

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

Lesson 8-A Brief Look at Calvin and Luther

Luther

Luther is very important when considering the _____ of a 2 Kingdoms doctrine for understanding life. Luther acknowledges the existence of 2 Kingdoms. However, his understanding of the 2 Kingdoms has some differences.

“Any discussion of the doctrine of the two kingdoms must necessarily begin, historically speaking, with Luther...Luther generally wanted to leave political order alone to do its own business as much as possible, without too much meddling from theologians or churchmen...It was precisely this stance that represented a dramatic shift in how most Christians had thought about politics for centuries, and that in certain ways laid the foundations for modern liberal order. No longer was political authority to be an appendage or henchmen of spiritual authority, or for that matter its exalted viceregent. Luther simultaneously promoted and demoted all forms of civil authority: promoted because princes and emperors were now answerable to no one but God alone, with no earthly rivals within their dominions; demoted because their task was now so very mundane, in every sense of the word: to preserve outward order, and no more, until the Son of Man should return.”-The Two Kingdoms, W. Bradford Littlejohn, 12-13.

“The ‘two kingdoms’ remain a distinctive and unique product of Luther’s theology, resting as they do directly on the bedrock of his doctrine of justification sola fide.” Ibid., 14.

2 kingdoms (i.e. governments-spiritual and earthly, _____ and _____, soul and body)

“The spiritual government is that by which Christ rules inwardly in the conscience by His Word and Spirit, the realm of grace; the temporal government is that by which Christ governs all external human affairs by law, in which He works not directly and immediately, but through the ‘masks’ of earthly governors and institutions. Only the elect experience the former; the latter they share in common with the unregenerate.”-Ibid., 15.

Those over you in the earth can tell you what to do but they cannot command your _____ to believe something. In this understanding then, even the church itself, as an earthly institution, would be subject to the earthly rulers in those things that are not pertaining to salvation.

“Magistrates could wield authority and demand obedience in ecclesiastical adiaphora (things indifferent to salvation)-questions of outward order, polity, and to some extent liturgy.” Ibid., 18.

You begin to really see Luther build this understanding early on in one of his first major works- *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (1520)*-this book is a refutation of what Luther refers to as the “_____” that the Roman Catholic Church hides behind that need to be torn down:

1. **Wall 1**-the claim that temporal powers have no _____ over spiritual powers because spiritual powers are always above temporal powers.
2. **Wall 2**-Any attempt to reprove them (these spiritual powers) with Scripture is shot down by their claim that _____ the pope may interpret the Scriptures.
3. **Wall 3**-If threatened with a council these spiritual powers respond by saying _____ the pope has the power to summon a council

“I say therefore that since the temporal power is ordained of God to punish the wicked and protect the good, it should be left free to perform its office in the whole body of Christendom without restriction and without respect to persons, whether it affects pope, bishop priests, monks, nuns, or anyone else.”-Luther

Luther was leading the charge out of the Middle Ages that stressed the authority of the Church of Rome over all of life (even affairs relating to the kingdoms of the earth). He called for both the church and the state to realize that they were different and had different tasks and spheres of _____.

Calvin

Similarly, to Luther, Calvin saw the 2 Kingdoms as relating to that which was salvific and everything else. _____ was again the issue involved in the spiritual kingdom.

“As for Luther, this was not Christian liberty in the sense we often mean it today-the freedom of individual believers to act as they wish in matters where Scripture is silent-but is fundamentally soteriological, the proclamation of the freedom of the believer’s conscience from the bondage of external works.”-Littlejohn, 26.

“Given the non-spiritual nature (in this precise sense of spiritual) of most ecclesiastical laws, Calvin saw no reason to make them the domain of church authorities alone, but gave magistrates in Geneva an important role in matters of worship and church order. In all this, Calvin’s approach to the two kingdoms was substantially the same as Luther’s.”-Ibid. 30

“Calvin himself never doubted that the external care for the church fell within the limits of civil jurisdiction, declaring that it was ‘to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the Church.’”-Ibid., 33

Clearly this issue was _____ for Calvin as he devoted a lengthy chapter to it in Book 3 (chapter 19) of the Institutes as well as having the final chapter in the entire work be about how the Christian is to live under the civil government (chapter 20).

“Therefore, lest this prove a stumbling-block to any, let us observe that in man government is two-fold: the one spiritual, by which the conscience is trained to piety and divine worship; the other civil, by which the individual is instructed in those duties which as men and citizens, we are bound to perform...Now, these two, as we have divided them, are always to be viewed apart from each other...For there exists in man a kind of two worlds, over which different kings and different laws can preside. By attending to this distinction, we will not erroneously transfer the doctrine of the gospel concerning spiritual liberty to civil order.” Institutes, 3.19.15

“He who knows to distinguish between the body and the soul, between the present fleeting life and that which is future and eternal, will have no difficulty in understanding that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and the civil government are things very widely separated. Seeing, therefore, it is a Jewish vanity to seek and include the kingdom of Christ under the elements of this world, let us, considering, as Scripture clearly teaches, that the blessings which we derive from Christ are spiritual, remember to confine the liberty which is promised and offered to us in Him within its proper limits.” Ibid., 4.20.1