SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM:

A FRAMEWORK FOR VOCATION IN LIGHT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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Chapter 1
Introduction: An Internship for the Eschaton

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be granted to you. - Matthew 6:33

If the kingdom is what Jesus announced it is, then what matters isn't just what we neatly classify as "spiritual" things. The natural world around us isn't just a temporary "environment," but part of our future inheritance in Christ. Our jobs—whether preaching the gospel or loading docks or picking avocados or writing legislation or herding goats—aren't accidental. Our lives now are shaping us and preparing us for a future rule, and that includes the honing of a conscience and a sense of wisdom and prudence and justice. God is teaching us, as he taught our Lord, to learn in little things how to be in charge of great things (Lk. 2; Matt. 25:14-23). Our lives now are an internship for the eschaton.[1]

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" One of the first questions asked of a child as they start to age is what they desire to be when they grow up. Of course, culturally, the question is asking what kind of career or job the child might dream of achieving when an adult. A less common way to put the question is, "what vocation do you want when you grow up." The modern use of the word "vocation" often means career or job.[2] This is typically what we mean when we think or speak of vocation in the Western world.

The word "vocation" may not be used much in modern vocabulary, but the concept of vocation is undoubtedly at the forefront of many people's minds. The Christian book publishing industry is replete with books answering the oft-stated question, "What is God's will for my life."[3] Andy Crouch suggests the modern man's vocation is "world changer," or at least that is

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[1] http://www.russellmoore.com/2015/11/03/you-only-live-forever/
[2] Clark, David K. and Robert V. Rakestraw. *Readings in Christian Ethics: Issues and Applications*. Vol 2. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 33.
[3] A quick Google search returned 1,160,000 results for the phrase "God's will for my life." An additional search of www.lifeway.com for "God's will" returned 329 results.

what modern man likes to read about in books.[4] It seems modern man thinks much about vocation without having the right vocabulary or understanding of the concept.

The Christian church, at least in America, is also marked by vocational misunderstanding. It is not infrequent to hear in a church, "Are you called to the ministry?" or for a college-aged boy questioning their ministerial call after a spiritually enriching week at summer church camp.[5] However, it is much less frequently, if at all, that great spiritual wrestling occurs over whether Bill the Deacon is called by God to start a construction business or father a child or spend the afternoon leisurely reading Plato. The church seems to think too narrowly and dualistically about vocation.

Modern man is confused about vocation, in the world and in the church, seeking after purpose and meaning without much of a framework. One popular framework to discern or understand vocation is set forth by Frederick Buechner. According to Buechner, a person can discern vocation at "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need."[6] While there is certainly wisdom in Buechner's definition, it relies too much on the subjective desire of the individual to provide an adequate understanding of vocation.[7] The individual is given the task of discerning the world's deep need and resting in subjective gladness, which is frequently fleeting.

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[4] Crouch, Andy. *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 187-189.
[5] Admittedly, the author has the same existential and spiritual crisis of calling every other year at the end of Together for the Gospel, regardless of age.
[6] Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 119.
[7] Ben Witherington, III, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), x.

Arguably, misunderstanding of vocation is tied up in the greater question of the meaning of life. It is a Christian truism that a misunderstanding of vocation - our purpose in the world - is a result of sin. Still, we must acknowledge the pervasive and persistent plea of modern man is to understand vocation - to have a purpose-driven life, you could say - and, if the fundamental problem is theological, then perhaps the fundamental solution is theological. To rephrase the oft-quoted Augustine, man was made for God and His kingdom and will be restless until they seek first the kingdom of God.

Central to Christian theology is the kingdom of God, that doctrine proclaimed by Jesus in his earliest public ministry, taught to the Apostles prior to His ascension, and proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in Rome before his death, but that which has been the source of much confusion and speculation in church history, as most questions of eschatology are want to do. Our understanding of vocation is impoverished because we misunderstand the doctrine of the kingdom of God. We think of vocation either too narrowly in terms of job or career. If we think of vocation more broadly, however, we tend to think of vocation in dualistic terms - spiritual and common or sacred and secular. This conception of vocation fails to produce the integrity of life desired by faithful Christians by misapplying the eschatological redemption found in the kingdom of God.

Two contemporary works that address the issue of vocation and the kingdom of God are *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* by Dr. Ben Witherington of Asbury Theological Seminary and *Living in God's Two Kingdoms* by Dr. David VanDrunen of Westminster Seminary, California. Witherington's work advocates a narrow conception of vocation, that vocation is primarily paid and unpaid labor or work. Witherington explicitly disavows the "vocation in all of life" perspective advocated by scholars such as Gene Edward Veith, Jr., in

God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life. At times, Witherington adopts Veith's - and, as we will later develop, the Reformational - perspective that God works in and through our vocation for kingdom purposes, but Witherington limits such vocational activity to labor or work. He acknowledges the spiritual and temporal value of other stations, such as parent, volunteer, recreation, and others, but he draws a strict line around what is and what is not vocation and its impact for kingdom purposes.

On the other hand, VanDrunen's work advocates a dualistic view of vocation that originates from VanDrunen's view of the kingdom - or, in his conception, kingdoms - of God. VanDrunen is an apt advocate, with his own nuance, of Two Kingdom theology, a theological framework for questions on the interaction of Christianity and culture. Two Kingdoms theology has a long and respectable history in Christianity, arguably dating back to the early church father, Augustine, claimed by so many as the source of their particular theological paradigm. This paper does not argue against a Two Kingdom theology so much as advocates a two ages approach that shapes a Christian understanding of vocation.

VanDrunen is an able proponent of Two Kingdom theology, particularly his nuanced Two Kingdom position, given his impressive academic credentials in law, philosophy, and theology, coupled with his years of seminary teaching at Westminster Seminary California and ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. However, his nuanced kingdom theology appears to breed a dualistic vocational vision split between spiritual and common, sacred and secular cultural activity. Under such a vocational vision, the Christian life disintegrates where the kingdom of God calls for integrity. VanDrunen's theology creates sharp discontinuity between

this age and the age to come, now and in the future;[8] whereas, this paper will argue for greater continuity here and now, as the eschatological kingdom of God breaks into this age with redemptive power.

This current work is not, however, intended as a point-for-point rebuttal of Witherington or VanDrunen's work in this regard. Rather, each scholar serves as a reference point for conceptions of vocation advocated in contemporary Christianity. This current work offers a positive case for a broad, integrated conception of vocation in the kingdom of God. Supernatural redemption in the kingdom of God restores, in a sense, the natural ability for the Christian to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, living lives worthy of the calling received from God (Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1). The whole Christian life is vocation and, contrary to a narrow or dualistic conception of vocation, the doctrine of the kingdom of God provides the mandate, mission, and motive for a Christian understanding of vocation.

Both a narrow and dualistic conception of vocation fails to adequately comprehend and appropriate the doctrine of the kingdom of God. On one hand, a narrow conception of vocation fails to comprehend how the kingdom of God creates, defines, and produces vocations in all areas of life. God, as sovereign creator, actively calls his people to submit to his kingly rule, mandates obedience to his commands, grants commissions for kingdom mission in the creation, and motivates his subjects to obey his will and carry forth his mission from their hearts.

On the other hand, a dualistic conception of vocation fails to understand the integrated, inclusive nature of the kingdom of God and its application to an all-of-life vocation. The kingdom of God is not per se limited in time, space, or jurisdiction, but rather the kingdom of

[8] David VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

God comes in redemptive reign through God's covenants, fully consummated in the new creation. The kingdom of God, in one form or another, permeates all creation - old and new. Therefore, rather than delineate two "kingdoms" in which Christian vocation is lived, this paper argues Christian vocation is lived in this current creation in the progressive realization of a "not yet" fully realized new creation - the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God provides the normative, objective commands and commission that give meaningful mandate to all of the Christian life, calling sinners out of the darkness of this fallen world into the light of God's kingdom, making each person a subject to a King and granting each subject an identity, gift, and mission in the kingdom. For instance, the natural man is an enemy of the kingdom of God, but God effectively calls the natural man into a supernatural relationship marked by submission and obedience to the Sovereign and His decrees. Practically, God's covenants and commands form the objective nature of this kingdom vocation. This normative perspective of kingdom vocation is the eschatological reality progressively realized in this present age. The Christian vocation is an objective kingdom vocation, true for all subjects of the King.

The kingdom of God also provides the situational context in which the subjects of the king live out their obedience to the King. The kingdom of God permeates the natural situations of all of life in such a way as to supernaturally redeem and restore those situations. For instance, the kingdom of God provides order for family life, instructing husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and wives to submit to and obey their husbands as the church is submitted in obedience to Christ. This is the situational perspective on kingdom vocation, the natural arena in which the supernatural, eschatological kingdom reality is lived.

Lastly, the Spirit of the kingdom of God produces in its subjects the personal, existential motives that animate the mission of the kingdom of God in this age. The kingdom of God is the reign of love by the Sovereign over His subjects and, as such, He works love in the hearts of his people to obey his commands in the context he has placed them. For instance, the husband's kingdom vocation is to obey God's commands in the context of marriage - to love his wife as Christ loves the church. But, dutiful, cold affection is disobedience. Rather, the husband's love for his wife is motivated by the love of God, a blessed, joyful love. This is the existential perspective on kingdom vocation, supernatural virtue progressively realized in the hearts of God's people as they increasingly obey his commands by his grace in the context he has placed them.

This paper will explore these matters further in the chapters that follow. Chapter 2 is a biblical, theological, and historical survey of the concept of vocation. This chapter will aim to set the concept of vocation - that is, calling - in biblical-theological terms, as well as survey Christian reflection on vocation throughout the history of the church. Chapter 1 will show that the concept of vocation is inherent in the biblical narrative and that Christian reflection on the concept is multifaceted and complex.

Chapter 3 is a biblical, theological, and historical survey of the doctrine of the kingdom of God. This chapter will aim to expound the biblical basis for the doctrine, develop its theological significance, and survey the historical development of the doctrine throughout church history, especially during the modern era. Chapter 3 will show that the doctrine of the kingdom of God is integral to the biblical narrative, advancing through progressive covenants, and is of prime importance in Christian theology, varied historical interpretations notwithstanding.

Chapter 4 is the integration of the concept of vocation with the doctrine of the kingdom of God. This chapter will seek to expound in a triperspectival manner how the kingdom of God provides the mandate, mission, and motive for a Christian understanding of vocation. God's kingdom contains the normative, situational, and existential perspectives necessary to understand the entirety of the Christian life as vocation awaiting the fullness of the coming kingdom of God.

Christian calling and vocation has occupied my heart and mind since my earliest Christian experience. For years, I struggled with the definition and discernment of vocation, particularly related to ministry. This paper is by no means a definitive treatment answering every vocational question, but the goal rather is to provide a holistic, integrated, theological perspective on the concept of vocation. The Puritan, John Flavel, wrote "The providence of God is like Hebrew words - it can be read only backwards."[9] In that same spirit, Christian vocation is best understood like Hebrew words - read backwards from the eschaton. The Christian seeks to live in this age in light of the mandate, mission, and motive of the kingdom of God, truly an internship awaiting full employment in the eschaton, the age to come, the kingdom of God.

[9] John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1963).

Chapter 2
Vocation: A Biblical-Theological and Historical Survey

Vocation is not a distinctly Christian concept, but it is a concept inherent in the storyline of Scripture. As a concept, vocation is not monolithic in history, but common to historical vocational reflection is the search by humanity for purpose and meaning in the world, an innate longing in the human soul as if the Ecclesiastical Preacher was right that God has planted eternity in the soul of man (Eccl. 3:11). Where such purpose and meaning derive depends on one's philosophical, theological, historical, and sociological station, though the Christian understands something of the universal ache better than others. Regardless, vocational reflection always consists of a seeking subject and the Christian knows best the Object where the seeking subject may find rest.

The most common understanding of vocation today is secularized where vocation refers to one's paid work.[10] This is evident in the common use of vocation in relation to training for a job, as in "vocational education."[11] The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocatio*[12] or *vocare*[13], which translates to "a calling."[14] In pre-Christian history, Greeks and Roman elites held intellectual work in highest esteem[15] and understood the intellectual life as the highest vocation. The Old and New Testaments, however, are permeated with the idea of vocation and calling as relational, namely in relation to God. For instance, the Hebrew word *kalein* means "to name" or "to summons" and permeate the Old Testament narratives.[16] Further, the Hebrew term *qahal* is

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[10] Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 1.
[11] Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 17.
[12] Michael P. Schutt, *Redeeming Law: Christian Calling and the Legal Profession* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 47.
[13] Schuurman, 5.
[14] Veith, 17.
[15] Claar, Victor V. and Robin J. Klay. *Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 166.
[16] Schuurman, 18.

used to denote the assembly God called to himself.[17] The New Testament word for that assembly is *ekklesia*, which has as its root *klesis*, which means calling.[18] *Ekklesia* literally means "those who are called out."[19] With this biblical basis, the history of Christian interpretation of the scriptural conception of vocation yields a rich canon of biblical-theological wisdom.

Biblical-Theological Survey

The concept of vocation is a theological concept reflecting a rich history of biblical-theological teaching about work, family, society, and the Christian life.[20] Scriptural references pertinent to the concept of vocation generally fall in two camps: the call unto God and God's call in the stations of life.[21]Central to the biblical conception of vocation is the call of God to relationship with himself. Scripture, however, is also replete with verses related to a narrow conception of vocation, like work or labor, but does not provide a straightforward account when it comes to vocation, more broadly understood.[22] Throughout the history of Christian contemplation on the biblical witness on vocation, Christians have generally followed scriptures dichotomy of a narrow - work or labor - and broader - all of life - conception of vocation. In a sense, vocational reflection throughout Christian history is wrestling anew with the admonition to seek first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33).

Vocation, in fact, is best understood in light of the doctrine of the kingdom of God. Vocation should not be narrowly conceived as only work or labor, nor should vocation be

[17] Schuurman, 18.
[18] Schuurman, 18.
[19] Schuurman, 18.
[20] Veith, 17.
[21] Schuurman 40-41.
[22] William C. Placher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 4.

bifurcated between secular and sacred activity. Rather, vocation is best conceived as the sum total of callings mandated, motivated, and lived out in the context of the kingdom of God. Therefore, this chapter will survey the relevant biblical passages to understand what the scripture teaches about vocation in total, with a particular emphasis on the nature of vocation as revealed throughout the unfolding epochs of the drama of redemption.

Vocation in Creation

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1) Foundational to the biblical worldview is the reality that God is the Creator of all things, the Lord and overseer of history.[23] The author of Genesis excludes all prefatory matter and brings the reader face to face with the cosmic truth that all things are created by God for God.[24] God literally calls the creation into being and, therefore, all creation's calling is from God.

One leading scholar draws four theological implications from the Genesis creation account. First, the power of God's Word reveals God's awesome, crushing omnipotence.[25] Second, God created *ex nihilo*, revealing God's power.[26] Third, God created freely as an expression of His will.[27] Fourth, the creation account underscores God's sovereign reign over all things.[28] The creation account in Genesis 1 is intended to communicate to the reader that God is Creator and King having created everything, including heaven and earth and all that is in them, on them, and between them.[29]

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[23] John D. Currid, "Genesis," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 43.
[24] Currid, 43.
[25] Currid, 50.
[26] Currid, 50.
[27] Currid, 50.
[28] Currid, 50.
[29] Currid, 50.

In this lies the first nugget of vocational wisdom from scripture: all creation is rightly theocentric, not anthropocentric.[30] Furthermore, we see in God's creative activity the first instance of divine calling, in a sense, when God speaks His creative Word and what once was not is now. As the writer of Genesis sets forth the content of creation in exalted prose narrative form,[31] we understand that the creation itself has a vocation from God, a calling to fulfill God's purpose in this new drama being written. And we are told by God that the creation's vocation is good. The sky's clouds and the bird's flight. The ocean's waves and the fish's swim. The land's soil and the plant's fruit. The heavens and earth and all that is in them declare the glory of God and, thus, fulfill its creation vocation. (Ps. 19:1).

This foundational principle rooted at the creation is critical to a Christian understanding of vocation - this is God's world. "Know that the LORD, he is God. It is He that made us, and we are his." (Ps. 100:3). God rules his creation through providence, directing and guiding all creation to its appointed ends. Therefore, the context in which we carry out our vocations is God's world and so we must remember that the creation's telos is the glory of God.

But, God did not only create the land and sea, birds and fish. In the exalted prose narrative of Genesis 1, God lastly created humankind as a "crown of creation."[32] Humanity - specifically, in this case, Adam and Eve - are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28). The Hebrew word for image appears sixteen times in the Old Testament, referring to something formed from another object, as in an idol or a statue.[33] In the case of an idol, the image is meant to stand in place of a deity. In the case of a statue, the image is meant to symbolize sovereignty

[30] Currid, 50.
[31] Currid, 51.
[32] Currid, 51.
[33] Currid, 51.

over a place in the place of a king.[34] Therefore, if nothing else, we can conclude that humanity created in God's image is meant to represent God and rule over God's creation.[35]

Specifically, in Genesis 1:28, God gives specific vocations to Adam and Eve. First, God commands the couple to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.". This is a vocational call to procreation. Second, God commands the couple to "subdue [the earth] and have dominion over the [creation]." In so doing, the couple will exercise viceregency, a godly authority, over God's good creation. This is humanity's fundamental vocation.

But, God's vocational call in the creation account of Genesis also contains a moral component.[36] In Genesis 2:15-17, God gives his first negative command. God placed Adam in the midst of the Garden and commanded him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17), calling Adam to the viceregency of Genesis 1, yet explicitly constraining Adam from absolute freedom. This episode introduces the reality that God's creation is part of an inherently moral universe, that our response to God's call carries blessing or curse.

Most unfortunate for Adam's progeny is that Adam and Eve did not heed the call of God, but rejected their vocations as viceregents. The first couple sinned against God and so disordered the vocational understanding of all humanity. God justly cursed creation causing great vocational confusion evident to this day.

Yet, a Christian understanding of vocation is impoverished if only rooted in the creation theology of the Old Testament.[37] God did not finally leave his creation to wallow in confusion under the curse. Rather, God graciously communicated with his creatures, hinting at his

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[34] Currid, 51.
[35] Currid, 51.
[36] Of course, in a sense, every command from God is ethical by nature, but the call to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil appears to be explicitly ethical.
[37] Witherington, xi.

redemption plan - and vaguely describing the vocation of the Redeemer - in Genesis 3:15. Further, God carried forth his redemption plan and made plain his purpose for all creation, particularly a special people called by his name. God's vocation for creation was not lost at the fall, but was graciously maintained and strengthened through his redemption mission.

Vocation in the Patriarchs and God's Old Covenant People

God's purpose and calling for his creation did not end in his judgment after the Fall of Adam. Rather, God's purpose continued through his covenants with the patriarchs and his people. The covenantal structure of God's relationship to the world, and particularly his people, exists from creation to consummation, despite the fall into sin.[38] The extent of the divine covenants reaches from the beginning of the world to the end of the age[39] and shapes the vocation of God's people in the interim.

God called and made covenant with Noah beginning in Genesis 6, the first occurrence of the word *berit* or "covenant" in the Bible.[40]. God had seen the rebellion of his creation, doing what was wicked in his sight rather than obediently following his call, and he determined to rid the earth - in a sense, recreate the earth - and begin anew with Noah and his family. It fell to Noah to faithfully follow God's call in the world.

In the Noahic covenant, we read of a restatement of the creation covenant. Noah was recommissioned with all of the ordinances given at creation to Adam and Eve and their family.[41] His calling was the same as Adam, modified somewhat to suit the circumstances of a fallen

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[38] O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), 25.
[39] Robertson, 25.
[40] Peter J. Gentry AND Stephen J. Wellum, *God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 57.
[41] Gentry, 62.

world.[42] Specifically, Noah was to be fruitful, to increase in number, and fill the earth (Gen 9:1).[43] Second, Noah is given the vocation of hunter, as the fear of man is placed in animals given by God to humanity for food (Gen. 9:2-3).[44] Third, God gives a vocation, in a sense, to all humanity through Noah to protect human life and to account for the murder of human life.[45] In these three ways, God graciously calls Noah to be a second Adam.

God's call to Noah to preserve the earth and God called and made covenant with Abraham, to leave Ur of the Chaldees and to go to an unfamiliar land, to form a *qahal*, a called assembly for his purpose in the world. God's promise to Abraham for his faithful obedience to God's call was to make Abraham a mighty nation and to bless all the peoples of the earth. In Abraham was the chosen seed and the vocation of universal blessing.

In the Mosaic Covenant, God calls all of Israel to covenant with him, to serve as a blessing to the earth.[46] Within the covenant community, individual Israelites were called to specific tasks, but the particular, individual callings were always discerned within the context of the covenant community. For instance, Moses was called to liberate Israel and lead her out of Egypt.[47] His particular calling was in service to the general calling of the covenant community.

The extraordinary calling of Moses did not, however, demean the ordinary callings of Israelites to fulfill God's purposes.[48] When the tabernacle was built, for instance, God called Bezalel, "filling him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft" to build the tabernacle with the further assistance of Oholiab and all the skillful in Israel

[42] Gentry, 62.
[43] Gentry, 62.
[44] Gentry, 62-63.
[45] Gentry, 63.
[46] Schuurman, 30.
[47] Schuurman, 31.
[48] Schuurman, 31.

(Ex. 31:2-6).[49] As Douglas Schuurman notes, "the comprehensive character of the covenant relationship evident in the scope of the commandments certainly warrants identifying these [tasks] as callings...the Law of Moses, which constituted the life of Israel, connects the will and purpose of God to every conceivable aspect of life. Each and every member of the covenant community has a sacred duty to heed God's law and contribute to God's purpose."[50]

Vocation of the Priests, Kings, and Prophets

The covenantal and communal vocations in Israel were uniquely manifest in the extraordinary callings of prophets, priests, and kings. Each office served as a mediator between God and his people. Prophets foretold and forth told oracles of God, serving as his covenant prosecutors when his people violated the covenant. Priests mediated God's mercy and forgiveness, even as they instructed God's people in the way of the Lord. Kings ruled over and led the theocratic state. In each office, God called particular individuals to mediate his purpose.

Prophets[51] appear in the earliest accounts of Israel's history, including the books of Joshua Judges, Samuel, and Kings.[52] In a real sense, even Abraham, Moses, and Aaron served as pre-monarchical prophets. Deborah, the prophetess, appears in Judges to assist Israel to triumph over its enemies, but also prosecute Israel for its disobedience to their covenant Lord and King.[53]

Prophets of the monarchical period are marked by increased activity and clear definition in distinction to Israel's kings.[54] In this epoch, prophets are closely tied to the development of

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[49] Schuurman, 31.
[50] Schuurman, 31.
[51] Much of the discussion surrounding prophets is assisted by class notes from Dr. Scott Redd's *Isaiah - Malachi* course taught in Houston in July 2016.
[52] Miles V. Van Pelt, "Introduction," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, edited by Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 36.
[53] Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 117, 121.
[54] Redd's Class Notes.

theocratic statecraft.[55] So, for instance, Samuel, who served as both prophet and priest, is intimately involved in the selection, advisement, and discipline of Israel's first king, Saul. Nathan spoke God's word to King David. The latter prophets, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Micah, were "called to serve as God's covenant officials, as covenant lawyers prosecuting the Lord's covenant lawsuit against his unfaithful people."[56]

The exilic prophets, like Ezekiel and Daniel, also prosecuted God's covenants. However, given the unique historical context, the exilic prophets were not called to involvement in the development of theocratic statecraft. The post-exilic prophets, however, were called to speak words of restoration of true worship and to assist in the redevelopment of theocratic state of Israel. No matter the context, though, prophets in the Old Testament were called to speak God's word to God's people.

Prophets mediated God's word to God's people. Priests mediated God's holiness to God's people, leading in the proper worship of God.[57] Leviticus chapters eight through ten contain the narrative of Moses consecrating Aaron and his sons as priests. In particular, Leviticus 10 contains the account of the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu, which was met by God's own fire coming forth and consuming Nadab and Abihu.[58] The consecration of Aaron and the account of "strange fire" illustrate the seriousness of worshipping God properly.[59]

Prophets mediated God's word to God's people. Priests mediated God's holiness to God's people. Kings mediated God's rule over God's people. Israel's need for a king is pervasive in the book of Judges.[60] The book of Judges details the deterioration of Israel

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[55] Redd's Class Notes.
[56] Van Pelt, 36.
[57] Michael G. McKelvey, "Leviticus," *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament,* edited by Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 92-93.
[58] McKelvey, 92-93.
[59] McKelvey, 93.
[60] Schreiner, 117.

politically and spiritually and the author of Judges "thinks that Yahweh's rule over the people will be mediated through a human king."[61]

God's people were given a king in Saul, but 1 and 2 Samuel are about how the Lord exalted David as king through many dangers and case down Saul.[62] King David was called to be the ideal representative king of Israel. God covenanted with David and established the Davidic throne forever (2 Sam. 7). Through David, the kings mediated God's rule. Even in the midst of the division of the kingdom, God's rule was mediated through kings.

Vocation to Prepare the Way

The call of God to covenant fellowship to himself is common to the Old and New Testaments, but the comprehensive reach of vocation into every sphere of life is more obvious in the Old Testament than the New Testament. Even still, the New Testament is full of examples, if not explicit teaching, of God's call in general and particular stations, tasks, and relationships. God's call is evident particularly in the lives of those individuals who prepared the way for the coming of Jesus.

In Luke 1:26-2:38, several people are introduced with specific callings to prepare the way for the coming Messianic king. We first meet Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is confronted by the angel Gabriel with the news that she is chosen of women to carry the Messiah in her womb. Mary is given the ordinary vocation of mother in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Mary's Magnificat serves as a splendid example and encouragement of a joyful response to the call of God.

[61] Schreiner, 118.
[62] Schreiner, 138.

The remaining characters in this Lukan drama include Mary's relative, Elizabeth, who is given the vocation of carrying the last prophet to point the way to the coming Lord, John the Baptist. His father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, fulfilling his particular vocation in this drama. Luke presents John the Baptist with an extraordinary call on his life to prepare the way of the Lord to enter his public ministry. John's vocation is not normative today, but serves as a descriptive example of faithfulness in the midst of dangerous and difficult circumstances.

Luke presents two ordinary vocations in the birth narrative. First, Luke introduces us to Simeon, "righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel...and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:25-26). At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Simeon pronounced blessing upon the child and his vocation was fulfilled. Second, Luke introduces Anna, a prophetess who "did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day." She, too, received the Lord Jesus as the Christ when presented in the temple. Both of these examples serve to remind the reader of ordinary faithfulness in ordinary callings.

Vocation of the Apostles and Disciples

Jesus of Nazareth began his ministry with two external calls: a call to repentance and faith (Matt. 4:17) and the calling of his first disciples, later to be termed apostles (Matt. 4:18-22). In Matthew 4:17, Jesus began his public ministry with the external call to repent and believe for the kingdom of God is at hand. That external call was followed then by the effectual call of his first disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John. It is no coincidence that the call set forth by the God-Man was a call to personal salvation and communal existence.

The first disciples of Jesus had day jobs - they were fishermen. A narrow view of vocation would end at their occupation, but it is clear in the text the call of Jesus on these fishermen radically changed their lives. They became disciples for a season, and later apostles, but it is not at all clear from the text that they left the fishing industry entirely. In fact, Jesus encounters the disciples fishing after his resurrection and prior to his ascension. It is fair to say that the disciples' calling was first a call to fellowship with the Lord Jesus and secondly to live faithfully in every context.

As such, the apostles serve as an example of the Christian life. Undoubtedly, the apostles were called to certain activity that is limited in scope to the office of apostle. To qualify as an apostle, the earliest disciple would have had to see the resurrected Jesus with one's own eyes and have received a specific commission from Jesus to serve as an apostle.[63] Apostles were called and commissioned by Jesus to speak and write word which were "words of God" in an absolute sense.[64] This was true of the original apostles, and of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-20). In this way, apostles are unique in church history and never to be replicated. Still, the conduct of their faith and especially their words set forth in Scripture serve as divine guides for Christians.

The apostles' teaching set down in Scripture, alongside the Old Testament writings, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, provide the divine words necessary for faithfulness as a disciple (Eph. 2:20). A disciple is anyone effectually called to union with Christ through faith in his name, transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's light (John 3:1-16). These New Covenant faithful are called into the mediation provided by Jesus Christ, called into an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15). Like God's people of Old, a Christian is called to be holy for

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[63] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 906.
[64] Grudem, 906.

God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15), to purity rather than impurity (1 Thess. 4:7), to obey all of God's commands with love (1 John 2:3). Even more, Christians are called to do good works that God prepared beforehand (Eph. 2:10), namely fulfilling the Great Commission - to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28).

Of course, individual Christians are called to fellowship together in local churches, serving the body of Christ. Many Christians are called to service in government and the Scripture speaks clearly to that context in Romans and 1 Peter, especially. Christian families are given particular callings in Scripture, as delineated in the so-called household codes of the Pauline and Petrine Epistles. But, as this paper argues, perhaps the summary calling of all Christians is found in Matthew 6:33, where the Lord Jesus instructs to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

Historical Survey

The development of the concept of vocation, reveals a maturation of the concept throughout Christian history. William Placher sets forth a helpful organization of time periods for the historical development of Christian teaching on vocation which is utilized in this paper.[65] The concept of vocation in the earliest Christian history (AD100-500), according to Placher, is understood primarily as the call of God to be a Christian and the attending suffering that accompanied the Christian call given the hostile cultural moment.[66] As a result, the early Christian era is marked by reflection on calling and vocation in light of the martyrdom that visited so many in the early church.

[65] Placher, *Callings*.
[66] Placher, 6.

The second era identified by Placher in the development of the Christian reflection on vocation is the Middle Age (AD500-1500), an era marked by Christian cultural dominance and, arguably, hegemony. Therefore, the Middle Age Christian reflection on vocation was unlike the early church reflection, marked by discerning God's call to a specific Christian service, like the priesthood, rather than God's call to be a Christian. Heavily influenced by the growth and structure of the Roman Catholic Church, this era was marked more by discerning the level of commitment to the faith and the church than by discerning whether to commit to the faith at all.

The third era identified by Placher in the development of the Christian reflection on vocation is the Reformation and Post-Reformation era (AD1500-1800).[67] The Protestant Reformation not only introduced reformation to the doctrine and practice of the church, but also reformed the common understanding of Christian vocation. Where the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages tended to separate the secular and the sacred, the Protestant Reformation argued that every vocation - common or spiritual, sacred or secular - was a vocation unto God, that all of life was lived *coram Deo*, before the face of God. There was diversity, however, amongst the Protestant Reformers about whether the concept of vocation applied strictly to one's labor or to all areas of life.[68]

Lastly, Placher identifies the Post-Christian era (AD1800-Present) as the current era in the development of the Christian reflection on vocation.[69] Interestingly, the Post-Christian era has seen the development of Roman Catholic thought on vocation to mirror the Protestant Reformation emphasis on every labor as a vocation. However, with the waning cultural influence of Christianity in the broader Western world, a veritable crisis of vocation has arisen in the

[67] Placher, 7.
[68] Placher, 8.
[69] Placher, 8

culture and the church. The very concept of vocation has been disparaged by theorists in seemingly unrelated camps, like Karl Marx and Karl Barth.[70] This era is marked by skepticism, autonomy, and individualism.

Despite the differences throughout the eras of the church, each era has its unique challenges that shaped Christian reflection. However, such unique circumstances do not prevent modern Christians from gleaning nuggets of Christian wisdom. Further, our contention is that Christian history provides a framework by which we can see the panoply of Christian wisdom on the concept, while trying to understand how those circumstances shaped the historical reflection. An historical survey of Christian reflection on the topic militates against a narrow understanding of vocation, but rather uncovers the complex and evolving nature of vocational reflection throughout the history of the church.

Vocation in the Early Church, 100-500

The earliest Christians had little to no concern about "career and calling," as one might see in a department on a modern Christian college campus. In the contemporary world of the early church, work was determined primarily by your parent's work or some other cultural directive.[71] One's life was largely determined by the societal arrangement, your circumstances, and the interplay of the two. If you were born a blacksmith's son, you would be a blacksmith's son. If you were born into an elite class, you were considered elite by default.

[70] Placher, 8.
[71] Placher, 23.

For the earliest Christians and those considering Christianity found themselves in a societal and cultural milieu initially hostile to the claims and growth of Christianity. So, while those early seekers were not visiting the career counselor, they were very likely taking seriously the cost of being a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 14:25-34). The earliest Christians had to discern whether they were called to belong to Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:6), called to be saints (Rom. 1:7).[72] Vocation, or calling, in this church age meant primarily the discernment of whether you were called of God into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and, while such discernment produced varied reflections, the sobriety given to this consideration - to confess, "Jesus is Lord" - indicated how dangerous and different a Christian calling would be for an early Christian and what dedication was required to maintain such a calling.

The New Testament provides the earliest window into Christian reflection on calling. The Apostle Paul referred to himself as one "called to be an Apostle," and referred to the Christians in Rome as "set apart [by God] for the gospel," those "called to be saints." This paper has already detailed the prodigious use of vocational language used throughout the New Testament. Here, the point is that the earliest Christians, as represented in the biblical authors, were cognizant that the Christian life is a vocational life, a life of calling from one station to another station, from darkness to life, sin to righteousness, death to life, from an enemy of God to a child of God. This radical call shaped the ethos of the earliest Christian reflection on vocation.

The first few centuries of Christian expansion occurred primarily in the Roman Empire, which provided the cultural and social milieu for early Christian reflection on calling. The Roman Empire milieu was not initially conducive to peaceful Christian reflection or expansion.

[72] Placher, 23.

In AD64, the Roman Emperor Nero instigated what is the first recorded organized persecution of Christians.[73] Rather than take responsibility for a disastrous fire started during a hedonistic, royal party, Nero systematically persecuted Christians as the culprits, torturing and killing many Christians, including the Apostles Peter and Paul, according to tradition.[74]

Despite Nero's carnage, Christian persecution in the Roman Empire was typically isolated and brief.[75] Arguably, the early persecution was a boon to the expansion of Christianity in the Roman Empire as Christians exhibited courage in the face of terror, but the persecution was never widespread enough to realistically squelch the rapid growth of this new religion.[76] In fact, the persecution provided the opportunity for early Christian witness to the power of the new religion as the martyrs willingly suffered and died for their faith.[77] As Placher helpfully summarizes: "A call to follow Christ only rarely ended in martyrdom, but the possibility was something any Christian had at least to consider."[78]

Physical persecution was not the only threat to the early Christians that shaped early Christian reflection on calling and vocation. The corruption and violence in the Roman Empire is, no pun intended, legendary. It is reported that Tiberius, who was emperor during the life of Christ, starved several of his family members to death and was exiled to a remote island because of his sexual deviancy, which was a tall order for the sexually lax Roman culture.[79] In Tiberius's wake stood the Emperor Caligula.

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[73] Placher, 25.
[74] Placher, 25.
[75] Placher, 26.
[76] Placher, 26.
[77] Placher, 26.
[78] Placher, 26.
[79] Placher, 28.

Caligula's reign was marked by brutality and continued sexual deviancy. He was known for arbitrarily condemning people to be sawn in two, branded with hot irons, and thrown to beasts.[80] His sexual exploits included adulterous escapades in full view of the betrayed, homosexual encounters with unwilling subjects, and even reportedly intercourse with each of his sisters.

Sexual decadence reigned at the top of the Roman culture - and undoubtedly, the bottom of the culture - and obscene violence ruled the popular Roman culture. Gladiatorial sport was the entertainment of the day, arenas full of vicious scenes of violence and death. The violent culture was most evident, perhaps, in the raging military of the Empire, for "even imperial peace rested on often brutal military victories."[81] It was this cultural milieu that, despite growing gains in acceptance of the practice of Christianity, led many Christians to seek to continue the radical nature of the earliest Christian devotion, practice, and separation.

After Constantine declared himself a Christian in the 4th century, Christians who once faced death for their faith, or at least social ostracization, now found it socially advantageous to be Christian.[82] This newfound social acceptance was, paradoxically, met with mixed response from the Christian community, many Christian leaders concerned that such social acceptance would blunt the radical call of the Christian faith.[83] The Christian vocation to date involved a radical turning from the world and its attendant cultural trappings of power, wealth, sensuality, and brutality. The Christianization of the Roman Empire raised questions in the early Christian

[80] Placher, 29.
[81] Placher, 29.
[82] Placher, 31.
[83] Placher, 31.

world of how gaining cultural power and influence would affect, if at all, the radical Christian vocation.

In this rising tide of cultural prominence, many Christians wrestled with just that conundrum. The Constantinian era caused something of an existential crisis in the maturation of Christianity.[84] It is no coincidence that during the Constantinian era, Christians regularly pursued a more extraordinary vocation in communal, separate lives given to self-denial and service of God - monasteries.[85] Initially, men and women of Egypt and Syria removed themselves from ordinary lives, given vocations of separation, self-denial, and solitude from the world.[86] Then followed monastic communities in France, Italy, and eventually most all of Europe. These were Christians seeking to turn from the world to God in an extraordinary sense, a so-called higher Christian vocation that sought to preserve the spirit of the age of the martyrs that so marked the early Christian church. The monastic age transformed the earliest Christian vocation into a discernment of a higher spiritual commitment.

Vocation in the Middle Ages, 500-1500

The monastic era in the Roman Catholic Church was marked by a co-opting of the use of the term "vocation" to refer solely to the monastic lifestyle.[87] During the Middle Ages, in the midst of the sheer drudgery of physical labor without aid of technology, the Roman Catholic Church proclaimed, "Their work is their prayer."[88] On the eve of the Reformation, however, the

[84] Placher, 31.
[85] Placher, 31.
[86] Placher, 31.
[87] Holl, Karl. "The History of the Word Vocation (Beruf)," trans. Heber F. Peacock. *Review & Expositor,* 55 (1958), 136.
[88] Claar, 166.

notion of a vocation or calling was restricted to members of religious orders, like priests and nuns, or those called to special ministries.[89]

The usual term "estate" was used to denote one's occupation or station in life, whereas "calling" or vocation "had been reserved for the life of prayer and fasting to which the Lord called monks and nuns."[90] This is most notably in the common use of Roman Catholic prayer, "May God send us many Order-vocations," as opposed to scholar-vocations, banker-vocations, or parent-vocations.[91] The medieval social division was among those with a churchly or praying vocation, like priests and nuns, and those "who fight (the nobles) and those who work (mostly peasants in the field)."[92] As Placher summarizes the medieval era, "The central vocational question for most medieval Christians was whether to choose a celibate life in service of the church."[93]

The churchly, prayer, Order-vocations of the medieval era were marked most prominently by the monastic life that arose toward the end of the early Christian era. Monasticism was markedly different than the other "estates" during this era. For instance, the monastery was typically a scholarly repository, housing many of the only surviving copies of Roman and Greek works.[94] Further, monasteries were virtually the only institutions of study, given their large libraries.[95] As expected, monks were typically the most literate, learned members of society, and typically produced many literary works throughout a lifetime.[96]

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[89] Claar, 166.
[90] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relationships in Seventeenth Century New England* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 70.
[91] Holl, 126.
[92] Placher, 107.
[93] Placher, 107.
[94] Placher, 108.
[95] Placher, 108.
[96] Placher, 108.

Western monasticism was greatly influenced by the monastic tradition arising from the early church monasticism of Egypt.[97] John Cassian, an Egyptian monastic, moved to southern France around 400 A.D. introducing monasticism to the Western world.[98] Bede, an English monk active during the late 7th and early 8th centuries, produced scholarly work on topics ranging from astronomy to theology quoting a range of early church fathers and monastics.[99] Perhaps the most famous influence on Western monasticism, and one who embodied much of the monastic ideal, was Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, and his famous work, *The City of God*.[100]

The City of God is a classic work frequently employed in discussions of vocation and kingdom theology. The thesis of the work is that two "cities" run through humanity in history: one city founded by Cain, which is focused upon self-love and worldly glory, and the other founded by Abel, focused on the love of God and the heavenly kingdom.[101] While Augustine remained ambiguous, to a degree, about the citizens of each city, though arguably the distinction traces that of the church and the world, monastics of the Middle Ages were understood to clearly be citizens of the City of God because of their religious vocation.[102]

Monasticism, of course, often failed and was in need of regular reform.[103] Throughout the Middle Ages reform came in various forms. From Benedict, monasticism received more discipline and a higher standard of conduct.[104] From Bernard of Clairvaux, monasticism was injected with spiritual mysticism and aesthetically grand monasteries.[105] Late Middle Ages saw

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[97] Placher, 108.
[98] Placher, 108.
[99] Placher, 108.
[100] Placher, 108.
[101] Placher, 108.
[102] Placher, 108.
[103] Placher, 109.
[104] Placher, 109.
[105] Placher, 109.

the rise of socially active Franciscan and Dominican friars who, like monks, disciplined themselves for spiritual gain, but in such a way as to be as focused on the service of others through serving the poor and vulnerable.[106] Regardless the monastic reform, though, the distinction between religious vocation and secular estate remained.

Vocation During and After the Reformation, 1500-1800

This understanding of vocation changed with the young monk-turned-reformer, Martin Luther.[107] "He urged the Christians to leave behind the exercises of monastic life, pilgrimages, Eucharistic parades, and various acts of pious self-denial in a struggle for [righteousness]," which was already accomplished by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and imputed to the believer by faith in the Son of God.[108] Instead, Luther understood vocation to be "first and foremost a summons to a life of faith – a call to trust in God and who and what we are by His grace – forgive and adopted children on His love."[109] This calling to God as a redeemed sinner, an adopted child, meant for Luther that God's vocation for each individual is decidedly ordinary and touches us within our space, where we already live[110], as opposed to a call to a life of separation and monasticism. Luther understood Paul to mean in 1 Corinthians 7:17 that God "calls us to express our faith in Him and His righteousness by loving service within the social communities to which we already belong through the responsibilities that arise from our stations and offices within them."[111] In applying his vision of vocation, the Protestant Reformer

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[106] Placher, 110.
[107] Hein, Steven A. "Luther on Vocatio: Ordinary Life for Ordinary Saints." *Reformation & Revival: A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership* 8, (1999), 121.
[108] Hein, 121.
[109] Hein, 126.
[110] Hein, 132.
[111] Hein, 132.

approvingly said, "The farmers feed us and the soldiers defend us." Likewise, John Calvin taught that everyone received a special calling to a vocation for which he received the necessary gifts.[112] Each person should exercise those gifts in service to God and others.[113]

Douglas Schuurman nicely summarizes the Reformation view of vocation under three themes. First, the Reformation taught that all aspects of life are holy.[114] The Reformation doctrine of vocation infused all of life - every mundane activity, every social or economic or political activity - with religious significance.[115] Neither Luther or Calvin limited the doctrine of vocation to paid labor, but rather acknowledged God's call on the Christian to lives each station of life to the glory of God. In identifying the mundane as vocations from God, the Reformers rejected the church-world dichotomy and recognized inherent dignity in everyday activity.[116]

The second theme identified by Schuurman for the Reformation doctrine of vocation is that all duties are to be governed by the will of God.[117] This theme most relies upon the doctrines of providence and incarnation. To live faithfully within a given vocation - whatever the situation - is to participate in God's provident ways and to be Christ incarnate to the present human need.[118] The Reformers certainly understood that moral conflict might arise providentially within one's vocation, but the Reformers exhorted Christians to live faithfully to God's law and will within the vocation. For Luther and Calvin, God ordered and cared for society through such providential means.[119]

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[112] Claar, 166.
[113] A discussion of Luther's "two kingdoms" teaching is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I chose to not mention the matter. However, so to show my familiarity with the concept, a quality analysis of the doctrine related to vocation occurs in John S. Feinberg's "Luther's Doctrine of Vocation: Some Problems of Interpretation and Application." *Fides et Historia* 12, (1979).
[114] Schuurman, 5.
[115] Schuurman, 5.
[116] Schuurman, 6.
[117] Schuurman, 6.
[118] Schuurman, 7.
[119] Schuurman, 7.

The third theme to summarize the Reformation doctrine of vocation is that of legitimate authority and power.[120] The Reformation doctrine of vocation confers theological legitimacy upon the authority of persons within positions of power within the social order.[121] Arguably, Luther emphasizes the matter more than Calvin, but both emphasize that God ordains offices and appoints individuals to exercise divine governance through the appointed person, whether in the family, workplace, church, or public square.[122] The reformers taught that God's authority worked itself through legitimate human authority and, therefore, those subject to such authority obeyed God by obeying the legitimate human authority. In so doing, God providentially ordered and sustained all human society.

The Reformation was an era where the doctrine of vocation was redeemed from the hegemonic captivity of Middle Age Roman Catholicism. The two pioneering reformers - Luther and Calvin - each attacked the narrow, dualistic conception of vocation promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church, while, Calvin in particular, defended too against the radical direction taken by overly pietistic Anabaptists. The Reformation doctrine of vocation charged the everyday activities of regular Christians with the glory and grandeur of God's providential working in and through such activity. God calls his people to live the Christian life in every and all circumstances, actively trusting in His good and perfect ways.

Puritan Definition

The Puritan movement is an heir to the Protestant Reformation and, consequently, to the vocational vision of the Reformers, like Luther and Calvin. As such, the Puritan doctrine of

[120] Schuurman, 7.
[121] Schuurman, 7.
[122] Schuurman, 7.

calling, or vocation, was a specific application of God's providence to the personal life of every Christian.[123] Puritans customarily divided God's call of the individual into a general calling and a particular calling. The general calling was the calling to be a redeemed and holy Christian in every area of life. The particular calling was God's direction of a person into a specific station of life, particularly in the family, marketplace and church.[124] The Puritans understood a vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good. Every person of every degree, state, sex, or condition without exception must have some personal and particular calling to walk in.[125]

According to Edmund Morgan, the Puritans used the word calling, or vocation, in three senses, where the subject in all three senses was God, the object always man. First, God called a man to ever right action that he performed, regardless the situation. "If the Puritan felt justified in a given act, he perceived a calling or a call to do it."[126] Second, the word called men to salvation.[127] "The substance of this call, or the thing the Lord calls unto, is to come unto him."[128] Thomas Hooker entitled one of his books *The Soul's Vocation or Effectual Calling*.[129] Third, God called men to a personal or particular calling, or vocation, a set of roles and tasks.[130]

Like Luther and Calvin, the Puritans rejected the monastic, Roman Catholic understanding of vocation. As the Puritan Thomas Shepard wrote:

> "Seeing yourself thus working in worldly employments fir him, you may easily apprehend that for that time God calls you to them and you attend upon the work of Jesus Christ in

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[123] Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 15.
[124] Ryken, 15-16.
[125] Edmund S. Morgan, ed. *Puritan Political Ideas 1558-1794* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 34.
[126] Morgan, *The Puritan Family,* 69.
[127] Morgan, *The Puritan Family,* 70.
[128] Morgan, *The Puritan Family,* 70.
[129] Morgan, *The Puritan Family,* 70.
[130] Clark, 33.

> them, that you honor God as much, nay, more, by the meanest servile worldly act, than if you should have spent all that time in meditation, prayer, or any other spiritual employment, to which you had no call at that time."[131]

The Puritan's viewed all of life under the authority and counsel of God, which filled all human endeavors – not only religious activities – with spiritual significance.[132] William Perkins instructed that "the duties of love" should motivate every person to pursue specific vocations in their spheres of life so as to "become a servant to his brother."[133] "The Puritan concept of the Christian's vocation neither reduces Christian devotion to the common life of natural men, nor limits Christian devotion to the special activities of ministers and evangelists."[134] Rather, the Puritan view of vocation weaves "spiritual motivations, a sense of the presence of the living God and a heavenly hope" into the common, ordinary life of the Christian man.[135]

Reformation and Puritan reflection on vocation served as a biblical corrective to the vocational conception of the Middle Ages. However, two developments during the Reformation era were seeds of later Christian reflection that sought to correct Reformation era vocational reflection. First, vocational reflection during this era took an inward turn, looking to and relying upon experiential religion to discern vocation.[136] Whether this development is rooted in Puritan experiential religion or empiricist philosophy that ruled the intellectual day is debatable. However, the writings of Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley served as examples of the

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[131] Thomas Shepard, *The Works of Thomas Shepard* (Forgotten Books, 2012), 308.
[132] Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones. *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 534.
[133] William Perkins, "A Treatise of the Vocations," *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* edited by William C. Placher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).
[134] Beeke, 534.
[135] Beeke, 534.
[136] Placher, 209-210.

development of experiential religion post-Reformation, which shaped the religious understanding of centuries of Christians.[137]

Second, related to the rise of experiential religion, a narrow understanding of vocation as work or job was used to evidence one's salvation.[138] While Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* contains both helpful and unhelpful arguments, Weber was arguably right that the Protestant work ethic that arose from the Reformation assisted the spirit of capitalistic economy.[139] As such, vocation as work or job became standard fare, as evidenced even presently by the nomenclature "vocational education." This experiential and narrow conception of vocation faced a backlash, of sorts, in the post-Christian era and, more importantly, finds a helpful corrective in light of the kingdom of God.

Vocation in a Post-Christian World, 1800-Present

The Reformation liberated vocation from Medieval monastic captivity, declaring that any lawful work can be a vocation from God. Even more, Reformation and Puritan ethics extended the concept of vocation to various stations of life. However, the common understanding of vocation heavily emphasized work as vocation. From the Enlightenment to present, many Christians have grown resistant to defining vocation so narrowly, as much modern labor has become alienated labor, disconnected from the social and cultural context that provides meaning and purpose to labor.[140]

In the Modern, Post-Christian era, many social theorists - Christian or otherwise - have argued against vocation as work alone. The Frenchman, Jacques Ellul, maintained that, "nothing

[137] Placher, 210.
[138] Placher, 210.
[139] Placher, 371.
[140] Placher, 327.

in the Bible allows us to identify work with calling...Work is an imperative of survival, and the Bible remains realistic enough to superimpose upon this necessity a superfluous spiritual decoration."[141] In other words, according to Ellul, there is nothing inherently meaningful about our work. In fact, Ellul argues that the notion of calling applies only to those instances where God summons a person to a specific task, service, or fellowship.[142] This perspective on vocation seems to limit the application of vocation solely to religious service.

Two other modern perspectives on vocation are given by American ethicist and theologian Stanley Hauerwas and Croatian-American scholar Miroslav Volf. Hauerwas argues giving too much significance to work as vocation tempts people to idolize work, making work spiritually dangerous.[143] For instance, Hauerwas argues that work is "the means to survive, to be of service to others and…[is] a hedge against boredom. Attributing greater significance to work risks making it demonic as work becomes an idolatrous activity."[144]

In the same vein, Volf argues that the "dead hand of vocation needs to be lifted from the Christian idea of work."[145] He further argues that the concept of vocation is inadequate for modern societies.[146] Rather, Volf argues that a Christian understanding of work is centered on the Spirit's work in the Christian: "The significance and meaning of Christians' work lie in their cooperation with God in the anticipation of the eschatological *transformatio mundi* [transformation of the world]."[147] Volf offers a helpful corrective by offering a teleological purpose for Christian work, but Volf's proposal lacks the biblical framework to best shape such a purpose.

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[141] Placher, 328.
[142] Placher, 328.
[143] Placher, 328-329.
[144] Placher, 328-329.
[145] Placher, 329.
[146] Placher, 329.
[147] Witherington, 37.

Ultimately, the post-Christian era is searching for divine guidance to shape vocational understanding. In a sense, this era finds itself back at the beginning. The desacralizing influence of secularism offers a world to modern man devoid of divine purpose. The effects of economic transition complicate questions of work and labor. The impulse of egalitarianism disallows for sober reflection on divine providence. These modern challenges to vocation call for a new formulation of the concept.

Modern Challenges to Vocation

The Protestant or Reformation understanding of all of life as vocation pervasively shaped the Western world.[148] This understanding of vocation and the legacy embedded in the cultural fabric of the modern West have been the focus of innumerable academic studies through the years. However, such understanding of life infused with such religious and moral meaning has come under assault. As this historical survey has shown, Christian reflection on vocation has developed through the centuries and the Western church finds itself faced with serious challenges to its understanding of vocation. And, with the waning influence of the church on the culture, the cultural milieu has only grown increasingly hostile toward any semblance of religious or moral meaning to life, resulting arguably in cultural decay.

Douglas Schuurman identifies three particular modern challenges to a Protestant doctrine of vocation. First, the challenge of a growing secularism threatens the idea that all of life, including public life, is lived in response to God. "Vocation's tendency to insist upon larger moral contexts, long-range consequences, and fundamental moral norms" is met by societal, cultural, and economic forces that militate against such insistence.[149] Secularism is, arguably, the

[148] Schuurman, 5.
[149] Schuurman, 11.

greatest rival of the Christian religion today,[150] and desacralizes day-to-day modern life, leaving modern man, including modern Christians, with no sense of divine activity in life.

Second, Schuurman identifies economic pressures and changes as a modern challenge to a Protestant doctrine of vocation. This objection is tied closely to secularism, as the empirical mind has dominated intellectual inquiry in modern times. While capitalism has produced great advances in efficiency and alleviation of poverty,[151] technocratic, managerial emphases on efficiency and short-term profits can eclipse a focus upon human dignity and purpose.[152] The industrial and technological economic revolutions certainly challenge a robust conception of vocation.

Third, Schuurman identifies an egalitarian impulse in the modern West as a modern challenge to a Protestant doctrine of vocation. He rightly states that "Americans like to pretend there are no differences of status and authority, and they tend to emphasize equality to the point of utter disregard for differences in knowledge, power, and status."[153] Schuurman rightly acknowledges that the doctrine of vocation can be used by those in power to oppress, as argued by Marxists and political liberals.[154] Even still, the misuse of the doctrine of vocation is not an indictment of the doctrine, but rather an indictment of those misusing the doctrine. In the case of the powerful who have used the doctrine to propagate injustice, it seems the adage attributed to Lord Acton applies in amended form: power tends to corrupt the doctrine of vocation.

Despite corruption, the doctrine of vocation does not inhibit moral agency and autonomy by encouraging obedience to the divine order.[155] Rather, the doctrine of vocation, considered in

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[150] John M. Frame, *A Theology of Lordship, vol. 3, The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2008), 436.
[151] Frame, *Christian Life*, 826.
[152] Schuurman, 11.
[153] Schuurman, 15.
[154] Schuurman, 15.
[155] Schuurman, 15.

light of the kingdom of God, acknowledges created realities under God's providential care and provides the biblical wisdom to live in concert with such providential ordering. God is the supreme authority and, as such, grants authority to persons who are called according to his purposes for his creation. This authority is a good gift of God and should be received as such. To live in accord with one's vocation is to live at peace with others in submission to the mysterious, wise providence of God.

Specifically, as this paper argues, a Christian understanding of vocation is best understood in light of the central theme of scripture, the kingdom of God, which militates against these three challenges. A Christian understanding of vocation in light of the kingdom of God is rooted in the cultural mandate and Great Commission, along with God's covenants and law, which provides the normative perspective to combat the growing secularism of our age. A Christian understanding of vocation in light of the kingdom of God provides the situational perspective that frames the kingdom mission not in economic or sociological terms, but in spiritual and eternal terms. Lastly, to understand vocation in light of the kingdom of God is to understand the existential power given to the Christian by God, the kingdom motive produced in Christians by the Holy Spirit. Such kingdom motive protects against the abuse of the doctrine of vocation. Instead, the kingdom mission motivates Christian vocation that bears all the fruit of the Spirit in service to neighbor out of a love for God.

Chapter 3
Kingdom of God: A Biblical-Theological and Historical Survey

The kingdom of God is as a central theme for the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).[156] This theme does not "nullify but rather serves the other variegated details of the Bible,"[157] including the biblical concept of vocation. The kingdom of God constitutes the thematic framework for the Bible, both Old and New Testaments.[158] It comprehends and encompasses every other theme encountered in the Scriptures, from creation to new creation and every theme in between, including vocation and calling.[159] The doctrine of the kingdom of God unites, coheres, stabilizes, and shapes all other biblical themes and concepts.[160]

What is meant by the "kingdom" in Scripture is, in a sense, mysterious, as the Scripture's teaching on the matter is complex.[161] This has led to various interpretations by the church throughout history, as we will see, resulting in no shortage of controversy and infighting.[162] George Eldon Ladd demonstrates the complexity of the biblical teaching on the kingdom in the New Testament alone when he writes:

> "The Kingdom is a present reality (Matt.12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (1 Cor. 15:50). It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing (Rom. 14:17) which can be experienced only by way of the new birth (John 3:3), and yet it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world (Rev. 11:5). The Kingdom is a realm into which men enter now (Matt. 21:31), and yet it is a realm into which they will enter tomorrow (Matt. 8:11). It is at the same time a gift of God which

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[156] cf. G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 164; F.J. Foakes-Jackson, "The kingdom of God in Acts, and 'the city of God,'" *Harvard Theological Review* 12:2, 193-200 (1919), 194.
[157] See e.g. Beale, 164.
[158] Van Pelt, 28
[159] Van Pelt, 28
[160] Van Pelt, 28
[161] George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 18.
[162] cf. Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 11.

> will be bestowed by God in the future (Luke 12:32) and yet which must be received in the present (Mark 10:15)."[163]

The interpretation of "kingdom of God" is further complicated in that our modern understanding of "kingdom" is typically that of a specific realm in which a king or sovereign exercises control or a reference to the subjects of the king themselves.[164] This has led to countless misappropriations of the kingdom theme.[165]

This chapter will first consider the interpretation and appropriation of the doctrine of the kingdom of God throughout church history. Stephen Nichols helpfully divides the historical development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God into four eras: the Early Church, the Medieval Church, the Reformation, and the Modern Church.[166] While there are varied interpretations of the kingdom of God throughout church history, the interpretations tend to swing from two poles: an apocalyptic, future vision of the kingdom of God and an internal, spiritual active presence of the kingdom of God.

The historical development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God is of course a history of the interpretation of and theological reflection on the Scriptures. The primary meaning of the Hebrew word for kingdom in the Old Testament – *malkuth* – and the Greek word in the New Testament – *basileia* – refers narrowly to the kingly authority, reign or rule of the sovereign.[167] Summarily, then, the kingdom of God is God's authority, reign and rule over His people.[168] As

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[163] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 18.
[164] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 18-19.
[165] See e.g. G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, Revised Edition, ed. Donald A. Hafner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 55-58.
[166] Stephen J. Nichols, "The Kingdoms of God: The Kingdom in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 25-45.
[167] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 19.
[168] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 21.

Vos put it, "the kingdom of God is not...His abstract right to rule - His sovereignty, [generally] - it is the actual realization of His sway."[169]

This chapter will also survey the biblical-theological development of the kingdom of God through Scripture. As such, this chapter will survey the kingdom of God theme in the Old Testament, focusing on the difference between the universal and particular aspects of the kingdom of God, and in the New Testament, focusing on the Christological and already-not yet aspects of the kingdom of God. This survey will also advocate a progressive covenantal structure of the kingdom of God that provides a theological framework by which to best understand the redemptive-historical development of the doctrine. Ultimately, this chapter will show that the kingdom of God is revealed in redemptive history through the progression of God's covenants from the Old to New Testaments, finding its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who has already come, but has not yet finally consummated his kingdom on earth.

Historical Survey

The doctrine of the kingdom of God has captivated theologians, scholars, political activists, churchmen, and laity for centuries, many claiming the doctrine as the central theme of the Bible.[170] The variegated interpretations and applications of the doctrine reveals the complexity of faithfully expounded the doctrine. However, seeking first to properly understand and then apply the doctrine has far reaching implications for the totality of one's theology. This section will survey the historical development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God from the

[169] Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 385.
[170] Nichols, 26.

early church through contemporary considerations. While reflection on the doctrine is varied in history, there are common threads that this survey intends to weave throughout history.

Stephen Nichols's chapter in *The Kingdom of God* provides the framework by which this paper will consider the historical development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God. Like the chapter on vocation, this historical survey is organized according to four epochs in church history: Early Church, Medieval, Reformation and Post-Reformation, and Contemporary. Each epoch is marked by its own sociological, cultural, and historical circumstances, but the common thread throughout the epochs becomes clear. Reflection on the doctrine appears to delineate between an apocalyptic, literal interpretation of key biblical texts and an internal, spiritual interpretation of the same texts.

The early church epochal reflection on the doctrine of the kingdom of God was marked initially by an apocalyptic, literal fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth, filled to the brim with the material blessings set forth in Scripture.[171] However, with the growing dominance of Christianity, the reflection on the doctrine shifted to a more spiritual realization of the kingdom, as reflected in Origen and Augustine.[172] A review of the earliest church epoch makes clear that reflection on the kingdom of God was in no way monolithic.

The medieval epoch of church history is dominated by an Augustinian view of the kingdom of God.[173] However, the medieval epoch was not without its apocalyptic enthusiasts, such as Joachim of Fiore.[174] Thomas Aquinas rose to the occasion against Joachim in this epoch,

[171] Nichols, 33.
[172] Nichols, 35.
[173] Nichols, 36.
[174] Nichols, 36.

advocating an Augustinian view of the kingdom of God.[175] At the end of the medieval era, however, the two strands of spiritual and apocalyptic interpretations of the kingdom continued to weave through the church.

The Reformation epoch in church history was, in many ways, a reformation of medieval theology.[176] Martin Luther's theology of the kingdom of God was largely a restatement of the Augustinian conception of "two cities." Rather than two cities, however, Luther emphasized the interaction of Two Kingdoms, with the consummation of the heavenly kingdom at the indistinct future.[177] Similarly, John Calvin did not emphasize an apocalyptic consummation of the kingdom, but rather connected his teaching on the kingdom of God to Christ and the gospel.[178] The Reformation era, however, did have its share of apocalyptic frenzy, particularly encouraged by Thomas Muntzer.[179]

The Enlightenment and Modern epoch experienced a renaissance, of sorts, in reflection upon the kingdom of God. The diminished statute of theology and increased importance of philosophy proved to shape much of the modern reflection on the kingdom of God.[180] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic introduced a philosophical paradigm with which to ascertain cultural progress, which some interpreted as the path toward the eschaton.[181] The result was an overtly political, worldly conception of the kingdom of God, which shaped theological conceptions, most notably in the realized eschatology of C. H. Dodd and Walter Rausenbusch.[182]

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[175] Nichols, 37.
[176] Nichols, 38.
[177] Nichols, 39.
[178] Nichols, 39-40.
[179] Nichols, 39.
[180] Nichols, 40.
[181] Nichols, 40-41.
[182] Nichols, 28-29.

The Social Gospel, Liberation Theology, and other politicized conceptions of the kingdom of God were countered by evangelical conceptions of the kingdom that generally fell within dispensational or covenantal camps of interpretation, each advocating particular views of the millennium.[183] Dispensationalism is marked by apocalyptic conception of eschatological realities and covenantal conceptions are marked by spiritual realities. The contemporary epoch, however, has seen reconciliation between these competing evangelical theologies, led by the theological work of George Eldon Ladd.

The Kingdom of God in the Early Church

The earliest, non-canonical reflection on eschatological matters, particularly the kingdom of God, emphasized the discontinuity between this present age and the age to come and the material blessings of the heavenly kingdom.[184] The early church father Papias - who tradition holds was taught elders who had been taught by the Apostle John - and Irenaeus - who also according to tradition was taught directly by the Apostle John - advocated such a vision of the kingdom of God.[185] In their day, the cultural and social order were opposed to the young Christian church and, therefore, these earliest Christian leaders taught plainly from the Scripture of the coming heavenly kingdom and the bountiful, material blessings that awaited the saints, as described in prophetic sections of Scripture.[186] Stephen Nichols quotes the enthusiastic writing of Papias:

[183] Nichols, 41-43.
[184] Nichols, 32.
[185] Nichols, 32.
[186] Nichols, 32.

> "The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine."[187]

This stylistic language is meant to convey the bountiful blessing of that future, heavenly kingdom for the people of God, trapped in a world overrun by wickedness and under the control of the Roman Empire, opposed to Christianity.[188]

This vision of the kingdom was also advocated by the apologist Justin Martyr and the lawyer-theologian Tertullian.[189] Martyr argued defiantly against the Romans for assuming that Christians sought an earthly kingdom, rather than a heavenly kingdom.[190] Like Papias and Irenaeus, Justin Martyr's vision of the kingdom of God was marked by a physical kingdom with bountiful, material blessings wholly in the future age to come.[191]

Tertullian, likewise, advocated for a wholly future kingdom of material blessings and peace. However, Tertullian added the wrinkle to his eschatological scheme of a kingdom that enters the world in two-stages, what would later be termed historic premillennialism.[192] Tertullian argued that the thousand-year reign of the Christ in Revelation 20:1-6 is a literal reign of God in Christ on the earth, followed by the full consummation of the kingdom of God in the

[187] Nichols, 32.
[188] Nichols, 33.
[189] Nichols, 33.
[190] Nichols, 33.
[191] Nichols, 33.
[192] Nichols, 33.

eternal state following the millennial reign.[193] As such, Tertullian became the first early church theologian to emphasize the apocalyptic nature of the kingdom of God.[194]

Standing contrary to Papias, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian in the early church was Origen, with his spiritual view of the kingdom.[195] Origen was troubled by the literal physicality of the conception of the kingdom by the likes of Papias and Justin Martyr.[196] His hermeneutic disallowed interpreting the prophetic kingdom blessings of wine and grain as literal. Rather, he understood these kingdom blessings to be allegorically descriptive of the blessing of the soul's union with Christ.[197] Arguably, Origen's conception of the kingdom of God was overly internalized, which would have squared with Origen's acceptance of Neoplatonism.[198]

Of all the early church theologians, apologists, and leaders, Augustine stands out as arguably the most influential throughout church history. While this paper is focused on the doctrine of the kingdom of God, Augustine's influence spans the gamut of Christian theology. However, perhaps Augustine's greatest influence is his vision of the interaction between the world and the kingdom of God.

In his monumental *City of God*,[199] Augustine covers many topics, but central to this historic work is the kingdom of God. Augustine's conception in some ways follows in the spiritual lineage of Origen, but is undoubtedly unique in most respects.[200] Nichols concludes that

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[193] Nichols, 33. It should also be noted that the question of the proper construction of the millennium in eschatology is beyond the scope of this paper and is not essential to the discussion of the doctrine of the kingdom of God.
[194] Nichols, 33.
[195] Nichols, 34.
[196] Nichols, 34.
[197] Nichols, 34.
[198] Nichols, 34.
[199] Written between 413 and 427.
[200] Nichols, 34.

Augustine's kingdom view "has almost exclusively dominated the field for centuries and continues to be deeply felt."[201]

Augustine takes his cue from Psalm 87:3 and distinguishes between the city of man and the city of God, using "city" near equivalent to "kingdom."[202] As is true for the biblical use of "kingdom," Augustine was not referring to a physical, geographical place, but rather "two communities of men, of which one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil."[203] In this way, Augustine understood the kingdom to have earthly significance, if for no other reason than to put humanity on notice that there are only two ways to live.

Augustine agreed with Origen, however, that the physical description of the kingdom, or city, of God in the prophetic writings of Scripture was not literal, but rather pointed to the spiritual union with the Triune God.[204] He agreed, too, with Papias and Irenaeus that the kingdom of God, while having earthly significance, was a future kingdom that would come only after this life was passed.[205] In this way, Augustine's conception of the kingdom is not only the chronological end, but also the teleological end of history.[206] According to Augustine, the *civitas terrena* will pass away and only the *civitas Dei* will remain.[207]

The early church reflection on the kingdom of God is the fountainhead for the two streams of thought related to the doctrine: apocalyptic, future kingdom and internal, spiritual kingdom. The tension is clear between the prevailing theologians of the era. However, Augustine

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[201] Nichols, 34.
[202] Nichols, 34.
[203] Nichols, 35.
[204] Nichols, 35.
[205] Nichols, 35.
[206] Nichols, 35.
[207] Nichols, 35.

serves as something of a middle road, acknowledging the significance of the existence of the two kingdoms, while seeing the kingdom of God as a future reality. Even with a cursory overview of the era, however, it is clear that most reflection on the kingdom of God in the early church emphasized discontinuity between the current age and the age to come, the kingdom of God. This discontinuity may be attributable to the sociological and cultural contexts of the early church theologians, or may be a function of their hermeneutic and the text. Regardless, the seed was planted early in Christian thought that this world is discontinuance with the world to come.

The Kingdom of God in the Medieval Church

The medieval epochal reflection on the kingdom of God was dominated by Augustine's thought.[208] Thomas Aquinas followed largely in the Augustinian tradition, observing both an internal, spiritual reality to the kingdom of God and the future hope of the coming kingdom.[209] Aquinas's kingdom theology was most characterized, however, by a beatific vision of the soul with God in his heavenly kingdom.[210] Like Augustine, Aquinas emphasized the discontinuity between this present age and the age to come.

The medieval era also contained apocalyptic visions of the kingdom of God. For instance, Joachim of Fiore's thought and teaching, particularly on the book of Revelation, led to an apocalyptic frenzy that was met by denunciation from the Fourth Lateran Council in 1213.[211] Joachim believed he had discovered a secret code of successive states in which God dealt with

[208] Nichols, 36.
[209] Nichols, 37.
[210] Nichols, 38.
[211] Nichols, 36.

humanity and, so happened, that the third and final state was during his lifetime.[212] Specifically, he believed the world would end in 1260 and the Antichrist would usher in the end times.[213] He reinterpreted Tertullian's long-lost millennial views, mixing together the political strife of his day with the divine purpose of the coming kingdom of God.[214] Joachim's apocalyptic frenzy influenced cultural leaders of the day, like Richard the Lionhearted, and even sustained influence centuries later with the likes of Christopher Columbus and the explorers of the late Middle Ages.[215]

The medieval era did not contribute much to the development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God. It did, however, sustain the two threads of early Christian reflection on the doctrine. On the one hand, Thomas Aquinas carried forth, to some degree, the Augustinian paradigm of the kingdom as internal and spiritual. On the other hand, Joachim of Fiore advocated an apocalyptic vision of the kingdom that was closely tied to the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth. Both visions also continued the general discontinuity between this age and the age to come, with an emphasis on the distinction between the heavenly realm - the Roman Catholic Church - and the world.[216]

The Kingdom of God in the Reformation

As with many other doctrines, great reformation occurred in the development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God with the appearance of the monk-turned-reformer Martin Luther.

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[212] Nichols, 36.
[213] Nichols, 36.
[214] Nichols, 36.
[215] Nichols, 36.
[216] Nichols, 38.

Much ink has been spilled over the years analyzing Luther's view of the kingdom of God. Where Augustine's doctrine had been honed and tuned in the Middle Ages, the Reformation further developed and reformulated Augustinian thought.[217] Like Augustine, Luther observed two main kingdoms - Luther preferred "kingdoms" rather than "cities"[218] - that arguably tracked with Luther's understanding of the law and gospel distinction.[219] The kingdom of the world was governed by the natural order and law instituted by God for the proper function of creation. Under such law, man is only condemned and destined to pass away. In the kingdom of God, however, God rules by the gospel, the gracious gift of His Spirit, where humanity does the will of God and is destined for eternal bliss with God.

As Augustinian as Luther can appear, though, there are sharp differences between Luther's conception of the two kingdoms and Augustine's two cities. First, Luther observed that the kingdom of God was currently active in the world through the church, impacting the world for the good of others and the glory of God. Luther wrote, "For this reason [Christ] came into the world, that he might begin God's kingdom and establish it in this world."[220] According to Nichols, "Luther had a larger place [than Augustine] for God to be at work in the world."[221]

However, Luther's conception of God's work in the world - of God's kingdom - was still largely dualistic in nature.[222] Herman Bavinck argued that Luther "leaves [the earthly realm] standing without connection next to the spiritual realm and sometimes speaks as though the

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[217] Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 16.
[218] Nichols, 38.
[219] Nichols, 38.
[220] Nichols, 38.
[221] Nichols, 39.
[222] Nelson Kloosterman, "Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms in the Thought of Herman Bavinck," *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective*, edited by Ryan C. McIlhenny (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2012), 75.

external is a matter of complete indifference and not capable of ethical renewal.."[223] Bavinck concludes, as was previously mentioned, that Luther appears to "restrict the Gospel and limit the grace of God" active in renewal of the present, earthly realm.[224] This distinction between nature and grace, law and gospel has remained a point of contention in Luther's and his disciples' Two Kingdom theology through the years.

Second, unlike Augustine, Luther was more explicit about who belonged to each kingdom. Luther declared, "Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God."[225] In his role as reformer, Luther did not mince words against his opponents, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. Where Augustine left his cities populated by the imagination, Luther left nothing to imagination for populating the two kingdoms.

Luther was, in most respects, the fountainhead of the Reformation. But, John Calvin, another magisterial Reformer, wrote extensively about the doctrine of the kingdom of God. Calvin's conception of the kingdom is, perhaps, most defined by his Christological emphasis. For Calvin, the kingdom of God was the gospel of Christ, centered on union with Christ, and hope for communion with Christ in the heavenly kingdom.[226] Calvin wrote, "By the kingdom of God, which [Christ] taught was at hand, he meant the forgiveness of sins, salvation, life, and utterly everything that we obtain in Christ."[227] Calvin was not given to apocalyptic visions of the

[223] Kloosterman, 75.
[224] Kloosterman, 75.
[225] Nichols, 38.
[226] Nichols, 38-39.
[227] Nichols, 38-39.

kingdom.[228] Rather, as Nichols summarizes, Calvin was "far more interested in connecting [his] understanding of the kingdom to the gospel, proclaiming and living it."[229]

Luther and Calvin represent, among others, represent the Reformation tradition focused on the spiritual reality of the kingdom of God in the world. But, Luther's contemporary, Thomas Muntzer, began to lead the apocalyptic Reformation tradition relatively soon after Luther's rise to prominence.[230] An early proponent of Luther's views, Thomas Muntzer took a fanatical turn and began interpreting dreams by the mid-1520's.[231] He also led a split from Luther - the "Wittenberg pope," Muntzer called Luther[232] - and what would become the Radical Reformation.

Muntzer believed "the kingdom of God would come to earth, rather violently, as God's people took to the battlefield in the name of righteousness."[233] As such, Muntzer attached great eschatological significance to the Peasants' War, assured God's people would have victory against the worldly nobility.[234] This kingdom view developed into the predominant view of Anabaptists with a particular emphasis on the conflict between the poor and oppressed and wealthy and powerful in the world.[235]

The Reformation era developed Augustine's view of the kingdom of God, as appropriated by Martin Luther and other leading Reformers. Luther and Calvin represent the spiritual tradition during the Reformation, with Calvin arguably giving more emphasis to the gracious working of the kingdom in the present, natural world. Thomas Muntzer carried forth the

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[228] Nichols, 39.
[229] Nichols, 39.
[230] Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers, Revised Edition* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2013), 173.
[231] Nichols, 39.
[232] George, 173.
[233] Nichols, 39.
[234] Nichols, 39.
[235] Nichols, 39.

apocalyptic tradition, introducing to a degree the paradigm of the kingdom being for the poor and oppressed as opposed to the powerful and wealth in this world.

The Kingdom of God in Contemporary Thought

The Reformation may have set the church free from Babylonian captivity, to borrow a phrase from Martin Luther,[236] but the resulting explosion of eschatological, particularly kingdom, speculation and disputation was unlike any previous era. Key to understanding contemporary development of the doctrine of the kingdom of God is the thought of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, that German philosopher active during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[237] Hegel's dialectical philosophy of idealism taught that reality is active and developing, rather than static, and that the structure of reality and the mind are the same, locked in a dynamic process.[238] For Hegel, God was not the Designer of naturalistic Enlightenment thought, but rather the Idea that lies behind human history, the *Geist* that is the active, inner being of the world, the Absolute.[239] And, for Hegel, the *Zeitgeist* progresses in and through history by the dialectic method, a dynamic concept of process characterized by the triad, thesis-antithesis-synthesis.[240]

The dialectic process was baptized, in a sense, by Hegel to argue that God is the Absolute Spirit who is revealed in history.[241] Hegel declared Christianity to be the highest form of religion, primarily because of what he perceived as the synthesis of nature and Spirit in the

[236] Luther, Babylonian Captivity
[237] Nichols, 40.
[238] Grenz, 33.
[239] Grenz, 33.
[240] Grenz, 34-35.
[241] Grenz, 36.

incarnation of Jesus.[242] In Jesus, then, for Hegel, the unity of God and humanity was made explicit in history.[243] In the death of Christ is the thesis and antithesis of the death of not just humanity (thesis) but God the Absolute Spirit (antithesis), but the resurrection of Jesus serves as the synthesis event, marking the advent of the universal kingdom of the Absolute Spirit (God).[244] While Hegel's dialectic provided a certainly clever framework by which to understand the "Christ-event," it laid the groundwork for skeptical interpretations of biblical themes and served as the paradigm for liberal and politicized forms of the kingdom of God in contemporary thought. In a sense, Hegel advocated an extreme spiritualization of the concept of the kingdom of God, ultimately rooted in an unbiblical philosophy.

Hegel's dialectic, however, served to propel critical biblical scholarship forward, in a decidedly liberal direction. For instance, David F. Strauss employed Hegel's philosophy for Christological study to develop the "evangelical myth" as a means to overcome a purported impasse between supernatural and rationalist interpretations of the life of Jesus.[245] Further, Hegel's emphasis upon the realization of the kingdom of God the Absolute Spirit in the resurrection of Christ led to the "realized eschatology" of English theologians C. H. Dodd and J. A. T. Robertson.[246] For Dodd and Robertson, "the kingdom of God was understood to be entirely for the present and not for the future. There would be no visible, physical second coming. There would be no apocalyptic kingdom."[247] Therefore, all that is bound up in the reality of the

[242] Grenz, 36.
[243] Grenz, 37.
[244] Grenz, 37.
[245] Grenz, 38.
[246] Nichols, 28.
[247] Nichols, 28.

kingdom of God is experienced right now in the present world.[248] This eschatological vision turned the spiritual tradition in the church in an external, worldly direction.

Expectedly, this "realized eschatology" led to great liberal political activism in the early 20th century as activists sought to renew and reform culture in light of the realized kingdom of God. For instance, Walter Rauschenbusch pioneered the Social Gospel movement, arguing that the kingdom of God has nothing to do with salvation from sin and its consequences, but rather everything to do with justice for the poor and oppressed.[249] He was confident that the social order might be Christianized and establish a Kingdom of social justice in the present age.[250] In Rauschenbusch's own words:

> The Kingdom of God is not confined within the limits of the Church and its activities...It is the Christian transfiguration of the social order. The Church is one social institution alongside of the family, the industrial organization of society, and the State. The Kingdom of God is in all these, and realizes itself through them all.[251]

Carl Henry summarized the Social Gospel movement well when he characterized it as "exalt[ing] the social issue above the theological, and priz[ing] the Christian religion mainly as a tool for justifying an independently determined course of social action."[252]

As a reaction to the realized eschatology of early modern liberal theology, mid-20th century theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg sought to restate the kingdom of God as the future hope for the Christian.[253] The theologians of hope were trying to appropriate a rediscovery in biblical scholarship of the centrality of eschatology to the

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[248] Nichols, 28.
[249] Nichols, 28.
[250] Moore, 27.
[251] Moore 158-159.
[252] Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 21.
[253] Grenz, 170-171.

proclamation of Jesus and the New Testament on the whole.[254] These theologians were also influenced by existentialist quandaries that rejected the Hegelian dialectic in exchange for a more subjective philosophy. In this sense, theologians of hope attempted to reorient the spiritual eschatological tradition to focus on the transcendence and future nature of the kingdom of God.

A renaissance of realized eschatology and Social Gospel liberalism appeared, however, in reaction to theologians of hope in the form of Liberation theology.[255] Whether in the form of Black, Latino, Feminist, or any other liberation theology, such theologians sought to apply the realization of the kingdom of God here and now, particularly, like Rauschenbusch, to justice for the oppressed and poor.[256] As such, Liberation theologians understood the kingdom as immanent and active in nature, almost appearing at times - one thinks of the guerilla warfare in Latin America - as standing squarely in the apocalyptic eschatological tradition despite their Hegelian foundations.

The development of liberal theological conceptions of the kingdom of God in the modern era left many conservative Christians with a bad taste in their mouths for kingdom theology. However, the debate about the nature and essence of the doctrine of the kingdom of God in the modern era was not confined to liberal appropriations of the doctrine. Rather, clear differences arose in the understanding and appropriation of the doctrine in evangelical Christian camps, namely between dispensational and covenantal (or Reformed) theological traditions.[257]

Dispensationalism was, in its classic sense, the anti-realized eschatology of Dodd and others. Born in the same period as realized eschatology, dispensationalism began with the

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[254] Grenz, 171.
[255] Grenz, 200-201.
[256] Grenz, 200-201.
[257] Moore, 20.

writings of John Nelson Darby, an Anglican minister in Ireland.[258] Darby held to literal fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a grand distinction between Israel and the church.[259] Darby's views were in conflict with the Anglican Church and so Darby moved to North America, where his views flourished as the Plymouth Brethren movement flourished.[260] As dispensationalism prospered in North America with Bible conferences and the *Scofield Reference Bible*, dispensationalism served as a measure of interdenominational cohesion.[261]

Classic dispensational theology stressed the future and apocalyptic nature of the kingdom of God.[262] In addition to its focus on the rapture and tribulation, dispensationalism argued for a future reign of Christ upon the earth from a restored Davidic throne in the millennial kingdom of God.[263] Christ's millennial reign would be in Jerusalem and after his reign, the end of the age. In a sense, dispensationalism severed the present activity of the kingdom from the work of the Christ.[264]

Contrary to dispensationalism, Reformed theology minimized, in many respects, the peripheral eschatological matters and rather emphasized the reign of Christ and his kingdom in the church through the hearts of Christians.[265] In that way, the Reformed tradition carried on the spiritual tradition of the kingdom of God in church history. As one scholar opined, the Reformed tradition severed the kingdom of God from the goal of redemptive history be relegating it to solely to the realm of the human heart, the church, or the heavenly state.[266]

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[258] Nichols, 29.
[259] Nichols, 29.
[260] Nichols, 29.
[261] Moore, 20.
[262] Nichols, 30.
[263] Moore, 32.
[264] Moore, 32.
[265] Moore, 32.
[266] Moore, 32.

Inaugurated eschatology, advocated by a panorama of Reformed and progressive dispensationalists, acknowledges a tension in the biblical data between the "already" of initial kingdom fulfillment and the "not yet" of future consummation.[267] Inaugurated eschatology serves as the gradually developed consensus of evangelical theology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[268]

At the center of the development of the growing consensus around inaugurated eschatology is the scholarship of George Eldon Ladd.[269] Harvard trained, Ladd was a New Testament scholar who taught at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.[270] Ladd was not unique in his biblical argument and theological construction of the kingdom of God as already present but not yet fully consummated, however Ladd did produce the unifying scholarship during the 1960's and 1970's that pioneered the discussion of evangelical consensus on the topic of the kingdom.[271] Followed by progressive dispensationalists, like Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary, and Reformed theologians, like Anthony Hoekema and Richard Gaffin, Ladd's core argument was that the kingdom of God is primarily Christological - Jesus Christ had already come to establish the kingdom and has not yet come to fully consummate his reign. As such, if dispensationalism was the evangelical thesis and Reformed eschatology the antithesis, then inaugurated eschatology is, to borrow an Hegelian framework, the historical synthesis of the biblical doctrine of the kingdom of God - both spiritual and apocalyptic, present and future.

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[267] Moore, 36.
[268] Moore, 36.
[269] Nichols 42.
[270] Nichols, 42.
[271] Nichols, 42.

Biblical-Theological Exposition

The doctrine of the kingdom of God constitutes the thematic framework for the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments.[272] The doctrine of the kingdom of God contemplates and effects every other doctrinal theme in Scripture, including covenant, law, prophet, priest, king, redemption, wisdom, faith, hope, love, and any other possible biblical theme, including vocation and calling.[273] According to John Bright, "the concept of the kingdom of God involves, in a real sense, the total message of the Bible."[274] Further, "to grasp what is meant by the kingdom of God is to come very close to the heart of the Bible's gospel of salvation."[275]

In a sense, the doctrine of the kingdom of God is a summary doctrine, encompassing all other biblical doctrines. All doctrines bear upon one another, such that if you tweak the doctrine of God, for instance, the doctrine of justification is changed. The doctrine of the kingdom of God is no different, but this doctrine has a centrality and summary quality unlike most other doctrines.

The kingdom of God is a creational reality, where God reigns over his creation as the covenant Creator and, yet, the kingdom of God has an eschatological reality that is manifest in time and space, an in-breaking to history of the future reign of God in that day of glory. In that sense, the kingdom is already present, but not yet fully realized. Its final and full consummation is on that day when the King establishes his kingdom once and for all, as we see in Revelation 21

[272] Van Pelt, 28.
[273] Van Pelt, 28.
[274] Van Pelt, 29.
[275] Van Pelt, 29.

and 22. The kingdom of God is revealed even through the chiastic structure of the covenant prologue - Genesis 1 through 3 - and the covenant epilogue - Revelation 20 through 22.[276]

It was this doctrine that began Jesus's public ministry in Matthew 4:17, rather than, say, the doctrine of the atonement. The doctrine of the kingdom of God was that doctrine taught by the risen Jesus to his Apostles in Acts 1 prior to his ascension. And, unsurprisingly, we read of the doctrine of the kingdom of God being taught to the Romans by the Apostle Paul in Acts 28. The doctrine of the kingdom of God was primary in the life and ministry of Jesus and the Apostles, literally forming bookends to the earliest recorded ministry of the Christian church. Therefore, with confidence we can state the doctrine of the kingdom of God holds a certain pervasive quality that should hold the attention of all Christians, especially as Christians consider the question of vocation.

But, how is the kingdom of God revealed in time and space? The kingdom of God comes to this world through the progression of the biblical covenants. The biblical covenants, beginning with the creation covenant, progressively reveals God's kingdom in the world and is centered upon the Lord, Jesus Christ, who is the end of the covenants. In the new covenant, then, the kingdom of God has already come to this world, but awaits the full consummation in the new creation where righteousness dwells.

[276] Van Pelt, 34.

Old Testament Survey

The Old Testament presents the kingdom of God in two forms: universal and particular.[277] God's universal kingdom is that activity of God in exercising his sovereignty over all creation.[278] The kingdom of God, in this sense, begins in Genesis 1 as sovereign king and ruler of the universe, and continues until Revelation 22, the fulfillment of his eternal plan.[279] Bruce Waltke summarizes the universal kingdom helpfully: "God parcels out to the nations their lands (Deut. 2:5, 9; 32:8), rules over their kings (2:30), and even gives them their gods (4:19; 29:25-26)."[280] God is king over all the earth (2 Kings 19:15).

Although God is the universal king, with the fall of Adam and Eve in sin, God's rightful rule of his creation is rejected.[281] Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum define sin as "essentially rebellion against the claims of the King - moral autonomy."[282] Therefore, rebellious creatures stand under God's just sentence of condemnation, guilt, and death.[283] It is in light of the Fall that the Old Testament distinction between universal and particular kingdoms is best understood, for the particular kingdom is the saving reign of God in the context of a rebellious creation.[284]

God's particular kingdom is "God's activity in exercising his authority over his subjects who, out of their faith in him and love for him, serve only him."[285] Such faith is active even prior to the founding of the nation of Israel in Abel, Enoch, and Noah.[286] God may rule over all

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[277] Bruce K. Waltke, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story," *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 49.
[278] Waltke, 49-50.
[279] Gentry, 243-244.
[280] Waltke, 50.
[281] Gentry, 244.
[282] Gentry, 244.
[283] Gentry, 244.
[284] Gentry, 244.
[285] Waltke, 50.
[286] Waltke, 50.

creation, but he rules over his people in a peculiar, particular manner. It is the creation which God rules providentially that serves as the stage of God's particular rule over his people.

In summary, God's kingdom begins with creation and the fall (Genesis 1-3), declines in judgment with the flood and Babel (Genesis 4-11), picks up with the patriarchs (Genesis 12-50), builds to the nation of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus-Deuteronomy), and then climaxes in the occupation of the land under Joshua, the judges, and the Davidic dynasty in the land of promise (Joshua-Kings).[287] God granted a period of rest during the Davidic reign, with the temple established in Jerusalem, but the infidelity of Solomon (1 Kings 11) marked the beginning of Israel's decline, ultimately dividing into two kingdoms, being thrown into exile.[288] The exilic struggle is captured by some of the books in the Writings and the Prophets.[289] The Old Testament, then, concludes with the unfulfilled expectations concerning the promised return from exile, the final establishment of the Davidic throne, and peace in the kingdom.[290] The Old Testament ends with anticipation for the arrival of the true King of the kingdom of God.

New Testament Survey

The New Testament opens with an announcement that the long-awaited King of the kingdom of God has arrived. So central to the New Testament is the kingdom of God that conceivably all of New Testament theology could be arrayed around the doctrine.[291] The kingdom of God is most prominent in the Gospels, with the phrase "kingdom" appearing 124

[287] Van Pelt, 29.
[288] Van Pelt, 29.
[289] Van Pelt, 29.
[290] Van Pelt, 29.
[291] Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Matthew and Revelation," *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 100.

times and the entire phrase "kingdom of God" (or "kingdom of heaven") appearing 53 times.[292] The usage of either "kingdom" or "kingdom of God" in the rest of the New Testament is noticeably smaller, with "kingdom" appearing 33 times and "kingdom of God" appearing 14 times.[293] This brief survey will focus upon the usage of the phrase in the Gospels primarily, but will touch briefly on its usage by the other New Testament writers.

Kingdom in the New Testament: Gospels and Acts

The Gospel of Matthew serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, detailing fulfillment of Old Testament promises for a primarily Jewish audience.[294] Also, Matthew's Gospel contains more references to the kingdom God than any other New Testament book, pregnant with meaning as the Old Testament kingdom promises find fulfillment in the New.[295] First, Matthew's Gospel is framed by regal overtones,[296] as the gospel begins with a royal genealogy and ends with a kingly pronouncement and commission. Further, the kingdom motif is central to the proclamation of John the Baptist and Jesus.[297] In fact, the first recorded words of John the Baptist are "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2) and a cornerstone command of Jesus is to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

[292] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99-100.
[293] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99-100.
[294] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 108.
[295] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 108.
[296] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 108.
[297] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 109.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is "suspended on a kingdom cord."[298] From warnings to those who relax the commandments to the very tenor of the Lord's Prayer, kingdom themes are prevalent throughout the Sermon. Jesus's parables, like the Sermon, also have the kingdom as a central theme.[299] The parable of the sower reveals the "secrets of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:11). The parable of the weeds distinguishes between "sons of the kingdom" and "sons of the evil one" (Matt. 13:38). The parables of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32), the leaven (Matt. 13:33), and the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45-46) each teach about the kingdom. Lastly, the kingdom motif in Matthew epitomizes the gravity and saving message of Jesus's ministry, as evident in the Lord's Supper magisterial institution.[300]

In summary, the Matthean data on the kingdom of God is varied, but is so numerous to nearly defy summation. In Matthew, the kingdom is presented as past, present, and future, or combination of all three.[301] Central to kingdom proclamation in Matthew is the ethical imperative to enter the kingdom of God by repentance and faith in the King, Jesus.[302] Robert Yarbrough helpfully summarizes: "At stake in 'the kingdom of God' in Matthean definition is not some literary or conceptual 'center' of early church teaching. It is rather the short- and long-term destiny of every individual soul and indeed of the entire world with Jesus, or personal faith-commitment to him, as decisive criterion, and with Jesus also the ultimate judge."[303]

Like Matthew, the remaining Gospel accounts present Jesus inaugurating the kingdom of God while "God's people have the privilege of participating in his coming kingdom in the here

[298] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 113.
[299] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 115.
[300] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 120-121.
[301] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 122.
[302] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 122.
[303] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 122.

and now."[304] Mark's Gospel references the kingdom less frequently than Matthew, yet more so than John's Gospel, but the kingdom motif is regardless a fixture throughout the gospel account.[305] Mark's Gospel accounts shows that the kingdom involves God's superintendence over history (Mark 1:15) and that all people must respond to the message of the kingdom, to repent and believe in the gospel.[306] Further, Mark's Gospel emphasizes the imminent arrival of the kingdom and a fresh infusion of its power, especially evident at the transfiguration.[307] Lastly, Mark's Gospel draws a close analogy between eternal life and kingdom, particularly in the parable of the rich, young ruler of Mark 10:17-25.[308] In short, Mark's Gospel from start to finish "serves to fuse kingdom fulfillment through Jesus's person and work to the kingdom desire that God cultivated in his people over many centuries leading up to the moment" of Jesus's announcement, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).[309]

In the Gospel of Luke, the word "kingdom" occurs forty-six times, most of which relate to the theme "kingdom of God."[310] The kingdom of God theme in Luke centers on Jesus Christ.[311] The Christocentric nature of the kingdom is evident in the ministry and person of Jesus, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom has arrived in the person of the king.[312] In Luke, Jesus makes reference to the kingdom of God coming near, a reference to the physical presence of the kingdom in his person (Lk 10:9-

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[304] Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Kingdom of God in the New Testament: Mark through the Epistles," *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 125.
[305] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 125.
[306] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 126.
[307] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 127.
[308] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 127-128.
[309] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 129.
[310] Schreiner, 469.
[311] Schreiner, 470.
[312] Schreiner, 747.

11). He makes the claim most explicitly in response to the Pharisees when he states, "behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Lk 17:21). Luke only confirms what Mark relates in Mark 1:15: the kingdom of God is at hand. Further, in Luke 8, Jesus travels throughout the Judean countryside "proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God" (Lk 8:1). In the next chapter, Jesus commissioned twelve apostles whose commission was to proclaim the kingdom of God,[313] followed by 72 others commissioned to a similar task.[314] The Christocentric nature of the kingdom is seen in kingdom preaching. "Those who proclaim Jesus Christ *and his suffering* and his glory proclaim the message of the kingdom."[315]

Related to Luke, the Acts of the Apostles ("Acts") is the earliest record of this new kingdom activity.[316] However, the word "kingdom" appears relatively infrequently in Acts, but the placement and hermeneutical weight of the eight occurrences[317] of the word indicate its central importance in Acts.[318] Before the ascension of Jesus and after his resurrection, he "presented himself alive to [the disciples]…by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Further, the book ends with the Apostle Paul living two years in Rome and "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31). From start to finish, the kingdom of God frames the narrative history of Acts, as the book recalls the beginning advance of the kingdom on earth.

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[313] Schreiner, 470.
[314] Schreiner, 470.
[315] Schreiner, 470.
[316] F. J. Foakes-Jackson, "The kingdom of God in Acts, and the 'city of God,'" *Harvard Theological Review 12*, no. 2: 193-200.*ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCO*host*: 193.
[317] Acts 1:3, 1:6, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31 (ESV).
[318] Schreiner, 470.

The Gospel of John, as in other respects, is different than the Synoptic Gospels and Acts when it comes to consideration of the kingdom of God. In fact, according to one scholar, "the kingdom of God plays no significant role in John's Gospel."[319] And, if judging by mere occurrence, it appears John's Gospel sees no significance to the kingdom motif. However, according to Yarbrough, "scholars commonly note that in John's Gospel, 'kingdom of God/heaven' as found in the other Gospels is replaced by John's references to 'eternal life' or simply 'life.'"[320] John may have used different terms to convey the same truth based upon his intended audience.[321] Regardless, it is fair to conclude that the kingdom of God as understood as eternal life plays a significant role in John's Gospel.

John's Gospel opens with the declaration that in Jesus is life, or the kingdom, and that all of life has its origin and basis in the Word made flesh.[322] Therefore, "whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life [the kingdom]" (John 3:16). Further, "the wrath of God remains" on those who do not obey the Son (John 3:26).[323] More can be said about the usage of eternal life in John, but even the briefest survey shows that the kingdom motif in the Synoptics is consistent with the eternal life motif in John.[324] The Gospels and Acts present a consistent witness to the past, present, and future activity of the kingdom of God centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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[319] Chrys Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 429.
[320] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 141.
[321] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 141.
[322] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 141.
[323] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 142.
[324] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 142.

Kingdom in the New Testament: Romans through Revelation

From Romans to Jude, the New Testament contains approximately eighteen references to the kingdom motif.[325] Like John, however, the rest of the New Testament writers' message is consistent with the kingdom motif, but conveyed under different language.[326] Specifically, in Paul's development of Jesus as Lord and Savior, his eschatological teaching, and writing on the Spirit, he maintains a legitimate extension of the Gospel proclamation of the kingdom.[327] Let us briefly survey a few of the instances of explicit kingdom reference in the rest of the New Testament.

The sole reference to "kingdom of God" in Romans is 14:17 and the fact that Paul uses the phrase without introduction or definition suggests the term is already familiar to him and his readers.[328] In this text, "kingdom of God" is synonymous with the salvation believers received by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.[329] Likewise, in First Corinthians, Paul employs the phrase without any reference or explanation and ties the kingdom motif to the active power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 4:20).[330] Paul also uses the phrase in an eschatological sense in 1 Cor. 6:9-10, exhibiting the diversity inherent in the motif in the Epistles that was evident in the Gospels.

In Paul's letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, the use of the kingdom motif is tied to ethical imperatives. For instance, in Galatians 5:19-21, Paul warns that "works of the flesh…[like] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these...will not inherit the kingdom of

[325] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 143.
[326] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 143.
[327] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 143-144.
[328] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 144.
[329] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 144.
[330] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 145.

God." The same counsel was given by Paul in Ephesians 5. These passages indicate a unity between Paul and Jesus's ethical teachings relative to membership in the kingdom of God.[331]

The Book of Revelation, of all New Testament books outside the Gospels and Acts, provides an impressive vision of the kingdom of God.[332] Yarbrough notes at least five ways the kingdom motif is evident in Revelation. First, the kingdom of God represents God's omnipotence over the order of all things.[333] God the Father and God the Son - the Lamb - with God the Spirit, ever shy, are shown in Revelation 22:1-3 in majestic reign over all things.[334] Second, the kingdom of God describes God's people.[335] Believers are shown to be a kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ, "ruler of kings on earth," from his heavenly throne.[336] Third, the kingdom of God provides the doxological vision of the church.[337] God is the object of eschatological praise (Rev. 5:11-14).[338] Fourth, the kingdom of God in Revelation prepares the church to witness in all the earth no matter the difficulties or even in the face of death.[339] Fifth, the kingdom in Revelation shows the tension of the present age.[340] The church currently lives in a temporal reality as the eternal reality of God's redemption is making its gradual push into the present age.

The New Testament teaching on the kingdom makes clear that virtually no sphere of life is untouched by this overlapping rule and reign of God.[341] There exists a spiritual battle where

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[331] Yarbrough, "Mark through the Epistles," 146.
[332] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 95.
[333] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 95.
[334] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 96.
[335] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 96.
[336] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 96.
[337] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 97.
[338] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 97.
[339] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 98.
[340] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 98.
[341] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99.

the natural world and man - the creation under God's universal rule - fights against the redemption manifest in God's particular kingdom. Robert Yarbrough summarizes the tension well: "One [kingdom] fading, the other gaining gradually in grandeur, however hidden: 'the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining' (1 John 2:8)."[342]

Kingdom through Covenant[343]

God's kingdom advances in the world - gaining gradually in grandeur - through the progressive administration of God's covenants. We have surveyed the historical and biblical teaching on the doctrine of the kingdom of God. Now, we turn our attention to the biblical-theological construct in an attempt to best understand how the kingdom of God fits within the structure of God's covenants. The previous section surveyed the biblical data to discern the nature of the kingdom of God, what Graeme Goldsworthy identifies as "the rule of God over creation, over all creatures, over the kingdoms of the world, and in a unique [particular] and special way, over his chosen and redeemed people."[344]

This section attempts to set the kingdom motif in relation to the covenantal structure of Scripture to best ascertain how the kingdom of God is progressively revealed in the world. First, it comes through covenant relationship between God and his creatures.[345] In the Adamic Covenant, or covenant of creation, God graciously chose to create humanity as image-bearers, or literally as priest-kings, to know him and fulfill his purpose - our vocation - in the creation.[346]

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[342] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99.
[343] This section is heavily indebted to Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum's *God's Kingdom through God's Covenant/: A Concise Biblical Theology*.
[344] Gentry, 243.
[345] Gentry, 245.
[346] Gentry, 245.

Through faithful exercise of this covenant, all creation would be ruled by God. However, as we saw previously, humanity did not fulfill its commitment to God and sinned against him.

Second, God's kingdom comes through the resulting biblical covenants diachronically.[347] It is through these covenants that "God chooses to reverse the disastrous effects of sin and usher in his saving reign over the world."[348] God elects to redeem the world through covenant with particular people - Noah and his family, Abraham and his descendants, Mosaic and the nation, and David and his throne.[349] However, each covenant mediator failed to realize the kingdom of God in its fullness and the saving reign of God is only typified and foreshadowed.[350] As Gentry and Wellum state: "It is only through the obedient Son that God's long-awaited kingdom is inaugurated in his world through the new covenant."[351]

The new covenant made through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the inauguration of the kingdom of God by which the resurrected King already reigns over the earth commanded all people to repent and believe.[352] And, yet, the kingdom of God awaits its full consummation when Jesus returns to vanquish all of his foes, including Satan, sin, and death. In this already-not yet tension the promises of God's plan of redemption have taken place already, yet await their full realization. Therefore, it is the position of this author that "kingdom through covenant" best captures the progression of the kingdom of God through the biblical covenants and serves as the "glue that unites the Bible's entire metanarrative."[353]

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[347] Gentry, 245.
[348] Gentry, 245.
[349] Gentry, 245.
[350] Gentry, 246.
[351] Gentry, 246.
[352] Gentry, 246.
[353] Gentry, 243.

A Brief Note on Covenants

The relationship between the biblical covenants have and are disputed, but evangelical theologians agree that God has one plan of redemption and that redemptive-history is the working out of that plan centered on Jesus Christ.[354] Regardless of the distinction between the covenant of works and grace, evangelical theologians can affirm a plurality of covenants which are part of the progressive revelation of the one redemption plan of God, and all of which reach their fulfillment in Jesus.[355] This conception of covenants best exhibits the continuity of the covenants, while allowing for discontinuities to be acknowledged and addressed where significant progression between covenants exists.[356] It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve too deeply into progressive covenantalism. Rather, this exposition is only meant to add to the understanding of the kingdom of God and, in later chapters, its relation to the concept of vocation.

Creation Covenant

Traditional covenant theology speaks of a covenant of works in Genesis 1-2; however, some Reformed theologians have questioned the validity of such a covenant for various reasons. Regardless of one's position on that question, there is ample agreement that there exists a covenant at creation with Adam.[357] As O. Palmer Robertson writes, "By the very act of creating

[354] Gentry, 251.
[355] Gentry, 251.
[356] Gentry, 251.
[357] Gentry, 257-258.

man in his own likeness and image, God established a unique relationship between himself and creation."[358]

The creation covenant has general and focal aspects.[359] The general focus of the covenant is humanity's responsibility to obey the ordinances embedded in creation, namely marriage, labor, and Sabbath.[360] In marriage, man and woman are to fulfill the creation command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with image-bearers who glorify God. In labor, man and woman are take dominion over creation, to subdue it and "bring out all the potential within the creation which might offer glory to the Creator."[361] In Sabbath, humanity rests from meaningful labor with meaningful rest following the blessed example of the Creator.[362] In obeying the general creation ordinances, humanity would live with the blessing of God in God's kingdom as intended by God.

The focal point of the creation covenant, however, is the command given to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[363] Robertson explains:

> "It is essential to appreciate the organic unity between this commandment and the total responsibility of man as created. The requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be conceived of as a somewhat arbitrary stipulation without integral relation to the total life of man. Instead, this particular prohibition must be seen as the focal point of man's testing."[364]

Adam's life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a unified whole, rather than drawing a dualistic conception of Adam's covenant responsibility between the cultural aspects - marriage,

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[358] Robertson, 67.
[359] Robertson, 67.
[360] Robertson, 68.
[361] Robertson, 80.
[362] Robertson, 72-74.
[363] Robertson, 81.
[364] Robertson, 81.

labor, and Sabbath - and the spiritual test of obedience.[365] Again, Robertson, "It is not that man had fulfilled all his obligations under the covenant of creation by refusing to eat of the tree. He had larger demands on his life as well."[366]

Even still, the focal point of the covenant rested specifically on the single test of eating from the tree, a probationary test by which man's submission to the Creator could be scrutinized.[367] The results of Adam's obedience were either blessing or curse, life or death. If Adam had obeyed, life would have been sustained in the condition of covenantal blessing and life.[368] But, Adam did not obey and therefore plunged all creation, and particularly humanity, into cursing and death.

The covenantal significance of the creation covenant and Adam is understood in relation to the other biblical covenants, each of which is a subset and corollary to Adam and the creation covenant.[369] The biblical storyline delineates between Adam's representative head and Christ as representative head. Each successive covenant after the creation covenant unpacks the ramifications of Adam's fallen headship, establishing each successive covenant mediator as a type of Adam seeking to obey the Lord, and progresses God's plan of redemption to establish his kingdom on earth, ultimately culminating in the success of the second Adam in the new covenant.

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[365] Robertson, 82.
[366] Robertson, 83.
[367] Robertson, 83-84.
[368] Robertson, 86.
[369] Gentry, 258.

Noahic Covenant

The Hebrew word for covenant - *berit* - appears for the first time in Scripture in relation to Noah in Genesis 6:18.[370] However, the covenant with Noah should be viewed as a continuation, of sorts, of the prior creation covenant, a "reinstatement and upholding of God's commitment to creation, now in light of human sin."[371] Robertson identifies six characteristics of the Noahic Covenant that assist us in discerning the progressive nature of the covenant.

First, the Noahic covenant emphasizes the close interrelation of the creation and redemptive covenants.[372] The Noahic covenant restates, in different but similar language, the general aspects of the creation covenant. The explicit restatement of these general aspects in the context of redemption broadens the "vistas of redemption's horizons."[373] The kingdom of God progressing through the Noahic covenant is directly related to the maintenance of the promised seed - the promise of redemption - coming through Noah's family, which is blessing for the entire world.[374]

Second, the Noahic covenant shows the particularity of God's redemptive grace.[375] While the world had universally fallen under the judgment of God, Noah and his family were particularly shown grace from God. God's grace in Scripture is God's merciful attitude to an undeserving sinner, like Noah.[376] Noah, in particular, found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8).

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[370] Gentry, 263.
[371] Gentry, 263.
[372] Robertson, 110.
[373] Robertson, 110.
[374] Robertson, 111.
[375] Robertson, 111.
[376] Robertson, 112.

Third, even still, the Noahic covenant possesses a distinctively universalistic aspect. While Noah and his family found grace in particular, the entire created universe, including all humanity, benefits from the Noahic covenant.[377] The Noahic covenant furthers God's one plan of redemption and, as Paul writes in Romans 8, the entire cosmos will experience ultimate deliverance from the curse.[378] The Noahic covenant serves as a foundation for the universal witness in all creation of the grace of God.[379]

Fourth, the Noahic covenant hints at God's intention to deal with families as a whole. The repetition of Noah's family in the covenant is a hint that God tends to work through the covenant head to bless a people. Fifth, the Noahic covenant is characterized primarily as a covenant of preservation. In Genesis 8, God promises to preserve the world-order until the time of final redemption is consummated.[380] God provides instruction as to the order of relations between man and creation, but most importantly he provides instruction and command focused on the preservation of human life made in His image. Humanity is God's prime natural revelation of himself in creation and he will not have humanity murdered.[381]

Sixth, the seal of the Noahic covenant emphasizes the gracious nature of the covenant. The rainbow depicts God's "grace-in-judgment."[382] In John's Revelation, we read of "the righteous Judge of heaven and earth [as] depicted as having 'a rainbow round about the throne'" (Rev. 4:3). It is no coincidence that the Noahic rainbow is but a sign of God's gracious favor that is eternal in the heavens.

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[377] Robertson, 121.
[378] Robertson, 122.
[379] Robertson, 123.
[380] Robertson, 114.
[381] Robertson, 115.
[382] Robertson, 123.

The Noahic covenant functions as a covenant of preservation. In Noah, the seed of woman is preserved and, in that way, Noah functions as a second Adam.[383] Yet Noah and his family ultimately disobey God, like the first Adam, and show that the Noahic covenant is not sufficient to bring about the final redemption.[384] The Noahic covenant proves that what is needed is a spiritual transformation so that humanity might live faithfully in creation, and so that the creation may be set free from its groaning curse.[385]

Abrahamic Covenant

Subsequent to the Noahic covenant, and as a subset of the covenant with creation, the Abrahamic covenant furthers the redemptive plan of God by allowing the nations to continue to exist and calling from those nations one man to become a great nation among nations, literally a kingdom in the proper sense of the word.[386] God's covenant with Abraham may be characterized particularly as the covenant of promise to fulfill the seed-promise of Genesis 3:15 through Abraham as a second Adam.[387] By a solemn ceremony in Genesis 15, God promises redemption, "assum[ing] to Himself the full responsibility for seeing that every promise of the covenant shall be realized."[388] Ultimately, God is faithful to the covenant as it is fulfilled by Jesus Christ in the new covenant.

[383] Gentry, 263.
[384] Gentry, 264.
[385] Gentry, 264.
[386] Gentry, 264.
[387] Robertson, 145.
[388] Robertson, 145.

Mosaic Covenant

The covenant with Moses - also known as the Old Covenant - "has provoked some of the greatest debates within Christendom's history."[389] The purpose of the law-covenant is diverse, but organically the covenant advances the promise of Genesis 3:15 by revealing and intensifying sin in anticipation of the coming of Christ and the new covenant.[390] Three brief observations further this conclusion of the purpose of the Mosaic covenant.

First, the Mosaic covenant is organically and progressively related to the other biblical covenants by law-administration. The introduction of formal, external law is unique, in a sense, to the Mosaic administration, but law is significant in all covenants prior and subsequent to the Mosaic covenant.[391] Therefore, the Mosaic covenant is organically related to the other biblical covenants by God's will expressed in law. The unique nature of the Mosaic covenant is the administration of God's law in an externalized, codified nature. However, that covenant administration is advanced through the Davidic covenant where the law-administration is bound up in the Davidic monarchy.[392] And, of course, the law-administration is advanced ultimately to the new covenant where the law of God is not written externally on tablets of stone, but on the heart of the Christian, a personal relation to God's law empowered to faithfulness by the indwelling Holy Spirit.[393]

Second, the Mosaic covenant is organically and progressively related biblical covenants by the seed-promise. In the same way that Noah and Abraham serve as typological second

[389] Robertson, 167.
[390] Gentry, 265.
[391] Robertson, 176-177.
[392] Robertson, 189.
[393] Robertson, 183.

Adams, so in the Mosaic covenant the nation of Israel is typologically the second Adam.[394] The basis of God's incorporation of the nation of Israel under the Mosaic covenant is rooted in God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant to bring forth a seed from Abraham, which we learn will come through the nation of Israel.[395] Israel as a nation is called to serve as God's representative before the nations - which will be blessed through Abraham's seed, Israel - and demonstrate life in God's kingdom.[396]

Third, the law-covenant is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The law-covenant is, in a sense, prophetic as it points forward to God's provision of redemption - a provision that comes apart from the law-administration - in and through the law-obedience of God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.[397] In that way, God fulfills the Abrahamic promise to unilaterally fulfill the covenant promise of redemption. Summarized perfectly by Robertson: "Moses, the law-mediator, ministered as a servant in God's house. Jesus Christ, the law-originator, rules as a Son over God's house (or kingdom)."[398]

Davidic Covenant

Gentry and Wellum designate the Davidic covenant as the epitome of the Old Testament covenants.[399] Robertson characterizes the Davidic covenant as God's purposes to redeem a people to himself reaching a climax of realization.[400] Under David, the kingdom arrives because

[394] Gentry, 266.
[395] Gentry, 266.
[396] Gentry, 266.
[397] Gentry, 267.
[398] Robertson, 199.
[399] Gentry, 268.
[400] Robertson, 229.

the king has come and the covenant centers on the coming of the kingdom.[401] Two important aspects of the Davidic covenant require attention.

First, the Davidic covenant isolates the covenant-mediator in the office of the king. Whereas previous covenants isolated the covenant-mediator in Noah, Abraham, and the nation of Israel, now God ordains the covenant-mediator to be the king over God's kingdom. The national covenant between Israel and God is now particularly mediated through the Israelite king.[402]

Second, the covenant contains a "Father-Son" promise between God and the Davidic king.[403] David and his seed are established in their regal capacity by the covenant.[404] It is an individual king who is appointed the son of God, like Adam. Therefore, the Davidic king is a second Adam meant to exercise covenant faithfulness before God on behalf of the nation.[405]

Of course, as with the previous covenant-mediators, the Davidic kings of Israel were unfaithful and did not consummate God's perfect reign and rule in God's kingdom on earth. It is this problem identified by the prophets, who anticipate and pronounce the need for God to provide a greater King.[406] Gentry and Wellum summarizes the progression of the covenants to this point in redemptive history well: "The biblical covenants tell a story: not only do they teach us who God is and what he expects of us, they also demonstrate that God must act in sovereign grace to provide an obedient Son, who will fulfill the roles of the previous covenant mediators by bringing God's rule and reign to this world by inaugurating a new and better covenant."[407]

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[401] Robertson, 229.
[402] Robertson, 235.
[403] Gentry, 268.
[404] Robertson, 231.
[405] Gentry, 268.
[406] Gentry, 268.
[407] Gentry, 268-269.

New Covenant

The *telos*, fulfillment, and consummation of all biblical covenants is in Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant.[408] The discontinuity and continuity of the new covenant with the other covenants can be debated *ad nauseum*, but what is clear is that the new covenant is *new*, that the new covenant's arrival means that covenant members are not under the strictures of the old covenants in quite the same way.[409] "The concept of newness implies a break with the past. God will act to redeem his people in a way unfamiliar to them."[410]

The focal point of the new covenant is the life and obedience of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, all of God's covenant promises are fulfilled. In Christ, Christians are "beneficiaries of his all-sufficient and victorious new covenant work" of sinless obedience to God, substitutionary death, and triumphant resurrection and "we live our lives as God's new covenant people...no longer under the previous covenants *as covenants*, even though the entire Scripture is for instruction."[411] In this light, we see that in Christ is the faithful second Adam who fulfills the creation covenant, redeeming humanity to walk in faithfulness to the general aspects of the creation covenant and setting forth a guarantee of the full redemption of all creation in the new heaven and new earth.[412] Christ is the fulfillment of the Noahic covenant as the preserved natural creation gives way to the inbreaking of the new creation. Christ is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant as he is the promised seed of Abraham who extends God's kingdom blessing to all the earth. Christ is the fulfillment of the Mosaic covenant as all of God's promises to Israel are "Yes" and "Amen" in Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant as he

[408] Gentry, 269; Robertson, 271.
[409] Gentry, 269.
[410] Robertson, 280.
[411] Gentry, 271.
[412] Robertson, 83, 107.

reigns triumphant as the Davidic king over God's people, conquering God's enemies, including death. And though we do not yet see all things in subjection to the King, his resurrection guarantees the day will come when even death is under his feet.

Kingdom Theology

In the same way the kingdom of God is central to biblical theology, so is the kingdom of God central to a systematic understanding of Christian doctrine. The kingdom of God serves as "an unbroken, almost necessary, linkage between" how one understands "all the central and defining tenets of Christianity."[413] In particular, the kingdom of God is intimately connected to Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Each of these doctrinal areas are briefly examined below.

Kingdom and Christology

The kingdom of God is wherever the King reigns. And, as Robert Yarbrough notes, "Jesus is an explicitly regal, kingdom-ruling figure from beginning to end."[414] Christ himself lived and died fully engaged in the tension between this dark and dying world and the abundant life gradually redeeming all things in the kingdom of God.[415] "Although he was a royal Son, he was willingly subject to the inexorable ravages of sin and death (without committing sin), even to the point that 'he learned obedience through what he suffered' (Heb. 5:8). Yet he fulfilled his

[413] Nichols, 29.
[414] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 108.
[415] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99.

mission so that He might reign by the Spirit 'already' in the current age, to the present and eternal benefit of believers."[416]

Jesus Christ is the "God-appointed mediator between the fallen race and its Creator."[417] In this way, Christ as King of a kingdom is the eternal purpose of God contemplated in God's plan of redemption.[418] "His [Christ's] glory, as the glory of God in the highest form of its manifestation, is the great end of creation and redemption."[419] This is the Christological Kingdom focused throughout the New Testament that terminates in the glory of God through the kingdom mission of Christ.[420]

Kingdom and Soteriology

Salvation is characterized as being subjects in the kingdom of God, transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son, a violent act of submission of Satan to the King.[421] In Jesus, salvation is a kingdom activity "whereby the Second Adam, the Son of David, displays His anointing by God and His faithful obedience to His mandate as King by protecting the created order, crushing the head of the ultimate enemy of the Kingdom, the Serpent (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9)."[422] Saving faith in the New Testament is immediate justification, but, there is a sense in which kingdom salvation is distinctly eschatological, not yet fully

[416] Yarbrough, "Matthew and Revelation," 99.
[417] Moore, 104.
[418] Moore, 104.
[419] Moore, 104.
[420] Moore, 104.
[421] Moore, 106.
[422] Moore, 105-106.

realized.[423] Therefore, kingdom salvation also calls for future hope and perseverance until the full salvation is realized in Christ's triumphant return.[424]

Salvation in the New Testament is also presented as more than salvation of individual souls. Rather, "the cosmic extent of salvation is seen as the Second Adam offers up to His Father a created order in which he has subdued every enemy (1 Cor. 15:24-26), and there is nothing unclean in the garden over which He rules (Rev. 21:1-8)."[425] Moore, again, is helpful:

> The purpose of creation , redemption, and consummation are seen holistically as God's purpose to glorify Christ by fulfilling the Adamic creation mandate, the universal Noahic promise, the patriarchal covenants and the Israelite monarchy in Him, this exalting Jesus as preeminent over the entire cosmos as the agent of creation, the true *imago Dei*, the Davidic subjugator of all rival powers, the firstborn of the eschatological resurrection from the dead, and the atonement through whom the final cosmic peace is found at last (Col. 1:15-23)."[426]

The proclamation of the gospel, the call for repentance and personal faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, then, is the vehicle for cosmic restoration and salvation of the world.[427]

Kingdom and Ecclesiology

The subjects of the kingdom – those believing people of the world – are now part of the true eschatological Israel.[428] "Jesus looked upon his disciples as the nucleus of Israel who accepted his proclamation of the kingdom of God and who, therefore, formed the true people of

[423] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 369.
[424] Schreiner, 485.
[425] Moore, 106.
[426] Moore, 108.
[427] Moore, 110.
[428] Beale, 685.

God, the spiritual Israel."[429] Shortly after Jesus taught his disciples about the kingdom of God, the disciples questioned whether this new *ekklesia* meant the restoration of theocratic Israel (Acts 1:6), but Jesus taught God's kingdom purpose was not only an *ekklesia* for Israel, but the whole world. Jesus's disciples would take the kingdom from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). This kingdom advance specifically parallels "the frequent references to Isaiah's hearers in their role as the Lord's servant acting as witnesses to him (Isa. 43:10, 12),"[430] and thereby fulfilling Old Testament allusions to the kingdom's advance and coming of the Holy Spirit in a unique dispensation.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost joined "together into a spiritual unity people of diverse racial extractions and diverse social backgrounds so that they form the body of Christ – the *ekklesia*"[431] – the people of the kingdom of God, the church. The church is not the kingdom, but the kingdom of God, as the redemptive activity and rule of God in Christ, created the Church and works through the Church in the world.[432] The church of the kingdom is marked by certain distinctives. It is outside the scope of this paper to offer a detailed examination of each mark, but we note the certain distinctives. First, the church holds to the apostles' teaching, or *didache*.[433] Second, the church "welcome[s] into fellowship all who accept the [*didache*], repent and receive water baptism."[434] Third, the church is marked by fellowship, unity and breaking

[429] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 379.
[430] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 528.
[431] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 384.
[432] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 117.
[433] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 386.
[434] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 387.

bread.[435] The kingdom of God creates the church and it serves as an embassy outpost witnessing to the kingdom.

Kingdom and Eschatology

The doctrine of the kingdom of God means that evangelical eschatology is not to be thought of as "things to come," but rather as an already-present reality that signals a yet-future consummation,[436] namely inaugurated eschatology. Inaugurated eschatology makes sense of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, explicitly linked to the Davidic throne-rule, to the Kingdom covenant promises made generally to humanity in Adam, and specifically to Israel through Abraham and Moses.[437] Russell Moore explains further: "Jesus is resurrected and enthroned both as obedient Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14) and as exalted Son of David (Acts 2:32-33) who has assumed His eschatological reign from His Father's right hand (Ps. 110; Acts 2:34; Rom. 1:3-4). The resurrection and ascension of Jesus means He is the [cornerstone] of the eschatological Kingdom of God (Heb. 1:10)."[438] Therefore, the kingdom of God is best understood as the eschatological reality whose overall goal "is the universal acclaim of Jesus as sovereign over the created order (Phil. 2:9-11) and the glorification of Jesus through the salvation of the cosmos (Rom. 8:29)."[439]

[435] Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 386-387; cf. Acts 2:46, 5:42 (ESV)
[436] Moore, 61.
[437] Moore, 57.
[438] Moore, 57.
[439] Moore, 56.

Conclusion

The kingdom of God is critical to a proper understanding of the purpose of God as revealed in Scripture. The kingdom motif has garnered great attention in church history because of its complicated, yet fundamental importance in God's plan of redemption. The kingdom is both universal and particular, already present and yet a future reality. The progression of the covenantal structure of biblical theology provides the best conduit to understand the coming kingdom. In the new covenant, the King has arrived and kingdom promises are being fulfilled. The King brings salvation for his people, forms them into a community that witnesses to such a great salvation, and awaits the consummation of the cosmic restoration of all things in the new creation, a place where God will finally rule without rebellion or enemy.

Chapter 4

Subjects of the King: A Triperspectival Approach to Kingdom Vocation

The doctrine of the kingdom of God has occupied the work of biblical and theological scholarship for centuries, but the kingdom of God must also occupy our thinking on and living of the Christian life.[440] The aim of this chapter is to present a triperspectival approach to the integration of the doctrine of the kingdom of God with the concept of Christian vocation. In so doing, the kingdom of God is allowed to shape Christian reflection on vocation. Rather than limiting vocational reflection to the arena of job or career, or segregating vocation and calling to sacred and secular, vocational reflection in light of the kingdom of God is marked by a breadth and depth that encompasses all of the Christian life lived in response to God's calling, in obedience to God's commands, and in relationship through God's covenant.

A Brief Note on Triperspectivalism

This paper has thus far employed historical and biblical-theological methods to survey and expound the concept of vocation and doctrine of the kingdom of God. However, this chapter employs the triperspectival method to integrate the concept of vocation with the doctrine of the kingdom of God in hopes of providing a useful framework for edification of and ministry in the church. This chapter is not meant as a defense or exposition of triperspectivalism. Rather, this is simply the method adopted and employed for the benefit of the thesis.

[440] Nichols, 46.

Triperspectivalism is, in a sense, an ethical and epistemological method most prominently associated with John Frame, a longtime seminary professor who last taught at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando. Frame explains that "the Christian ethic should present law, situation, and ethical subject in organic unity. A Christian understanding of law will be essentially the same as a Christian understanding of situation and person. The three will be 'perspectives' on one another and on the whole."[441] Frame calls the three perspectives normative, situational, and existential.[442] The perspectives offer a holistic, integrated method by which to view and understand the world.

The normative perspective provides an objective standard or mandate that is comprehensive and governs all areas of life.[443] In this paper, the normative perspective on the concept of vocation is supplied by the covenantal structure of the kingdom of God and its attending laws and mandates given by God. The situational perspective focuses on the context in which the normative and existential perspectives are lived.[444] In this paper, the situational perspective on the concept of vocation is supplied by the redemptive-historical development of the kingdom of God and the varying contexts given in God's providence in which a Christian is to live. Lastly, the existential perspective focuses on the law of God and working of God's Spirit as revealed in man as redeemed in God's image.[445] In this paper, the existential perspective on the concept of vocation is supplied by the theological virtues and fruit of the Spirit produced as a result of Spirit-enabled seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

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[441] John M. Frame, *A Theology of Lordship, vol. 1, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1987), 74.
[442] Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 74.
[443] Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 75.
[444] Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 75.
[445] Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 75.

Kingdom Mandate (Normative Perspective)[446]

Our review of the kingdom of God showed that central to the kingdom is the King, the Lord Jesus. All creation was made for Christ and through Christ and He sustains the creation by his powerful word (Heb. 1:2-3). All the covenants of God find their ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus. As such, Jesus fulfills the office of the Davidic King who rules over the kingdom of God in general and in particularity.

The kingship of Jesus is significant for Christian reflection on vocation because His rule is objective, normative in the Christian life. Christian vocational reflection need not separate vocation between sacred and secular vocation for Jesus is King over all creation, not just the church. And Christian vocational reflection need not isolate career and job from other callings because Jesus as King has mandated other tasks and callings other than paid or unpaid labor. Jesus is King and His mandates are clear and effective as he reigns under the new covenant. Therefore, Christian vocational reflection is shaped by the cultural mandate and ordinances given by God at the creation, which are restored to the Christian by nature through the gospel, and by the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the creation covenant and consequently frees the Christian from sinful bondage to live in accord with the general commands of creation, humanity's most basic vocation: marriage, labor, and Sabbath.[447] Humanity's vocation as creatures made in God's image is not merely to be like God (*imago Dei)*, but also to act like God (*imitatio Dei*).[448]

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[446] It should be noted that the triperspectival approach can be applied even within each of the sections as delineated in this chapter. For instance, Frame identifies *the command* of God in Genesis 1:28 as the normative perspective, the fact man is to subdue *the earth* as the situational perspective, and *the fruitfulness* of man in God's image as the existential perspective. Frame, 307-308. I will take Genesis 1:28 solely as providing a normative perspective on the vocational purpose of mankind.
[447] Robertson, 68.
[448] Currid, 51.

Humanity's vocation is not merely a matter of character, but of function and activity.[449] Specifically, we see in Genesis 1 and 2 that humanity is meant to imitate God in at least three ways. First, humanity labors with intelligent creativity.[450] In Genesis 1:2, we read that the earth was formless and void, then God gives form and order to the creation. In the same way, humanity subdues and rules over the creation, specifically through cultivating the garden (2:15) and naming the animals (2:19-20).[451]

This will look different in each Christian's life depending on the situation and motive. But, fundamentally this means that a Christian understanding of vocation is concerned with creatively cultivating the raw materials of this world - be that natural raw materials, numbers in a spreadsheet, or words on a page. In so doing, Christians glorify God and fulfill their created purpose to take dominion over the creation. Christians, by God's grace in Christ, are able to serve as vice-regents for God in His creation.

Second, humanity is fruitful and multiplies. In the creation of humanity in His image, God was, in a sense, fruitful and multiplied. Analogously, humanity patterns God by filling the earth with progeny through reproduction (Gen. 1:28) in marriage. God created and ordained marriage as the means by which humanity fulfills its creation mandate to be fruitful and multiply. However, in sin, humanity distorts the marriage ordinance, but Christians are restored to live in concord with natural marriage as a means to glorify God.

Humanity was to also be fruitful and multiply through cultivation of produce from the earth, releasing the potential latent in the creation (2:15).[452] The creation order still sits under the curse of sin, groaning for freedom from bondage (Rom. 8:19), and Christians are no more

[449] Currid, 51.
[450] Currid, 51.
[451] Currid, 51.
[452] Currid, 51.

effective as cultivators and farmers than non-Christians. But, Christians are themselves new creations (2 Cor. 5:17) and understand that the cosmos will be renewed and recreated, set free from the cursed bondage in the new creation.[453] And, so now, Christians labor by the sweat of their brow to subdue the earth, to cultivate it in thankful obedience to God.[454]

Lastly, humanity imitates God by resting from active labor.[455] As God rests from his active creation activities (Gen. 2:2-3), so humanity is to imitate God in obedience to the Sabbath command (Exod. 20:8-11) and rest from its labors. This is yet another fundamental vocation that calls for thankful obedience from the Christian. No matter how one understands the application of Sabbath under the new covenant, the Sabbath command shapes the Christian life. Each creation ordinance "stands as an inviolable principle inherent in the structure of the world as God has ordained it"[456] and, therefore, form a fundamental vocation for the Christian as a redeemed creature recreated in God's image.

It is legitimate to speak of Genesis 1:28 as the first "Great Commission,"[457] applied to humanity as creatures made in the image of God, an image that was not discarded through sin, but only defaced by sin. In redemption through Jesus Christ, Christians are now able to faithfully obey the original "Great Commission," which forms the fundamental vocation for all Christians, in conjunction with faithful obedience to the Great Commission of Matthew 28. To be fruitful and multiply in the natural sense in no way precludes the fruitful multiplication of disciples in the spiritual sense. In fact, "before the fall, Adam and Eve were to produce progeny who would fill the earth with God's glory being reflected from each of them in the image of God."[458] After

[453] Moore, 93-94.
[454] Kloosterman. 76.
[455] Kloosterman, 76.
[456] Robertson, 68.
[457] Beale, 57.
[458] Beale, 57.

the fall, a remnant of humanity, redeemed and restored by God, was and is to spread God's glorious presence throughout the world through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ in faithful obedience to the Great Cultural Commission-Mandate.[459]

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 is in many ways a restatement of the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:28, as outlined above.[460] The Great Commission of the kingdom of God through the new covenant is the fundamental vocation of the church.[461] In the Great Commission, the Lord "renews God's original purpose to fill the earth with worshippers of the true God."[462] Unlike the Cultural Mandate, though, the Great Commission is focused on the communication of God's redemptive message, namely the gospel of the kingdom.[463] As such, the Great Commission vocation of the Christian is to "make disciples of all nations," specifically by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [God] has commanded" (Matt. 28:19-20). And the Christian obeys this commission because "all authority on heaven and earth" has been given to King Jesus, who will be with the Christian "to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20) when He will consummate His kingdom in full and the Great Commission will be fulfilled.

At the end of the age, God's will - His law - will be done and His kingdom will come. But, until then, the Great Commission commands Christians to teach converts to obey God's commands, which raises the thorny question of the application of God's law to the Christian life. The scope of this paper is not set forth in detail a defense of a particular view of the law in the Christian life. Rather, this paper will follow the godly lead of Dr. John Frame in understanding

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[459] Beale, 57.
[460] Frame, *Christian Life,* 16.
[461] Frame, *Christian Life,* 211.
[462] Frame, *Christian Life,* 308.
[463] Frame, *Christian Life,* 308.

God's law to have a positive role in the Christian life, that God's law is a gift from God, and that those saved by God's grace in Christ will want to obey God's law.[464] As such, in addition to the Cultural Mandate and Great Commission, which are part of God's law in themselves, the Ten Commandments[465] serve as a helpful tool to discern the ethical obligations in Christian vocation.[466]

Before we consider the Ten Commandments in more detail in relation to vocation, we must understand that "love is the great commandment, the greatest commandment, the highest virtue, the mark of the believer, the center of biblical ethics."[467] The covenant allegiance owed to God the King by the Christian as subject of the King is characterized as "love" in the ancient Near East and evident in the First Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).[468] However, the love-command is most explicit in the Shema, that famous confession of Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4-5).[469]

The Lord Jesus refers to the Shema as the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:38), emphasizing the centrality of love in the Christian life.[470] Christian love-command extends to love of neighbor, and even enemies (Matt. 22:39; 5:43-48). In one sense, a Christian cannot credibly claim to love God unless the Christian also seeks to love neighbor and enemy. Therefore, love is not in opposition to law, but rather is the motivation to obey and fulfill the law. Love, of course, is a God-wrought fruit of the Spirit that will be addressed in the existential

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[464] Frame, *Christian Life,* 180-181.
[465] The consideration of the tripartite division of the law is outside the scope of this paper. However, for a brief, helpful treatment of the subject and the abiding significance of the moral law, see John Frame, *Christian Life*, 213 - 217.
[466] Frame, *Christian Life*, 385-404.
[467] Frame, *Christian Life*, 193.
[468] Frame, *Christian Life*, 192.
[469] Frame, *Christian Life*, 192.
[470] Frame, *Christian Life*, 192.

section of this chapter. For now, though, it is enough to acknowledge that Christian vocation must be marked by loving obedience to God's commands. Again, Frame: "We demonstrate our love by obeying the commandments."[471]

Now, let us turn to a brief application of each of the Ten Commandments to the concept of Christian vocation. The First Commandment, as mentioned previously, serves as a love-allegiance between the Christian as subject of God the King. All of the Christian life - what this paper argues is the Christian's vocation - is to prioritize allegiance, action, and affection to and for God our King. No person, job, money, or other created thing - or uncreated thing, for that matter - is to hold rival to our action and affection. God is the Christian's ultimate allegiance, taking action to worship and serve Him from our deepest affection.

The Second Commandment, like the First, calls the Christian to worship God alone as God prescribes. God's covenant jealousy prohibits the Christian from giving outward expression of allegiance or loyalty to any other created or uncreated thing.[472] The Christian's vocation is faithful worship of their covenant King.

The Third Commandment broadly commands reverence for God.[473] A narrow reading of the commandment limits the consideration to the taking of the Lord's name in vain. However, a broader reading reveals the hallowed nature of God in all situations. Ultimately, we know that the commandment is fulfilled in Jesus and in our Christian vocation we do all things to God's glory (Col. 3:17).

The Fourth Commandment is a restatement of the creation ordinance of Sabbath. The commandment reveals that God is able to complete what He begins and the ultimate fulfillment

[471] Frame, *Christian Life*, 195.
[472] Frame, *Christian Life*, 461.
[473] Frame, *Christian Life*, 487.

of all of God's works are not in doubt.[474] Ultimately, the commandment previews the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ who sat down at the Father's right hand, resting from His labor to bring forth God's kingdom. The Sabbath rest in Genesis 2 and in this commandment also introduces eschatology into Scripture, as an assurance that the eternal rest for God's people still abides (Heb. 4:9). The Christian vocation is shaped immeasurably by the Sabbath, as detailed previously in creation, and this particular commandment reiterates the need for faithful labor and rest in the Christian life.

The Fifth Commandment introduces the "second table" of the commandments, which focus on our duty toward one another, rather than on our duty solely to God, as found in the "first table."[475] In one sense, the Fifth Commandment is a transition from loving God with all our heart to loving our neighbor as ourselves.[476]Still, the Fifth Commandment serves as something of a restatement of the First in that honor is due to a particular subject, narrowly understood as father and mother.

The Fifth Commandment broadly understood sets forth the duty to honor those with rightful authority.[477] Frame is helpful in defining honor triperspectivally: reverence, submission, and support or gratefulness.[478] Reverence is a heart attitude of respect toward another person expressed through deference and praise in words, actions, and thoughts.[479] Submission is characterized by respect in hearing and obedience in practice.[480] Support or gratefulness is tied to both reverence and submission in that it connotes "render financial value," which expresses

[474] Frame, *Christian Life*, 529.
[475] Frame, *Christian Life*, 575.
[476] Frame, *Christian Life*, 575.
[477] Frame, *Christian Life*, 576.
[478] Frame, *Christian Life*, 577-581.
[479] Frame, *Christian Life*, 578.
[480] Frame, *Christian Life*, 580.

honor to the authority through giving.[481] As such, honoring authority is words, thoughts, and actions that express reverence to the one in authority, submits to the authority's wisdom, and supports the authority, even by means of financial support, in gratefulness. The Christian vocation is not marked by pride, but rather humble honor given to all those in authority in the home, church, and public spheres.

The Sixth Commandment teaches that God is the Lord of life. In the command not to murder is the implicit command to respect all of life. Life and death are God's business and the Christian vocation is to protect and promote life. "It is a measure of the greatness of salvation that in Christ death is swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4)."[482] And so, the Christian is to promote life through being fruitful and multiplying physically, but particularly to promote life in and through obedience to the Great Commission to make disciples.

The Seventh Commandment teaches that marriage, gender, and sexuality are given by God and considered sacred. In a sense, the commandment is an extension of the creation ordinance of marriage, reflecting the natural and sacred nature of that covenant union of one man and one woman. Further, the marriage covenant reflects the covenant relationship between God and his people. Physical adultery then presupposes and pictures spiritual adultery. "One who would cheat on his spouse would also cheat on God."[483] Therefore, this commandment teaches that Christian vocation includes the commitment to maintain the sanctity of natural marriage.

The Eighth Commandment teaches a general respect for creation and, specifically, private property. Ultimately, all property belongs to God, but, as discussed previously, He has given man the responsibility to care for and be stewards of His creation.[484] And, so, Scripture

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[481] Frame, *Christian Life*, 581.
[482] Frame, *Christian Life*, 685.
[483] Frame, *Christian Life*, 750.
[484] Frame, *Christian Life*, 796.

presupposes the concept of private property, that each person is given ownership over particular property to care for and steward the property. Without such presupposition, the command not to steal makes no sense.[485] But, the command also broadly implies a godly work ethic, the very antithesis of theft, that allows the worker to have material prosperity to give to the needy.[486] In this way, the Eighth Commandment mandates both justice and mercy as part of a Christian vocation.[487]

The Ninth Commandment is "the foundation of the general biblical polemic against lying" and mandates truthfulness.[488] Broadly, the commandment is concerned about Christian witness - is the witness truthful about God and His creation? Wisdom is needed in the application of this commandment to particular situations, like joking or spying, but the general thrust of the commandment is to regard truthfulness as a supreme virtue because God does not lie. Therefore, a Christian vocation must be concerned about true witness and regard honesty as morally superior to lying.

The Tenth Commandment mandates contentment in all circumstances. We should be thankful for God's blessings on us and others.[489] This commandment is particularly concerned about the heart posture toward material and immaterial perceived prosperity. This commandment shapes the Christian vocation by acknowledging that all good and perfect gifts come from above (James 1:17) and, therefore, the Christian is to trust the King of the kingdom who rules over all.

Christian vocation is shaped by the kingdom's mandates. Specifically, the cultural mandate of Genesis 1 and 2, the Great Commission of Matthew 28, and the Ten Commandments

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[485] Frame, *Christian Life*, 798.
[486] Frame, *Christian Life*, 798-799.
[487] Frame, *Christian Life*, 799.
[488] Frame, *Christian Life*, 831.
[489] Frame, *Christian Life*, 845.

provide the normative perspective on Christian vocation. In the kingdom of God, a Christian is made subject to God's saving reign and set free from sin to obey these kingdom mandates in the various situations given in God's providence.

Kingdom Mission (Situational Perspective)

The kingdom of God is governed by the mandates - laws and commands - of the King. "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). God's kingly work of creation included his creation ordinances, which were later restated in the Mosaic law, but His work of creation "is never presented as an end in itself; rather, it is the beginning of God's eternal plan in time, which he now directs and governs" by providence.[490] Gentry and Wellum further explain the kingdom mission of God: "[B]oth creation and providence establish the eschatological direction of God's plan worked out in terms of his specific covenantal relationships with his creation, which, in the end, all leads to a specific goal centered in Christ (Col. 1:15-20)."[491] Therefore, Christian vocation is providential in nature - God sets the boundaries and circumstances of our lives in creation - and is Christocentric - the Christian life is lived unto Christ our King in every providential situation, faithfully applying the kingdom mandates.

God providentially places Christians in innumerable situations to serve and live in His kingdom. However, there are three domains which encompass God's providence in each Christian life: the family, the church, and the world. In each of these three domains, Christian vocation is shaped by kingdom mandates. Even further, the kingdom mandates discussed previously are given further explanation and application in many New Testament passages that

[490] Gentry, 244.
[491] Gentry, 244.

expound and apply kingdom mandates. This section intends to briefly identify and apply how Christian vocation is lived out in the family, the church, and the world, showing that Christian vocation is broader than work because God calls each Christian into these three domains and faithful vocation is not marked by dualistic terms.

Christian Family

The Christian family is rooted in the creation ordinance of marriage. Marriage and the family were created by the sovereign creative act of God, which removes all doubt with respect to the sanctity of marriage.[492] Closely associated with the marriage mandate in creation is procreation.[493] As such, these two aspects of creation - marriage and procreation - are united to form a family. Family is the creational and providential situation in which Christians faithfully live out the vocation of marriage and procreation.

John Murray provides five helpful observations about the nature of marriage in Scripture that assist us in understanding the calling of the Christian in this particular situation. First, God intends that marriage is a monogamous, rather than polygamous or digamous, relationship between a man and a woman.[494] God created one woman for the one man and so instituted that ideal of marital monogamy.[495] Though common practice in the lives of Old Testament people of God, the Old Testament "clearly communicates that the practice of having multiple wives was a departure from God's plan for marriage,"[496] particularly in the Seventh Commandment. The Old Testament also makes clear that the disorder and trouble caused by polygamous relationships is

[492] Robertson, 75.
[493] John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 45.
[494] Murray, 45, 80.
[495] Andreas J. Kostenberger with David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundations*, 2d ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 32.
[496] Kostenberger, 33.

evidence that polygamy is contrary to the creation norm.[497] In the New Testament, the creation norm of heterosexual, monogamous marriage is affirmed and given further revelation in light of Christ.

Further, natural marriage is a monogamous relationship between *a man and a woman*. Homosexuality is contrary to the divine design of marriage and family in at least three ways. First, fundamentally, the creation ordinance of marriage employs masculine and feminine nouns, which strongly suggests heterosexuality, rather than homosexuality, as the norm.[498] Second, marriage is conceived of in gender-specific, complementary roles - the husband has head, the woman as a suitable helper - and, therefore, a same-gender or same-sex union is not a faithful representation of biblical marriage.[499] Third, integral to the marriage ordinance is the duty to procreate, which is naturally impossible in a homosexual relationship.[500] Faithful Christian vocation in marriage cannot, by definition, include homosexual relations.

Second, and related to the first, heterosexual, monogamous marriage is the only proper context for procreation.[501] Murray points out this principle is implicit in that Adam did not find any other animate creature suitable for his needs.[502] This principle is also more explicit in the creation ordinance to be fruitful and multiply. The ordinance was given to Adam and Eve as the first married couple.

Third, heterosexual, monogamous marriage is directed by the ethical demands set forth in Scripture.[503] As already discussed, marriage is to be heterosexual and monogamous. But marriage is also to be governed by the other commandments, as each commandment applies to

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[497] Kostenberger, 33.
[498] Kostenberger, 200.
[499] Kostenberger, 200.
[500] Kostenberger, 200.
[501] Murray, 80.
[502] Murray, 80.
[503] Murray, 80.

marriage in some sense. Marriage is to be held in high esteem, rather than forbidding marriage or being seen as one of many social organizing principles.[504] Also, the husband and wife are to fulfill marital obligation of sexual intercourse so as to avoid a false spirituality that diminishes the goodness of sex as God created.[505] In particular, adultery is forbidden as it breaks the covenantal bond between husband and wife, which is a reflection of that union between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32). Further, Jesus joins the commandments and equates looking at a woman lustfully - or, covetously - with adultery (Matt. 5:27-28).

In addition, the New Testament provides marital roles along gender lines that are rooted in creation. For instance, the husband is the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3) and to love the wife as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25). Likewise, wives are to submit to the husband's leadership and care as the church submits to Christ (Eph. 5:22). The marriage relationship is a picture of "God's larger salvation-historical, apocalyptic purpose, that is, the bringing of 'all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ' (Eph. 1:10)."[506]

Fourth, marriage is forbidden within certain degrees of consanguinity.[507] There are morally prohibited choices of marriage partners along family lines in Scripture, particularly in Leviticus 18 and 20.[508] Further, as touched on previously, the New Testament limits the ethics of marriage in line with Old Testament restrictions.

Fifth, marriage and singleness are equal callings before God.[509] Marriage is the natural relationship for companionship, procreation, and uniquely reflects the relationship of Christ and the church, but not every Christian will be called to marriage. Rather, each Christian must

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[504] Kostenberger, 55.
[505] Kostenberger, 54-55.
[506] Kostenberger, 56.
[507] Murray, 81.
[508] Murray, 81.
[509] Murray, 81.

discern the specific course of life entrusted to him by God. In fact, singleness is a gift of God and is a legitimate calling from God (1 Cor. 7:7).[510]

Regardless if a Christian is married or single, every Christian is a member of a natural family and so has kingdom vocation to fulfill as a son or daughter. The Fifth Commandment is most obviously applicable as a mandate to honor the authority of your father and mother. This theme is advanced in the New Testament as children are instructed to "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Eph. 6:1). The Christian vocation of being a son or daughter in a natural family is characterized clearly by given honor - reverence, submission, and support - to your father and mother.

The natural end of marriage is procreation, the natural family. As such, the family provides the context to exercise the vocation of father and mother. Honor is due to a father and mother, but what mandate applies to the father and mother in relation to the child? Of course, much could be said, but at minimum, the married couple is simply to obey the cultural mandate to be fruitful. In so doing, they will also obey the command not to murder the child. The scourge of abortion is so heinous because it attacks the image of God in the baby and breaks the Sixth Commandment. To simply bear a child is a statement against the serpent and an affirmation of the value of life and the Lord of life.

The vocation of father is marked in the Old and New Testaments as a place of honor and dignity.[511] Specifically, in the Old Testament family life radiated outward from the father as its center - a certain biblical patriarchy.[512] A godly father inspires trust and security of the family.[513] A godly father does not provoke his children, but rather bears special responsibility for

[510] Murray, 81.
[511] Kostenberger, 86.
[512] Kostenberger, 86.
[513] Kostenberger, 86.

disciplining children, being careful not to discourage the children, but to cultivate great affection in the children.[514] The Christian vocation of fatherhood, ultimately, derives from the "one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:6) who cares and provides faithfully for his children and is perfect in all of His ways (Heb. 12:5-10).[515]

The vocation of mother is given a heightened status in the Old and New Testaments contrary to the contemporary eras of its writing. In the very creation of the woman is indication of her dignity and honor.[516] As a mother, the Old Testament summarizes her duties in Proverbs 31: providing food, clothing, and caring for the shelter.[517] The New Testament holds up as the woman's highest calling and privilege the vocation of motherhood.[518]

Both father and mother bear the responsibility to teach children about God.[519] The Book of Proverbs provides keen insights into biblical parenting. In particular, the purpose of biblical parental instruction is to inculcate wisdom and the fear of the Lord.[520] As summarized by Kostenberger: "Christian parents have the mandate and serious obligation to instill their religious heritage in their children...While there may be Christian Sunday School teachers and other significant people in a child's life, parents must never go back on their God-given responsibility to be the primary source of religious instruction for their children."[521]

The providential and natural contexts of marriage, singleness, and family are situations in which Christians can carry out their vocations as husband, wife, mother, father, son, and daughter. Marriage and family do not exist as ends in themselves. Rather, marriage and family

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[514] Kostenberger, 107.
[515] Kostenberger, 108.
[516] Kostenberger, 88.
[517] Kostenberger, 89.
[518] Kostenberger, 109.
[519] Kostenberger, 92.
[520] Kostenberger, 94.
[521] Kostenberger, 94.

exist for our good - social, material, and spiritual. But, ultimately, marriage and family exist for the glory of God. "In marriage [and the family] it is for the service of Jesus Christ that new men are created."[522]

Christian Church

The church is not the kingdom, but the kingdom of God, as the redemptive activity and rule of God in Christ, created the Church and works through the Church in the world.[523] In the church, Christian vocation is lived particularly in obedience to the commands of God, most notably the Great Commandment and Great Commission. The Great Commission of the kingdom of God through the new covenant provides a "new conquest," like that of the Canaanite conquest but different in that this new conquest is not military in nature for defined piece of land, but rather is a conquest of the whole world by the church through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom.[524] As John Frame puts it, "As a result of this missionary conquest, God dwells in people all over the world, 'from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages' (Rev. 7:9)."[525]

The Great Commandment is obeyed in relation to the Great Commission, but also in the life of the local church where the covenant body serve and love one another, showing the world who the disciples of Christ (John 13:35). In particular, Christian vocation is exercised in three particular offices in the church: member, deacon, and elder. To be a member of a local congregation is to be publicly identified as a Christian by other professing Christians. The idea of

[522] Kostenberger, 115.
[523] Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 117.
[524] Frame, *Christian Life*, 211.
[525] Frame, *Christian Life*, 211.

a churchless Christian is foreign to the New Testament and so to be a faithful Christian is to be a faithful local church member.[526] This is a fundamental aspect of Christian vocation.

The office of deacon is to be a servant of the church.[527] Deacons typically serve the physical needs of the church (Matt. 25:44; Acts 11:29, 12:25) and are charged to strive for the unity of the local congregation, as is evident in the work of equitably distributing food to widows in Acts 6.[528] Deacons are also to support the ministry of the elders, freeing those men to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer.[529] Deacons are to meet the qualifications set forth in Scripture (e.g. 1 Tim. 3:8-13) and may be women (Matt. 8:15, 27:55; Rom. 16:1).

The office of elder is, fundamentally, a minister of God's Word.[530] Like deacons, elders are to meet the character qualifications set forth in 1Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, with the caveat that elders are to be able to teach God's Word faithfully, typically having a greater grasp on biblical theology and able to defend the doctrines under particular assault in their own day.[531] Mark Dever sets forth the nature of this office well: "The essence of the elder's office lies with ensuring the Word of God is well understood, evidenced by the commitment to teaching one's particular flock this Word....he should be an example of care and concern for the congregation as a whole."[532]

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[526] Mark E. Dever, "The Church," *A Theology for the Church*, edited by Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 791-795.
[527] Dever, 798.
[528] Dever, 798-99.
[529] Dever, 800.
[530] Dever, 800.
[531] Dever, 802.
[532] Dever, 802.

These three offices[533] shape the Christian vocation in the church. All Christians should be faithful members of a local church, yet not all members will serve as deacons or elders. However, members are to submit to the leadership and godly teaching of elders and be served by the ministry of deacons. Even if a member never serves in the two offices, the member's vocation is to understand, relate to, and encourage the faithful ministry of deacon and elder. For those called by God to serve as deacons and elders, the vocational requirements are shaped by the ministry of each office as set forth in Scripture and dictated by godly wisdom.

Each of these offices in the church exist to carry forth the mission and purpose of the church, namely the worship of God, the edification of the church, and the evangelization of the world.[534] The worship of God corporately and privately is regulated by God's Word, but in the corporate gathering can be summarized: read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible, and see the Bible.[535] Such corporate worship will shape the personal, private worship offered to God by Christians in everyday life as Christians "offer [their] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is [their] spiritual...worship" (Rom. 12:1).[536]

The worship of God in the church naturally results in the edification of Christians and the evangelization of unbelievers. The purpose of the church, in part, is to encourage particular Christians in their faith and practice, to equip them for ministry, and encourage their perseverance.[537] Likewise, the church is to witness to God's saving reign in Christ and the

[533] For the sake of ease, I am using the status of "member" under the term of office.
[534] Dever, 809.
[535] Dever, 809.
[536] Dever, 812.
[537] Dever, 812.

kingdom of God, preaching the gospel to those outside the church so that the fullness of God's elect might enter into the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God creates the situation - the church - in which Christians can faithfully obey the kingdom mandates. In particular, Christian vocation is shaped by the offices of member, deacon, and elder. These offices carry forth the purpose and mission of the church, namely to worship God, edify Christians, and evangelize non-Christians.

Christian in the World

The kingdom of God is not the church, which implies that the kingdom of God reaches outside the church, namely into God's world. God's creation does not lose its natural goodness only because it is under the curse of sin. Robertson is helpful: [The gospel of the kingdom of God] involves discipling men to Jesus Christ. Integral to that discipling process is the awakening of an awareness of the obligations of man to the totality of God's creation."[538] As such, the kingdom of God creates a situation in the world where the Christian vocation is to "form a culture glorifying to God."[539]

Even more, the King of the Kingdom is also a Prophet who speaks God's Word into every situation. As the incarnate King of the kingdom, Jesus is infinitely greater than any of the prophets of the Old Testament.[540] Jesus is the last Word spoken by God to His people (Heb. 1:2). He now directs His people how to live in the kingdom through the Spirit-breathed Scriptures.[541] As such, The King speaks His mandates prophetically into every situation in His kingdom.

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[538] Robertson, 83.
[539] Robertson, 83.
[540] Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology edited by Gerald Bray (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 91.
[541] Letham, 101.

Vern Poythress helpfully narrows the scope of the "culture" to politics and government, science and technology, art, education, and business.[542] Not every Christian will be called of God in each of these cultural areas, but to the extent a Christian is called to a particular area of service in the world, the Christian's vocation is shaped by the kingdom of God. This paper is limited in its scope and will therefore not delve deeply into each cultural area and expound the innumerable ways Christian vocation is lived in each cultural area. Instead, we will briefly address each area of culture and provide some context for further vocational discernment. First, God's sovereignty as King of the world means the authority of civil government is limited.[543] The state has genuine authority given by God (Rom. 13:1), and should be honored in line with a broad reading of the Fifth Commandment. Still, the state is limited in its authority, particularly in relation to those spheres given its own authority by God, such as the family and church, and should be about the promotion of justice and equity in a society as ministers of God.[544]

The Christian scientist - whether natural scientist, social scientist, etc. - should recognize that science is not religiously neutral, but rather that science is the observation and exploration of the natural world, God's creation, which is being redeemed through the kingdom of God.[545] As such, the Christian scientist must take a distinctively Christian approach to the practice of scientific inquiry. Poythress, again: "Christ came to earth to accomplish redemption. Through his redemption he triumphed over sin and death and corruption...This achievement has universal relevance and transforms our view of the task of modern science."[546]

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[542] Vern S. Poythress, *The Lordship of Christ: Serving Our Savior All the Time, in All of Life, with All of Our Heart* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016).
[543] Poythress, 103.
[544] Poythress, 104.
[545] Poythress, 112-113.
[546] Poythress, 113.

The Christian artist - whether expressed in communications, media, advertising, song, or film - must view their vocation in light of the truth central in the kingdom of God. Christian artists must understand how to create art without violating the commandments, but rather to extol the beauty of God, drawing attention to His beauty through their work.[547] As creative workers in the world, artists in particular can image God in creative work as God is the Creator.[548]

All education should have the glory of God as its goal, the commandments of the kingdom of God as its norms, and the love of Christ as its fundamental motive.[549] In fact, education is of such importance that the Lord commands His people to teach his commands "diligently to your children, and [you] shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut. 6:6-7). Furthermore, this theme of educating children is clear in Proverbs chapters 1 through 9, as the Wisdom writer encourages the Son to listen to the Father's teaching. The primary task of education is given to parents, but regardless, the Christian vocation of education is to be shaped by a kingdom worldview since Christ the King over all the universe.

Labor and work, the common realm of vocational consideration, is a creation ordinance of God in his universal kingdom.[550] The Christian vocation of work is to be done heartily, as to the Lord (Col. 3:23). Work is not to be understood narrowly - as only paid labor - but rather encompasses all sorts of work, whether paid or not. For instance, a mother who devotes much of her time and energy to working in the home for no income is as much a laborer in the kingdom of God as the Christian attorney representing multimillion dollar businesses in tax litigation.

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[547] Poythress, 118.
[548] Poythress, 118.
[549] Poythress, 123.
[550] Robertson, 79.

Each Christian must work out their particular vocation in relation to the kingdom mandates of the kingdom of God.

In addition, meaningful rest may be experienced only in the context of meaningful labor.[551] The Christian vocation to rest, as per the creation ordinance and the Fourth Commandment, can only be understood in the context of a full work period. Therefore, a Christian work ethic devoted to laboring diligently, honestly, and skillfully is a necessary component of a Christian vocation. No matter what work a Christian engages in in the world, the Christian is called by God to do it heartily and well, followed by rest.

This brief survey of the different areas of cultural service in the kingdom of God shows that understanding vocation narrowly or dualistically is unwarranted. Rather, Christian vocation is broad, covering all areas of legitimate cultural service, and is holistically sacred since all areas are governed by Christ the King. John Frame is helpful: "Christianity is a public faith. As the Great Commission implies, it is to be carried out in workplaces and marketplaces, as well as in churches and homes. God gives us his name to be proclaimed, not to be hidden as a private treasure."[552] According to Frame, the Great Commission is not restricted simply to a spiritual, churchly gospel, but rather "the preaching of the church represents to the world a way of life that transforms everything."[553]

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[551] Robertson, 79.
[552] Frame, *Christian Life*, 503.
[553] Frame, *Christian Life*, 616.

Kingdom Motive (Existential Perspective)

The King rules His kingdom through kingdom mandates and speaks those mandates prophetically into different missions or situations. But, how do subjects of the King live obediently to the King's commands in the kingdom mission? The King must give His subjects what He commands and, thankfully, the King is also a priest. The King also mediates the presence of God in and to His subjects, having vicariously obeyed God's commands on behalf of His people and offered himself as the sacrifice necessary for the sins of His people.[554]

King Jesus is himself fully human, having shared in our flesh and blood, having suffered, endured temptation, and experienced death.[555] Even more, he is able to discharge the duties of a priest before God perfectly since he faced every temptation but is without sin,[556] wholeheartedly obeying the will of God as expressed in his law.[557] Lastly, he himself is the propitiatory sacrifice required of God and is now interceding for his people before God.[558] As such, the King has sent forth the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to indwell Christians, bringing regeneration to their souls by faith and empowering Christians to live in obedience to the King's mandates in every kingdom situation from their heart.

John Frame defines the heart as "the source of our most fundamental commitment, either to serve God or to serve an idol. It governs our actions (Matt. 15:19), words (Matt. 12:34), and thoughts (Matt. 9:4)."[559] External obedience to the King's commands is not sufficient in the King's reckoning and is not what was secured for his people. Rather, Spirit-wrought faith, hope,

[554] Letham, 113.
[555] Letham, 111.
[556] Letham, 111.
[557] Letham, 115.
[558] Letham, 112.
[559] Frame, *Christian Life,* 325.

and love (1 Cor. 13:13) motivate the Christian to obey the commands of the King in the situations he has placed by his providence.

Scripture emphasizes faith in two primary ways: as an initial justifying faith and as an ongoing sanctifying faith.[560] In each instance, faith is an instrument that receives God's grace in King Jesus.[561] Christians are initially made subject to the King by trusting God's promise of redemption in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the King, and are made more like the King - enabled to obey the King - by persevering in faith. In this sense, abiding faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Repentance accompanies the grace of faith in a Christian's life. To be made subject of the King by faith is also to turn away from rebellion in sin, to lay down the weapons against the King. Repentance leads to a life of faith (Acts 11:18).[562]

The grace that faith receives leads to good works.[563] God has intended that his people perform good works from eternity (Eph. 2:8-10). As James teaches, the evidence of faith in a Christian is good works (James 2:14-26). Therefore, to act in faith is to obey God's commands in the situations he has placed you by his providence, to exercise your Christian vocation in every circumstance.

John Frame defines hope as "faith directed toward the future aspect of salvation, the 'not yet.'"[564] If faith rests secure on the already inaugurated aspect of the kingdom of God, then hope anticipates the coming subjection of all things under the King's rule and dominion. Biblical hope is a "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19). Biblical hope makes the Christian bold

[560] Frame, *Christian Life*, 327.
[561] Frame, *Christian Life*, 327-328.
[562] Frame, *Christian Life*, 331.
[563] Frame, *Christian Life*, 329.
[564] Frame, *Christian Life*, 332.

(2 Cor. 3:12), keeps from discouragement (1 Thess. 5:8) and actually motivates faith and love (Col. 1:4-5).[565] Since we live in the reality of the inaugurated kingdom of God, our good works of obedience in every situation can be motivated by the hope of what is to come in the full consummation of the kingdom.

Frame helpfully defines love as "allegiance, action, and affection."[566] Love is the exclusive allegiance of the Christian subject to King Jesus, taking action to obey all of His commands out of an affection for Him, His people, and His world. Love is being faithful to our new covenant vows made as subjects to the King.[567] Christians are loyal to the King because he was first loyal in love to us (1 John 4:7-21). Such allegiance not only prevents disloyalty, but also motivates to serve the King to whom we are committed.[568] Therefore, allegiance necessarily leads to action.[569]

If we love the King, we will obey his commands (John 14:15). Christians will imitate the King in the love we show to his people and to his enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). Christians seek to fulfill their vocation in love as husbands and wives, mothers and father, sons and daughter in the Christian family. Christians seek to fulfill their vocation in love as members, deacons, and elders in the church. Christians seek to fulfill their vocation in love in whatever context they find themselves in the world. Love seeks every possible way to serve God and one's neighbor, indeed love seeks to act with moral heroism.[570]

Subjects of the King act out their allegiance with great affection for the King. Christian vocation in the kingdom of God is not a duty-bound allegiance and action, but an allegiance and

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[565] Frame, *Christian Life*, 332.
[566] Frame, *Christian Life*, 193.
[567] Frame, *Christian Life*, 334.
[568] Frame, *Christian Life*, 334.
[569] Frame, *Christian Life*, 334.
[570] Frame, *Christian Life*, 343.

action infused with affection for the King. Loving affection, in this sense, is most clearly displayed through gratefulness for the King.[571] In fact, Frame says that gratefulness and allegiance are inseparable.[572] Frame goes on: "If our salvation is the greatest gift anyone has ever received, the greatest gift imaginable, then how can we do anything other than give ourselves wholeheartedly to our covenant Lord? How can we be other than deeply wounded at the thought of betraying him?"[573] Love for the King is marked by allegiance, action, and affection and motivates the entirety of Christian vocation.

Other biblical summaries of Christian virtue that motivates Christian vocation is found in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:12-13). The theological virtues previously addressed overlap these fruit, but we would certainly be remiss to not briefly consider the fruit in relation to Christian vocation. In every instance, love is the conclusion and summation of the virtue lists.[574] Frame helpfully places each of these other biblical virtues under the triad of faith, hope, and love.[575] For instance, Frame summarizes faithfulness, steadfastness, godliness, patience, joy, and knowledge as "faith virtues."[576] The subject of the King carries out Christian vocation "steadfast in his trust, faithful to God's covenant [and kingdom], patient to the end. Having knowledge of God's revealed truth, he worships God in all of life, recognizing God as Lord of everything."[577]

Virtues of hope include meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, gentleness, and peace.[578] Each of these virtues cohere in hope because hope is faith directed at God's future fulfillment of all his promises. We can be sure of God's plan and so easily forbear with others, forgive others,

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[571] Frame, *Christian Life*, 335.
[572] Frame, *Christian Life*, 335.
[573] Frame, *Christian Life*, 335.
[574] Frame, *Christian Life*, 344.
[575] Frame, *Christian Life*, 344-345.
[576] Frame, *Christian Life*, 344.
[577] Frame, *Christian Life*, 344.
[578] Frame, *Christian Life*, 344.

be gentle with other, and be at peace with others and the world. Frame says: "The point is that God is in control of the world and we are not. Therefore, we are free from the need to be in control of every situation and to dominate other people."[579]

Virtues of love include compassion, brotherly love, kindness, and goodness.[580] These virtues motivate the Christian to live out his calling for the good of others and the glory of the King. The Christian subject need not be driven by selfish ambition for the King has already accomplished all the Christian needs and has given the Christian all that is needed for life and godliness. The Christian is now freely subject to a King who works love in his heart.

One final kingdom motive is the fear of the Lord, or wisdom.[581] Wisdom is a key theological virtue for understanding Christian vocation. No matter the situation or motive, we are unable to fulfill every mandate and command of God all at once.[582] Rather, the mandates and commands are given corporately so that each part of the whole might fulfill its particular vocation at any given time (1 Cor. 12:12-27).[583] As such, Christians are responsible to discern priorities in wisdom among divine commands in given situations.[584] Each Christian will best be suited to ask for wisdom from God (James 1:5), to comb the Scriptures, and to seek godly counsel (Prov. 19:20) to discern how best to seek first the kingdom of God in any particular situation out of love for the King. John Frame, who I am indebted to a great deal in this chapter, offers sage counsel: "This task [Cultural Mandate and Great Commission] presupposes a society in which each member plays a different role in achieving the result...God gives to each believer wisdom to discover how God has gifted him and how he can best use that gift in God's kingdom.

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[579] Frame, *Christian Life*, 345.
[580] Frame, *Christian Life*, 345.
[581] Frame, *Christian Life*, 345-348.
[582] Frame, *Christian Life*, 228.
[583] Frame, *Christian Life*, 228.
[584] Frame, *Christian Life*, 228.

That wisdom should of course be compared with the wisdom of other believers, who can help us to evaluate our gifts."[585]

Conclusion

The kingdom of God provides the framework in which to best understand Christian vocation. First, the kingdom provides the mandate - the objective norms - that govern Christian vocation by the rule of King Jesus. In order to best understand the "rules" of action and what God has called each Christian to obey, we look to the kingdom mandates. Second, the kingdom provides the mission - the providential situations and contexts - in which Christian vocation lives out the kingdom mandates. The kingdom creates the contexts of the family, the church, and the world and God calls Christians to live faithfully in each situation as he speaks into each situation through the Prophet-King Jesus. Third, the kingdom provides the motives - the Spirit-wrought virtues - that drive faithful Christian vocational obedience. The Priest-King Jesus serves as the vicarious atonement and intercessor, sending for the Spirit to regenerate and empower Christians to live obediently to the kingdom mandates in the kingdom mission out of faith, hope, and love.

Christian vocation is life lived in subjection to the King in his kingdom. Christian vocation is not narrow, only applicable to a job. The kingdom of God rules over all things and provides mandates and mission that is broader than just a job. Christian vocation is not to be conceived dualistically, dividing callings between sacred and secular. All of the Christian life is lived *coram Deo*. In that way, every calling of God - in the family, church, or the world - is sacred as it is motivated by faith and hope in and love for King Jesus.

[585] Frame, *Christian Life*, 312.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Seek First the Kingdom

There is on some college campus in Texas right now a young man who has experienced the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been transferred from the domain of darkness into the marvelous light of the kingdom of God. And that young man is now asking the question, "what do I do with my life?" in light of the kingdom of God. This paper is written in response to that young man because I was that young man. In a sense, my seminary studies were birthed from that most fundamental of Christian questions: what does the Lord require of me?

A review of the history of Christian reflection on vocation reveals that this is no new question. Rather, the history of Christian reflection shows that this question is asked by every Christian. The response to that question is shaped by the unique historical situation of the Christian. The earliest Christians were merely seeking to be faithful to God in the midst of a hostile culture, followed by a deepening sense of devotion required when the culture was Christianized. Vocation became so associated with religious service that the dichotomy arose between sacred and secular callings, a dualism protested by the Protestant Reformers. The legacy of the Reformation is that every job is a vocation, but narrowing the concept of vocation to employment was met with criticism and cynicism in the modern era.

What seems to be missing in contemporary conceptions of vocation, however, is an orientation of vocation to a central theme of Scripture, the kingdom of God. The last half-century has seen a resurgence of evangelical reflection on the doctrine of the kingdom of God, bringing

near unity across previous theological divides. A near-consensus now exists that inaugurated eschatology best represents the biblical teaching on the kingdom. In addition, a so-called progressive covenantalism is a helpful biblical-theological framework by which to understand the coming of the kingdom into the world from Genesis to Revelation. The kingdom of God, then, shapes all of the Christian life and should be central to a Christian understanding of vocation.

The doctrine of the kingdom of God provides a triperspectival conception of Christian vocation. First, the kingdom of God through the covenants and commands of God contains the normative mandates that frame the entire question of vocation. Christians live in a reality structured by the kingdom of God and, in which, Christians can best discern what God requires of them.

Second, the kingdom of God through the providence of God commissions the situational mission in which Christians live out obedience in submission to King Jesus. The kingdom of God provides the context in which every Christian lives out the kingdom mandates. Jesus exercises his office as Prophet-King by speaking God's Word into every situation of life.

Lastly, the kingdom of God through the power of the Spirit of God creates in the people of God the existential motives by which Christians live in obedience and submission to King Jesus. The Priest-King makes provision for His people and supplies them with the means by which to be faithful to the kingdom mandates in the kingdom mission. As such, Christians enabled to fulfill their vocation from a willing heart out of love.

A Christian understanding of vocation shaped by the doctrine of the kingdom of God is holistic and integrated. Rather than conceiving of vocation narrowly, this paper shows that God's call to His people is broad, encompassing the effectual call into the kingdom, the call to obey His commands, to love God and neighbor, and to live out the Christian life in the context of the family, church, and the world. Rather than distinguishing between sacred and secular vocations, this paper shows that the kingdom of God permeates, in differing ways, all of creation. In this sense, everything is sacred. There is no situation in which the Christian is not to sanctify themselves and the situation unto God. Therefore, a Christian conception of vocation informed by the doctrine of the kingdom of God is holistic and integrated.

The young man on the college campus in Texas, a child in the faith, would not likely understand every theological, sociological, or historical nuance of this paper. But, what this paper argues is, I believe, exactly what that young man needs to understand about his newfound faith. God's call on his life is not characterized by a mystical, personal revelation, but rather a biblical-covenantal structure to reality, a kingdom mandate. He need not be concerned about making his situation in life more sacred or pursuing some calling deemed more holy, but rather God's kingdom makes the ordinary places holy, places of kingdom mission. And neither does he need to be concerned that a particular calling might make him less holy, but rather that God, by His Spirit, will work in him kingdom motives. To understand God's calling on his life, the young man need only heed the words of the King in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

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