

Kingdoms and Covenants: Evaluating David VanDrunen's Two Kingdom, Natural Law Approach to Culture

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Summary of VanDrunen's Position

David VanDrunen has over the past decade developed an approach to culture distinct from much of evangelicalism and with a claimed pedigree reaching back through the Reformation to Augustine. He sets this view in opposition to those who think that God is redeeming cultural activities through Christians who carry out the creation mandate to build God's kingdom in such a way that the culture they transform will be part of the New Jerusalem. In contrast, VanDrunen proposes that Christians live in two kingdoms. The kingdom of God is the eternal kingdom won by Christ. It is expressed now in the ministry of the church, and it will find its consummation in the new creation. This kingdom is ruled by Scripture. The common kingdom is the kingdom that the saved and lost share. Christians participate in this kingdom, and they seek to show love for their neighbors in their cultural endeavors in this kingdom. But they realize that the culture they create will not endure for all eternity, so they do not try to transform it. This kingdom is ruled by natural law, rather than by Scripture.¹

VanDrunen bases this two kingdom's view on the Scripture covenants. A creation covenant establishes the roles of Adam and the Second Adam in obtaining eternal life. The Noahic covenant grounds the common kingdom. The Abrahamic covenant grounds the redemptive kingdom. Under the Mosaic covenant, the redemptive and common kingdoms are merged for Israel so that both are ruled by Scripture. When out of the land, the Israelites function in the common kingdom under natural law. Christians under the new covenant find themselves in a situation most akin to Israel in the Babylonian exile. The common and redemptive kingdoms are distinct and ruled by natural law and Scripture respectively. New Testament Christians, however, still function in the common

¹ David VanDrunen, *A Biblical Case for Natural Law*, Studies in Christian Social Ethics and Economics, ed. Anthony B. Bradley (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute, n.d.), 37–39. VanDrunen provides three reasons that the common kingdom is ruled by natural law as opposed to Scripture. First, Scripture has an “indicative–imperative” structure. The imperatives only apply to those of whom the indicatives are true. Second, the patriarchs lived in the common kingdom according to natural law rather than according to Scripture. Third, Old Testament judgment passages regarding the nations are rooted in natural law rather than special revelation. Ibid., 39, 42, 52. VanDrunen has clarified that this does not mean that Scripture is silent about the common kingdom. First, he argues that the two kingdoms model itself, including teaching about the common kingdom, is found in Scripture. Second, Scriptural law and natural law overlap, so it is appropriate for Christians to have a biblically informed view of natural law. David VanDrunen, “Two Kingdoms and Moral Standards,” available at <http://wscal.edu/blog/entry/two-kingdoms-and-moral-standards>, accessed 3/5/2011.

kingdom. They should engage in cultural pursuits, but they should do so in a way that can be described as “joyful, detached, modest.”² And Christians certainly should not invest eternal significance in their cultural pursuits. By contrast worship in Word and sacrament on a day set apart from common cultural activities gives the Christian a foretaste of the next world. But for its spiritual distinctness to remain, the church must not meddle in the affairs of the common kingdom.³

There are a number of avenues by which to evaluate this natural law, two kingdom approach to culture. Its logical coherence could be evaluated.⁴ Since VanDrunen claims that his view has historical precedent,⁵ his historical argument could be critiqued. Its potential effect on Christian living could be scrutinized.⁶ This paper critiques VanDrunen’s two kingdoms approach exegetically by evaluating the way he grounds his two kingdom theology in the biblical covenants.

The Creation Covenant

Fundamental to VanDrunen’s view is a belief in a creation covenant constructed in a particular manner.⁷ But by misconstruing the Creation Covenant, VanDrunen’s entire system rests on a shaky foundation.

² David VanDrunen, *Living in God’s Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 164.

³ This summary is based on *Ibid.*, *passim*.

⁴ James Anderson writes: “On my reading, VanDrunen seems to be committed to all of the following claims: “(K1) When living as citizens of the common kingdom, people should observe the moral standard of that kingdom.

“(K2) The moral standard for the common kingdom is natural law (and only natural law).

“(K3) When living as citizens of the common kingdom, Christians should observe the distinction between the two kingdoms.

“(K4) It is not a deliverance of natural law that Christians should observe the distinction between the two kingdoms.

“In a nutshell, my objection is that these claims form an inconsistent set: they can’t all be true. So the question is whether 2K advocates really are committed to all four claims, and if not, which do they reject[?]” “2K or not 2K?” available at <http://proginosko.wordpress.com/2011/03/02/2k-or-not-2k/>, accessed 3/5/2011.

⁵ David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, ed. John Witte Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁶ For instance, VanDrunen is dismissive of the need for distinctively Christian approaches to vocation, and he emphasizes the importance of working together with non-Christian neighbors in the common kingdom. For instance, VanDrunen does not find it helpful to talk of Christian dentists, plumbers, or firefighters. There is nothing specifically Christian about such things, and he believes that Christians should have liberty to approach these vocations in different ways. VanDrunen, *Living*, 191–93. This approach has the potential of secularizing a Christian’s approach to other vocations—doctor, educator, lawmaker, for example—in which a real antithesis exists between the Christian and the unbeliever.

⁷ This statement is most true with regard to the two kingdoms aspect of VanDrunen’s approach. The natural law aspect is more rooted in his conception of the image of God in man. Hence, with reference to natural law, VanDrunen writes, “one might agree with all my other substantive claims in this chapter without being convinced of a prelapsarian covenant.” David VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law*, Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, ed. John Witte Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 80.

VanDrunen and the Creation Covenant as a Natural Law Covenant

VanDrunen holds that the creation covenant is a natural law covenant established in the act of creating man.⁸ Because the covenant is established in the act of creation, there is no ceremony or oath.⁹ But all the other elements of a covenant are present: “God brings human beings into a formal relationship with him, imposes obligations on them, takes obligations upon himself, and identifies consequences for his human partners’ response.”¹⁰ The obligations that God imposes on humans in the creation covenant are the obligations of natural law. Further, this natural law is “*inherent* to human nature” by being rooted in the image of God in man.¹¹

For VanDrunen the image of God is “about *who we are* and especially *what we do*.”¹² The “what we do aspect” is defined by the creation mandate. For VanDrunen, “exercising dominion is a constitutive aspect of being like God.”¹³ By looking at God’s actions in the opening chapters of Genesis, VanDrunen believes he can lend some specificity to what this dominion is: “The revelation of God’s own exercise of dominion in Genesis 1-3, furthermore, indicates that image-bearing human dominion was to take place through speaking and naming, through rendering right judgments, and through bounteous generosity that seeks the good of all creation.”¹⁴ For Adam, this general dominion is focused by the specific command in Genesis 2:15 to guard the garden-temple of Eden from intrusion.¹⁵

As the covenant condition, the creation mandate was never to be a permanent mandate. This leads to some interesting discontinuities. If the mandate is fulfilled, mankind would “enter triumphantly into the world-to-come.”¹⁶ Because, in VanDrunen’s view, the image of God in man is tied up with the creation mandate, there must be a discontinuity between the image of God when the mandate is still in effect and the image of God when it is no longer in effect. Thus VanDrunen writes:

Fundamental in what follows is the idea that the image of God bestowed in the first creation (what I will call the “protological image”) is not identical to the image of God as preserved after the fall into sin (what I will call the “fallen image”) and that neither of these is identical to the image of God bestowed on believers in Christ as a gift of the new creation (what I will call the “eschatological image”). There is organic continuity, but not identity, among them.¹⁷

Because the creation mandate is, for VanDrunen, the condition of the covenant, Christians must not, in VanDrunen’s view attempt to fulfill the creation mandate. “If Christ is the *last Adam*, then we are not new Adams. To understand our own cultural work as picking up and finishing Adam’s original

⁸ Ibid., 84-85.

⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹¹ Ibid., 87.

¹² VanDrunen, *Living*, 38.

¹³ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., 68.

¹⁵ VanDrunen, *Living*, 41-42; *Divine Covenants*, 85.

¹⁶ VanDrunen, *Living*, 40.

¹⁷ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 41.

task is, however unwittingly, to compromise the sufficiency of Christ's work."¹⁸ In the post Fall world, humans bear a different divine image and live under different covenants.

Reconsidering the Creation Covenant

The very existence of a Creation, or Adamic, covenant is a matter of debate. However, VanDrunen is correct to affirm this covenant. First, the absence of the label does not mean the absence of the covenant. The label is absent in 2 Samuel 7, but Scripture later recognizes the Dauidic covenant with that term (Ps. 89:3). Similarly, the label is absent in Genesis 1–2, but an Adamic covenant is recognized by Hosea (6:7)¹⁹ and Paul (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:22).²⁰ Second, the elements of a covenant are present: two parties, promises, obligations, and sanctions. The only element(s) missing are a sacrificial ceremony and oath. But these would not be needed in an unfallen world. Third, some point out that God and man already existed in a natural relation. A covenant relation was not necessary. But to the contrary, the Creator is so exalted above the creature that the promise of a mutual relationship and the grant of dominion over the rest of creation seem to move beyond that natural relationship into a covenant relationship.²¹ Similarly, the fact that Adam's sin made the whole race guilty points toward the existence of a covenant. In natural relations, children are not guilty for

¹⁸ VanDrunen, *Living*, 50–51.

¹⁹ The disputed status of Hosea 6:7 is evident by comparing major translations. ESV: "But like Adam they transgressed the covenant" (cf. HCSB). KJV: "But they like men have transgressed the covenant." NIV: "As at Adam, they have broken the covenant." The weakest of these translations is the NIV. It requires either emending the text to a reading not found in any Hebrew manuscript or ancient version or adopting an unusual understanding of *kaph* for this verse. Thomas Edward McComiskey, "Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 1:33. The KJV does have the support of some of the ancient versions (LXX, Syriac, Arabic). But this interpretation is no longer considered viable. As à Brakel notes, "If one were to translate it with the word 'man,' it would take away the emphasis of this text, for the words 'as Adam' are added here to maximize rather than minimize the crime. What force of emphasis, yes, what purpose would there be to state that they had broken the covenant like other men." Wilhemus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, trans. Bartel Elshout (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1992), 1:366. This leaves the translation of the ESV and HCSB. The only objection to this reading is that some do not think that God entered into a covenant with Adam. Thus Warfield comments, "Any difficulties that may be brought against it, indeed, are imported from without the clause itself. In itself the rendering is wholly natural." Benjamin B. Warfield, "Hosea VI.7: Adam or Man?" in *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1970), 1:128.

²⁰ The key to these passages is understanding what it means to be "in" someone. Some have argued that all humans were "in Adam" seminally, because all humans are descended from Adam. But this is not a sufficient explanation for two reasons. First, children are not guilty for the sins of their fathers (cf. Deut. 24:16). Another factor in addition to descent that makes Adam's offspring guilty of his sin. Second, this view does not work in parallel with what it means to be "in Christ." The better explanation is that Christ is the head of the New Covenant. Those who are united to him in a covenant relationship receive the benefits of the covenant. This would then indicate that Adam is the head of a covenant. All those in covenant relationship with Adam receive the benefits or the penalties of that covenant. For defenses of the federal headship view, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 494–95; Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 79–81.

²¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 2:569–71.

the sins of the fathers. But people under the obligations of treaties or covenants or governments are held responsible for the actions of their covenant or legal heads.

VanDrunen's error is not in positing a Creation covenant. His error is in his conception of the covenant. Properly conceived, the Creation covenant is made between God and Adam as the representative of the human race. So far so good. The promise of the covenant is limited by VanDrunen to the confirmation of eternal life in the world to come. The obligation of the covenant is the creation mandate. This is VanDrunen's fundamental error. He confuses the promise of the covenant with the obligation of the covenant.

Though the promises of Genesis 1:26-28 are commonly understood to be the obligations of the covenant because they are stated as imperatives, the grammatical imperative can be used in Hebrew to indicate blessing. By beginning verse 28 with the statement, "and God blessed them," the text indicates that it is as expressing God's blessing that the following imperatives are to be understood.²² What is commonly called the creation mandate would be better labeled the creation blessing. Thus the fundamental promises of the Adamic covenant are fertility and the right to reign over creation. The fertility part of the promise works in tandem with the promise of dominion. The blessing of ruling over the earth is so vast that it cannot be fulfilled by one or two people. For the blessing of dominion to be realized, mankind must be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Likewise, dominion makes the blessing of fertility possible.²³

The final promise of the Adamic covenant is life. The promise of life is implied in the judgment that death will result from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17). Adam and Eve already had life, and Adam's sin brought death into the world (Rom. 5:12). But this life would have been confirmed and made permanent had Adam and Eve obeyed the covenant obligation. This lies behind God's statement that partaking of the tree of life would bring eternal life (3:22).

While the promise of ruling over God's world as image bearers of God and the promise of eternal life may seem to be distinct promises, the Gospels bring these two promises together. The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus's preaching about the kingdom of God as the centerpiece of his preaching ministry. It is important to remember that when Jesus preaches about the kingdom drawing near or about his establishment of the kingdom, he is not talking about the sovereign reign of God over all things. That has never ceased. Instead, Jesus is proclaiming the restoration of the dominion that he as the Man will restore. In John, however, the kingdom language gives way to the language of eternal

²² John Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 38.

²³ Commenting on the rise in human population *The Economist* notes, "The earth could certainly not support 100 billion hunter-gatherers, who used much more land per head than modern farm-fed people do. But it does not have to. The earth might well not be able to support 10 billion people if they had exactly the same impact per person as 7 billion do today. But that does not necessarily spell Malthusian doom, because the impact humans have on the earth and on each other can change." "Demography: A Tale of Three Islands," *The Economist* (Oct 22nd-24th 2011), electronic edition.

life.²⁴ John 3 makes it clear that entering the kingdom (3:5) and gaining eternal life (3:15) are the same.

The obligation of the covenant was to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It should not be thought from this title that knowledge of good and evil itself is a bad thing. The test is whether man will gain the knowledge of good and evil through obedience or through sin.²⁵ From this it seems evident that though God had built into his world a natural law of right and wrong, the covenant test was not obedience to all of the natural law. Rather, God's law would be discerned by obedience to this one command.²⁶

That not eating from the forbidden tree is the condition of the covenant is evident from the account. In order to make the creation mandate the condition of the covenant, VanDrunen must link the two. He does this through a particular understanding of Genesis 2:15: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." According to VanDrunen, the garden is to be understood as a primordial temple, and the word "keep" is an allusion to the priestly responsibility to guard the tabernacle/temple. Therefore by not expelling the serpent from the Garden Adam failed in the creation mandate responsibility of ruling over and guarding the garden. This interpretation suffers from a number of deficiencies. First, though it has become popular to identify the garden of Eden as a primordial temple,²⁷ the fact that the tabernacle and tabernacle often hearken back to the

²⁴ "The Synoptic Gospels emphasize the fulfillment of God's promises by speaking of the kingdom of God, but in John the focus is not on God's kingdom, but on eternal life. Still, the two notions are remarkably similar. As Köstenberger says, 'That the expressions "kingdom of God" and "eternal life" are essentially equivalent is suggested by their parallel use in Matthew 19:16, 24 pars.'" Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 95.

²⁵ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, (1948; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975), 31-32.

²⁶ Witsius explains how mankind could have learned the distinction between good and evil by resisting the temptation. Man would have discerned: "1. That God is lord of all things; and that it is unlawful for man, even to desire an apple, but with his leave. In all things therefore, from the greatest to the least, the mouth of the Lord is to be consulted, as to what he would, or would not have done by us. 2. That man's true happiness is placed in God alone, and nothing to be desired, but with submission to God, and in order to employ it for him. So that it is He only, on whose account all other things appear good and desirable to man. 3. Readily to be satisfied without even the most delightful, and desirable things if God so command: and to think, there is much more good in obedience to the divine precept, than in the enjoyment of the most delightful thing in the world. 4. That man was not yet arrived at the utmost pitch of happiness, but to expect a still greater good, after his course of obedience was over. This was hinted by the prohibition of the most delightful tree, whose fruit was, if any other, greatly to be desired, and this argued the same degree of imperfection in that state, in which man was forbid the enjoyment of some good." Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man, Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh: Thomas Turnbull, 1803), 1.3.20-21.

²⁷ Richard E. Averbeck, "Tabernacle," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 816-17; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 66-80; John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Biblical Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 2009), 78-83.

garden is not sufficient to establish that the garden was a temple.²⁸ As Block notes, “while the instructions concerning the tabernacle suggest that the structure was designed as a microcosm of creation, this does not mean creation is a macrocosm of the tabernacle.”²⁹ Second, while שמר is used to refer to the priests duty to guard the tabernacle/temple (Num. 3:7, 8; 8:26; 18:7), it can also mean “tend.” In connection with work in the garden, this is the most likely meaning in context. It is also the meaning that the translations consistently adopt.³⁰

VanDrunen also fails to pay close enough attention to the covenant sanctions. The sanctions of the covenant confirm the above interpretation. Fertility, dominion over the earth, and life are the promises of the covenant. The sanctions of the covenant touch on each of these blessings. The blessing promised that humans would be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (1:28). This blessing remains, but now attending it is great pain in childbirth (3:16). The blessing of dominion/land also endures but with frustrations. God blessed both man and woman with dominion over his world as fellow image-bearers (1:26–28), but he also ordained an order of authority in which the woman was the help to her husband in subduing the earth (2:18). In judgment the woman will desire unsuccessfully to rule over her husband (3:16; cf. 4:7). In addition, because Adam should have exercised his leadership rather than listening to his wife’s temptation to wrong, the man’s work will also be frustrated by ground that rebels against his efforts to subdue it (3:17–19). Romans 8:19–23 reveals that it is not just the ground that was affected by Adam’s sin. Rather, the whole creation groans because God “subjected [it] to futility” (Rom. 8:20). The great and climactic penalty is death.

It is important to note that none of the blessings are entirely removed. Humans will still be fruitful and multiply, mankind will still rule over the earth, and death will not come immediately to the outer man (though the inner man clearly died at the time of the sin). For humans to continue to live out the creation blessing is not an evidence of self-righteousness, as VanDrunen holds, but is rather evidence of the grace of God.

Finally, on this conception of the covenant, there is no need to posit differing images of God in man for the pre-fall, post-fall, and eschatological stages of history. Instead, of making rule of the earth a part of the image it is better to understand the image of God as at the very least those capacities which combine to enable man to wisely and righteously rule over God’s earth.³¹ These capabilities are not all removed in the Fall.³² Mankind still has the abilities that fit him to rule over the animals

²⁸ Daniel I. Block, “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence,” in *From Creation to New Creation: Essay in Honor of G. K. Beale*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 4–5, 21, 26.

²⁹ Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 298.

³⁰ NIV: “work it and take care of it”; CEB: “to farm it and take care of it”; NAB: “to cultivate and care for it”; NET: “to care for it and maintain it”; KJV: “to dress it and to keep it”; NKJV: “to tend and keep it”; (N)RSV: “to till it and keep it”; NASB: “to cultivate it and keep it”; ESV: “to work it and keep it.” The two outliers are the HCSB, “to work it and watch over it” and the NLT, “to tend and watch over it.”

³¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 324.

³² “As there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving of Him, His moral attributes, which are summed up in His holiness, and His natural attributes, of strength, knowledge &c., that

and the world. But, as Ephesians 4:17–23 indicates, a dead inner man lacks righteousness and holiness of the truth. Men and women stand in need of rebirth to restore the inner man.³³ It is for this reason that theologians speak of the image of God in man being marred, but not lost, in the Fall.³⁴

The Noahic Covenant

The Noahic covenant also plays an important role for VanDrunen because it anchors the common kingdom. VanDrunen must demonstrate that the Noahic covenant is not a redemptive covenant and that it establishes a separate kingdom that God rules over differently from his rule over the redemptive kingdom.

VanDrunen and the Noahic Covenant as the Common Kingdom Covenant

VanDrunen gives four reasons why the Noahic covenant grounds the common kingdom and is distinct from the redemptive covenants. First, “It concerns *ordinary cultural activities* (rather than special acts of worship or religious devotion).”³⁵ This means it concerns issues of food, fertility and justice.³⁶

constitute the greatness of God; so there is a twofold image of God in man—His moral or spiritual image, which is His holiness, that is the image of God’s moral excellency (which image was lost by the fall); and God’s natural image, consisting in men’s reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion over the creatures, which is the image of God’s natural attribute.” Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (1746; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1961), 181–82; cf. Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 4th ed., ed. K. Scott Oliphint (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 35.

³³ The distinction between death in the inner man and death in outer man is clearly made by Jesus and by Paul. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul says, “though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” This distinction helps make sense of Jesus’s words in John 11:25–26. Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” (NASB). As is often the case in John’s Gospel Jesus is recorded as using the same words with subtly different meanings. In verse 25 Jesus uses life to refer to resurrection life. So even the one who’s body is buried, he is a believer, he will live even though he dies. But in verse 26 Jesus speaks of one who lives and believes never dying. Here he is probably referring to eternal life. In John it is clear that eternal life is not something that we will get in the future; it is something that we have now. So Jesus is saying that even if the outer man dies the one who believes in Jesus will live in the outer man again. Jesus can make this promise since he is the resurrection. But Jesus is saying more than that. He is saying that the believer already has eternal life in the inner man and that he will never die in the inner man.

³⁴ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 201.

³⁵ VanDrunen, *Living*, 79; *Divine Covenants*, 120. In the more recent book VanDrunen repeats his belief that worship is excluded from the Noahic covenant, but he also qualifies this assertion. He grants that humans “retain some sort of relationship and accountability to God.” He therefore concludes, “the reality of the divine image indicates that they are to render proper honor to their creator, before whom they lie accountable. While the Noahic covenant is thus not unconcerned about holistic (though imperfect) human flourishing and people’s relationship with God, its chief interest is human sustenance and a modicum of social order.” VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 123. It seems that in *Divine Covenants and Moral Order*, VanDrunen concedes the legitimacy of critiques of certain aspects of his view, but it does not seem that these concessions cause him to make any substantive changes to his view.

³⁶ VanDrunen, *Living*, 79; *Divine Covenants*, 119–20.

Second, “It embraces the human race *in common* (rather than a holy people that are distinguished from the rest of the human race).”³⁷ The Noahic covenant is made with all humans from after the flood onward (Gen. 9:1, 8, 9, 12), with “every living creature” (9:9–13, 15–17), and with the earth (9:13). In fact, “the Noahic covenant envelops the forces and functions of the natural order.” There is no special people of God “set apart” in this covenant.³⁸

Third, “It ensures the *preservation* of the natural and social order (rather than the redemption of this order).”³⁹ VanDrunen rejects the idea that the creation mandate is restored in the Noahic covenant. While there are obvious parallels between parts of the Noahic covenant and the creation mandate, VanDrunen believes the differences are significant as well. God’s world is no longer said to be “very good.” Furthermore, God “intentionally omits the language of dominion and subduing,” and there is no “probationary command” by which Noah can bring about redemption.⁴⁰ In addition the sign of the covenant, the rainbow, is not a bloody sign as are the signs of the redemptive covenants.⁴¹ VanDrunen grants that the Noahic covenant plays a role in redemption insofar as it plays a role in God’s ordering of all history, but he claims that it “cannot be situated in an organic line of continuity with these other biblical covenants.”⁴² Instead, the covenant promises the seasons will continue, animals will be kept in check, and “social order” and “justice” will be maintained.⁴³

Fourth, “It is established *temporarily* (rather than permanently)”⁴⁴ Genesis 8:22 suggests to VanDrunen that the “earth (at least in its present form) will not endure forever.”⁴⁵ The use of עולם in Genesis 9:16 doesn’t change this assessment, since עולם can simply indicate an extended period of time.⁴⁶

VanDrunen brings his ideas about the creation covenant and Noahic covenant together, noting:

The protological natural law of the original creation was never intended to endure in unchanging form forever. A natural law meant to direct human beings toward a goal could not continue to obligate them in identical ways if they attained the goal. Presumably, God designed natural law to be consummated along with the consummation of human nature and creation as a whole. As it turned out, the divine image-bearers did not faithfully complete their commission and thus God did not bless them with eschatological consummation.⁴⁷

³⁷ VanDrunen, *Living*, 79.

³⁸ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 104; cf. *Living*, 80.

³⁹ VanDrunen, *Living*, 79; cf. *Divine Covenants*, 104.

⁴⁰ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 106; cf. *Living*, 80–81.

⁴² VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 108.

⁴³ VanDrunen, *Living*, 80.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁵ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 102–3; cf. *Living*, 81.

⁴⁶ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 103, n. 11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

Since the natural law of the creation covenant is no longer now in force, it is republished in modified form in the Noahic covenant.⁴⁸ What is missing in this republished covenant is the command to exercise dominion over the world.⁴⁹

Evaluating the Noahic Covenant as a Common Kingdom Covenant

VanDrunen has made a number of valid observations about the Noahic covenant. He is correct about the universal scope of this covenant. This covenant is made with all humans from Noah's time onward, with all the animals, and with the earth itself. The covenant does not establish a covenant people distinct from other people on earth. VanDrunen is also correct that the covenant is temporary. There is a time in which "all the days of the earth" are complete and the seasons and the daily cycle will end.⁵⁰ The preservation guaranteed by this covenant will end and judgment will come.

VanDrunen is wrong, however, to distance this covenant from the creation blessing and from redemption. In VanDrunen's understanding the creation mandate is a condition for salvation. Thus those who seek to fulfill the mandate are seeking to earn the salvation. But the Noahic covenant confirms that what is often called the creation mandate is actually a blessing: "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them . . ." (Gen. 9:1). What is more, Genesis 9:2 repeats Genesis 1:28 almost word for word with two differences: (1) the order of the phrases have shifted, and (2) the phrase "and have dominion" is replaced by the phrases "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon. . ." and "into your hand they are delivered." Contrary to VanDrunen, God does not "intentionally omit...the language of dominion and subduing." The phrase "into your hand they are delivered" is the language of dominion and subduing. Instead, the Noahic covenant repeats the creation blessing in the context of the Fall. In fact, VanDrunen ends up having to concede that to live out the blessings of the Noah covenant mankind will need to "to form a broad range of social structures and engage in a range of other activities through the exercise of wisdom."⁵¹ These are acts of subduing the earth. On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the activity of ruling over the earth is not a redemptive activity or a means of salvation. It is a common blessing, now marred by the Fall, given to all mankind.

VanDrunen is also wrong to sequester the Noahic covenant from redemption. The redemptive aspects of the covenant are foreshadowed in Lamech's prophecy at the birth of Noah: "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed" (Gen. 5:29 HCSB). The curse is not removed by the Flood or by Noah. Romans 8:20-22 indicates that the curse persists to the end times and the resurrection. Thus this prophecy probably refers to the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 96, 118.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 119. Nonetheless, VanDrunen concedes, "But even to carry out this minimalist ethic, human beings need to form a broad range of social structures and engage in a range of other activities through the exercise of wisdom." Ibid., 123. This sounds a lot like exercising rule over the earth. Once again it sounds like VanDrunen concedes his critics' argument and yet still wants to maintain his original position.

⁵⁰ This does not mean that the earth will be annihilated. Later revelation makes it clear that the disruption of the seasons and the daily cycle happens during the Tribulation period. The Tribulation marks the end of this earth and the beginning of the transition to the new earth just as the time before the Flood could be referred to as the "world that then existed" but "perished" (2 Pet. 3:6).

⁵¹ Ibid, 123.

Noahic covenant since this is a covenant made with Noah that placed limits on the curse's effects on the world. The nature of the Noahic covenant is to set bounds on the curse so that God's plan of redemption can be worked out in the world. The culmination of the redemption made possible by the Noahic covenant is the removal of the curse. In this way Noah plays a significant role in God's plan to bring the earth relief from the curse.

There is also something redemptive, at least in a symbolic way, in Noah, his family, and animals being saved through the Flood. Though this is not part of the covenant per se, the promise of the covenant forms the basis for this deliverance (Gen. 6:18). VanDrunen wants to separate the covenant mentioned in Genesis 6:18 from the Noahic covenant. He claims that the covenant in 6:18 is a "particularistic" covenant made with Noah, and that its purpose—deliverance of a remnant—differs from the Noahic covenant's broad promises of preservation.⁵² This multiplying of covenants, however, is not persuasive. It seems an unnecessary expedient to avoid possibly connecting the Noahic covenant to redemption.

VanDrunen also wishes to distance the Noahic covenant from the sacrifice that serves as its basis:

This sacrifice does not, however mean that the Noahic covenant is redemptive rather than common. For one thing, Noah offers this sacrifice *after* he has been saved by God from the destruction of the world, and it appears to be a sacrifice of consecration rather than of expiation for sins. God's covenant words in the following verses, furthermore, mention nothing about forgiveness or eternal salvation.⁵³

It is better to understand the sacrifice as the foundation for the Noahic covenant. It is when God smells the aroma of the sacrifice that God first gives the provisions of the covenant (6:18). The text also specifies that Noah offered a burnt offering. The burnt offering for Israel, and possibly at this time, was an atoning sacrifice (Lev. 1:4). It probably symbolized the entire consecration of the worshipper since it is the only sacrifice that was to be entirely burnt.⁵⁴ Because atonement was necessary for consecration to God, this sacrifice should have caused the worshipper to consider his "complete sinfulness" and his need for atonement to be consecrated to God.⁵⁵ While it is certainly true that the Noahic covenant is a common grace covenant, even common grace needs to be rooted in a sacrifice. Judgment can only be delayed because of the future atonement that Christ will provide.

Finally, it is important to note that the creation blessing establishes the blessing, seed, land theme that runs through the biblical covenants. The creation blessing was marred by the Fall. The covenants each play a role in God's plan to restore this original covenant blessing. It is in the dominion/land part of the promise that the biblical kingdom theme is grounded. Nonetheless VanDrunen is wrong to see the establishment of a natural law kingdom in this covenant. Murder is clearly wrong according to natural law, and this is apprehensible by general revelation. But is the image of God in

⁵² Ibid., 109–110.

⁵³ VanDrunen, *Living*, 80–81, n. 2.

⁵⁴ Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 60.

⁵⁵ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. David A Hubbard (Dallas: Word, 1992), 24.

man—the basis for this prohibition, or, in VanDrunen’s understanding, the basis for the penalty being carried out by man⁵⁶—also understood by natural revelation? Given what Romans 1 says about what man should understand about God in general revelation, perhaps so. But it seems more likely that the *imago dei* is only known by special revelation. More transparently, the command not to eat meat with the blood in it goes beyond natural law and general revelation. VanDrunen wants to say that this is a prohibition against “pouncing on an animal and eating it alive, as animals do to other animals.”⁵⁷ VanDrunen’s interpretation would comport well with natural law. However, it is not the most likely interpretation. First, the text does not indicate that this command was in force to ensure humans act humanely. Rather, the text highlights the link between life and blood. Deuteronomy 12:23–24 repeats this provision, and Deuteronomy specifies that pouring the blood out is in view. Leviticus 17:11 further clarifies that behind this prohibition is the reality that blood, with its connection to life, is integral to atonement. Nor can the connection with atonement be dismissed as a relic of the Mosaic covenant. The same concern likely lies behind the Jerusalem Council’s similar prohibition (Acts 15:29).⁵⁸ Given that this command is clearly tied to redemption and that it is not discernible through general revelation alone, the Noahic covenant cannot be considered a covenant establishing a realm of natural law.⁵⁹ The Noahic covenant clearly has redemptive concerns.

The Abrahamic Covenant

As the Noahic Covenant establishes the common kingdom for VanDrunen, so the Abrahamic covenant establishes the redemptive kingdom in VanDrunen’s scheme. VanDrunen must establish that the Abrahamic covenant is fundamentally different from the covenants that precede it and that it establishes a realm that is ruled differently from natural law covenants.

VanDrunen and the Abrahamic Covenant as the Redemptive Kingdom Covenant

VanDrunen claims that in each of the four areas that distinguish the Noahic covenant as a covenant of the common kingdom, the Abrahamic covenant stands in contrast as a redemptive covenant. First, the Abrahamic covenant “concerns religious *faith and worship* (rather than ordinary cultural activities)”⁶⁰ Abraham must turn from idols for God to make this covenant with him, this covenant provides justification by faith alone, and the sign of this covenant is circumcision.⁶¹ Yet the covenant does “not directly regulate Abraham’s broader social life, in its various political, legal, or economic aspects.”⁶² Second, “it embraces a *holy people* that is *distinguished* from the rest of the human race (rather than the human race in common).”⁶³ VanDrunen does not deny that there is a universal aspect to the Abrahamic covenant. Abraham and his seed are chosen for the purpose of bringing blessing to the nations. But, unlike the Noahic covenant, the covenant is not made with every single

⁵⁶VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 117.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁸ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 1:402.

⁵⁹ The Noahic covenant is a common grace covenant, but that is not the same thing as a natural law covenant.

⁶⁰ VanDrunen, *Living*, 82.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶² VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 270.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 270.

person from Abraham's time forward.⁶⁴ Third, "'It bestows the benefits of salvation upon this holy people (rather than preserving the natural and social order).'"⁶⁵ VanDrunen holds that the Noahic covenant is about "preserving this present world." By contrast, the Abrahamic covenant is about "opening the world to come."⁶⁶ Fourth, "It is established *forever and ever* (rather than temporarily)."⁶⁷ He establishes this point by noting that justification, which is a feature of this covenant, brings eternal life.⁶⁸ He also finds the promise that kings will come from Abraham to be fulfilled in the kings who bring their wealth into the New Jerusalem.⁶⁹

VanDrunen also argues that Abraham lived in the common kingdom of the Noahic Covenant as he sojourned in the land. When he fought to save Lot, bought a cave in which to bury Sarah, resolved disputes with Abimelech, or entered into treaties with rulers, Abraham was living in the common kingdom.⁷⁰ Furthermore, when right and wrong are at stake in Abraham's interactions with those outside the Abrahamic covenant, those interactions are grounded on the natural law rather than on the Abrahamic covenant. Natural law, not the Abrahamic covenant, is the basis for Abraham's interaction with Abimelech.⁷¹

VanDrunen believes that Abraham models the life that the Christian should have. He is in a redemptive covenant with God, but he is a sojourner in this world. Thus in religious matters Abraham remained distinct from those outside the covenant, but in common matters he joined with his pagan neighbors under natural law.⁷²

Evaluating the Abrahamic Covenant as a Redemptive Kingdom Covenant

There are, of course, no objections to seeing the Abrahamic covenant as a redemptive covenant. Nor are there objections to recognizing that it is more particular than the Noahic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant does establish Abraham and his seed as the family through which God will work out redemption. Nor is there any objection to seeing natural law at work in Abraham's interactions with his neighbors. Nonetheless an important continuity exists between the Noahic covenants and the preceding covenants. The Abrahamic promises are often summarized under the headings of land, seed, and blessing.⁷³ These three themes are at the center of the promises and the

⁶⁴ VanDrunen, *Living*, 84.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 82-83.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 84.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 85-87.

⁷¹ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 279-80.

⁷² VanDrunen, *Living*, 87-88.

⁷³ Note the themes of **land (dominion)**, **seed**, and **blessing**:

Genesis 12:1-3—Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the **land** that I will show you. And I will make of you a **great nation**, and I will **bless** you and **make your name great**, so that you will be a **blessing**. I will **bless** those who **bless** you, and him who **dishonors** you I will **curse**, and in you all the families of the earth shall be **blessed**."

sanctions of the Adamic covenant. Genesis 1:28 identifies God's words in 1:28-30 as a blessing. The blessing centers on seed ("be fruitful, and multiply") and land ("replenish the earth, and subdue it"). When Adam and Eve sin the blessing is replaced with a curse (Gen. 3:17). The content of the judgment focuses on seed (3:16) and land (3:17). These very same themes of blessing, land, and seed reoccur in the Noahic covenant. The goal of the Noahic covenant is to preserve these blessings in a fallen world but with the hope of their future redemption (cf. Gen. 5:29; 8:21-97). The goal of the Abrahamic covenant is redemption—the restoration of the Adamic covenant blessings to humanity.⁷⁴

Not only does the Abrahamic covenant stand in continuity with the previous covenants, but it also does not set up a distinctively redemptive kingdom. There are, to be sure, redemptive promises that pertain to kingship. For instance, the promise of land implies a ruler over that land. More explicitly, God promises "kings shall come from you" (Gen. 17:6; cf. 17:16). As the promises to Abraham are elaborated for the other patriarchs, God says to Jacob: "Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins" (Gen. 35:11, KJV). Jacob prophesies of Judah, "The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until

Genesis 12:7—Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your *offspring* I will give this **land**." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 17:2—that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may *multiply* you greatly."

Genesis 17:6—I will make you exceedingly *fruitful*, and I will *make you into nations*, and **kings shall come from you**.

Genesis 17:8—And I will give to you and to your *offspring* after you the **land** of your sojournings, all the **land** of Canaan, for an everlasting **possession**, and I will be their God."

Genesis 22:16–18—and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely *bless* you, and I will surely *multiply your offspring* as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your *offspring* shall **possess the gate of his enemies**, and in your *offspring* shall all the nations of the earth be *blessed*, because you have obeyed my voice."

Genesis 26:3–4—Sojourn in this **land**, and I will be with you and will *bless* you, for to you and to your *offspring* I will give all these **lands**, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will *multiply your offspring* as the stars of heaven and will give to your *offspring* all these **lands**. And in your *offspring* all the nations of the earth shall be *blessed*.

Genesis 26:24—And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will *bless* you and *multiply your offspring* for my servant Abraham's sake."

Genesis 28:3—God Almighty *bless* you and make you *fruitful and multiply* you, that you may become a *company of peoples*.

Genesis 35:11–12—And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: *be fruitful and multiply*. A *nation and a company of nations* shall come from you, and **kings** shall come from your own body. The **land** that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the **land** to your *offspring* after you."

Genesis 48:3–4—And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and *blessed* me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you *fruitful and multiply* you, and I will make of you a *company of peoples* and will give this **land** to your *offspring* after you for an everlasting **possession**.'

References gleaned from Gentry and Wellum, 226–27.

⁷⁴ "The 'Promise to the Fathers' is none other than a reiteration of God's original blessing of mankind (1:28). To make this clear the author has given a representative list of 'all mankind' in chapter 10 according to their 'families' (v. 32 . . .) and has shown how their dispersion was the result of the rebellion of the city of Babylon (11:1–9). These same 'families of the earth' . . . are to be blessed on Abraham and his seed. (12:3)." Sailhamer, 112.

He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him” (Gen. 49:10, HCSB). It is clear by the end of Genesis that the kingdom that God is promising to set up through Abraham’s seed is the Messianic kingdom.

Not only is this Messianic kingdom not established in Abraham’s day, the Messianic kingdom extends to areas VanDrunen assigns to the common kingdom. Psalm 72 says the Messiah will “defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the need, and crush the oppressor!” (Ps. 72:1), He will accept tribute from the other kings of the earth (Ps. 72:10). These seem like activities that VanDrunen would keep in the common kingdom. The entire idea of a redemptive kingdom separate from a common kingdom seems to be read into the Abrahamic covenant rather than out of it.

The redemptive kingdom, according to VanDrunen, deals with issues such as “religious faith and worship.” VanDrunen notes that Abraham was justified when he believed the promises of this covenant. Likewise, the sign of the covenant is circumcision, a worship activity.⁷⁵ But Abraham’s response of faith and the rite of circumcision do not a redemptive kingdom make. Nor is there enough here to sustain the claim that in religious matters Abraham lived under the Abrahamic covenant but that in common matters he lived under the Noahic covenant. VanDrunen is aiming toward the conclusion that Christians should live according to Scripture in the redemptive kingdom but according to natural law (rather than Scripture) in the common kingdom.⁷⁶ But this distinction does not make much sense in Abraham’s day, in which there was no Scripture. Thus Abraham’s operating by natural law without reference to Scripture in his dealings with the nations can hardly be paradigm setting. Once again, VanDrunen is reading his view into the Abrahamic Covenant rather than out of it.

The Mosaic Covenant

The Noahic and Abrahamic covenants are the foundational covenants in VanDruenen’s system. The Mosaic covenant establishes the era most dissimilar to the one in which Christians live.

VanDrunen and the Mosaic Covenant as the Two Kingdoms Covenant

VanDrunen looks to Abraham as the example for Christians to follow as they sojourn in this present evil age. The Mosaic covenant, on the other hand, establishes a situation that the Christian should not attempt to replicate. Under the Mosaic law, the two kingdoms paradigm does not apply within the land (though it does outside the land).⁷⁷ VanDrunen observes, “The Mosaic law directly regulated many areas of general cultural life, often in minute detail.”⁷⁸ Thus both kingdoms are rolled into one in the Mosaic kingdom. The Mosaic law is not entirely disconnected from natural law, however,

⁷⁵ VanDrunen, *Living*, 83.

⁷⁶ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 14. Note this does not mean that Christians do not make use of Scripture to better understand the natural law. See note 1.

⁷⁷ VanDrunen, *Living*, 89-91.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

since VanDrunen sees the Mosaic law as the application of natural law to Israel in its particular time and place.⁷⁹

Under the Mosaic Covenant, VanDrunen finds the era of the Babylonian Captivity to be the most parallel to the Christian's situation. Jeremiah 29:4–7 is the key passage for VanDrunen:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

VanDrunen contrasts this with Deuteronomy 23:6, “You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.”⁸⁰ He also appeals to the account of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: “They did not try to turn [Babylon] into the redemptive kingdom founded upon the covenant with Abraham.”⁸¹ He argues that the pagan kings judged in Daniel were judged on the basis of natural law. The Israelites “did not impose *true* religious worship upon the pagan nations.”⁸²

Evaluating the Mosaic Covenant as a Mixed Kingdom Covenant

VanDrunen is right to distinguish life under the Mosaic Covenant from the lives Christians live in culture today. The reason for the difference between then and now is not, as VanDrunen says, that the Mosaic covenant combines two kingdoms. Rather, the Mosaic covenant is a covenant made with a nation. It is for this reason that there are civil penalties for religious offenses. This stands in contrast to the new covenant, which is neither a national covenant nor a covenant comprised of both regenerated and unregenerated people.

VanDrunen's insights about how the Mosaic code applies natural to ancient Israel's time and place is correct. His conclusion that the Mosaic law is similar to other ANE law codes (while acknowledging substantial differences) because both are based on natural law is insightful.⁸³ In addition, the idea that the Mosaic law applied natural law to a particular time, place, and situation in redemptive-history does set the Mosaic law apart from the Christian's position. As T. D. Bernard noted,

The prophets delivered oracles to the people, but the Apostles wrote letters to the brethren, letters characterized by all that fullness of unreserved explanation and that play of various feelings which are proper communication, as between those who are, or should be, equals. . . . Why all this labor in proving what might have been decided by a simple announcement from one entrusted with the Word of God? Would not this apostolic declaration that such a statement was error, that such another was

⁷⁹ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 283.

⁸⁰ VanDrunen, *Living*, 92–93. VanDrunen fails to note that Deuteronomy 23:6 was not a general statement about how Israel should relate to pagans in general. It is a specific judgment on Ammonites and Moabites for specific sins those people committed against Israel.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁸² *Ibid.*, *Living*, 95, n. 7.

⁸³ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 288–301.

truth, have sufficed for the settlement of that particular questions? Doubtless! But it would have sufficed to train men's minds to that thoughtfulness whereby truth becomes their own, or to educate them to the living use of the Scriptures as the constituted guide of inquiry.⁸⁴

The New Testament method is as Bernard describes it because Christians have grown in their maturity from the position of children under the law's guardianship to the position of sons. In the New Testament era, Christians do not live in a single time, location, or culture. So instead of a divine application of natural law to a particular time and place, God expects Christians to determine how to apply God's law in a variety of cultural situations. This differs from the Mosaic law, which applies the natural law to specific circumstances.

The Mosaic covenant is not the Christian's covenant. The Christian is not bound to this covenant. Thus far there is agreement with VanDrunen. But the Christian is, according to Pauline example, to make use of the law as wisdom.⁸⁵ Consider how Paul makes use of the law regarding not muzzling an ox while it treads the grain (1 Cor. 9:9). It would seem, then, that even nations in another time, place, and location in redemptive-history would find God's specific applications of natural law highly useful in applying the law to their own situations. According to Deuteronomy 4 this would apply to the civil parts of the law and not just the religious. VanDrunen recognizes that Deuteronomy 4 presents Israel's practice of the law as displaying wisdom to the nations.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, in his paradigm he wants to reserve the common kingdom for natural law and sequester Scriptural authority to the redemptive kingdom.

Finally, the Babylonian exile does not seem to be the best model for Christian sojourning in the present evil age. On the one hand, there are parallels for Christians who live in cultures hostile to the Christian faith. But this is not the only cultural situation Christians throughout history or at present find themselves. In addition, the exile theme in Scripture is different from the sojourning theme. From the exile from Eden and the exile of Cain through the Babylonian Captivity, exile from the land is punishment for sin. The sojourning theme, by contrast, is a positive theme.⁸⁷ When the New

⁸⁴ T.D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1864), 154, 157-158.

⁸⁵ These two different ways of describing how the Christian relates to the law are drawn from the four relations to the law described by Brian Rosner. Rosner notes four ways in which the Christian relates to the law. First, the Christian is not under the Mosaic Law as his covenant. Second, the Christian is under the Law of Christ (or the law of faith or the law of the Spirit of life) instead of the Law of Moses. The Christian does not walk according to the law; he walks in the Spirit. Third, the Law is prophetic. Fourth, the Christian should use the law as wisdom. Even the commands that are not repeated in the New Testament have a bearing for how the Christian lives his life. Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 2013).

⁸⁶ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 316-26.

⁸⁷ For instance, Moses seems to go out of his way to emphasize that the movement of Jacob's family to Egypt was not an exile. Given the theme of exile as punishment earlier in Genesis, one might be tempted to see the events of Genesis 45-47 as an exile for the brothers because of their sin. But Genesis 45 seems to counteract that reading by describing how good a land Goshen is. In addition, the move from Canaan to Egypt reunites the family. It seems better to see the possession of Goshen as an indication that God can give land to his people. Even though Jacob's family are foreigners and despised shepherds, they come into possession of the best of the land of Egypt. But sandwiched in between notices that Israel gained possession of land in Egypt (Gen. 45:11,

Testament does explicitly draw on an Old Testament example of sojourning, it looks to Abraham. Importantly, Abraham sojourns in the land that God promised to him just as Christians sojourn on the earth that God has promised to them (Heb. 11:8-16; Matt. 5:3, 5). Doubtless there are lessons for the Christian to learn from the Babylonian Captivity, but it goes too far to see that judgment as a paradigm for the church.

Wisdom Literature

Biblical theologians have struggled over how to integrate wisdom literature into the storyline of the Bible. VanDrunen does an admirable job of integration by connecting wisdom to creation and to the image of God in man.

He draws on Proverbs 3:19-20 (“The LORD by wisdom founded the earth. . .”) and Proverbs 8:22-23 (“The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work”) as evidence that “the very wisdom commended to human beings throughout Proverbs resides ultimately and prototypically in God himself, exhibited in the way he structures and orders the world.”⁸⁸ This wisdom is woven into the world in such a way that it “orders” the world. “Wisdom consists, to a significant degree, in perceiving the resultant order and structuring one’s life in conformity to it.”⁸⁹ Notably, the natural world and the moral world are “intertwined” in Proverbs. The order that God has woven into his world encompasses both, and lessons can be drawn from one to the other.⁹⁰

VanDrunen also connects wisdom to his vision of the image of God in man, which involves mankind’s rule over the world. Since the wisdom that humans have is based on the wisdom of God, humans image God in acting wisely. Both Proverbs 3 and Proverbs 8 combine affirmations that God created by his wisdom and that humans should acquire this wisdom.⁹¹ Second, humans who are wise are involved in “skillful ordering of the world.”⁹² This is what ruling over the world in Genesis 1:26-28 involves. Third, there is an emphasis on kings in Proverbs. VanDrunen clarifies, “all people are to pursue these things [“seeking justice,” “helping the needy,” “remaining sexually moral”] as aspects of wisdom, but Proverbs envisions kings as having particular responsibility in these matters.”⁹³

The wisdom literature, especially Proverbs, guides its readers in how to live in God’s world as God’s image-bearers.⁹⁴ The similarity of Proverbs to ANE wisdom literature shows that wisdom is rooted

27) is an account of how the Egyptians lose their land and become the slaves of Pharaoh (the priests excepted). Yet, despite losing the land, the Egyptians praise Joseph for saving their lives (47:25). This section therefore shows both that God is able to give his people the best land, but it also shows that Joseph is exercising wise dominion over the land of Egypt (45:8, 26). This wise dominion results in universal blessing since the Egyptians and all the neighboring world is saved by him.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 377.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 379.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 379.

⁹¹ Ibid., 381.

⁹² Ibid., 382.

⁹³ Ibid., 383.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 391.

in natural law.⁹⁵ Nonetheless VanDrunen notes that while Proverbs envisions people gaining wisdom “through observation and experience in the world,”⁹⁶ “this is not a bare empiricism, as if Proverbs envisions human beings as blank slates that observe the world and automatically deduce proper moral conclusions” since fear of the Lord is “a basic precondition” for wisdom.⁹⁷ VanDrunen proposes that it is special revelation that provides insight in how to live according to general revelation.⁹⁸ (The other important factors for gaining wisdom include learning from wise elders,⁹⁹ “becoming a virtuous person,”¹⁰⁰ and “persuasion.”)¹⁰¹

VanDrunen’s treatment of wisdom literature is well done. Apart from his conflation of the creation blessing and the image of God in man, there is little to disagree with. Yet it must be pointed out that his treatment of wisdom literature seems in tension with his two kingdoms, natural law view. If wisdom is rooted in natural law, and if wisdom also relies on fear of the Lord, it would seem absolutely necessary for Scripture and observation of the creation to be held tightly together for wisdom to function accurately. This is not to deny that those who do not fear the Lord can make astute observations about the way God’s world works. But it is to say that it seems difficult to bar the Christian from bringing Scripture to bear even within the realm of the common kingdom.

The Davidic Covenant: The Missing Covenant

VanDrunen recognizes that kingdom is a major theme in biblical theology. He seeks to connect his two kingdom theology to this biblical theme. He claims that the kingdom that Christ proclaims in the Gospels is the redemptive kingdom in his two kingdoms scheme.¹⁰² Nonetheless, VanDrunen fails to deal with the covenant that grounds the kingdom declared by Christ in his various books on the two kingdoms. It is a striking omission.

Once again, it is important to note the continuity of the blessing, seed, and land themes in the biblical covenants. First promised in the Adamic covenant, seed and land came under the curse in the Fall. The blessings of seed and land are reaffirmed in the Noahic covenant, though in the context of the Fall. The Abrahamic covenant’s promises also revolve around promises of seed and land to a particular people along with the promise that these people will extend God’s blessing to all the peoples of the earth. The Abrahamic covenant also carries specific promises about a coming king. The Mosaic covenant applies the law that God built into his creation to that seed so that it could live

⁹⁵ Ibid., 393, 398.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 386.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 388.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 391.

⁹⁹ “Proverbs does not advocate an individualistic quest for moral knowledge solely through one’s personal experience. Rather, it instills a respect for the accumulation of knowledge through the observation and reflection of many people over time, and hence urges older people to pass down their wisdom to the younger and younger people to give heed to their elders.” Ibid., 389–90.

¹⁰⁰ “For Proverbs the person with deep moral knowledge is not someone with moral factoids floating in her head but one who is the right kind of person, the person of character.” Ibid., 390.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 390.

¹⁰² VanDrunen, *Living*, 106–8.

in the land in a way that attracted the nations to God. In actuality, as Israel lived in the land, it demonstrated the depth of human sinfulness and the justice of God's wrath on sinners. In this context the Davidic Covenant reaffirms the themes of seed, land/dominion, and blessing. God promises David that he will raise up a seed after him (seed theme), God will establish a kingdom for this seed (land/dominion theme), and God will establish a house, or dynasty for him (seed and dominion theme combined). All of this is a blessing, and David recognizes that this blessing will extend to the nations: "You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD" (2 Sam. 7:19).¹⁰³

This continuity is significant because it indicates that the kingdom theme finds its roots in the creation blessing. The promises of the Davidic covenant are thus designed to bring about the restoration of the original dominion of the creation blessing. The continuity of the kingdom theme finds confirmation in Hebrews 1 and 2. Hebrews 2:6-8 quotes Psalm 8's reference to the promise of dominion given in the creation blessing: "you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet" (2:8). Hebrews 2:5 links that promise of dominion to the Davidic kingdom: "For it was not to angels that God submitted the world to come, of which we are speaking." The phrase "of which we are speaking" links back to chapter 1. In 1:13 the author comments that God did not give the Davidic covenant promise of Psalm 110, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet," to angels. In fact, from 1:5 through 1:13, Davidic covenant promises permeate the proofs of the exalted incarnate son. Not only do these chapters link the creation blessing, the promises of the Davidic covenant, and the world to come, but the Noahic covenant is brought in as well. Hebrews does this by following the quotation of Psalm 8, which indicates that man currently rules over the earth, with the observation, "At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." It is the Noahic covenant that reaffirms in a fallen context the blessing of authority to rule. The way the kingdom theme of the Davidic covenant is tied to these other covenants makes it difficult to claim that the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants set up contrasting kingdoms.

Second, it is important to note that the Abrahamic covenant does not actually inaugurate a kingdom. Abraham never rules over a land or a people. The nation of Israel is formed politically under the Mosaic covenant, but it does not become a kingdom until Saul and David. Furthermore, while the Davidic covenant does confirm a Davidic dynasty, the kingdom that it promises to establish was a future reality. God had not yet enthroned a Davidic king to whom God would say "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession" (Ps. 2:8). Nor could it be said of any of the Judean kings, "In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!" (Ps. 72:7-8). It was to David's son and his Lord to whom Yahweh would say, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool" (Ps. 110:1). This is why Jesus, who clearly is this promised Davidic ruler (cf. Matt. 1:1-17; Lk. 1:32), spoke of the kingdom being "at hand" in his ministry (Mk. 1:15). The promised Davidic kingdom of God was not established until the triumph of

¹⁰³ W. J. Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 151-52.

the ultimate Davidic Seed.¹⁰⁴ So while the Adamic and Noahic covenants establish human rule over the earth, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are primarily pointing to the putting right of this rule in a future Seed. Once again, it is difficult to see these covenants as establishing different kingdoms given the unity of the plan of redemption that unfolds through them.

New Covenant

VanDrunen, the New Covenant, and Christians as Dual Citizens

The Two Kingdoms vision for life is most realized for VanDrunen in the New Covenant. He writes, “Through the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Last Adam, new covenant believers have passed through God’s judgment, become citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and made heirs of eschatological life. Their identity is chiefly defined by the new creation rather than by the original creation as sustained by the Noahic covenant.”¹⁰⁵ Thus VanDrunen argues that “Christians, at an ultimate level, have been released from the natural law through their union with the crucified and exalted Christ.” This is the case because the new creation “has no need of the basic institutions, such as family or state, that characterize the present order.”¹⁰⁶ Thus he holds that Paul’s teaching that “Christians are no longer ‘under the law’” applies to both “Mosaic and natural” law.¹⁰⁷

Note carefully the qualifications that VanDrunen issues, like “at the ultimate level.” He comes back around and says, “Yet they continue to live within the confines of the protological natural order and must remain, as a general matter, under its moral authority,”¹⁰⁸ and, “yet, at a penultimate level, [Christians] must live within the structures of this present world that exist under the authority of natural law through the Noahic covenant.”¹⁰⁹

Thus the two kingdoms conclusion: “Christians exist in a time of eschatological tension, in the overlap of this age and the age to come.” This tension leads VanDrunen to conclude,

Christians are dual citizens. Their highest allegiance is to the kingdom of Christ’s new creation to which they belong through the new covenant, and in this sense they have been released from the authority of the Noahic natural law. Yet they also remain participants in the structures of this present creation, to which they belong through the Noahic covenant. In this sense, and by Christ’s command, they continue to submit to the natural law’s authority.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ VanDrunen recognizes that Jesus is proclaiming something new. He says, “*Christ and his kingdom bring the Old Testament redemptive kingdom and its law to fulfillment.*” *Living*, 108. It seems that there are really more than two kingdoms. Not only are there a common kingdom and a redemptive kingdom, but there is an Old Testament redemptive kingdom and a New Testament redemptive kingdom.

¹⁰⁵ VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants*, 415.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 416.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 415–16.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 416.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 416.

Evaluating Living in Two Kingdoms under the New Covenant

Free from the Mosaic Law; Still Under Natural Law

The relation of the Mosaic law to the new covenant is a complicated issue that is beyond the scope of this paper to settle. Nonetheless, something must be said. First, it appears that when Paul speaks about Christians no longer being under the law, he is speaking about the move from the Mosaic covenant to the new covenant. Christians are no longer under the Mosaic law code as their law code (see esp. 2 Cor. 3:6-9). Second, Paul does not free Christians from all law. The new covenant speaks of the law being written on the heart. This indicates that there is a law that transcends the Mosaic law. Given that the Mosaic law is the concrete application of creational or natural law to a particular time, place, and redemptive-historical period, it would be expected that the natural law, which is built into creation (Prov. 8:8:22-31, HCSB),¹¹¹ is that which transcends the Mosaic law. Third, sometimes Paul quotes parts of the Mosaic law as it still applies to the Christian. It appears that in these cases the law that was concretely applied in the Mosaic law can either be almost directly reapplied (cf. Rom. 13:9) or provides insight into principles that can be reapplied. That Paul does this points away from the Christian being released from natural law along with release from the Mosaic code.¹¹² That the Christian is no longer under the Mosaic law is clear (Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 5:18), but that he is also free from the natural law built into the creation does not follow.

Enduring Institutions

The basis for VanDrunen's claim that Christians are ultimately freed from natural law is his claim that the basic institutions such as family and government pass away in the new creation.¹¹³ However, the Scripture does not teach that basic institutions pass away in the new creation. Government is not a necessary evil confined to this present age. When Jesus traveled throughout Israel, preaching the gospel, he preached "the good news of the kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43; 8:1). When Jesus returns to earth, he will come as a conquering king and a judge (Rev 19:15-16). The goal of redemption is not to abolish government but to establish just government on the earth. Thus the climactic verse of the climactic book of the Bible is: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord

¹¹¹ See Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 108-13.

¹¹² Works that have shaped my thinking on the relation of the Mosaic law to the Christian include Douglas J. Moo, "The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 319-76; Frank Thielman, *Paul and the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); idem., *The Law and the New Testament: The Question of Continuity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1999); Brian S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

¹¹³ Institutions are ways of behaving that have become so enduring in a society that they define the rules and roles for human behavior in various situations. See James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "Elaborating the 'New Institutionalism,'" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, ed. R. A. W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3; Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3. The organization that carries forward these social practices may also be identified as an institution. Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 232-33.

and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). A kingdom is a governmental institution, and that aspect of the kingdom ought not be spiritualized away. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Jesus does not rule over the millennial age and the new creation simply as God. The promises that form the foundation for the Davidic Messiah’s rule over the world in righteousness stretch back to Genesis 1:26–28. Jesus will restore God’s blessings to redeemed mankind by ruling over the earth as the perfect man (Heb. 2:5–9). Jesus is not the only one who reigns in this future government. Though the blessing of human dominion over the earth is most gloriously fulfilled in him, it is not fulfilled in him alone. Daniel prophesies that God’s people will possess this kingdom and will have dominion in it (7:18, 22, 27). John says that under the Messiah, the saints “will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 21:5). Some saints will be given special provinces of authority. Jesus promised the twelve disciples that when he ruled in the regenerated world, they would “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28). Revelation 21:24 reveals that there will be nations and kings throughout all eternity. These kings bring their glory into the New Jerusalem. It sounds as though they are overseeing the nations under their rule to cultivate God’s world and make it glorious. They then to bring that glory before God for his honor and glory.¹¹⁴

The institution of family in the new creation is somewhat different. Jesus says that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matt. 22:30). Marriage does not endure into the new creation in its present state for two reasons. First, marriage is given for a particular purpose. God makes mankind male and female and blesses them with fecundity so that they will fill the earth and subdue it. But in the eternal state, the earth will be filled. There will be no further need of procreation and no further need of marriage.¹¹⁵ In addition, Scripture indicates that marriage is a great mystery that is ultimately fulfilled in the marriage between Christ and his people (Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:6–9; 21:2). These fulfillments of marriage in eternity do not necessarily indicate a wholesale change in natural law. First, VanDrunen would need to show that the transformation that the institution of marriage undergoes in eternity is undergone by other institutions. Yet, the reasons for why marriage does not continue in the eternal state and the fact that government clearly does points to marriage being the outlier. Second, VanDrunen would need to show that the fulfillment of marriage actually frees new covenant people from natural law. This does not seem to be Paul’s conclusion in Ephesians 6.

If the institutions of creation endure into the new creation, then a significant rationale for declaring Christians free from the natural law falls away.

¹¹⁴ The latter part of this paragraph is adapted from an initial draft chapter for *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016).

¹¹⁵ Marriage, of course, has other purposes, such as companionship, but those purposes can be fulfilled in other ways.

One Kingdom in Two Stages

Nonetheless, VanDrunen is correct that Christians relate to culture differently from those under the Mosaic Covenant and from those in the Millennial and eternal states. The reason for this is found not in a two kingdoms structure but in the nature of Christ's present reign.

Before his ascension Jesus claimed that he had been given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). As God, the Son has always had all authority, so this refers to the Son's messianic reign. Yet despite this claim of all authority, the enemies of Christ still hold positions of power and the followers of Christ have often faced persecution. Psalm 110 provides Christians with a paradigm that helps make sense of this situation. At present Christ rules in the midst of his enemies (110:2).¹¹⁶ At this time he seeks for "people [who] will offer themselves freely" (110:3). In the future, "he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath" (110:5). This gap between the kingdom coming in salvation and the kingdom coming in judgment was unexpected when Jesus came in his first advent proclaiming the kingdom. Jesus's disciples needed to have their expectations concerning the kingdom adjusted. Just prior to his triumphal entry Jesus tells a parable "because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). In the parable a nobleman goes "into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom" (19:12), just as Jesus would receive his kingdom as he is resurrected and enthroned at the right hand of God.¹¹⁷ The nobleman's servants are to "engage in business" while the nobleman is away (19:13), just as Jesus's servants are to be faithful while he is away. Nonetheless, there is a time when the nobleman will return and reward his faithful servants and destroy his enemies (19:26-27).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ That this is a present reign is indicated by two factors: The New Testament repeatedly affirms that at the resurrection/ascension Christ was enthroned at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34-36; Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22) and that this is the present position of Christ (Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2). Second, it is unlikely that the millennial reign of Christ, in which the devil is bound, is well-described as a reign in the midst of Christ's enemies. The possible counter-evidence to this thesis is the mention of the scepter coming "from Zion." On the one hand, this could simply be a reference to the fact that this ruler is a Davidic king. Or, since the death, resurrection, and ascension took place at Jerusalem, this could be an affirmation of the reign beginning in Zion. For this last point and the observation that a reign in the midst of enemies is distinct from the millennial reign, I am indebted to Mark Minnick. Mark Minnick, "Our Lord Now Rules," (sermon, Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Greenville, SC, March 9, 2014).

¹¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Moisés Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1532.

¹¹⁸ This is the concluding pericope in a whole section of Luke that deals with the kingdom. In 17:20 the Pharisees ask "when the kingdom of God would come." Jesus indicates that the kingdom of God is already in their midst in his person (see Bock, 1417-18). Nonetheless Jesus indicates to the disciples that there will be a time when they will be desiring to see the Son of Man rule, and they won't see it. Instead, they will be waiting for his coming. In fact, he must suffer first (17:22-30). Therefore in the time of waiting people must be sure that they are prepared so that they receive salvation and not judgement when he returns (17:32-37). Jesus then tells a parable that instructs the disciples to pray for justice as they await the coming of the Son of Man (18:1-8). Following this are three periscopes about how to be justified/how to "receive the kingdom of God"/how "to inherit eternal life (18:9-30). Then there is a passion prediction (18:31-34), a healing that highlights Jesus as the Son of David (18:35-43), and another account of salvation (19:1-10).

This gap between Christ reigning in the midst of his enemies and the coming day in which he will shatter kings in the day of his wrath means that there is a sense in which Christians do live as dual citizens. But it is not that they are citizens of a common kingdom governed by natural law and a redemptive kingdom governed by Scripture. Rather, Christians are pilgrims or sojourners in a present evil age. Sojourner is probably a better word than pilgrim, for pilgrim evokes the idea of traveling to another place for most people. The biblical concept of sojourner is more about dwelling in a foreign place. The New Testament words for sojourner (παρεπίδημος, πάροικος; cf. παροικία, παροικέω) are not words for someone on a journey from one place to another. Rather, the sojourner, is someone who lives in a foreign land.¹¹⁹

To be a sojourner as a Christian is not to pass through this world on the way to heaven. To be a Christian sojourner is to live, as Abraham did (Heb. 11:9), as a foreigner in the promised land (“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,” Matt. 5:5; cf. Rom. 4:13), looking forward to the day when it will become “a better country.” There is therefore a healthy tension to being a sojourner. The Christian lives in the present world; he is not just passing through. There is a sense in which he is to be “at home” in this world and active in its institutions. This is possible because the legitimate institutions and vocations of this present age are all rooted in the creational law that God built into his world.¹²⁰

However being a sojourner also puts the Christian “at odds” with the rest of the world.¹²¹ Peter writes, “Beloved I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which war against your soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). But what is the result of this abstemious living? “They are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you” (1 Peter 4:4). The broader context shows that Christians should expect suffering for living as sojourners. As Wolters and Goheen comment, “If we as the church want to be faithful to the equally comprehensive biblical story we will find ourselves faced with a choice: either accommodate the Bible's story to that of our culture, and live as a tolerated minority community, or remain faithful and experience some degree of conflict and suffering.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ cf. TDNT, 5:842.

¹²⁰ Michael W. Goheen, *Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 184.

¹²¹ Goheen, 184; cf. 183.

¹²² Wolters and Goheen, “Postscript,” in *Creation Regained*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 134. Wolters and Goheen also say, “The question has been posed as to why the Western church is one of the few churches in the world that is not facing suffering and persecution. One answer that has been offered is that the church has not been faithful to the comprehensive claims of the gospel. It has adjusted the biblical story by setting up a dualism which would allow for a compromise with the secular grand narrative of rational progress which has shaped much of western culture. There is undoubtedly much truth to such a claim. On the other hand, there is perhaps a more positive reason as well. Western culture, while increasingly humanistic and secular, has for centuries been salted to some degree by the gospel. This lessens the tension—but may also increase the danger and the temptation for accommodation. In a day of growing neo-paganism where the impact of the gospel is felt less and less in public life, it may be an opportune time to re-emphasize the biblical teaching concerning faithfulness and suffering.” Ibid, 135.

Paul doesn't use the sojourning language that appears in Hebrews and 1 Peter, but he does speak of the contrast between the present evil age and the age to come (1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21). This two-age eschatology provides the framework for Paul's view of how Christians live receptively in the present evil age.¹²³ Some have argued that the best cultural work that humans do now will be purified and preserved on the new earth.¹²⁴ However there is little biblical evidence for this.¹²⁵ VanDrunen rightly rejects this claim.¹²⁶ It is best to recognize that Christians don't actually redeem anything. They don't redeem people when they share the gospel. They don't redeem culture or science or education. They can press toward redemption or live in light of redemption in their endeavors. But redemption is brought about by Christ himself at the end of the age.

There is one interesting exception to the claim that Christians do not redeem anything. Paul told the Ephesians that they should be "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15, NKJV). Most modern translations opt for some variation of "making the most of the time" (RSV, NRSV, HCSB; cf. NASB, ESV, NIV). There is, however, no evidence that this is an idiomatic or metaphorical phrase in Greek.¹²⁷ The straightforward rendering, "redeeming the time," makes good sense when placed in Paul's eschatological contrast between "the present evil age" (Gal. 1:4) and the age to come.¹²⁸ As Thielman notes, "Here, then, Paul instructs his readers to 'buy the time' away from (ἐκ, *ek*) something that has a grip on it. What has a grip on the present time? He explains in the phrase 'the days are evil.' . . . His readers are to buy the present time out of its slavery to evil and to use it instead in ways that are 'pleasing to the Lord' (5:10)."¹²⁹ Christians can redeem evil time by living righteously. They can redeem the time by walking wisely. It is as if they can bring some part of the

¹²³ The following is adapted from an initial draft chapter for *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016).

¹²⁴ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 47.

¹²⁵ Wolters appeals to Rev. 21:24, 26, but it is more likely that the glory and honor spoken of in those verses pertains to the age to come rather than to the present age.

¹²⁶ VanDrunen, *Living*, 62.

¹²⁷ Hoehner appeals to Theodotion's translation of Daniel 8:2, καὶρὸν ὑμεῖς ἐξαγοράζετε ("you are trying to buy time" NETS). Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 692. But as Moo notes, "the whole phrase [in Daniel 8] means to 'stall for time'—a meaning that surely does not fit either Colossians 4:6 or Ephesians 5:16." Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 328. Further, as Eadie notes, there is greater specificity in Ephesians than in Daniel, indicated by the article, that distinguishes it from the more general saying in Daniel. John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (1883; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 393. Finally, Theodotion is a translation from Hebrew, a translation "characterized by formal equivalence to its source." R. Timothy McLay, "To the Reader of Daniel," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under That Title*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 992. It is therefore questionable that the Greek of Daniel 8:2 provides a reliable window into Greek idiomatic speech.

¹²⁸ See Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 883. O'Brien does not adopt the interpretation proposed here, but his comments about Paul's two age eschatology here prompted my thinking in this direction.

¹²⁹ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 356.

age to come into the present. When Paul spells out what redeeming the time looks like, he explains how we ought to function in our normal every day relationships. It has to do with family life and work life. Christians cannot redeem the institutions of the world; that is up to God. But Christians do redeem the time in this present evil age.

One Kingdom, Many Institutions

VanDrunen is also correct in distinguishing the role of the church from the role of Christians in society. However, he does this by locating the redemptive kingdom solely in the church and placing cultural concerns in a common kingdom. It is an error to restrict the kingdom to the church. A kingdom rooted in the creation blessing covers all aspects of life. However, it is appropriate to recognize that the church is a unique institution.¹³⁰ The church is the New Covenant people of God (cf. Acts 2:4). All true Christians can be said to be part of Christ's church (Eph. 2:8–15). But the church exists in specific locations (Acts 9:31; 11:22; 13:1; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Philem. 1:2). In these locations it has leaders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5) and members (1 Cor. 5:4–5; 2 Thess. 3:14–15). Thus the church is an institution. The church also has a particular mission made up of the following components: evangelism, baptism, teaching, fellowship, observance of the Lord's Supper, and prayer (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:42).

For some people, this vision of the church's mission is too small. They note that sin has infected every aspect of this world. They note that God's plan of redemption is to restore all that has been marred by sin. Therefore redemption is not only individual in its scope, it is cosmic as well. Thus, according to these Christians, the mission of the church should be as vast as the mission of God. That mission includes, of course, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. But it also includes creation care, care for the poor, political action against social injustice, and more.¹³¹ VanDrunen is concerned that such an expansive view of the church's mission compromises its unique mission in the world.

VanDrunen's concern is well-founded. The expansive view of the church's ministry goes beyond the mission that God has given to the institutional church. Nonetheless, VanDrunen seems to underestimate the reach of the Fall with his emphasis on working with our unsaved neighbors in the common kingdom. The Fall is cosmic in scope, and Christians ought to press toward redemption in every aspect of life.

It is therefore best to distinguish, not between the common kingdom and the redemptive kingdom but between the church as institution and the church as organism.¹³² All Christians are part of the body of Christ. This body does not move in and out of existence as the church gathers and scatters. The church as organism carries out all manner of good works in the name of Christ in a wide variety of vocations (on this see below). But the church also exists as an institution. It has pastors/elders and

¹³⁰ The following is adapted from an initial draft chapter for *Biblical Worldview: Creation, Fall, Redemption* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2016).

¹³¹ See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Biblical Theology for Life, ed. Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010).

¹³² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 304–5.

deacons who fill positions of leadership, it exercises shepherding and discipline functions with its members, and it gathers for the preaching of the Word, prayer, the ordinances, fellowship. It gathers to send out missionaries or to engage in local evangelistic efforts.¹³³

The institutional church does not have the competence to ensure justice in the world, provide solutions to intractable environmental issues, to resolve the problem of inter-city poverty, or to bring about the end of malaria. There are other institutions that address these tasks. The institutional church, nonetheless, does have an important role to play in all of these areas. The church can pray about such matters. The church should preach against unjust and unrighteous behavior. The church has a responsibility to disciple Christians to live biblically in the vocations God has called them to, some Christians may be called to vocations that address these problems.

VanDrunen claims there is nothing really distinctively Christian about the vocations of carpenter, firefighter, plumber, or landscaper, or goat-breeder aside from the virtues of diligence, respect, and honesty that all people recognize as good.¹³⁴ But what if the vocations were to include research biologists, philosophers, historians, bioethicists, educators, and legislators? In these vocations the distinctions between the Christian perspective and non-Christian perspectives are often stark. In these cases the Christian ought to bring Scripture to bear on their vocation.

Conclusion

David VanDrunen's natural law, two kingdoms approach to culture has a number of strengths. First, VanDrunen affirms the goodness of creation and the importance of Christian involvement in culture. Second, VanDrunen places appropriate emphasis on the pilgrim character of God's people in this age. Third, VanDrunen's emphasis on the church as an institution is significant given that the church is neglected in many books about Christians and culture. Fourth, VanDrunen is right to ask that Christians speak modestly about *the* Christian approach to certain cultural activities since Christians are often dependent on general revelation and their best judgment rather than special revelation in such matters. Fifth, VanDrunen makes a strong case for the existence of natural law. Sixth, VanDrunen is seeking an exegetical and theological basis for his position.

Nonetheless, VanDrunen's proposal suffers from a number of weaknesses. First, despite his attempt at exegetical grounding, VanDrunen's exegesis at key points in his argument is faulty. The creation blessing is not the probationary test for attaining eternal life, the Noahic covenant cannot be

¹³³ This distinction between the organic church and the institutional church can be seen clearly in that the commands that God gives to the institutional church and organic church, though overlapping at points, are distinct. Greg Gilbert and Kevin DeYoung note, "There are some commands given to the local church that the individual Christian just should not undertake to obey on his own. An individual Christian, for example, can't excommunicate another Christian; but the local church is commanded to do so in certain situations. Nor should an individual Christian take the Lord's Supper on his own; that's an activity the local church is to do "when you come together" (1 Cor. 11:17-18, 20, 33-34). In the same way, there are commands given to individual Christians that are clearly not meant for the local church as an organized group." Husbands, for example, are told to love their wives, and children are told to obey their parents. The church as a whole can't do those things. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 232-33.

¹³⁴ VanDrunen, *Living*, 192; *Natural Law*, 4-5.

separated from redemption, and the Abrahamic covenant does not establish a kingdom. In the same vein, a kingdom oriented theology cannot neglect the Davidic covenant. Second, as VanDrunen has responded to cogent exegetical critiques of his previous works, his later works tend to acknowledge the criticism while not actually changing the substance of his position. This creates points of tension within his position. It opens him to the charge of being inconsistent. Third, VanDrunen's position results in his drawing too many unwarranted distinctions. He ends up with at least three images of God in man: protological, fallen, and eschatological, several differing creation mandates, and kingdoms plural within the redemptive kingdom. At some point these multiplied fine distinctions strain exegetical credulity.

While VanDrunen is to be commended for his concerns to protect the church and its mission and to ground Christian involvement in culture exegetically and theologically, his program suffers from significant weaknesses that prevent it from being a recommended model.

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