowledge that Luther seemed to have "an instinct for the autonomy of the orders," though the concept itself is found nowhere in his thinking.[30] Luther, after all, acknowledged that love takes different forms in different spheres. In the realm of medicine, a doctor may be required by love to amputate a limb in order to save a life.[31] Likewise, the soldier and magistrate demonstrate love in the sphere of politics through violence against evildoers in the service of justice. The crucial component for Luther however, will be demonstrated in the following chapter. The critical piece for Luther is that all the spheres are subject to the ethic of love, manifested in different ways according to the nature of the sphere. Furthermore, God rules over all spheres, none being independent from his Lordship. The orders are never ethically autonomous for Luther. However, as the advance of naturalism and scientific determinism appeared to uncover and describe laws governing the various spheres of life, which operated independent of ethical concerns, and in fact made ethical action impossible, the Lutheran language of two kingdoms underwent a subtle shift to accommodate the changing assumptions. Within this context, it became tempting to believe that the temporal kingdom of

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[28] Zahl, *Grace in Practice*, 189–90.
[29] Hillerbrand, *Annotated Luther*, 269.
[30] Thielicke, *Politics*, 73.
[31] Luther, "Whether Soldiers," 46:97.

institutions and governments operated according to their own autonomous laws, independent from the laws that govern the (largely internal) kingdom of God.[32]

Appropriation of Autonomy

The process by which the concept of autonomy became embedded in the Lutheran conception of the two kingdoms is historically complex, and is contingent upon realities that extend far beyond mere theological debate. Cultural, historical, political, and philosophical developments contributed to the appropriation of autonomy by significant portions of the Lutheran church. This section does not attempt to trace these developments. It takes as a historical given that these developments occurred, and that the concept of autonomy was taken up into the Lutheran conception of the two kingdoms to a great enough extent that it hampered Lutheran resistance to the eventual tyranny of the Nazi party.[33] This section pursues a related but distinct aim. As the concept of autonomy situated itself within a Lutheran conception of the two kingdoms, theologians and writers, some of whom were opposed to the concept, and some of whom were in favour, repeatedly linked the concept of autonomy with Luther himself, either crediting or blaming his theology of the two kingdoms for their contemporary articulations of it. This section will survey some of the significant figures who were instrumental in solidifying this connection between Luther and the concept of autonomy on a scholarly and popular level. The effects of this connection on discussion of Luther's two kingdoms theology is

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[32] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 24.

[33] Going back further in history, for example, Kenneth Barnes argues that the dichotomous two kingdoms view became "the ironclad, stereotypical stance of German Lutheranism with the work of conservative dogmatists after Luther and the staid church-state Lutheranism of the following centuries" (*Nazism*, 23). The state control over religion, stemming from the Lutheran church's reliance on the protection of the secular princes, lasted until 1918, and "indelibly cast the policies of the German church in a conservative, uncritical, noninterventionist mold" (Barnes, *Nazism*, 24).

still felt today, though, as has been noted, recent research is gradually dispelling the false conceptions about the nature of Luther's two kingdoms as he understood it himself.

The origins of the understanding of Luther as promoting the concept of secular autonomy is often attributed to theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) and sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920).[34] Some have traced the concept further back to the mid nineteenth century to Christoph Ernst Luthardt (1823–1902).[35] Troeltsch, who will be discussed below, "decried the ethical conservatism" exhibited by Luthardt.[36] Luthardt's influential interpretation of Luther in *Ethik Luthers in ihren Grundzuegen* (1875) stressed "the inwardness of Christianity in contrast with external life in the world."[37] Lazareth calls the result in Luthardt "a dualistic chasm between personal life and public affairs," but Luthardt never made human institutions truly autonomous, maintaining that human institutions, though under reason, "are not really profane, but God's endowment, order, and will, and God is present in the same."[38] Wright, on the other hand, argues that Luthardt was careful to place Christians always under the law and rule of God, even when they act in the office of the temporal authorities.[39] Luthardt did emphasize the inner disposition of the Christian, however, the Ten Commandments always applied to the actions of the Christian, and it is therefore unfair to credit him with "the idea of the complete autonomy of the natural world from the rule and laws of God."[40]

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[34] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 25. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*.

[35] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 21; Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 5.

[36] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 5.

[37] Luthardt, *Ethik Luthers*, quoted in Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 5.

[38] Luthardt, *Ethik Luthers*, 94, quoted in Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 22.

[39] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 23; cf. Luthardt, *Ethik Luthers*, 65, 107–8.

[40] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 23.

Ulrich Duchrow, who was a major figure trying to clarify Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms in the wake of World War II, attributed the concept of autonomy between political life and the life of faith to Hermann Jordan.[41] Hermann Jordan, an Erlangan church historian, appears to have been "the first to speak of the independence of political and social life from faith as 'autonomy.'[42] He promoted the idea that Lutheranism supported the idea that "religion and politics each have to process through their own laws."[43] He used the phrase "*Eigengesetzlichkeit* (autonomy) of the stately sphere"[44] Yet the autonomy Jordan spoke of was only of a limited degree. Jordan maintained that the state must be moral, because its very purpose is to restrict evil.[45] In fact, he noted that Luther "had sanctioned resistance against any government that broke the Ten Commandments."[46] Jordan's understanding of Lutheran autonomy is not one of "Machiavellian or unlimited moral autonomy granted to the state."[47]

Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber are two scholars who played a significant role in linking the concept of autonomy with Luther's two kingdoms theology.[48] Both were influential scholars writing in the early twentieth century. Troeltsch was a theological liberal, and his two volume work, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1931) spends a significant amount of time wrestling with the theological ethics of the Lutheran church.[49] Frustrated by what he saw as the social conservatism of the Lutheran church in

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[41] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 24; Duchrow and Huber, eds., *Die Ambivalenz der Zweireiche-lehre*, 19, 23. Cited in Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 24.
[42] Duchrow and Huber, *Die Ambivalance*, 20, quoted in Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 24.
[43] Jordan, *Luthers Staatsauffassung*, 191–2, quoted in Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 24.
[44] Jordan, *Luthers Staatsauffassung*, 28–29.
[45] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 25.
[46] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 25. cf. Jordan, *Luthers Staatsauffassung*, 19, 97–98.
[47] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 25.
[48] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 25.
[49] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 4.

Germany, Troeltsch placed the blame squarely on Luther's shoulders.[50] Lazareth observes that while Troeltsch may have been mistaken in his understanding of Luther's ethics, "he was often absolutely right about the reactionary ethics of nineteenth-century German Lutheranism."[51] Unfortunately, "his inability or unwillingness to make this crucial distinction between Luther's ethics and nineteenth-century German Lutheran ethics may well have been his basic error."[52] Troeltsch understood Luther's two kingdoms theology as emphasizing obedience to secular authorities and featuring an ethical dualism that divided between a personal ethic concerned with inner conformity to the Christian calling, and a "relatively Christian" ethic, governed by reason.[53] Wright identifies Troeltsch as the "founding source of the concept of *Eigengesetzlichkeit*, even though he did not actually use the term itself."[54] While the concept of the autonomy of the state can be traced at least back to the sixteenth century, Niccolo Machiavelli, and the idea of "reason of state," many scholars argue that Troeltsch promoted "the idea that ethical values develop out of unique historical experiences; that is, they are autonomously determined in their own spheres."[55] Troeltsch, for one, "identified Luther's teachings with Machiavellianism."[56] Troeltsch wrote that, on the Lutheran understanding, the state was a product of reason. However, he still recognized that for Luther, the reason that governed the state still issued from Divine Reason. The state's purpose was "the preservation of external discipline and order, and the securing of human wellbeing."[57]

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[50] Lazareth, *Christians in Society,* 4.

[51] Lazareth, *Christians in Society,* 4.

[52] Lazareth, *Christians in Society,* 4.

[53] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching,* 2:449–500, cited in Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding,* 26; Grenholm and Gunner, *Lutheran Identity,* 10.

[54] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 26.

[55] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 26.

[56] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 27. See Troeltsch, *Social Teaching,* 2:532–33, 858n247.

[57] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching,* 2:548.

While Troeltsch "had talked of a Lutheran dual morality," he never implied that Luther had sanctioned an evil, amoral, or immoral state, since "the state has a divine task of securing human well-being."[58] Nevertheless, Wright notes that Troeltsch "had opened a door that would be difficult to close."[59]

Troeltsch had a significant influence on Anglo-American Western perceptions of Lutheran two kingdoms theology through the work of Helmut Richard Niebuhr, who spread "Troeltsch's idea that Luther taught a dual moral code and strictly separated a private from a public ethic."[60] Niebuhr contributed to this interpretation of Luther as having dualistic tendencies with regard to the Christian's relationship to culture and politics.[61] Wright argues that Niebuhr played a significant role in further opening the door to the misinterpretation of Luther's two kingdoms theology.[62] This is not to say, of course, that Niebuhr—or Troeltsch, for that matter—was somehow instrumental in creating the passive and quietist church culture that eventually capitulated to the Nazis. Rather it is to point out that they were instrumental in crediting Luther and Lutheran two kingdoms theology with the autonomy concept that hampered healthy resistance to secular authorities.

Wolfgang Huber, a post-World War Two writer, argued that it was not the theologians who invented the concept of autonomy, but rather Weber did.[63] Weber, Wright argues, considered Luther an early proponent of "modern capitalist rationality,"

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[58] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 28.
[59] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 28.
[60] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 28; see Heckel, *Lex Charitatis*, 161.
[61] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 171–76.
[62] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 28.
[63] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 29. Emile Durkheim, father of modern sociology, must also be credited with "the whole idea of autonomous (natural) laws or moral autonomy" (Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 29).

which was characterized by moral autonomy."[64] Weber "adapted Luther's two-kingdoms

concept and his distinctions between the inner and outer man to the distinctly modern

idea of public political life versus private religious life."[65] Weber contributed to the

intellectual movement towards autonomy, which, while its intention was to defend

Christianity from determinism, "allowed the legitimizing of the idea that the social,

economic, and political struggles of their era fell under autonomous laws intrinsic to the

processes of the worldly sphere."[66] This division was made for the purpose of defending

Christendom from determinism, but amounted to capitulation to the forces of

modernism.[67] Weber spoke of "inner *Eigengesetzlichkeiten*" of the political sphere, the

economic sphere, the intellectual sphere, and more.[68] Weber's thesis was that the

Protestant ethic "evolved into a worldly ascetic and rational capitalist spirit," a thesis that

"represented the application of the concept of an independent ethics inherent to the

economic sphere."[69] While Weber claimed Lutheran origin to his ideas, it is clear that his

"modern Adam Smithian ethic based on self-interest" is an "almost grotesque antithesis"

to Luther's ethic based on love and service to God and neighbour.[70]

By the time Hitler's National Socialists arrived on the scene, the stage was set for

the twisted two kingdoms doctrine to make an appearance. Wright notes that whatever

developments occurred in the Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms, "the rise of

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[64] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 29.

[65] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 29.

[66] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 29. Wright contends that Liberal theologians used this movement to legitimize the idea that political, social, and economic spheres fell under autonomous laws independent of the laws of the Christian ethic (Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 29).

[67] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 29.

[68] Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsatzë*, vol 1., 550, quoted in Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 30.

[69] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 31.

[70] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 31; Pawlus, *Luthers Berufs-und Wirtschaftsethik*, 266, quoted in Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 31.

National Socialism in Germany provided the context for the ultimate application of the concept of the double autonomy of the worldly spheres of life."[71] A number of prominent Lutheran theologians were duped, seduced, or complicit in the rise of the Nazi party in the 1930s.[72] It was in the early 1930s that the terms "two kingdoms doctrine and "doctrine of the two kingdoms" came into widespread use in the discussion surrounding the rise of Nazism and the collaboration of the German Christian Movement.[73] The Nazis declared state, war, nation, and race natural orders.[74] This, combined with the concept of moral autonomy of the spheres, was used to justify church collaboration, or at least non-resistance. Responsibility for society was seen to be the domain of the state, not of the church, and therefore "the church was to be the church, proclaiming the gospel while the state took care of earthly matters."[75] As will be seen in the following chapter, this way of thinking fails to account for Luther's synthesis of the two kingdoms in the Christian person, who has responsibilities in the civil realm, a realm that is never autonomous. Nevertheless, Beeke calls the perverted use of Luther's two kingdoms by the Nazis "not an illogical step," in light of the understood autonomy of the realms.[76]

The two kingdoms doctrine was not the only theological factor that influenced German Christian responses to the Nazis, nor was it likely the most significant. The pro-Nazi German Christian movement that eventually grew to include between a quarter and a third of German Protestants, had three ideological prongs. There were "its opposition to

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[71] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 31.

[72] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 7.

[73] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 32. Wright identifies Harold Diem's *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms* (1938) as the arrival of the modern two-kingdoms doctrine. Diem and Emmanuel Hirsch are examples of those who asserted the two kingdoms doctrine in its modern form (Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*, 32).

[74] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms*,

[75] Barnes, *Nazism*, 111.

[76] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 193.

church doctrine, its anti-Semitism, and its effort to craft a 'manly' church."[77] Heschel notes that "the aryanization of Jesus into a manly, heroic, fighting spirit reflected among the theologians the 'heroic realism' that prevailed in the 1930s within right wing political thought."[78] Along with antisemitism, fear of Communism also contributed to Christian support of Nazism. The choice was seen to be "between atheistic communism on the left" or the "renewal of *Volk* and state upon a national and Christian basis" on the right, under Nazism.[79]

Despite the widespread ethical corruption of the German churches, the ascendance of Nazi power was not without resistance from German Christians. Hitler came to power January 30, 1933. His election was initially welcomed and supported by the majority of Christians, who hoped in the promise of "economic recovery, social stability, and the restoration of order."[80] Immediately, however, he "initiated his policy of *Gleichschaltung* (equalization; synchronization; coordination)," the purpose of which was to bring all political, social, cultural and religious German institutions under Nazi control.[81] In April, 1933, the Aryan paragraph was introduced as part of the Nazi efforts, with the ultimate goal of removing Jews, even those who had become Christians, from leadership positions in the government, economic institutions, universities, and the church.[82] The *Pfarrernotbund*, the Pastor's Emergency League, emerged five months later "to oppose the Aryan paragraph, to resist the removal of Jewish pastors, and to

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[77] Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*, 5.
[78] Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*, 10.
[79] Green, *Against Hitler*, 43. Schäfer, *Württenberg*, 1:75. Quoted in Green, *Against Hitler*, 43.
[80] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 133.
[81] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 133.
[82] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 133.

support these pastors and their families in whatever way possible."[83] Within four months the league membership numbered around twenty percent of German pastors.[84]

It is important to recognize the struggles of the era. Historical theology and its interpretation naturally fell to the wayside in light of far more pressing issues of ethics and practice. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this investigation, it must be noted that one of the significant figures of this era had a large influence on furthering the interpretation that there was a clear and causal connection between Luther's two kingdoms and the Nazi perversion of the doctrine. Karl Barth, a Reformed theologian, was an aggressive opponent of the Nazis long before they gained power, and so became "the major spokes-man for the anti-Nazi point of view."[85] At the same time, Barth made himself a vocal opponent of the doctrine of the two kingdoms, offering his alternative concept of the "Lordship of Christ."[86] As early as 1922 Barth blamed Luther for the autonomous two kingdoms idea.[87] He went as far as to suggest that "Adolph Hitler's intellectual ancestry could be traced back to Luther, via Bismarck and Frederick the Great."[88] Barth was one of the most significant figures to link Luther to the two kingdoms doctrine manipulated by the Nazis, not least because of his position as one of the few clear voices standing for justice in an incredibly difficult and tumultuous time.

Even as the corruption of Luther's two kingdoms reached its peak with German Lutherans' accommodation to the Nazis, the Barmen Confessional Synod of German

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[83] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 133–34.
[84] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 134. Hendel notes the sad irony, however, that "only a few of the pastors made opposition to the racist policies of the Nazi regime a high priority" in their opposition to the Nazis (Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 134).
[85] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 33.
[86] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 33.
[87] Lazareth, *Christians in Society,* 11; Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 34.
[88] Wright, *God's Two Kingdoms,* 35.

Evangelical churches (May 1934) protested the Nazi takeover, and rejected claims of complete autonomy based on Lutheran principles.[89] The Confessing Church, which opposed the Nazi controlled German Christian movement, arose out of this Synod.[90] It was here that the Confessing Church adopted the Barmen Declaration, consisting of six affirmations. The Declaration, while not directly referencing either the Nazi party or Hitler himself, made clear that the Confessing Church resisted the totalitarian, idolatrous claims of the Nazi ideology.[91] While Karl Barth was "the leading spirit" behind the Barmen Declaration, the document was produced by Barth and Hans Asmussen, a Lutheran.[92] It is clearly evident, that though the concept of autonomy had worked its way through the German churches, Lutheran Christians still managed to provide resistance on the basis of Lutheran principles.[93]

Following the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust in the years following World War Two, theologians grappled with the factors that led the German church to provide so little resistance to the Nazi atrocities. In the wake of the war, German Lutheranism "began its social ethical self-examination with repentance."[94] There was a significant movement towards emphasizing the importance of social justice and comprehensive Lordship of Christ. Lazareth notes that the German Lutheran church rose from the ashes with a renewed understanding of their public responsibility.[95] All over the world, however, Christians wrestled with the political implications of their faith. The rise

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[89] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 31–32; Duchrow, *Lutheran Churches*, 17.

[90] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 134.

[91] Caulley, "Remember the Barmen Declaration," 256.

[92] Hendel, "Barmen Declaration," 134.

[93] The fifth thesis, for example, rejects in clear terms the confusion of the temporal and spiritual kingdoms, such that the state fulfills the church's vocation, or the church appropriates the characteristics and tasks of the state (Busch, *Barmen Theses*, 71).

[94] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 12.

[95] Lazareth, *Christians in Society*, 13.

of liberation theology emphasized solidarity and justice with and for the poor. The decline of Christendom demanded a rethinking of the traditional relationship between church and state in the West. Prominent pacifists such as Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder have made important contributions to political-theological thought. In the vast majority of cases, movements post World War Two have at their core an emphasis on the political and social ramifications of the Christian message. These recent movements in theology will be charted in chapter four of this thesis.

Conclusion

Bauman observes that "in its misrepresentation, Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms paved the way for the National Socialism of the Hitler Reich."[96] This is an astute observation, to the extent that the two kingdoms doctrine as it was understood in mid-twentieth century Germany was, first of all, a misrepresentation of Luther's theology of the two kingdoms, and, secondly, a significant hindrance to what one would consider proper resistance to the tyranny and terror of the Nazi party. At the same time, however, one must recognize that there are many other factors that played into the rise of Nazism and Christian capitulation. Certainly, one cannot release the German Lutherans from their responsibility, but one must also recognize the multiplicity of factors that played into the moral failure that was capitulation to Nazism. The two kingdoms doctrine was not even the only theological factor, let alone the only factor, that paved the way for Nazism. One still finds the misinterpretation of Luther in contemporary writings today. Luther is occasionally held up as the patron saint for Christian passivity and disengagement. For

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[96] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 39.

example, Ron Sider, in his recent book *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics*, suggests that "Luther's insistence that the state operates by its own norms without any interference from the gospel opened the door for those who later would argue that Christians should blindly obey whatever the state commands."[97] As will be shown in the next chapter, this is a subtle but important misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms. The state, Luther insists, must not govern by the gospel. On the other hand, one may discern in Luther numerous ways in which the gospel "interferes" with the state.

One can no more lay responsibility for the quietism of the Lutheran German churches at the feet of the two kingdoms than one can lay responsibility for South African apartheid at the feet of John Calvin and his vision for a holy commonwealth. South Africa during the years of Apartheid was predominantly Reformed. Boesak argues that "it is Reformed Christians who have spent years working out the details of apartheid, as a church policy and as a political policy . . . Apartheid is the grave of the dignity and credibility of the Reformed tradition."[98] Much like Lutherans in Germany, the Reformed tradition was closely related to a system of unjust government and an unjust state system. In South Africa, Boesak notes that "we have reached a state of affairs where many, especially blacks, have come to believe that racism is an inevitable fruit of the Reformed tradition."[99] Investigating the complexity of the Reformed tradition in South Africa and the realities of Apartheid are far beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say, however, that the fact that the Reformed tradition in many other areas of the world has not resulted in oppressive and racist regimes should lead one to the conclusion that there

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[97] Sider, *Scandal*, 31.
[98] Boesak, "Black and Reformed," 274.
[99] Boesak, "Black and Reformed," 274.

is nothing inherent in the Reformed tradition that leads necessarily to racism and apartheid. Any theological tradition can be perverted and elements used to justify what would have been anathema to the founder of the tradition. One must hold each generation responsible for their use and abuse of their theological heritage.

This section has traced the development of the interpretation of the two kingdoms concept to its eventual perversion with the German church's two kingdoms doctrine. A survey of the history demonstrates that there is no necessary link between Luther's concept of two kingdoms and a pathologically submissive church, but rather that the possibility of a two kingdoms doctrine was the result of capitulation to the modernist idea of determinism and autonomous natural laws. Even in its most corrupted form, the theology of the two kingdoms was able to spur some resistance, thanks to Luther's insistence that all Christians are ultimately to obey only Christ.[100] Thus, though there is a danger that Luther's language can be used to justify a false dichotomy between internal piety and external responsibility, this is an incorrect interpretation of Luther, stemming from the church's appropriation of Weber's concept of the autonomies. For Christians who wish to be engaged politically in pursuing justice and peace, the antidote to misunderstanding is not to abandon the original teaching, but rather to expound it with renewed clarity and vigour.

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[100] Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding*, 33.

CHAPTER 2: MARTIN LUTHER'S THEOLOGY OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

If the previous chapter has made clear that the connection between Luther's two

kingdoms and a pathologically submissive church is a historically contingent

development rather than an unavoidable outworking of Lutheran theology, it becomes the

task of this chapter to describe in detail the actual content of Luther's two kingdoms

teaching. As has been seen, in the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century, there

was a tendency to politicize Luther's two kingdoms theology.[101] As a result, Luther's

teachings on the two kingdoms have often been equated with the separation of church and

state.[102] While there are similarities and overlap between Luther's two kingdoms

theology and the concept of the separation of church and state, one must be careful not to

simply equate the two. Luther was not a political theorist, and his theology of the two

kingdoms is not primarily a political doctrine. To read it as such is to risk

anachronistically projecting contemporary political concepts onto Luther's thought. The

dispute about Luther's two kingdoms is very complicated. Jonathan Beeke notes that

"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."[103] At the same time, Beeke observes

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[101] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 192.

[102] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 192–93.

[103] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 191.

that there is a growing tendency "to recognize the pervasive character of the two kingdoms throughout the whole of Luther's theology."[104] He goes as far as to propose that "understanding Luther's two kingdoms is crucial for a proper understanding of his whole theology."[105]

This chapter will describe Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms as he expounded it in his writings. It begins by outlining the context within which Luther promoted his ideas. It then examines Luther's two kingdoms in detail, sketching the function and the limits of the kingdom of God and the temporal kingdom. Johnson argues that "Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms was his attempt to describe the manner by which God exercises lordship over the world and man."[106] This is not to minimize the tensions that Luther establishes that give his theology its shape, but rather to recognize that the dualism in Luther's thought ought to be distinguished from its later, nineteenth and twentieth century distortions. Space does not allow for more than a preliminary foray into the "labyrinth of interpretation," and this chapter will chiefly concern itself with the broad strokes and major tensions of Luther's two kingdoms theology.[107] It outlines the distinctions that Luther draws between the kingdoms in terms of ends, means, and realms, as well as describing Luther's crucial distinction between person and office.

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[104] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 193.

[105] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 194. The central position of the two kingdoms in Luther's theology notwithstanding, this chapter will spend minimal space drawing connections with the rest of Luther's theology, simply due to space constraints.

[106] Johnson, "Luther's Doctrine," 240.

[107] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 198.

Plague, Famine, and Reformation: Historical Context

Luther articulated his two kingdoms paradigm in a time of crisis for the medieval world. The reformation he started spread across a Europe ravaged by plague, famine, rebellion, and the looming threat of Turkish invasion.[108] In the sixteenth century Christendom was well-established. At the peak of its power in the twelfth century, the papacy asserted its power over imperial authorities, arguing that the pope had been "entrusted with the two swords, temporal and spiritual."[109] The temporal sword he bestowed on the secular ruler, which he was to use to serve the ends of the pope, who also bestowed upon him his position as emperor.[110] By the sixteenth century temporal powers had asserted a measure of independence from ecclesial authorities; England and France both refused, in different ways, to grant particular elements of papal control.[111] David Knowles observes that "in practice rulers everywhere erected practical barriers against ecclesiastical pretensions."[112] Still, in theory, the temporal authorities were under the authority of the pope, and were to work together with the ecclesial authorities for the good of the church.

It is important to understand that many of Luther's writings are situational, and all of his writings that relate to political theology are most definitely so. Luther's most influential writing on the subject of the two kingdoms, "Temporal Authority," was written out of Luther's concern that the Catholic church was interfering in secular

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[108] For a discussion of the many forces of instability assailing Europe at the time, see MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 53–57. cf. Lindberg, *European Reformations,* 32–40; George, *Theology of the Reformation,* 23.

[109] Knowles, "Church and State," 10.

[110] Knowles, "Church and State," 10.

[111] Knowles, "Church and State," 11.

[112] Knowles, "Church and State," 11.

affairs.[113] Schoenberger correctly observes that "it was not intended to provide a definitive theory of political obligation."[114] Luther did not use the distinction between the two kingdoms as "a systematic grid for organizing his theology," as Luther did very little systematization of his theological thought, unlike John Calvin, for example, the systematic theologian *par excellence*.[115] Nevertheless, Hein observes that Luther's theology of the two kingdoms is one of the "chief organizing principles in [his] thought," which often helps explain some of the apparent inconsistencies in other areas of Luther's thought.[116] Still, it must be remembered that Luther never wrote a complete summary of his political thought, so one is forced to draw conclusions from writings that are topical in nature.

Luther's reliance on Augustine for much of his two kingdoms theology is "a well-documented fact."[117] There are important distinctions between Luther's two kingdoms and Augustine's cities, but they share some similar core elements. The more negative precursor of Luther's thought is the medieval doctrine of the two swords described above, commonly associated with Pope Boniface VIII.[118] This model, rather than contrasting cities or kingdoms, conceptualizes the relationship between government and the church as two swords, spiritual and temporal authority, both invested in the pope by Christ.[119] The state, on this view, "received its legitimization entirely from the church."[120] In

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[113] Schoenberger, "Justifiability," 4. In particular, in 1521 the Roman Catholic church instituted a ban on Luther's translation of the New Testament and demanded that it be surrendered (Sockness, "Two Kingdoms Revisited," 94).

[114] Schoenberger, "Justifiability," 4.

[115] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 201.

[116] Hein, "Reason," 139.

[117] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 195. Hendrix, *Luther*, 16.

[118] Witte, *God's Joust*, 215.

[119] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 196–97. Witte, *God's Joust*, 215.

[120] Crouse, *Mapping*, 2.

Luther's day there were many German bishops and princes operating on the hierarchical assumption associated with Boniface.[121] Within the two swords paradigm, the antithetical tension of Augustine's *City of God* is lost.[122] Ockham was another precursor of Luther's two kingdoms.[123] While Luther was clearly influenced by Augustine and in conversation with his contemporaries, his two kingdoms theology "is a significant development of Augustine's two cities and Ockham's critique of the medieval papacy."[124]

The Two Kingdoms

Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms addresses the apparent contradiction between biblical injunctions such as Christ's commandment in Matt 5 to love one's enemies and not resist an evildoer, and the practice of Christians participating in the office of temporal power.[125] Luther is concerned to "provide a firm basis for the civil law and sword," and goes on to argue that it is established by God's will and ordained by God.[126] He does this on the basis of passages such as Rom 13:1–7 and 1 Pet 2:13–14, in which Christians are called to be subject to the authorities. Rom 13, in particular, posits that "the authorities that exist have been established by God," that the authorities are "God's servants," who "do not bear the sword for no reason," and that they are "agents of wrath to bring

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[121] Witte, *Law and Protestantism*, 109.
[122] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 197.
[123] VanDrunen, *Natural Law*, 61; Beeke, "Was There a Time," 197.
[124] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 198.
[125] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:81.
[126] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:85. He adds, "So no one will doubt that it is in the world by God's will and ordinance" ("Temporal Authority," 45:85).

punishment on the wrongdoer" (Rom 13:1, 4 NIV).[127] At the same time, he recognizes

that Matt 5, Rom 12:9, 1 Pet 3, and similar passages "would certainly make it appear as

though in the New Testament Christians were to have no temporal sword."[128] The two

kingdoms address that tension.

Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is deceptively complex.[129] Luther

maintains that there are two governments which reign over two kingdoms.[130] Christ

reigns as king and Lord over the kingdom of God, in which belongs "all the true believers

who are in Christ and under Christ."[131] For Luther, the *communio sanctorum*, the hidden

church, "is wholly identified by the spiritual reign of Jesus Christ."[132] These people have

no need of a temporal sword over them, because they "have in their hearts the Holy

Spirit, who both teaches and makes them to do injustice to no one, to love everyone, and

to suffer injustice and even death willingly and cheerfully at the hands of anyone."[133]

Crucially, as Anderson notes, using a Habermasian term, "the spiritual project is power-

free."[134] Perhaps more clearly, the spiritual project is free of all coercive power. If

everyone were Christian, there would only be one kingdom, with Christ the ruler of all,

ruled by grace. Coercion on any level would be unnecessary. But such is not the case, and

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[127] Genesis 9:6, wherein God declares that "whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed," also plays a significant role in Luther's argument that the temporal sword is sanctioned by God within scripture ("Temporal Authority," 45:86).

[128] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:87.

[129] Sockness correctly highlights the single most difficult aspect of any investigation of Luther's two kingdoms when he suggests that "the term 'two kingdoms' lacks a stable referent in Luther's writings" ("Two Kingdoms Revisited," 93).

[130] As noted in the above footnote, Luther's use of the terminology of the two kingdoms is fluid, sometimes alternating with the language of government instead of kingdom. In most cases the terms are used interchangeably, but it is crucial to note that there is a distinction between the realm of the kingdoms and the government of the kingdoms—despite the fact that the same language is often sometimes used to describe both.

[131] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:88.

[132] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 201.

[133] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:89.

[134] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 112.

for this reason, Luther proposes that "God has provided for them a different government beyond the Christian estate and kingdom of God," subject to the sword and under the law.[135] This government is ordained by God in order to restrain sin and keep the world from being reduced to chaos.[136] Luther summarizes the purpose of the two kingdoms as such: "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 or obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace."[137] Luther is adamant that both are essential, so long as there are both Christians and non-Christians.[138]

Luther interprets Matt 5 and related passages to mean that the sword has no place in Christ's kingdom, since Christ rules over Christians by the Holy Spirit.[139] Having established this, he addresses Rom 13:1–7 by noting that, though for Christians the temporal government is not essential, they "serve the governing authority not because [they need] it but for the sake of others."[140] Though Christ forbids the use of the temporal sword or law among Christians themselves, Luther notes "that he does not, however,

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[135] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:90. Luther observes that "there are few true believers, and still fewer who live the Christian life, who do not resist evil and indeed themselves do no evil" ("Temporal Authority," 45:90).

[136] Luther suggests that "if this were not so, men would devour one another, seeing that the whole world is evil and that among thousands there is scarcely a single true Christian" ("Temporal Authority," 45:91).

[137] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:91. The two kingdoms do not describe two regions or subjects under each authority. All people are under both forms of authority. "Further, the two different kinds of authority are not law and gospel, for both the law and the gospel rule in the church, even though the primary function of the law in the church is different from the law's function in civil government" (Grobien, "Christian Voice," 116).

[138] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:92. Luther observes that both produce a kind of righteousness: one becomes righteous in the sight of God by means of "Christ's spiritual government," but for those outside the kingdom of God, at the very least external acts of wickedness are restrained ("Temporal Authority," 45:92).

[139] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:93.

[140] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:94.

forbid one to serve and be subject to those who do have the secular sword and law."[141]

Hence, he concludes that Christians, if they are called or see a need, ought to serve in the

temporal government out of love for neighbor: "In what concerns you and yourself

according to love and tolerate no injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what

concerns the person or property of others, you govern according to love and tolerate no

injustice toward your neighbour."[142] Therefore, Christ's command in Matt 5:39, "do not

resist an evil person" (Matt 5:39, NIV), applies only to Christians in that they must not

use violence for their own welfare, while Christians are at the same time encouraged to

use the law for the good of the public.[143]

Luther draws a crucial distinction "between an occupation and the man who holds

it, between a work and the man who does it."[144] The spiritual government rules according

to the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God; Christ is the ultimate example of service in

this office.[145] The temporal government rules according to the violence, using means that

do not, in and of themselves, seem like works of love.[146] However, because actions of

violence are authorized by God within the temporal office, Luther compares it to a doctor

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[141] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:95.

[142] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:96. Luther appeals to the many Old Testament examples of believers wielding the temporal sword in defense of their neighbours, among them Abraham (Gen 14:8–16), Samuel (1 Sam 15), Elijah (1 Kgs 18:40), Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, and many others. In response to a potential objection that the "Old Testament is abrogated and no longer in effect," Luther responds that "they had the same Spirit and faith in Christ as we have, and were just as much Christians as we are" ("Temporal Authority," 45:96–97).

[143] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 204.

[144] Luther, "Whether Soldiers," 46:94.

[145] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:100. Luther notes that Christ, in pursuing the office and vocation of spiritual leadership as he did, "did not thereby reject any other" ("Temporal Authority," 45:100).

[146] Luther, "Whether Soldiers," 46:96. Luther is in continuity with Augustine of Hippo in centering his discussion of the use of temporal authority on Christian love for neighbour. Augustine argued that the Christian rules "not from a love of power, but from a sense of the duty they owe to others—not because they are proud of authority, but because they love mercy" (City of God, 2:323).

who commits acts of violence against a limb to save the body.[147] Luther's two kingdoms model maintains a further series of distinctions: between the ends of the two kingdoms—on the one hand, the salvation of humanity, on the other, good governance and the restriction of wickedness; between the means of the kingdoms, which are governed according to the temporal sword or the spiritual sword; and between the realms over which the kingdoms exercise legitimate authority.[148] It is with this final distinction that Luther is particularly interested in his main treatise on the two kingdoms. Luther never gives the temporal government unlimited authority; rather, he argues that their authority extends only to "life and property and external affairs on earth," things such as taxes, honour, and the restrain of evil.[149] If Luther stressed obedience to government, Bainton observes that "he did so precisely because he was being taxed with disobedience."[150] However, to assume on that basis that he meant "to inculcate unqualified submission to government" would be to "utterly . . . misconstrue his meaning."[151]

According to Luther, the realm of the soul, conscience, and orthodoxy are under the authority of the church, and the church is to govern these using the spiritual sword of the Word of God.[152] Therefore bishops and church leaders are to rule in spiritual matters,

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[147] Luther, "Whether Soldiers," 46:96–07. Luther is brutally realistic about the tool available to the temporal kingdom to assert its rule: "its tool is not a wreath of roses or a flower of love, but a naked sword" ("Open Letter," 46:70). Still, Luther is always consistent in insisting that the sword only ever be turned "against the wicked, to hold them in check and keep them at peace, and to protect and save the righteous" ("Open Letter," 46:70).

[148] Korey Maahs notes that the distinction between the realms does not mean that there is an "unbridgeable chasm" between them, since "not only is God himself the King who rules in each kingdom, but so also the Christian lives simultaneously as a citizen in each" ("Paradox," 60).

[149] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:105–11.

[150] Bainton, *Reformation*, 235.

[151] Bainton, *Reformation*, 235.

[152] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:105–6, 114–5. Leaders of the kingdom of God are to judge "matters of faith and morals," leaving "matters of money and property, life and honor" to the temporal authorities ("Christian Nobility," 44:160).

while princes are to rule in temporal matters.[153] Luther is particularly concerned that the rulers rule in their respective realms, and not confuse ends and means. He was disturbed by the fact that bishops were ruling "castles, cities, lands, and people outwardly," instead of "ruling souls inwardly by God's word."[154] Similarly, he expressed disgust with the temporal princes who failed to govern the lands and institute justice, and instead tried to establish a spiritual rule over souls."[155] It is especially important for Luther, given his conflict with the Roman church authorities, that he establish that heresy is firmly in the realm of the spiritual authorities, and not a matter for the temporal authorities.[156] Temporal authorities should not use the sword to enforce matters of doctrine. Luther proclaims that "we should overcome heretics with books, not with fire, as the ancient fathers did."[157]

An important aspect of Luther's understanding of the two kingdoms, especially in light of twentieth century misunderstandings, is that both kingdoms, temporal and spiritual, belong to God. Bauman argues that for Luther, "the world is not brought under Christ's lordship by being clericalized by the 'saints.' It is already under Christ's lordship, and therefore it is free to be and to remain world under God."[158] Yet Luther, who resides in what Duchrow calls "the apocalyptic New Testament Augustinian tradition," perceives

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[153] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:145.
[154] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:109.
[155] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:109.
[156] Luther, "Temporal Authority," 45:114.
[157] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:196. Luther is convinced that "heresy can never be restrained by force" ("Temporal Authority," 114). By 1530, Luther, having witnessed the Peasants' Revolt, had kinder things to say about Roman law, and harsher things to say about Germanic law.[157] Later in his life, Luther claimed that the authorities had an obligation to suppress the Anabaptists with force, a reversal of his earlier position. Heresy, Luther argued, manifested as blasphemy, which rulers ought to punish in order to protect the faith of those they ruled.
[158] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 44.

an antithetical dualism in history.[159] God wages war against the powers of evil, which seek to lead creation away from its proper relationship with its creator in order that it might eventually destroy itself.[160] In this conflict, God "fights against the power of evil in every dimension of creaturely existence."[161] God as creator is acting in both governments or kingdoms; the difference is that it is only in the spiritual kingdom where God is acting alone, through his Spirit.[162] Luther always maintains that God rules over both the temporal and the spiritual kingdom.[163] The orders of preservation, that is, the temporal authorities and institutions, were ordained to create an environment where faith is possible, and where the spiritual kingdom of God can be realized.[164] Therefore, the Christian is not to sacralize the secular or natural order, but to "accept his station and calling . . . within it as the place of his sanctification."[165] For Luther, the world is the arena in which the believer must work out their salvation, not the cloister.[166] In his or her particular station of life, the Christian must "pass on to his neighbour through love what he has received for himself through faith."[167] God gives different capabilities, freedoms, and instruments, by which they can deal with the realities of shared human life in a responsible way, so that "their relationships and their life in the world are possible and even improved."[168] These capacities are summarized under what Luther calls "reason,"

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[159] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 3.

[160] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 3.

[161] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 3.

[162] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 112.

[163] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 42.

[164] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 42.

[165] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 44.

[166] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 43.

[167] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 43. The emphasis on love is where Luther's two kingdoms theology contrasts with the two kingdoms doctrine of early/mid twentieth century Germany, where "the social message of the German church boiled down to political obedience" (Barnes, *Nazism*, 111).

[168] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 3. Put in traditional theological terms, this would be the dimension of "works" (*Salt or Mirror*, 3).

which participates "in what is good and true, what promotes sharing in the good of all, and gives stability."[169] Here the distinction between faith and reason becomes important; for while Luther wrote against the magisterial use of reason in theological matters of the spiritual kingdom, he nonetheless believed that "reason could serve a useful task once it was 'bathed by the Holy Spirit' and placed in a ministerial position to Scripture."[170] Within the context of the temporal, earthly kingdom, Luther views natural reason positively.[171] Hein notes that "for Luther, reason has the rightful task of bringing order to society and developing this life."[172] Natural reason and the natural law written on human hearts are the means through which "God in his creative will holds society together."[173]

What Bauman calls the "organic unity" of the temporal and spiritual realms and reigns is founded for Luther in "the dual character of revelation as gospel and law."[174] With the sinner, God deals according to the demands of the law, but meets the believer with the graceful gift of the gospel.[175] This should not lead to a simplistic understanding of the relationship between gospel and law, however. Since Christ's lordship remains hidden, Bauman observes that this "cannot imply that the church lives by the gospel while the state has been entrusted with the execution of the Law."[176] This is why "the law of Christ or Spirit of Christ does not seek to sacralize (or Christianize) the natural as though it were profane . . . The Christian's function is not to proclaim the gospel as the abolition of the rule of the law but to proclaim to those who are ordained to execute the

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[169] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 3.

[170] Hein, "Reason," 142.

[171] Hein, "Reason," 140.

[172] Hein, "Reason," 140.

[173] Hein, "Reason," 140. Luther refers to legal knowledge and general knowledge of God as God's "left-hand knowledge" (141).

[174] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 49.

[175] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 49.

[176] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 49.

Law (and are tempted to assume the autonomy of the law) that it is Christ's law."[177] At the same time, conflating the kingdoms under one "redemptive umbrella" essentially conflate law and gospel.[178] Beeke observes that "to confuse the two kingdoms is to confuse law and gospel."[179] For Luther, "obedience to the law promises temporal rewards, whereas gospel promises eternal life."[180]

Luther's two kingdoms contains dualism.[181] However, the use of dualism in Luther's two kingdoms is often misunderstood. Luther shares important similarities with Augustine's two cities, which are dualistically opposed. In so far as the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God are diametrically opposed, Luther espouses a form of dualism. One cannot belong to both God and Satan's kingdom at the same time.[182] When it comes to the temporal and spiritual kingdoms, however, or the life of the Christian him or herself, the dualism is much more complex. The kingdoms overlap, since the temporal kingdom is God's kingdom, and not Satan's, and therefore Christians belong to both the temporal and spiritual kingdoms.[183] Anderson understands the distinction between the spiritual and temporal kingdom as the distinction "between two divine projects

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[177] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 49.

[178] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 194.

[179] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 205.

[180] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 205.

[181] For the purposes of this discussion, dualism designates a form of thinking that "sees reality as consisting of . . . two fundamentally different kinds of existence, neither of which can be reduced to the other" (Nelson, "Dualism," 372). Within the bounds of this discussion, that reality could be reality as a whole, or could refer to subsections of reality, such as, for example, the reality of Christian life in the world, or the reality of the Christian person, each of which could, in theory, contain forms of dualism.

[182] Johnson notes that "in a number of instances, Luther could write that God and the devil rule over their own *regnum*. However, in this sense *regnum* is used differently from the way *coelum* and *terra* are used to designate the two kingdoms" (Johnson, "Luther's Doctrine," 242).

[183] Beeke describes it as follows: "The Christian is a dual citizen (*Bürger zweier Rache*) 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" (Beeke, "Was There a Time," 200).

concerning the human world."[184] The spiritual is "the project of salvation and of creating

faith that occurs primarily by the gospel's proclamation," while the temporal restrains the

destructive power of sin and wickedness and contributes to peace and order.[185] Luther's

purpose was "to show how God rules the world in two different ways by two different

means."[186] Not two different, mutually exclusive kingdoms consisting of Christians on

the one side and non-Christians on the other, as in Augustine's two cities, but two forms

of divine rule.[187] Wingren summarizes this well:

> The spiritual and the earthly governments constitute two kingdoms, but both of
> these are God's. They are not in opposition to one another, but, side by side, both
> contend against the devil, one guided by the gospel, and the other by the law. The
> kingdoms of God and Satan cut across all orders of being. Against the devil, God
> uses both of his governments as weapons, and the devil seeks to destroy these
> weapons of his enemy. The devil corrupts the spiritual government through popes
> and masses, and the worldly government by peasant revolt, fanatics, and
> cloisters.[188]

For Luther, faith and love are the two basic components of the Christian life. Faith alone

is necessary for salvation, but the Christian life does not consist in faith alone.[189] Were

faith alone the entirety of the Christian life, the spiritual kingdom must be completely

distinct from the temporal kingdom. The logic of faith is a logic of powerlessness, and

therefore cannot be transferred into the realm of politics, since politics is a realm that

functions on the basis of power.[190] The logic of love, however, is a logic of service and

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[184] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 112.

[185] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 112.

[186] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 40.

[187] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 40. For Augustine, the two cities are divided by the
conflict between *agape* and pride (Ruether, "Augustine and Christian Political Theology," 259). Therefore,
the two cities were mutually exclusive. It is important to note that Augustine "understood the heavenly and
earthly cities primarily as eschatological realities that resisted identification with actual institutions" (Lee,
Republics, 554).

[188] Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, 98–99. Quoted in Johnson, "Luther's Doctrine," 242.

[189] As Luther argues, "Anyone who wants to be a true Christian, a member of Christ's kingdom,
must be a true believer. We do not believe truly if loving actions do not follow our faith" (Luther,
Galatians, 254).

[190] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 113.

sacrifice for others—a logic that coheres with the function of the temporal, political kingdom.[191] Love is capable of exercising power for the service of others, whereas faith is unable to do so. Christian love, the foundational ethic for Luther, is what connects the two kingdoms. Love bridges the divide between the spiritual and the temporal kingdom.[192] For Luther, love can take the form of beneficence or self-sacrifice. There is therefore an important distinction between the two kingdoms. When acting on behalf of oneself, the Christian's love of neighbour takes the form of self-sacrifice; when acting on behalf of others, neighbour love takes the form of beneficence.[193] Love is the driving force in both cases, taking different form depending on the context.[194]

Conclusion

As seen in the previous chapter, Lutheranism has at times during its history been vulnerable to quietism and a disengaged political attitude. It should be clear now that such a stance is not faithful to Luther's own teachings or theology. The two kingdoms ought never to limit Christian engagement in politics, but rather provides direction for the nature of that involvement. Luther recognizes that the temporal kingdom, which God has provided to restrain sin and hold back the chaos that would otherwise ensue, ought never to take upon itself the goal of advancing the spiritual kingdom. At the same time, neither should the church expect the temporal kingdom to forfeit the tools of coercion that God has ordained it to use. Love, for Luther, is the basis of the Christian ethic.[195] It is for this

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[191] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 113.

[192] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 113.

[193] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 115.

[194] Luther did not desire a radical and complete separation of the kingdoms. He "desired a distinction between them, but not an ontic separation" (Thielicke, *Politics,* 99).

[195] It is this emphasis on the gospel freeing the human to serve their neighbour in love that ought to undermine any tendency towards social disinterestedness (Raunio, "Luther's Social Theology," 216).

reason that Anderson argues that the function of government, in Luther's thought, goes beyond simply the struggle against sin. Sin must be restrained because it is destructive to God's creation, human life. Love ought to compel one to take action to better the situation of one's neighbour, using political means if necessary. Luther mentions that good government is both a "corporeal and temporal good" along with providing "peace and security."[196] In the end, as Anderson notes, "government has a positive, life-supporting aim."[197] During the darkest periods of German Lutheranism, the "critical constructive antithesis" between the church and the secular authorities, normed by love and reason, was superseded by "obedience to authorities."[198] Luther, on the other hand, considered obedience to be "a form of critical participation."[199] This thesis will now turn its focus to the way in which Luther's two kingdoms theology provides insights in particular for how Christian love and service towards one's neighbour can be manifested through critical participation in politics today.

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[196] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 113.

[197] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 112–13. It is for reasons such as this that Nygren, Althaus, and Ebeling defend Luther's doctrine "as a source of salutary political realism" while at the same time maintaining a definite sense of Christian social responsibility.

[198] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 10.

[199] Duchrow, *Salt or Mirror*, 10.

CHAPTER 3: POST-CHRISTENDOM APPROACHES TO POLITICAL
ENGAGEMENT

Western nations have undergone profound changes in recent decades. Philip Jenkins

proposes that "we are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the

history of religion worldwide."[200] For centuries, European and European-derived

civilizations, in particular North America, have been overwhelmingly Christian, both in

population and in self-perception. Christendom, that synthesis of church and political

structures, dominated Europe for over a thousand years. Two world wars left European

civilization gutted and the modernist dream in tatters, and in the years after the Second

World War European religiosity declined substantially.[201] Today Europe is largely

secular, and Christendom is hardly more than a memory except in perhaps a few select

areas. In Canada, the dissolution of Christendom is more recent, but while a majority of

Canadians still identify as Christians, there is a trajectory away from Christendom self-

identity. Darren Marks observes that "no longer is Canada even nominally a Christian

nation."[202] In the United States the situation is somewhat more complicated. As far back

as 1913, George Santayana observed that "The civilization characteristic of Christendom

has not disappeared, yet another civilization has begun to take its place. We still

understand the value of religious faith; . . . on the other hand the shell of Christendom is

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[200] Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 1.
[201] Torpey, "A (Post) Secular Age?" 288.
[202] Marks, "Canadian Protestantism," 196.

broken."[203] Still, in the 1950s a "living room deism" penetrated the national consciousness.[204] Even in the 1960s it was still possible to speak of the United States' civil religion.[205] However, this drastically changed over the next several decades. Chinnici observes that "no less an American religious historian than Robert Handy has argued that the 1960s marked the end of the 'long spell of [Protestant] Christendom' on the American religious imagination."[206] While the United States has been characterized by a voluntarist approach and the separation of church and state, many Americans still operate on Christendom assumptions. These assumptions include such as ideas of the United States as a Christian nation and privileging of the Christian voice in the political, social, and cultural realm. Nevertheless, the United States also appears to be moving away from a Christian self-identity and towards a post-Christendom future.[207]

Following World War Two, the church in Europe and North America has had to confront numerous challenges, many of them political in nature. The spectre of the Second World War and the horror of the Holocaust cast a long shadow over the post-war years, prompting much discussion on how the church ought to be politically engaged. The Cold War forced churches to further wrestle with political engagement in their cultural context. The rise of secularism, post-modernism, and changing social and cultural dynamics were further developments prompting reflection and debate by the church. This chapter surveys the various approaches to political theology and Christian political engagement that have been proposed in the post-Christendom era, in particular

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[203] Santayana, "the Intellectual Temper of the Age," 1. Quoted in Handy, *Undermined Establishment*, 126.

[204] Marty, *Shape of American Religion*. Quoted in Chinnici, "Changing Religious Practice," 67.

[205] Chinnici, "Changing Religious Practice," 68.

[206] Chinnici, "Changing Religious Practice," 67.

[207] Carter, *Rethinking*, 173.

as it relates to Christians navigating the relationship between the church and coercive political power. Several movements and streams of thought are differentiated. The post-Christendom conversation in North America in recent years has been dominated by two traditions, the Anabaptist and the Reformed. Emanating mostly from the global South, Liberation theology has offered a timely reminder that the church must be concerned with political justice and the plight of the oppressed. Both the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions have been articulated in particular (and diverse) ways over the years, and this chapter briefly covers their main distinctives in relation to a Lutheran two kingdoms approach. This chapter does not argue that the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions have not been fruitful; in fact it maintains the opposite—both traditions offer rich visions for Christian living socially and ecclesiologically. Nor does it argue that there is something radically wrong with Anabaptist and Reformed approaches to politics. Sider argues that "a Christian political philosophy dare not be either naively utopian or socially pessimistic."[208] This is an important point, and it is fair to say that both of these streams of thought are closer to the happy medium than they are to the extremes. This chapter does argue, however, that although post-Christendom approaches have been fruitful, there is a need for another voice. The Reformed tradition has provided a rich vision for cultural engagement and transformation, while the Anabaptist tradition has warned against the dangers of the Christendom coordination of church and coercive power. Both have their limitations, however. The former lacks a clear distinction between the violence of politics and the kingdom of God, while the latter lacks a paradigm for Christian participation in government.

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[208] Sider, *Scandal*, 70.

Anabaptist Approaches

A significant stream is the Anabaptist pacifist position. Michael Montgomery observes

that the Anabaptist tradition is "arguably more influential today than ever before through

their legacy of pacifism, service, and consistent theological articulation."[209] It has been

noted that "Anabaptists shared many of Luther's presuppositions, but few of his

conclusions."[210] The Anabaptist movement has historically held to a conception of the

nature and role of church and government that is remarkably similar to that of Luther's

two kingdoms.[211] This is reflected today in authors such as Sider, who argues that

Christians "must understand that the church and the state are two separate institutions,"

and though "their interests and agendas frequently intersect . . . their respective spheres of

authority and actions must remain clearly distinct."[212] Where they differ is in how the

Christian is to participate in those institutions. While Anabaptists historically share with

Luther a similar view of the function, ordination, and responsibilities of government, they

held that Christians could not serve in the office of political power, because of the

implicit and explicit use of coercive, violent force.[213] Contemporary Anabaptist voices

follow in this tradition, maintaining that the form of God's rule is revealed in the

ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. The nature of this rule is "neither

coercive nor externally triumphal—it is visibly characterized by the story of the cross."[214]

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[209] Montgomery, *Ecclesiologies*, 219.

[210] Bauman, "Theology of 'The Two Kingdoms,'" 44.

[211] Halteman, "Anabaptist Approaches," 247.

[212] Sider, *Scandal*, 238.

[213] John Howard Yoder (*The Politics of Jesus*), James William McClendon (*Systematic Theology*), and Stanley Hauerwas (*Resident Aliens*) are prominent representatives of this stream of thought. Note that some Anabaptists did think a Christian ruler was theoretically possible, but believed he or she would not be tolerated unless he or she correlated "love, power, and justice within his [sic] faith in a way in which the Anabaptists could not" (Bauman, "Theology of 'The Two Kingdoms,'" 47.

[214] Kroeker, "O'Donovan's Christendom," 45.

The coercive nature of the political system as it operates in a post-fall world is therefore antithetical to the nature of kingdom of God. As a result, there tends to be a strict division between Anabaptist churches and the structures of politics. Historically, the Anabaptists agreed with Luther that all governing authorities are "*of* God and therefore *under* God, not the devil."[215] However, the Anabaptists went beyond Luther, and maintained that the institution of government was not contingent on the character of the ruler, and neither was it contingent on the degree of relative justice the ruler demonstrates.[216] As Bauman notes, for Anabaptists, "the office was 'ordained' *for* the unbeliever, and therefore it remained 'ordained' despite the fact that it was exercised *by* the unbeliever in an ungodly way."[217] The Anabaptists did not distinguish between the state of Rom 13 and the state of Rev 13 with respect to divine institution; they did not distinguish between "legal and illegal, just or unjust authority."[218] In light of the state's involvement in Christ's crucifixion, the Anabaptists concluded that the state belongs to the order of sin, identifying the state with the "world" of Johannine literature.[219]

One of the prominent themes of the post-Christendom Anabaptist tradition is a concern for recovering a pre-Christendom vision of ecclesiology. Criticism of the Constantinian shift is a hallmark of contemporary Anabaptist political thought.[220] For Anabaptists the problem with Christendom is not a matter of isolated abuses, but a matter

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[215] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 45.
[216] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 45.
[217] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 45.
[218] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 45.
[219] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 46.
[220] The terminology of the Constantinian shift was coined by John Howard Yoder, "arguably the most influential Anabaptist theologian of the latter twentieth century," and the concept has been influential among Anabaptists and beyond (Charles and Demy, *War*, 144). Anthony Siegrist notes that "the Constantinian shift is central to the narrative of the church that lies behind Yoder's theology and ethics" (*Participating Witness*, 125). Yoder "has exerted an important influence upon contemporary Evangelical thought," and his writings on Constantinianism are an example of that (Thorne, *Evangelicalism*, 171).

of the church's fundamental identity. Contemporary Anabaptists develop a vision for Church life that attempts to be faithful to the nonviolent politics of Jesus. If Constantinianism represents "the fall of the church from its calling as servant into the libidinous desire for historical mastery and political domination," then the Anabaptist goal is to recover the church's self-sacrificial servant identity.[221] Typically this means Christians cannot participate in government insofar as it requires them to participate in coercion. At the same time, it means that the church ought not to have an institutional connection to the government so that it participates as a body in the coercive practices of the state. This does not necessarily exclude participation in the political process, but does limit it. Sider is an example of a pacifism who argues that "it is entirely consistent for a pacifist who rejects all killing to conduct political debate within the framework of a traditional just-war framework, challenging nonpacifists to live up to their own just-war norms."[222] Anabaptists do not necessarily always exclude themselves from political engagement. However, it is historically irregular. Anabaptist theologians, such as Yoder, criticize a political involvement that seeks control of the levers of political power and historical direction, rather than imitating the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.[223] Sider argues that "in all this political engagement, it is crucial that Christians understand that the church and the state are two separate institutions."[224] Though "their interests and agendas frequently intersect . . . their respective spheres of authority and actions must remain clearly distinct."[225] Here one can discern a fundamental agreement between

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[221] Kroeker, "O'Donovan's Christendom," 42.
[222] Sider, *Scandal*, 98.
[223] Kroeker, "O'Donovan's Christendom," 49.
[224] Sider, *Scandal*, 238.
[225] Sider, *Scandal*, 238.

Luther and at least one stream of Anabaptist thought. Nevertheless, there is still a

significant difference in the extent to which Christians can participate in the function of

the state.

Luther considered himself the middle way, between the Catholic and the

Anabaptist approach to political engagement. He argued that the Catholics separated the

kingdoms, and the Anabaptists confused them.[226] Bauman observes that "the Anabaptist

identification of the kingdom of God with their own *Kerngemeinde* implied a realized

eschatology in the sense that higher values were realized within the *sanctorum*

communion."[227] Luther maintained that the Anabaptists had "succumbed to the

antinomian confusion of the two kingdoms."[228] Luther was concerned that the

Anabaptists had succumbed to a utopian vision that sought to universalize the ethical

norms of the Sermon on the Mount.[229] This ambition, he believed, was not only

unrealistic, but also wrong, since it is not God's will to rule the world with the Gospel.[230]

Furthermore, he was concerned that when the fanatics "realize it doesn't work, then, in

their impatience with the orders of creation, they resort to the 'Sword of Gideon' and in

the name of realized eschatology realize hell rather than heaven on earth."[231] Obviously,

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[226] Buaman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 40. Kroeker notes, importantly, that "for Yoder there is no separation between the church and politics as if these were somehow two separate realms" ("O'Donovan's Christendom," 47).

[227] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 47–48.

[228] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.

[229] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41. This would essentially lead one to a form of Christian anarchism. Indeed, some streams of contemporary Anabaptists trend in this direction. Yoder, for example, is popular among Christian anarchists, though he himself should not be considered an anarchist (Troxell, "Postanarchism," 43–44). Yoder does maintain that the Christian social critique can and should challenge the world one point at a time "to take one step in the right direction, to move one more notch in approximation of the righteousness of love" (Yoder, *End of Sacrifice*, 47–48, quoted in Troxell, "Postanarchism, 47).

[230] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.

[231] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.

it was never the Anabaptists intention to rule the world by the Sermon on the Mount.[232]
The Anabaptists were also opposed to any confusion of the two kingdoms.[233] The
Anabaptists did separate the two kingdoms, but without confusing them.[234] Nevertheless,
the Anabaptists represent one end of the spectrum of Christian political engagement. On
this end of the spectrum, inclusion in the kingdom of God precludes participation in the
structures of government, which are inherently coercive. The limitation of the Anabaptist
approach is found in its pacifism. For Christians who are not pacifist, the Anabaptist
tradition offers a rich vision for Christian life as an alternative community, but it does not
provide a paradigm for Christian political participation. For the Christian who believes
that the church is called to nonviolent service, but at the same time does not see in Jesus'
call a categorical prohibition of violence in all circumstances, the Anabaptist tradition
falls short.

Reformed Approaches

One of the most influential and productive streams of thought in recent years, when it
comes to political and cultural engagement, has come out of the Reformed tradition.
There is considerable diversity in this tradition, however in regards to political theology
this stream tends to emphasize the Lordship of Christ over all creation, and resists the
stricter divisions of Luther's articulation of the two kingdoms. Within this tradition, what
is sometimes referred to as "neo-Calvinism" has emerged as an articulate voice in
contemporary conversations about Christian and culture. [235] Avoiding dualisms that

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[232] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.
[233] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.
[234] Bauman, "Luther and Anabaptists," 41.
[235] VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 16.

divide life into sacred and secular realms is of chief importance for neo-Calvinism. One of the central aspects of the neo-Calvinist vision is that "the kingdom of God extended to every aspect of life in the original creation and that this kingdom is being restored in the present age in each of these aspects, including the work of the civil state."[236] Neo-Calvinism has been characterized as transformationalist, with authors arguing that "a transformationalist paradigm largely dominates contemporary Reformed social thought," and that "perhaps the most prominent popular interpretation of Calvin's political theology is that which makes the reformer a socio-political transformationalist."[237] This tradition warns against "dualistic" theologies that divide life into sacred and secular realms.[238] Any view that distinguishes between two kingdoms or two realms tends to be characterized as restricting the scope of Christ's lordship, and devaluing cultural pursuits.[239] For Christians, all activities are kingdom work and should be seen as such. The Christian, therefore, "must seek to transform all areas of life in ways consistent with this vision, anticipating the final renewal of all things at the end of history."[240]

VanDrunen notes with fascination the fact that many prominent voices in Christian thought sound very similar to neo-Calvinism, echoing their critiques of Platonic and dualistic tendencies in contemporary churches and their emphasis on "the redemptive transformation of culture" and "the connection of cultural work to the kingdom of God and the new creation."[241] He cites the New Perspective on Paul and the emerging (or emergent) church movement as examples of these tendencies.[242] Bolt distinguishes

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236 VanDrunen, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine," 743.
237 Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 12; VanDrunen, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine," 743.
238 VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 19.
239 VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 20.
240 VanDrunen, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine," 743.
241 VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 16.
242 VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 16.

between two traditions; arguing that the transformationalist tradition belongs to "a long line of theologians of messianic eschatology or historicizing eschatology that was present in the early church, repudiated by Augustine, but revived by the twelfth-century Calabrian abbot, Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202), instead of seeing the kingdom of God as a spiritual reality manifested primarily in the church, as Augustine did."[243] Neo-Calvinist thought fits into this tradition, while, interestingly, Calvin himself did not, and neither did his reformed successors.[244] The majority of prominent Reformed proponents of cultural engagement, such as Michael Goheen (*Living at the Crossroads*, 2008), Craig Bartholomew (*True Story of the Whole World*, 2009), and Andy Crouch (*Culture Making*, 2008), can be characterized as belonging to this neo-Calvinist transformationalist tradition.

Tuininga suggests that H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* played a significant role in popularizing the transformationalist perspective, and in placing in it contrast with Luther's two kingdoms theology.[245] Niebuhr's fifth type, "Christ Transforming Culture," is cited with approval by many Reformed proponents of cultural engagement. This interpretation proposes that Christians cannot be neutral with respect to the state, since Christ is Lord of all.[246] H. Richard Niebuhr called this understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and culture "Christ the transformer of culture."[247]

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[243] Bolt, "Pearl and Leaven," 257.

[244] Certain statements of Calvin may at first glance lend themselves to a transformationalist approach: "Now we know," says Calvin, "that out of Christ there is nothing but confusion in the world; and though Christ had already begun to erect the kingdom of God, yet his death was the commencement of a well-regulated condition, and the full restoration of the world." But Calvin goes on. "Yet it must also be observed, that this proper arrangement cannot be established in the world, until the kingdom of Satan be first destroyed, until the flesh, and everything opposed to the righteousness of God, be reduced to nothing" (Calvin, *John*, 20).

[245] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 12.

[246] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 13.

[247] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 190.

Abraham Kuyper famously proclaimed that ". . . there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine!"[248] While this is not a sentiment Luther would be likely to disagree with, when divorced from an understanding of the ends and means of the two kingdoms, there is nothing restraining the Christian from wielding the power of the state to bring the culture into conformity with the values of the kingdom of God by force. It is in light of this transformational vision without exception or limitation that Troeltsch argued that Calvinism "sought to make the whole of Society, down to the smallest detail, a real expression of the royal domain of Christ."[249] Tuininga notes that there are "a myriad of scholars who claim that for Calvin Christians and the church are God's instruments in the renewal or transformation of society into the kingdom of God."[250] Tuininga notes that "it is true that some Calvinists have viewed the complete transformation of society as a fundamental part of their gospel mission," and he argues that this has all too often resulted in Calvinist triumphalism.[251] Such transformationalist perspectives "tend to exaggerate the passivity of other Christian traditions, especially Lutheranism," which Tuininga notes "also had a revolutionary impact on law and society."[252]

It has been said that "in broadest outline, Luther's and Calvin's doctrines of the two kingdoms overlap and similarly address many common issues. Nonetheless, a doctrine of 'two kingdoms' comes to something different in Luther's thought than it does in Calvin's."[253] Beach argues that "this leads the Reformed to press for a Christian form

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[248] Kuyper, *Centennial Reader*, 461.
[249] Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 622.
[250] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 13.
[251] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 13, 14.
[252] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 14.
[253] Beach, "Critics of the Lutheran Doctrine," 35.

of the state . . . a Christian state, not just Christian statesmen or politicians."[254] Some

recent scholars of Calvin have pushed back in recent years against the transformationalist

interpretation, however. VanDrunen, for example, suggests that "the two kingdoms

doctrine, contrary to common perceptions, is not simply a Lutheran idea but also a

historic tenet of the Reformed tradition, and one with concrete practical implications."[255]

Tuininga concurs with VanDrunen. Calvin, Tuininga argues, did not develop "a

transformationalist political theology as the systematic outworking of a central doctrine,

such as the sovereignty of God or predestination," something that Troeltsch claimed of

Calvin.[256] Importantly, Tuininga notes that while Calvin's doctrine of the two kingdoms

differs from Luther's to the extent that he worked it out in institutional terms, "two

kingdoms theology remains central to Calvin's thought and that of the Reformed

tradition."[257] Tuininga notes that "Calvin's two kingdoms realism preserved him from the

sort of zealous socio-political transformationalism that characterized some of his

followers."[258] Still, Beach notes that the two kingdoms do function differently in Luther's

theological project than in Calvin's, as well as contain different implications for the

Christian life as it is lived in the public sphere. Calvin's engagement with the civil

authorities of Geneva differed from Luther's interactions with the German princes.

Calvin drew less bold boundaries in both theory and practice than Luther, as evidenced

by the establishment of a consistory in Geneva that strove to "bring every aspect of

Genevan life under the precepts of God's law."[259] Beach argues that the two kingdoms

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[254] Beach, "Critics of the Lutheran Doctrine," 46.

[255] VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*, 744.

[256] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 15.

[257] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 14.

[258] Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology*, 15.

[259] Bouwsma, "Explaining," 70. It is important, however, to recognize that Calvin's understanding of the workings of the consistory was not tinged by the eschatological drive to bring the culture into

are coordinated, for Calvin, versus standing over against one another, since "what God does in the worldly kingdom is not alien work—rather, the state is to reflect Christ's kingdom."[260] Recent scholarship has challenged this conclusion; nevertheless, it is certainly a fair assessment of the transformationalist interpretation of Calvin's theology of church and government. Regardless of whether Calvin ought to be interpreted transformationally or not, the transformationalist approach characterizes the contemporary Reformed approach to political and cultural engagement and dominates the literature produced today.

If the Anabaptist stream of thought represents one end of the spectrum, the neo-Calvinist reformed stream of thought represents the other end of the spectrum. While the Anabaptists call for a separation between the church and the structures of government, the transformationalist perspective represents a return to the Christendom model. Carter, in his book *Rethinking Christ and Culture*, identifies Niebuhr's fifth type with the Christendom model. Without a two kingdoms theology, there is nothing restraining the church from using the mechanisms of the state, including violence and coercion, to advance the kingdom of God. The church's mission, on this view, includes guiding the hand of the state as it wields the sword of violence. Yet this is precisely the arrangement

conformity with the kingdom of God by force, as he recognized that final and full restoration of the world awaits the return of Christ and the destruction of the kingdom of Satan (Bolt, "Pearl and Leaven," 261).

[260] Beach, "Critics of the Lutheran Doctrine," 46. Beach illustrates the difference with what may be a helpful metaphor for the visually inclined, arguing that "we may think of the difference visually. Consider two models in a pictorial form: The Lutheran model is like two circles standing next to each other, meeting in the Christian person. God stands above both as Lord, the one is an alien work through the law—natural law and reason, and orders, i.e., the state of affairs in a fallen world, such as tasks, stations, vocations, responsibilities, to keep the human game going. These are not creation ordinances, since they are not creation, as such; but emerge from a fallen state for the preserving of human life. Meanwhile, the Reformed model is more like two concentric circles. Christ is at the center; the church is the inner circle; the state is the outer circle. The church through Christ declares the will of God, and so also instructs the state regarding the will of God. Christ is the lord of each circle-from the inward to the outward, from church to state" ("Critics of the Lutheran Doctrine," 45–46).

that led to some of the greatest failures of the Christendom era. The greatest abuses of the Christendom era occurred when the church, with good intentions, pursues the ends of the kingdom of God by using the means of the state. Neo-Calvinism offers a profound vision of cultural engagement, but its fear of dualism does not allow it to draw enough of a distinction between the kingdom of God and the violence of the state.

Political Theology and Liberation Theology

The two traditions, Reformed and Anabaptist, represent opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to Christian political engagement. More recent developments in political theology and liberation theology further illustrate the importance of a well-articulated two kingdoms theology after the manner of Martin Luther. Political theology integrates theology and politics after the manner of figures such as Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, and Dorothee Soelle. Soelle's landmark book *Political Theology* (1971) is one of the foundational works of the movement.[261] Political theology, Soelle argues, "is not an attempt to develop a concrete political program from faith . . . [but] is rather a theological hermeneutic."[262] For Soelle, the political sphere is the realm in which Christian truth is enacted. Thus, for example, Soelle "explicitly refuses to make a distinction between faith and love, because that would mean tearing apart theory and praxis."[263] Political theology as a field emphasizes the political causes and content of theology, taking as foundational the assumption that there is no theology that is apolitical.[264] Political theology makes many valuable contributions. The link between

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[261] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 118.
[262] Soelle, *Political Theology*, 58–59.
[263] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 118.
[264] Riswold, *Two Reformers*, 4.

faith and love in the public sphere is particularly important. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, for Luther, love is what connects the kingdoms, allowing the Christian life to be lived out in the political sphere.

Liberation theology emphasizes concern for social justice, political activism, and liberation of the oppressed, and has been represented by such varied voices as Jürgen Moltmann and Gustavo Gutiérrez (*Theology of Liberation*, 1971). An incredibly diverse tradition emanating from Latin America, liberation theology has been influential in its own context, as well as across the globe, challenging the church to confront the suffering of the oppressed and campaign for liberation and justice. Ideology plays a significant role in some streams of liberation theology, and very little in others. Some liberation theologians have gone as far as to argue that Christianity is communism. Miranda claims that "for a Christian to claim to be anticommunist . . . without a doubt constitutes the greatest scandal of our century."[265] In the early 1970s, Chileen priests issued the Declaration of the Eighty, in which they argued that "as Christians [they did] not see any incompatibility between Christianity and socialism," though they disagreed with the Marxist assessment of religion as "the opiate of the people."[266] Other liberation theologians are less influenced by socialist and Marxist theory, and call for liberation without falling into the temptation of an over realized eschatology.

Luther's two kingdoms theology has not played a significant role, for either good or ill, in liberation theology. When they do intersect, liberation theology sometimes criticizes Lutheran political theologies because they avoid causal relationships between

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[265] Miranda, "Christianity Is Communism," 160.
[266] Ferm, *Liberation Theologies*, 13.

"human historical activity and the constructing of God's eschatological kingdom."[267]

Juan Luis Segundo argues that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms "tends to depoliticize the doctrine of justification."[268] Emancipating the princes from the power of Rome resulted in "the severance of secular authority from the imperatives of justice and righteousness. This depoliticization of the doctrine of justification effectively rendered the state autonomous."[269] Lutheran political theologies, it is argued, often fail at providing a definable political program. There is not a strong enough connection between political program and eschatological future. As such, Nessan observes that Segundo argues that "Luther's freedom of the gospel was not matched by an adequate elaboration of what those freed by the gospel are freed 'for.'"[270] The consequences of this are seen in the "work of political theologians who sharply distinguish between an eschatological future to be inaugurated by God and any specific political program."[271] Luther can be contrasted with certain political visions that see the advance of political justice, freedom, or democracy as the advance of salvation. Stumme observes that "we are faced with two doctrines of salvation . . . one believes that salvation is a future human project, and the other finds salvation in a divine event of the past, which makes possible what salvation is now and will be."[272] Altmann, on the other hand, argues that the use of Luther's two kingdoms to legitimize a variety of political ideologies, from fascism to the separation of church and state, is a misappropriation of Luther's thought.[273] Altman proclaims that "the

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[267] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 258.
[268] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 257. Interestingly, the goal of much of liberation theology is very similar to Luther's eschatological vision: As Osthathios observes, "a perfect classless society is only an eschatological possibility" ("Reality of Sin and Class War," 343).
[269] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 258.
[270] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 259.
[271] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 259.
[272] Stumme, "Liberation Theology," 429.
[273] Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 259.

dichotomic dualism between church and state cannot be legitimately ascribed to Luther. It is true that he drew a distinction of competence between one and the other, but he has never separated them as autonomous identities."[274] Altman calls the distinction "indispensable" for Luther, the purpose of which was very clear: "to stand against the corruption of the church which had become a temporal and political power."[275]

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the prominent streams of post-Christendom thought. The Anabaptist and Reformed tradition represent opposite ends of a spectrum when it comes to Christian engagement with the political realm. The Anabaptist tradition contributes a vision for a Christian community characterized by the lifestyle of Jesus, as non-violent, non-coercive, suffering, and characterized by self-sacrificial servanthood. Their contributions in this area are important and valuable. At the same time, it must be recognized that for those who are not of the pacifist persuasion, the Anabaptist tradition does not provide sufficient guidance as to how the Christian ought to engage as a member of the political sphere. The Reformed tradition emphasizes comprehensive Christian engagement with every level of life, with no aspect independent from Christ's Lordship and leadership. This is a valuable contribution, especially in an increasingly fractured cultural context, where the different aspects of life can be seen as independent from any central identity. At the same time, it must be recognized that the Reformed tradition, at least the way it is articulated in most contemporary literature, lacks a helpful paradigm

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[274] Walter Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 47. Quoted in Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 259.

[275] Walter Altmann, "Interpreting the Doctrine," 47. Quoted in Nessan, "Liberation Theology," 259.

for negotiating the coercion inherent in political rule. It is all well and good to say that one ought to transform all of society to reflect the kingdom of God, but such an impetus alone provides no defense against the abuses of Christendom, where the sword of the state is wielded on behalf of Christ's gospel. Liberation theology offers a reminder that theology is not apolitical, and ushers a call to the church to be concerned with political justice and the plight of the oppressed. These are important reminders to the church. The next and final chapter outlines the ways in which Luther's two kingdoms theology provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context, allowing for the best of the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions, as well as Liberation theology's vision for justice, while avoiding the dangers of civic disengagement or Christendom synthesis.

CHAPTER 4: TWO KINGDOMS FOR TODAY

The previous chapter outlined some of the significant trends in the major Protestant traditions as they pertain to post-Christendom political engagement. While one could write an entire thesis outlining the numerous contributions each of the traditions in the previous chapter have made to the field, the previous chapter shows that each has limitations when it comes to the intersection of Christian engagement with the coercion inherent in government. This chapter argues that Luther's two kingdoms provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context, by providing a way for the church to understand its relationship to government and the violence inherent in temporal rule. This chapter provides a synthesis of the previous chapters. The previous chapter demonstrated that while the Reformed tradition's emphases on Christ's lordship, social justice, and cultural engagement are important contributions to any political theology, without a robust theology of two kingdoms there is nothing stopping Christians from using the coercive power of the state to further the ends of the church. Any liberation theology or political theology that lacks a two kingdoms theology is in danger of the same thing. While Luther's two kingdoms theology was formulated in a Christendom context, Anderson observes that "the very fact that Luther discusses the case in which some of the parties in a legal quarrel do not accept the law of love is a clear indication that he does not argue within the conceptual framework of the Corpus Christianum, but rather presupposes what

I call the split polis: the world is a place where Christians live together with non-Christians (even if baptized)."[276] For this reason the careful distinctions that Luther draws between the ends, means, and realms of the kingdoms can provide a foundation for Christian political participation and service in a post-Christendom context.

The Reformed tradition offers a rich vision for cultural engagement. The Anabaptist tradition offers a rich vision of ecclesiology and the radical nature of the kingdom of God. Liberation theology and political theology offer a reminder that the church must be concerned for political justice and the suffering of the oppressed. Luther's two kingdoms offers a way to conceptualize the relationship between the coercive force of the government and the nonviolent nature of Christ's calling. By doing so Luther provides a way to live in peaceful ecclesiology and rigorous cultural engagement without returning to the abuses of Christendom. Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is not a comprehensive political theory, and was never meant to be.[277] Rather, it provides a way of understanding the relationship between the mission of the church and the violence of the temporal government. This contribution is invaluable for any political theology that wishes to navigate the complexities of our twenty-first century, post-Christendom Western and Canadian culture. Luther's two kingdoms contextualizes well to a post-Christendom context. The first section of this chapter deals with the objection that the dualism of Luther's two kingdoms is an impediment to Christian political engagement. Much post-Christendom Christian political thought has been concerned with overcoming

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[276] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 115–16.

[277] As noted above, all of Luther's overtly political writings were directed toward particular situations, and were never intended to be comprehensive works of political theory (Shoenberger, "Justifiability," 4).

dualisms that inhibit Christian political action.[278] This chapter argues that, rather than forestalling Christian action, Luther's two kingdoms ought to clarify it. The second section argues that Luther's two kingdoms provides a way forward for Christian political engagement in a post-Christendom context. Luther's two kingdoms paradigm provides a safeguard against the temptation for Christians to take up the coercive power of the state on behalf of the church, while at the same time calling Christians to be engaged in seeking justice and restraining evil, either by working through the God-ordained apparatus of the government or by resisting it when necessary.

Living the Tension

One cannot read very far in Luther studies without coming across the suggestion that Luther presents a dualistic vision of the Christian life. Whether Luther's two kingdoms are in fact dualistic depends on how one uses the word. Luther strictly divides the kingdoms in terms of their function, their roles, and their leadership. As this paper has demonstrated, the ends, means, and realms of the two kingdoms are completely distinct, and ought never to be confused. Therefore, one could say that Luther advocates a sort of dualism between the church and the state. However, if one means the sort of dualism that leads to a sacred-secular divide, where only what is done in the church or for the church is important, and where other human pursuits are relegated to a secondary status, then Luther is decidedly not dualistic.

Luther is adamant that the Christian can serve in both kingdoms. In fact, if their services are required by the ethic of love, then they ought to serve in both kingdoms.

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[278] In light of the failures of World War Two, detailed in chapter 1, this is understandable, and important.

Luther addresses the concern that the Christian who serves in government, must, by the nature of the role itself, use violence and coercion, which is opposed to the nonviolent ethic of the church. Luther takes pains to establish that since both kingdoms are ordained by God and are ways in which one can love and serve one's neighbour, it is consistent with the Christian calling to serve in the office of the government and perform the actions of the office, despite the fact that the actions of the office would be wrong for a Christian acting outside the office. Therefore, the role of a soldier or magistrate is just as legitimate a calling as being a doctor or a surgeon—or any other calling, for that matter.[279] If this is the case, then there is no dualism within the Christian life itself.

From the perspective of the Christian person, who belongs to the kingdom of God, under the rule of Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, all life is kingdom living; Christians merely takes on different roles when they serve their neighbours within different offices. Luther is crystal clear on this point: "all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office."[280] When Christians serve in the office of the temporal kingdom, it just so happens that they are called to use means that are the reverse of those used in the kingdom of God. This does not introduce dualism into the Christian life anymore than suggesting that a surgeon may remove the limb of a fellow human being in the hospital but not the mall introduces dualism into the life of the citizen. Luther draws a distinction between the kingdom of God and the temporal kingdom in terms of the use of violence, but in his writing *To the Christian Nobility* he attacks those who divide the Christian life between the "spiritual

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[279] Luther, "Whether Soldiers," 46:97. Luther argues that the office of the sword is, "in itself, is godly and as needful and useful to the world as eating and drinking or any other work" ("Whether Soldiers," 46:97).

[280] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:127.

estate" of pope, bishops, priests, and monks, and the "temporal estate" of "princes, lords, artisans, and farmers."[281] There is one Christian body; the only difference is that of office, by which "every member has its own work by which it serves the others."[282]

In order to properly understand how dualism functions for Luther, one must understand that, in sociological terms, the Christian unites the earthly and spiritual kingdoms, as an inhabitant of both.[283] The two kingdoms are distinct and separate, but bridged "metaphysically by God's sovereignty, and sociologically by the life of the Christian."[284] Furthermore, Luther never conceives of a Christian working in the office of the temporal authorities as doing so as anything other than a Christian. In his letter *To the Christian Nobility*, he is adamant that the temporal princes of Germany must "act humbly and in the fear of God," if they are to avoid causing disaster.[285] Luther carefully draws distinctions between the various offices that a Christian may serve in, but he never divides the Christian life itself.

Some have suggested that Luther was caught "between his sense of obligation to the grace of God in the gospel and his sense of obligation to the law of God in the person of the [temporal authorities]."[286] This is a fundamental misunderstanding of Luther's two kingdoms. On Luther's view, the obligations are not opposed, so there is no sense of

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[281] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:127.

[282] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:127. Luther goes to some pains to establish this point, repeating it several times. Luther's argument rests on his theology of the priesthood of all believers. He argues that since all Christians are baptized with the same baptism, having the same faith and the same gospel as all other Christians, all are equally "consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, although of course it is not seemly that just anybody should exercise such office." Therefore, he concludes, "there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status" (Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:129).

[283] Hein, "Reason," 144.

[284] Hein, "Reason," 144.

[285] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:126.

[286] Zahl, *Grace in Practice,* 189.

being caught in between the spiritual and temporal authorities at all. What Luther does do is free the Christian serving in the office of the spiritual government from the obligation to take on temporal responsibilities, or the temptation to use the temporal sword. At the same time, he frees the Christian in the office of the temporal government from the obligation to nonviolence and forgiveness, or the ambiguity of trying to govern the spiritual realm at the same time as that of the temporal. Luther's two kingdoms actually bring remarkable clarity for Christians who are troubled by the use of violence and coercion in government; after all, this is fundamentally what the two kingdoms paradigm is meant to do.[287] Any post-Christendom political engagement will be forced to wrestle with the eschatological tension inherent in living between Christ's first and second coming. It is a helpful reminder that the kingdom of God has not and does not come in or through the political structures. At the same time, the political structures still have a legitimate and God-given function to play, and Christians have a responsibility to engage with and in them. Whatever dualism is present in Luther is the product of his engagement with the eschatological reality that the kingdom of God is here but is still yet to come.

The distinction between the two kingdoms is actually crucial for critical Christian engagement in politics. For example, one of the perennial dangers of the twentieth century was ideological totalitarianism. Millions of people died in the name of various ideologies.[288] In a pluralistic society, the chances of ideology dominating increases. The distinction between the two kingdoms allows Luther's two kingdoms to ward off naive

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[287] The other fundamental purpose of the two kingdoms paradigm is to establish limits on the temporal government's efforts to regulate doctrine and enforce Christian orthodoxy. Heretics are not burned at the stake in contemporary Western culture, so this happens to be less of a concern for contemporary Christians.

[288] Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 8.

utopianism on the one hand, and political passivism on the other. Put another way, Luther's two kingdoms allows the Christian to avoid the danger of lapsing into ideological totalitarianism, while also providing grounds for resisting it.[289] Totalitarian ideologies, like those that ravaged the twentieth century, peddle utopian visions and exhibit salvific overtones. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, ideological tyranny has receded from the public consciousness. However, there is always the temptation for the government to assume the status of saviour and lord, and to reach into every area of life, commanding absolute fealty. As Helmut Thielicke maintains, the two kingdoms must remain distinct. The temporal kingdom "must not take on sacral significance or equip itself with the dynamic . . . of a religious sense of mission. It must not become an idolatrous imitation of the kingdom of God."[290] At the same time, Luther believed that all things were subsumed in one way or another under the 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."[291] The church should never "be subsumed into the idolatry of the state." Instead, the church is to call the state to account. Thus Benne "suggests rejuvenating the doctrine of the two kinds of authority in order to activate Christian participation in politics."[292] The dualism that Luther espouses in distinguishing between the kingdoms actually provides the critical distance necessary for constructive Christian engagement. Rather than limiting political engagement, Luther's two kingdoms ought to clarify it.

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[289] The fact that a perverted two kingdoms doctrine failed to do this is the subject of chapter 1; this thesis has examined the factors that led to that failure.

[290] Thielicke, *Politics*, 60.

[291] Beeke, "Was There a Time," 201–2.

[292] Grobien, "Christian Voice," 124.

A Way Forward for Post-Christendom Engagement

The Christendom model is no longer effective in contemporary Europe and North America. Whether one agrees with the Christendom model or not, it simply does not work in countries that are incredibly diverse and avowedly secular. Christendom is over in the West, and as such, the Christendom model no longer applies. In the wake of the dissolution of Christendom, Daniel Bell Jr. notes that "modern Christian political theologies are devoted to overcoming the dualisms that forestall faith-based political action."[293] As the above discussion of Luther has shown, rather than reinforcing this divide, a proper understanding of Luther's two kingdoms brings clarity to the discussion, and frees Christians to engage wholeheartedly in the political realm while maintaining their Christian identity and calling. This allows the church to "embody a different sort of politics," one which does not rely on violent coercion, serving as the "sign of God's salvation of the world" and "reminding the world of what the world still is not," while being faithful to the biblical passages that legitimate temporal authority.[294] Luther's two kingdoms, perhaps surprisingly, provide a way forward for any Christian movement which espouses comprehensive cultural engagement.

Luther is not a conservative archetype, fundamentally opposed to all forms of sociopolitical progress and prophetic critique. Luther never suggests that the church cannot speak on temporal issues. In fact, Luther himself addresses the German rulers, leveraging his influence to try and persuade them to properly and justly exercise their office.[295] The difference is in ends and means, not in the subject matter under the

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[293] Bell Jr., "Postliberalism," 114.

[294] Cavanaugh, *Migration,* 138.

[295] See Luther's letter "Christian Nobility," an extended treatise on the ills of the religiopolitical situation in Germany at the time and the proper temporal response. Luther also felt free to express his

authority of each kingdom. Moral actions are encompassed by both realms, and are the concern of both governments. Luther preaches against the vices of murder and stealing, which are also under the authority of the temporal leaders.[296] The difference is that the church leader addresses these sins for the end of the gospel, using the means of the word and of preaching, while the temporal authority addresses these sins for the end of keeping the peace by punishing the wicked, using the means of the temporal sword.

It is illuminating to compare the tensions inherent in Martin Luther's two kingdoms with the tensions that were present in Jesus' own ministry. Galilea situates Jesus' ministry in relation to the political attitudes and objectives of the Zealots and the Essenes. The former were revolutionaries, actively seeking independence for their oppressed people through subversion. The latter were "a sect of deep and intense religious life and organization who kept themselves free from temporal and political matters."[297] Jesus has been linked with both, though "today it can be shown, without a doubt, that he did not participate in either of these movements."[298] Importantly, it is clear that "in the messiahship of Jesus there is no seeking for anything temporal or political, and he himself avoided being taken as a social leader."[299] Nevertheless, he was still thought by many people to be a political or temporal messiah, "to the point that one of the chief preoccupations of Jesus was to dispel this false impression."[300] It is therefore important to understand, Galilea argues, that "the preaching of the kingdom is not

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thoughts about legislative realities. Estes notes that Luther found some of the German law "barbarous in its severity, and he expressed regret that it was far too deeply entrenched to be done away with in favour of uniform application of Roman law . . . the common law of the Empire" ("Luther's Attitude," 98).

[296] Luther, "Christian Nobility," 44:214.
[297] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 178.
[298] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 179.
[299] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 179.
[300] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 179.

properly speaking a political discourse, but it can give rise to authentic liberation movements among human beings: insofar as it makes them conscious of various sinful situations and insofar as it inspires them to transform society because of a gospel of the kingdom in which they have believed."[301] "In this sense," Galilea argues, "the religio-pastoral message of Jesus gave rise to a dynamic of social changes for his time and for all time to come. . . . In this very precise sense the action of Christ—and the action of the church—is involved with the political order, insofar as they are called upon to bring about changes in the political systems."[302] Because of this, Jesus' messiahship was always susceptible to confusion, especially in a society oppressed in many ways. The Christian message is critical of religious and civic totalitarianism; the result is that Christ can be seen as a temporal liberator. Galilea argues that "this same Christological danger is also ecclesiological in that the church, whose pastoral activity has the same characteristics, can be attracted toward political power and a purely temporal liberation."[303] He notes that this is "evidently . . . a constant temptation of pastoral activity."[304]

Galilea observes that "to proclaim the one, true God as the Lord puts an end to any idolatry. It relativizes people and values that in that society took the absolute place of God."[305] This includes emperors, authorities, and ideologies.[306] Jesus created a prophetic consciousness in his disciples in proclaiming the "condition of the new human being" in

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[301] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 180.
[302] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 180.
[303] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 180.
[304] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 180. Galilea notes that angelism and a lack of temporal commitment "is the temptation of the contemplative," while machiavellism is the temptation of the Christian revolutionary (Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 181).
[305] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 181.
[306] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 181.

the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. Therefore, "to the extent that the values proposed by the Beatitudes penetrate the hearts of people and of society, they will condemn any sociopolitical structure incompatible with those ideals."[307] Thus the message of Christ sows the "seeds of liberty and community."[308] This is precisely the paradigm of Christian social and political action that Luther has in mind. For Luther, the Christian prince is one who rules for the good of their subjects rather than for their own interests.[309] This principle goes beyond the Christian magistrate: any Christian truly living by faith is compelled by Christian love to serve their neighbour by pursuing justice and peace and opposing, in a Christian manner, the sociopolitical structures or figures of injustice.

If there is a suspicion that somehow Luther's two kingdoms theology limits the impetus to social justice, since he neither outlines a comprehensive program of social reform, nor spends a significant amount of time outlining the positive potentiality of government, then an examination of Jesus's own ministry should mitigate that concern. Luther never limits the positive development of government. His explicit concern is to limit the negative potentials of confusing the temporal and spiritual governments. As noted in chapter 3, love is the center of Luther's political ethic, and love compels action. Luther's Two Kingdoms theology channels that action into appropriate pathways. In light of Galilea's perceptive evaluation that positions Christ's ministry between the Zealots and the Essenes, one can see how Luther's failure to present a comprehensive program of social and political reform for all ages, while still urging justice and reform, mirrors the

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[307] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 182.
[308] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 181.
[309] Anderson, "Lutheran Political Theology," 115.

tension present in Jesus' own ministry. As Galilea notes that "without putting forward a model for a better society, of a concrete program of liberation, Jesus creates a movement of liberation and solidarity that we find at the origin of many later social changes."[310] Luther did not intend to one-up his Lord by proposing the concrete program Jesus' declined to present.

Post-Christendom conversation has seemingly vacillated between two approaches to politics. On the one hand, there is a reformed, transformative vision of the gospel which permeates even the structures of government, but, without Luther's differentiation between the kingdoms, seemingly leads back into a Christendom model, and provides no safeguards against the church wielding the coercive power of the state. Thielicke maintains that the two kingdoms must remain distinct. The temporal kingdom "must not take on sacral significance or equip itself with the dynamic . . . of a religious sense of mission. It must not become an idolatrous imitation of the kingdom of God."[311] This leads to totalitarianism, whether the religious mission is seen to be in the service of the Christian gospel or in the service of some other ideal, such as equality or progress. Luther believed that all things were subsumed in one way or another under the rule of God expressed in the two kingdoms, but the rule of God takes different forms, and the limits of the temporal kingdom keep the practice of politics from devolving into totalitarianism. On the other hand, there is the Anabaptist approach, which recognizes the problems inherent with the church wielding violent, temporal power, but struggles to shape politics from the inside. Luther's two kingdoms provide a *via media* between conflation of the temporal and spiritual realms on the one side, and disengagement from government

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[310] Galilea, "Jesus and the Liberation of His People," 182.
[311] Thielicke, *Politics,* 60.

service on the other. It does not require a Christian government, and instead provides a way for Christians to be involved in government regardless of whether it is secular or religious. Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is not a comprehensive political theory, and was never meant to be.[312] Rather, it provides a way of understanding the relationship between the mission of the church and the violence of the temporal government. This contribution is invaluable for any political theology which wishes to navigate the complexities of our twenty-first century, post-Christendom Western and Canadian culture.

Luther's two kingdoms theology does not provide a concrete program of political or social reform. However, it does clarify Christian engagement in a post-Christendom world in important ways. Fundamentally, Luther's two kingdoms theology reminds Christians that they must engage politics from a place of service rather than selfishness. Augustine of Hippo argued that Christian political service ought to come "not from a love of power, but from a sense of the duty they owe to others—not because they are proud of authority, but because they love mercy."[313] Luther is in continuity with Augustine in centering his discussion of the use of temporal authority on Christian love for neighbour. While the church is not, as an institution, integrated into the political process—neither in the Luther's thought, nor in post-Christendom society—the church is a body of Christian individuals who are freed and obliged to engage politics selflessly, out of love for God and love for neighbour. Love is the central ethic of Luther's two kingdoms, and Christians must be prepared to sacrifice their own interests in the service of others. The

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[312] As noted above, all of Luther's overtly political writings were directed toward particular situations, and were never intended to be comprehensive works of political theory (Shoenberger, "Justifiability," 4).

[313] Augustine, *City of God*, 2:323.

two kingdoms paradigm guides Christians as they live out their love for their neighbours in the public sphere. On a practical level, Luther's two kingdoms provides the conceptual framework within which to weigh questions of contemporary concern. As Christians consider public issues such as foreign policy, freedom of speech, abortion, and a myriad of other topics, the two kingdoms theology clarifies the church's mission and the role of government so that a productive conversation can take place. Christians may not all agree on what constitutes a faithful Christian response, but the tensions that Luther maintains ought to ensure that the Christian response remains relatively balanced.

The Christian hope is ultimately grounded in Christ's return. Nevertheless, Luther stresses the obligation of the Christian to serve their neighbour now, through all legitimate means, including political. Love compels action, and the fact that both kingdoms belong to God and are established by God means that love should compel action in both kingdoms. On the other extreme, distinguishing between the means and ends of the kingdoms ought to mitigate the danger of Christendom-style ecclesiastical abuse of political power. The greatest abuses of Christian history came when the ends and means of the two kingdoms were confused. The coercive means of the government should never be used to advance the cause of the gospel. The gospel should never be used as a means to the end of governing, as an ideology, a tool for the state to maintain control. The end of social and political justice and peace should be pursued through the means of the temporal government, while the end of the spread of the gospel should be pursued using the means of the kingdom of God. Such an approach will guard against the greatest abuses of the past. A proper understanding of Luther's two kingdoms brings clarity to the discussion, and frees Christians to engage wholeheartedly in the political realm while

maintaining their Christian identity and calling. Because of this, Luther's two kingdoms contributes to the church's ability to embody what Cavanaugh calls "a different sort of politics," one which does not rely on violent coercion, serving as the "sign of God's salvation of the world" and "reminding the world of what the world still is not," while still being faithful to the biblical passages that legitimize temporal authority.[314] Luther's two kingdoms allows the church to be the church, while providing a paradigm for Christian political service and engagement. In so doing, Luther's two kingdoms avoids the dangers of civic disengagement on the one hand, and the dangers of a return to Christendom coercion on the other.

Conclusion

Luther's theology of the two kingdoms provides a way forward for political engagement after Christendom by avoiding the extremes of civic disengagement on the one hand, and a wholesale return to a Christendom synthesis on the other. He provides a way for Christians to understand the relationship between temporal authorities and the church, clearing the way for active engagement at every level of society. Of course, his model is not entirely new; Augustine's vision of the temporal government limits its role to restraining sin and securing peace in a world corrupted by sin.[315] The Anabaptist movement holds to a conception of the roles of church and state that is remarkably similar to that of Luther's two kingdoms, though they have historically held that the Christian is not to participate in the temporal government.[316] However, the simplicity of

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[314] Cavanaugh, *Migrations,* 138.

[315] Bruno, *Political Augustinianism,* 3; cf. Augustine, *City of God,* book XIX.

[316] Halteman, "Anabaptist Approaches," 247.

Luther's distinction between the ends, means, and realms of the two kingdoms, and his crucial distinction between the person and the office, makes his contribution unique and invaluable. He manages to hold Matt 5 and Rom 13 together satisfactorily, maintaining the eschatological tension inherent in the reality that, at the moment, there are both Christians and non-Christians in the world—that until the eschaton there will always be those who are enabled to serve out of love, and those who must be restrained from evil by coercion. There will always be the potential that Luther's two kingdoms can be taken to endorse a sacred-secular divide, whereby the church separates itself from culture. This is a danger inherent simply in the terminology of two kingdoms, but as this thesis has shown, this is a false understanding of Luther. The Bible is full of conceptual couplets, such as flesh and spirit, light and darkness, and church and world. Each of these couplets carries the inherent risk that they will be misunderstood and taken to require a harmful separation between the gospel and the world. With Luther's two kingdoms, as with all nuanced and helpful theologies, one ought not to abandon the original teaching, but rather to expound it more clearly and vigorously. This chapter has shown that Luther's two kingdoms, rather than limiting political engagement, provides a paradigm in which the church can be the church, while encouraging Christian political service and engagement. By doing this, Luther's two kingdoms provides a way forward for post-Christendom political engagement, by avoiding the dangers of civic disengagement on the one hand, and the dangers of a Christendom synthesis of church and coercion on the other.

CONCLUSION: A WAY FORWARD

In post-Christendom Europe and North America, the church has been deposed from its position of privilege and power that it occupied for so long. In the last fifty years there has been a radical shift in how society views the place of the church, and how the church sees its own place in relation to government. Just like Luther during the period of the Reformation, the church in the West finds itself in a period of change, and to a certain extent, crisis. This is an important time for Christians to think creatively about how the calling to follow Christ intersects with the world of politics and government. Through his two kingdoms theology, Luther issues a call to Christians to engage the world in love and service, as members of God's kingdom here on earth, and as servants of their neighbours through politics.

The first chapter of this thesis examined the history of interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms theology. The appropriation of autonomy by German theologians and scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth century led to a misunderstanding and misapplication of Luther's two kingdoms, which has coloured subsequent assessments of Luther's two kingdoms theology. It is often assumed that Luther's two kingdoms necessarily leads to political quietism or passivism. Chapter 1 demonstrated that this is a misreading of history that fails to differentiate between the misapplication of the two kingdoms concept in the twentieth century and the faulty association of Luther with the

faulty two kingdoms doctrine. This chapter explicated the two kingdoms doctrine as it was understood during this period, with special attention to the concept of autonomy, an idea that was foreign to Luther's own thought. It traces the connection between Luther and this two kingdoms doctrine as it was reinforced by the work of various influential authors, such as Ernst Troeltsh, Max Weber, Karl Barth, the Niebuhr brothers, and others. These authors are not blamed for the faulty doctrine, as many were explicitly opposed to the way that the two kingdoms doctrine was being articulated, but rather this chapter demonstrated that the causal association between Luther and the defective doctrine of the two kingdoms ought to be questioned, as the doctrine of the two kingdoms developed as the church acquiesced to cultural assumptions—most significantly, the concept of autonomy. This chapter separated Luther from the misappropriation of his theology so that his two kingdoms theology as he articulated it can be clearly apprehended.

The second chapter of this thesis examined Luther's two kingdoms theology. The purpose of this chapter was not to expound a new understanding of Luther's theology, but rather to outline the chief components of his two kingdoms theology so that they could be applied to a post-Christendom culture. The chapter sketched in broad strokes the elements and tensions of Luther's two kingdoms. It took as point of departure the tension between Matt 5 and Rom 13, the tension that Luther's two kingdoms theology is intended to address. Luther begins with the kingdom of God, arguing that Christ rules as Lord through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his people. There is no need for coercion in this kingdom, since the Holy Spirit governs, and the Christian serves and obeys as a result of the Holy Spirit's governance. The temporal government, Luther maintains, exists because not every person at this time belongs to the kingdom of God. The temporal government

restrains sin and keeps the world from falling into chaos. Both kingdoms are ordained by God and belong to God, and God works through both of them. The Christian, therefore, can and ought to serve in temporal government. This chapter outlined the distinctions between the ends, means, and realms of the kingdoms, and between the person and the office. These are the distinctions that maintain the tension in Luther's theology of the two kingdoms that are crucial for political engagement. There is also, however, a unifying force in that both kingdoms are God's kingdoms, and the Christian can never disengage from society but must live out their vocation and calling in the world. For Luther, love is the ethic that allows the Christian to live and serve in both kingdoms, and the distinctions Luther's draws between the kingdoms allows the Christian to live in obedience to both Matt 5 and Rom 13.

Having examined the history of interpretation of Luther's two kingdoms and the two kingdoms as Luther himself articulated it, the third chapter of this thesis turned towards contemporary application. With the dissolution of Christendom in Europe and North America, Christians have produced an enormous amount of material wrestling with the issues of post-Christendom political and social engagement. This chapter began by outlining two major voices in the conversation surrounding post-Christendom societal engagement, the Anabaptist and Reformed traditions. Both traditions have made significant contributions. The Anabaptist tradition has contributed a vision for ecclesiological witness that is faithful to the nonviolent and noncoercive call of Christ. The limitation of the Anabaptist approach is found in its pacifism. The Reformed tradition has contributed a vision for cultural engagement. Transformationalist writers have dominated reformed writings on political engagement, casting a grand vision for

comprehensive cultural, social, and political engagement. The limitation of the Reformed tradition, however, is found in the fact that it resists distinguishing between the two kingdoms, thereby leaving little deterrent to the church guiding the hand of the state to advance the interests of the kingdom of God. Essentially, this is a vision for a return to Christendom, leaving the church vulnerable to the failures of the past. This chapter also outlined the basic tenets of liberation theology and political theology. Once again, it demonstrated that when a two kingdoms theology is not in effect, both these theologies can run the risk of attempting to advance the kingdom of God through the coercion and violence of the government—or revolution.

The fourth and final chapter of this thesis provided a synthesis of the material from the first three chapters. It demonstrated that Luther's two kingdoms provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context. The first section addressed the criticism that dualism in Luther's two kingdoms splits the Christian life and hampers political engagement, arguing that rather than splitting the Christian life, the duality of Luther's two kingdoms allows the Christian to live out of cohesive identity in the tension between the first and second coming of Christ. The distinction between the kingdoms allows the necessary distance for Christians to engage critically with the political realities of their time. On Luther's two kingdoms, the state ought never to assume a sacral identity, and the church should be vigilant not to fall into the idolatry of the state. The distinction between the kingdoms allows for critical Christian engagement. Luther's two kingdoms, by distinguishing between the ends, means, and realms of the two kingdoms, by distinguishing between person and office, and by maintaining the tension between Matt 5 and Rom 13, provides a way forward in a post-Christendom context. Both the Anabaptist

and Reformed traditions have contributed valuable visions for post-Christendom Christian life; the former has contributed a vision for ecclesiology, and the latter a vision for cultural engagement. Nevertheless, there are limitations to both approaches that Luther's theology of the two kingdoms helps to overcome. Luther's two kingdoms provides a framework for Christian action in both the spiritual and temporal realm, in the church and in politics. His two kingdoms theology provides a way to avoid disengagement from society on the one hand and Christendom synthesis and coercion on the other, freeing Christians to love their neighbours through selfless service in both of God's kingdoms.

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