

HOW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOD'S KINGDOMS OF THE CHURCH AND THE
STATE SHAPES A CHRISTIAN'S APPROACH TO GAY MARRIAGE

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Abstract

The issue of gay marriage is hotly contested throughout the United States of America. The Supreme Court's decisions are moving in favor of it, as is public opinion. However, Christians understand that God instituted marriage to be between one man and one woman. What is the proper Christian response to this cultural development? What guidance does God's Word give to individual Christians and pastors as they approach this issue in their private and public lives? A thorough study of the guidance in God's Word concerning this difficult topic will lead us to this conclusion: God has established two distinct kingdoms in the church and the state. Christians will seek to maintain the distinction between these two kingdoms, even when the government chooses to change the definition of marriage. The state's responsibility is to govern outward behavior. The Christian will serve the state in that endeavor however he is able to do so. The church, on the other hand, has been given the responsibility to change people's hearts. This task is not accomplished through legislation or political activism, but through the means of grace. Therefore the church will proudly proclaim law and gospel, but not become involved with the political fight over gay marriage.

Introduction

According to a Gallup poll published on July 29, 2013, the majority of Americans now favor a nationwide legalization of gay marriage. This is the continuation of a trend that has seen public support for gay marriage steadily increase in recent years.¹ At the time of this writing, 14 of the 50 states have already legalized marriage between same-sex couples. More states are expected to legalize such marriages by the time that this paper will be published.² Every indication is that gay marriage is an issue that Americans will continue to deal with in the future. Thus American Christians will do well to think through the appropriate response to this legislation.

The main goal of this essay will be to examine how Christians will appropriately respond to the legalization of gay marriage. The Christian ought to approach this political situation mindful of his place as a citizen of two distinct kingdoms. Christians belong to God's kingdom of the church, which is governed by God through his Word. However, Christians also live under God's other kingdom, that is, the state. Christians will seek to maintain this distinction between God's two kingdoms. This distinction applies also in those instances in which the state has legalized gay marriage.

I begin this examination of the appropriate Christian response to legislation that changes the state's definition of marriage with an assessment of current literature concerning this topic followed by an analysis of the political philosophy that has driven this change. I then consider whether or not this political philosophy is acceptable to Bible-believing Christians. Once the scriptural position has been established, I examine the lessons that can be learned from the precedent that has been set in church history. The remainder of the paper focuses on how these principles will be applied in the lives of pastors, individual Christians, and congregations.

¹ Lydia Saad, "In U.S., 52% Back Law to Legalize Gay Marriage in 50 States", *Gallup Politics*, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/163730/back-law-legalize-gay-marriage-states.aspx> (Accessed on 3 Nov. 2013).

² Abby Ohlheiser, "The State of the State-by-State Fight for Gay Marriage", *The Atlantic Wire*, <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/politics/2013/11/state-state-state-fight-gay-marriage/71151/> (Accessed on 3 Nov. 2013).

Literature Review

This paper deals with several areas of academia. As a result, I have consulted a significant variety of sources. Some of the sources commented on current American public policy. Other sources discussed the development of the separation of church and state throughout American history. Some of the theological books I have consulted dealt with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, its biblical basis, and its historical development. Plenty of other sources encouraged Christians to act in certain ways in response to the current political scene. Since the literature I have consulted comes from such significantly different sources, I evaluate them one category at a time.

Progress in the gay rights movement has accelerated significantly over the past few years. Therefore, it was necessary to use extremely recent sources in order to set the current political scene for this paper. When it comes to court cases that have been decided in the past year, careful, scholarly analysis of those decisions is still emerging. Much of the analysis of the Supreme Court cases dealing with the Defense of Marriage Act and Proposition 8³ has come from the mainstream media. While such analysis was helpful in this research to get a pulse of the nation's opinions, it often offered little in the realm of meaningful evaluation of the arguments put forth in the Court's reports. Because the court cases are so recent and sources of analysis are still emerging, I chose to deal mostly with the primary sources. The opinions of the court were helpful in that they clearly laid out the line of reasoning and research that led them to the decisions they made.

Concerning the development of the separation of church and state in the United States, there is a strong thesis and antithesis. The generally accepted thesis has been that the separation of church and state developed in colonial America in the years leading up to the composition of the Bill of Rights. The revisionist view of this concept is that the separation of church and state that Thomas Jefferson and others supported and protected in the Bill of Rights is something entirely different than what that phrase means when it is used today. David Barton's *The Jefferson Lies* is perhaps the most radical proponent of this viewpoint. Thomas J. Curry in his book *The First Freedoms*, summarizes the arguments on both sides. In my paper I briefly summarized this difference of opinion, but did not attempt to resolve the conflict. Instead, I simply traced the development of thought that has grown into the separation of church and state

³ The text of both of these documents is contained in the attached appendices.

that drives the support for the legalization of gay marriage. Curry's book was quite helpful in that endeavor, as was Robert L. Maddox's *Separation of Church and State*.

Many sources presume a connection between the framers of the Constitution and Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke and Voltaire. Curry and Maddox, among others, both write about the Enlightenment as a movement that set the stage for the American revolution and the First Amendment. However, such sources often failed to demonstrate a concrete connection between the European Enlightenment and the American revolution. One source that was helpful in drawing such a connection was *The Enlightenment in America* by Henry F. May.

Many Christians throughout the centuries have written about the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Men as early as Augustine and Pope Gelasius I wrote about the two kingdoms. Lutherans have contributed greatly to the repertoire of literature concerning the two kingdoms. The Lutheran Confessions address the concept. Luther wrote extensively about God's two kingdoms. Twentieth century confessional Lutherans have also written extensively on the topic. Many essays by Lutheran pastors and professors have emphasized this. Professor Daniel Deutschlander's *Civil Government* provides a useful overview of the entire concept. These men have dealt with the doctrine of God's two kingdoms masterfully; however, most of them wrote before they needed to deal with the issue of gay marriage. With this paper I hope to stand on the shoulders of these men. I will take the principles that they have expounded and apply them to the situation that Christians deal with today.

UnChristian by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons provided a helpful snapshot of the modern-day cultural scene as it relates to Christianity. Kinnaman and Lyons provided many practical ideas concerning how Christians could remedy certain negative perceptions about Christianity in modern culture. While its ideas were certainly helpful and would be worth a read for any Bible-believing Christian, this book was written with far more of a practical rather than a doctrinal focus. The doctrine of the two kingdoms was mentioned, but briefly. While many of the book's suggestions were compatible with the doctrine of the two kingdoms, that relationship was more implicit than explicit. The Catholic literature on gay marriage, most notably John Harvey's *The Truth About Homosexuality*, tends to focus more on the practical side of the issue than the theoretical. This was pleasantly surprising. In the past the Catholic church has frequently mingled church and state, politics was not the focus of their literature concerning homosexuality. There certainly was the underlying premise that these convictions

should result in political action, but that was rarely explicitly stated. I hope to add to this field of literature a Confessional Lutheran perspective that explicitly states the doctrine of the two kingdoms as that which fundamentally shapes a Christian's approach to the political issue of the legalization of gay marriage.

The Political Philosophy Behind the Change

The arguments in favor of homosexual marriage are complex and varied. It can be difficult at times to identify all the underlying issues that contribute to a certain position. There are, however, two lines of argumentation that have each played a significant role in the court cases that have advanced gay rights in the United States. Recently, proponents of gay marriage have argued on the grounds of the due process clauses of the Fifth⁴ and Fourteenth Amendments.⁵ For example, the argument that challenged California's Proposition 8 relied heavily on "the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment."⁶ In the prominent case that struck down the Defense of Marriage Act, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the opinion of the court that said, "DOMA seeks to injure the very class New York seeks to protect. By doing so it violates basic due process and equal protection principles applicable to the Federal Government."⁷ The purpose of this paper is not to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the argumentation of the justices of the Supreme Court. This author is far from a constitutional expert and, therefore, will instead focus mainly on the theological aspects and pastoral implications of this issue. Later on, this paper will deal with the concerns that Bible-believing Christians have about these conclusions of the Supreme Court. At this time, however, it is enough simply to note that the concept of due process and equal protection is the main thrust of the current argument in favor of gay marriage.

While the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments are at the focus the current dialogue concerning gay marriage, the First Amendment laid the foundation for the gay rights movement. In reality, the Fourteenth Amendment is a broadening of the focus of the First Amendment.⁸

⁴ "No person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." U.S. Constitution, amend. 5.

⁵ "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." U.S. Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 1.

⁶ Hollingsworth et al. v. Perry et al., John Roberts (Supreme Court of the United States 2013), 1, http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-144_8ok0.pdf (Accessed on 6 November 2013).

⁷ United States vs. Windsor, Executor of the Estate of Speyer, et al., Anthony Kennedy (Supreme Court of the United States 2013), 23, http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-307_6j37.pdf (Accessed 6 November 2013).

⁸Daniel Deutschlander, *Civil Government: God's Other Kingdom*, People's Bible Teachings (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 176.

However, even if someone were to argue that the Fourteenth Amendment represents a separate line of thought from the First Amendment, an analysis of the Supreme Court's statements explaining rulings that moved gay marriage forward reveals that the First Amendment remains as the ultimate ideological basis for this movement. For example, while the actual argumentation of Justice Kennedy concerning DOMA relied upon the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, in that opinion he repeatedly referred to the precedent set at *Lawrence v. Texas*.⁹ In that earlier statement, Justice Kennedy addressed a statement that Chief Justice Burger had previously made. Burger said, "Decisions of individuals relating to homosexual conduct have been subject to state intervention throughout the history of Western civilization. Condemnation of those practices is firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards."¹⁰ Kennedy argued that this was not valid ground on which to deprive people of their rights. He said, "The state cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime."¹¹ With this ruling, the Supreme Court ruled that Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards did not provide sufficient grounds to criminalize homosexual behavior. In this ruling the court refused to do that which the First Amendment forbids; that is, they refused to uphold a law "respecting an establishment of religion."¹² Kennedy's use of *Lawrence v. Texas* in support of the ruling that struck down DOMA in *United States v. Windsor* demonstrates that this First Amendment rationale still supports the case for the legalization of gay marriage.

The legalization of gay marriage is, at its core, driven by a somewhat new application of the First Amendment. Again, it is not the purpose of this paper to determine the cogency of the argument to legalize gay marriage based on the First Amendment. Such an endeavor would go beyond the scope of this assignment. What is within the scope of this assignment is to examine the ideology behind the First Amendment in order to determine whether or not Christians can accept the political philosophy that drives this change. An understanding of the philosophy that supports the legalization of gay marriage will help Christians determine the appropriate response

⁹ *United States vs. Windsor, Executor of the Estate of Speyer, et al.*, Anthony Kennedy (Supreme Court of the United States 2013), 23.

¹⁰ *John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner, Petitioners v. Texas*, Anthony Kennedy (Supreme Court of the United States, 2003), page 11. <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/02-102P.ZO>. (Accessed 7 November 2013).

¹¹ *John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner, Petitioners v. Texas*, Anthony Kennedy (Supreme Court of the United States, 2003), page 18.

¹² U.S. Constitution, amend 1.

to such legislation.

The First Amendment came into existence as the result of a struggle between groups of people with differing ideologies concerning the relationship between church and state. In colonial America there were two camps that stood in strong opposition to one another. One side did not value religious tolerance. For example, the Puritans of Massachusetts wanted everyone to adopt a state mandated religion.¹³ On the other hand, many people did quickly see the need for a separation between church and state in colonial America. For example, Robert L. Maddox wrote about the development of church-state relations in Virginia saying, "The sight of Baptist ministers in jail for refusing to register with the government pricked the consciences of such men as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, pushing them further in their thinking about religious liberty and the separation of the church from the state."¹⁴ The story of the founding of the colony of Rhode Island provides an example of this conflict in colonial America. Roger Williams was banished from the colony of Massachusetts for his opinion that no official linkage should exist between the church and the state. As a result, "Williams, along with some other dissenters, founded the colony of Rhode Island and trumpeted, perhaps for the first time in history, that all human beings who chose to live in this community would enjoy full political and religious freedom."¹⁵ Pennsylvania's constitution provides one more piece of evidence that there were conflicting ideas regarding the appropriate relationship between church and state. Pennsylvania's constitution guaranteed religious freedom to individuals, but required "officeholders to acknowledge a belief in God and in both the Old and New Testaments."¹⁶ Benjamin Franklin had hoped to see a further separation of church and state. They made progress when subsequent Pennsylvania constitutions loosened the requirements for elected officials.¹⁷ Clearly, there was conflict in colonial America concerning the relationship that should exist between the church and the state.

While the First Amendment did signal a victory for the proponents of religious liberty,¹⁸

¹³ Robert L. Maddox. *Separation of Church and State: Guarantor of Religious Freedom*. New York: Crossroad, 1987, 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 52

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 53

¹⁶ Curry, 160

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161

¹⁸ Thomas J Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment*

the battle was far from over. Many scholars are quick to point out that the First Amendment came to be because some influential men were concerned that the Constitution did not explicitly protect religious freedom.¹⁹ However, many others still point out that "both before and after the Amendment's enactment, state and federal governments maintained numerous contacts with religion and assisted it in multifarious ways."²⁰ While this tension is unlikely to be resolved, it framed the debate that continues on to this day.²¹ People agree that religious liberty ought to be protected. The question is, "To what extent?"²²

No matter what answer a particular scholar gives to that question, there is almost universal agreement that one of the primary concerns of the First Amendment was to limit the influence that the state and the church could have upon one another. Even David Barton, a radical revisionist, recognizes that the First Amendment came to be as the result of the thought that the state should not be in charge of the affairs of the church and the leaders of the church should not have authority over the state.²³ The ideology behind the First Amendment was that the church and the state should be separate. This was done to guarantee religious liberty.

While many Americans tend to think that the fight for religious freedom began and ended in colonial America, history tells another story.²⁴ A closer look at the ideologies that these men promoted will demonstrate that these ideas date back even further than names like Jefferson, Franklin and Madison. Nearly a century before Thomas Jefferson coined the phrase "a wall of separation between church and state," John Locke proposed a separation of the church and state that promoted a limited role of government.²⁵ Many scholars are convinced that the work of John Locke paved the way for religious freedom in the United States. For example, in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, John Locke said,

(New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 194

¹⁹ Ibid, 195

²⁰ Ibid, vii.

²¹ Ibid., viii.

²² Ibid, vii

²³ David Barton. *The Jefferson Lies*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012, 120.

²⁴ Ibid, 118

²⁵ Ibid., 97

I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interest of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth.²⁶

Locke's fight for religious tolerance in England provided the precedent for such tolerance in America.²⁷ For another example, Henry May says that, "the usual starting point of deism²⁸ was the epistemology of Locke and the rational Christianity of Clarke."²⁹ From there he goes on to mention how Benjamin Franklin was convinced of deism as a result of the dialogue between Locke, Clarke and their opponents.³⁰ May concludes his chapter on the moderate English Enlightenment by stating that, "Englishmen in America read the same books as Englishmen read at home, a little later and somewhat selectively. Thus the Moderate Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of Locke and Newton, of Tillotson and Doddridge, of Clarke and Wollaston, . . . left its clearly visible traces on the shape of American culture."³¹ With these statements, May demonstrates that there is a tangible link between the thinking of the significant figures in America and the thinkers of the European Enlightenment. The separation of church and state that developed in colonial America had its roots in the European Enlightenment.

The ideology that supports homosexual marriage is nothing new. The idea that church and state should be separate pre-dates the United States Constitution and even colonial America. For centuries political philosophers have advocated the position that neither the church nor the state should interfere in the affairs of the other. While the idea that the separation of church and state means that homosexual couples should be able to marry is relatively new, the ideology behind it is not. Therefore, the Christian response to legislation that legalizes gay marriage will be shaped by our response to the widely accepted political philosophy that church and state

²⁶ John Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," 1689, <http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm>. (Accessed February 9, 2014)

²⁷ Ibid., 79

²⁸ While Christians do not approve of deism as a theological perspective, it has had benefits in terms of civil peace.

²⁹ Henry F May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 21

³⁰ Ibid., 22

³¹ Ibid., 25

should be separate. Much of this debate boils down to the question, "Is the separation of church and state an idea that Christians can accept?"

The Scriptural Distinction Between Church and State

While the secular precedent for the separation of church and state dates back several centuries, the religious precedent for such a separation dates back several millennia. This distinction between church and state is frequently referred to as the doctrine of God's two kingdoms.³² The next section of this paper will examine the biblical basis for this doctrine and its historical development, as well as problems that the church has encountered when it has ignored this distinction between God's two kingdoms.

In an essay on "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," John Brug said, "There is no explicit discussion of the separation of church and state in Scripture."³³ He went on to explain that the absence of such an explicit discussion in both the Old and New Testaments is logical. He said, "In the Old Testament theocracy there was, of course, no sharp separation of church and state, of civil and moral law, or of religious offenses and civil punishment."³⁴ He went on to explain, "In the New Testament world the only real threat to the separation of church and state was the oppression of the church by both the Jewish and the Roman states."³⁵ Given the political climate at the time the Bible was written, there was no need for an explicit discussion of the separation of church and state. Daniel Deutschlander explained the way that teaches believers about the relationship between church and state by saying, "let us search the Scriptures. . . There God himself will give us not a manual that answers every question but principles to guide and motivate our attitudes and actions."³⁶ When one searches the Scriptures, it is evident that there is a biblical basis for the church and state to be separate.

While there may not be an abundance of passages in the Bible that explicitly prescribe the attitudes and actions of believers living under a secular state, there are some helpful descriptive passages about how believers have acted in such situations. Joseph is one of the first biblical examples of a believer living under a secular or pagan state. While this example is often

³² John Brug, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," in *Our Great Heritage*, ed. Lyle W. Lange and G. Jerome Albrecht, vol. II (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991), 378

³³ *Ibid.*, 405

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Deutschlander, 9.

overlooked in the discussion of the doctrine of the two kingdoms, there are plenty of lessons that believers today can learn from Joseph's example.

The first lesson that modern-day believers can learn from Joseph about living in a secular state is that he did not compromise his beliefs under pressure. In Egypt, Joseph resisted Potiphar's wife's advances (cf. Genesis 39:8,9). The rationale he gave for resisting these advances was, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"³⁷ Ultimately this resistance resulted in Joseph's imprisonment, even though he did the right thing. Joseph's willingness to stand up for what was right, even under pressure, gives an example that believers can follow even today. Believers today can imitate Joseph's behavior by holding true to their biblical morals no matter what society has to say. In this way, believers can learn from Joseph about how to live under a secular state.

Perhaps the most significant lesson to learn from Joseph is that a believer should not compromise his beliefs even while he lives under a secular government. There are, however, many more lessons that can be learned from this hero of faith. One other significant lesson that Christians can learn from Joseph is that believers can participate in government. As Joseph acted out his faith in his private life, the opportunity came for him to serve in the government. Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph willingly interpreted Pharaoh's dreams as he had asked (Genesis 41). Joseph served Egypt faithfully for many years in this influential role. In this way, Joseph participated in Egypt's government to prepare them for the upcoming famine. As a result of Joseph's participation in the Egyptian government, Pharaoh put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Therefore, one lesson that believers can conclude from Joseph's example is that believers can and should participate in government as they have the opportunity to do so.

Joseph also served as an example for believers in that he confessed his faith as his public role gave him the opportunity to do so. When Joseph had the opportunity to do so, he gave glory to God. For example, when Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dream, Joseph said, "I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires" (Genesis 41:16). With this statement, Joseph gave God the glory for all his success. From this account, believers can conclude that it is appropriate for them to confess their faith in the public realm as they have the opportunity to do so.

³⁷ All biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version, 1984.

While there are many examples that believers can learn from what Joseph did while he was in Egypt, there is also one significant lesson to be learned from what he did not do. There is no recorded account of Joseph using his position in government to make Egypt look more like the promised land. There is no record of Joseph's attempt to force those under him to worship the true God. There is no record of him using his position in government to coerce his subjects to observe the moral law. From everything that is recorded in the book of Genesis, it seems as if Joseph recognized that God's promised land was coming, but that Egypt was not it. This is, admittedly, an argument from silence, so it cannot be used by itself to say that it would be entirely inappropriate for a believer to exert his influence in government with the intention to establish a more moral state. There will be other points in this paper that address whether or not a person can use his position in government to such ends. However, this example from Joseph shows clearly enough that there is no scriptural mandate for believers to use their governmental influence in order to make the state's laws more closely reflect God's laws.

In summary, there is plenty that believers can learn about life under a secular government from Joseph's example. Joseph showed that it is most important for a believer to continue to act in faith regardless of the state around him. He then demonstrate that believers can participate in government when they have the opportunity to do so. The way Joseph conducted himself in his public role shows believers that they ought to confess their faith publicly when they have the opportunity to do so. However, Joseph's example also shows that believers need not attempt to use their governmental influence to change the laws of the land to more closely reflect God's moral law. Joseph, although one of the earliest recorded examples of a believer living under a secular state, provided Christians with a helpful model to follow as they live in secular societies today.

Many of the Old Testament believers who followed Joseph do not provide particularly helpful examples for Christians today concerning how they should interact with those who govern over them. Concerning the examples of believers in Israel, Deutschlander said, "Israel's government was unlike any other. It had a special role to play in the history of our salvation. It was not a government that God gave for the whole world. It was not a government that God ever said should be imitated . . . It was established only for Old testament Israel so that Israel would remain the vessel of God's gracious promise of the Savior."³⁸ These examples are not

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

particularly helpful because the way that believers behaved under the theocratic government of Israel does not prescribe how Christians ought to behave under secular governments today.

The book of Daniel provides another valuable, biblical example of how a believer ought to act as he lives under a secular or pagan government. This example is particularly valuable for modern-day believers because, "The believers among those taken into captivity continued to carry the promise of the Savior, but they no longer lived under a government and constitution directly given by God. They lived under governments that correspond much more closely to the governments we have."³⁹

Daniel's behavior in many ways reinforces the lessons that Joseph taught by his behavior in Egypt. For example, Daniel publicly confessed his faith when he had the opportunity to do so, just like Joseph did. Daniel also did not use his position in government to attempt to change the foreign nation into something resembling a theocracy. While there are many similarities between Joseph and Daniel, there are some lessons that come through more clearly in the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel clearly illustrates the way that believers submit to the government. The believer only refuses to submit when the government asks him to sin against God. Daniel Deutschlander observes, "In the book of Daniel, we see repeatedly how Daniel and his friends struck a balance: They obeyed the government but also resisted injustice when the government overstepped its proper bounds."⁴⁰ There are numerous instances of believers applying this principle in the book of Daniel and throughout Scripture. For example, the account of the three men and the fiery furnace shows Daniel's friends' unwillingness to obey the government when the king commanded them to bow down and worship his statue. However, "they did nothing that would look like the start of a rebellion. They were ready to die rather than fall into the sin of idolatry. Equally they would rather die than fall into the sin of rebellion."⁴¹ While they did refuse to obey the command of the king, they refused to try to overthrow the government or take away the king's right to rule. They were willing to suffer for their faith when the king imposed rules that went against their faith, but they still submitted to him as the divinely established ruling agent in their lives. As evidence of their submission, Daniel's friends continued to

³⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁴¹ Ibid.

address their ruler as, "O King" even throughout their disobedience to his ungodly command (Daniel 3:18). Daniel himself provides another example of this submission. Even when Daniel disobeyed the king's command to pray only to him, "Daniel did nothing to undermine the government, even though it had grossly overstepped its bounds. Daniel did not rebel."⁴² The book of Daniel clearly shows that believers will submit even to wicked governments insofar as the Christian is able to do so without violating God's commandments.

Daniel's service to the government provides another example for believers living under a secular state. Similar to Joseph in Egypt, Daniel served in the highest level of government. "He served the government in every way possible and sought its preservation."⁴³ Nebuchadnezzar carried Daniel out of Jerusalem to Babylonia (Daniel 1). Yet even while this oppressive government held him captive, Daniel not only submitted to the government, but also served the government in meaningful ways that contributed to its success. Through his prophet Jeremiah, God commanded the captives to, "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (29:7). Daniel's behavior exemplifies the spirit of this command. He sought the peace and prosperity of Babylon even though Babylon was holding God's people captive. Believers today would do well to emulate this behavior. Even when the secular government seems hostile to Christians, believers serve the government and contribute to its prosperity in whatever way they can.

The apostle Paul wrote to first century Christians who lived under Roman rule. In these letters, he gave them encouragement and instruction to help them in their Christian lives. What he wrote to these people about government certainly applies to Christians who live under secular governments in the twenty-first century as well. Many of Paul's instructions encourage the same behavior and attitudes that Joseph and Daniel exhibited. For example, Paul said that believers must submit to the government and must not rebel (Romans 13). Just like Jeremiah, Paul also instructed believers to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2). The way that Joseph and Daniel had acted while under the rule of secular governments was also the way that Paul said that Christians ought to act under the rule of the Roman empire. It is also the way that Christians ought to live today.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

Christians can learn a valuable lesson from the apostle Paul by considering what he did not say about government. There is no existing record of Paul complaining about the decisions of the government. There is also no existing record of Paul encouraging a group of Christians to attempt to change or abolish legislation that he found objectionable. These are arguments from silence, but one has to wonder what Paul might say about how often pastors do exactly this in America today. Lest anyone think that Paul's lack of complaints was because he had no reason to complain about the government, it is helpful to remember the historical context of his epistles. Deutschlander said, "Paul knew very well that the government often does not do what it is supposed to do. By the time he wrote his letter to the Romans, he had already suffered persecution from the government. He suffered persecution not because of his behavior but because of his faith, because of his preaching and teaching."⁴⁴ If there were anyone who had reason to complain about the government, it was the apostle Paul. He lived in a nation that was far more hostile to Christians than modern-day America is. Paul chose to busy himself as a Christian evangelist, not as a political activist. Believers in twenty-first century America would do well to follow the example of the apostle Paul, a first century Roman citizen who submitted to the governing authorities and went about the Lord's work without complaint.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson that Paul taught concerning government is not as much practical as it is theoretical. Paul taught that the government is a divinely established entity that exists for a specific purpose. Paul explained that purpose:

There is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. ⁴ For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. ⁶ This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. (Romans 13:1-6)

Brug summarized these thoughts and said, "God has established government so that people may live in some degree of peace in a sin-filled world. Governmental authority is an ordinance of God . . . The government's responsibility is to preserve the greatest possible peace and order in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 43

the world by punishing evildoers, and protecting the rights of the law-abiding."⁴⁵ The apostle Paul's words about government make it very clear that God has established government to accomplish a specific task and has even given it specific tools to accomplish that task. That is, God has established government to preserve order among its citizens. The state keeps order and preserves society by enacting and enforcing laws that reward good behavior and punish bad behavior, even using the sword if necessary. The state determines its laws based on the natural law and reason. The state has the right to determine what it deems good and bad behavior within its society. This may or may not align with what God's Word has to say is good or bad behavior. No two law codes agree in every point.⁴⁶ Yet such failures to align with God's moral law do not immediately void the government's authority as established under God's plan.

The purpose and tools that God has given to the government sharply contrast the purpose and tools that God has given to his church. While God has established the state so that people may live in peace and order here on earth, he has established the church for a different purpose and he has given them different tools to fulfill that purpose. Brug wrote:

God has established the church so that people may live with him in peace forever. The church's responsibility is to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments through which saving faith is created and nourished. The church does not wage its battles with the sword of the state, but with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God . . . Since God has assigned to both the church and the state their own distinct purposes and distinct tools, they should not become mixed or confused. Neither church nor state should try to do the work of the other. Neither should ask the other to do its work. Neither should seek to accomplish its ends by using the tools of the other.⁴⁷

This is the biblical basis for the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Since the doctrine of the two kingdoms has this clearly biblical basis, Christians will seek to maintain this separation of the church and the state.

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms In Church History

Since the doctrine of the two kingdoms has a biblical basis, Christians have historically distinguished between the church and the state. Already in the early church Christians recognized that such a distinction was necessary. Saint Augustine's *City of God* was some of the earliest Christian writing that explicitly discussed the church and state as two separate

⁴⁵ Brug, 380-381

⁴⁶ Deutschlander, 29

⁴⁷ Brug, 406

kingdoms. In book XIX of *The City of God*, Augustine said, "The whole use, then, of things temporal has a reference to this result of earthly peace in the earthly community, while in the city of God it is connected with eternal peace."⁴⁸ Augustine asserted that God has established temporal authority to accomplish a specific purpose that is distinct from the church's purpose. This is the same conclusion that present day confessional Lutherans hold to a millennium and a half after Augustine. While there are many statements in Augustine's *City of God* that confessional Lutherans would not feel bound to confess,⁴⁹ his discussion of the two kingdoms demonstrates that this doctrine dates back to very early Christian thought.

Other early Christians also subscribed to Augustine's belief that the church and the state are distinct kingdoms and ought to be kept separate. For example, Ehler and Morrall argue that the general attitude of the church towards the state was one of respectful, appropriate submission.⁵⁰ They cite Pope Gelasius I as an example of one who promoted a separation of church and state. They said, "Gelasius . . . sketches his famous theory of two powers governing Christendom--the spiritual and secular authorities. Each of these has its own sphere of action, with which the other must not interfere."⁵¹ This theory, they say, was often quoted throughout the Middle Ages.⁵² Augustine was not alone in his thought. Rather, the thought that God has two distinct kingdoms that ought not interfere with each other is one that persisted throughout early Christian history and the Middle Ages.

The doctrine of the two kingdoms is a doctrine that Martin Luther and the other reformers wrote about frequently. About his dedication to this doctrine, Luther said,

The whole world knows (praise God) what effort and zeal I have already expended and how hard I am still toiling to see that the two authorities or realms, the temporal and the spiritual, are kept distinct and separate from each other and that each is specifically instructed and restricted to its own task. The papacy has so jumbled these two together and confused them with each other that neither one has kept to its power or force or rights

⁴⁸ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 692.

⁴⁹ For example, Augustine's typical allegory gets him into trouble when he says that God initially distinguished between his two cities on the first day of creation when he separated light from darkness.

⁵⁰ Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of Historic Documents with Commentaries* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1967), 1

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10

⁵² *Ibid.*, 11

and no one can disentangle them again. This is what I dread, and with God's help I want to avoid it and stay within the charge of my own office.⁵³

With these words Luther expressed how important it was to him that Christians understand the difference between the two realms of authority. This teaching became a part of the confession of those who stood with Luther. Both the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* contain articles concerning political order. In summary of all that the Lutherans had already written about the doctrine of the two kingdoms, Melancthon wrote, "the kingdom of Christ is spiritual . . . beginning in the heart the knowledge of God, the fear of God and faith, eternal righteousness and eternal life; meanwhile it permits us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live."⁵⁴ It was very important to Luther and the other reformers to preserve the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

Christians in America have also seen the importance of the separation of the church and state. As mentioned before, some of the Puritan colonists did not desire a separation of church and state.⁵⁵ However, this possible mingling of church and state concerned some colonial clergy. For example, Roger Williams voiced his opposition to a state church. He said, "We query where you now find one footstep, print, or pattern in this doctrine of the Son of God for a national holy covenant and so, consequently, . . . A national church?"⁵⁶ Williams, as well as those who joined him in Providence, understood the dangers of a mingling of church and state. The two kingdoms doctrine was influential as the foundations for the United States of America were put in place.

The biblical teaching is clear that God's two kingdoms should remain separate. There is ample testimony from the history of the Christian church that supports that doctrine. If all that were not enough to convince Christians to that this distinction is good, the experience of history would teach that lesson. The Christian church has run into problems when Christians have failed to maintain the distinction between church and state. The following paragraphs contain

⁵³ Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society III*, ed. Robert C. Schultz, vol. 46, 53 vols., American edition, Luther's Works (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 266

⁵⁴ *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, article XVI, paragraph 54.

⁵⁵ William R. Estep, *Revolution Within the Revolution* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 74.

⁵⁶ Roger Williams, *Queries of Highest Consideration*, quoted in Estep, 75.

only a sampling of examples of times when Christians have ignored this distinction. These examples will show the problems that the church encounters when believers ignore the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

The first example of a mingling of church and state occurred under the emperor Constantine. In 313 A.D. he issued the Edict of Milan. This decree spoke against the persecution of Christians.⁵⁷ While this decree did not declare Christianity to be the official state religion, "In practice the decree of toleration opened the door to a climate of much more than mere toleration. Christianity soon and very obviously became the religion favored by the government."⁵⁸ The state supported the church in many ways. As a result, many people joined the Christian church. Unfortunately, this kind of support for the church from the state resulted in a weak "moral fibre of the Church."⁵⁹ Many of the new converts were insincere. The church struggled to maintain a supply of pastors to shepherd this new influx of people. False doctrines gained ground.⁶⁰ These false doctrines caused divisions among believers. Because of his desire for a united empire, Constantine desired to see these divisions resolved. "In order to settle the doctrinal divisions in the church . . . Constantine summoned a church council and presided over it as well."⁶¹ In just a little bit over a decade, the scene in the Roman empire had shifted from one in which Christians were persecuted to one in which the emperor presided over councils to settle doctrinal differences.

Deutschlander analyzed the council of Nicea saying, "The goal was noble in many respects, and in many respects the results were of great benefit to the church. . . . As important as the Nicene Creed was, however, the Council of Nicea set a bad precedent of government getting involved in the affairs of the church."⁶² There were many positive results from the council of Nicea. For example, the council resulted in a creed that is still confessed in Christian churches to this day. The council accomplished what it set out to do in settling the disagreements concerning the person of Christ, at least temporarily. However, as Deutschlander pointed out,

⁵⁷ Deutschlander, 112.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁹ Ehler and Morall, 3.

⁶⁰ Deutschlander, 113.

⁶¹ Ibid., 114.

⁶² Ibid., 115.

this set a precedent that would cause problems in the near future.

Not long after the Christian triumph of the Council of Nicea, division once again returned. Deutschlander explains how people who had been part of the council soon ran into trouble. He said,

After the council had finished its work and adjourned, heretics gained influence over the emperor and his court. The ink was barely dry on the first draft of the Nicene Creed when the government threw it out, deciding in favor of the view that Christ is merely similar to God, not God from God. Guess what happened--persecution! Athanasius was banished and exiled and in fact died before the Nicene Creed finally triumphed. Other faithful pastors met a similar fate.⁶³

These events demonstrate one reason why it is so dangerous to rely on the government to do the work of the church. While there may be victories for the truth when the government supports the truth, the results can be disastrous when the government supports error. Because of this, Christians would do well not to attempt to establish the church through the government. Instead, the church ought to do its work and encourage the state to do its work too. As Deutschlander put it, "God has not given even a Christian emperor the responsibility for establishing the faith of the church. That is not the task of the state, even if the ruler's faith is the correct one."⁶⁴

The situation became even more of an issue under Constantine's successors. Constantine divided the empire among his three sons. Just like their father, all three sons attempted to defend and promote their faith by force. Constantius II was the one that emerged victorious. He preferred the Arian view as opposed to the Nicene. After Constantius' death, his successors' viewpoints differed concerning the eternal deity of Christ. They were often more concerned with political goals than religious.⁶⁵ Throughout all of this, orthodox Christians had to worry about whether the new emperor would support them or persecute them based on his own personal beliefs. Believers would have been much better off had they distinguished between the church and the state.

While the instability in Constantine's wake caused problems for the Christian church, the stability that began at the end of the fourth century caused perhaps even more significant

⁶³ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Richard, D Balge, "Key Events In Church History, Part I," accessed November 30, 2013, <http://www.wlssays.net/files/BalgeKey1.pdf>, 6.

problems. In 395, Theodosius I declared Nicene Christianity to be the only permitted religion in the Roman Empire.⁶⁶ While many undoubtedly considered this a great victory for Christianity, Deutschlander points out the devastating effects this had on the Christian church. He said,

Many simply went through the motions of attendance at worship services to avoid trouble with the state. . . . How many assumed that citizenship in the earthly realm equaled citizenship in heaven? How many never became Christians because outward obedience to the state was all the church seemed to care about? How many never understood the gospel because legal acceptance of the creed was all that was necessary, whether the creed was understood or not?⁶⁷

When church and state are mingled into one, the church loses focus of its mission. Jesus told the church to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). When the church relies on the state to make disciples, it ends up accomplishing the wrong task because it uses the wrong tool. The sword does not make people into disciples. The sword can make people into obedient subjects, but not disciples. When the church relies on the sword, the focus has to shift to outward behavior. This is the problem with a mingling of church and state. This was the unintended consequence of Theodosius' decree.

The crusades are perhaps some of the darkest moments in Christian history. While there were many contributing factors, these atrocities occurred largely because of a failure to keep church and state separate. Beginning in 1095, Christians took up the sword in support of various Christian causes.⁶⁸ In response to this historical development, Deutschlander asked, "Where did Christ ever ask his church to conduct a war?⁶⁹ When did he ever tell us that it was a good work to kill people in order to have the places where he walked in Christian hands? Could anything be further away from the Great Commission to preach and teach the gospel than a holy

⁶⁶ Balge, 6.

⁶⁷ Deutschlander, 117.

⁶⁸ John Brenner, "Eastern Orthodoxy," accessed November 30, 2013, www.wlssays.net/files/BrennerOrthodoxy.rtf, 12.

⁶⁹ This mention of Christ's church refers to the New Testament church. God did ask the nation of Israel to conduct wars, but that was a unique situation. His purpose was to safeguard his Old Testament people as a distinct nation from whose lineage Christ would come. Now that Christ has come, the purpose of God's chosen nation of Israel has been fulfilled. God no longer has a physical chosen nation. Instead, God's chosen people in the New Testament era is a spiritual group with spiritual tasks to carry out.

war?"⁷⁰ The church had lost focus of its mission. It took on the responsibilities of the state. As a result of this confusion of the roles of church and state, the Roman Catholic church began to promise that whoever went on a crusade would not have to go to purgatory.⁷¹ Because of the political goals of the popes, the doctrine of the church was corrupted. As the doctrine of purgatory moved toward center stage in the Roman Catholic church, it obscured the doctrine of justification by faith. The crusades were some dark moments for Christianity, not only because of the physical atrocities, but also because of the spiritual ones. This is what the doctrine of the two kingdoms seeks to avoid. It seeks to focus the church on its mission of proclaiming the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name, rather than on any political mission. When the church fails to do that, even the very core of Christian doctrine is in jeopardy.

Lest anyone think that mingling church and state is only a Roman Catholic problem, it is good to point out that there are plenty of examples of such behavior in protestant Christianity. For example, only a few years after Martin Luther had published the Ninety-five Theses, many peasants, citing Luther's teachings for their support, threatened to take up the sword against their unjust rulers. Religious leaders such as Thomas Muenzer encouraged them in this endeavor.⁷² They wrote twelve articles making their case for rebellion. In response Luther wrote,

Not one of the articles teaches anything of the gospel. Rather, everything is aimed at obtaining freedom for your person and for your property. To sum it up, everything is concerned with worldly and temporal matters. . . . The gospel, however, does not become involved in the affairs of this world, . . . How, then, does the gospel agree with you? You are only trying to give your unevangelical and un-Christian enterprise an evangelical appearance; and you do not see that in so doing you are bringing shame upon the holy gospel of Christ.⁷³

Luther warned the peasants that their desire to rebel against God's kingdom of the state was un-Christian. He voiced his concern that this disgrace of the gospel would cause damage to his cause of proclaiming the gospel.⁷⁴ Lutherans, too, can fall into error by confusing the roles of church and state. This is dangerous, first of all, because it is sinful. Furthermore, it is dangerous also because it disgraces the gospel and is counterproductive to our message of

⁷⁰ Deutschlander, 127.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Historical introduction to Luther's *Admonition to Peace*. Martin Luther, *The Christian in Society III*, 5.

⁷³ Luther, 35-36.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 42.

proclaiming God's grace. Like Luther himself, Lutherans today ought to watch out for the mingling of church and state and speak out when such behavior occurs.

Protestants in the United States have also failed to maintain the proper distinction between the church and the state. In recent years many American Christians have sought to abolish the separation between church and state. Many Christians have advocated for group prayer in public school as well as other religious causes.⁷⁵ Deutschlander said, "Someone may ask: How can it hurt if everybody says the Lord's Prayer together in school? . . . Wouldn't it help to establish some sort of discipline and order in increasingly unruly children if there was some devotional activity at the beginning of the school day?"⁷⁶ Even that very argument reveals a dangerous pitfall. When Christians seek to have Christianity included in public education, the focus must shift very quickly away from pure doctrine toward outward behavior. The evangelist John summarized his gospel with the words, "These are written that you may believe and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). He did not say, "These are written that your unruly children may be disciplined!" The Christian church ought to focus on teaching the words and works of Jesus so that people may believe. It ought to avoid the temptation to become involved in the fight to promote the church through the state.

Beyond simply distraction from its mission, the Christian church in America has seen other negative developments because of a failure to distinguish between God's two kingdoms. A common perception is that, "Christians are primarily motivated by a political agenda and promote right-wing politics."⁷⁷ This creates a problem because it impacts how Christians communicate with people in society. Kinnaman and Lyons assert,

Christians need to be aware of their reputation in this area, not only because it influences their political engagement, but because it affects their ability to connect with new generations who are innately skeptical of people who appear to use political power to protect their interests and viewpoints. This perception may not always be accurate, but it contributes to outsiders' mistrust of Christians.⁷⁸

One big problem with Christians being distracted by politics is that it hinders their mission to

⁷⁵ Deutschlander, 176.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 177.

⁷⁷ Davdi Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity...And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 153.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 156-157.

spread the gospel. Many mistrust Christians because they believe that they're motivated by political interests. As an example of the mistrust that political involvement can cause, Deutschlander gave an example of a church that engaged in public battles for creation to be taught in schools. He said, "People who never heard the gospel from that church only know one thing about it: It opposes evolution. That one point sticks in their mind when they hear of that particular church. Will they come to hear the gospel from a church that seems devoted only to a crusade against evolution?"⁷⁹ This sort of political involvement, even if it were for a noble cause, can frustrate the church's endeavor to proclaim the gospel. This is a serious problem with the mingling of church and state in America and Christians would do well to avoid it at all costs.

It is a well-established Christian doctrine that the church and state ought to be separate. God has established two kingdoms that accomplish different purposes with different tools. His kingdom of the church is concerned with souls. To address the needs of souls, the church uses the tools of the law and the gospel. The state, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with outward behavior. In order to guide outward behavior, the state makes laws and enforces them, even with the sword if necessary. This teaching is biblically based and it has persisted throughout Christian history. The church has encountered problems when it has done away with this teaching. Christians today would do well to continue to maintain this doctrine of the two kingdoms.

How the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms Shapes the Christian's Approach to the Legalization of Gay Marriage

While the biblical doctrine concerning the two kingdoms is clear, there are some Christians in America today who think that the church ought to become involved in the political fight against the gay rights movement. For example, some Roman Catholics believe that the implications of a successful gay rights movement would be damaging enough to the Christian church that the church should fight back.⁸⁰ On the other side of the issue, Deutschlander wrote, "We lament with good reason the growing godlessness in our society. But joining with religious groups in court is not the answer to the problem. We must continually return to the principle

⁷⁹ Deutschlander, 197.

⁸⁰ John Harvey, *The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 211.

that God has given his Word to the church and the sword to the state."⁸¹ Because Christians are legitimately disappointed in society's abandonment of biblical morality, the remainder of this paper will consider how Christians can approach the legalization of gay marriage without violating the scriptural principles of the two kingdoms.

First of all, Christians would do well to consider how they will approach this issue in their personal lives. Privately, Christians will follow Paul's instructions that said, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Christians can pray for their leaders that they would maintain the separation of church and state by allowing believers to continue to proclaim the truths of God's Word. Christians can also pray that God's message of sin and grace would be proclaimed clearly for all to hear. Then Christians will also act. Just as they have prayed for the clear proclamation of God's law and gospel, believers speak the truth in love to the people in their lives. The way that God has provided to believers to change people's hearts is with the law and the gospel. Changed hearts result in changed behavior. By speaking the message of law and gospel to individuals as we have the opportunity, we do the work Christ commissioned us to do as his witnesses.

While it is clear what a Christian ought to do in his personal, private life, the issue of how a Christian will approach this issue in the public sphere is quite a bit more complicated. One lesson that Joseph and Daniel taught believers was that believers can and should participate in government as they have the opportunity to do so. In the United States, citizens have many different opportunities to participate in the government. They can vote. They can write letters to their representatives voicing their opinions. They can publicly demonstrate. They can use their money to support candidates whose platforms match their own. All of these are ways that Christians can participate in the political process. Just like Joseph and Daniel, believers today ought to serve their governments in whatever meaningful ways they are able.

However, the issue still remains concerning exactly how a Christian will approach the issue of gay marriage as he participates in government. In this situation as well, the scriptural examples of believers living under secular governments can be helpful. God leaves no record

⁸¹ Deutschlander, 177.

in the Bible of a believer in such a circumstance ever attempting to influence the country so that it more closely resembled the theocracy of Israel. In fact, the notion of a religious nation-state is completely absent from the New Testament. While this is an argument from silence, if the primary job of believers living under a secular state were to influence their government in that way, we would expect Scripture to address that in a primary way. However, there is no such scriptural mandate. The Bible has, on the other hand, given the government a job to do. That job is to manage its citizens outward behavior in such a way that keeps order. Christians will serve their government so that it can accomplish that job as well as possible.

Opinions may vary on the best way to accomplish this service. That means that while a Bible-believing Christian will have the moral perspective that marriage is between a man and a woman, he may not believe that the best approach is to impose that moral view through legislation. Many Christians believe that it is important to support legislation that reflects biblical morality when it comes to marriage.⁸² However, other Bible-believing Christians might oppose such legislation for various reasons. For example, one Christian minister (who prefers to keep his voting record anonymous) voted against a proposed constitutional amendment in Minnesota that said, "Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota."⁸³ He believes, in accord with Scripture, that marriage is intended to be a union of one man and one woman, but did not favor the state taking a heavy-handed role in attempting to mandate a biblical worldview. He felt that the efforts to ban gay marriage by means of legal amendments were hurting rather than helping the church in its mission, since community members saw the issue as a matter of churches trying to impose their religious views on those outside of the church. Other Christians may oppose such legislation on the basis of the equal protection clauses in the Constitution, just like Supreme Court justices have done in recent years. In his book *Separation of Church and State: Guarantor of Religious Freedom*, Robert Maddox argued in favor of religious tolerance as a protector of religious freedom.⁸⁴ While he does not address the issue of same sex marriage in this book because he wrote it before the fight for marriage equality came to center stage, his words are helpful in understanding why some Christians might believe it best not to seek to legislate their moral convictions concerning this

⁸² Kinnaman and Lyons, 106.

⁸³ <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bin/bldbill.php?bill=S1308.1.html&session=1s87>

⁸⁴ Maddox, 3.

issue. He said,

Religious people must avoid absolutizing detailed applications of their religious beliefs and denouncing their political adversaries as being less religious or less righteous. I get terribly uncomfortable when people begin telling me *the* Christian point of view on any political issue. . . . The U.S. Constitution ensures religious freedom, thus giving everyone equal standing before the law. Religious freedom requires that the religious community carry its own weight, police itself. The religious should not look to the government for moral and financial support. Religion should keep its own house in order, especially in matters of morals and doctrines, and it should avoid asking the civil magistrate to intervene.⁸⁵

Some Christians may even be so conflicted that they would choose not to vote on a referendum addressing gay marriage. About difficult political decisions, Deutschlander said, "Christians will sometimes have difficulty deciding which issues are most important. We will weigh the potential for damage and for good as we try to make the best choice possible. We will pray for God's blessing as we wrestle with difficult choices."⁸⁶ How to vote on legislation dealing with gay marriage is a choice that many will find difficult. As Christians wrestle with that decision, they use the gifts of the intellect and the will that God has given them. Then they do what they believe to be best, and they should do it with a clear conscience.

The doctrine of the two kingdoms helps Christians know how to approach political choices because it teaches them that they are citizens of two distinct kingdoms. While all Christians can benefit from a proper understanding of the two kingdoms, pastors ought to exercise some careful discretion because of the important role they have in God's kingdom of the church. The thoughts in the previous paragraphs apply also to pastors as they live as private citizens under the kingdom of the state. Just like lay Christians, pastors are able to participate in the political process. Pastors can vote, contact representatives, and donate among other things as they seek the best interest of the state.

However, it is important for a pastor to exercise caution about how he behaves in his public role as an overseer of those living in God's kingdom of the church. Most importantly, a pastor will remain focused on his task of proclaiming law and gospel to the people under his care. In order to remain focused on that task, he will take special care to avoid unnecessarily burdening people's consciences. For example, God has not commanded that Christians use

⁸⁵ Ibid., 191.

⁸⁶ Deutschlander, 86

their votes to support candidates who promise to legislate a biblical definition of marriage. Therefore, a pastor will not give his parishioners the impression that they should or must vote for such candidates. If the pastor falls into this behavior, Christians who support other candidates for valid reasons may feel alienated. About the dangers of a pastor's public involvement in politics, Deutschlander wrote,

Some pastors and teachers become known as political activists for a certain political party. Their churches are opposed to pornography and abortion and the general moral decline in the nation. They want national leaders who can be counted on to stand up for what's right and true and, yes, Christian. But their association with the political party of their choice means that they also become associated with views of that party that have nothing to do with morality, with right and wrong. By their public alliance with a political movement, do they give people the impression that God wants social security and highway programs and defense spending done in that political party's way?⁸⁷

It would be tragic if people would feel as if they did not belong in a church because they felt strongly about certain political issues that they voted in a different way than their pastor.

Unfortunately, this sort of alienation does happen in American churches.⁸⁸ Faithful pastors will avoid public political involvement that establishes barriers in his effort to proclaim law and gospel.

Many Christians recognize that it would be an uphill battle for biblical morality to emerge victorious in the political and legal battle over homosexual marriage in the United States.⁸⁹

This can be a discouraging bit of news for Bible-believing Christians. One response would be for the church to double down in the political fight against gay marriage. However, a better response would be one that keeps the words of Jesus in mind, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). Jesus has promised that his church will not perish. He will make sure that his church survives and has given the keys of his kingdom to Christians. The job that he has given to the church is to proclaim his law and gospel to each person's heart. The church would do well to stick to this mission that Jesus has given to them, rather than being distracted trying to accomplish the mission that God has given to his kingdom of the state.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 199

⁸⁸ Kinnaman and Lyons, 166.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 106

After all, as Deutschlander put it, "God gives the sword to the state to govern outward behavior; he gives the church the gospel to change hearts. Pastors and teachers have the gospel for hearts. Why would they want to busy themselves with the sword of the state? That sword on its best day never converted anyone."⁹⁰ Although it may be tempting, given the current political landscape, for the church to become involved in politics, the church should use the tools that God has given it to accomplish the mission that he has given.

The political climate in the United States is changing. That much is undeniable. However, God's Word remains unchanging. Scripture has established the doctrine of the two kingdoms. Faithful Christians today will seek to maintain that distinction, even when it comes to the issue of gay marriage. This means that the mission of the church continues to be to proclaim law and gospel. While Christians may be personally involved in the political struggle concerning gay marriage, this is not the job of the church. The church will proclaim God's message that all are sinners whom God loved enough to send his only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. To God alone be the glory as the church proclaims the message!

⁹⁰ Deutschlander, 199

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Appendices

Appendix A - The Defense of Marriage Act

*One Hundred Fourth Congress
of the
United States of America*

AT THE SECOND SESSION

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Wednesday, the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six

An Act

To define and protect the institution of marriage.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Defense of Marriage Act'.

SEC. 2. POWERS RESERVED TO THE STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL- Chapter 115 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding after section 1738B the following:

'Sec. 1738C. Certain acts, records, and proceedings and the effect thereof

'No State, territory, or possession of the United States, or Indian tribe, shall be required to give effect to any public act, record, or judicial proceeding of any other State, territory, possession, or tribe respecting a relationship between persons of the same sex that is treated as a marriage under the laws of such other State, territory, possession, or tribe, or a right or claim arising from such relationship.'

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT- The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 115 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1738B the following new item:

'1738C. Certain acts, records, and proceedings and the effect thereof.'

SEC. 3. DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE.

(a) IN GENERAL- Chapter 1 of title 1, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

'Sec. 7. Definition of 'marriage' and 'spouse'

'In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or of any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.'

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT- The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 1 of title 1, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 6 the following new item:

7. Definition of 'marriage' and 'spouse'.

Appendix B - Proposition 8

Section I. Title

This measure shall be known and may be cited as the "California Marriage Protection Act."

Section 2. Article I. Section 7.5 is added to the California Constitution, to read:

Sec. 7.5. Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California.