

The Ethics of Martin Luther

by Paul Althaus

The Two Kingdoms and the Two Governments¹

The Biblical Basis

[1] Luther did not base his doctrine of the two kingdoms or the two governments on his own speculative thinking. He felt that in this matter too his position was wholly determined by Scripture. He distinguishes two types of statements. One type is characterized by Jesus' statements in the Sermon on the Mount and the apostles' statements about the "law of Christ": the disciples of Jesus never use force, do not resist evil, do not avenge themselves, but under all circumstances serve one another in love.² These statements of the gospel appear to reject completely the state and the activity of the political authorities.³ But there is a second type of statement. The same Scripture contains the apostolic affirmation of the state and, as in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2:13-14, admonishes us to obey the authorities. In addition there are the statements of the Old Testament which institute and establish the "sword" which, as in Genesis 9:6 or Exodus 21:14, 22 ff., includes the death penalty. There is also the conversation between John the Baptist and the soldiers (Luke 3:14) in which John obviously does not in any way condemn the soldiers' station in life but rather recognizes it.⁴ Finally, Luther read the Old Testament descriptions of God telling his people to prepare for battle and leading them to war; and he was aware that "all the saints have wielded the sword from the beginning of the world."⁵

[2] Luther was bound to the Scripture and did not teach on the basis of his own willful speculation or in terms of what the political authorities wanted him to say. And the Scripture bound Luther to teach that the secular government, with all that belongs to it, is in the world because God has willed and ordained it. However, Scripture is not alone in asserting this; Scripture agrees with and confirms natural law. It was because these two different and even apparently contradictory types of statements stand side by side in Scripture that Luther was led to his doctrine of the two governments. Franz Lau correctly concludes that it was Scripture itself which led Luther to realize that the Sermon on the Mount did not mean what Enthusiasts like Thomas Muntzer said it did.⁶

[3] As we shall see, Luther also includes marriage and the family as well as business in secular government. He sees these — and the laws governing them — as being based in God's creation, that is, in the institution of marriage and in the command to rule over the creatures in Genesis 1 and 2, and therefore as being distinct from the kingdom of Christ.

Spiritual and Worldly Government

[4] God rules the world in a twofold way, at least insofar as his rule is visible to the eyes of faith. But the ruling that is visible does not exhaust God's lordship. As always, Luther distinguishes between the hidden and the revealed God. It is according to his majesty that God works all in all, but this omnipotent lordship — like God's majesty in general — cannot be comprehended by us men.⁷ However, here we are not speaking of God's hidden government but of that revealed government which faith can know about. In this context, God has established two governments, the spiritual and the secular, or earthly, temporal, physical.⁸ This secular government serves to

preserve external secular righteousness; it thus also preserves this physical, earthly, temporal life and thereby preserves the world. The spiritual government helps men to achieve true Christian righteousness and therewith eternal life; it thus serves the redemption of the world.⁹ God provides secular government throughout the whole world even among the heathen and the godless; but he gives his spiritual government only to his people.¹⁰

[5] This spiritual government brings the kingdom of God into being.¹¹ This is “the kingdom of grace.”¹² God’s grace is present in Christ, and so this kingdom is Christ’s kingdom and Christ is its “king and lord.”¹³ Christ exercises his government by bringing grace and the gospel to men who are in bondage to sin and death. This grace includes the forgiveness of sins¹⁴ and therewith the freedom of the children of God: freedom from the condemning law, freedom from God’s wrath, and at the same time freedom from all the demonic powers of fate and of this created world. Christ’s government by way of the forgiveness of sins comes to men through Christianity in the preached word, the sacraments, and brotherly consolation. Christianity is thus both the place in which Christ exercises his government and the means by which he exercises it. The Holy Spirit works through preaching to move men to faith. When this occurs, the kingdom of God is present for and powerful in a man. Christ’s government is thus nothing else than the lordship which he exercises in a man’s heart through his . Spirit.¹⁵ The only power at work here is the power of the Spirit which overcomes the heart and brings it to faith. Thus the constitutive element of Christ’s lordship is freedom.¹⁶ Force is not used in this kingdom; rather, everything takes place voluntarily through the compelling power of the Spirit which is inherent in the word of the gospel,¹⁷ This power is the “spiritual sword” of God’s word.¹⁸ As a result, the lordship of Christ can never be an institution or an order of this world; it is a completely personal reality.

[6] However, the same God who administers the kingdom of grace in Christ has also instituted the secular kingdom.¹⁹ Christ does not participate in this secular kingdom. God — and not Christ — institutes it. It is therefore certainly God’s kingdom but it is not Christ’s kingdom. Christ is concerned only with the spiritual kingdom. He concerns himself about secular government as little as about God’s working in nature — as about storms, for example.²⁰ At this point Luther clearly distinguishes between the activity of God and the activity of Christ. Not everything that God institutes and works comes from Christ. But Christ, although his kingdom is only the spiritual government, has very explicitly confirmed that this other secular government is also God’s will and order.²¹ “Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness.”²²

[7] For Luther, secular government includes much more than political authorities and governments; it includes everything that contributes to the preservation of this earthly life, especially marriage and family, the entire household, as well as property, business, and all the stations and vocations which God has instituted.²³ Luther distinguishes all this from the spiritual reality of grace, of the word of God, and of faith and describes it as an “external matter,”²⁴ that is, related to our bodies, and also as the “secular sword.”²⁵

[8] This secular or temporal government is necessary alongside the kingdom of Christ. “For without it [secular government] this life could not endure.”²⁶ Luther’s position is based not only

— or even primarily — on the fact of sin and the wickedness and licentiousness of men. Luther does indeed emphasize these whenever he speaks of political authority, for only by using the sword can the political authorities restrain that evil which destroys the fabric of society and leads to chaos.²⁷ But Luther clearly sees that the state does more than use its force and power to restrain evil. The political authorities also exercise the office of a father or of parents insofar as they function in nourishing and taking care of people.²⁸ It would be very difficult to base this function on the fact of sin or to derive it from the duty of protecting people against violence; rather, it comprehends all the orders of life. And this is especially true of the other elements which Luther includes in the secular government, such as marriage, the household, property, the relationship between master and servant — these do not have their basis in humanity's fall into sin. They are necessary simply because God desires to preserve the men whom he has created and these orders are indispensable for that purpose. For example, anyone who has an office — beginning with the father of a family who must take care of his children — needs property. “The world could not endure if we were all to be beggars and have nothing.”²⁹ In the same way, earthly life requires relationships in which some are superiors and others are dependent, in which some give commands and others obey, in which some rule and others are subjects — and these relationships are not at all restricted to political life in the narrower sense.³⁰ Thus everything that Luther understands as secular government has a basis antecedent to the dominion of sin, that is, in the elementary necessities of this earthly life. This is what Luther means when he says that secular government was already present in paradise³¹ and that it “was instituted from the beginning of creation.”³²

[9] Thus secular government existed long before Christ and also exercised power without him. This indicates that secular government and Christ's kingdom are two distinct entities and that Christ is not directly involved in secular government.³³

The Concepts of Kingdom and Government

[10] In *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523), Luther clearly distinguishes between the two “kingdoms” on the one hand and the two “governments” on the other. Because there are two kingdoms, the kingdom of God to which all believers in Christ belong and the kingdom of this world to which all others (that is, nonbelievers) belong, “God has ordained two governments the “spiritual. . . and the secular.”³⁴ Later Luther does not maintain this distinction but uses the concepts *kingdom* and *government* in the same sense. He alternates between “spiritual kingdom and secular kingdom” and “spiritual government and secular government,” and between “the kingdom of Christ” and “the government of Christ.”³⁵

“The World” and “The Secular”

[11] Luther uses the concepts world and secular in the same broad sense that the New Testament does.³⁶ When he speaks of living “in the world” he frequently refers to people who live in this age of the world or who live “on earth.”³⁷ In this sense the Christian is a “citizen of this world.” Luther explicitly says that this secular life and the stations that constitute it are given and instituted by God.³⁸ “The righteousness of this world,” “the outward righteousness before the world” is clearly distinguished from “that principal Christian righteousness by which a person becomes a believer acceptable to God.” (Luther understands the statement in Matthew 5:6 about

“those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” as referring to this outward righteousness,) Thus this outward righteousness is indeed considered less valuable than the true righteousness of the Christian. However, it does have positive value, for it says “that in his station everyone should do his duty.”³⁹ If people were seriously concerned about this secular righteousness, “there would be no rascality or injustice, but sheer righteousness and blessedness on earth.”⁴⁰

[12] On the other hand, Luther, like the New Testament, frequently uses the word *world* to designate those men who have closed their hearts to God’s word and live in enmity with him or to describe that area in which sin, Satan, and “the children of Satan” have power.⁴¹ This meaning of world is found in the same contexts in which the other meaning is found.

[13] Given this breadth of usage, it can happen that Luther, like the New Testament, combines the various meanings of world and secular in such a way that both meanings are expressed at once. But that is not always the case. At times the meanings must be clearly differentiated. Luther says one thing when he says that marriage is an “external, worldly matter”⁴² and something quite different when he says that the princes who persecute the gospel are “worldly princes” and live up to their name and title according to the standards of this world.⁴³

[14] Furthermore, Luther’s usage of the terms *worldly* or *secular* and *world* changes. In *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* Luther uses worldly (*weltlich*) or secular in the sense of the world as God’s enemy. Therefore he can describe the princes who are opposed to the Reformation: “Such tyrants are acting as worldly princes are supposed to act, and worldly princes they surely are. But the world is God’s enemy; hence they too have to do what is antagonistic to God and agreeable to the world, that they may not be bereft of honor, but remain worldly princes.”⁴⁴ The princes are preserving their worldly honor. As far as I can see, after 1523 Luther no longer speaks of worldly princes or of a secular government in this significant theological sense; rather, worldly is used in the same sense as temporal, earthly, and bodily. If this observation is correct, it provides evidence for the development of Luther’s thinking about the two kingdoms which I will now describe: Luther no longer bases his doctrine on the opposition between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan which originally characterized his doctrine.

Change in Approach and Basis

[15] Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms or governments was involved in a process of change as regards both his approach and the basis of his doctrine. At first the doctrine was developed under the influence of Augustine’s theology of history. In 1523, when he wrote *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed*, and during the next few years, Luther asserted that there are two governments: the spiritual and the secular. Luther based this assertion on the basic opposition of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. That is, all true believers in Christ belong to the kingdom of God and all other people belong to the kingdom of this world. In this usage, world means the sinful world under the lordship of Satan. Humanity is also divided into two camps, and those who believe in Christ always remain a small minority.⁴⁵ As long as mankind belongs to the kingdom of this world, it stands under the law. The law appears in secular government. This already implies that those who believe in Christ, because they no

longer stand under the law do not need this earthly government, law, and the sword — all this is necessary only for the sake of other people.⁴⁶ If all men were Christians, there would be no need of secular government.⁴⁷ The relationship between the two governments is thus the relationship between the law and the gospel. It corresponds to the division of mankind into Christians and non-Christians. In this usage, kingdom and government are distinguished: the kingdom of this world determined by sin; secular government is instituted by God against sin, even though secular government itself may participate in sin.

[16] This doctrine of the two governments is thus closely related to the biblical dualism between the kingdom of God and this world understood as the kingdom of Satan. It is thus also closely related to Augustine's doctrine of the city of God and the city of this world.⁴⁸ Luther thinks of the world primarily in terms of the state, with its office of preventing evil, with its "sword." If secular government is basically represented by the state and particularly by its punitive power, it is obviously easy to approach the whole problem on a dualistic basis — that is, on the basis of the unconditional opposition between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the sinful world which results in Luther's distinction between two different kinds of government.

[17] However, Luther could maintain this basic understanding of the two governments only as long as he felt that the secular government is basically represented by the state — and particularly by its power of the sword. As soon as Luther began to speak of secular government in a broader sense, including such matters as marriage and property, he could no longer identify the power of evil among men as the basis for secular government in this broader sense. For according to Luther, marriage and property are instituted in paradise and originally have nothing to do with the fall into sin. Thereby, however, the doctrine of the two governments has now been separated from the dualism between the kingdom of God and that kingdom of this world which is in opposition to God. Now the kingdom of this world or the secular kingdom is understood as earthly and as serving to preserve this earthly life. Now Luther no longer needed to distinguish between the terms *kingdom* and *government*; he could use both in the same sense.

[18] After this point, Luther no longer defines the two governments in terms of their relationship to the opposition between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world, understood as being in opposition to the kingdom of God. They are now defined as the spiritual government and the secular, or outward, government which affects our physical, earthly life, or as the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the emperor. Accordingly, the kingdom of this world is no longer simply identified with being under the law — although that certainly remains true of the authorities' demand for obedience from a subject insofar as he is not a Christian. For Luther now sees that the authorities also express the goodness of God; and this goodness is even more clearly expressed in other elements of the secular government, such as marriage, property, and all that Luther lists in his explanation of the First Article and the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer in his Small Catechism.⁴⁹ The two governments no longer deal with two distinct and different groups, the believers and the unbelievers; rather, both affect the life of the children of God in two different areas of one and the same life. The Christian lives in both governments. He is also a citizen of this world.⁵⁰ Therefore, it can no longer be said that Christians do not need secular government for their own persons. And after this time Luther no longer makes this kind of

statement.

[19] In all this Luther has not simply and completely abandoned his characterization of the state (that is, of the secular government in its narrow sense) as being necessary because of sin, but this is no longer all that he has to say; this is now valid only for certain functions of the state.

Reinhold Seeberg attempted to combine Luther's doctrine of the two governments with Luther's doctrine of law and gospel in such a way that "the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical government may be understood as a special instance of the relationship between law and gospel." This is not possible.⁵¹ There is more to secular government than the authority to punish. That is, it is not simply characterized by the law, but also by divine goodness and thus also points toward the gospel. The blessing of God comes not only through the spiritual government but also through the secular government — even though these are two different blessings. "God has a double blessing, a physical one for this life and a spiritual one for eternal life."⁵²

The Unity of the Two Governments

[20] Both governments have been established by one and the same God. Even insofar as secular government exists because of sin, it still does not have its source in sin and is not a city of the devil; rather, it is a divine institution. It is "God's own work, institution, and creation" established in opposition to the devil.⁵³ The same God stands behind both governments and is effectively present in both; God only works in a different way in each.⁵⁴ Luther can even mention in one breath the presence of God in the means of grace of the kingdom of Christ and his presence in the political authorities: "God is in preaching, in baptism, and in government; that is where you can find him." And what Luther says about government naturally applies equally to the household.⁵⁵

[21] We have already said that God rules in both governments with his goodness, love, and mercy. This is no less true of the secular government than of the spiritual government, the kingdom of Christ. It goes without saying that this holds true for the office of parents in dealing with children. However, it is also true of the office of the political authorities and of their use of the "sword," in spite of all misuse. For the political authorities create and maintain law and order, God's good gift, and earthly peace, which is the greatest earthly good and cannot be outweighed by everything else in the whole world.⁵⁶ Through the political authorities, God protects his people from the violent acts of evil men.⁵⁷ Therefore Luther can call the authorities "saviors" and place them alongside fathers and mothers and the doctors and lawyers who help us in sickness or in legal matters.⁵⁸

[22] Luther sees a state in which justice prevails as a picture of the kingdom of God, for such a state preserves peace and therewith, earthly blessedness: "God wants the government of the world to be a symbol of true salvation and of his kingdom of heaven, like a pantomime or a mask."⁵⁹ Thus there is an analogy between secular government and the lordship of Christ, between Christ the Lord and secular lords. In both instances to be a lord means to be a "helping power." When lordship is properly understood and practiced, *lord* is a pleasant, friendly term even in the world. The proper exercise of lordship consists merely in doing good and helpful

things. Therefore if the lords of this world wish to be used as helpers and if their subjects wish to use them as such, *trust* must be as much a part of the relationship between lords and subjects as it is part of our relationship to Christ. The fact that someone is my lord means that I may rely on him; there is a correspondence between the lordship of Christ and that of the lords of this world, even though it is only a relative one.⁶⁰ Thus Luther establishes a very close relationship between our ethical relationship to political authorities and our relationship to God. Both have a common characteristic.

[23] Admittedly, secular government is also a kingdom of wrath for those who are evil and rebellious.⁶¹ Secular government must use force and punish those who are evil in order to protect the righteous.⁶² Thus wrath also stands in the service of mercy. The situation in the spiritual government is no different. The political authorities cannot repudiate the use of wrath anymore than the parents of a family or a preacher in his pulpit can do.⁶³ And just as parents and preachers use “necessary wrath” as a means of love, so it is also a means of God’s love when used by the political authorities: “Although the severity and wrath of the world’s kingdom seems unmerciful, nevertheless, when we see it rightly, it is not the least of God’s mercies.”⁶⁴ Our awareness of the unity and the correspondence between these two governments must not, however, prevent us from seeing the thoroughgoing distinction between them.

The Difference Between the Two Governments

[24] First, there is a difference in rank. Although both are instituted by God, the two governments do not have the same rank. In this respect they are related to one another in the same way as true Christian righteousness that counts before God is related to the secular righteousness that counts “before the world.”⁶⁵ The spiritual government which helps us achieve true righteousness before God has the higher rank, and secular government is subordinate to it. For secular government serves only this earthly life and passes away together with this life;⁶⁶ spiritual government, however, stands in the service of eternal life and thus of God’s ultimate purpose. In an indirect way, of course, secular government also serves the greatest good: eternal life; for spiritual government — the preaching of the gospel and the life of Christendom — requires earthly peace. However, secular government is never anything more than a means to achieve what is really important for God and men. God administers secular government with his left hand;⁶⁷ it is really not very important in comparison with the spiritual government which he exercises with his right hand. It is on this latter government that everything depends; it is God’s own government, and he has reserved it for himself.⁶⁸ “Temporal power is but a very small matter in the sight of God, and too slightly regarded by him for us to resist, disobey, or become quarrelsome on its account, no matter whether the state does right or wrong.”⁶⁹

[25] Secular and spiritual government are as definitely and widely separated as heaven and earth.⁷⁰ The rule in the kingdom of Christ is that all his people, because of their relationship to him, are one and equal before God.⁷¹ In secular government, however, God has instituted differences between men and made some dependent upon others. He establishes human authority and makes it powerful; the fourth commandment requires us to recognize this authority by obeying it. He calls men into a variety of stations and offices and into corresponding relationships of dependence and of commanding and obeying.⁷² Wherever people live together, there is a top and

a bottom, there are higher and lower stations.⁷³ The equality of all Christians before God in faith and love does not abrogate or invalidate natural differences and relationships of dependence and authority among men. The attempt to eliminate these differences would throw human society into chaotic disorder. At the same time, however, the equality is not set aside through the inequality: “God creates one and the same standing within the great inequalities of many different stations and persons.” God wants every station, especially the higher stations, to recognize this equality in all inequality and with all humility to refrain from thinking itself to be more before God than other stations.⁷⁴

[26] The love which Christ commands and exemplifies, rules in the kingdom of Christ. This love gives and forgives without limit, does not avenge itself, and uses no other weapon than love itself. This love is even ready to lose its life for the sake of the brother.⁷⁵ In secular government, at least in the state, justice rules — and rules with force, for only force is able to preserve law and justice. The authorities must take the people who do not want to obey and compel them to obey.⁷⁶ In the kingdom of Christ everything is voluntary. The kingdom of Christ consists in forgiveness; secular government exercises retribution and punishment.⁷⁷ At this point the kingdom of Christ and secular government are in opposition to each other.⁷⁸ Spiritual government does in fact administer punishment through the office of the Word; however, according to Matthew 18 this is done only “with God’s word,” the law. The political authorities do it quite differently; they exercise outward force against “open lawlessness.”⁷⁹ Secular government rules with the sword; spiritual government rules with the word.⁸⁰

[27] In the kingdom of Christ, Christ rules personally with his gospel through his Spirit. Secular government has no need of Christ, his gospel, or the Spirit. Here reason rules.⁸¹ Therefore, in making decisions in the course of fulfilling one’s office in the secular government, one ought not go to Christ for advice but rather to the law of the land.⁸² In this process, positive laws are always to be tested on the basis of reason, for laws flow out of reason “as from the spring of justice.”⁸³

The Two Governments Depend on Each Other

[28] Even though the two governments are different from and essentially independent of each other, they still need each other.

[29] The secular kingdom “can have its own existence without God’s kingdom”; likewise, the spiritual kingdom can exist without the kingdom of this world.⁸⁴ Each government exists independently and does not need the other government in order to fulfill its own nature. Even though both governments are so distinct from and independent of each other, however, they still belong together.⁸⁵ In his doctrine of the stations, or hierarchies, Luther places them together as stations within the one body of Christendom.⁸⁶ They need each other and exist for each other.

[30] The kingdom of Christ, however, could not exist in this world apart from the varied functioning of the secular government.⁸⁷ The institution of marriage creates new members for Christendom; the political authorities create the peace which the congregation of Christ needs to carry out its task.⁸⁸ Christendom does not have the resources to establish this peace. It has only the gospel. But we cannot rule the world according to the gospel in such a way that we could do

without secular government and the state.⁸⁹ For the gospel does not force people to do anything — and for this reason it does not bring everyone faith.⁹⁰ Christians are always a minority; the power of evil continues to exist. And the Christian community will never finish its battle against evil. Rejecting political authority and expecting everything to come from the gospel “would be loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts.”⁹¹

[31] The secular government needs the spiritual government as much as the spiritual government needs the secular. For no society properly maintains law and order and continues to be blessed if it lacks that knowledge of God and his truth which the spiritual government provides.⁹² Only the proclamation of the word permits us to recognize properly and respect secular government and the various stations of society as God’s work and will. The office of preaching helps the authorities to preserve peace and order by instructing all stations concerning God’s will for them and by teaching “obedience, morals, discipline, and honor.”⁹³ The secular government by itself can indeed force people to behave well outwardly, but it cannot make the heart righteous. Where secular government works by itself, therefore, it produces only hypocrisy and outward obedience without the proper attitude of the heart to God.⁹⁴

[32] However, just as one may not separate these two governments from each other and try to have one without the other, so they may not be mixed.⁹⁵ They are and remain two different entities — and precisely for this reason they need each other. Luther says that we cannot have one without the other. And he also says that we should separate them as far from each other as heaven is separated from earth.⁹⁶ The Roman papacy has been especially guilty of mixing the two governments. It has “so jumbled these two together and confused them with each other that neither one has kept to its power or force or rights.”⁹⁷ Through canon law the papacy has sought to gain control of secular law and make decisions in secular matters (such as the laws concerning marriage) which are properly the concern of secular government; thus it has made itself master over all political authorities.⁹⁸ But it is not the function of the church’s ministry to make laws concerning these matters and to exercise secular government; the ministry is concerned with secular matters only insofar as they “touch upon consciences.” It is therefore in a position to instruct and comfort consciences.⁹⁹

[33] When the Enthusiasts derive laws for secular government from the gospel, they confuse the two governments in the same way that the papacy does. The peasants were making social demands in the name of the gospel and thus confusing the two kingdoms.¹⁰¹

[34] On the other hand, Luther condemns the political authorities and the secular princes who seek to rule in the church.¹⁰² Thus authorities in both governments misunderstood the distinction between the kingdoms in two ways, and Luther continually needs to re-emphasize it.¹⁰³

The Christian in Both Governments

[35] The Christian must live in both kingdoms, and he is a citizen of the secular kingdom as well as of the spiritual one.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, he belongs to the kingdom of this world even before he belongs to the kingdom of God, for he was born even before he became a Christian. Therefore he stands under both governments. He has two lords: one in the earthly kingdom and one in the spiritual

kingdom. He is obligated to the emperor and to Christ at the same time; to the emperor for his outward life, to Christ inwardly with his conscience and in faith.¹⁰⁵ How can the Christian live this sort of double existence? Are not his attitudes and his activities tragically and hopelessly fragmented?

[36] Luther posed these questions very seriously and with complete clarity. The meaning of Christ's lordship over men is clarified by Jesus' strict statements concerning the attitude of men in the kingdom of God as these statements are collected in the Sermon on the Mount and adopted and interpreted by the apostles.

The Interpretation of the Sermon on The Mount¹⁰⁶

[37] All Jesus' statements in the Sermon on the Mount have a two-fold meaning. Jesus calls his disciples to freedom and to love. The disciples of Jesus are to be free in their relationship to the world and to its goods: Jesus warns them against bondage to Mammon and to worry. In their relationship to people, the disciples of Jesus live purely and exclusively out of love. This love gives and forgives without limits; it suffers injustice without resisting; it does not repay others what they have coming. Love always responds with and defends itself with love. Thus this love is completely opposed to the style of life typical of this world, in which those who are mighty rule — whereas love itself knows no other lordship than in service. How is it possible to live in this way and at the same time live in a world that is characterized by property and profit, by law, by economics, by the state, and by politics — for example, to be a property owner who has to administer his estate, a judge, a statesman, or a soldier?

[38] Luther asks this question in all its sharpness because he does not weaken either side of the question. He takes Jesus' statements very seriously. And he is very realistic about the task of living in this world as a citizen subject to secular laws.

[39] When Luther interpreted the statements of Jesus which we summarize under the name of the Sermon on the Mount, he was confronted by two opposing opinions. On the one side was the official Roman Catholic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount at the time of the Reformation. According to this interpretation, no one can fulfill the Sermon on the Mount while living in the midst of this world. Its strictest requirements can only be fulfilled by small groups who withdraw from life as much as possible and form a Christian elite — for example, a monastic community. In any case, the most sharply formulated statements of Jesus and his most difficult demands are not intended as unconditional *commandments* for everyone but only as *counsels* for those who wish to achieve perfection. Alongside this, there is room for a secular Christianity which follows only the commandments but not the counsels. Consequently, there are two stages of discipleship.¹⁰⁸ The ascetic ideal proclaimed by Jesus is valid only for a select group; it is moderated for most Christians.

[40] On the other side Luther was confronted by the Enthusiasts' — for example, the Anabaptists' — interpretation and application of the Sermon on the Mount. They too assert that the Sermon on the Mount and life in this world as it now is are in irresolvable contradiction to each other. If

Christians really want to obey their Master, then they must leave this world. They neither may nor can participate in the institutions of this world, such as property, law, oath-taking, the exercise of authority, affairs of state, police work, the penal system, any kind of use of power, and war. Tolstoi asserted that true disciples of Jesus may not even participate in marriage, and similar opinions were current at the time of Luther. Another form of Enthusiasm concludes from Jesus' statements that the world must be basically reformed through a Christian revolution and made to conform to the "evangelical law." In this way it can become a thoroughly Christian world and take on the shape of the kingdom of God on earth — this is the activist form of Enthusiasm. As passive Enthusiasm asserts that we must radically withdraw from the world, so active Enthusiasm asserts that we must radically reform and reshape the world.

[41] Luther opposes both the Roman Catholic and the Enthusiast viewpoints. He begins by rejecting their common presupposition that the statements of Jesus cannot be fulfilled by living in this world as it is. Luther thereby does not in any way weaken the Sermon on the Mount. He takes it absolutely seriously. Even those statements of Jesus which are most strict and which natural man and his reason consider to be "impossible" are "precepts binding on all Christians alike" and not "mere counsels for the perfect."¹⁰⁹ Luther thus rejects the Catholic interpretation because it fails to grasp the difficult but utterly serious demands of the Sermon on the Mount.

[42] At the same time, Luther asserts that the Christian may not leave this world. He ought to use the world and not refuse to accept the offices and responsibilities that are necessary for the life of this world.¹¹⁰ In every situation, he is to act as a Christian in obedience to Jesus — there is no interruption or moratorium in such obedience — and at the same time regularly take his place as a citizen of this world, which may include possessing property, acting as a judge, a prince, or a soldier. Is it possible to realize both of these at the same time? How can the Christian who lives in the world, uses it, and participates in it preserve the freedom and the love to which Jesus calls him?

[43] Luther recognizes — as Clement of Alexandria did earlier¹¹¹ — that the freedom from the world of which Jesus speaks does not consist of outward but of inner distance. Freedom from the service of Mammon means "not setting our confidence, comfort, and trust on temporal goods," "being spiritually poor in our hearts," and "spiritually forsaking everything." Freedom is thus a matter of the heart and of our inner attitude. We cannot all be poor in an economic sense and have no possessions. What is important, however, is that even when we have possessions, our soul remains free of them. "While we live here, we should use all temporal goods and physical necessities, the way a guest does who spends the night in a strange place and leaves in the morning." At every hour of our life, we should be prepared to lose everything and surrender it for the sake of God and "always keep our hearts set on the kingdom of heaven." Even a man who is outwardly poor can, when viewed in terms of his inner attitude, be a "rich belly," a servant of Mammon. On the other hand, many saints have possessed much and have still been poor in the sense that Jesus intended. "The gospel looks into the heart." Luther recognized that Jesus never speaks of a restructuring or reordering of this world but rather only of the personal attitude of his disciples toward the goods of this world.¹¹² This inner freedom — which Paul describes "as having nothing, yet possessing everything, 2 Corinthians 6:10 — is expressed in action whenever

the situation demands it. There are times when the disciple of Jesus can and should give — perhaps even give away everything and let everything be taken from him. In theses prepared for an academic disputation in 1539, Luther explains that we must be able to abandon everything for God's sake whenever our obedience to the first commandment, our confession of faith in God and the gospel, is at stake. Then Jesus' demand must be fulfilled literally and in actuality; we must joyfully abandon everything for the sake of the pearl of great price. Here Luther does not diminish any of the strictness of Jesus' admonition.¹¹³

[44] However, the situation which requires us to abandon all earthly property and goods is not created by man but by God alone. Abandoning everything can never be an achievement that we choose for ourselves but only simple obedience to God's leading of our lives. The hour that requires such a sacrifice is indeed not an infrequent hour, but it nevertheless remains an extraordinary hour — a borderline and emergency situation. It cannot therefore call into question the principle which governs the ordinary situation. Rather, this extraordinary admonition to abandon everything presupposes the ordinary possession of earthly goods and personal property and its use to maintain our life, to earn our living, and to engage in business as God's good institution.¹¹⁴ Jesus speaks of a basic inner freedom that can act at any time and must be ready to do so. One of Luther's statements about private property shows just how seriously he takes this readiness: Anything left over that is not used to help our neighbor is possessed unjustly; it is stolen in God's sight, for in God's sight we ought to give and lend and let things be taken away from us."¹¹⁵ Any of our property that is not necessary for the preservation of our own life belongs to our neighbor. In a certain sense Luther anticipated the socialist slogan "Property is theft," that is, property *can become* theft when the excess which we do not need for our own person is not used for the welfare of our neighbor.

[45] Luther is thus able to show a way in which we can live in the world in harmony with the Sermon on the Mount, because he understands Jesus' statements in terms of our personal attitude and readiness. We have seen that this does not simply mean an ethics of attitudes or only of inner disposition. There is no doubt that Luther has interpreted Jesus' statement as the Master himself intended it. For even our Lord did not require all his disciples to abandon their possessions; he did, however, require them to be prepared to do so anytime God specifically called them to abandon everything.

[46] Luther interprets the love commanded by Jesus — like the freedom from the world — as an attitude which can constantly be lived out while we are participating in the orders and institutions of this world.

Two Areas and Forms of Activity

[47] Viewed in terms of his activity, a Christian man is indeed a double person functioning in a twofold office and living under a twofold law.¹¹⁶ His activity has a twofold form. These two cannot be harmonized, since even God's government is not a unit but appears in the double form of spiritual and secular kingdoms or governments. The Christian stands in two areas of activity.

[48] Luther expressed the fact that the Christian man lives in two areas in various ways. Sometimes he describes “the two persons or the two types of office that are combined in one man” by distinguishing the “Christian” and the “secular person.”¹¹⁷ Elsewhere he distinguishes between “a person acting in his own behalf” and “a person acting in behalf of others, whose duty it is to serve them ; or between the private person and the public person; or between life and activity “when you are the only person affected and life and activity when you are a Christian-in-relation who is “bound in this life to other persons.” Since we are persons for others when we are fulfilling our office, Luther distinguishes between “person” and “office,” or between “Christians as individuals who are not involved in an office and government” and Christians who “occupy a public office.” He also distinguishes between “what each of us, acting in his own behalf, should do to others” and our duties “within secular government.” He thus distinguishes our private relationships to people from our official relationships to people. Luther also distinguishes between “the natural person,” according to which we are all equal to one another, and the “person according to his station,” according to which we are unequal. Occasionally Luther distinguishes the two areas as “inward” and “outward”; but it would be a misunderstanding to interpret his use of “inward” as referring only to our attitude and not to our activity.

[49] The phrase “Christian-in-relation” might be taken to imply that as “private” Christians we are not constantly related to other people and our lives not bound together with theirs, but this is not what Luther intends to say. This phrase — like another that he uses, “Christians as they live for their own person” — does not describe activity that is related exclusively to our own person with out regard to our neighbor. According to Luther, we are never without a relationship to others; we are continually bound to our neighbors. When he nonetheless speaks of life-in-relationship as something special, what he has in mind is our commitment to others insofar as it is governed “by secular law,” that is, in a station which makes me responsible for protecting or serving someone else in a particular way (for example, as a parent or as a prince) .¹¹⁹ Luther thus distinguishes a purely private relationship to my neighbor from one that is given by virtue of my “station.”¹²⁰ He also distinguishes between what affects our own person and what affects someone who has been entrusted to us. Luther’s usage of all such individual sets of contrasting terms must be understood in such a way that they clarify one another.

[50] Taken together, all these terms imply that a distinction must be made between acting (and suffering) in my own behalf in a private relationship with my neighbor on the one hand, and acting (and suffering) in my office, that is, in the responsibility for others inherent in my station.¹²¹

[51] In these two areas one and the same Christian person now has to do things that are quite different, even diametrically opposed. It is as though there really were two persons, one here and another there, with the result that the Christian must do something in one area that he may not do in the other.¹²² Luther here establishes a sharp opposition between what the Christian does as a private person and Christian and what he does and has to do in fulfilling the responsibility of his office in behalf of those who have been entrusted to his care. As a Christian, when his own personal welfare is involved, he seeks to do nothing else than serve his neighbor, even if his

neighbor is his enemy. He is prepared to suffer injustice without protecting himself and resisting evil, without calling upon the authorities and their judicial power for help, without avenging himself — all this in accordance with the statements of Jesus and the apostles.¹²³ However, as a secular person, fulfilling his office of protecting those entrusted to his care and acting in matters that affect the welfare of his neighbor, he must under all conditions fulfill his duty to protect them, to oppose evil, block it, punish it, and use force in resisting it. “A Christian should not resist any evil; but within the limits of his office, a secular person should oppose every evil.”¹²⁴ It is not appropriate for the authorities to be meek and mild; that would run counter to the task which God has given them.¹²⁵ The governing authorities cannot justify such a lenient attitude toward evil on the basis that Jesus says we should not demand justice and retribution, for these statements are not at all concerned with secular government and cannot be established as a rule governing it. Rather, they are concerned with the Christian’s attitude in his heart.¹²⁶ They are binding on the Christian not in terms of what he does in his office as a secular person but only in his personal relationship to his neighbor.¹²⁷ They are not intended to regulate secular affairs and thus serve to preserve this earthly life; rather, they show the way to eternal life.¹²⁸

Unity in Love

[52] Such completely different attitudes and activities in the two areas of life are nonetheless compatible with each other. The personal unity of an individual Christian and the unequivocal character of his ethos are not destroyed in the sense of a double morality or an ethical dualism between “personal morality and official morality,” as Ernst Troeltsch claimed.¹²⁹ On the contrary, a deep and basic unity prevails in the midst of the difference and opposition. Admittedly, it is not apparent in the form of activity in both areas — that is markedly different. This unity is apparent however in the meaning of the action and the personal attitude which is expressed in our activity in each area. The office of which Luther speaks and which he distinguishes from the activity which I carry out in my own behalf is really the same as God’s mandate to serve others. God in his mercy has given me the task of serving and protecting others, and that is an office of love.¹³⁰ It is precisely as forms of service to men, as stations of service, that the offices are “divine stations” and thus conform to God’s nature as love. They are therefore also sanctified as God’s word.¹³¹ Thus when Christians act to fulfill the functions of the offices in which they serve, they do not fall out of the love which Jesus commands and gives. Luther can say that when Christ exhorts us to give the emperor what belongs to the emperor (Matthew 22:21) he is thinking of love.¹³² Thus in the Christian’s activity the distinction, in terms of whether he is acting as a private person or an official person, is made within the activity of love itself. There is a great difference between direct service to our neighbor and the administration of an office which protects his life and serves him as the official authorities do. However, this concerns only the form of the activity and describes the broad variety that is possible. The meaning of this activity — including the corresponding personal attitude — is the same in both cases: serving the life of the other person. The only difference is that in one case service occurs in direct personal encounters between people and in the other case through the structures and orders which support the life of society and through which the Christian serves his brothers. Such official activity is also ministry; it is ministerial activity in the original sense of the word, that is, it is the readiness to serve and to help. Because the offices, particularly the political offices, have been instituted by God as the indispensable form of serving our fellow-man, Luther encourages Christians to make themselves

available for such offices wherever there is a lack of people to administer them properly.¹³³ Christians ought always to be available whenever they have the opportunity to serve others, no matter what form such service may actually take. They should not selfishly ask whether a particular service is important in the eyes of the world or attractive to them personally, but only how necessary it is.¹³⁴

[53] Christians should be especially ready to fill the political offices as a special service to God.¹³⁵ Christians are also needed in these offices because political and judicial offices, like all kinds of power, may be so easily misused by someone with a selfish attitude. They then no longer serve but tyrannize and carry out their own arbitrary and vindictive purposes. Christ purifies the hearts of his people and enables them to administer their offices singlemindedly according to God's own purpose, that is, in order actually to serve.¹³⁶ In all this Luther stands much closer to Jesus and the New Testament than did Tolstoi, who felt that service in government could not be reconciled with being a disciple of Jesus.

[54] Luther repeatedly refers to the distinction between private and official activity in his discussion of Jesus' prohibition of anger in Jesus' interpretation of the fifth commandment, Matthew 5:20 ff. Jesus forbids private anger in matters that affect our own person. However, it is something quite different when we are angry and punish with the authority that is given us by our office, when we act as judges or rulers or even as parents, as fathers or mothers. Such official anger is not only not forbidden but is even commanded by God. It is good, a "necessary and divine wrath" — God's own anger which he expresses through his representatives.¹³⁷ This is also true of spiritual offices. The preacher must also be angry and condemn people when God's honor is involved; indeed, as biblical examples indicate, he must sometimes even curse.¹³⁸ Thus the distinction between private and official activity does not coincide with the distinction between spiritual and secular government. The spiritual government also has offices and therefore also has official activity. However, official anger and condemnation have nothing to do with our private concerns or with the passions of vindictiveness and hatred: it is impersonal wrath and impersonal condemnation administered because of our office, that is, because of our responsibility for justice, for God's commandments, and for God's *honor*. This is anger without hatred of our neighbor.¹³⁹ "Then wrath is not wrathful."¹⁴⁰ For the officeholder serves not his own personal anger but God's wrath. Woe to anyone who allows his subjective, personal, passionate feelings of personal hatred to enter into his official wrath and condemnation.¹⁴¹ Such a man misuses his office and dishonors God's name; he thus breaks the second commandment. But because of original sin and the temptation of the devil, people do this repeatedly.¹⁴² Christians must struggle to keep from confusing their personal anger with God's wrath. It even happens that honorable people convince their consciences that their personal anger and hatred are a righteous expression of their official responsibility. Thus they identify what is a sin in God's eyes with their own personal ideas of virtue.¹⁴³ If the judge sentences the lawbreaker on the basis of his own subjective anger, the judge himself becomes a murderer.¹⁴⁴

[55] The impersonal objectivity with which the Christian serves God's purpose of preserving the world through political offices shows itself in the fact that even when his office requires him to be angry with someone and to administer the law very strictly, as a judge sometimes must, he still

loves this person as his brother before God.¹⁴⁵ The brotherly relationship of Christians to other people is neither excluded nor interrupted by our official relationship to them; rather, both have their place alongside each other. The Christian opposes his fellowman only in his office, not with his heart. If his office as prosecutor or as judge requires him to condemn or punish someone, “he keeps a Christian heart. He does not intend anyone any harm, and it grieves him that his neighbor must suffer grief.”¹⁴⁶ It pains him that he must condemn and punish someone in the name of justice. All judicial activity must necessarily be characterized by anger and by deadly seriousness. However, this is only the outward form within which punishment takes place. The heart of the Christian who must sit in judgment does not share in this anger. On the contrary, the harder the action which he must take against his brother man, the more love burns in his heart, the more he feels pity and compassion for him.¹⁴⁷

[56] There is more to Christian love than what is expressed in an administrative office; love always addresses itself to our neighbor in direct ways as well. However, Luther criticizes the administration of justice under the papacy for the reason that people hesitated to condemn a man to death “because they were unable to distinguish between the private and the public person.” Luther rejects the common custom of the time which required the executioner to do penance and to request the condemned man to forgive him for executing the death sentence — as though the condemnation and execution were also sin, even though he was merely fulfilling the office to which God had called him.¹⁴⁸ Thus official and personal activity may neither be confused nor separated from each other.

[57] Furthermore, the distinction between what we do out of concern for our own person and what we do because we are responsible for others is not Luther’s final word. Something that affects my own person may have a significance that extends beyond my personal life and is relevant to the whole community. An injustice that is done to me is an injustice in and of itself and endangers the whole order of justice within which all others in the community must also live. Under these circumstances it can happen — and Luther considers this case both in *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* and in his sermons on the Sermon on the Mount — that a Christian calls upon secular government for justice in his own behalf and brings his case to court. The Christian may do so as long as his purpose is to preserve law and justice and to guard against injustice — that is, as long as he does not act primarily for his own benefit but because he loves righteousness, not from selfish vindictiveness but “out of a true Christian heart.” We ought not to give in to every kind of violence, keep quiet about it, and do nothing at all — what would that lead to! If we did that, all order would be destroyed. If the preservation of law and justice is involved, Luther can even say that we are commanded to go to court and defend ourselves against the injustice that we have experienced.¹⁴⁹

[58] We may, however, seek justice in this way only if we are at the same time completely prepared to suffer injustice and violence and to follow the example of Jesus before the high priest. When the high priest’s servant struck Jesus, he condemned the unjust act with his words but, here and throughout his whole passion, endured being beaten without defending himself. Luther feels that since we are the kind of people we are, it would be a miracle if someone were to seek justice for himself with such inner freedom and complete objectivity. It does not happen

very often, and this is a dangerous road to follow. We very much like to conceal our deepest personal interest under the cover of selfless objectivity. A special grace is needed here, the grace of a pure heart motivated by God's Spirit.¹⁵¹ Such an action is properly understood in terms of a person's office, that is, his responsibility for the common life. Thus Luther continues to apply his basic distinction between concern for our own person and concern for our service to other people — only now the distinction must be applied in matters which themselves concern our own person. They are a matter of personal concern and I must be prepared to suffer; at the same time, they may also be a public matter that requires me to protect myself. Thus readiness to suffer and the determination to fight to preserve justice can exist side by side. As Luther sees it, they are not contradictory.

[59] In later discussions of the question of resisting injustice, Luther replaces the distinction between matters that affect our own person and matters that affect our office with a distinction between matters that concern the Second Table of the law and matters that concern the First Table. This is a distinction between matters which affect us as citizens of this world and matters which affect our faith and confession. The distinction is made in the disputation on Matthew 19:21 (1539),¹⁵² but it also occurs as early as Luther's sermons on Matthew 5-7 (1530-1532).¹⁵³ This means that whenever a Christian is threatened and attacked as a Christian (that is, for the sake of the gospel and thus for the sake of Christ), he does not defend himself; rather, he is ready to suffer injustice and violence without resisting and to abandon joyfully all that he has — even his body and his life. But in secular matters, when his suffering is not for the sake of the gospel, he may turn to the authorities for help and demand justice and protection. If his request is not granted, then he must suffer in the secular matter too.

[60] This corresponds to Luther's opinion of self-defense.¹⁵⁴ If the authorities persecute the Christian because of his faith (that is, in matters related to the First Table of the law), he does not resist but instead suffers everything, including death.¹⁵⁵ If a thief or robber uses violence against him, however, the Christian as a "citizen of this world" ought to defend himself. The secular authorities require him to do so, and they themselves must resist the evil.¹⁵⁶ If a highway robber wants to take his life, he ought to meet violence with violence. In such a case he is protected by the secular authority, and he represents the authorities to whom he is subject. He acts as these authorities themselves would act and ought to act in fulfilling their responsibility to protect their citizens. Such violent self-defense is required of me, and therefore permitted, only when my life itself is threatened and not in opposition to some other injustice. If my life is not threatened, any private exercise of force is forbidden, since in such cases we ought to wait for the authorities to act.¹⁵⁷ Luther thus establishes my right to defend myself when my life is under attack by asserting that it is no longer a private action for my own personal benefit but an official action of the authorities which I perform in an extraordinary way, that is, as a substitute for the official authority.

[61] All this applies not only to the relationship of the Christian to his own government but also to every relationship in which one man is subject to and ought to obey another, wherever the Christian may stand within the orders of this world. There is basically no conflict between obeying God and obeying human officials. For God also gives us his commands through the offices which

he has instituted, from parents to lords and princes. Therefore, when I obey the men who have been set in authority over me, I do so “for God’s sake,” that is, I obey God himself.

[62] However, just as obedience to God forms the basis for my obedience to men, so it also limits it. My duty to obey God far exceeds any duty to obey earthly authorities. In fact, it requires me to disobey the authorities if they command me to do anything that is specifically contrary to God’s command. In such a case the Christian — because it is God who commanded us to obey men if the first place — is at the same time also free of men. The Christian’s direct relationship to God and God’s direct relationship to him in faith does not exclude but rather includes the relationships mediated through human authority. These two are never identical, however, and our relationship to God is never circumscribed by our relationship to human authority; our relationship to God both transcends and is completely independent of our relationship to human authority. God’s command and our obedience to him can indeed be immanent in the commandments of men and our obedience to them, but at the same time the former always transcends the latter. This is shown in the fact that these two can in fact be in conflict with each other.¹⁵⁸

[63] The tension between our personal attitude and our objective activity for the sake of justice, between love in our hearts and the severity of our administration of justice, is great indeed.¹⁵⁹ However, the Christian must not be destroyed by this tension anymore than God himself is. For, as Luther shows, the same deep tension is found in God himself. God administers justice but is at the same time nothing else than love itself. God must use force against those who rebel against him, and yet his heart burns with love for them. God’s love appears in our evil world also in the broken form of his wrath — as his “strange work.” Thus the ethical paradox in which the Christian finds himself when he administers his office justly is no more difficult to bear than the theological paradox of God’s own activity. Indeed, Luther feels that the first paradox is based on the second. This clearly shows that his solution of the problem of the Christian in political office is not based on a compromise. The basis of Luther’s solution lies deep in his knowledge of God.¹⁶⁰

[64] Luther thus illustrates the unity of the Christian’s attitude and activity in the two realms in relationship to both the Sermon on the Mount and the Bible’s affirmation of law and the state.¹⁶¹

[65] The Christian acts in one way in matters that affect only his own person and in another way when he fulfills his official responsibility in behalf of others. However, it is one and the same love that works in both realms; and it must act differently, precisely because it is love. The same gospel commands both types of activity. Luther thus sees the gospel’s commandment of love as being very closely related to our life within the orders of this world. The gospel is not opposed to our service of government under law but requires it, as a service of our neighbor in love.¹⁶²

[66] Thus the two governments do not exclude each other — presupposing that each remains within the limits of its own area. Luther establishes that a Christian may also be, for example, a prince and that a prince may remain a Christian; he also points out that a Christian may be a subject of both Christ and the emperor.¹⁶³ This demonstrates once again that the relationship

between the two governments is completely different from the relationship between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These latter kingdoms completely exclude each other. “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). According to Luther, however, one can serve both God and the emperor. For God himself has instituted the emperor and his imperial office and is effectively present in him; God is hidden behind the earthly lord. When we obey the emperor, we are basically obeying God himself. We are here involved not with “two masters,” as in Jesus’ statement about Mammon, but with one God; the only distinction is that we at one time obey him directly and at another time indirectly.¹⁶⁴

Response to the Criticism of Luther’s Doctrine of the Two Governments

[67] Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms or governments is frequently criticized.¹⁶⁵ There are two basic objections. First, Luther’s doctrine limits the claim of Jesus Christ to be lord of all areas of life and of the world. Luther derives only the new attitude of the Christian in the world from the gospel; however, he does not describe the task and responsibility of the Christian in the renewal of the world and in the transformation of its orders to conform with the kingdom of Christ. The Enthusiasts — so we are told, “properly identified an inadequacy in Luther’s theology at this point. The second objection is that Luther differs from the New Testament insofar as he disregards the eschatological tension between the two kingdoms and instead thinks of the two governments as simply standing alongside each other in static coexistence, rather than as being at war with one another.

[68] The response to the first objection is that Luther too intends to view secular life, insofar as Christians participate in it, as being under the lordship of Christ. In fact he does not claim that Christ is lord within the *orders* as such but only in the men who act within these orders.¹⁶⁶ Thus the secular kingdom does not stand under the lordship of Christ in the same way that the kingdom of Christ or Christendom does.¹⁶⁷ On this, Jesus and the New Testament agree with Luther.¹⁶⁸ The New Testament itself speaks of the lordship of Christ only as his lordship in persons, that is, in their faith.¹⁶⁹ Such Christians in fact, work in the world so that the orders and relationships which God has established to serve human life may be reestablished and set free from misuse and distortions. Even though this is true, however, this goal cannot be defined in terms of “Christ’s lordship in the orders” — as though there were a Christocracy. According to the New Testament there will continue to be two governments of God as long as this world endures. The lordship of Christ is to be understood in the context of the theology of the cross. It is still hidden under the “form of this world.”¹⁷⁰ The fact that the orders do not stand under the lordship of Christ, but are to be formed and shaped according to reason, does not mean that they are not subject to the will and commandment of God. For reason is obliged to shape the orders in order to fulfill God’s strict demands that life be preserved. Luther constantly reasserted this, not only in general statements but also by making very specific criticisms and by giving directions for specific activities.

[69] The second objection presupposes that Luther’s doctrine is to be evaluated in terms of the New Testament’s teaching of the two aeons and the conflict between the kingdom of God and the demonic kingdom of Satan and sin. It overlooks the fact that — in spite of Luther’s earlier approach to this doctrine, which he did not later maintain¹⁷¹ — Luther is speaking about an

entirely different problem. He is well aware of what the New Testament says about the world and about the biblical contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Wherever he looks in history, or in the administration of the orders, or in every human heart, he sees the battle going on between these two kingdoms, and he therefore also knows something about the eschatological tension.¹⁷² And Luther summons Christians to join in the battle against the demonic powers. However, this battle and conflict may under no circumstances be confused or identified with the relationship between the two governments in Luther's theology. For God has instituted both governments; and he has specifically instituted the secular government against the kingdom of this world, if the kingdom of this world is understood in the absolute theological sense of the power and kingdom of Satan.¹⁷³

[70] Admittedly, the kingdom of this world, Satan, and evil continually reassert themselves in the actual administration of secular government; but this is a misuse of secular government and contrary to God's intention for it. This is equally true of the church and of Christendom, that is, in the area of spiritual government. Satan constantly roams about in both governments and rages against them in order to corrupt them, contrary to God's intention for them.¹⁷⁴ God and Satan struggle with each other in both governments. Indeed, Satan is a far greater danger in the spiritual government. For this reason an office in the spiritual government is far more dangerous and difficult than an office in the secular government,¹⁷⁵ and the failure of people who hold spiritual offices is far more dangerous for the people they are intended to serve. Thus the line of battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan cuts through the middle of both governments. For this reason, it is absolutely impossible to equate Luther's doctrine of the two governments or kingdoms with the absolute opposition between the kingdoms of God and Satan; it is also impossible to correlate the two sets of concepts. It is therefore not appropriate to evaluate and criticize Luther's theology of the secular government on the basis of the biblical statements about the kingdom of this world as opposed to God.

[71] We cannot discuss here the question of the theological and ecclesiastical development of Luther's doctrine in later generations or consider the purposes for which it was used or perhaps used. Our concern at this point is simply to present the actual teaching of the Reformer. Later misuse of this teaching to set government and politics free from the norms of morality is not based on Luther's doctrine itself, and we cannot hold Luther responsible for it. In his own specific application of this doctrine, Luther does indeed reveal the influence of his historical situation.¹⁷⁶ Our world is different from the world in which Luther lived. And Luther's ideas must be reinterpreted and applied in terms of this new situation. However, their basic structure continues to demonstrate its truth.¹⁷⁷ Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is one of the most valuable and enduring treasures of his theology.

[72] Luther never abandons the political world to autonomous self-administration; rather, he constantly struggles against the self-glorification of the princes and their misuse of the secular government. He clearly admonishes the consciences of politicians to conform to the will of God. The emancipation of political governments from any moral concern does not have its source in Martin Luther but in the Renaissance, a movement which swept across the entire expanse of European politics, invading Roman Catholic countries earlier than Lutheran areas but with equal

force. Lutheranism itself stood in opposition to this development for a long time.¹⁷⁸ That it did so was the result of Luther's theology.

Endnotes

1. *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523), *W A* 11, 245-80; *LW* 45, 81-129. Whether Soldiers, Too, Can be Saved (1526), *W A* 19,623-62; *LW* 46, 93-137. *The Sermon on the Mount* (1532), *W A* 32, 299-544; *LW* 21, 3-294. See also the sermons on Matthew 5:20-26, the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, listed in *W A* 22, xlvi-xlvii and a variety of passages in the sermons on the payment of the tax to Caesar discussed in Matthew 22:15-22, the Gospel for the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, listed in *W A* 22, lii-liii, for example, *W A* 11, 202; *W A* 17I, 464, 467; *W A* 29, 598-99; *W A* 32, 178; *W A* 37, 195, 583; *W A* 45, 252. See also Luther's sermon on Romans 12:17-21 preached in 1531, *W A* 34I, 120 ff., and his interpretation of Psalm 101, *W A* 51, 238-39; *LW* 13, 193-99.

The following literature is also important (for additional material, see Paul Althaus, "Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen im Feuer der Kritik," *Luther Jahrbuch* 24 [1957]: 40-68 [reprinted in Paul Althaus, *Um die Wahrheit des Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1962)], pp. 263-92). Franz Lau, "Äusserliche Ordnung" und "weltlich Ding" in *Luthers Theologie des Politischen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933). Harald Diem, *Luthers Lehre von den zwei Reichen, untersucht von seinem Verständnis der Bergpredigt aus, "Theologische Existenz Heute," Neue Folge*, no. 6 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1938). Ernst Kinder, *Geistliches und weltliches Regiment nach Luther* (Weimar: Schriftenreihe der Luthergesellschaft, 1940). Gustav Törnvall, *Geistliches und weltliches Regiment bei Luther* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1947 [orig. 1940]). Franz Lau, *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1953). Ernst Wolf, "Das Problem der Sozialethik im Luthertum," in *Peregrinatio. Studien zur reformatorischen Theologie und zum Kirchenproblem* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1954), pp. 233ff. Johannes Heckel, *Lex charitatis. Eine juristische Untersuchung über das Recht in der Theologie Martin Luthers* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1953). I have evaluated Heckel's presentation of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms in my article "Die beiden Regimenter bei Luther. Bemerkungen zu Johannes Heckels 'Lex charitatis,'" *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 81 (1956), no. 3, cols. 129-36. Heckel responded to my critique in his book *Im Irrgarten der Zwei-Reiche-Lehre* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1957). Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms in the Context of His Theology*, trans. Karl H. Hertz (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1966). The most important discussions of the two kingdoms in relation to political ethics are found in Walter Kunneth, *Politik zwischen Dämon und Gott; eine christliche Ethik des Politischen* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954), pp. 72-97, and Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, ed. William H. Lazareth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 1 (1966): 371- 82; 2 (1969): 655-56.

2. *W A* 11, 248; *LW* 45,87.
3. "At this point (Matthew 5:25-26), the Gospel can be understood as intending to abrogate the secular sword:" *W A* 10 III, 251.
4. *W A* 11, 247-48; *LW* 45, 85-87. Luther points out that Peter confirms the military station of Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43), just as John the Baptist confirms the military station of the soldiers with whom he spoke. *W A* 11, 256; *LW* 45, 98.
5. *W A* 11,255; *LW* 45, 96.
6. One can even say that Luther was led to his doctrine of the two governments on the basis of his correct understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. This is the position of Diem, *Luthers Lehre*, pp. 22 ff., and Lau, *Luthers Lehre van den beiden Reichen*, pp. 21, 24, 35. In many of the sermons which he preached on Matthew 5:20-26, the Gospel for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Luther discusses our actions in fulfillment of an office, especially in government, in terms of the distinction between this type of activity and what Jesus commands in the Sermon on the Mount. In the sermons preached on July 19, 1528, and July 23, 1536, this leads Luther into a discussion of the two kingdoms. *W A* 27, 259; *W A* 41, 638.
7. *W A* 45, 252.

8. *W A* 11, 251; *LW* 45, 91; *W A* 17I, 460; *W A* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 99. Luther contrasts the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of the emperor. *W A* 27, 259. Luther also uses concepts such as power, station, and office as well as government. *W A* 32, 387; *LW* 21, 105-6; *W A* 30II, 206.
9. *W A* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 99.
10. *W A* 51, 238; *LW* 13, 193.
11. For Luther's understanding of the kingdom of God, see especially the sermon on Matthew 18:23 ff. preached in 1524. *W A* 15, 724 ff.
12. *W A* 31I, 245; *LW* 14, 27.
13. *W A* 11, 249; *LW* 45, 88; *W A* 31I, 238-41; *LW* 14, 19-23.
14. *W A* 15,724; *W A* 17I, 463.
15. *W A* 11, 252, 258-59; *LW* 45, 93, 100-1; *W A* 45, 669; *LW* 24, 228.
16. *W A* TR 3, no. 3388; *LW* 54, 199.
17. *W A* 31I, 86; *LW* 14, 55.
18. *W A* II, 258; *LW* 45, 101. It should be noted that this "spiritual sword" not only works through forgiving of sins but also through retaining them. Cf. *W A* TR 6, no. 6672.
19. *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109; *W A* 36, 385; *W A* 51, 238; *LW* 13, 193.
20. *W A* II, 202.
21. *W A* 10I, 2, 426. *W A* II, 258; *LW* 45, 101; *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109.
22. *W A* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 100.
23. *W A* 32, 321; *LW* 21, 29.
24. "The secular rule has nothing at all to do with the office of Christ but is an external matter, just as all other offices and estates are." *W A* 12, 331; *LW* 30,76.
25. *W A* 11, 258; *LW* 45, 101; *W A* 23, 514; *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109; *W A* 37, 197; *W A* 47, 242; *W A* 30II, 562; *LW* 46, 242. It should be noted, however, that parents also belong to spiritual government, for parents proclaim the gospel to their children. *W A* 10II, 301; *LW* 45, 46. See below, pp. 99-100.
26. *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109.
27. "The presence of the sword shows the nature of the children under it: people who, if they dared, would be desperate scoundrels." *W A* 19, 640; *LW* 46, 112.
28. *W A* 30I, 152; BC, 384; *W A* 32, 153.
29. *W A* 32, 307; *LW* 21, 12.

30. *WA* 6, 252; *LW* 44, 82. Augustine felt that the difference between rulers and subjects was based on the fact of sin. *The City of God*, book 19, chapter 15.
31. “God committed secular government to Adam when he said, Genesis 1 [:28]: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.’” *WA* 28, 441. Luther thus recognizes that at least some elements of secular government were present before the fall. *WA* 11, 266; *LW* 45, 111.
32. *WA* 49, 137, 143. In this passage — from a sermon on John 20:12-23 — Luther makes no reference at all to the fact of sin: “In these words, the Lord shows what he has done through his resurrection: he has instituted a government that is not concerned with getting and keeping gold and money, or with this temporal life. For this kingdom was already present, having been instituted at the beginning of the world and subjected to reason. . . . This is the old government and it is the concern of the secular authorities who do not need the Holy Spirit to do their work.” *Ibid.*
33. *WA* 47, 242.
34. *WA* 11, 249-51; *LW* 45,88-91.
35. See, for example, *WA* 30II, 562; *LW* 46, 242; *WA* 36, 385; *WA* 45, 252; *WA* 49, 137, 143; *WA* 51, 238-39; *LW* 13, 193-94; *WA* TR 6, no. 7026. Luther also speaks of the need “to distinguish properly between the secular and the spiritual stations, between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the world.” *WA* 32, 387; *LW* 21, 105 — Luther here uses *Stand*, “station,” in the same sense as *Regiment*, “government”; see *WA* 37, 602. In George Röer’s notes on Luther’s sermons, *regnum* and *regimen* are used in the same sense. *WA* 27, 259-60. The fact that Luther does not continue to distinguish between kingdom and government is related to the change in the structure of his doctrine of the two kingdoms, which is discussed below, pp. 00-00.
36. See Hermann Sasse’s “Κῆσμος,” in Gerhard Kittel et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:868-95.
37. *WA* 32, 371; *LW* 21, 86.
38. *WA* 39II, 40-41. * [The terms are *Welt* and *weltlich*. The latter more literally means worldly, but also carries the full sense of secular. I have frequently chosen to translate it as secular rather than worldly. — Trans.]
39. *WA* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 99-100; *WA* 32, 318-19; *LW* 21, 26.
40. *WA* 32, 319; *LW* 21, 26.
41. “These are princes of this world. But the world is God’s enemy.” *WA* II, 267; *LW* 45, 113; *WA* 32, 310-12, 314, 318; *LW* 21, 16-17, 19-20,25; *WA* 45, 70.
42. *WA* 30III, 205; *LW* 46, 265.
43. *WA* 11, 267; *LW* 45, 113.
44. *WA* 11, 267; *LW* 45, 112-13.
45. *WA* 11, 249-51; *LW* 45, 88-90; *WA* 10III, 252; *WA* 12, 329-30; *LW* 45, 217-19. In 1525 Luther said that God has ordained the sword because of the world, that is, sinful humanity. *WA* 17I, 460. This usage is found as late as 1529. *WA* 28, 281.
46. *WA* 11, 251; *LW* 45, 91; *WA* 10III, 252.

47. *WA* 11, 249-50; *LW* 45, 89.
48. Ernst Kinder, "Gottesreich und Weltreich bei Augustin und Luther," in *Gedenkschrift für Werner Elert*, Friedrich Hubner et al., eds. (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1955), pp. 24-42.
49. *WA* 30I, 363-64, 374; *BC*, 345, 347.
50. "The Christian as a Christian is under the first Table of the law, but outside the kingdom of heaven he is a citizen of this world. Therefore he has two citizenships: he is a subject of Christ through faith and a subject of the emperor through his body," *WA* 39II, 81.
51. Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Deichert, 1933), 4I:368 n. 1 (§84, 11). For a more detailed discussion, see Törnvall, *Geistliches und weltliches Regiment bei Luther* pp. 53 ff.; Lau, *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen*, pp. 43 ff., and Wilfried Joest, "Das Verhältnis der Unterscheidung der beiden Regimente zu der Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium, in *Dank an Paul Althaus, eine Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag*, Walter Künneth and Wilfried Joest, eds. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1958), pp. 79-97.
52. *WA* 40I, 395; *LW* 26, 251. Heckel (*Lex charitatis*, pp. 31 ff.) does not distinguish Luther's development of his doctrine of the two governments in *Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* (1523) and elsewhere in this period from Luther's later thinking on this matter. There is no question that in 1523 and the years immediately following, Luther's doctrine of the two governments is based on the opposition between the kingdom of God and the sinful kingdom of this world, which is ruled by Satan. Heckel however writes as though this were Luther's final position. "Luther's teaching on the governments. . . is first placed in its appropriate context when it is understood in relationship to the two kingdoms" (p. 42). As Heckel understands Luther, he continues to think of the secular government as almost completely overshadowed by the kingdom of this world, which is opposed to God and to his kingdom. Thus he partially distorts Luther's doctrine when he describes it as "Augustinian." See my critical discussion of his position in "Die beiden Regimente bei Luther." The passages from Luther which Heckel cites to support his position require careful examination. In a whole series of instances they do not prove the point that Heckel wishes to establish. See also Martin Schloemann, *Natürliches und gepredigtes Gesetz bei Luther* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), pp.16-17.
53. *WA* 11, 251, 257; *LW* 45, 91, 99; *WA* 39II, 42.
54. "Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness. There is no human ordinance or authority in either, but each is a divine thing entirely." *WA* 19, 630; *LW* 46, 100.
55. *WA* 49, 643.
56. *WA* 7, 581; *LW* 21, 335; *WA* 10I,2, 427.
57. *WA* 37,49.
58. *WA* 52, 158.
59. *WA* 51, 241; *LW* 13, 197. "Worldly lordship is an image, shadow, or figure of the lordship of Christ." *WA* 30II, 554; *LW* 46, 237. (In its context, this latter passage emphasizes the difference and the distinctions between the two governments more than their correspondence.)
60. *WA* 37, 49-52.
61. In spite of *WA* 18, 389; *LW* 46, 70-71, Heckel's summary of Luther is one-sided and only half true when he says (*Lex charitatis*, p. 41): "Mankind experiences this kingdom of God [the secular government] as a kingdom of divine wrath"; the same must be said of his assertion (*ibid.*, p. 42) that the secular government is "exercised

in the kingdom of divine wrath through government and with the use of the sword of secular authority.”

62. *W A* 18, 389; *LW* 46,70-71; *W A* 37,49.
63. *W A* 32, 364; *LW* 21, 78.
64. *W A* 18, 390; *LW* 46, 71.
65. *W A* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 99.
66. *W A* 45, 669; *LW* 24, 229.
67. “This is his kingdom with the left hand. However, the kingdom with his right is wherever he himself reigns.” *W A* 36, 385; *W A* 52, 26. Heckel (*Lex charitatis*, p.41) completely misinterprets Luther’s use of the phrase left hand as though this referred to a “government at the left hand.” Luther, however, does not speak of a government “at the left hand” but rather “with the left hand”! This is the action of divine wrath against the “goats” who stand at the left hand in the Last Judgment.
68. *W A TR* 3, no. 3388; *LW* 54, 199.
69. *W A* 6, 259; *LW* 44, 93. Luther speaks of the “kingdom of this world” as a “filthy and mortal kingdom of the belly” and calls it “a poor and miserable kingdom, indeed, a foul and stinking one.” *W A* 32, 467; *LW* 21, 203. In this passage, however, he is not thinking of secular government as such but of the sum total of all earthly goods, or Mammon.
70. *W A* 47, 284.
71. *W A* 32, 316; *LW* 21, 23.
72. *W A* 6, 252; *LW* 44, 82; *W A* 51, 212; *LW* 13, 161; *W A* 49, 606 ff.; *LW* 51, 348 ff.
73. *W A* 11, 202; *W A* 301, 148; *BC*, 379-80; *W A* 49, 82; *W A* 49, 609-10; *LW* 51, 349-51; *W A* 52, 137; *W A* 51, 212; *LW* 13, 161. Heckel (*Lex charitatis*, p. 36) says that for Luther the inequalities among men in the kingdom of this world are the result of selfishness, but to say this is to read one’s own opinion into Luther. The quotations which Heckel cites (*W A* 7, 590, 592; *LW* 21, 344, 346; *W A* 14, 655, 701; *LW* 9, 145, 220; *W A* 40I, 178; cf. *LW* 26, 97-98) do not support his position. All these quotations merely say that the world cannot exist without a “difference between persons and stations.” This is also the meaning of *W A* 18, 327; *LW* 46, 39.
74. *W A* 49, 609-10; *LW* 51, 349-50; *W A* 32, 476; *LW* 21, 214; *W A* 40I, 178; cf. *LW* 26, 97-98.
75. *W A* 11, 250, 252; *LW* 45, 89, 92; *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 108.
76. *W A* 11, 252; *LW* 45, 92.
77. *W A* 18,389; *LW* 46,69-70.
78. *W A* 17I,460.
79. *W A* 30I, 168; *BC*, 398; *W A* 31I, 130; *LW* 14, 76; *W A* 41, 638.
80. *W A* 28, 281.
81. *W A* 11, 202; *W A* 32, 304; *LW* 21, 9. Concerning business matters, Luther says: “Now, Christ is not preaching

about this. He leaves the division of property and business to the teaching of reason.” *W A* 32, 394; *LW* 21, 115. “In the office of preaching, Christ does the whole thing, by his Spirit, but in the worldly kingdom men must act on the basis of reason — wherein the laws also have their origin — for God has subjected temporal rule and all of physical life to reason (Genesis 2[:15]). He has not sent the Holy Spirit from heaven for this purpose:’ *W A* 30II, 562; *LW* 46, 242; similarly *W A* 45, 669; *LW* 24, 228. “God made the secular government subordinate and subject to reason, because it is to have no jurisdiction over the welfare of souls or things of eternal value but only over physical and temporal goods, which God places under man’s dominion, Genesis 2[:8ff.]” *W A* 51,242; *LW* 13, 198.

82. *W A* 32, 391, 395; *LW* 21, 110, 115.
83. *W A* 11, 280; *LW* 45,129.
84. *W A* 51, 238-39; *LW* 13, 193-94.
85. *W A* 11,252; *LW* 45, 92; *W A* 31 I, 50.
86. See above, pp. 36-37. The doctrine of the two kingdoms and the doctrine of the three hierarchies are not coextensive but complementary. The doctrine of the three hierarchies is distinguished from the doctrine of the two kingdoms by the fact that it is completely bound to the particular historical situation and viewpoint at the time of Luther. As Lau says, Luther was still working with “a structure of society that, viewed in modern times, comprehends both church and state; and he considers this intertwining of spiritual and secular government to be a desirable situation.” *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen*, p. 62. Elsewhere Luther points out that the office of the preaching of the word “rests in the community.” Community (*Gemeinde*), as used at this place, refers to a sociological structure that is both secular and spiritual and was coextensive with the “congregation.” Here both governments are found together with one another in one totality. *W A* 31I, 196; *LW* 13, 49.
87. *W A* 11, 258; *LW* 45, 101.
88. *W A* 31I, 192; *LW* 13, 45.
89. *W A* 11, 251; *LW* 45,91. “I have often taught that the world ought not and cannot be ruled according to the gospel and Christian love, but by strict laws and with sword and force, because the world is evil. It accepts neither gospel nor love, but lives and acts according to its own will unless compelled by force.” *W A* 15, 306; *LW* 45, 264. See also *W A* 15, 302; *LW* 45, 258.
90. *W A* 11, 260; *LW* 45, 102; *W A* Br 3, 484-85; cf. S-J 2, 311. [S-J translates the letter but not the accompanying memorandum.-Trans.]
91. *W A* 11, 251-52; *LW* 45, 91-92; *W A* 17I, 333.
92. *W A* 31I, 50.
93. *W A* 30II, 537-38; *LW* 46, 226-27; *W A* 31II, 592.
94. *W A* 11,252; *LW* 45,92; *W A* 30II, 562; *LW* 46,242.
95. *W A* 11, 252; *LW* 45, 92; *W A* 32, 387; *LW* 21, 105.
96. *W A* TR 6, no. 6672.
97. *W A* 30III, 206; *LW* 46, 266. In opposition to this, Luther maintains “that the two authorities or realms, the temporal and the spiritual, are kept distinct and separate from each other and that each is specifically instructed

- and restricted to its own task.” Ibid. See also *W A* 30II, 112; *LW* 46, 166.
98. *W A* 30II, 112, *LW* 46, 166; *W A* 30III, 205; *LW* 46, 265-66.
99. *W A* 30III, 205; *LW* 46, 265. “Let whoever is supposed to rule or wants to rule be the ruler; I want to instruct and console consciences, and advise them as much as I can.” *W A* 30III, 206; *LW* 46, 267.
100. *W A* 51, 239; *LW* 13, 194.
101. *W A* 18, 327; *LW* 46, 39; *W A* 41, 538.
102. *W A* 51, 239; *LW* 13, 194.
103. “Constantly I must pound in and squeeze in and drive in and wedge in this difference between the two kingdoms, even though it is written and said so often that it becomes tedious. The devil never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other:’ *W A* 51, 239; *LW* 13, 194.
104. *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109; *W A* 39II, 40, 81.
105. *W A* 32, 187; *W A* 32, 390, 393; *LW* 21, 109, 113.
106. Georg Wünsch, *Die Bergpredigt bei Luther. Eine Studie zum Verhältnis vom Christentum und Welt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1920). Wünsch’s description of Luther’s position is strongly influenced by Ernst Troeltsch. For my criticism of this position, see my review of this book in *Theologisches Literaturblatt* 43 (1922), col. 81-89.
107. *W A* 32, 299 ff.; *LW* 21, 3-6.
108. *W A* 11, 249, 259; *LW* 45, 88, 101-102; *W A* 28, 279; *W A* 30II, 110; *LW* 46, 164; *W A* 32, 299, 361; *LW* 21, 3, 74.
109. *W A* 11, 245, 249; *LW* 45, 82, 88; *W A* 28, 282; *W A* 32, 299; *LW* 21, 3; *W A* 39II, 189.
110. “Christians all belong to the imperial government, which Christ has no intention of overthrowing. Nor does he teach us to escape from it or to desert the world and our office and station, but to make use of this rule and established order.” *W A* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113.
111. [For example, see “The Rich Man’s Salvation,” in George W. Forell, *Christian Social Teachings* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1966), pp. 54-57. — Trans.]
112. Quotations in this paragraph are found in *W A* 32, 307-8; *LW* 21, 13-15.
113. *W A* 39II, 40.
114. *W A* 39II, 39.
115. *W A* 10III, 275.
116. *W A* 32, 390; *LW* 21, 109.
117. *W A* 32, 316, 390; *LW* 21, 23, 109; *W A* 34I, 121-22. In referring to Luther’s sermons on Matthew 5-7, one must take into account that individual phrases may not come from Luther himself but from the editors. (See *W A* 32, p. lxxvi; *LW* 21, xiv-xv.) However, the basic picture of Luther’s distinction between two persons in one Christian is clear.

- 118.** For the above paragraph, see *W A* 19, 648; *LW* 46, 122; *W A* 32, 316, 334, 368, 390-93; *LW* 21, 23, 44, 83, 109-13; *W A TR* 3, no. 2911a; cf. *LW* 54, 180-81.
- 119.** *W A* 32, 391; *LW* 21, 110; *W A* 30I, 172; BC, 402.
- 120.** *W A* 32, 316; *LW* 21, 23; *W A* 30I, 157; BC, 389.
- 121.** What is involved here is our responsibility within secular government. Being there as a Christian for others is also a constant factor in a private relationship, but not the same way as when an office is involved. Even as a brother, sister, or friend I can be put into a situation in which my responsibility as a fellow Christian requires me to make my neighbor aware of the evil he is doing and correct him, and thus in this sense “punish” him. This private Christian responsibility is not to be confused with the public responsibility which a secular office or station lays upon us: I may and must correct my fellow Christian, but I am forbidden to sit in judgment and condemn him “in my own behalf” without having any office of secular responsibility. “Likewise, although no one has in his own person the right to judge and condemn anyone, yet if they whose duty it is fail to do so, they sin as much as those who take the law into their own hands without such commission.” *W A* 30I, 172; BC, 402.
- 122.** In speaking of the fifth commandment, “You shall not kill,” Luther says: “Therefore neither God nor the government is included in this commandment, yet their right to take human life is not abrogated. . . . Therefore, what is forbidden here applies to private individuals, not to governments.” *W A* 30I, 157; BC, 389.
- 123.** *W A* 11, 259-60; *LW* 45, 101-103.
- 124.** *W A* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113.
- 125.** *W A* 32, 316; *LW* 21, 23. “The rule in the kingdom of Christ is the toleration of everything, forgiveness, and the recompense of evil with good. On the other hand, in the realm of the emperor, there should be no tolerance shown toward any injustice, but rather a defense against wrong and a punishment of it, and an effort to defend and maintain the right, according to what each one’s office or station may require.” *W A* 32, 394; *LW* 21, 113.
- 126.** *W A* 28, 282.
- 127.** *W A* 10III, 251. “Christ is not giving lessons in the use of the fist or of the sword, or in the control of life and property. He is teaching about the heart and the conscience before God. Therefore we must not drag his words into the law books or into the secular government.” *W A* 32, 374; *LW* 21, 90. “Christ has no intention here of interfering in the order of the secular realm, or of depriving the government of anything. All he is preaching about is how individual Christians should behave in their everyday life.” *W A* 32, 382; *LW* 21, 99; *W A* 32, 307, 389, 395; *LW* 21, 12, 108, 115; *W A* 37, 482.
- 128.** *W A* 32, 304; *LW* 21, 9.
- 129.** *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960), 2:508-509, 550-76.
- 130.** *W A* 32, 314; *LW* 21, 20; *W A* 11, 274; *LW* 45, 121.
- 131.** *W A* 32, 316; *LW*, 21, 23.
- 132.** *W A* 11, 202.
- 133.** *W A* 11, 255; *LW* 45, 95.

- 134.** “Love of neighbor is not concerned about its own; it considers not how great or humble, but how profitable and needful the works are for neighbor or community.” *WA* 11, 261; *LW* 45, 103-104. See also *WA* 11, 256; *LW* 45, 98.
- 135.** “For the sword and authority, as a particular service of God, belong more appropriately to Christians than to any other men on earth.” *WA* 11, 258; *LW* 45, 100. See also *WA* 11, 254; *LW* 45, 94.
- 136.** *WA* 11, 274; *LW* 45, 122. “A Christian may carry on all sorts of secular business with impunity — not as a Christian but as a secular person — while his heart remains pure in his Christianity, as Christ demands. This the world cannot do; but contrary to God’s command, it misuses every secular ordinance and law, indeed every creature.” *WA* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113.
- 137.** *WA* 20, 455; *WA* 32, 364; *LW* 21, 78; *WA* 34II, 6-8, 10; *WA* 37, 383, 385, 482-83; *WA* 41, 638.
- 138.** *WA* 20, 456; *WA* 34II, 8; *WA* 37, 384; *WA* 40I, 309; *LW* 26, 186; *WA* 41, 638.
- 139.** *WA* 37, 115; *WA* 45, 112.
- 140.** *WA* 41, 638.
- 141.** *WA* 20, 456.
- 142.** *WA* 37, 383-84; *WA* 41, 636-38; *WA* 45, 111-12.
- 143.** *WA* 32, 366-68; *LW* 21, 81-83.
- 144.** *WA* 20, 456.
- 145.** *WA* 10III, 252. “Here an official should properly not feel anger in his heart, even though he must express anger; let his voice be sharp and his fist be rough, but he should keep his heart sweet and friendly, free of any malice.” *WA* 32, 362; *LW* 21, 76; *WA* 32, 392; *LW* 21, 111.
- 146.** *WA* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113; *WA* 20, 456.
- 147.** “We see that a godly judge painfully passes sentence upon the criminal and regrets the death penalty which the law imposes. In this case the act has every appearance of anger and disfavor. Meekness is so thoroughly good that it remains even in such wrathful works. In fact, the heart is most tormented when it has to be angry and severe. . . . I must not regard my own possessions, my own honor, my own injury, or get angry on their account; but we must defend God’s honor and commandments, as well as prevent injury or injustice to our neighbor. The temporal authorities do this with the sword; the rest of us by reproof and rebuke. But it is to be done with pity for those who have earned punishment.” *WA* 6, 267; *LW* 44, 103. See also *WA* 27, 267. “For example, a pious judge gets angry with a criminal, even though personally he wishes him no harm and would rather let him off without punishment. His anger comes out of a heart where there is nothing but love toward his neighbor. Only the evil deed is punishable and must bear the anger.” *WA* 32, 368; *LW* 21, 83.
- 148.** *WA* TR 3, no. 2910B; *LW* 54, 179.
- 149.** *WA* 11, 261; *LW* 45, 104; *WA* 32, 388, 392; *LW* 21, 107, 111.
- 150.** *WA* 28, 282-83; *WA* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 112.
- 151.** *WA* 11, 261; *LW* 45, 104; *WA* 32, 392; *LW* 21, 111.

152. *W A* 39II, 39 ff., especially theses 21 ff.
153. *W A* 32, 395; *LW* 21, 116.
154. *W A* 18, 647; *LW* 46, 120.
155. *W A* 39II,41; *W A TR* 2, no. 1815.
156. *W A* 39II, 41, 80; *W A TR* 2, no. 1815, 2666a, 2727a.
157. *W A* 39II, 41.
158. For a further discussion of this, see our treatment of the authority of parents and of political authorities below, pp. 100, 124-32.
159. Luther finds this tension in the Bible, for example, in Moses, Paul, David, and others in the Old Testament. He says that “they used the sword energetically in fulfilling their office and executed people like chickens — but at the same time they were no less meek, mild, and friendly in their hearts:’ *W A* 10III, 252-53.
160. *W A* 36, 427.
161. “Thus the word of Christ is now reconciled, I believe, with the passages which established the sword:’ *W A* 11, 260; *LW* 45, 103.
162. “In this way the two propositions are brought into harmony with one another: at one and the same time you satisfy God’s kingdom inwardly and the kingdom of the world outwardly. You suffer evil and injustice, and yet at the same time you punish evil and injustice; you do not resist evil, and yet at the same time, you do resist it. In the one case, you consider yourself and what is yours; in the other, you consider your neighbor and what is his. In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the gospel and suffer injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns the person or property of others, you govern yourself according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact, in other places it actually commands it:’ *W A* 11, 255; *LW* 45, 96. When Luther speaks of gospel in this statement he is thinking first of all of the Sermon on the Mount and second, of statements such as “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22 : 21). Luther understands this latter statement as an exhortation to love by serving others through the state. *W A* 11, 202.
163. *W A* 11, 246, 273; *LW* 45, 83, 121; *W A* 19, 629; *LW* 46, 99; *W A* 32, 393; *LW* 21, 113; *W A* 39II, 81.
164. Luther comments on Jesus’ statement “No one can serve two masters” in Matthew 6:24: “He is referring to two masters that are opposed to each other, not to those that govern together. There is no contradiction involved if I serve both God and my prince or emperor at the same time; if I obey the lower one, I am obeying the highest one as well, since my obedience moves in an orderly fashion from the one to the other.” *W A* 32, 453; *LW* 45, 186.
165. For a detailed summary of this criticism, see Althaus, “Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen im Feuer der Kritik,” pp. 40-68.
166. *W A* 11, 246; *LW* 45, 83.
167. Erwin Mülhaupt, “Herrschaft Christi bei Luther,” *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* 1 (1958): 165-84.
168. This is also the conclusion of *Lau, Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen*, p.88.

169. In faith, the Christian knows that Christ is the lord of all things, even of money, and lives accordingly. “There are many people who believe that Christ is the lord, but they do not believe that he is the lord of all things, such as money, and do not trust him to feed them; rather, they live as though they had to scratch out a living for themselves — and when they are touched by poverty, they become very worried:’ *WA* 12, 459.
170. “Therefore the kingdom of Christ is and remains a secret kingdom, concealed from this world, maintained in Word and faith until the time of its revelation.” *WA* 31I, 248; *LW* 14, 30. See *Theology*, 31-32.
171. See above, pp. 51-53.
172. *Theology*, 404-405.
173. Luther explains that the kingdom of this world would be the kingdom of Satan if there were no secular government, *WA* 17I, 467.
174. *WA* 23, 514. See Törnvall, *Geistliches und weltliches Regiment*, pp. 185 ff.
175. *WA* 37, 602.
176. On this point, see Paul Althaus: *Religiöser Sozialismus. Grundfragen der christlichen Sozialethik* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1921), pp. 91-92; idem, *Obrigkeit und Fuhrertum* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1936) p. 55; idem, “Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen im Feuer der Kritik,” pp. 67-68.
177. “We live in a world in which Christ has not yet established his lordship but which is still controlled by other powers. Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms remains the best available help to live a Christian life in such a world. A more adequate or clearer interpretation of the biblical understanding of Christian existence in a world which must guarantee its own existence by means of force has not yet been given us.” Lau, *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen*, p. 95.
178. Althaus, “Luthers lehre von den beiden Reichen im Feuer der Kritik,” pp. 62 ff.