A Scriptural and Confessional Summary
Of the Lutheran Understanding of the Two Kingdoms

I. God’s Reign Through Two Distinct Divine Kingdoms

It all started in the Garden, or rather, it began most immediately on the east steps of Eden. Husband and wife feared, loved and trusted the Tempter above all things, and so they sinned, failing God and thus collapsing on each other. Spiritual death was their instant inheritance, physical death their eventual wages, but the immediate pain was the loss of their home, lovingly created and fashioned for them as a free gift, the concrete form of God’s gracious giving. I wonder if Adam and Eve looked back over their shoulder at the Cherubim with the flaming sword as they walked away, knowing that they would never see that perfect world again. Did they tell their kids what it was like for that brief, glorious time to live in the Garden, where things were perfect, where God alone was God, and where they enjoyed simply being in His presence? Probably, they were human after all, and regret and longing for what was lost is part of the human condition of sin that first set in on the east side of Eden.

Ever since then things have never been right. It’s either too cold or too hot, too wet or too dry, too calm or too windy, abundant or sparse, beautiful or ugly. And when it seems like things just might be as close to perfect as they get outside of Eden, we hold our dying breath, waiting, somehow knowing that it won’t last long. Perhaps that feeling is a memory of the image of God that we lost and an inborn desire to regain what was robbed.

And so ever since the day that holy Cherubim drew his flaming sword, safeguarding the way to the Tree of Life, mankind has been seeking in vain to find the forbidden steps to Eden and to return to the paradise we were created to live in and enjoy in God’s presence. A paradise we have been barred from due to our terminally sinful condition, lest we eat and live forever as the ever-dead but never-dying zombies of Eden’s fall into the blackness of death.
However, that protective sword of mercy has been sheathed in the stone of Golgotha and transformed into the cross of Calvary. Not just the blood of man, but of God in human flesh, flowed from the cross with the watery flood of grace and pardon, and Eden’s gates are no longer barred shut to the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. In Jesus Christ, God has washed us clean from the stain of sin and filled our death with His life. As the heavens opened above the waters of the Jordan, the Father spoke, and the Spirit descended upon His dearly beloved Son, even so in Holy Baptism the waters of the font flowed over you in a flood of forgiveness. The heavens were opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father named you His own dear child.

In the fullness of time, Jesus Christ came, born of a woman, and in Him alone the gates of Eden are open once again to you. This time, not a lush garden in the now lost lands of Mesopotamia, but a heavenly Eden, the true paradise prepared for those who are baptized into and trust in Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection for their forgiveness. The Tree of Life is planted there arching over the River of Life, a stream that makes glad the Kingdom of God. And that Tree once forbidden, now bears fruit in every season for the healing of the nations, the Tree of whose fruit we partake in our Lord’s Body and Blood, for the forgiveness of the fallen.

The time to return home has come as free gift of God’s Grace alone, by Faith alone, and all of this bestowed and sealed by Scripture alone. And this paradise is restored to lost sinners through the ministry of an Embassy of Grace, planted by God in the heart of enemy territory, this broken world, where not even the gates of hell will bring it to ruin. This Embassy, the Church, exists not to change the world, but to bestow life and salvation, peace and comfort, through the preaching of God’s holy Word and the proper giving away of the blessed Sacraments.

Now if all the earth were filled with true Christians, we would live each day filled with hope looking to our heavenly home of which we are true citizens, while at the same time passing as pilgrims through this broken world in the joyful contentment and peace of heaven on earth delivered through the Embassy of God’s Grace in Jesus Christ. This is the Kingdom of the Right.
But not all are believers. The devil has been thrown down and the earth and seas are filled with woe. Satan is the master of disguise and misperception, lies and false hope masked by false promises. The paradise of heaven on earth is hidden except to the eyes of faith, the fullness of God’s promises in Christ are not yet revealed to the eyes of flesh. And so those with eyes that will not see and ears that cannot bear to hear, find no peace at the Embassy of the Church, no forgiveness and comfort in Christ, and so no contentment of life in a broken world that they try desperately to repair like a sinking tanker.

The Old Adam wages his daily battle in the children of God, but he has won the war without fighting in the hearts of unbelievers, who still remember and still long to find the steps to Eden’s paradise, the entrance to the now imaginary picture of perfection on earth. And left unchecked, the Old Adam will seek his own return to Eden, ultimately by means of violence if necessary, thus winning a hollow victory in the pursuit of Paradise on earth. And so we have the Stalins, Lenins, Mussolinis, Hitlers, Jim Jones, Neros and many other starry-eyed politocrats, kings and even today’s “well-intentioned” rulers who would crush anyone that will not embrace their utopian dream. Each and everyone aroused and inflamed by sin and driven by the Old Adam to regain the gates of Eden at any cost.

And so God has graciously given another angel, a messenger with the sword to restrain the Old Adam from his personal pursuit of paradise at any cost. This angel is not the Cherubim of Eden, but the Caesar of Government. Created, established and ordained by God to exercise control over civil affairs and that insurgent Old Adam.

Because the Embassy of the Church must dwell in the enemy land of broken unbelief, God has established the government even as He has established His Church. Two Kingdoms, not separate, but distinct and distinguished from each other in their assigned purposes and missions, even as Law and Gospel are distinguished from each other and yet have the same broad target. These Two Kingdoms are not adversaries, but serve each other, one protecting and one guiding, for the mutual benefit of humankind and the Church’s ministry. Both are ordained, established and blessed by God, that all might come to know Jesus Christ and return home to their true heavenly Eden.
As when Law and Gospel are confused, disaster and death are soon to follow, so when the Two Kingdoms are mixed or baked together the whole lump is leavened and lost. When God’s ordained kingdoms are properly distinguished, when the order is obeyed, God’s blessings flow and both kingdoms flourish to the salvation of all mankind.

But when the order and distinction is overturned, and the Old Adam becomes insubordinate to God’s ordained kingdoms climbing into the driver’s seat of either kingdom, spiritual and physical death and disaster are sure to follow. When the kingdoms are muddled, sin reigns and death holds the field, no matter which kingdom is being driven.

Absolute power corrupts absolutely. History has shown that when the Old Adam drives the Church and the Kingdom of the Right in his desire to subordinate the government in the Kingdom of the Left, Christ is recast as a new Moses, thundering laws that only make Lucifer laugh with glee. The passion for all power, civil and spiritual, sets eternal hell fire to souls and temporal fire to the flesh of enemies branded as heretics and infidels. The good news of love, mercy and grace are all but forgotten by the insubordinate Old Adam when he pushes the Church out of order, to the head of all creation and the sweetness of the Gospel is lost in his quest for domination. The Kingdom of the Right rules by the Gospel alone, not coercion or compulsion. If it’s source and purpose is anything other than delivering to poor miserable sinners the Christ crucified for them, it is not the kingdom Christ established, but the mask of an imposter who is the serpent himself.

The other side of the same coin of history has shown that the Old Adam likes to work for the government as well. Even though God has established government in the Kingdom of the Left to serve and protect His Kingdom of the Right, the government is rarely satisfied with ruling and protecting the body alone, but passionately burns with desire to rule over the soul and conscience as well. Calming the guilty conscience and erasing sinful shame by the hollow comfort of tolerance and individual truth, the Old Adam legislates to destruction the Embassy of the Church that he cannot dominate. If the source and purpose of the government is anything other than protecting poor miserable sinners from each other so that Christ crucified for them, may be delivered to
them, then it is not the kingdom God established, but the mask of an imposter who is the serpent himself, who must then not be obeyed, for God Himself will not share His glory and honor with anyone.

So then, there are two kingdoms. On the Left, the government must exist for the protection of humankind from humankind, lest the world become the Old West and chaos be the sheriff; and as in Judges, “everyone did as was right in their own eyes.” And on the Right, the Church must exist to pour out life and salvation upon poor sinners, uniting them to Christ’s death and resurrection, and to each other in Christian love and unity, lest without the Church, Eden will be eternally barred and lost to the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

Both Kingdoms are a gift, ordained and established by God. Both are vital to our lives on earth and our lives in Christ, not separated, but clearly distinguished from each other.

Understanding the distinction and mutual blessings between these two divine kingdoms and the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, is more an art of the Church’s confession than the orderly schematic of doctrinal textbooks. Our understanding of the Two Kingdoms is built upon, informed and guided by the black and white of Scripture, but not fully colored by it. The Two Kingdoms cannot be reduced to quoting dead theologians and applying their words to our time. The governments were different then. In each generation the Church must stand upon Christ the solid Rock, and study and confess this blessed teaching with as much art and skill as that of the highest art of any Christian, namely that of rightly dividing Law and Gospel.

No matter what century we are in, or which emperor we are under, there will be times of despair and doubt, trial and temptation. But take heart and be at peace because we are always in Christ, given sanctuary in the Embassy of His beloved Church, living each day in the hidden heaven on earth until our eyes behold Him in the clouds and faith gives way to sight. Then every knee will bow and every tongue confess what the church has always believed and confessed, that Jesus Christ is Lord and not even the gates of hell or Caesar will prevail against His beloved Kingdom of the Church for whom He gave His life and took it up again.
II. God’s Kingdom of the Right in Scripture  
A. Matthew 28:16–20 (ESV)  

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

B. Colossians 1:13–18 (ESV)  

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

C. Philippians 3:20 (ESV)  

20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

D. Matthew 16:16–18 (ESV)  

16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

E. John 18:33–37 (ESV)  

33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” 35 Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” 37 Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”


13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”
III. God’s Kingdom of the Left in Scripture
A. Romans 13:1–7 (ESV) 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

B. 1 Peter 2:13–15 (ESV) 13 Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, 14 or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.

C. John 19:10–11 (ESV) 10 So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” 11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

D. Romans 2:14–16 (ESV) 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

IV. Two Kingdoms in The Lutheran Confessions
A. Small Catechism: 4th Commandment
“Honor your father and your mother.”

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

B. Large Catechism: 4th Commandment
In this way He separates and distinguishes father and mother from all other persons upon earth and places them at His side. 106 For it is a far higher thing to honor someone than to love someone, because honor includes not only love, but also modesty, humility, and submission to a majesty hidden in them. 107 Honor requires not only that parents be addressed kindly and with reverence, but also that, both in the heart and with the body, we demonstrate that we value them very highly,
and that, next to God, we regard them as the very highest. For someone we honor from the heart we must also truly regard as high and great…

142 So all whom we call “masters” are in the place of parents and must get their power and authority to govern from them. So also men are all called fathers in the Scriptures, who in their government perform the functions of a father, and have a paternal heart toward their subordinates…

150 The same should also be said about obedience to civil government. This (as we have said) is all included in the place of fatherhood and extends farthest of all relations. Here “father” is not one person from a single family, but it means the many people the father has as tenants, citizens, or subjects. Through them, as through our parents, God gives to us food, house and home, protection, and security. They bear such name and title with all honor as their highest dignity that it is our duty to honor them and to value them greatly as the dearest treasure and the most precious jewel upon earth…

158 So we have two kinds of fathers presented in this commandment: fathers in blood and fathers in office. Or, those who have the care of the family and those who have the care of the country…

167 In addition, it would be well to preach to the parents also, and to those who bear their office. Tell them how they should behave toward those who are given to them for their governance. This is not stated in the Ten Commandments. But it is still abundantly commanded in many places in the Scripture. God wants to have this included in this commandment when He speaks of father and mother. 168 He does not wish to have rogues and tyrants in this office and government. He does not assign this honor to them, that is, power and authority to govern, so they can have themselves worshiped. But they should consider that they are obligated to obey God. First of all, they should seriously and faithfully fulfill their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, and so on, but, most of all, they should train them to honor and praise God [Proverbs 22:6]. 169 Therefore, do not think that this matter is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will. This is God’s strict command and order, to whom also you must give account for it [1 Peter 4:5].

C. Small Catechism: Apostles’ Creed, 1st Article

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil.
All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

D. Small Catechism: Apostles’ Creed, 3rd Article
“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

E. Augsburg Confession XVI Civil Government
1 Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God. 2 They teach that it is right for Christians to hold political office, to serve as judges, to judge matters by imperial laws and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to take oaths when required by the magistrates, for a man to marry a wife, or a woman to be given in marriage [Romans 13; 1 Corinthians 7:2].

3 Our churches condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these political offices to Christians. 4 They also condemn those who do not locate evangelical perfection in the fear of God and in faith, but place it in forsaking political offices. 5 For the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart (Romans 10:10). At the same time, [the Gospel] does not require the destruction of the civil state or the family. The Gospel very much requires that they be preserved as God’s ordinances and that love be practiced in such ordinances. 6 Therefore, it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. 7 The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

F. Augsburg Confession XXVIII Church Authority
1 There has been great controversy about the power of the bishops, in which some have terribly confused the power of the Church with the power of the State. 2 This confusion has produced great war and riot. All the while the popes, claiming the Power of the Keys, have instituted new services and burdened consciences with Church discipline and excommunication. But they have also tried to transfer the kingdoms of this world to the Church by taking the Empire away from the emperor. 3 Learned and godly people have condemned these errors in the Church for a long time. 4 Therefore, our teachers, in order to comfort people’s consciences, were constrained to show the difference between the authority of the Church and the
authority of the State. They taught that both of them are to be held in reverence and honor, as God’s chief blessings on earth, because they have God’s command.

5 Our teachers’ position is this: the authority of the Keys [Matthew 16:19], or the authority of the bishops—according to the Gospel—is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments. 6 Christ sends out His apostles with this command, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you … Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld” (John 20:21–22). 7 And in Mark 16:15, Christ says, “Go … proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.”

8 This authority is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, either to many or to individuals, according to their calling. In this way are given not only bodily, but also eternal things: eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. 9 These things cannot reach us except by the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, as Paul says, “The Gospel … is the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes” (Romans 1:16). 10 Therefore, the Church has the authority to grant eternal things and exercises this authority only by the ministry of the Word. So it does not interfere with civil government anymore than the art of singing interferes with civil government. 11 For civil government deals with other things than the Gospel does. Civil rulers do not defend minds, but bodies and bodily things against obvious injuries. They restrain people with the sword and physical punishment in order to preserve civil justice and peace [Romans 13:1–7].

12 Therefore, the Church’s authority and the State’s authority must not be confused. The Church’s authority has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments [Matthew 28:19–20]. 13 Let it not break into the office of another. Let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world to itself. Let it not abolish the laws of civil rulers. Let it not abolish lawful obedience. Let it not interfere with judgments about civil ordinances or contracts. Let it not dictate laws to civil authorities about the form of society. 14 As Christ says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). 15 Also, “Who made Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14). 16 Paul also says, “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). 17 And, “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

18 This is how our teachers distinguish between the duties of these two authorities. They command that both be honored and acknowledged as God’s gifts and blessings.

G. The Power and Primacy of the Pope, par. 54

54 The chief members of the Church, the kings and princes, should especially guard the interests of the Church. They should see to it that errors are removed and consciences are healed rightly instructed. God specifically warns kings, “Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth” [Psalm 2:10]. It should be the first care of kings to advance God’s glory. It would be very shameful for them to use their influence and power to confirm idolatry [e.g., 1 Kings 14:14–16] and endless other crimes and to slaughter saints.
V. Life in Two Kingdoms
   A. Properly Distinguished

1. Matthew 22:17–22 (ESV)  
   17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”  
   18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?  
   19 Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius.  
   20 And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?”  
   21 They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”  

   When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

2. 1 Timothy 2:1–4 (ESV)  
   1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,  
   2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.  
   3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,  
   4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

   18 So [the Sanhedrin] called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.  
   19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,”  
   20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

   27 And when [the captain and officers] had brought [the apostles], they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them,  
   28 saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”  
   29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.  
   30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.  
   31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.  
   32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

5. Acts 25:10–12 (ESV)  
   10 But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well.  
   11 If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.”  
   12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.”

6. Jeremiah 29:4–7 (ESV)  
   4 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:  
   5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.  
   6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.  
   7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.
B. Muddled and Mixed

1. **Daniel 3:15–18 (ESV)**

15 Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

2. **Daniel 6:10–11, 16-17 (ESV)**

10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God.

16 Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”

17 And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.

3. **Revelation 13 (ESV)**

1 And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

3 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast.

4 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”

5 And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

8 If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

9 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

11 Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

12 It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

13 It performs great signs, even making fire come
down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

The Sea Monster and the Beast with the Lamb’s Horn. A woodcut by Albrecht Dürer
VI. Conclusion

Confessing the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms is the second highest art of the Christian Church, like that of dividing Law and Gospel. Each generation of the Church must take its stand on God’s Holy Word, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in Whom the whole building is held together and grows into a holy temple, an Embassy of Grace in sometimes hostile territory. We take comfort and have peace in knowing that we have been marked in Holy Baptism as citizens of an eternal Heavenly Kingdom, even as we travel through this barren and dying land. Our Lord is faithful and will be with us even unto the end of the ages when He returns with the sound of the trumpet of God and bestows the Crown of Resurrection Life upon His faithful servants and every tear is wiped away. Until then we cling to Him in faith, ever looking the certainty of what is yet unseen and confess with the saints of old the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom every knee will bow in heaven and on earth.

There truly is nothing new under the sun. The trials and tribulations endured by the Christian Church and her children have all been seen before. We would do well in our age to confess with those who have gone before us and who themselves endured the dark days of Caesar’s Old Adam desiring to rule the church, the conscience and the soul. With them we confess the truth that the unbelieving world does not acknowledge and will not confess. There is a ancient writing called the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp that comes down to us from the earliest days of the Church. It’s an interesting little document, but where it really soars is at the end:

“It was the second day of the first fortnight of Xanthicus, seven days before the calends of March, when our blessed Polycarp died his martyr’s death two hours after midday on the Greater Sabbath. The official responsible for his arrest was Herod; the High Priest was Philip of Tralles; and the proconsul was Statius Quadratus – BUT THE RULING MONARCH WAS JESUS CHRIST, WHO REIGNS FOREVER AND EVER. TO HIM BE GIVEN ALL GLORY, HONOR, MAJESTY, AND AN ETERNAL THRONE FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION.” (Martyrdom of Polycarp, par. 21)

To God Alone be the Glory