(Fundamentalism), Social Action, and the Gospel

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When I was informed of my topic for the conference today I cringed lightly, as I rather unceremoniously discarded the label *fundamentalist* as part of my self-identity some time ago. I have no ready replacement label; instead, I try to avoid conversations where I have to agonize over my self-identity. But unlike other self-identity crises in the news today, in which people doubt aspects of their self-identify that are defined quite objectively by our Creator and confirmed rather unequivocally by our biology, the Christian *fundamentalist's* self-identity has never been objectively defined, and now that the term has been adrift these many years, I've discovered that I am better off without it. Still, this tug-of-war of mine (and one that no doubt many of you have experienced with me), is emblematic of the very point under discussion this afternoon.

Fundamentalism has, by and large, been correct on the essentials of the Gospel, and for this reason has, by and large, been able to offer a means of distinguishing believers from unbelievers. But this has never been an adequate basis for ecclesiastical cooperation. I am weary of the idea that the mission of the church can be summed up as "Gospel." When I get together with my church on Sunday we are not together for the Gospel, but for the building of a people for his name's sake. Of course Church cannot legitimately occur without Gospel—the Gospel, paired with baptism, comprise the entry point into the gathered people of God—but hopefully you are doing a great deal more on Sunday than awkwardly eisegeting the cross into every text, singing and endless stream of cross-centered songs, and reminding your people of the Gospel: we pursuing a whole ecclesiastical mission.

Ecclesiastical cooperation of any meaningful sort requires a common understanding of the ἐκκλησία, and apart from this commonality, all cooperation is doomed to eventual failure. So if you want to modify the title of this presentation as given, I wish to rebrand this presentation as *The Church, the Gospel, and Social Action*. Specifically, we are going to be looking at three factors necessary for cooperative evangelism as church-building, with social action as a case study.

> - **A common view of the nature of the church,**
> - **A common view of the church's responsibility to its civic/secular culture, and**
> - **A common view of the effects of depravity on culture's response to ecclesiastical social action.**

A Common View of the Nature of the Church

Much may of course be subsumed under this heading, but let me get right to the point I am trying to make. I'd like to make the case that there is no factor more critical to valid cooperative evangelism and no factor more seminal to our understanding of the role of social action in evangelism than a common understanding of the *spirituality of the church*. Very little has been written in the last century on this topic, and I'll wager that many of you today are unaware of the technical use of this phrase. This is a great tragedy, and one for which I hope to offer at least a summary remedy below.[1]

The Meaning of the Spirituality of the Church

While the phrase *spirituality of the church* can refer generally to the spiritual health and purity of a church (including for many a regenerate church membership), the phrase usually carries a more technical

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[1] I am abridging here a longer treatment of mine, "A Tale of Two Kingdoms: The Struggle for the Spirituality of the Church and the Genius of the Dispensational System, *DBSJ* 19 (2014): 53–71.

meaning, viz., "the notion…that the church has no business *as an institution* meddling with political or social questions."[2] Stripped of all secular jurisdiction, the church's "prerogative" is instead "simply to declare the truth of God as revealed in his Word and to require that the truth should be professed and obeyed by all under its jurisdiction [i.e., its members]."[3] The church is a spiritual "kingdom" with a strictly spiritual (i.e., not a social or political) mission/function.

This does not mean that the church cannot speak to the civic duties of its members, which it must do (e.g., Titus 2:1–10; Gal 6:10), or that it cannot identify and censure civic/public vice (e.g., abortion, drunkenness, or homosexuality); however, even here the church has limited authority: it has "no power over the lives, liberty, and property of its members" beyond what is clearly demanded in Scripture.[4] The doctrine of the spirituality of the church does not even mean that individual members or officers of churches are barred from civic involvement or even vocational civic service; indeed, John Murray insists that individual Christians "must…engage in politics,… but only in their capacity *as citizens of the state*, not *as members of the church*."[5]

The outworking of this doctrine has not been monolithic in its historical expression. Some reduce the doctrine as a rather vague affirmation of the separation of church and state, perhaps prohibiting political speeches during church services or restricting the display of national flags in the sanctuary. Others suggest that the church may not speak officially on matters of public ethics (e.g., organized advocacy for or against gun control, immigration reform, civil rights, military action—even abortion, same-sex unions, or slavery) Some even suggest that the doctrine shortens the Church's social arm, barring the church's provision of "education" or "mercy ministries for those beyond the church's membership."[6] But no matter how differently the doctrine is applied, proponents of the spirituality of the church universally affirm that spiritual matters are the purview of the church, and secular matters are the purview of some other seat (e.g., the state, the family, or the individual). Furthermore, they argue that these spheres of authority do not *ultimately* overlap.

A History of the Spirituality of the Church

The spirituality of the church is sometimes dismissed as a 19th-century Southern Presbyterian invention designed to give moral credibility to the Confederate cause during the American Civil War. But while it is

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[2]Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 568, emphasis added.

[3]Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2:604.

[4]Ibid., 2:604; also and esp. Hodge's most comprehensive discussion of this topic under "The State of the Country," *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 33 (1861): 548–52; 556–68.

[5]John Murray, "The Relation of Church and State," in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976–1982), 1:255. See also James Henley Thornwell's distinction between "assemblies of Christian gentlemen" that speak to civil affairs and the "court of Jesus Christ" that speaks only to spiritual matters (*The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, ed. John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau [repr. of 1873 ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986], 4:472–73).

[6]Mark E. Dever, "The Doctrine of the Church," in *A Theology for the Church,* ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 814 n. 104. To be fair, Dever clarifies that "the Scripture in no way *denies* the right or ability of a congregation to care for the physical needs of non-Christians in their area. [But] neither does Scripture *require* the local congregation to alleviate the physical needs of non-Christians in our community" (814). Such matters fall beyond the pale of the institutional church's mission, and undue attention to them "potentially distracts the church from its main and unique responsibility, that of incarnating and proclaiming the gospel" (814 n. 104). For a stance much sharper than Dever's, see James Henley Thornwell, who decries all institutional involvement of the Church in civil/social matters, be they "hospitals," "asylums," "temperance," or the "philanthropic" relief of the blind, the poor, or the enslaved. To "implicate the Church" in such matters, Thornwell argued, is to "endanger her efficiency" (*Collected Writings*, 4:472–78). Such concerns belong to "Christian gentlemen," but not to the Church.

true that some of the most articulate expressions of the doctrine come from that milieu, the *idea* of the spirituality of the church is easily as old as the Reformation, even as old as Augustine, and arguably traces to Christ's demarcation of what belongs, respectively, to Caesar and to God (Matt 22:21).[7]

I would argue that the formal birthdate of the doctrine corresponds with Martin Luther's *Zwei Reiche Lehre* or "doctrine of the two kingdoms,"[8] a doctrine echoed in John Calvin's teaching of the *duplex in homine regimen*, or "two governments of God."[9] Both Luther and Calvin meant by these expressions that there were two spheres of divine jurisdiction in the world, viz., the church (a spiritual kingdom) and the state (a civil kingdom). These two "kingdoms" (or *governments* or *spheres*, if you prefer) are distinct in origin and non-overlapping in jurisdiction. While NT believers hold a kind of "dual citizenship" in both of these kingdoms, the kingdoms themselves remain distinct, with neither intruding on the other.[10] The development of this understanding at this particular moment of history is likely due to the advantage it gave the early Reformers in dismantling the ecclesiastical/magisterial alliances that had long been brokered in Europe by the Roman Catholic Church.

As time passed and more Reformation-friendly magisteria began to emerge, however, state and church reverted to their old patterns of symbiotic fraternity, and the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, which began so promisingly, fell into decline. Perhaps better, its locus shifted to a new minority group— Anabaptists and eventually Baptists. Chief among these were English Baptists, whose emphasis on the "separation of church and state" has been forever enshrined among the traditional "Baptist Distinctives." The most visible expression of this ideal is seen in America, where odd bedfellows like Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians, and even Romanists carved out a nation whose first freedom was from a legislature that might try to "make [a] law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This was, perhaps, the political high water mark for the doctrine of the spirituality of the church.

It was the efforts of Presbyterian stalwarts attempting to preserve the unity of their church during the crucible of the American Civil War, however, that gave us the most developed expression of the doctrine of the church's spirituality. As its name suggests, the Civil War was not an ecclesiastical but a *civil* conflict, with contours political, economic, sociological, cultural, and ethical. Despite this fact, the nation's churches began speaking loudly to the conflict, resulting in inevitable schism. Whole denominations split on geopolitical lines, and none more bitterly than the Presbyterian denomination. Standing squarely against this division, however, was a renewed and desperate appeal to the doctrine of the spirituality of the church as a hopeful means of preventing schism. Many proponents of the doctrine were Southern Presbyterians who (arguably) lacked moral high ground.[11] The most ardent proponents of the doctrine,

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[7]For a comprehensive treatment of this topic, see David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

[8]While this doctrine is critical to Luther's overall theology, he tended to assume rather than to prove it. His most formal treatment of the doctrine (albeit brief) may be found in his "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, ed. Walter I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 83–104.

[9]This is a major topic of discussion in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), esp. 3.19.15; 4.20.

[10]Calvin, for instance, would write that the "spiritual kingdom of Christ and the civil government are things far removed from one another," and that to commingle their respective aegises would be to revert to "Judaic folly" (*Institutes* 4.20.16 n. 39).

[11]See esp. the succinct treatments of two leading stalwarts of Southern Presbyterianism, Robert L. Dabney (*Syllabus and Notes of the Course of Systematic and Polemic Theology Taught at Union Theological Seminary, Virginia*, 6th ed. [Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1927], 873–87) and William Henley Thornwell's (*Collected Writings*, esp. 4:446–64, 472–78). But also see several notable contributions from outside the Confederacy, including not only Charles Hodge but also James Bannerman, a Scottish Presbyterian with no vested interest in the American conflict (see his *The Church of Christ* [repr. of 1869 ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960], 1:148–59).

however, were found in the pulpits of "border churches"—churches positioned along the geographical boundary between the Union and Confederacy, and easily the most vulnerable of all to violent schism.[12]

The leaders of these churches argued uniformly that the institutional church should not take sides on questions of slavery, union, state's rights, etc., *because of administrative discontinuity between the Christian church and the Old Testament Jewish theocracy*. The Christian church, they argued, must not take its cue from the OT (where cultic and civic concerns intertwined), but from Christ's new command to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21).[13]

Sadly, while many of the best minds of Presbyterianism were committed to the doctrine of the church's spirituality, the tide of popular sentiment would not countenance the idea, and the church shattered. The spirituality of the church suffered a great blow, but not a terminal one. Vestiges of the doctrine persisted in the Reconstruction South and in the Princeton theology and later in the OPC, a minority movement that resisted the tide of Modernism. Among the latter, J. Gresham Machen stands out as the most consistent and principled advocate of the church's spirituality, staunchly maintaining the doctrine in the face of two very opposite foes: liberalism and fundamentalism.[14] Today, the tradition continues in corners of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church,[15] especially in a breakaway band of scholar-theologians clustered around Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California.[16] This aggressive expression has generated a lot of noise in recent days, but its voices are few and much maligned.[17]

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[12]For key defenses from border churches see T. E. Peck (pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Lynchburg, VA, part of the Baltimore Presbytery), *Notes on Ecclesiology* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1892), 119–62; Stuart Robinson (pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of Louisville), *The Church of God* (repr. of 1858 ed., Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2009), 60–77. Robinson's story is perhaps the most accessible of these, thanks in no small part to an impressively documented account of Robinson's struggles prepared by Preston Graham, Jr., *A Kingdom Not of This World: Stuart Robinson's Struggle to Distinguish the Sacred from the Secular During the Civil War* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002).

Of particular interest to dispensationalists is the fact that James Hall Brookes, the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church and later the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church (both in St. Louis) and father of American dispensationalism, birthed his theory principally out of the doctrine of the church's spirituality, arguing that the church's spirituality was the chief point of practical distinction between the Jewish and the Christian missions.

[13]Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, 4:474; Dabney, *Systematic and Polemical Theology*, 874–75; Peck, *Notes on Ecclesiology*, 124–28; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:604–5.

[14]On the one hand Machen drew the ire of the fundamentalists for refusing to "take a stand" with their coalition of cultural resistance (e.g., prohibitionist stances on drinking or smoking, issues that were for Machen *non-ecclesiastical* matters to which the Scriptures did not speak clearly). On the other hand, Machen waged war against theological modernism in the matter of the church's mission, fiercely guarding it against not only doctrinal deviants, but also the reduction of the church's true mission of Gospel proclamation to a *civic errand of social service*—a mission that Machen viewed as ancillary to the church's mission. For a helpful treatment of Machen's story that emphasizes his commitment to the spirituality of the church, see D. G. Hart's *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), chap. 6.

[15]See, e.g., Darryl Hart, *Recovering Mother Kirk* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 51–65; also Carl Trueman's "Case of the Missing Category," blog post at http://info.alliancenet.org/mos-beta/postcards-from-palookaville/the-case-of-the-missing-category, accessed 3 December 2014).

[16]See, e.g., Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011], 713, *et passim*; ibid., *Where in the World Is the Church?* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002); Jason Stellman, *Dual Citizens: Worship and Life Between the Already and the Not Yet* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2009); also VanDrunen's *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*; and R. Scott Clark's collection of weblog articles on the topic at http://heidelblog.net/category/twofold-kingdom/.

[17]For a particularly harsh example of this criticism see John M. Frame, *The Escondido Theology: A Reformed Response to Two Kingdom Theology* (Lakeland, FL: Whitefield Media Productions, 2011). A more irenic version can be found in Ryan C. McIlhenny, ed., *Kingdoms Apart: Engaging the Two Kingdoms Perspective* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012).

The Decline of the Spirituality of the Church

One might wonder, in view of the preceding, why the doctrine of the spirituality of the church is in such steep decline, especially within dispensationalism, which I have argued above to be a direct result of the doctrine. I suggest four principal reasons:

First in historical order was the *association of the doctrine with the vice of slavery*. The banner under which the pro-slavery churches of the South operated before, during, and after the War had the doctrine of the spirituality of the church emblazoned upon it, and so the doctrine came to be regarded as part of the "wrong side of history." Thus chastened, the doctrine was quietly suppressed.

As memories of the War began to fade, however, a **second** factor usurped the first in importance: *Modernism*. For many Americans, America had been built, to small degree, on the Puritan idea of a "city on a hill"—a utopian vision of a nation built on Christian principles. This vision, resting to no small degree on a platform of vibrant postmillennialism, imagined the world moving toward a visible, economic, political, sociological, and otherwise ideal society with King Jesus at the helm. Even the Civil War, which might easily have proven fatal to this idea, contributed to the optimism: the elimination of slavery became symbolic of the "glory of the coming of the Lord" and a triumph of God and truth as they kept "marching on."[18] Years of relentless church involvement in civil affairs in early American history came to full flower at the close of the nineteenth century—*but at the cost of the mission of the church*. No longer did the church exist (in the public opinion at least) to secure converts to Christ and subscribers to particular doctrinal systems; instead, the church existed to *materially facilitate* the Kingdom of God that had "always" been but was now "coming" in new and explosive ways.[19] For Rauschenbusch, widely regarded as the chief spokesman of this model at its height, four facilitating agencies (Church, State, family, and the "industrial organization of society") were working in concert to this grand end.[20] And what was the church's primary role in this utopian society? Engaging in and promoting philanthropy, charity, public education, temperance, civil equality, and other virtues, not as "an annex to the orthodox conception of the scheme of salvation," but as its "essence."[21] This was the golden age of theological liberalism, and it succeeded by convincing the majority that God's kingdom, complete with all of its many *visible* and *physical* components, was arriving, and the church was leading the way.

Pockets of resistance to this Modernist wave emerged from dispensational fundamentalism[22] and also a small band of subscriptionist denominational Presbyterians that were committed to the spirituality of the Church.[23] The resistance, however, came at great cost. Followers of Moody and Machen alike endured

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[18]The reader will recognize the familiar words of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" that became a rallying hymn for the Northern armies.

[19]These terms regularly employed by Walter Rauschenbusch have appeared as the title of a recent biography: Christopher Hodge Evans's *The Kingdom Is Always but Coming: A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[20]Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: MacMillan, 1917), 145.

[21]Ibid., 131.

[22]For these, the *eternal* kingdom of God (the *always* kingdom) is to be distinguished from the *mediatorial* kingdom (which began promisingly in the OT theocracy but was suspended until the second coming of Christ in power and glory to establish a 1000-year earthly reign). While this latter kingdom *had* and *will have* vast and far-reaching civil, political, sociological, and material features, its absence today leaves the institutional church with a strictly spiritual mandate (see esp. Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959]). Of course, as citizens of God's eternal kingdom, believers still have material responsibilities to their fellow man; these responsibilities are not to be administered by the church, however, but by the family/state.

[23]The Orthodox Presbyterian cohort that broke from the PCUSA/Princeton under the leadership of Machen, being mostly amillennial, held out no hope for a future, earthly, 1000-year Jewish Millennium (a stance that led eventually to the expulsion of the few premillennialists that were originally part of the group). But neither did they have any patience

crushing slander and ridicule for opposing the Modernist vision of the church and advocating for a purely spiritual mission of simple Gospel declaration.[24] The doctrine of the spirituality of the church had been roundly chastened by the majority church, and the doctrine very nearly died of embarrassment in the court of public opinion.

It was this embarrassment that led to a **third** factor in the collapse of the doctrine of the church's spirituality: the *new evangelical adoption of "realized eschatology" as its governing missional premise*. Feeling the weight of disenfranchisement in both the academy and in the court of public opinion, a band of progressive fundamentalists sought to "reawaken" their movement from its socio-political slumber and so to recover the "place at the table" that they had relinquished during the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy.[25] The great barrier to this goal was obvious: the persistent dispensational reduction of the mission of the institutional church to a strictly *spiritual* errand. To succeed, the "new" evangelicals needed to eliminate all vestiges of this doctrine of the spirituality of the church.

It was to this end that Carl Henry published in 1947 his *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*—a clarion call for middle ground between the "kingdom now" error of liberalism and the "kingdom then" error of dispensational fundamentalism. It was the latter error, however, that galled Henry the most, because it "cuts the nerve of world compassion," "undercuts world relevance," and thereby "destroys the essential character of Christianity."[26] The only solution to the problem of dispensational fundamentalism, for Henry, was to abandon their belief structure and to affirm "both that the kingdom is here, and that it is not here."[27] This theological affirmation was, for Henry, the only way to (1) justify evangelical social action, to (2) reacquire world relevance and a "place at the table," and to (3) thereby ensure the continued success of the Gospel.

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for the liberal vision of the church as developing a comprehensive temporal and material kingdom on earth. Instead, they understood that Christ, during his first advent, introduced fundamental changes in the theocratic program that rendered its purview strictly spiritual. While God in Christ continues to oversee the civil realm in a very real way through the age-old institutions of family and state, the ecclesiastical realm or spiritual "kingdom" remains separate from it (so Calvin's "two governments of God" discussed above). Not all in the OPC fully understood Machen, but their suspicion of the new evangelicalism in the following decades stands as a testimony to their concern that the new evangelical agenda was only marginally removed from that of Modernism. It is not surprising that the modern revival of "two kingdoms" theology has emerged from this theological family.

[24]Ernst Sandeen raised eyebrows when he affirmed an "alliance" between Old Princeton/Westminster and the dispensationalists ("Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," *Church History* 36 [March 1967]: 67), but his theory has seen nothing but qualification, minimization, and even outright dismissal ever since (so George Marsden, *"Defining Fundamentalism," Christian Scholar's Review* 1 [Winter 1971]: 67; also Joe L. Coker, "Exploring the Roots of the Dispensationalist/Princetonian 'Alliance': Charles Hodge and John Nelson Darby on Eschatology and Interpretation of Scripture," *Fides et Historia* 30 [Winter-Spring 1998]: 41–56; and many others). All practical similarity between the two groups has been dismissed as coincidence or at best a marriage of convenience—the theological discontinuities were much too great, critics affirm, to countenance any *real* cooperation.

Todd Mangum, however, has done the church a great service in demonstrating that there *was* at least one point of theological continuity between Old Princeton/Westminster and the dispensationalists that has been routinely overlooked, viz., *a common high regard for the doctrine of the spirituality of the church* (*The Dispensational-Covenantal Rift: The Fissuring of American Evangelical Theology from 1936–1944* [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2007], 8–10; 103–6). This common principle, I believe, supplied easily as much of the glue requisite to this alliance as did their common regard for the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

[25]The emphasized terms I borrow from the titles of two key works detailing this period of ecclesiastical history: Joel Carpenter's *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford, 1997), and John A. D'Elia's fascinating study, *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America* (New York: Oxford, 2008).

[26]Carl Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 53, 57.

[27]Ibid., 53.

George Eldon Ladd answered Henry's appeal formally in his 1959 work *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, a work that reflects the foremost expression of Ladd's personal mission to "replace dispensationalism with an evangelical view of the kingdom of God and the end-times that was…more able to sustain evangelical social engagement."[28] Ladd's work immediately raised eyebrows by both its tone and sources. While harsh toward his dispensational brothers, Ladd was fawning in his praise of non-evangelicals, whom he cited not only favorably, but also *exclusively*. The writings of C. H. Dodd and Oscar Cullmann supplied Ladd's primary argument, and their cutting-edge idea of "realized eschatology" lent considerable intellectual substance to Henry's model.[29] For Ladd and Henry, the fact that God's undifferentiated kingdom not only *is already* but also *is not yet* supplied the necessary basis for expanding the church's purview beyond the "spiritual mission" championed by dispensational fundamentalism.[30]

Also playing a significant role in the theology of the new evangelicalism and in the suppression of the spirituality of the church is a **fourth** and final factor, viz., *Neo-Kuyperianism* (sometimes called *Neo-Calvinism*). Abraham Kuyper (from whom the system derives its name) was a most remarkable figure in both Dutch Calvinist theology and Dutch politics at the close of the nineteenth century. Eminently quotable, Kuyper's is perhaps best known for his statement that "there is not one square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'"[31] In so saying, Kuyper asserted that nothing subsisted outside the broad scope of Christ's *singular lordship and kingship*: there was but *one kingdom* and Christ is the King—and Kuyper's broad involvement in a great many spheres of this kingship (ecclesiastical, political, economic, educational, etc.) communicated to his followers that these were all legitimate targets for influence by the institutional church. Whether Kuyper intended all of this is a matter of intense debate;[32] nevertheless, the message that his disciples heard and perpetuated was this: the mission of the Church is not merely to carry to the world the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but to bring *every* domain (not just the *spiritual* domain) of human existence under the undifferentiated kingship of Jesus Christ. This message was widely embraced by the "new evangelicalism," and while that movement has disintegrated, Neo-Kuyperianism continues to enjoy a robust following in the wake of that movement.

Summary

It should be fairly easy to see from the foregoing why ecclesiastical cooperation between those who affirm the spirituality of the church and those who deny it might be significantly strained. The two groups

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[28]Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 195.

[29]It must be observed in the throes of the First World War, the postmillennial vision of Modernist liberalism died suddenly, leaving the church's vibrant socio-political mission without any identifiable anchor. But rather than abandon the mission, the solution was to forge a new anchor—one supplied, in no small part, by Dodd, Cullman, and others of their ilk. And so while modernist liberalism *as a theological system* was technically a casualty of the War, the liberal *mission* survived the War and extends to the present day.

[30]For modern appeals for a return to the model of Henry and Ladd, see Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); Gregory Alan Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), and to a degree James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford, 2010). Among the few refreshingly dissonant voices raised against this model within the evangelical community, see Arthur Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1978), and more recently, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011).

[31]Inaugural address for the Free University of Amsterdam, 20 October 1880, discoverable in James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 489.

[32]A more thorough study of the context of Kuyper's "not one square inch" divulges that Kuyper partitioned the kingship of Christ over the universe into sovereign and independent but interlocking "spheres." As such, he probably would not have approved of the intrusion of the institutional Church into these other spheres. This detail was lost, however, on many of his followers, hence I have identified them not as Kuyperian but as *Neo*-Kuyperian. For a discussion of these distinctions, see VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*, chaps. 7, 9, and 10.

quite simply have very different views of the mission of the institutional church, different views of the necessity of social action by the institutional church, and in some cases different views of the Gospel itself. That cooperation is growing between these groups is plain to see, but the question whether serious ecclesiastical cooperation between these two groups can occur remains in serious doubt. One of the two groups will have to capitulate to the other, or else they will remain apart at least at some practical level.

A Common View of the Church's Relationship to Its Civic/Secular Culture

Related but not identical too the preceding is the question of the relationship of the Church to its culture. For this point I'd like to borrow from the well-worn categories in Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*,[33] which are neither perfect nor even intended for the purpose for which I am using them; still, they are adequate to the argument I hope to make, viz., that the church's missional and philosophical responsibilities to culture will greatly inform its approach to social action and evangelism, and consequently will greatly inform the possibility of ecclesiastical cooperation.

I begin with the two poles of Niebuhr's taxonomy:

➢ In the **Christ against culture** model, culture is irreparably corrupt, and thus to be avoided and even opposed by the church. The church should function as a counter-culture, a "new and separated community"[34] within culture. Examples are broad, including odd bedfellows such as various monastic orders, countercultural sects (e.g., the Amish), extreme expressions of fundamentalism, and (perhaps most curiously) a few Paleo-Kuyperian covenantalists. Social action in this model is an exercise in futility. Indeed, in its most advanced form this model has no apologetic to speak of, and attempts little that can be legitimately called evangelism.

➢ In the **Christ of culture** model, culture is in the very worst analysis neutral, and in the best quite *good*—so good, in fact, that it informs and even *prescribes* the religious expressions and mission of the church. Our best example here is Protestant Liberalism, which prescribes for the church a naturalistic mission rather than the Bible's supernaturalistic mission: the church exists to make our world better rather than to prepare people for the world to come. Social action in this model effectively *is* the Gospel.

It goes without saying that the variations of Christianity that propagate these models leave little room for ecclesiastical cooperation: their respective views of social action lie beyond the pale of legitimate Christianity. They represent, respectively, a Christianity that is *neither in the world nor of the world* and a Christianity that is *both in the world and of this world*.

It is two of the three intermediate positions, however, that offer the greatest intrigue, viz., the **Christ Transforming Culture** model and the **Christ and Culture in Paradox** model:[35]

➢ In the **Christ transforming culture** model, culture is seriously damaged, but is redeemable, and ultimately will be redeemed. In this model, the church is charged with redeeming everything—not only a *people* for his name's sake, but also culture itself. The most comprehensive expression of this model is Reformed Postmillennialism, which sees the Church's mission as building not *two* kingdoms, but one great monolithic kingdom in which every sphere of human society is systematically transformed until such time as "Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth."

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[33]H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (San Francisco: Harper, 1951).

[34]Ibid., 72.

[35]Note that I am setting aside one position, viz., **Christ above culture**, because it has few modern Protestant representatives of note. In the Christ above Culture, culture is corrupt, but can be alternately subjugated and cultivated so that Christ's higher ethic is eventually recognized and embraced by culture at large. Its best example is Romanism, though chapters of the Magisterial Reformation adopted some of these ideals as well.

While not a perfect fit within this model, Neo-Kuyperianism also finds its home here, together with any model that countenances a Christian kingdom that is in the process of realization. For these, social action is an integral part of the church's mission, but never the whole.

➤ In the **Christ and culture in paradox** model, culture is irreparably corrupt, but also inescapable. Christ is overseeing two kingdoms—one civic and the other ecclesiastical; one secular and the other sacred; one immanent and temporal and the other transcendent and eternal. The paradox is that Christ is building his ecclesiastical "kingdom" in the context of a secular kingdom doomed to destruction. This paradox means that while the church inevitably introduces moral restraint and social enrichment that renders society livable and creates an abundance of contact points for Christian evangelism,[36] such social improvements are incidental to its primary mission. This model, which Niebuhr sees as the property of Lutheranism and its "Two-Kingdom" motif, can also be claimed by any two-kingdom approach, including such amillennialists as emphasize the spirituality of the church and, ideally, all dispensationalists.[37]

If I may superimpose Niebuhr's four categories onto a grid supplied by Ed Stetzer,[38] we emerge with something that looks like this:

View of Church/Culture	"Missional" Sub-Model (Stetzer)	Function of Social Action
Church against culture	[No mission at all]	Social action is optional and unnecessary, even discouraged.
Church and culture in paradox	Low Missional	Social action is the purview primarily of "Christian gentlemen," but can function incidentally as a vehicle for the institutional Church's primary end of gospel proclamation.
Church transforming culture	Mid-Missional	Social justice/mercy ministry and gospel proclamation are two parallel ends of the institutional Church.
Church of culture	High Missional	Social justice/mercy ministry is the institutional Church's primary end.

Obviously, within these four categories there are nuances of variation, and we might even be able to spot transitional or hybrid forms that don't quite fit comfortably into any approach. Still, I think it is possible to say that that *substantive* cooperative evangelism can really work only within one's particular missional approach and corresponding view of social action.

A Common View of the Effects of Depravity on Culture's Response to Ecclesiastical Social Action

Our final point of consideration this afternoon is an apologetic one. I suspect this afternoon that some of you have looked at the chart above, agreed generally with the second view of social action, but with the

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[36]A great deal more ink might be spilled here distinguishing between proposed points of contact that reflect borrowed Christian capital and are thus legitimate for evangelism and those that reflect pagan origin and are *not* legitimate points of contact, but this must be saved for another day.

[37]We might also include more Platonic forms of the Christian religion such as is manifest in Neo-Orthodox theology, though I am not prepared to detail this anomaly in this presentation of our more narrow scope.

[38]"Meanings of Missional," part 5, posted 2 October 2007, available at http://www.edstetzer.com/2007/10/meanings-of-missional-part-5-1.html.

caveat that my description there remains awfully wide open. To what extent, you might ask, may social action function as a vehicle for the institutional church's primary end of gospel proclamation? Let me answer by admitting that I am unprepared to draw the thick black we might want; still, I think its is possible to construct some notes toward an answer to this question. Please note the following:

➢ First, it should be evident to all who engage in social action while summarily *denying* the notion of depravity will not be able to engage in cooperative evangelism with those who engage in social action and *accept* the notion of depravity. And that is because these two approaches have opposite understandings of what social action can accomplish for evangelism. If the notion of depravity may be denied, then social action is not merely an *occasion/instrument/vehicle* for the Gospel, but an actual *means* of the gospel. That is, one may increase the success rate of evangelism or even guarantee gospel success by means of social action.[39] Now to be sure, such an approach should not be confused with the social gospel (which sees social action as synonymous with gospel); nonetheless, the error here is palpable, and cannot comport successfully with any apologetic model that sees the only truly efficacious *means* to Gospel success as God forcing an entry into recalcitrant minds through his unilateral work of regeneration.

Of course, most who regard social action as a *means* to Gospel success do not see social action as an wholly efficacious measure—a guarantee—of regeneration. Instead, many see social action as part of a cumulative case for faith, that is, part of a network of reasons that break through the sluggish sensibilities of the unregenerate mind and inexorably break down the unbeliever's resistance to other, less demonstrable assertions of the Gospel. IOW, social action makes the gospel more plausible and agreeable and thus more likely to take root. At the end of the day, however, this understanding differs from the previous only in degree and not in substance.

This brings us then to the appropriate use of social action and other "evidences" in the spread of the Gospel. Some have embraced the preceding and, agreeing that social action cannot compel faith as an efficacious *means*, conclude that there can be no *vehicle* of gospel truth other than the Gospel proclaimed. But this is plainly not true (see, e.g., Matt 5:16; John 17:20–23; 1 Cor 9:21–23; Titus 2:6–10; 1 Pet 3:1). But if social action is not a means of faith, then what role can it possibly play? I would argue that while a believer's good deeds and exemplary behavior (as all of the "evidences") can never serve as *compelling arguments for faith* (i.e., means of the turning of the unregenerate heart), they are *exemplary demonstrations of the holistic nature of the Christian worldview*. Christianity cannot be reduced to the *kerygma*, but instead exists as a comprehensive worldview that boasts both rational and ethical components. As such, the ability of a believer to both "give a reason" and to do so "with a good conscience" are inextricably linked (1 Pet 3:16), and have either a positive or a negative effect on whether his evangel will be heard. So while no true presuppositionalist imagines that by his life he can compel faith, he knows that these can demonstrate and corroborate the truth of Christianity. And that is because Christianity is both objectively true (i.e., warranted, public, and available to all who exercise right reason to obtain it) and subjectively appropriated (i.e., it rests upon God's regenerative transformation of individual minds).[40]

To summarize, it would seem that in order to have meaningful ecclesiastical cooperation in the use of social action, there must be some level of agreement on the theological purpose and expectation of what that social action can accomplish.

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[39]This sentiment concerning the evangelistic use of social action is expressed vividly in Rick Warren's bald statement, "It is my deep conviction that anybody can be won to Christ if you discover the key to his or her heart…. The most likely place to start is with the person's felt needs" (*The Purpose Driven Life* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002], 219).

[40]For a comprehensive treatment of this thorny issue, see Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1998), chap 8, and esp. pp. 596–61.

> ➢ Second and more difficult to measure are the specific *kinds* of social engagement that are appropriate vehicles for the Christian Gospel. In our chart above it was suggested that the "Christ transforming culture" model is intent on redeeming all of culture, a goal that suggests that all of culture is redeemable. Operating from superficial readings of Scripture that "all things are lawful" (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23), "I become all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:23), and "to the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15), many who follow this model argue for what I have come to call a normative approach to the use of gospel means, viz., that unless the Bible specifically prohibits it, then I may automatically incorporate it into not only my *worship*, but also into my *apologetic*.
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> In the "Christ and culture in paradox" model (a variation of which I have commended), however, the options dramatically reduce, suggesting a more regulative approach to both worship and apologetics. Knowing that Christ is building a people for his name in the context of a corrupted culture (that's the paradox), the church msut assume that much of what the world does (and much of what the world expects Christians to do) is incompatible with the Church's mission—even in matters for which I can cite no chapter and verse. Stated positively, the church may use as a vehicle for the Gospel only what can be biblically demonstrated as sourced in a Christian worldview.
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> Obviously this last point is more subjective than the previous; still, radical disagreement on this point will almost certainly scuttle cooperative evangelistic efforts.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of the collapse of fundamentalism into an odd cornucopia of both orthodox and silly, the question of new bases for unity has come to the center of the stage for us who have been disenfranchised by our own movement. Many are looking hopefully to the conservatization of parts of the evangelical movement and are finding promising alliances here, and this is by no means something I want to discourage.[41] Still, I am troubled by the thought that agreement on the bare facts of the gospel alone (with perhaps a token nod to the idea of ecclesiastical separation from apostasy) is adequate to ecclesiastical fellowship. As we have suggested in the foregoing, evangelistic cooperation of any meaningful sort requires a common understanding of the ἐκκλησία, and it is not forthcoming that all who populate conservative evangelicalism have come to any sort of agreement on (1) the nature of the church as a distinctly spiritual institution, (2) the church's specific responsibility to its civic/secular culture, or (3) the effects of depravity on ecclesiastical/evangelistic success.

At the end of the day, I would argue that subscription to comprehensive doctrinal standards (i.e., denominational agreement) is the best possible basis for ecclesiastical and evangelistic cooperation; but until that ideal returns, it is hoped that the foregoing addresses some of the more critical points of immediate concern in the present milieu.

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[41]Particularly interesting here are treatments of this topic by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert (*What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2011] and Michael Horton (*Where in the World Is the Church?* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002]).