

WORK

Week 10: The Theory and Practice of Reformation through Work (Part 1)¹

Ideas have consequences. Whether we realize it or not, our engagement in society generally—and in our work particularly—is the result of an undergirding theology we may have consciously chosen or may have picked up at church, talk show or podcast hosts, at home, or from friends. **Do you have a “one kingdom” view of work or a “two kingdom” view of work? Do you even know what that means?**

HOW MANY KINGDOMS? ONE OR TWO?

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) the Dutch theologian/statesman best articulated—and lived—the one kingdom perspective (the author of our study, Dan Doriani, is neo-Kuyperian). **One Kingdom View believes:**

- Christ is Lord of all of life and he rules all things (his one kingdom) through his gospel and the comprehensive truth of Scripture.
- The Church is the vanguard, school, and hospital for disciples, but Christ’s rule of the church isn’t so different from his rule of everything else.
- Jesus is Lord of “every square inch” of this world.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), whom we have already met, espoused a typical two kingdom perspective. **Two Kingdom View believes:**

- The church should be central to the Christian life.
- Cynicism about the ability to realize gospel norms in temporal and political structures is appropriate.
- While God’s Word governs all of life, secular fields like politics, economics, science, and technology are governed by justice and law—not grace.
- Christians should emphasize commonality between believers and non-believers in their mundane lives.

Here comes the question again: **Do you lean more 1K or 2K?**

¹ This study is a distillation of Daniel Doriani’s *Work: Its Purpose, Dignity and Transformation* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2019). It is meant to be taught in conjunction with the book, not as a replacement.

Two Kingdoms

Table 1

	Classical 2K	Radical 2K	Neo-Calvinism
Who taught it?	Martin Luther and (partly) John Calvin	Michael Horton and David VanDrunen	Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck
What are the kingdoms?	Invisible (vertical) Visible (horizontal)	Visible (church) Visible (state)	All of life lived rightly reflects God’s kingdom
What law governs the kingdom(s)?	Invisible: Scripture (gospel) Visible: Scripture (law) and natural law	Church: Scripture State: natural law	Scripture is clearer than natural law
Where is redemption?	Our souls	Our churches	All creation
Are our vocations part of God’s kingdom?	No vocations are part of God’s kingdom (Luther)	Only pastoral vocations part of God’s kingdom	All vocations part of God’s kingdom

READING CREATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE FALL

At Creation, God ruled over all reality—both physical and spiritual alike—through one kingdom. And over that kingdom he placed Adam and Eve to rule according to his law: **Read Genesis 1:26-28 & 2:15.**

Everything changed when man fell into sin. He no longer ruled the created order as he was made to do. Creation had a new king: Death. And yet, the creation still seemed to recognize and groan for its rightful rulers: **Read Romans 5:14 & 8:19-21.**

Moreover, the created world was not abandoned by its Creator when man sinned. The Psalmist often sings of the ways God's world continues to operate according to his gracious word: **Read Psalm 104.**

"Theologians like to distinguish the word of God in creation from the word of God in Scripture. But Psalm 147:15-19 says that God's "word runs swiftly" to send ice and frost and to declare his "statutes and rules to Israel." That is, the psalm connects the word in creation to the word of redemption. God speaks in both" (167).

Does God speak differently in creation and in the Scriptures? In 1 Corinthians 10:31 Paul writes, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." This command assumes that "we can discover how to glorify God whatever we do, across the range of human activity" (167). **But how?**

WISDOM AND CREATION ORDINANCES

Apart from God, the world has two definitions for good workers:

- The good worker obeys the authorities and their rules
- The good worker seeks insight, wisdom, skill, and virtue

Both of these fall short, truncating the humanity of workers and enabling self-promotion (Jer. 17:9). Rather, good work happens as we observe the created order through the lens of Scripture and gain wisdom through experience in putting the Word to work in every sphere of life.

STRUCTURE AND DIRECTION

Genesis chronicles the growth of mankind, and with it the advent of certain structures. In the Garden we see man practicing scientific study, governance, family, work, and rest (Gen. 1:28; 2:15,19,24). As the population grew, cities developed with craftsmen, governments, and economies: "The more potent the structure, the greater its capacity to

do good if well-directed and to do harm if not" (170). **How might a believer in good conscience design software for a lethal F-15 fighter jet?**

SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY

"The orders of life function best when they operate according to their principles and stay within their boundaries" (171). Kuyper proposed *sphere sovereignty* for each realm of life:

- Knowledge of the rules for each sphere of life
- Leaders appointed for each sphere of life
- A resolve to work within its boundaries instead of intruding on other spheres

Kuyper's followers (neo-Kuyperians) believe that humanity develops through voluntary associations. No association should trample others or be trampled. For instance, "The state should not govern (or crush) families, churches, or literary clubs" (172).

Each sphere has a purpose and principles, and inevitably spheres will intersect one another: "Parents can challenge education experts if they believe classroom instruction contains misinformation or uses methods that damage their children. Many of our conflicts at work arise when two spheres seem to clash" (173). **Can you think of an instance when leaders in a sphere transgressed their bounds?**

- Arts & Communism
- Boss & Workers
- Economy & Education
- Arts & Commercialism
- State & Family
- State & Church

Example: Consider the case of David Dao. After settling into his airline seat, a flight attendant informed him that his seat was taken. Refusing to get up, he was forcibly removed from the flight, suffering a concussion and broken nose in the process. What happened? The airline intentionally overbooked flights to maximize profits. The *economic* sphere was "strong-arming" the social sphere of customers. When policies changed to build trust with customers, airlines found that treating customers well is good for business!

Food for Thought:

Do you believe Jesus is Lord of every square inch of life? How does that shape your life in the home, work, politics, elsewhere?

Have you seen any area where God may be calling you to restructure your part of the world?