

Russell Moore has, through a careful evaluation of the contribution of Carl F. H. Henry and others, provided a unique insight for evangelicals attempting to grasp and apply what it means to be a Kingdom Christian. Dr. Moore is one of the brightest minds working today in the arena of the relationship of Christ and the church and their relationship to the culture. Every serious Christian will profit through the reading of this book.

—PAIGE PATTERSON

President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

For far too long, evangelicals have waited for a serious study of the Kingdom of God and its political application. That book has now arrived, and *The Kingdom of Christ* will redefine the conversation about evangelicalism and politics. Russell Moore combines stellar historical and theological research with a keen understanding of cultural and political realities. This is a serious book about a very serious subject, and we are all in Dr. Moore's debt for this outstanding contribution. This is a landmark book by one of evangelicalism's finest minds.

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President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

A faithful heir of Carl F. H. Henry, Russell Moore not only reasserts a coherent Kingdom consensus around which evangelicals can gravitate, he also shows us a way forward in strength and unity. Anyone who cares about the future of evangelicalism will read this volume with both great interest and care.

—C. BEN MITCHELL

Associate Professor of Bioethics and Contemporary Culture,
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Russell D. Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* is at once an enlightening account of the merging theological vision of recent dispensational and covenant theologies, and a stirring call for a unified evangelical social engagement based on this theological consensus. Here, theological inquiry and evangelical social activism meet in a riveting account of where we've been and where we now are in the evangelicalism of the early-twenty-first century. Moore's accomplishment is nothing short of remarkable; his writing is as clear and engaging as it is pro-

found. As Christians called to “understand the times,” we are granted enormous assistance through his careful scholarship and insight, and the church will only be strengthened as she embraces his call for a truly biblical and theologically responsible framework for sociopolitical engagement.

—BRUCE A. WARE

Professor of Christian Theology and Senior Associate Dean,
School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Moore’s book challenges all evangelicals to find common agreement on one basis for political and social involvement: the Kingdom of God is already here but it is not yet fully here. Therefore it is right to seek to advance its influence in all areas of life, including government and society, but with the realization that these activities are never enough apart from primary focus on Christ as King. This is an informative, thought-provoking, and refreshing study that will have perspective-modifying implications for the way Christians understand their role in the world in this present age.

—WAYNE GRUDEM

Research Professor of Bible and Theology, Phoenix Seminary

The
KINGDOM
of CHRIST

THE NEW
EVANGELICAL
PERSPECTIVE

RUSSELL
D. MOORE

CROSSWAY BOOKS

A DIVISION OF
GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective

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Published by Crossway Books
a division of Good News Publishers
1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

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Cover design: Josh Dennis

First printing 2004

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Moore, Russell, 1971-

The kingdom of Christ : the new evangelical perspective / Russell D.

Moore.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58134-627-1 (rov : alk. paper)

1. Kingdom of God. 2. Jesus Christ—Kingdom. 3. Christianity and politics—United States. 4. Evangelicalism—United States.

5. Theology, Doctrinal. I. Title.

BT94.M625 2004

231.7'2—dc22

2004011548

BP 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

INTRODUCTION

The title of this book is, in some ways, awfully misleading. After all, there really is no “new” evangelical perspective about the Kingdom of God. What is true about the Kingdom of Jesus was, in one sense, “new” only when it was announced on the shores of Galilee, whispered in the catacombs of Rome, and shouted in the marketplaces of Ephesus. The Kingdom concept is a mystery older than the creation itself—a mystery that points to God’s cosmic purpose to sum up the entire cosmos under the rule of one human King, Jesus of Nazareth (Eph. 1:10). What is “new” is that many evangelicals have stopped arguing about the Kingdom of God—and have started seeking after it.

From the very beginning of the contemporary evangelical movement, conservative Protestants have bickered and splintered over Kingdom questions. Is it future or present? Is it spiritual or material? Is it the church or the world—or neither or both? Is it to be found in evangelizing the lost or in reclaiming the culture? After a half-century of searching the Scriptures, however, a quiet consensus is emerging about the Kingdom of God—a consensus that offers possibilities for evangelical theology to correct some longstanding errors and missteps. To some degree, the Kingdom confusion among evangelicals was a byproduct of the theological health of the movement—it being protected from liberalism, after all, by the divergent streams of dispensationalism and covenant theology. Now, evangelicals have the opportunity to stop polarizing around the Kingdom question—marching off into partisan camps at war over the prophecy charts at the back of our Bibles.

This book takes a look at the Kingdom through the prism of evangelical political action, but that is not because the Kingdom is a tool to equip evangelicals for politics. It is not even because evangelical politics is all that important, in the larger scheme of things. Instead, it is because the failure of evangelical politics points us to something far more important that underlies it—the failure of evangelical theology. It was the capitulation to the political regime of Nazi Germany that convinced Karl Barth that “German Christianity” had forgotten Christ. In the same way, it was the “uneasy conscience” of a socially and politically disengaged fundamentalism that prompted theologian Carl Henry to question whether evangelicals had an adequate doc-

trine of the Kingdom of God.¹ For Henry and his colleagues, the problem was not that fundamentalists were apolitical—the problem was *why* they were apolitical. Their isolationism sprung from competing and unbiblical views of the Kingdom of God—views that would compromise their witness at almost every other point. And so evangelical political thought revealed the Kingdom crisis in evangelical theology. The same can be said of the theologically anemic (and often missiologically embarrassing) attempts at “Religious Right” and “Religious Left” activism since Henry’s day. Could it be that evangelicals are seen as a political “constituency” because about all we have to offer the watching culture is politics? Could it be that the eclipse of Jesus in evangelical politics is a symptom of the eclipse of Jesus in evangelicalism itself?

This book calls evangelical Christians to shape our identity by our convictions about the Kingdom of God in Christ. The new perspective on the Kingdom of God can define evangelical theology along the lines of the central themes of the Old and New Testament canon. In the end, a renewed focus on the Kingdom is essential if evangelicals are ever going to grapple with the *evangel* of a crucified, resurrected, and enthroned Messiah. As such, American evangelicalism ought to become both more and less political. Evangelical theology will not serve an activist agenda to be an identity caucus in someone’s political party. But evangelical theology will remind Christians that the call to Christ is not a call to “go to heaven when you die,” but instead a call to be “joint-heirs” (KJV) with the Messiah who will inherit an all-encompassing Kingdom. This means that the most important political reality of all is not the local voter precinct or the White House reception room, but the creaky pews of the local congregation. A renewed Kingdom theology can remind evangelical churches that they are the rulers of the universe—but not yet (1 Cor. 6:3). This means that evangelicals can see the Kingdom of God as something more than the terminus point on the prophecy chart; something more than a crocheted sentiment hanging on the kitchen wall. It means that evangelicals can confront the Caesars of this age with a truth that once caused riots in the streets—there is “another king” (Acts 17:7). It means that we can remind ourselves that the only perspective on the Kingdom of Christ that matters ultimately is quite old. And that perspective has already been addressed over the waters of the Jordan and in the caverns of a garden tomb, and will be repeated once more before a watching cosmos: “Jesus is Lord” (Phil. 2:9-11).

AN UNEASY CONSCIENCE IN THE NAKED PUBLIC SQUARE: EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY AND EVANGELICAL ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

“Modern conservatism owes much of its success to the aggressive political activity of evangelical Christian churches,” observes commentator Russell Baker. “In Goldwater’s era they stayed out of politics; now they crack whips.”¹ Despite the exaggeration of this statement, it illustrates a key problem in constructing a basis for a theology of evangelical engagement. For much of the American news media, if not for large sectors of the American public as a whole, evangelical churches seem at times to be caricatured as not much more than Sunday morning distribution centers for Christian Coalition voter guides. The postwar evangelical project called for a vital presence of evangelicalism in the public square, but it did so in terms of a theologically cohesive foundation for cultural and political interpenetration. For the pioneers of contemporary evangelicalism, the political isolationism of conservative Protestantism was not problematic because it sidelined fundamentalists as a voting bloc; it was problematic because it pointed to underlying theological problems, centered on an inability to come to terms with the most central theme of Scripture—the Kingdom of God. And so, the task of evangelical engagement was about a recovery of Kingdom theology—not simply a mobilization of evangelical voters. In the years since World War II, however, the kind of theologically informed engagement envisioned by Carl Henry and the movement’s other early theologians has not often been reflected in the most visible efforts at evangelical sociopolitical action. And, as with the fundamentalist isolationists before them, the failure of evangelical politics is often, at root, the failure of an evangelical theology of the Kingdom.

AMERICAN POLITICS AND EVANGELICAL ENGAGEMENT

The perception that evangelicalism is primarily a political movement is partially understandable since, for much of the nation, evangelicalism seemed to emerge *ex nihilo* in the mid-1970s, largely in relation to political happenings of the time, namely, the conversion of Republican Watergate felon Charles Colson and the very public evangelical identity of Democratic presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, with each announcing that he had been “born again.”² Shortly thereafter, widespread publicity was given to the mass organizing of evangelicals and fundamentalists to oppose Carter on issues such as abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the Panama Canal Treaty.³ Since then, the evangelical presence on the national scene has been closely linked to evangelicals as a political constituency. Thus, the most widely disseminated analyses of American evangelicalism have seemed too often content to trace the movement in terms of the progression from Moral Majority to the Liberty Federation, from the Pat Robertson presidential campaign to the Christian Coalition. Even grassroots revivalist movements such as Promise Keepers are often considered part of an electoral constituency.⁴

Historians rightly identify the first visible rumblings of evangelical social engagement with Carl F. H. Henry’s 1947 jeremiad, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.⁵ Still, Henry could not have foreseen the way in which evangelicals would in fact lift their voices in the public square in the generation after *Uneasy Conscience*. After all, the National Association of Evangelicals of the 1940s and 50s deemed it necessary to plead for fairness for evangelicals on the public airwaves. With the onset of Moral Majority and other activist groups in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, the mid-century urgings of Henry seemed dated, if not inconceivable, to a new generation of politically savvy evangelicals. The impetus to evangelical engagement included the emergence of an evangelical left, including an “Evangelicals for McGovern” organization formed to oppose Billy Graham’s friend Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election.⁶ While the evangelical sociopolitical left continued to exist throughout the rest of the century, most sectors of its influence seemed to drift away from any semblance of evangelical theological commitments.⁷ Instead, the most vigorous evangelical forays into the sociopolitical arena have come from the right side of the cultural and political spectrum.

The most significant move toward evangelical engagement did not come through a reflection on the philosophical appeal of Henry or any other theologian. Instead, it came through the mobilization of the Christian right following the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, an act that served as the opening shot of the “culture wars.” In 1976, the Jimmy

Carter campaign cleared the path for religious conservatives through Carter's self-disclosure of a new-birth experience, a disclosure that called for rigorous "spin control" from the campaign to convince the public that, among other things, Carter did not hear audible voices from God.⁸ By the next election cycle, evangelical conservative activists would have a forum to question Republican primary candidates about their personal regeneration, or lack thereof.⁹ By the end of the century, few eyebrows were raised when the Republican presidential frontrunner spoke in terms reminiscent of Jimmy Carter of "recommitting" his life to Jesus Christ through the ministry of Billy Graham.¹⁰ The public discussions of evangelical piety were not limited to candidate autobiographies. Appeals to religious conservatives infused much of American political discussions, especially during the Reagan administration of the 1980s. After all, even Reagan's historic denunciation of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," it must be remembered, was delivered before the National Association of Evangelicals. Even more remarkable, and relatively unnoticed, is the fact that this geopolitically significant statement was set in the context of Reagan's prayer that those behind the Iron Curtain might be born again, a comment that would have been unthinkable, even for Jimmy Carter, only a few years before.¹¹

The emergence of politically active evangelicals, led by populist figures such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, received a mixed reception among their political cobelligerents. Conservative theorist Robert Nisbet denounced the evangelical conservatives as not conservative at all because they rooted their ideology in a theological underpinning, "a characteristic they share more with those Revolution-supporting clerics in France and England to whom Burke gave the labels of 'political theologians' and 'theological politicians,' not, obviously, liking either."¹² Most of the Republican conservative establishment, however, received the evangelical constituency as a key voting bloc, especially in the South and Midwest. One Jewish neo-conservative theorist, for example, wrote that most of his fellow Jewish conservatives, "however bemused they may be by styles of evangelical piety—a bemusement, I might add, shared by a number of non-evangelical Christians—still have no problem counting Christian conservatives as staunch cultural and political allies."¹³

The emergence of the Christian right, however, was not about crafting a united evangelical theology of sociopolitical engagement. Instead, evangelical political activists practically celebrated the fact that their entrance into the public arena was more of a forced conscription than a purposeful engagement.¹⁴ Even many nonevangelicals, who shared some of the same cultural goals as the Christian right, supported the defensive nature of evangelical engagement.¹⁵ As

Yale University law professor Stephen Carter notes, “The more that a nation chooses to secularize the principal contact points between government and people—not only the public schools, but little things, like names and numbers and symbols, and big things, like taxes and marriage and, ultimately, politics itself—the more it will persuade many religious people that a culture war has indeed been declared, and not by the Right.”¹⁶

Thus, the political activism of twentieth-century evangelicals was not an essentially theological movement, even though many of the activists were reliant on the kind of worldview formulations provided by evangelicalism’s theologians and philosophers.¹⁷ Some of this had to do with an American public ignorant of and uninterested in the theological nuances of evangelical theology.¹⁸ Much more had to do, however, with the motivations and public statements of the politicized evangelicals themselves. Evangelical political action, to begin with, often failed to see the larger social and political nature and the interrelationships of the issues over which they were so energized.¹⁹ Moreover, the Christian right often deliberately sought to avoid theological commitments, for fear that they could not sustain the traditionalist coalition of evangelicals, Roman Catholics, conservative Jews, Mormons, and even right-leaning secularists. As Jerry Falwell explained, “Moral Majority is a political organization and is not based on theological considerations.”²⁰ Similarly, the Christian Coalition’s Ralph Reed contended, “This is not a vision exclusively for those who are evangelical or Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox or Jewish. This vision makes room for people of all faiths—and for those with no faith at all.”²¹

Even so, the lack of an overarching theology of evangelical engagement did not save the Christian right’s political coalition, but instead unraveled it. The *ad hoc* nature of the religious right left evangelicals without the theoretical tools to evaluate political priorities *theologically*, and thus to articulate the issues in terms of an overarching evangelical worldview.²² This further alienated some in the evangelical constituency, who began to wonder if evangelical political priorities were being negotiated according to the platform of the national Republican Party, rather than according to biblical revelation.²³ Moreover, at the century’s end, evangelical optimism about their place in the “silent majority” of the American mainstream was replaced in many sectors by a sober pessimism that American culture was “slouching towards Gomorrah.”²⁴ Religious conservatives would then broach the subject, not only of whether Christians should engage the public square but also of whether they could any longer support the American regime at all, or whether the American project was irreparably broken.²⁵

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY AND EVANGELICAL ENGAGEMENT

While the precise definition of evangelicalism may be hotly debated among evangelicals themselves, all sides agree that the term does not refer primarily to a voting bloc of the Democratic or Republican National Committees. This does not mean, however, that sociopolitical activism is incidental to evangelical identity. Evangelicalism, at least as originally conceived by the theologians at the helm of the postwar evangelical renaissance, is first of all a *theological* movement. Indeed, even the postwar call for sociopolitical engagement was cast in terms of a self-consciously theological agenda. As a result, the evangelical attempt to engage politically without attention to these prior questions of theological self-identity and underlying philosophy has served only to frustrate the kind of evangelical engagement envisioned by the movement's founding theologians.

Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, after all, was not first of all a sociopolitical tract. Instead, it served in many ways to define theologically much of what it meant to be a "new evangelical," in contrast to the older fundamentalism.²⁶ Along with Ramm, Carnell, and others, Henry pressed the theological case for evangelicalism in terms of a vigorous engagement with nonevangelical thought.²⁷ As articulated by Henry and the early constellations of evangelical theology, such as Fuller Theological Seminary and the National Association of Evangelicals, evangelicalism would not differ with fundamentalism in the "fundamentals" of doctrinal conviction, but in the application of Christian truth claims onto all areas of human endeavor.²⁸ Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, which set the stage for evangelical differentiation from isolationist American fundamentalism, sought to be what Harold J. Ockenga called in his foreword to the monograph "a healthy antidote to fundamentalist aloofness in a distraught world."²⁹ Thus, the call to sociopolitical engagement was not incidental to evangelical theological identity, but was at the forefront of it. Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, and the movement it defined, sought to distinguish the postwar evangelical effort so that evangelical theologians, as one observer notes, "found themselves straddling the fence between two well-established positions: fundamentalist social detachment and the liberal Social Gospel."³⁰

Such "straddling," however, is an inaccurate term if it carries the idea that Henry and his postwar colleagues sought to find a middle way between fundamentalism and the Social Gospel. The evangelicals charged the fundamentalists with misapplying their theological convictions, but they further charged the Social Gospel with having no explicit theology at all. "As Protestant liberalism lost a genuinely theological perspective, it substituted mainly a political program," Henry lamented.³¹ The new evangelical theologians maintained that their agenda was far from a capitulation to the Social Gospel, but was instead

the conservative antidote to it.³² This was because, Henry argued, evangelicalism was a theology calling for engagement, not a program for engagement calling for a theology. The Social Gospel theologians, Henry claimed, “exalt the social issue above the theological, and prize the Christian religion mainly as a tool for justifying an independently determined course of social action.”³³ Nonetheless, fundamentalism was also, in many ways, not theological enough for Henry and his cohorts, a fact that lay at the root of fundamentalist isolation, as the evangelicals saw it. Henry commended fundamentalists for their defense of the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, and so forth. This was not enough, he warned. “The norm by which liberal theology was gauged for soundness unhappily became the summary of fundamentalist doctrine,” he wrote. “Complacency with fragmented doctrines meant increasing failure to comprehend the relationship of underlying theological principles.”³⁴ This meant, Henry argued, that although conservative Christians could apply the biblical witness to evangelistic endeavors and certain basic doctrinal affirmations, “they have neglected the philosophical, scientific, social, and political problems that agitate our century,” such that those seeking to find a theoretical structure for making metaphysical sense of the current situation were forced to find it in Marxism or Roman Catholicism.³⁵

But doctrinal reductionism was merely a symptom of the crisis of fundamentalist isolation. The effort toward a “united evangelical action” in the public square was likewise hampered by the internal lack of cohesiveness within the American evangelical coalition itself. It is here, at the core of evangelical identity, that conservative Protestantism faced its crisis over the Kingdom of God. Despite the assertions that contemporary evangelicalism can be described best as a doctrinal “kaleidoscope” of various competing ideologies, a cursory glance at the postwar evangelical coalition will reveal less of a “kaleidoscope” than a river, fed by at least two very distinctly identified streams.³⁶ A vast array of historians has observed that the evangelical movement was strongly influenced by, as Sydney Ahlstrom puts it, a Reformed “denominational, seminary-oriented group” and “a Bible institute group with strong premillennial and dispensational interests” that were able to maintain an “uneasy alliance” against the common foe of modernism since dispensationalism gave the conservatives “a measure of interdenominational cohesion and esprit” while Reformed theology gave the movement “theological and historical prowess.”³⁷ While some elements of this historiography are contested, the preeminence of these two streams in shaping contemporary evangelical theology is not in dispute.³⁸

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy had provided a common enemy against which conservative Protestants, especially confessional

Calvinists and dispensational premillennialists, could coalesce in a common defense of orthodoxy. Henry, however, sought to serve in a role similar to that of William F. Buckley, Jr., in Buckley's successful attempt to create a "fusionist" postwar conservative political coalition between libertarians and traditionalists against the common threat of global communism and domestic liberalism.³⁹ The intellectual leaders of the fledgling evangelical movement after World War II recognized that a vast cooperative movement of conservative American Protestants would require more than tactical alliances against mainline liberalism on the left, obscurantist fundamentalism on the right, and a rising tide of secularism on the horizon. Henry's *Uneasy Conscience*, therefore, insisted that a socially and politically engaged evangelicalism could not penetrate society so long as the movement itself was saddled with internal theological skirmishes.⁴⁰ In this, Henry received the hearty agreement of other leaders such as Harold J. Ockenga and Edward J. Carnell.⁴¹

The skirmishes between Reformed and dispensational theologies were symptomatic of what Henry viewed as part of a larger trend of evangelical "navel-gazing."⁴² This was, however, a real threat to evangelical theological cohesiveness, especially since the debates between the groups predated the postwar evangelical movement itself.⁴³ This lack of cohesion was even more important given that the bone of contention between evangelical covenantalists and evangelical dispensationalists was the concept Henry identified in *Uneasy Conscience* as most fundamental to an articulation of Christian sociopolitical engagement: the Kingdom of God.⁴⁴ Thus, the emerging evangelical movement could not dismiss the covenant/dispensational controversies over the Kingdom as mere quibbling over secondary matters, nor could these concerns be divorced from the rest of the doctrinal synthesis as though the differences were akin to the timing of the Rapture. Dispensationalists charged covenant theologians with shackling the biblical witness to a unitary understanding centered on the justification of individuals rather than on the larger cosmic purposes of God. Covenant theologians accused dispensationalists of denying the present reality of the Kingdom of Christ, divorcing the relevance of the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount from this age, and with denigrating the centrality of the church by considering it a "parenthesis" in the plan of God. These Kingdom-oriented differences were multitudinous, and none of them could be resolved by an umbrella statement on last things appended to the conclusion of the National Association of Evangelicals statement of faith.

Despite some exhortations to the contrary, the evangelical movement's theologians seemed to realize that more than doctrinal détente was needed between these two groups if evangelicalism were ever to go beyond its

Kingdom paralysis toward a cohesive theology of evangelical engagement. Henry's *Uneasy Conscience* waded into the Kingdom debate as an incipient call for a new consensus, one that was a break from the Kingdom concept of classical dispensationalism and also from the spiritual understanding of many covenant theologians.⁴⁵ Henry was joined in this by the exegetical and biblical theological syntheses of George Eldon Ladd, who went even further in calling for a new evangelical vision of the Kingdom, usually riling both dispensational premillennialists and covenantal amillennialists in the process.⁴⁶

Beyond the mere matter of a Kingdom "cold war" between these two streams of evangelical theology, however, was the fact that the differences on the Kingdom were directly correlated to various aspects of the evangelical sociopolitical task. The concept of the Kingdom was thus off-limits to the construction of an evangelical political theology, a situation that would paralyze any such effort since the problematic features of both fundamentalism and the Social Gospel in relation to the public square were directly related to Kingdom concepts. The incendiary debates about the Kingdom within conservative Christianity, particularly between dispensationalists and covenant theologians, had led, Henry argued, to a "growing reluctance to explicate the kingdom idea in fundamentalist preaching."⁴⁷ This aversion was so pronounced, he noted, that a fundamentalist spokesman had warned him to "stay away from the kingdom" when addressing the root of the uneasy conscience.⁴⁸

Jettisoning such advice, however, Henry set forth his manifesto for sociopolitical engagement as, above all, a theological statement; more specifically, it was a plea for an evangelical Kingdom theology.⁴⁹ For Henry, such a Kingdom theology was urgent not only because of the theological fragmentation of evangelicals over the Kingdom question, but also because only a Kingdom theology could address the specific theological reasons behind fundamentalist disengagement:

Contemporary evangelicalism needs (1) to reawaken the relevance of its redemptive message to the global predicament; (2) to stress the great evangelical agreements in a common world front; (3) to discard elements of its message which cut the nerve of world compassion as contradictory to the inherent genius of Christianity; (4) to restudy eschatological convictions for a proper perspective which will not unnecessarily dissipate evangelical strength in controversy over secondary positions, in a day when the significance of the primary insistences is international.⁵⁰

The formation of such a Kingdom consensus was, however, easier proposed than accomplished, not only because of the internal theological Kingdom ten-

sions within evangelicalism, but also because of the role of Kingdom theology in nonevangelical American Christianity. After all, a Kingdom consensus had indeed been achieved within the ranks of Protestant liberalism by the onset of the early twentieth century.⁵¹ The integrative motif of the “Kingdom of God” proposed by mainline Protestant theologians was most vigorously opposed by dispensationalist and Reformed conservatives.⁵² The ethical and anti-supernatural “Kingdom” offered by theologians such as Albrecht Ritschl, covenantalist biblical theologian Geerhardus Vos contended, gave liberals “an opportunity to remain within the circle of religion and yet have less of the obsession of God in religion.”⁵³ Vos contrasted the definition “of God the Kingdom” in the theology of Jesus and the apostles with “the Kingdom (of God)” as offered by contemporary liberal theologians.⁵⁴

KINGDOM THEOLOGY AND EVANGELICAL ENGAGEMENT

In the years since *Uneasy Conscience*, evangelical theology’s “cold war” over the Kingdom has thawed dramatically. Remarkably, the move toward a consensus Kingdom theology has come most markedly not from the broad center of the evangelical coalition, as represented by Henry or Ladd, but from the rival streams of dispensationalism and covenant theology themselves. Progressive dispensationalists, led by theologians such as Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, and Robert Saucy, have set forth a counterproposal to almost the entire spectrum of traditional dispensational thought.⁵⁵ With much less fanfare, but with equal significance, a group of covenant theologians, led by scholars such as Anthony Hoekema, Vern Poythress, Edmund Clowney, and Richard Gaffin, has also proposed significant doctrinal development within their tradition.⁵⁶ The move toward such development has been prompted by a Reformed theology dependent on the redemptive-historical emphasis of Geerhardus Vos.⁵⁷

Interestingly, this growing consensus did not come through joint “manifestos,” but through sustained theological reflection. The cooperative doctrinal endeavors between dispensationalists and covenantalists, especially through the Evangelical Theological Society’s Dispensational Study Group, have resulted in what one dispensationalist scholar calls a spirit of “irenic yet earnest interaction” over the meaning of the Kingdom.⁵⁸ Nor has the consensus come through a doctrinal “cease-fire” in order to skirt the issue of the relationship of the Kingdom to the present mission of the people of God. Instead, it came as both traditions sought to relate their doctrinal distinctives to the overarching theme of the Kingdom of God as an integrative motif for their respective systems. Whatever the objections of critics in both traditions, progressive dispensationalists did not set out to “covenantalize” dispensational

theology, nor did modified covenantalists set out to “dispensationalize” covenant theology. Rather, the coalescence with the other tradition on various disputed points seems almost coincidental in the scholarship of both groups.

Instead, at the forefront of the proposals within both traditions stands a more sweeping agenda—namely, an attempt to find a unifying center for their respective theologies in the overarching concept of the Kingdom of God. Progressive dispensationalists articulate the Kingdom as the central integrative motif of their system, citing this as a major distinction from earlier forms of dispensational theology.⁵⁹ In fact, the move toward a Kingdom theology even accounts for the name of the newer form of dispensationalism. It is called “progressive” not because it is more contemporary than other forms of dispensationalism but rather because in it “the dispensations *progress* by revealing different aspects of the final unified redemption,” namely, the eschatological Kingdom of God.⁶⁰ At the same time, the modified covenantalists insist that their contention for the unity of the covenant of grace is expressed not primarily in a pre-temporal decree or in a static understanding of redemption, but rather through the unity of God’s eschatological purposes to “restore and renew the human race and the cosmos” through the triumph of the eschatological Kingdom of God.⁶¹ In this, the modified covenantalists reconfigure the emphases of the American Reformed tradition, while relating to a prominent theme in the Dutch Kuyperian stream of Reformed theology.⁶²

The question of the place of this Kingdom consensus within evangelical theology is not isolated from the question of evangelical sociopolitical involvement. This is true, first of all, because it affects what Mark Noll identifies as the chief “apolitical impetus” of conservative Christianity’s doctrinal streams, traditional dispensationalism and the southern Presbyterian concept of the “spirituality of the church.”⁶³ The emergence of a Kingdom theology is criticized by both traditionalist covenant theologians and traditionalist dispensationalists for the sociopolitical ramifications such developments bring.⁶⁴ The move toward an evangelical Kingdom theology is not simply the construction of a broad, comprehensive center for evangelical theological reflection. As the Kingdom idea has been explored within evangelical theology, and within the sub-traditions of dispensationalism and covenantalism, specific points of contention have been addressed, especially in terms of the way in which the Kingdom concept relates to the consummation of all things, the salvation of the world, and the mission of the church. In so doing, this emerging Kingdom theology addresses the very same stumbling blocks to evangelical cultural engagement that were once identified as the roots of conservative Christianity’s “uneasy conscience.”

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1947).

CHAPTER ONE

¹ Russell Baker, "Mr. Right," *New York Review of Books*, May 17, 2001, 8.

² Charles Colson's conversion was the subject of his popular autobiography, *Born Again* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Chosen, 1976). Carter unabashedly recounted his own evangelical experience on the campaign trail and in his campaign autobiography, *Why Not the Best?* (Nashville: Broadman, 1975), published by the publishing arm of Carter's denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). While Colson, also a Southern Baptist, would remain a fixture in the evangelical subculture, Carter's rift with conservative evangelicals would eventually manifest itself in a growing embrace of the mainline Protestant left, including the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate dissident group within the Southern Baptist Convention. Carter links his disaffection with the denomination to the SBC's increasing support of a conservative social agenda, which the former President describes as "a threat to human rights, and to democracy and freedom" (cited in Peter G. Bourne, *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Postpresidency* [New York: Scribner, 1997], 497-498).

³ Carter expressed his frustrations with the evangelical activists on these issues in his presidential memoir, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam, 1982), 561-562. These frustrations include being accused of "secular humanism" by the conservative leadership of Carter's denomination.

⁴ See, for instance, Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford, 1998), 216-235.

⁵ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1947).

⁶ The "Evangelicals for McGovern" campaign was spearheaded in part by Anabaptist theologian Ronald J. Sider. It would provide the basis for the 1973 politically liberal "Chicago Declaration" and, later, the formation of Sider's Evangelicals for Social Action. See Tim Stafford, "Ron Sider's Unsettling Crusade," *Christianity Today*, April 27, 1992, 18-22; and Ronald J. Sider, ed., *The Chicago Declaration* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1974). The Chicago Declaration included some political and theological liberals whose "evangelical" credentials were dubious even at the time, such as Southern Baptist ethicists Foy Valentine and James Dunn. It also included some who would be the mainstay in the call for a new evangelical left, such as Sider, Richard Pierard, John Howard Yoder, Jim Wallis, and Richard Mouw. Surprisingly, the declaration's signers also included Bernard Ramm and Carl F. H. Henry. Henry later wrote

that he was shocked and disappointed by the leftist tone of the final draft of the document, which “called for a bold attack on ‘maldistribution of the nation’s wealth and services’ but remained silent about Marxism’s inability to produce wealth” (Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of a Theologian* [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986], 348).

⁷ This would include magazines such as *Sojourners* and *The Other Side*, which increasingly came to rely on Roman Catholic liberation theologies and mainline ecumenical political theologies in articulating their concerns. *The Other Side* grew closer and closer to the sexual libertarianism rejected by most of the Chicago Declaration evangelicals until it finally embraced the cultural left’s acceptance of homosexual relationships as a matter of social justice. The leftist evangelicals often sought to transcend the Reformed/dispensationalist alliance of the previous generation by pointing evangelicals back to the nineteenth-century traditions of Arminian postmillennial revivalist abolitionists such as Charles G. Finney. See, for example, Ronald J. Sider, “An Historic Moment for Biblical Social Concern,” in *Chicago Declaration*, 12-13; and *One-Sided Christianity? Uniting the Church to Heal a Lost and Broken World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993), 17-19. See also Jim Wallis, *Who Speaks for God? An Alternative to the Religious Right—A New Politics of Compassion, Community, and Civility* (New York: Delacorte, 1996), 16-22. Wallis sees a “hijacking” of this earlier progressive evangelical tradition by the conservatives emerging from the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. Ironically, Wallis was reared in the dispensationalist tradition of J. N. Darby’s Plymouth Brethren churches and began his radical social activism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. See Garry Wills’s foreword to Wallis’s *The Soul of Politics: A Practical and Prophetic Vision for Change* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), ix-x. Wallis takes on the political assumptions of Reformed evangelicals, even those of a moderately liberal stripe, by charging that “the problem is not that we are not political, but that we are not political in the same way that our Reformed critics are—and the way they think Christians ought to be.” In the place of a Reformed paradigm, Wallis posits an Anabaptist one. Jim Wallis, “What Does Washington Have to Say to Grand Rapids?” *Sojourners*, July 1977, 3-4.

⁸ Jules Witcover, *Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency* (New York: Viking, 1977), 270-272.

⁹ William Martin offers a glimpse of the dynamics involved in such meetings, contrasting the language used by 1980 Republican presidential candidates John Connally and Ronald Reagan during two separate meetings with evangelicals. Using the terminology of his “Evangelism Explosion” training course, Presbyterian pastor D. James Kennedy asked Connally what reason he would give should he die and God were to ask him why he should be admitted into heaven. Martin quotes a participant at the meeting: “Connally said, ‘Well, my mother was a Methodist, my pappy was a Methodist, my grandmother was a Methodist, and I’d just tell him I ain’t any worse than any of the other people that want to get to heaven.’ Well, that fell like a stone on all these Christian leaders.” When Kennedy asked Reagan the same question later, “Reagan dropped his eyes, looked at his feet, and said, ‘I wouldn’t give God any reason for letting me in. I’d just ask for mercy, because of what Jesus Christ did for me at Calvary.’” Reagan, of course, won the support of most of the evangelical leaders present despite the fact that, as Martin notes, “he was not a regular churchgoer and would surely have been soundly defeated by Jimmy Carter in the ‘Sword Drills,’ contests Southern Baptist youngsters use to sharpen and show off their knowledge of Scripture” (William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* [New York: Broadway, 1996], 208-209).

¹⁰ George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep* (New York: William Morrow, 1999), 135-139. Bush did face controversy regarding his religious beliefs. It was because of his appearance at the racially segregated Bob Jones University during the South Carolina primary and because he cited Jesus as his favorite political philosopher in a primary debate.

Unlike Jimmy Carter, however, Bush ignited no political firestorm when he declared himself to be a “born again” Christian. Indeed, Bush relied on evangelicals to give him the margin of victory in his primary campaign against the reformist (and relatively secularist) John McCain.

¹¹ “Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination over all peoples on the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world” (Ronald Wilson Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983,” in Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989], 178). The term “evil empire” almost immediately replaced “focus of evil in the modern world” in the parlance of public opinion and media commentators.

¹² Robert Nisbet, *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 104.

¹³ James Nuechterlein, “Conservative Confusions,” *First Things*, May 2000, 7.

¹⁴ Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed, for example, appealed to the mainstream nature of the Christian right in the 1990s by arguing, “The movement is best understood as an essentially defensive struggle by people seeking to sustain their faith and values. They want good schools, safe neighborhoods, faith-knit communities, and lower government debt to protect the financial future of their children. They are far less interested in legislating against the sins of others, and far more interested in protecting their own right to practice their religion and raise their children in a manner consistent with their values” (Ralph Reed, *After the Revolution: How the Christian Coalition Is Impacting America* [Dallas: Word, 1996], 18).

¹⁵ Thus, one Jewish neo-conservative writes, “Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians were once content to render unto Caesar what was Caesar’s and to concentrate on saving their own souls. What drew them into politics, first behind Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and then to Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition, was not any wish to impose their own views and mores on the rest of us. To the contrary: Far from being an aggressive move, it was a defensive one. They were trying to protect their own communities from the aggressions the liberal culture was committing against *them*, with the aid of the courts, the federal bureaucracies, and the ubiquitous media” (Norman Podhoretz, “The Christian Right and Its Demonizers,” *National Review*, April 3, 2000, 31-32).

¹⁶ Stephen L. Carter, *God’s Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics* (New York: Basic, 2000), 2.

¹⁷ One Protestant liberal ethicist, for example, argues that behind many of the positions of the populist Christian right leaders “is the work of such conservative theologians of a previous generation as Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius Van Til, and Carl F. H. Henry” (J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Perspectives on Politics*, rev. and expanded ed. [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000], 129).

¹⁸ “Most nonevangelicals wouldn’t know an errantist from an inerrantist, a pre- from a post- from an a-millennialist, and think being ‘born again’ is a warm tingle in the toes,” observed Lutheran historian Martin E. Marty in the mainline Protestant magazine *Christian Century*. “But they do know that the evangelical-moralist sector has made most of the news in the past 12 years, and that it includes much more than the evangelism of Billy Graham” (Martin E. Marty, “The Years of the Evangelicals,” *Christian Century*, February 15, 1989, 171). The fact that Marty’s analysis of evangelicalism was written in the aftermath of the well-publicized string of sexual and financial scandals within the media empires of television evangelists such as Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart only serves to strengthen Marty’s point.

¹⁹ As one observer notes, “Evangelical conservatives often confused the issue by claiming that their concern was to defend the private family and Christian norms against the larger, public, secular world. This view tended to obscure the fact that the issues were inevitably public with great public consequences” (Robert Booth Fowler, *A New Engagement: Evangelical Political Thought, 1966–1976* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982], 191).

²⁰ Jerry Falwell, “An Agenda for the 1980s,” in *Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987), 113.

²¹ Reed, *After the Revolution*, 11.

²² Thus, evangelical theologians such as Carl Henry were horrified to find some in the Christian right “attaching Christian identity to specific legislative proposals such as a balanced-budget amendment or line item veto” (Carl F. H. Henry, *Has Democracy Had Its Day?* [Nashville: ERLC Publications, 1996], 53).

²³ For instance, two early leaders of Moral Majority later wondered whether evangelicals had forgotten that societal ills can be remedied only “by his Spirit, not through the Republican or Democratic party; and only through individual human hearts, not through human institutions, and most especially not through those representing the kingdoms of this world” (Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson, *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999], 178).

²⁴ Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). Compare Bork’s outlook with that of Jerry Falwell, who proclaimed in his 1980 manifesto that “Americans want to see this country come back to basics, back to values, back to biblical morality, back to sensibility, back to patriotism” (Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980], 19). This optimism was not limited to the religious conservative activists. Patrick J. Buchanan, then a syndicated columnist and former Nixon White House aide, had expressed the same sentiments in traditionalist conservative terms in the post-Watergate era, arguing that the basically conservative will of the people was subverted consistently by a center-left coalition in the government and party structures (Patrick J. Buchanan, *Conservative Votes, Liberal Victories: Why the Right Has Failed* [New York: Quadrangle, 1975]). As late as the 1990s, the Christian Coalition’s Pat Robertson likewise expressed his belief that most Americans were ideologically in sync with the religious right (Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide: The Fall of Liberalism and the Rise of Common Sense* [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1993]).

²⁵ Richard John Neuhaus sparked this discussion with a symposium on the “judicial usurpation of politics” in his *First Things* magazine. “What is happening now is the displacement of a constitutional order by a regime that does not have, will not obtain, and cannot command the consent of the people. If enough people do not care or do not know, that can be construed as a kind of negative consent, but it is not what the American people were taught to call government by the consent of the governed” (Richard John Neuhaus, “The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics,” *First Things*, November 1996, 18). The resulting controversy is recorded in Mitchell S. Muncy, *The End of Democracy?* (Dallas: Spence, 1997); and *The End of Democracy? II: A Crisis of Legitimacy* (Dallas: Spence, 1999).

²⁶ As the editor of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s *Decision* magazine would note, “The book dropped like a bomb into the peaceful summer Bible conference atmosphere of the postwar evangelical community” (Sherwood Eliot Wirt, *The Social Conscience of the Evangelical* [New York: Harper & Row, 1968], 47).

²⁷ This was not only in the social and political arenas. Henry sought to form an evangelical movement that would engage robustly the current streams of philosophy, soci-

ology, scientific thought, and political theory. See, for instance, Carl F. H. Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1946).

²⁸ Evangelicalism was not a repudiation of fundamentalism but a reform movement within it. Henry, even in his most insistent criticisms of fundamentalism, asserted that he wished to “perform surgery” on fundamentalism, not to kill it (Henry, *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 9). Indeed, Henry even maintained that his sharpest attack on contemporary fundamentalism was part of “self-examination currently going on in alert fundamentalist circles,” rather than “a direct assault on basic convictions” such as those being lodged by continental theologians such as Emil Brunner (Carl F. H. Henry, *The Protestant Dilemma: An Analysis of the Current Impasse in Theology* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948], 58 n. 43). Indeed one observer reflected on the emergence of the postwar evangelical movement, not as a counterinsurgency against fundamentalism, but simply as “the fundamentalist reconsideration of itself” (Ronald H. Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1963], 29).

²⁹ Harold J. Ockenga, “Introduction,” in Henry, *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 14.

³⁰ Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 138. Others have noted an even broader sense in which Henry and the early evangelical theologians sought to find a middle way theologically. Carl Trueman sees this mediating position especially in Henry’s *God, Revelation, and Authority*: “Henry’s entire work—of which *GRA* is the greatest single example—must be understood as an attempt to restate conservative Protestant theology in a manner which takes seriously the epistemological concerns of the Enlightenment without surrendering the content and truth-claims of orthodox Christianity. In doing so, Henry defined himself over against theological traditions on both the left and right of the spectrum: on the left, the reduction of theology to reflection upon the religious self-consciousness found in Schleiermacher and his progeny, and the anti-metaphysical trajectory of Kantian theology evident in Ritschl, Herrmann, and, latterly, Barth and the neo-orthodox; on the right, the ‘fundamentalist’ obscurantism of those who denied the relevance of education, learning, or cultural/social/political engagement to the life of the Christian church—a position which had characterized much, though by no means all, of American conservative Protestantism in the twenties and thirties in the wake of the disastrous Scopes’ monkey trial and the equally unfortunate era of Prohibition” (Carl R. Trueman, “Admiring the Sistine Chapel: Reflections on Carl F. H. Henry’s *God, Revelation, and Authority*,” *Themelios* 25 [2000]: 49).

³¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 116.

³² By segregating political concerns from the gospel, Henry asserted, the fundamentalist evacuation from the public square had conceded it to liberals such as Walter Rauschenbusch, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and their more radical successors. He lamented the fact that the inadequacies of the Social Gospel were not devastated by conservative orthodoxy, but instead by the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr, which was “as destructive of certain essential elements of the biblical view as it was reconstructive of others” (Carl F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Engagement* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1971], 34-35).

³³ Henry, *Aspects of Christian Social Ethics*, 21. The language used by the Social Gospel pioneers themselves only bolsters Henry’s critique. “We have a social gospel,” Walter Rauschenbusch proclaimed. “We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it” (Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology of the Social Gospel* [New York: Macmillan, 1917; reprint, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997], 1).

³⁴ Carl F. H. Henry, "Dare We Renew the Controversy? Part II: The Fundamentalist Reduction," *Christianity Today*, June 24, 1957, 23.

³⁵ Henry, *Remaking the Modern Mind*, 12. Henry's argument here would continue as he later argued that "only three formidable movements insist that man can know ultimate reality" in the context of modern Western thought. He identified these as communist materialism, Catholic Thomism, and evangelical Protestantism (Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals at the Brink of Crisis* [Waco, Tex.: Word, 1967], 7).

³⁶ The "kaleidoscope" imagery was articulated by Timothy L. Smith, "The Evangelical Kaleidoscope and the Call to Unity," *CSR* 15 (1986): 125-140. The "kaleidoscope" metaphor, which replaces Smith's earlier imagery of an evangelical "mosaic," is challenged by traditionalist conservatives such as R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Reformist Evangelicalism: A Center Without a Circumference," in *A Confessing Theology for Postmodern Times*, ed. Michael S. Horton (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2000), 135-136.

³⁷ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 812-813, 816. Ahlstrom's thesis finds agreement in Ernest R. Sandeen, who argues that this Reformed-dispensationalist coalition was not surprising since both groups were united in "general mood and in the elaboration of their central theme of biblical authority," particularly in the doctrine of the inerrancy of the scriptural autographs. As such, Sandeen notes, conservative American Protestantism "was comprised of an alliance between two newly-formulated nineteenth century theologies, dispensationalism and the Princeton theology, which, though not wholly compatible, managed to maintain a united front against modernism until about 1918" (Ernest R. Sandeen, "Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History* 36 [1967]: 67, 74). See also Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millennialism, 1800-1930* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1970). This basic alliance between dispensationalists and covenantalists united against modernism is likewise seen in, for example, Richard D. Land, "Southern Baptists and the Fundamentalist Interpretation in Biblical Interpretation, 1845-1945," *Baptist History and Heritage* 19 (1984): 29. Land compellingly points to this alliance in the dispensationalist and Reformed contributors to the manifesto of early American conservative Protestantism, *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 4 vols. (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917).

³⁸ This acknowledges that the Sandeen thesis does have problems. George Marsden, for example, argues persuasively that Sandeen seems to subsume fundamentalism under the larger category of millennialism (George Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," *CSR* 1 [1971]: 141-151). Also, Sandeen errs by categorizing biblical inerrancy as a historical innovation fueled by the Princeton-dispensationalist alliance, a point that is challenged and corrected in John D. Woodbridge and Randall H. Balmer, "The Princetonians and Biblical Authority: An Assessment of the Ernest Sandeen Proposal," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992), 244-279. D. G. Hart claims that Sandeen overemphasizes the hegemony between dispensational premillennialists and confessional Calvinists, largely because Hart equates "fundamentalism" with apocalypticism and young-earth creationism rather than with more "fundamental" issues such as biblical inerrancy and the historical nature of the Christian faith (D. G. Hart, "Machen, Confessional Presbyterianism, and Twentieth-Century Protestantism," in *Reforming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present*, ed. Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger, Jr. [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998], 132). Nonetheless, few scholars would challenge Sandeen's basic identification of confessional Calvinism and dispensationalism as, for better or for worse, formative influences on American fundamentalism, and, ultimately, American evangelicalism. This is true even of those who also would emphasize other theological streams, such as the holiness tradition. See, for instance, Phillip E. Hammond, *The*

Protestant Presence in Twentieth-Century America: Religion and Political Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 46; and Richard Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals: The Story of the Emergence of a New Generation of Evangelicals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 7-14.

³⁹ For a discussion of the “fusionist” agenda of Buckley and Frank S. Meyer in the formation of the American conservative movement, see George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, Del.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996). See also Godfrey Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1996).

⁴⁰ Henry wrote, “What concerns me more is that we have needlessly invited criticism and even ridicule, by a tendency in some quarters to parade secondary and sometimes even obscure aspects of our position as necessary frontal phases of our view. To this extent we have failed to oppose the full genius of the Hebrew-Christian outlook to its modern competitors. With the collapse of Renaissance ideals, it is needful that we come to a clear distinction, as evangelicals, between those basic doctrines on which we unite in a supernaturalistic world and life view and the area of differences on which we are not in agreement while yet standing true to the essence of biblical Christianity” (Henry, *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 10).

⁴¹ See, for example, Harold J. Ockenga, “The Unvoiced Multitudes,” in *Evangelical Action! A Report of the Organization of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action* (Boston: United Action Press, 1942), 27; and Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 114-119.

⁴² Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1976), 29.

⁴³ This is seen in the contentious battles within the Presbyterian communion over the 1941 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States controversy as to whether dispensationalism was within the bounds of the Westminster Confession of Faith. This move was denounced by Dallas Seminary president Lewis Sperry Chafer in “Dispensational Distinctions Challenged,” *BibSac* 100 (1943): 337-343.

⁴⁴ As Sydney Ahlstrom observes, “[Dispensationalism] aroused strong resistance among American Protestants by denying what most evangelicals and all liberals firmly believed—that the Kingdom of God would come as part of the historical process. They could not accept the dispensationalist claim that all Christian history was a kind of meaningless ‘parenthesis’ between the setting aside of the Jews and the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom. This claim aroused violent reactions because it provided a rationale for destructive attitudes and encouraged secession from existing denominations. Especially objectionable was the tendency of dispensationalists to look for the Antichrist among the ‘apostate churches’ of this ‘present age’” (Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People*, 811).

⁴⁵ The primary task of the theological vision of *Uneasy Conscience* was, as chapter 3 notes, the attempt to find a mediating position between the “Kingdom then” concept of fundamentalist dispensationalism and the “Kingdom now” concept of the liberal Social Gospel. In so doing, Henry would challenge the Kingdom concepts of both groups, as in, for instance, his treatment of the law in his *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1957), 278-326. Here Henry sides with the Reformed evangelicals against the dispensationalists in his insistence that the Sermon on the Mount is a particularization of the requirements of God for new covenant Christians. Henry also maintains here that the moral law, as summarized in the Mosaic Decalogue, is binding on new covenant believers.

⁴⁶ For Ladd’s work on the Kingdom, see George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952); *The Gospel and the*

Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1959); *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974); and Ladd's magnum opus, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974). For examples of dispensationalist and Reformed covenantalist responses to Ladd, see Ladd's interchanges with dispensationalist Herman Hoyt, amillennialist Anthony Hoekema, and postmillennialist Loraine Boettner in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

⁴⁷ Henry, *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, 51.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ So Henry contended that *Uneasy Conscience* was written in order "to urge upon evangelicals the necessity for a deliberate restudy of the whole kingdom question, that the great evangelical agreements may be set effectively over against the modern mind, with the least dissipation of energy on secondary issues" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the varying conceptions of the Kingdom in American Protestant theology and biblical scholarship, see Gösta Lundström, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus: A History of Interpretation from the Last Decades of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day*, trans. J. Bulman (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963); Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 3-42; Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 54-67; and Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus in Twentieth-Century Theology* (Dallas: Word, 1997).

⁵² Dispensationalist fundamentalist William B. Riley, for instance, began his 1912 work on the Kingdom by repudiating liberal Protestant John Watson's sentence, "Two claims have been made within recent years: the Divine Fatherhood of God and the Kingdom of God." Riley countered that the Kingdom had never been lost by orthodox Christianity, but instead had been infused with new meaning by liberalism (William B. Riley, *The Evolution of the Kingdom* [New York: Charles C. Cook, 1912], 7-21). Similarly, covenant theologian Geerhardus Vos expressed mistrust toward "modern attempts to make the kingdom of God the organizing center of a theological system," precisely because Protestant liberals were restricting the idea of the Kingdom to ethical norms derivative from the concept of the universal fatherhood of God (Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God and the Church* [New York: American Tract Society, 1903], 5-8).

⁵³ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 412.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ The key monographs articulating this viewpoint are Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992); Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1993); and Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1993). Widely recognized as a precursor to the concepts within progressive dispensationalism is Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972).

⁵⁶ Thus while numerous scholarly monographs and articles have debated the shifts in dispensational thought, covenantalists have been forced at times to make the case that significant changes within their sectors of Reformed theology even exist. See, for example, Richard Gaffin, "A Cessationist View," in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 29.

⁵⁷ John M. Frame, “In Defense of Something Close to Biblicism: Reflections on *Sola Scriptura* and History in Theological Method,” *WTJ* 59 (1997): 278. Willem VanGemeran likewise attributes to Vos a pivotal role in the formation of a new synthesis in American Reformed thought, particularly through Vos’s impact on Westminster faculty such as John Murray. VanGemeran links the influence of Vos with the influence of Dutch Reformed theology via theologians such as Abraham Kuyper as formative for the development of contemporary American Reformed theology (Willem VanGemeran, “Systems of Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg [Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988], 47-50). Richard Gaffin points to Vos’s contributions to biblical theology, along with those of Herman Ridderbos, as the root from which modified covenantalism has grown (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., ed., “A New Paradigm in Theology?” *WTJ* 56 [1994]: 380). Similarly, Richard Lints cites an essential continuity between Vos and “the decidedly Vosian” theologies of Ridderbos, Ladd, and Westminster covenantalists such as Poythress, Gaffin, and Clowney (Richard Lints, “Two Theologies or One? Warfield and Vos on the Nature of Theology,” *WTJ* 54 [1992]: 236 n. 6).

⁵⁸ David L. Turner, “‘Dubious Evangelicalism’?—A Response,” *GTJ* 12 (1992): 267. Turner contrasts the growing move toward consensus between dispensationalists and covenantalists involved in this dialogue with the ongoing debates between the groups that represent “a throwback to earlier days where there was frequently more heat than light produced in this type of discussion.” Here Turner specifically points to John Gerstner’s *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1991).

⁵⁹ Craig Blaising laments the fact that dispensationalism since C. I. Scofield has had no Kingdom theology, “but competing interpretations which have had varying levels of influence” (Craig A. Blaising, “Contemporary Dispensationalism,” *SWJT* 36 [1994]: 9). He outlines at least four representative Kingdom theologies proposed by more traditionalist dispensationalists, none of which focus on the Kingdom as the unifying center of theology (Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 39-45). Robert Saucy argues that the Kingdom concept is not merely an integrative motif for theology but is instead “the unifying principle of biblical history” (Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 27-28).

⁶⁰ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 48. This Kingdom theology is contested by the more traditionalist dispensationalists who find in it echoes of George Eldon Ladd. See, for instance, Stephen J. Nichols, “The Dispensational View of the Davidic Kingdom: A Response to Progressive Dispensationalism” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Philadelphia, November 18, 1995), 3.

⁶¹ Vern Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994), 41-43. Likewise, Anthony Hoekema, an early pioneer in the modified covenantalist project, starts his analysis with the centrality of the Kingdom as an integrative motif for the whole of theology, defining the Kingdom as “the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ, the purpose of which is the redemption of God’s people from sin and from demonic powers, and the final establishment of the new heavens and the new earth” (Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979], 45).

⁶² Note Kuyper’s insistence on the centrality of the Kingdom of God as the integrative motif of Reformed theology in his 1898 Stone Lectures at Princeton: “The dominating principle was not, soteriologically, justification by faith, but in the widest sense cosmologically, the sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible” (Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1931], 79). Theologian John Bolt likewise maintains that the Kuyperian tradition safeguarded an important part of the Reformed theological heritage:

“The theme of the kingdom of God underscores the role of the Calvinist/Puritan tradition in shaping American Christianity,” he writes. “It is the common (Calvinist!) conviction of the sovereignty of God through the reign of Christ that must be lived *on earth as it is in heaven* that also links the public theology and practice of Jonathan Edwards and Abraham Kuyper” (John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s American Public Theology* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001], 193).

⁶³ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 169.

⁶⁴ Covenant theologian D. G. Hart warns that the call for a Kingdom-oriented theology by Henry and others leads to a perilous “politicizing” of the church. Hart traces the “worldview Calvinism” of Henry, Francis Schaeffer, and others back to the culture-transformative theology of Kuyper, a “neo-Calvinist” tradition that, for Hart, diverges from the heritage of J. Gresham Machen (D. G. Hart, “Christianity, Modern Liberalism, and J. Gresham Machen,” *Modern Age* 39 [1997]: 234-245). Hart dismisses what he calls “the so-called ‘kingdom perspective’” of “those who trumpet a Reformed world and life view” as inconsistent with authentic Reformed identity (D. G. Hart, “*Christianity and Liberalism* in a Postliberal Age,” *WTJ* 56 [1994]: 342). Among dispensationalist traditionalists, Robert Lightner warned early on that Henry’s call to engagement might prove to be a Trojan horse for evangelical appropriation of Walter Rauschenbusch’s Social Gospel, precisely because of Henry’s rejection of the classical dispensationalist view of the Kingdom (Robert Lightner, *Neoevangelicalism Today* [Schaumburg, Ill.: Regular Baptist Press, 1978], 43-53). In the same vein, Charles Ryrie counters the Kingdom emphasis of progressive dispensationalism by arguing that the Scriptures “call us to obey church ethics, not kingdom ethics” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 176).

CHAPTER TWO

¹ Ockenga argued, “That there is little agreement concerning the Kingdom is shown from the contrast between the writings of Stanley Jones and A. C. Gaebelein. It has always been easiest for me to think of the Kingdom as one, but with several forms—theocratic, church, millennial, but *all* the Kingdom of God. Unless the continuity and the breaks, along with the coterminous principles and ends, of the forms of the Kingdom are recognized this question becomes a hopeless puzzle to men” (Harold John Ockenga, “Introduction,” in Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1947], 13-14).

² It must also be said that Henry did so without intentionally alienating the strong dispensationalist element within conservative Protestantism. Even as Henry criticized elements of dispensational theology, he never reached for the kind of anti-dispensational polemic used by Carnell. See, for instance, the attack on dispensationalism as a feature of “cultic” fundamentalism in E. J. Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), 117-119. Henry was not only more irenic toward the dispensationalists, but stood with them on at least some key points. Historian George Marsden, for example, quotes Harold Lindsell as listing Henry, along with himself, Wilbur Smith, Gleason Archer, and Charles Woodbridge as the “Pre-Trib Men” on the Fuller Theological Seminary faculty circa 1955 (George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], 151).

³ This is not the only time that Henry would make clear that he did not equate the errors of fundamentalism with the errors of liberalism. Henry corresponded with Billy Graham in June of 1950 expressing his reservations about whether Henry would be the best choice for the editorship of *Christianity Today* because of his firm convictions on this very matter. “I was convinced that liberalism and evangelicalism do not have equal right