

BOOK REVIEWS

Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought, by David VanDrunen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. x + 466 pp. \$35.00.

For the past century or more, neo-Calvinism has exercised a tight hold on both the Reformed and American evangelical practice of social engagement, pressing upon the church what VanDrunen calls a “one-kingdom” model. “This kingdom,” he explains, “encompassing all human activities and institutions, was originally created by God in perfect righteousness, was corrupted through the fall into sin, and is now being redeemed from corruption and advanced toward its eschatological goal. Christians are not to dismiss any area of life as outside of God’s redemptive concern, and thus are to seek to transform all activities and institutions in ways that reflect the kingdom of God and its final destiny” (p. 4). In this model, the Christian (and more specifically, the *church*) makes no hard distinction between sacred/secular, cultic/civic, religious/political, evangelistic/social, *oral labora*; instead, the Christian mission is to bring all aspects of life uniformly under the singular kingship of Christ. To suggest that the believer is a citizen of *two* kingdoms (spiritual vis-à-vis civil) is to capitulate to Lutheran or even Gnostic dualism.

In view of the preceding, a growing coalition of two-kingdom advocates with rigidly Reformed pedigrees commands considerable interest. David VanDrunen has emerged as a major contributor to the Reformed two-kingdom cause, joining the likes of Michael Horton, Darryl Hart, and Justin Stellman in defending the believer’s “dual citizenship.” In brief, the model understands the believer to have two distinct sets of responsibilities. As an individual Christian living in God’s civil kingdom, he has a responsibility to love his neighbor as himself, pursuing integrity, justice, and excellence in his industry, politics, social welfare, science, art, and every area of his secular life. As a citizen of God’s spiritual kingdom he has a responsibility to join with the church in worship, evangelism, discipleship, and edification. What is critical to the two-kingdom model is that the institutional church does not encroach upon tasks that God has assigned to civil society and the state does not encroach upon tasks that God has assigned the institutional church. As members of both kingdoms, individual Christians may and must operate in both realms, but the realms must remain distinct (e.g., while social responsibility constitutes an abiding concern of two-kingdom theology, it is a concern of Christians *as individual members of civil society*, and not of Christians *as part of the institutional church*).

VanDrunen builds his case historically (see the parameters of his study detailed on pp. 14ff.), arguing that not only Luther, but also Calvin, Turretin, the Puritans, and in fact most pre-twentieth-century representatives of the Reformed faith were committed to a two-kingdom distinction. Indeed, many of the failures that occurred during this period can be traced precisely to points at which they *failed* to maintain this distinction or maintained it inconsistently (i.e., when they mingled church and culture into a single redemptive/eschatological conglomerate)—a practice that effectively undermines the success of both kingdoms. VanDrunen traces the decline of the two-kingdom model and corresponding rise of the one-kingdom model to two major factors: (1) the rise of Barthian Christocentrism, and (2) the progressive blurring of the two kingdoms in Dutch Reformed thought (Kuyper, Dooyeweerd, Van Til and the “VanTillians”). One is left to wonder a bit about the influence of theological liberalism, but alas, the discussion of this book is limited to those who were “self-consciously committed theologically and ecclesiastically to the historic Reformed creedal standards, in something like their original meaning” (p. 16), so Schleiermacher and his ilk were not accorded significant treatment.

This volume is primarily historical in nature—VanDrunen makes no direct overture for his readers to adopt the two-kingdom model. However, as a good historian, he weaves into his historical analysis an unspoken invitation for his readers to sympathetically explore the model further. In this he is successful. And while VanDrunen’s firm commitment to the whole Reformed tradition, unguarded use of kingdom language, and broad emphasis on natural theology will no doubt trouble some readers of this journal, his discussions will agreeably pique the interest of Baptist readers (with their historic emphasis on separation of Church and State) and fundamentalist/dispensationalist readers (whose legacy of reticence to expend the church’s resources to “polish the brass on the sinking ship” of modern culture is well-documented). No doubt the ideas in this seminal work will undergo much finessing and emendation in the coming years; but for now they warrant close watching and cautious praise.

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Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study, by James Leo Garrett, Jr. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009. xxvii + 743 pp. \$55.00.

Timed to be released at the quadricentennial anniversary of the establishment of the first Baptist church on British soil, James Leo Garrett offers a comprehensive survey of the theologies of individuals who have called themselves Baptist. The book is the *magnum opus* of a professor who has spent more than fifty years reading and teaching