

Cultural Engagement
Two Kingdoms (“Stay in your lane.”)



“Let us first consider that there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘temporal’ jurisdiction (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life—not only with food and clothing but with laying down laws whereby a man may live his life among other men holily, honorably, and temperately. For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outward behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other, the political kingdom. Now these two, as we have divided them, must always be examined separately; and while one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority.” —John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.19.15

“We must distinguish the twofold kingdom, belonging to Christ: one natural or essential; the other mediatorial and economical. Christ possesses the former over all creatures with glory and majesty equal to that of the Father and Holy Spirit. The latter (according to the economy of grace) he administers in a peculiar manner as God-man. The former extends equally over all creatures; the latter is terminated specifically on the church. That is founded on the decree of providence, this on the decree of election. That is exercised by Christ inasmuch as he is God and the Logos; this inasmuch as he is God-man. Hence it is called his ‘mediatorial and economical kingdom’ because it is a dominion peculiar to the Mediator and as it were his own according to the dispensation of grace. The other belongs to him by nature and is on that account called ‘natural.’ The mediatorial belongs to him by from the free institution of God because he constituted him King over the church (Ps. 2:6).” —Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* II.486

Key Themes of Two Kingdoms

- The spirituality of the church
- Critical of the idea of a “Christian worldview” or “redeeming the culture”
- Discontinuity between present cultural activities and future heavenly glory
- Humble excellence (rather than transformationalism or triumphalism) in cultural activities
- Natural law (rather than Scripture) as the primary normative standard over culture

The Spirituality of the Church

- “In general terms, the spirituality of the church teaches that given the nature of the church under the mediatorial reign of Christ there are limits to church power and that this power must not be confused with the power of the state. Through most of Reformed history, the spirituality of the church has *not* entailed a silence on all political matters, but rather a commitment to the uniqueness of the church’s mission and a principled conviction that the concerns of the church should not be swallowed up by the concerns of the state.” (Kevin DeYoung)
- “Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.” (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 31.5)

Critical of “Christian worldviewism”

- “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.” —James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*
- “Worldviewism” is **arrogant** and **simplistic**, claiming to have answers where the church has no authority or competence to speak.
- “Worldviewism” is **relativistic** and **fideistic**, minimizing the objectivity of reality and overemphasizing the role of one’s worldview “lenses.”

Cultural Activities in the New Creation?

- **The “old view” of heaven (Two Kingdoms)**
 - The new creation will *replace* the old creation. (2 Pet. 3:10-12)
 - Our present earthly activities will *pass away*. (1 Cor. 7:31)
 - Our primary activity in heaven will be *worship*. (Rev. 22:3)
- **The “new view” of heaven (Transformationalism)**
 - The new creation will *restore* the old creation. (Rom. 8:18-22)
 - Our present cultural activities will *continue* into heaven. (Isa. 60:11)
 - Our activity in heaven will include a *cultural vocation*. (Matt. 25:21)

Humble Excellence in Cultural Activities

- “The standards of excellence for cultural work are generally the same for believers and unbelievers. What constitutes excellence for the Christian engineer? Whether the bridge he designs holds up traffic. What constitutes excellence for the Christian plumber? Whether the pipes he fixes stop leaking. Once again we might ask the question: would we hold a non-Christian engineer or plumber to the same standards? Absolutely. Activities such as building bridges and repairing broken pipes are general human activities, not uniquely Christian ones. The technical aspects of our cultural labors—those things that distinguish excellent work from mediocre work from shoddy work—do not depend on what is uniquely Christian. Christ’s resurrection, ascension, and establishment of the church have not changed the truths of calculus or the way that water flows. The fact that a plumber is converted to Christianity does not change his objective obligations as a plumber (even though he now has new motivation for being industrious and honest as he pursues his vocation).” —David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms*