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Operative Metaphor and Antimony: A Framework for Understanding the Two-Kingdoms/Neo-Kuyperian Debate

Donald Roth

donald.roth@dordt.edu

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Operative Metaphor and Antinomy: A Framework for Understanding the Two-Kingdoms/Neo-Kuyperian Debate

by Donald Roth

I.   Introduction

The theological debate between advocates of what has come to be known as "Two-Kingdoms Theology" and other theological camps, particularly those who identify as "Neo-Kuyperians,"[1] can sound quite esoteric to the average Christian. At the same time, the sharp tone of the critiques exchanged by the various camps can be acerbic and often give the impression that either our entire con-

ception of Christianity is at stake or that this is one of those "how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" debates that is a lot more bark than bite when it comes to substantive differences. The reason for this wildly contrasting perception is rooted in the difficulty of truly understanding the claims at stake, and, if the many conversations I've had on this issue in the past years are any indication, this confusion is pervasive.

For me, however, the contours of this debate strike a deeply personal note. I was raised in Escondido, in the shadow of Westminster Seminary California, and I attended school from Kindergarten straight through college at institutions that were avowedly Neo-Kuyperian. Then, in the summer of 2007, I moved to Washington, D.C. for law school and became involved with a church plant there. Suddenly I was hearing new terms, like "Two Kingdoms" and "Law/Gospel Distinction," promoted as central doctrines of the Reformation. While I had been skeptical of the more sweeping claims of Neo-Kuyperianism at Dordt, I now often defended those ideas against what seemed to me to be a radical swing in the other direction. The tension this difference created became acute when I returned to Dordt in 2011, this time as a faculty member. While I had defended Neo-Kuyperianism

Donald Roth is Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice and Business Administration at Dordt College.

in Washington, D.C., I now found myself frequently defending Two-Kingdoms advocates. Resolving my often conflicting thoughts in this area became compelling when I joined the teaching team for Core 399: *Calling, Task, & Culture*, the capstone class of Dordt's Core curriculum, in 2013-14. Finally, when I took over the course's team lead in fall of 2014, I concluded that I had to wrestle with these ideas even more intentionally until I could get them straight in my head.

In wrestling with the issues raised by this debate, I have become convinced that the concern does in fact go to the root of our entire conception of Christianity, and I believe that the theological distinctions between many Neo-Kuyperians and Two-Kingdom Advocates are, as logical matters, irreconcilable on these root issues. However, in another sense, I don't think that the positions are really that far apart, and I think the values animating the critiques being exchanged underline the necessity for community rather than the inevitability of schism. What follows is my humble attempt to reconcile the tension in this thesis through the concepts of both operative metaphor and antinomy, two terms that I will define and then apply to this theological debate. Through these concepts, I will show that this debate is a valuable and essential conversation within the context of Christian discipleship.[2]

II. Operative Metaphor
A. *Defined*
The concept of operative metaphor can help us conceptualize the Neo-Kuyperian/Two-Kingdoms debate and understand Christian discipleship in general, but the term needs definition. I find this idea most useful with respect to discipleship, and in that context an operative metaphor is a Biblical analogy, metaphor, or picture that helps us to frame and engage in our call to live as heirs of an immortal inheritance in a mortal world. This explanation may still sound a bit fanciful, so to better explain this concept before applying it, I will lay out what I do and do not mean by the term.

The concept of operative metaphor is not connected to Stephen Pepper's concept of "root metaphor" or the philosophical developments that have come from this line of thinking. In his 1942 book

World Hypotheses, Pepper speaks of certain rules for what sort of evidence individuals will accept as good and compelling, calling these "root metaphors."[3] For Pepper, these metaphors are tools for reasoning from common sense to more refined knowledge, such as science.[4] Although I am aware that subsequent theorizing in this area of metaphysics does speak of the operative nature of these metaphors, this area is not what I have in mind with the term, and whatever parallels might be useful are granted, but my view should not be seen as rooted in this philosophical tradition.

Instead, operative metaphor is a way of explaining how we go about the process that Walter Brueggemann refers to as "cultivating historical imagination," in *The Bible Makes Sense*. In this book, Brueggemann speaks of the Bible as a covenantal history carrying "a peculiar memory and promise, a very particular identity and vocation," making it a Christian goal "to become a responsible participant in that covenantal history, to share in its perceptions and nuances so that our life-world conforms to that which is central to the Bible."[5] Brueggemann then discusses how we can accomplish this process: we increasingly become insiders in the Biblical story by adopting Biblical imagery and symbolism as ways to apply Scriptural principles through a process of faithful improvisation.[6]

The Biblical call to discipleship is not without a basic level of content, but reasoning exactly how Biblical commands should be specifically lived in the world can be difficult. Operative metaphor, then, is a guide we can use to figure out for ourselves what exactly it means to "love your neighbor as yourself" or to "make disciples of all nations." This means that our choice of which operative metaphors we use to shape our imagination in this process has a substantial impact on how we live our lives.

B. *Neo-Kuyperian Theology and "the Kingdom"*
It should be fairly self-evident that Neo-Kuyperians imagine discipleship within the framework of the operative metaphor of "kingdom." Using this framework doesn't mean that this group has a monopoly on the term but that Neo-Kuyperians speak of discipleship in terms of "kingdom service" and our call to "extend the kingdom," "usher in the

kingdom," or "live as kingdom citizens."

By using the metaphor of "kingdom," Neo-Kuyperians tend to emphasize the message of the gospel in very broad terms. For instance, Al Wolters says, "the restoration in Christ of creation and the coming of the kingdom are one and the same."[7] This broad view then becomes a strong motivator

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for action, as Wolters explains: "[t]he rightful king has established a beachhead in his territory and calls on his subjects to press his claims ever farther in creation."[8] This view makes pressing the kingdom claim into every sphere and "square inch" of creation, whether the natural world or man's cultural development of it, the animating goal of what Christians are to "be about" in this world.

As an operative metaphor, "kingdom" encourages an optimistic Christian engagement with the world, often grounded in a goal of transformation. It also gives an eternal significance to even the otherwise mundane aspects of life. All of our cultural work becomes, as Andy Crouch calls it, "the furniture of heaven."[9] For believers motivated by this metaphor, a nearly assumed *soli deo gloria* permeates life in a way that encourages confidence in innovation and comfort in participation in broader culture.

C. *Two-Kingdoms Theology and "Pilgrims"*
For those who advocate Two-Kingdoms Theology, the predominant way that discipleship is imagined is through the operative metaphor of "pilgrim." Again, this usage does not mean that only Two-Kingdoms folk talk about Christians as pilgrims (some Neo-Kuyperians speak in similar terms[10]) but that advocates of Two-Kingdoms Theology predominantly speak of discipleship/disciples as being "sojourners"[11] or "pilgrims on the way."[12]

By thinking in terms of "pilgrim," advocates of Two-Kingdoms Theology tend to emphasize the message of the gospel in more technical and juridical terms. The emphasis in the gospel is on a thing completed in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. Michael Horton describes the gospel as "an announcement that someone else has performed everything and now gives the inheritance to us as a gift."[13] He further elaborates that "[t]he gospel changes lives precisely because it is not about us – even our changed lives – but about Christ."[14] While this perspective still encourages going out and engaging with the world around us, it is framed as the work of "ambassadors"[15] and "exiles in Babylon."[16]

As an operative metaphor, "pilgrim" draws deeply on the experience of the Judean exiles in Babylon. The cultural calling is an echo of the prophet's words in Jeremiah 29:8-9: "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." There is engagement, but, as David VanDrunen describes it, this cultural engagement is a joyful, detached, and modest engagement that expresses "gratitude for the small blessings that God bestows for a time" while recognizing that "our cultural products themselves are not meant to endure into the world to come."[17] For believers motivated by this metaphor, there is a suspicion of becoming too complacent with the world, and comfort is found primarily in fellowship with believers now and a hope of better things to come.

III. Antinomy
A. *Defined*
When I refer to antinomy in this context, I have in mind J.I. Packer's discussion of the concept from his classic work *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Packer refers to an antinomy as an "apparent contradiction" between two things we hold to be equally true, and he compares an antinomy to the simultaneous wave and particle characteristics of light in physics.[18] Antinomy is distinct from a paradox, in which contradictory words are used to describe a single essential fact; as Packer says, "a paradox is always dispensable."[19] An antinomy, then, is an irreducible incompatibility of two true states, and Packer encourages us to deal with them by "not[ing] what connections exist between the two

truths and their frames of reference, and teach[ing] yourself to think of reality in a way that provides for their peaceful coexistence, remembering that reality itself has proved actually to contain them both."[20]

I believe that many of the debates that rage in this theological arena, as well as some of each side's suspicions about the other, are rooted in a stronger affinity with one side or the other of a number of important antinomies that run within the Christian faith. In that light, we would do well to take Packer's advice to heart in how we deal with these antinomies and to recognize that these distinctions can do much to advance dialog in this area.

When I say that these perspectives are rooted in a "stronger affinity with one side or the other," I mean that it is impossible to hold both ideas—because they are antinomies—in our minds equally, and so we tend to emphasize or resonate with one of the two truths more strongly. For instance, with the antinomy of Christ's simultaneous divine and human nature, it is impossible for us to imagine someone being completely two things at once, and so it is natural for us to resonate with Christ's humanity or His divinity to a greater degree. Those who resonate with His humanity will often seek a "more personal relationship" and tend to see Christ in more brotherly terms. These people also tend to emphasize the healing and caring works that Christ performed while on earth and encourage us to imitate them. Those who resonate with His divinity will often be concerned with proper reverence toward Christ and speak of Him in more hierarchical terms. These people will usually put a priority on Christ's ongoing work of salvation and emphasize our roles as messengers rather than imitators.

Perhaps the concept of antinomy is not yet objectionable, but once we begin to wrestle with applying the concept to this debate, those objections may quickly crop up, so I will add a few caveats and explanations to further demonstrate what I mean by the idea: If I am honest with myself, I find that I resonate more with the sense of Christ as divine than as human. This does not mean in any way that I reject Christ's humanity, and it certainly doesn't mean that I believe Christ to be any less human than He is divine. However, since I cannot logically imagine Christ as both, I find myself, more often than not, imagining Him in a divine sense, seated on the Throne of Heaven, making intercession for His people and ruling over Creation. This emphasis doesn't mean that a human can't do those things (obviously Christ does these as a man), but in my mind's eye, I am prone to envision Christ in these roles by emphasizing His divine nature.

My point about antinomy here is that our affinity with one side or the other will work its way out in significant ways in terms of how we believe our faith should be ordered and lived out. With respect to the example we've been considering, this means I tend to emphasize proper reverence and a conservative approach to the worship order, since our Lord is the Almighty God, but it also trickles down into little things, like my conscious practice of capitalizing pronouns referring to a member of the Godhead. Those who feel an affinity for Christ's humanity might indeed share some of these practices, but their persistence or underlying reasoning will likely differ.

At the same time, recognizing something as an antinomy is a constant call to keep our imaginations in check. As much as I may imagine Christ as divine, I also affirm that He is human, and it's important that I step back and rein in my imagination to remain respectfully cognizant of that fact. Just in working through this example, I had to stop myself after referencing Christ on the throne and recognize that Jesus sits on the throne every bit as much as a man as He does as God. That realization forces me to wrestle with my concept of the proper role of man and to temper and deepen my understanding of Christ. In other words, keeping both aspects of an antinomy in robust dialog is not only an antidote to error but an essential tool for reaching deeper understanding.

With this understanding, then, I believe there are three prime antinomies at play in this particular debate, although certainly others could be mentioned. In the following sections, I will detail each of these in turn and demonstrate some of the ideas and applications that come from differing affinities. I will then offer some concluding reflections on how to balance these often conflicting tendencies.

B. *The Already/Not Yet of the Kingdom* of God

One of the great concerns of early Christianity was the nature of the kingdom of God, particularly its immanence. This topic was the subject of numerous teachings and parables of Christ, as well as the writings of the Apostles, and from this the Christian church has developed the notion that the kingdom of God both has come and is yet to come. This "already and not yet" tension is more than just a paradox or difficult saying; it is an antinomy. We can see this in the fact that the statement contains two essential truths that are logically irreconcilable. By saying "already and not yet," we do not simply mean that the rule of Christ is only established tentatively or partially. Christ sits enthroned in heaven, and all things are already subject to His rule, which He already providentially carries out over "every square inch" of Creation.[21] At the same time, Christ has not yet returned to purify the world and usher in the New Jerusalem so gloriously prophesied in Revelation. The difficulty comes in expressing how we see this accomplished ascendancy worked out in the fallen world: to what degree is the kingdom "already" and how is it "not yet"? There is a cognitive tension at play in our understanding of the kingdom that bears many of the marks of an antinomy, and the debate between Neo-Kuyperians and the Two-Kingdoms Theology maps across affinities for each side.

Neo-Kuyperians will, by and large, resonate with the "already" of the kingdom. Again, this does not mean that they totally reject the "not yet," but as their affinity increases, descriptions will increasingly emphasize both the degree to which the Kingdom of God is realized in the present world and Christians' increasingly active role in bringing the world under Christ's dominion. This approach can be seen, for instance, in Al Wolters, who, as previously mentioned, describes the coming of Christ as His establishing "a beachhead in his territory," which calls us to "press his claims ever further in creation."[22] Similarly, Wolters maintains that reconciliation in Christ "reinstated [Christians] as God's managers on earth."[23] In his critique of the Two-Kingdoms Theology, Tim Scheuers draws on Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen when he says, "this divine plan 'unfolds *progressively* through [God's] work in the life of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus, *and it continues today in the mission of the church.*'"[24] In emphasizing the "already" of the kingdom, then, NeoKuyperians focus on a progressive rolling out (or reconciliation) of the new order which will be completed in Christ's second coming. In other words, an emphasis of NeoKuyperians is on the continuity of this world and the next by virtue of this progressive breaking in of the coming kingdom. This view makes Christians into reinstated viceroys of creation through Christ, enlisted in Christ's task of reconciliation, redeeming creation, and taking up the cultural mandate driven by this progressive hermeneutic of a movement from garden to city.

Two-Kingdoms Theologians, on the other hand, resonate much more deeply with the "not yet" of the kingdom, and as their affinity with that view increases, the tendency will be to increasingly emphasize the discontinuity of the present age and the one to come while attributing redemption/reconciliation in more exclusive terms to Christ alone. David VanDrunen maintains that "[b]elievers themselves are the point of continuity between this creation and the new creation. The New Jerusalem is the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2). Asserting that anything else in this world will be transformed and taken up into the world-to-come is speculation

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beyond Scripture."[25] Michael Horton emphasizes the unrealized aspect of the coming kingdom, saying, "The church is not yet the realized kingdom of Christ on earth, but it is the only place where that kingdom becomes partially visible through the ministry of Word and sacrament."[26] In this view, Christ's work did not reinstate Christians as viceroys of creation. As VanDrunen says, "Christians

will attain the destiny of life in the world-to-come, but we do so not by picking up the task where Adam left off but by resting entirely on the work of Jesus Christ, the last Adam who accomplished the task perfectly."[27]

Perhaps at this point it appears that I've erred. The quotations I've selected evince a substantive disagreement between Neo-Kuyperians and Two-Kingdoms Theologians with respect to the nature of the work of Christ and the degree of continuity between this world and the next, so how is it helpful to analyze this difference, using the concept of antinomy? If we focus solely on the theological issues mentioned, the distance between the camps seems wide indeed, and I do not want to downplay the significance of the differences in the doctrinal concerns considered; however, there are also points of significant-seeming harmony. For instance, neither side actually disagrees that humans are to be about cultural labor. VanDrunen says, "God first grants [Christians] all the rights of the world-to-come as an accomplished fact and then calls them to cultural labor in this world as a grateful response."[28] At the same time, in his critique of Two-Kingdoms Theology, Scott Swanson says that the kingdom message of Revelation does not "encourage us to see our cultural engagements as in themselves advancing Christ's kingdom. They can and must aim to be expressions of our faithful witness to that kingdom."[29] At the extremes, the gulf between the camps widens, and the theological differences become more pronounced, but I believe that a useful way to understand these perspectives still centers around how they aim to resolve the tension of the "already/not yet," something that Neo-Kuyperians accomplish via their affinity for the "already"; and Two-Kingdoms Theologians by an emphasis on the "not yet."

C. *The World is Created Good/Corrupted by Sin*
There is a divide similar to the "already/not yet" antinomy with respect to the nature of Creation. Genesis 1:31 describes God's completed work of Creation as "very good"; however, Genesis 3 recounts man's fall into sin, which, as Romans 8:20 explains, subjected all of creation to "futility." In the Reformed tradition, the fall has been understood as a pervasive frustration of purpose, most

frequently referred to as "total depravity." Total depravity creates a tension in how Christians look at Creation and plays out as another antinomy across which we can map the Neo-Kuyperian/Two-Kingdom debate.

Neo-Kuyperians tend to resonate with the fundamental or original "good"-ness of Creation. The redemption and reconciliation brought by Christ, then, is spoken of in terms of cosmic restoration for all of Creation. As Wolters says, "[God] refuses to abandon the work of his hands—not to imply that God scraps his earlier creation and in Jesus Christ makes a new one, but rather to suggest that he hangs on to his fallen original creation and *salvages* it."[30] Taking the statement in Colossians 1:20, that God is reconciling all things to Himself through Christ, Neo-Kuyperians tend not only, as mentioned above, to emphasize continuity between this world and the next but to emphasize this continuity as rooted in the created order, in some cases even by virtue of an eschatological, developmental character to the original Creation itself.[31] Tying this continuity to the discussion above, then, the progressive hermeneutic at play in the Neo-Kuyperian understanding of the coming kingdom of God finds its roots not just in the incarnation of Christ but in the Creation itself, and many Neo-Kuyperians take the accounts of the Garden in Genesis and the Heavenly City in Revelation not just as a plan of redemption but as an eschatological development of Creation by mankind set in motion before the Fall.[32]

Two-Kingdoms Theologians, on the other hand, resonate with the corruption and passing nature of Creation. David VanDrunen asserts that mankind failed its cultural task in the first Adam and that Christ has completed that work, but despite mankind's failure, God entered a covenant with Noah that promised to allow man's cultural activities to proliferate for a time, a time which would come to an abrupt and cataclysmic end with Christ's return.[33] In other words, Two-Kingdoms Theology sees Creation largely through the lens of the Noahic Covenant, namely, that God once cleansed the earth of man's corrupt culture-making with water, but that He has promised not to do so again until the Last Day. With this view, Two-Kingdoms Theology is much more guided by the

purifying fire described in 2 Peter 3 than the universal reconciliation mentioned in Colossians 1:20. As mentioned above, the emphasis on the "not yet" of the Kingdom fits well with a strong awareness of the fallen and temporary nature of the current regime. Just as the Kingdom is to be ushered in exclusively by Christ, so the renewal of Creation is accomplished solely by Christ, and the reconciliation and purification of Creation involves a sweeping away of the mess man has made of the current order. As Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert say, "the gospel is the good news of a salvation, in all its parts, that is *for us,* and not in the least *by us.*"[34]

Again, like with the concept of kingdom, there are deep theological distinctions and differences at play in the views of both Neo-Kuyperians and

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those who advocate Two-Kingdoms Theology. The differences between the progressive, or the preservational, hermeneutics of the two sides are in particularly strong relief; however, it is again worth noting that the gulf isn't always as wide as it appears. While they see culture in very different terms, the Neo-Kuyperian idea of a movement from garden to city in Creation is not totally alien to the Two-Kingdoms perspective. VanDrunen argues that humanity's original calling was to "complete its task in this world and then to enter triumphantly into the world-to-come."[35] In his view, "*this present world was never meant to exist forever.*"[36] To put this idea in context, VanDrunen argues that Adam was originally charged with a cultural task that would culminate with an ascendancy and eternal life in Zion. That is, Crouch and VanDrunen both agree that man was set on a path from garden to city from the beginning. They differ on theologi-

cal details and the hermeneutic of arriving there, but there is an essential agreement between at least some of those in the two camps on this general trajectory. It is important not to trivialize the existing differences, but I believe that seeing some continuity here helps us map this debate across antinomies such as the good/tainted nature of Creation.

D. *"In the World, but not of it" and the Church*
A third antinomy is rooted in the long tradition of affirming that we are "in the World, but not of it." Viewing this as an antinomy is particularly apt when it comes to the interplay of individual Christians and our corporate identity as the Church. Both sides of the theological debate over the Two Kingdoms agree that Christians are citizens of the kingdom of God, that we possess a heavenly nature and ethical calling that causes us to live differently, and that we are called to gather together in a visible, regular form we usually refer to as "church." However, emphases within these points of commonality vary, and the overall articulations of the role of the church differ in ways that reflect a varying affinity with the two poles of this antinomy.

Neo-Kuyperians tend to emphasize the "in the World" nature of Christians and the church. Because of their broad and immanent view of the Kingdom of God, Neo-Kuyperians see the church as only a small (but important) part of the kingdom. As Michael Williams says, "The church is the citizenry of the kingdom, but the kingdom is broader than its citizens."[37] Since "Christ's disciples did not proclaim the church but the kingdom," the church then exists to help advance the Kingdom of God.[38] This means that Christians, both as individuals and as the community of the church, are called together to a task of working out this mandate by engaging the world. By way of enumeration of the "every square inch" principle, Wolters lists marriage, sexuality, politics, art, and business all as fields in need of redemptive engagement and an effort to conform these areas "again to God-honoring standards."[39] This approach does not mean that there is a total disregard for corporate worship, but the emphasis is on broader engagement under the idea that "[t]he rule of God is realized through the righteous action of God's people in spheres of life

lying beyond the institutional church."[40]

Advocates of Two-Kingdoms Theology, on the other hand, have an affinity for the "not of the World" aspect of this antinomy, which leads to an emphasis on both Christians as a people called out and the church as a particular institution. By contrast to the cultural-activity focus of Neo-Kuyperians, David VanDrunen says, "The church is where the chief action of the Christian life takes place." Horton goes further, calling the church "the only place where [the Kingdom of God] becomes partially visible."[41] He puts this provocatively in his book *The Gospel-Driven Life*, with a chapter titled "Don't Just *Do* Something, *Sit* There!"[42] Tied to their emphasis on the "not yet" and the temporal nature of Creation, Two-Kingdoms Theologians tie the Christian life strongly to the institutional Church, and they speak of the institutional church strongly in terms of faithfully awaiting the coming age and bearing witness to salvation in Christ.

In many ways, it is this issue that sees the sharpest practical divide between Two-Kingdoms and Neo-Kuyperian thought. At their extremes, Neo-Kuyperians will downplay the role of the church as institution or blur it into the broader cultural mandate; at the same time, Two-Kingdoms Theologians will emphasize both the centrality of worship as an institutional body and our passive role in receiving the kingdom to such a degree that they become virtually incoherent on any ethical or moral component of the Christian life. This is not to say that all members of either camp dwell at these extremes, but concern over the potential to either neglect the church or neglect the world provides much of the heat that drives the often passionate tone of this debate.

Ultimately, this is why I believe that the evaluative framework of antinomy is so valuable in this debate. Despite everything said in this section, there is substantial overlap between Neo-Kuyperians and Two-Kingdoms Theologians in this area of the church's importance, perhaps more even than in others. Williams calls the church the "locus of the Kingdom" and says that "God alone can and will build his kingdom; it cannot be built by men. But God calls the church to witness to the kingdom."[43] At the same time, VanDrunen says, "even in their most ordinary and mundane tasks, Christians

must act from faith, in accord with God's law, and for God's glory…hence making their cultural work, in this respect, uniquely Christian."[44] With selective quotations and adequate space to do so, it would not be a difficult task to make the two sides sound virtually identical on many issues that touch the church, so why is there at times such a sharp practical difference? I believe the difference reflects a guiding affinity for the respective sides of the debate to be either "in the World" or "not of it," and each side will often work itself out in a primary practical concern either for Sunday or for the rest of the week.

IV. Concluding Reflections

Throughout this paper, my goal has been to provide a couple of interpretive tools to add clarity to what can all too often be a confusing debate. My purpose has not been to obscure the genuine theological issues at stake in this discussion or to attempt to paper over differences. One of my colleagues responded to an earlier discussion based on these topics by saying I had failed to convince him that this was "all semantics," and I have failed in my efforts if that's what it appears that my thesis is. The question of whether or not Christians are reinstated as vice regents of Creation as part of our restoration in Christ seems to me a critical point of disagreement in this debate. At the same time, the hermeneutic of a movement from garden to city and a passing from temporal to eternal bear similarities, but it would be a deep mistake to conflate them. Rather than seeking to minimize differences, I have tried to show that the concepts of operative metaphor and antinomy can help provide a platform for understanding what drives these differences. If Neo-Kuyperians and advocates of the Two-Kingdoms imagine their task in terms of different operative metaphors, their theology and conception of what Christianity is will be fundamentally different. At the same time, if these differences map over an affinity for different aspects of antinomies that run through the Christian faith, there is some fundamental commonality and relatedness on these issues that in a sense transcends the disagreement.

If what I've argued is true, Christians have a responsibility to keep this discussion going in a robust, charitable way. Scripture is full of metaphor

and imagery, and if metaphor, particularly operative metaphor, is so powerful in shaping our faithful improvisation and our way of imagining discipleship, then it is equally important that we not become myopic or obsessed with a single one. We need to keep these operative metaphors in dialog with one another, not by trying to hold on to all of them at once but by owning which ones are particularly inspiring for us and then being sensitive to what insights and inclinations these create as we interact with the rest of the body. At the same time, it is inherent to the very concept of antinomy that we won't be able to practically conceptualize both aspects of the antinomy as equally true. We will naturally resonate with one or the other irreconcilable truth. Rather than seek to solve the antinomy, we can embrace it, resolve our own answers, but remain cognizant of our affinities and recognize that the only way to see that both of these truths are fairly expressed is through our community together. This process takes profound humility and tolerance that will be difficult to maintain. Ultimately, the practical differences created by working out these ideas may mean that federative unity is not always possible, but it's vital that an overarching spirit of ecumenism and mutual respect keep this discussion from creating walls of silent division, because if my thesis is correct, we will all suffer in our faith without these differing voices.

Endnotes

1. I will try to stick to the term Neo-Kuyperian in this article; however, I recognize that this term is ill-defined and has significant overlap with those who would self-identify as Neo-Calvinists. My intention by selecting this term is to suggest the third (or perhaps fourth by now) wave of theologians and philosophers coming at the latter half of the 20th Century and into the new millennium who identify strongly with the work of Abraham Kuyper and those around his time who were, at the turn of century, referred to as Neo-Calvinists. It is primarily a distinction as to time, and I am not here weighing into any potential distinctions as to theology.

2. In defending my thesis, my intent is to provide a context for dialog. I am not trying to imply that any one person embodies the whole of one perspective or the other or that persons who feel an affinity to one camp or the other necessarily agree with everything else stated by their peers. Despite the generality required here, I do hope that I am being fair to the respective beliefs,

and any misrepresentations are wholly unintentional.

3. Stephen Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (University of California Press, 1942), 84.

4. Ibid., 91-92.

5. Walter Brueggemann, *The Bible Makes Sense* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003), 25.

6. Brueggemann demonstrates how this can work, specifically with the example of "manna in the wilderness." Ibid., 29-36.

7. Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview,* 2nd Ed. (Eerdmans, 2005), 73.

8. Ibid., 74.

9. Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Intervarsity Press, 2008), 170.

10. See e.g. Timothy R. Scheuers, "Dual Citizenship, Dual Ethic?" in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective,* edited by Ryan C. McIlhenny, 125-154 (P&R Publishing, 2012), 142-143.

11. See e.g. David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* (Crossway, 2010).

12. See e.g. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Zondervan, 2011).

13. Michael Horton, *The Gospel-Driven Life* (Baker Books, 2009), 109.

14. Ibid., 127.

15. Ibid.

16. VanDrunen, 73-74.

17. Ibid., 166.

18. J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1961), 18.

19. Ibid., 20

20. Ibid., 21.

21. See e.g. Hebrews 1. The whole book grounds its argument in the accomplished work and ascendancy of Christ.

22. Wolters, 74.

23. Ibid., 71.

24. Emphasis in original. Scheuers, 142 (citing Craig G. Bartholomew, and Michael W. Goheen, *Living at the Crossroads* (Baker Academic, 2008), 52).

25. VanDrunen, 66.

26. Michael Horton, *The Gospel Driven Life*, 248.

27. VanDrunen, 50.

28. Ibid., 51.

29. Scott A. Swanson, "How Does 'Thy Kingdom Come' before the End?" in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective,* edited by Ryan C. McIlhenny, 201-226 (P&R Publishing, 2012), 225.

30. Wolters, 70.

31. See Lief, Jason. "Eschatology, Creation, and Practical Reason" in *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective,* edited by Ryan C. McIlhenny, 227-249 (P&R Publishing, 2012).

32. This view is present in many Neo-Kuyperians but is probably most clear in Crouch, 109-110.

33. VanDrunen, 28-29.

34. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Crossway, 2011), 208.

35. VanDrunen, 40.

36. Emphasis original. Ibid., 65.

37. Michael Williams, *Far as the Curse is Found* (P&R Publishing, 2005), 265.

38. Ibid., 267.

39. Wolters, 71.

40. Williams, 265.

41. Horton, 248.

42. Ibid., 103.

43. Williams, 266-7.

44. VanDrunen, 168.