MACP Workshop, 2010

**Preliminary Remarks**

I. Moore’s Contribution

A. Introduction

*Moore’s purpose:* To arouse the evangelical church to socio-political engagement in the culture before it’s too late.

Several evangelical theologians comment:

“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” [Wayne Grudem, *Research Professor of Bible and Theology, Phoenix Seminary* (back cover, *The Kingdom of Christ*)].

“Russell D. Moore’s book *The Kingdom of Christ* is an enlightening account of the merging theological vision of recent dispensational and covenant theologies and a stirring call for a unified evangelical social engagement” [Bruce A. Ware, *Professor of Christian Theology and Senior Associate Dean, School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (ibid.)].

“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” [R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* (ibid.)].

**Method to Achieve Purpose:** Tie “a doctrine of the church to a Kingdom-oriented theology of socio-political engagement” (132).

### B. Ecclesiology and the Theological Project of Postwar Evangelicalism

- “The problem of the church in the public square is not a new one, but was one of the challenges faced by the postwar evangelical movement’s call for evangelical social and political engagement” (131).

- *Who made this postwar call?:* Postwar evangelicals such as Carl F. H. Henry, Harold J. Ockenga and E. J. Carnell

These postwar evangelicals were pioneers of the parachurch movement:

*Marsden writes:* “These individualists were remarkably free from external controls. None of them had a taste for strong denominational authority, and all were thus attracted to a situation free from such restraints. An independent seminary, they were convinced, could serve the whole church. When they thought of the church, however, they did not think first of institutions but rather of the ‘invisible’ body of all evangelical believers. The church was essentially a collection of converted individuals. So the planners could act freely without being subject to any ecclesiastical authority. Free enterprise was at work” (George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], 29; 248, fn. 2).

*Moore believes this is logical outcome of the times in which these men lived:* “After all, the denominational structures of the mainline churches were, by mid-century, almost without exception in the hands of the modernists, a fact that gains further precedence when it is noted that the dispensationalist Dallas Seminary, the Reformed confessional Westminster Seminary, and the broadly evangelical Fuller Seminary were all non-denominational parachurch entities formed to circumnavigate the liberalizing forces within the existing church structures. Significantly, it was within this atmosphere of parachurch cooperation that the evangelical discussion of the church took place” (132).

We should keep the parachurch connection in mind as we interact with their purpose and methods to engage the culture and government.

1. **Postwar Evangelical Ecclesiology and The Uneasy Conscience**

   **Problem:** “Henry and others in the movement recognized that a sustainable theology of evangelical engagement [socio-political] could not be achieved
without some form of consensus on the church” (132).

To these evangelical theologians, the liberals had hijacked the church and had turned “the denominations into the equivalent of political action committees, addressing a laundry list of social and political issues” [the “Social Gospel” agenda], because they “had neglected preaching the gospel of individual salvation” (132).

a. *Henry was against the Church as a corporate body being used as a place for “endless political pronouncements”* (132). *Henry writes:* “The Church as a corporate body has no spiritual mandate to sponsor economic, social and political program(s)…. Nowhere does the New Testament authorize the Church to endorse specific legislative proposals as part of its ecclesiological mission in the world” (132–33).

*Note:* Because of this statement some have suggested that Henry was inconsistent since he called “for evangelicals to move beyond the ‘uneasy conscience’ toward a holistic view of redemption and responsibility toward society” (133).

b. *Yet, on the other hand, Henry insists:* “We do not support the position that the Christian’s only concern is the saving of men’s souls and that, for the rest, he may abandon the world to the power of evil,… Nor do we deny the Church’s scriptural right through the pulpit and through its synods, assemblies and councils to emphasize the divinely revealed principles of a social order and to speak out publicly against the great moral evils that arise in community life” (133).

Still Henry believed that it would prove difficult for the evangelical church to speak out with a consistent voice in the socio-political arena because of the many disagreements evangelicals had on “secondary issues,” over the role of the church in “society, politics, and cultural mores” (133), the “retarded” ecclesiology of Fundamentalism (133), and the rugged individualism of the evangelical movement itself… seen in the Jesus Movement, the Chicago Declaration of Young Evangelicals, etc.

*Moore writes:* “Almost from the very beginnings of the movement, some evangelicals worried that the parachurch nature of evangelicalism represented a problematic individualism that reflected the culture of mid-century America more than the revealed imperatives of the first-century apostolic mandate” (134).
2. Postwar Ecclesiology and the Kingdom Debate

To help move the needle “to a more theologically workable understanding of the role of the church in social and political engagement” (134), Henry, et. al. probed “the question of the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God in order to differentiate their view of evangelical engagement from the Social Gospel, and to guard against the isolationism of fundamentalism” (134).

To Henry, the church is a sign of the coming Kingdom. The church is the “closest approximation of the Kingdom of God today” (135). Its Head is the risen Redeemer.

The church as a sign of the coming Kingdom has at least three tasks in the socio-political arena per Moore and Henry:

a. Pray for the social/political/economic issues facing the world.

_The result of the church being a sign of the coming Kingdom, per Henry, was that the church should have a prayerful focus. Henry writes: “If the church is a sign of the coming Kingdom, Henry argued, the mission of the church’s prayerful focus ‘must include within its scope Russian totalitarianism, Indian poverty, Korean suffering, American greed; it embraces the hospitals, the factories, the service clubs, the prisons, and the brothels’”_ (136).

_b. Testify to the righteous justice of the Kingdom before political governments in the world._

_Henry maintained, per Moore, that as a sign of the coming Kingdom, “… the church does not have the right to take over the reins of government, but it does have the responsibility to testify to the righteous justice of the Kingdom”_ [Moore’s words, 136].

incorporates into its preaching the divine demand for world righteousness, and in no whit relaxes God’s present requirement of universal social justice” (Carl F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1971], 121–22) [250, fn. 32].

c. Model what its like to live under the eschatological reign of Christ.

*Moore writes:* “The politics of the Kingdom enter the present era through the visible demonstration by the church of what it means to live under the eschatological reign of Christ by being a New Society called to ‘mirror in microcosm’ the messianic rule in the new heavens and new earth” (136).

Note: Moore gives George Eldon Ladd the credit for providing the mechanism by which Henry could talk about the Kingdom/Church relationship.

C. **Kingdom Ecclesiology and the Emerging Evangelical Consensus**

Moore believes evangelical theology has reached a consensus on the relationship between the visible church and the Kingdom of God. The consensus spans evangelical theology fault-lines and includes “both the traditionalist conservative [e.g., Carl F. H. Henry] and reformist progressive wings [e.g., Stanley Grenz]” (138). Together they “are moving toward a common understanding of the Kingdom orientation of the doctrine of the church” (138).

Yet, the one area in which the development of the “remarkable consensus” on the “Kingdom operation of ecclesiology” is best seen is the development of this subject in the dispensational and covenant traditions.

Both sides are endeavoring “to recover a more biblically informed vision of the church as regenerate community by exploring more fully how the church fits within the broader picture of a theology of the Kingdom of God in Christ” (140).

Both sides are therefore reconceiving “the place of ecclesiology and the corporate nature of salvation in their respective systems” (140) and moving “toward rapprochement on the once thorny issue of ecclesiology.”

1. **Kingdom Ecclesiology and Dispensational Development**

Progressives have “dramatically altered the understanding of the church in relation to the Kingdom” (141). They view the church as a “functional outpost,” or “sneak preview” of the coming Kingdom (141), or a “‘workshop of Kingdom righteousness’ in which the nature of the eschatological reign of
Christ is revealed through its internal ministry, its external pronouncements, and even by its very makeup as a multinational Spirit-centered entity” [so model can be “genetical,” as well as “ethical”] (142).

“Blaising and Bock [Progressive Dispensationalists] do not simply relate the church to the Kingdom, but actually define the church in terms of the Kingdom” (142).

*Bock* calls for “evangelical theology to transcend both the radical discontinuity of traditional dispensationalism and the radical continuity of traditional covenant theology in the understanding of Kingdom and church” (142).

“Because the church is the locus of Kingdom activity, *Bock argues*, progressive dispensational theology may contribute a sixth option to the five relationships between Christ and culture outlined by H. Richard Niebuhr. In the place of these, *Bock offers* ‘Christ as the transformer of His community as a model for other cultures.’ Since the church is the one visible manifestation of the invisible reign of the Davidic ruler who will one day exercise indisputable sovereignty over all peoples, *Bock argues* that the church must be able to say to the world through its efforts at social compassion and reconciliation across racial, economic, and gender lines, ‘if you want to see God and the promise of his powerful, transforming rule, look at what he is doing among us’” (142).

*Blaising makes an interesting comment on the church’s relation to politics:*

“But one should not imply from this that the state should control local churches or that the church is a political state alongside other governmental bodies. *Political authority over all nations belongs to Christ now, but how and when he will exercise his authority is a matter of his and the Father’s will.*

Progressive dispensationalists believe that the New Testament teaches that *Christ will function as both political and spiritual head among the redeemed and over the world when he comes.* Prior to that time, his special activity is revealed in the formation of believing Jews and all kinds of Gentiles of faith into a *community* for the indwelling of God by the Holy Spirit. *This community interpenetrates the diverse political structures of this world.* Even though it awaits the revelation of Christ’s political administration at his return, it should already begin to explore within itself the social and political righteousness of Christ within its own redeemed *community* of people” (Craig A. Blaising, “Contemporary Dispensationalism,” *SWJT* 36 [1994]:13) [253–54, fn. 80].

2. **Kingdom Ecclesiology and Covenantal Development**

*Edmund Clowney* (former *President of Westminster Theological Seminary*) – argued in the 1960’s that confusion about the role of church in relation to
Kingdom “had led to the theologically slipshod politicization of Protestant denominations.  

*Clowney argued* that this “was a direct result of a separation between soteriology and ecclesiology” (143).

To Clowney, “the United Presbyterian Church’s proposed 1967 revision to its confession of faith… saw the mission of the church almost exclusively in terms of ‘social renewal’ precisely because it believed the salvific goal of the Kingdom was the universal brotherhood of humanity under the Fatherhood of God” (143).

To Clowney, this confession merged the Kingdom with the church and the church with the state. As a result, the state would be denied the “power of the sword” and the world would end up being disciplined by the house of God (cf. 144).

*Against this view Clowney* “did not simply assert the ‘spirituality of the church,’ segregating the church off from political concerns. Nor did he spiritualize the Kingdom into an equation with the church” (144).

Instead, *Clowney applied* the “already/not yet” understanding of eschatology and a holistic vision of soteriology” (144) to the church.

*Clowney writes:* “Other authority structures besides the church remain valid: the state continues to bear the sword by God’s own ordinance; the family is closely related to the church but not identified with it. Yet only the church has been organized by Christ as the ordered form of his kingdom, the new people of God in the world” (Edmund P. Clowney, “The Christian College and the Transformation of Culture,” *CSR* 1 [1970]: 15) [254, fn. 90].

*Note:* This new type of covenant theologian has emphasized the “newness” of the church, “while maintaining the unity of the people of God and the church’s identity as the ‘new Israel’ of God” (144).

“*Clowney argues* that the church ‘as the community of Christ’s Kingdom on earth is a *theo-political order,*[like a theocracy?]’ and therefore serves as the heavenly *polis* on earth “as a colony of heaven in the present age. As such, the church is not isolated from the state, but witnesses to the righteous demands of the kingdom of God” (146).

Because of its spiritual nature, the church’s political objectives and methodologies are transformed. “With such being the case, *Clowney argues,* the church is not simply ‘an association for conducting public worship but
instead mirrors before the world the ‘politics of the Kingdom,’ the eschatological demands of corporate righteousness and justice” (146).

D. Kingdom Ecclesiology and Evangelical Engagement: An Evaluation

Moore writes: “Evangelical theology seems to have reached a consensus about the relationship between the inaugurated Kingdom and the church” (146).

Will this consensus hold? If it does… “Kingdom ecclesiology carries with it implications for evangelical engagement, as Kingdom theology is focused on the very real social and political structures and stances of communities of faith” (146).

1. Ecclesiology as a Theological Problem
   a. Unworkable understandings in light of development in Kingdom ecclesiology.
      i. The dispensational understanding of the church as a “parenthesis” is unworkable… “once a framework of inaugurated eschatology is embraced” (147).
      ii. The covenant understanding of “a starkly ‘spiritual’ equation of the church with the Kingdom is impossible… once ‘new creation’ eschatology and a holistic vision of cosmic salvation are embraced” (147).
   b. Consensus reached “on the broader themes of Kingdom and church” by dispensational and covenant theologians.
      Agreed… Both dispensationalists and covenant theologians “now affirm that the church maintains some continuity with Israel as the people of God” (147).
      Agreed… “the church is, at least in some sense, a new stage in the progress of redemption, brought about by the eschatological nature of the coming of Christ” (147).
      Agreed… “the church is not to be equated with the Kingdom” but “the regenerate body is an initial manifestation of the kingdom” (147).
      Agreed… “the church is the focal point in the present age of the inaugurated reign of Christ as Davidic Messiah” (147).
   c. Thus, dispensational and covenant theologians have learned from each other.
As a result of the developing consensus: “Covenant theology’s understanding of the church in community with Israel” is fused “with dispensationalism’s understanding of the church as a new manifestation of grace” (149).

d. A Kingdom ecclesiology needs a clearly developed doctrine of the church.

Moore writes: “Without a clearly developed doctrine of the church, the benefits of inaugurated eschatology are virtually nullified, as it is almost impossible to differentiate between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ aspects of the Kingdom. The move toward a Kingdom ecclesiology maintains rightly that the definition of the ‘already’ reign of Christ is the church” (151).

e. The “already” phase of the Kingdom is only visible in the context of the church.

“This means that the righteousness and justice of the messianic order cannot be found, in the present age, in the arenas of the political, social, economic, or academic orders. Instead, the reign of Christ is focused in this age solely on His reign as Messiah over the people called into the Kingdom, namely, those who make up the church. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are presented in the New Testament Scriptures as indeed granting to Jesus the cosmic ruling authority promised to the Son of David (Eph. 1:20-21), but this ruling authority is only visible, indeed in one sense only ‘already’ fulfilled, in the context of the regenerate community of those in voluntary submission to the Kingdom of God in Christ (Eph. 1:22). Thus in the Pauline writings, the mystery of the age, culminating in the universal reign of Christ, is seen in this present age only ‘through the church,’ wherein ‘the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 3:9-10, ESV). This is likewise why Paul can write of Christ’s headship over ‘the body, the church’ in the same context as he writes of the exhaustively cosmic (and therefore, by definition, political) reign of Christ. The cosmic reign finds its expression, for now, within the church. And so the doctrine of the church brings together the prevalent biblical themes of the preeminence of Christ, the warfare against the demonic powers, and the restoration of the cosmos” (151–52).

f. Thus, the church should take care of “internal political and economic conflicts” and “internal socioeconomic relationships” because it is a manifestation of the Kingdom. The church will eventually “judge the world” (1 Cor 6:10–11).
Moore writes: “This is illustrated in the Petrine description of the church as ‘living stones,’ which proclaim by their very existence as a corporate body ‘the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light’ (1 Pet. 2:4-10). This internal ordering of the church, according to Peter, has an external focus as the countercultural Kingdom community witnesses to the Gentile nations (1 Pet. 2:12) and particularly to the governing authorities (1 Pet. 2:13-17) and to the economic authorities (1 Pet. 2:18-24) of the righteousness of the Kingdom manifested in their midst, a Kingdom described in the decidedly messianic and Davidic language of submission to the ‘Shepherd’ (1 Pet. 2:25)” (156).

g. Yet, the church must guard against apostates taking over its agenda, as happened in the early twentieth century.

Moore writes: “Dispensationalists noticed, perhaps long before others in conservative American Protestantism, that many of the mainline Protestant churches were, in fact, apostate. Thus, dispensationalism engendered a healthy skepticism. The church is indeed to point to the Kingdom, but the New Testament makes clear that it can do otherwise” (157).

The church is to be wary of totalitarian anti-Christ government and “spiritually totalitarian anti-Christ church government” (157). The reformers had this skepticism of the Roman Catholic church, which they viewed as having “co-opted the Kingly prerogatives belonging only to Christ” (157). So dispensationalists and older reformers had kinship here.

h. Yet the answer to a rogue church is not a parachurch movement, which diminishes denominational distinctives, such as parachurch leaders, Carnell, Ockenga and Henry did.

E. J. Carnell “dismissed denominational confessional attention to distinctives as a hindrance to world evangelization” (158).

Harold J. Ockenga had this to say at the opening convocation of the National Association of Evangelicals: “If the cross of Christ Himself cannot unite true Christians there is no other possibility for their unification. Baptism should not be a reason for separation of Christ-believing Christians today. Why cannot we have tolerance enough to understand both sides? Different church governments and many other differences are insignificant and almost foolish if Christ is put in the highest place where He belongs. Moreover, denominations are no longer the boundary line between the world and the church but rather help to increase the confusion; denominations are only monuments of
old arguments of our forefathers; the reasons for most of these have long since passed out of existence and only the separation caused by the arguments continues to live on. Yes, between many of us in our denominations there is less fellowship than there would be in a good Rotary club, for the simple reason that we do not have any sense of unity” (158).

Carl F. H. Henry “announced the arrival of a genuinely evangelical parachurch movement that could unite conservatives Christians ‘without overstressing denominational distinctions’” (158).

i. To Moore, a confessional evangelicalism must have a proper place in Kingdom ecclesiology and this includes church membership and the ordinances.

Moore points out that some evangelicals water down certain distinctives such as Baptism. For example:

i. Wayne Grudem defends baptism by immersion as the very definition of the word. “Nonetheless he (remarkably) concludes this robust definition of baptism by asserting that ‘baptism is not a major doctrine of the faith,’ meaning that Baptists and paedobaptists should not make the meaning and mode of baptism a matter of congregational membership, but should leave such questions to individual conscience” (161).

ii. Millard Erickson marshals arguments to equate New Testament baptism with immersion but concludes his treatment “by noting that immersion ‘may not be the only valid form of baptism’ but that it ‘fully preserves and accomplishes the meaning of baptism’” (162). However, Erickson writes: “Whatever mode adopted, baptism is not a matter to be taken lightly” (162).

Moore concludes: “One must wonder about the logical consistency here: if baptism is defined in the New Testament as the immersion of believers, then how can evangelicals take seriously a baptism that is not, in fact, baptism? Moreover, how are evangelicals to recognize the reign of Christ over His church through the Scriptures when the central command given by Christ to the church is described in terms of ‘whatever mode’ the congregation deems best to use? If the word uttered as a command by the resurrected Christ to ‘baptize’ the converts of all nations (Matt. 28:19) did indeed mean specifically the immersion of a believer, how can evangelical theology, much less local congregations and mission boards, consider it as ‘minor matters’ best left to individual decision?” (162).
Baptism, etc. is not unrelated to the Kingdom ecclesiology. Ecclesiology cannot be separated from the authority of Christ.

Some evangelical leaders unfortunately equate frank confessional dialogue or ecclesiology with “fundamental factionalism” (162). Yet this is a misdiagnosis, because early fundamentalists were quite “trans-denominational” (162), and most of the fighting was intra-fighting against one in one’s own denomination over matters of biblical authority.

Moore concludes: “If evangelicals are to recover fully a doctrine of the church, this kind of ecclesiological gravity must be recovered, including within its discussion the uncomfortable tensions among evangelicals on the questions of the membership, ordinances, and structure of the church” (162).

2. **Ecclesiology as a Political Problem**

Moore writes: “The developments within evangelical theology toward a Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology…, offer a starting point for a new paradigm for evangelical sociopolitical engagement, one anticipated by evangelical pioneers such as Henry and Schaeffer” (164).

a. The emerging evangelical consensus must continually argue that “the Kingdom of God in this era is manifested in the regenerate church, not in any secular government” (164–65).

This is a difficult task as many evangelicals have grown up on evangelical preachers applying Old Testament theocratic texts to the USA. Even politicians use biblical language to support their positions/initiatives… For example, Reagen’s “Shining City on a Hill”; Clinton’s 1992 platform “The New Covenant”… *per Moore* (165).

Yet, a “congregationally focused engagement [should expect] a culture of explicit Christianity to flourish under the reign of Christ *in the church*, rather than expecting a ‘generic’ Christian culture in the outside social structures” (165).

b. To Moore, the parachurch movement has contributed to the problem of socio-political engagement for the church.

*Moore believes* that “the inordinately parachurch focus of the evangelical movements’ activity bled over into the movement’s theology” (165) and informed its sociopolitical engagement. Thus, in
the 70’s and 80’s “evangelical political action was not focused on the church, but on ‘parachurch’ political entities” (165).

So it is not surprising that the Moral Majority “engaged in the political arena through constituency lists and direct-mail campaigns” (165). This is exactly how the evangelical movement as a whole operated “[through constituency lists and direct-mail campaigns” (165) “in areas ranging from global missions to evangelistic crusades to hunger relief” (165)... e.g., through Henry, Billy Graham and others.

This has caused problems for evangelicals. Political action committees focus on “polling data or party platforms, rather than an authoritative text” (166).

As Moore writes: “Political solutions are then grounded in the social contract of a ‘moral majority’ rather than by the righteousness of the coming Kingdom of God in Christ” (166).

c. Another problem for a cohesive socio-political engagement by the church is the call of some for disengagement of the church from the political process.

Moore notes: “Robert Lewis Dabney spent considerable time contrasting the role of the church, which is ‘to teach men the way to heaven, and to help them thither,’ with the role of the political process, which is ‘to protect each citizen in the enjoyment of temporal rights’” (167).

Dabney, thus, was against the church taking a stand on abolitionist or racial reconciliatory issues. He writes: “‘Christ’s kingdom does not ‘wait on the politicians and conquerors of the world’ to instruct it ‘on how she must administer her sacred charge,’ since addressing ‘political’ matters such as race relations would be ‘a sophistical perversion of our spiritual character’” (167, underlined words are Moore’s insertions).

“Historian Paul Harvey, notes, [however] that this claim was far less ‘apolitical’ than it appeared, since a refusal to address such ‘political’ issues was itself a political act, by propping up the status quo of a slaveholding society” (167).

To Moore’s dissatisfaction “a growing number of evangelicals point both to the southern and Princeton tradition to argue for a politically disengaged church” (167). To Moore, the emerging evangelical consensus on relationship of church and Kingdom offers a more balanced approach.
Moore writes: “… it [the emerging evangelical consensus] addresses this problem by noting that the church cannot address only personal ‘spiritual’ matters, but instead witnesses to the whole counsel of God and to the justice of the Kingdom, through the internal discipline of the Body and through the external witness to the state and the societal structures” (167). In this way it can “maintain a tempered engagement in sociopolitical concerns as indeed matters of ‘spiritual,’ and thus churchly, import” (168).

d. To Moore, the church itself is “political” in one sense. This is especially seen in the matter of church discipline.

Moore writes: “All evangelicals believe in some form of church polity; the church is governed either by the congregation or through appointed or elected leaders carrying out what they consider to be the biblical imperatives for the ordering of church life. Accordingly, the church does indeed engage in ‘political’ relationship by virtue of its existence as a community” (168).

The church also handles “political” matters by judging church discipline matters and “profound social and relational implications such as marriage relationships and economic matters (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-6:20)” (168). These “political” matters are “self-consciously internal” (168).

Moore continues: “As the church deals internally with matters of justice, it witnesses to the political powers-that-be of the kind of Kingdom righteousness the gospel demands, not only of individuals but also of communities” (168–69).

The church that is inconsistent in these internal matters [e.g., not dealing with an adulterous husband, or having a slumlord as chairmen of the deacons] has no clear voice in public matters.

In church discipline, the church identifies “itself as a witness to the eschatological Kingdom and to its submission to the present rule of the messianic King” (169).

e. Beyond church discipline, the church also witnesses to the world by its “internal ministries and activities of the congregation” (169).

Moore cites this example: “As the outside governmental and cultural structures observe Kingdom righteousness at work in alleviating poverty or resolving conflict within communities of believers, they not only find workable model solutions to social problems, but they also
receive a call to come under the authority of the messianic King who brought the church together by His Spirit. This is especially true in terms of believer-to-believer ministry, an important emphasis in the New Testament writings (Acts 2:44-46; 11:29-30; 2 Cor. 9:1-14; Gal. 6:10; Phil. 4:14-17)” (169).

The church models what the coming Christocracy will be like. It should model how “reconciliation between diverse ethnic, economic, racial, and social groups” (169) will operate in the multinational Kingdom of Messiah… “testifying to the regenerative power of the Spirit and to the global scope of the coming reign of Christ” (169).

f. Are “family values” an answer to the sociopolitical need for Kingdom social justice?

Moore points out that “‘Family values’ is an easier point to rally a coalition around, thus avoiding the theological sticking points of defining the church. After all, evangelical, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Mormon cobelligerents can define, at least for now, what a ‘family’ is. They cannot say the same for the church” (170).

To Moore, “… the only structure which can cultivate the revelation atmosphere in which biblically-ordered families can thrive is the church” (170). The community of the church is based upon “a prior commitment to prophetic/apostolic authority” (171). The church has priority over the family in this regard.

g. To Moore, “evangelical churches often will find themselves in a clash with the culture, over the very nature of the ‘mediating structure’” (171).

Richard Rorty (a pragmatist philosopher, biological descendent of Walter Rauschenbusch) caveats his “civil-society” as having “subtraditions” which should be “constructive” (171). He defines “constructive” communities as follows: “My litmus tests would be the following: If a religious community has gay clergy and solemnizes gay marriages, it belongs to the constructive minority. If it preaches the social gospel, if the preachers remind the congregation that the richest country in the world at the richest point in its economic history still doesn’t feed its poor, then it also qualifies. I don’t think there are very many religious communities of this sort. The vast majority of them do not meet either of these litmus tests” (171).

Moore notes: “It is for this reason that Rorty finds so ‘upbeat’ the ‘gradual replacement of the churches by the universities as the conscience of the nation” (171).
Evangelical churches are not “constructive” communities, per Rorty’s definition. Instead, to Moore, they are “manifestations of a yet-future Kingdom, governed now by authoritative, external revelation and not voluntary associations propping up the American experiment. As such they may increasingly struggle with the culture and state.

h. To Moore, politically conservative evangelicals may attempt to bypass the church in order to achieve a sociopolitical justice, but in the end will only make things worse.

*Moore cautions:* “By emphasizing simply the governmental and political mechanisms of social change, these conservatives have unwittingly given aid to the idea of a robust central government. As conservative legal theorist Robert Bork argues, the power of government grows when the smaller, more representative forms of community, such as the family and the church, are eroded. ‘Chaos, which only government can control, results when other sources of authority are denigrated and diminished,’ he argues” (171).

*Moore concludes:* “Evangelicals who neglect the church in favor of the picket line of Capitol Hill inadvertently concede the very intrusive nature of government against which they protest” (172).

Yet, *Moore cautions:* “At the same time this does not mean that evangelicals should abandon the public square for the sake of the church” (172).

i. Other evangelicals are calling for a “resurgent isolationism” (172).

*Moore writes:* “Calling for an evangelical ‘separation’ into parallel structures, Weyrich points to the homeschooling movement’s successful endeavor to ‘secede’ from a secularized public school system, arguing that evangelicals should do the same across the entire spectrum of public life. This is precisely the isolationist stance described and denounced in Henry’s *Uneasy Conscience*” (172).

*Contrary to Weyrich’s position,* because the Church is a manifestation of the Kingdom, “the scope of the Kingdom informs the scope of evangelical concern” (172)… and this includes more than the “counterculture” of the churches. “Thus the concerns of the community itself at times require attention to matters of political concern, including electoral politics” (172).

j. There are limits to political activity for the church as the emerging Kingdom ecclesiology bears out.
Moore writes: “Political solutions are first implemented within the community of the local church. When political solutions are offered to the outside world, they must always be couched in language that recognizes the futility of cultural reform without personal regeneration and baptism into the Body of Christ” (172).

k. Thus, to Moore, regardless of the impact of the church on its culture and public square, it still lives uneasily in its present circumstances.

Moore writes: “As Henry argues, the people of God live ‘with renewable visas’ on earth, even as they live out their heavenly citizenship in the counterculture of the church” (173).

Moore concludes: “… every church building represents by its very existence a latent political challenge to the powers that be. Because the evangelical consensus at this point recognizes the church as an initial form of a coming global monarchy, they proclaim by their very presence on the landscape that the status quo will one day be shaken apart in one decisive act of sovereign authority. Therefore, the evangelical conscience remains always a bit ‘uneasy’ even as it engages vigorously the social and political structures. This is because the doctrine of the church is, after all, the concrete display of the ‘already/not yet’ of the Kingdom. As such, it reminds evangelicals that, although they are to submit to the governing authorities, they are claimed by no transient political entity, but by a coming messianic Kingdom, which they see even now breaking in around them through Spirit-propelled reconciliation, peace, and unity” (173).

II. BIBLICAL PRECEDENT – BOOK OF ACTS

Is the church in an “already” phase of the “not yet” Kingdom?

A. Christ’s Post-Resurrection Ministry and Its Connection to the Kingdom

1. The Lord Teaches the Disciples.

   a. The disciples needed further teaching concerning Jesus’ suffering and glory (cf. Lk 24:21, 25–27, 36–49; Acts 1:3).

   b. The disciples’ needed further teaching concerning the Kingdom (cf. Acts 1:3).

      i. Notice the disciples’ question.

      **Acts 1:6** So when they had come together, they were asking
Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

- The question assumes the restoration of a kingdom which existed historically.

- The question also assumes that the Kingdom was not [yet] established.

- The question also assumes that when the Kingdom is restored, Israel will once more possess it in fulfillment of Old Testament history and prophecy.

- The question demonstrates the disciples’ ignorance concerning the timing of the Kingdom.

ii. Notice Christ’s reply to the disciples’ question.

Acts 1:7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;”

- **First**, in reply the Lord does not rebuke or correct the general assumptions of the disciples.

- **Second**, Christ answers the disciples’ question concerning the timing of the Kingdom directly.

- **Third**, Christ comforts His disciples by reminding them that they don’t have to be concerned about the timing of Kingdom. The timing issues are in the Father’s control (cf. Acts 1:7).

2. The Lord Commissions the Disciples (Acts 1:8).

   a. The ascension demonstrated that Jesus was the Messianic King.
   b. The promise of His Second Coming at the Ascension reconfirmed that He would set up His earthly Kingdom in the future.

B. The Day of Pentecost and Its Connection to the Kingdom
1. The testimony given on Pentecost.
   b. The message of Peter.

   Peter’s message contains the following significant elements:
   i. Peter explains the miracle of tongues.
   ii. Peter reminds his Jewish audience that the ‘miracles and wonders and signs’ performed by Jesus confirmed that He was the Messianic King (Acts 2:22).
   iii. Finally, Peter answers at least two questions in the Jewish mind.

      • First Question: How could a crucified man be the Messianic King of Israel? He is dead. How, then, could He ever reign?

      Peter’s answer: Jesus is alive. He has resurrected from the dead and has ascended to the right hand of the Father. Therefore, He is King and has the right to the throne of David (Acts 2:23–32).

      • Second Question: “If Jesus is the Messiah, why is He not now on earth ruling on David’s throne?”

      Peter answers: The risen Messiah must first enter into heaven and for a season (of intercession) sit at the Father’s right hand until His enemies are brought into subjection at His return to establish His Kingdom (Acts 2:33–35; cf. Psa 110).


   That the Jewish converts viewed their conversion as possibly the beginning of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel is seen in their conduct:
   a. They continued to worship in the temple daily (Acts 2:46).
   b. Their attitude toward their personal property demonstrates an expectation that the Kingdom was imminent (Acts 2:45).
c. Their observance of the “many wonders and signs [that] were taking place through the apostles” (Acts 2:43) must have heightened their anticipation of the restoration of the Kingdom.

C. The Reoffer of the Kingdom.

1. First, Peter addresses the nation of Israel (Acts 3:12, 13, 17, 25–26).

2. Second, Peter ascribes the power for the miracle to the God of Israel Who “has glorified His Servant Jesus” (Acts 3:13, 16; cf. 2:26).

3. Third, Peter boldly proclaims that Israel had killed the divine Messiah whom God had sent to them, but God raised Him from the dead… thus their King is alive (Acts 3:13–15; 17–19).

4. Fourth, to enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom, Israel must “repent” and “return” (Acts 3:19) and be given a “new heart” [just like the Old Testament prophets foretold and Christ and John the Baptist had announced]. Indeed the social, economic, and political blessings of the kingdom rest upon a spiritual foundation of repentance and forgiveness.

5. Fifth, if Israel, as a whole, met the spiritual conditions required for entrance into the kingdom… repentance and return… then God would set certain things in motion according to His great and awesome plan (Acts 3:19–21).

   a. God would wipe away the sins of the people (v. 19).

   b. God would send “the times of refreshing” which “come from the presence of the Lord” (v. 19).

   c. Concomitant with “the times of refreshing,” God would “send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,” whose present session in heaven is only temporary (v. 21).

   d. This Second Coming of Christ would bring “the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times” (v. 21).”

6. Sixth, “the reference to Moses’ prophecy concerning the Messiah confirms the genuineness of this offer to Israel.

7. Seventh, Peter reminds the nation of Israel that by descent they are the primary objects of the regal blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant (Acts 3:25–26).
Note: During the Lord’s ministry on earth at His First Coming, He foretold of a reoffering of the Kingdom… in *The Parable of the Wedding Feast* (Matt 22:1–7).

**Two calls** went out to “those who had been invited to the wedding feast” (v. 3).

1. “First call” – Issued by our Lord through His disciples (cf. Matt 10:1–15; Lk 10: 1–9). It was directed specifically to the nation of Israel and they officially rejected it:

   Matt 22:3 “And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.”

2. “Second call” – Verse 4: “Again he sent out other slaves saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited, ‘Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.’ ‘” The dinner is “prepared”; “everything is ready” (v. 4) – certainly a reference to our Lord’s finished work of redemption at Calvary” (McClain, 406). This is a post-resurrection call.

Note: As a result of this second call some of the King’s slaves were “seized,” “mistreated,” and “killed” (v. 6). This description fits the book of Acts… not the Gospels.

3. *No third call* – Instead the King sends His armies, destroys the murderers and burns their city – a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (vs. 7).

**CONCLUSION**