

The Kingdom of God and the Church: A Baptist Reassessment

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Introduction

The United States Constitution isn't a sacred document; it isn't even a grammatical one. That was the claim of E. B. White who, as one-half of *Strunk and White*, the twentieth century's most famous team of style-writing experts, probably ought to know. In an essay in the *New Yorker* in 1936, White pointed to the preamble's language of forming a "more perfect union." Perfection is perfection, White noted, and degrees of more or less perfection have "turned many a grammarian's stomach." A grammatically-correct author, White concluded, would have written simply "in order to form a perfect union—a thing our forefathers didn't dare predict, even for the sake of grammar."¹ The founding statesmen, of course, were reacting to something virtually all generations of humans have known—kingship, including a divine right to rule. The American skepticism of such claims to monarchy has had an impact on more than simply the grammar of our founding documents. The hostility to monarchy and of utopianism—rightly placed hostility, in this present age—has left a Western culture in which "kingship" and "Kingdom" means very little, apart from a fast-food logo or the latest bored trivialities of the British royal family. It is little wonder, then, that Western Christians often read "Kingdom of God" in their Bibles as either "when the roll is called up yonder" or a denominational program or a sermon series or the sum total of their individual

"quiet times."

The past century, though, has seen a renewed emphasis among evangelical Christians on the Kingdom of God both in its present and future manifestations. This ongoing reflection on the Kingdom has yielded, and promises to yield further, great insights on the mission of the church in the present age.

This article argues that Baptist ecclesiology particularly has much to learn from and contribute to the debate about the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church. Some of the emphases being recovered by other Christians on this score resonate with central aspects of the Baptist vision of the church. The contention of this article is that understanding the church as a colony of the Kingdom in this already/not yet structure makes most sense within a Baptist ecclesial framework. The church, then, in its relationship to the Kingdom of Christ, is made up of subjects of the Kingdom, announces the onset of the Kingdom, and lives out the ethics of the Kingdom. A historic, confessional Baptist ecclesiology has the exegetical and theological explanatory power lacking in some contemporary expressions of evangelical ecclesiology. A Baptist reassessment of the interplay between the church and the Kingdom, then, can serve to preserve Baptist distinctives in a post-denominational age, to press our Christian brothers outside of our fellowships toward more consistent applications of Kingdom theology to

church life, and to begin the process of revitalization and reform in local Baptist churches.

The Church, the Kingdom, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology

Reformed theologian B. B. Warfield famously remarked that the Protestant Reformation represented the triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the church.² In fact, Warfield contended, Augustine's soteriology and his ecclesiology were two children "struggling in the womb of his mind."³ This is partially true, at least as it relates to apostolic succession of bishops and the sacramental economy. On the relationship of the church to the Kingdom of God, however, Augustinian themes remained to varying degrees within Protestant church thought, especially within the Lutheran and Reformed wings of Protestantism, for over a millennium. Augustine identified the Kingdom as virtually synonymous with the church, both on earth and in heaven, ruling with Christ in the "thousand years" between his first and second comings.⁴ Contemporary evangelical Christianity saw some attempts to distance the church and the Kingdom, seeing the Kingdom as future-oriented, standing in judgment over the church, and indeed serving as the criterion by which the institutional churches would be found faithful or apostate on the last day.

Faced with what was deemed a doctrinally and morally falling Church of England in the nineteenth century, dispensationalism radically severed the church and the Kingdom of God, seeing the church as a "parenthesis" in God's redemptive program. The church

represented a mystery people, promised heavenly blessing. The Kingdom, however, was yet future, and belonged to ethnic Israel over whom Jesus would rule from David's throne in a rebuilt Jerusalem. When the church is raptured out of the world at the end of the age, and the kingdoms of this world are judged in the Great Tribulation, then the Kingdom of God will come with Jesus in the Eastern skies, the dispensationalists taught. This church/Kingdom distinction was helpful to American fundamentalists in the early twentieth-century when many (though not all) of them were influenced by the dispensationalist paradigm of the *Scofield Reference Bible* and Dallas Theological Seminary. After all, many of them were marginalized by churches and denominations that, just as the Church of England, were falling to Protestant liberalism and ethical latitudinarianism.

The distinction between the Kingdom and the church was further affected by American revivalism, from the Great Awakenings onward, and accelerated rapidly with the explosion of parachurch ministries within the fundamentalist and evangelical movements of the twentieth century. Revivalism rightly sought to emphasize personal regeneration, and to speak against any illusion of reconciliation with God based on church membership. Revivalist evangelicals also sought, again rightly, to embrace a unity that transcended denominational particularities—especially as the secularizing culture and the mainline Protestant establishment both reacted with hostility against what evangelicals took to be the gospel itself. Some of the most effective evangelistic, social ministry, personal discipleship, and political action organizations in American evangelicalism were intentionally

trans-denominational, accountable to a constituency of individuals rather than to a particular fellowship of churches. As a result, discussion of the church was often abstract and almost incidental to the Gospel. New believers were told, for instance, in evangelical gospel tracts to join a good church after conversion, but this seemed to be simply for the purpose of additional instruction and fellowship, not as an essential aspect of the gospel itself.

Dispensationalism and revivalism, along with a Reformed emphasis on the “spirituality of the church,” both distinguished themselves from the kind of Kingdom of God envisioned by mainline Protestants, who often fused a Puritan postmillennial optimism with a distinctively modern view of human progress through social and political action. Thus, Social Gospel proponents pictured a Kingdom of God that had more to do with the labor union and city hall than with the local church. In fact, Walter Rauschenbusch, the pioneer of the Social Gospel movement, argued for a distinctively non-churchly understanding of the Kingdom. As Rauschenbusch put it, the church was, for early Christians, a “temporary shelter” that, unfortunately, grew into “the main thing” throughout history.⁵ “The church is one social institution alongside of the family, the industrial organization of society, and the State,” Rauschenbusch writes. “The Kingdom of God is in all these, and realizes itself through them all.”⁶

This kind of “Kingdom” of earthly progress and political action, fundamentalists and evangelicals perceived, was foreign to the Christocentric nature of the Kingdom as revealed in Scripture. But, even so, there was little agreement among them as to how to relate, if at all,

the Kingdom to the present-day church. If Christians were indeed to “seek first” the Kingdom of God, as Jesus says, then how could conservative Protestants offer a united front of Kingdom activity when, for instance, dispensationalists and the Reformed were at odds over whether the Kingdom was here, yet future, or whether it even belonged to us at all? Moreover, how could evangelicals speak to issues of ecclesiology when evangelical institutions were filled with those who could not agree on issues as basic to church life as whether to “baptize” infants? The solution to this problem was found, at first, not in the denominational structures or cooperative initiatives of the evangelicals, but in the area of biblical scholarship.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Fuller Theological Seminary’s George Eldon Ladd in discussing the evangelical understanding of the Kingdom as it relates to the church—or to anything else, for that matter. Ladd was a Baptist, but like many of his evangelical contemporaries—including luminaries such as Billy Graham and Carl F. H. Henry—Ladd was identified more as an “evangelical” than as a Baptist. Ladd drew upon the concept of inaugurated eschatology, the idea that the Kingdom is both a present and a future reality with an “already/not yet” structure present in the church as far back as Irenaeus and Justin Martyr and developed more recently by biblical theologians such as Geerhardus Vos.⁷ Ladd contended that, “One of the most difficult questions in the study of the Kingdom of God is its relationship to the church.”⁸ Judging from evangelical controversies—ranging from covenant/dispensationalist skirmishes to the “signs and wonders” movement of the Third Wave of Pentecostalism to the furor over

the Social Gospel in the early twentieth-century to theonomy to the Religious Right and the Religious Left later on—Ladd’s statement certainly rings true. And yet, following Ladd’s lead, evangelical theology and biblical scholarship has made great strides over the past century toward the development of a Kingdom ecclesiology. Indeed, evangelical theology has moved toward a virtual consensus of the Kingdom as both “already” and “not yet,” with the church as the initial manifestation of the Kingdom of God, thus eschewing such ideas as, on the one hand, the concept of the church as synonymous with the Kingdom, and, on the other, the concept of the church as a parenthesis in God’s Kingdom program.⁹

The Kingdom of God, then, according to Ladd and those who followed him is both “already” and “not yet.” In the person and work of Jesus Christ, the King of God’s Kingdom, the eschatological Kingdom has reached back and broken in to the present age, and is present wherever the rule and reign of God exists. Though the Kingdom is now (i.e., Mark 1:15), it is also not yet, as it awaits future consummation in which the reign of God in Christ will extend over all the cosmos (Rev 11:15). Though Jesus is currently reigning at the right hand of the Father, we do not yet see all things under his feet. But, as Carl Henry argued in essential agreement with Ladd, the goal of the Kingdom of God is to do exactly that, “to subordinate all things to him as creator, judge, and redeemer. Of no other kingdom can this be said.”¹⁰

Ladd wrote much on the topic of the church, and more specifically on the nature of the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church. As noted earlier, Ladd believed this relationship was a difficult one to comprehend

and understand, but still one necessarily worthy of examination. According to Ladd, there are five specific aspects to the relationship between the Kingdom and the church: the church is not the Kingdom; the Kingdom creates the church; the church gives witness to the Kingdom; the church acts as the instrument of the Kingdom; and the church acts as the custodian of the Kingdom.¹¹ The Kingdom of God is not directly identified with the subjects of the Kingdom,¹² but the existence of the Kingdom presupposes a people over whom the King will reign.¹³ The church as the people of God over whom Jesus reigns now (Eph 1:22-23) are a people who live “between the times.”¹⁴

Ladd’s inaugurated eschatology framework changed the field of discussion regarding the Kingdom/church relationship among evangelicals. Both covenant theologians and dispensationalists significantly revised their systems and emphases to affirm the church as an initial manifestation of the Kingdom of God, convinced that such a framework best represents the content of the New Testament.¹⁵ Dispensationalist scholar Darrell Bock, for instance, writes about the church/Kingdom relationship:

In its initial phase, the kingdom as manifested in the church is a community of people who all look to the same hope in Christ. Thus, the kingdom’s presence primarily is manifested in believers who all serve and are accountable to the sovereign head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:19-22; Col. 1:12-14). The church universal is related to the kingdom, being its present expression, but the church is not all there is to the kingdom, since there is a kingdom to come. In addition, the church is not an institution seeking to seize power on earth or exercise coercive sovereignty, but is to serve and love humankind, reflecting the love of God, his standards of righteousness,

and the message of his forgiveness and love in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:9-13:7). These elements make up the mission of the church as light in the world (Matt. 5:14-16).¹⁶

It is inconceivable that a New Testament scholar at Dallas Theological Seminary could have made such a statement about the relationship between the Kingdom and the church before, and for many years after, Ladd.

The post-Ladd evangelical scholarship adequately defined the Kingdom—as seen in the influence of this framework from Pentecostals to Presbyterians—and it adequately defined, in the abstract, the relationship between the Kingdom and the church. The parachurch nature of evangelicalism prevented the movement from defining with much specificity the meaning of “the church”—at least as it relates to the questions most likely to divide conservative Protestants from one another. For some evangelicals, ecclesiology has seemed to be driven by a hyper-Protestant rejection of the visible *ekklesia*, with the church representing simply the combination of all the individually regenerate Christians with sacraments, ordinances, ordination, and even congregations themselves almost an afterthought, at least in the ultimate sense. Carl Henry said, for instance, to criticisms of the proliferating parachurch evangelical ministries from the mainline denominations: “What is this ‘Church’ from which some evangelical missionaries are isolated?”¹⁷ To be fair, Henry was reacting against a notion that “the church” could be defined by a denominational bureaucracy. Still, he—and many others with him—overreacted to such a claim, identifying “the church” as those who are individually church members doing the

business of the church.

The ecclesial dissonance of evangelicalism at this point has become pronounced in recent years with the rise of “post-conservative” and postmodern forms of Christianity. Some, such as Stanley Grenz, have argued that the church emphasis should increase, while the Kingdom emphasis should decrease. Grenz contends that the motif of “community” is preferable to that of “Kingdom,” and that the community concept biblically supersedes the hierarchical notion of a Kingdom as a unifying motif of Scripture.¹⁸ Meanwhile some leaders of the more postmodern wing of the so-called “emerging church” have argued that the Kingdom emphasis should increase, while the church emphasis should decrease. Ray Anderson, a professor at Fuller Seminary and a student of Ladd’s who acknowledges Ladd’s influence on him, is one example of this trend.¹⁹ Anderson speaks of the Kingdom as a broad concept, one that encompasses the culture and the workplace. The church exists to “outsource” the individual Christian’s “need for communion with other believers and our instruction and guidance from the Word of God, and recharge our spiritual batteries for our daily life” in what Anderson calls the “secular sacrament” of the workplace.²⁰ After all, Anderson contends, the church is a “human institution.” As he puts it, “There will be no church in heaven. It will be kingdom living, first class!”²¹ Fuller Seminary professors Ryan Bolger and Eddie Gibbs write that, like Rauschenbusch, the view of emerging churches is that Jesus was concerned much more with a Kingdom than a church, which seems almost incidental to the Kingdom program. “Emerging churches seek first the kingdom,” they say. “They do not seek to

start churches per se but to foster communities that embody the kingdom. Whether a community explicitly becomes a church is not the immediate goal. The priority is that the kingdom is expressed."²² Indeed, Gibbs and Bolger point as an illustration of "living in community" to Seattle pastor and leader of the left wing of the "emerging" church Karen Ward's conversation with a friend at a café. When the friend asked when the church service was, Ward replied, "You just had it."²³

The Church, the Kingdom, and the Development of Contemporary Southern Baptist Ecclesiology

Baptist history is consumed, as one would expect by the very name of the movement, with explanations and controversies over ecclesiology. A brief survey of Southern Baptist theologians from the nineteenth century onward on this question, however, reveals a less detailed discussion about the relationship between the church and the Kingdom—at least in explicit treatment—than other issues, such as the relationship between the church and the state. Perhaps the most prolific writer on this point was John Leadley Dagg, the first writing Baptist theologian in the Southern Baptist tradition and one of the most influential shapers of Southern Baptist ecclesiology. Dagg viewed the Kingdom of God primarily in terms of the general rule of Christ over all of human affairs, and in terms of personal regeneration. "The kingdom of Christ is the kingly authority with which he, as mediator, is invested, and which he exercises over all things, for the glory of God and the good of his church," Dagg writes. "The peculiarities of this divine reign are that it is exercised in human nature, and that it grants favor to rebels."²⁴ At the final judg-

ment in the eschaton, Christ will judge between the obedient and the disobedient subjects under his general kingly rule. By equating the Kingdom with divine providence and individual redemption, then, Dagg saw the church as a society of "external organization" just as families and nation-states, those things that are "organized for the present world," and thus alike temporary.²⁵

The other major nineteenth century Southern Baptist theologian, James Petigru Boyce, the first president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, deals little with the biblical concept of the Kingdom. His view on the relationship between the church and the Kingdom is essentially the same as that of Dagg: "Christ rules over his spiritual kingdom, securing the final result of the establishment of that kingdom in the persons of all his people when he shall 'present the church to himself, a glorious church (Eph 5:27).'"²⁶ The Abstract of Principles, the confession of faith adopted by the seminary's founders for the institution in 1858, did not include an article on the Kingdom, although a distinctively Baptist view of the church is articulated on matters related to church offices, ordinances, and so forth. Remarkably, much of the nineteenth century work on the relationship between the Kingdom and the church was undertaken by the theologians of the Landmark movement that argued for perpetuity of Baptist churches from the first century to the present, denying the legitimacy of paedobaptist "assemblies" as "churches." J. R. Graves, for example, seems to, with an extreme Augustinianism, equate the Kingdom of God with the visible church (or, in Graves's case, visible churches) itself.²⁷ At the same time, with an extreme dispensationalism, Graves

seemed to speak of a parenthesis in the reign of the Lord Jesus. In a sermon on Satan, Graves contends that the ascension was when Christ was “slain” and “cast out,” “out of his dominions” by *Satan*. In the present age, Christ is “an exile from the earth,” having been “driven from the earth by the power of Satan.”²⁸ With traditional dispensationalism, Graves denied that Jesus rules the church—or anyone else—now from David’s throne, since “David never had a throne in heaven; nor will he, or any mortal, ever have a throne there.” After all, Graves reasoned, a “throne implies government or rule exercised over subjects and official inferiors,” and who could these subjects be?²⁹

In the twentieth century, Southern Baptist theology engaged the issue of the Kingdom first through the influential writings of Boyce’s successor as president of Southern Seminary, Edgar Young Mullins, arguably the most significant theologian of the century for Southern Baptists and the primary architect of the denomination’s 1925 confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message*. For Mullins, the Kingdom of God was primarily individual and ethical, for it is “the reign or rule or dominion of God in the human heart and life.”³⁰ Mullins understood the relationship between the Kingdom and the church primarily in terms of the ethics of the Kingdom lived out by members of each church.³¹ Very similar language appeared in the text of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, which had for its final article a statement on the Kingdom, except that the article located the Kingdom locus in both “the heart and life of the individual in every human relationship” and in “every form and institution of organized human society.”³² Mullins’s emphasis on the Kingdom as individual and personal is

consistent with his views on “soul competency” and the priesthood of the individual believer. It is interesting to note, though, Mullins’s view of the corporate aspect of the Kingdom is in every human institution, which fits symmetrically with the Social Gospel teachings of the time. What is not mentioned in the confession of faith is the church, although preaching and teaching are identified as the “chief means for promoting” the Kingdom. A generation after Mullins, Herschel H. Hobbs, the heir of the Mullins tradition and the authorial force behind the *Baptist Faith and Message* (1963), elaborated on the church/Kingdom relationship. Hobbs taught that the Kingdom is not the same as the church. The Kingdom of God is, in a greater sense, “the rule of God in his universe and over all created beings, of which the church is a spiritual element.”³³ Jesus’ earthly ministry and proclamation of the Kingdom served “to establish God’s reign, not only in men’s hearts, but over all things in the universe.”³⁴ The 1963 confession was shorn of the Social Gospel optimism of the 1925 confession. An already/not yet tension was present, somewhat, with the confession noting that the “full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.” The present aspect of the Kingdom is not said to be the church but the “realm of salvation” that “men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.”³⁵ Theologian Dale Moody embraced a form of the already/not yet tension of the Kingdom, a view he contrasted with the upward progress of humanity envisioned by the Protestant liberalism of the Social Gospel era.³⁶ Moody’s understanding of the Kingdom as it relates to the church explained his opposition to Landmarkism and dispensationalism.³⁷ What was not

developed was a foundational theology for understanding the present reality of the Kingdom as it relates to local congregations.

In more recent years, despite the evangelical renaissance in Kingdom studies, relatively little has been done by some of the best-known contemporary Southern Baptist theologians and ecclesialogists on the interrelationship between the Kingdom and the church. The two most prolific Baptist systematic theologians of the last three decades, Millard Erickson and Wayne Grudem, both of whom have at least tenuous and incidental connections to Southern Baptist life, each devote less than one page in their respective systematic theologies to the relationship between the church and the Kingdom, and each mostly gives a synopsis of Ladd's view of that relationship.³⁸ R. Stanton Norman does not deal with the issue explicitly in either of his important works on Baptist ecclesiology,³⁹ and John S. Hammett references the Kingdom only in passing, when expressing his support of congregational polity.⁴⁰ Mark E. Dever, arguably the most significant of the younger Southern Baptist voices on ecclesiological matters, does broach the church/Kingdom relationship, at least implicitly. Two books on the "big picture" of biblical theology through the canon provide a background for Dever's thought on the marks of a "healthy church."⁴¹ In a more recent work, Dever notes that one must answer the question as to "whether the kingdom is identical with the church." After quoting Ladd, Dever asserts: "The relationship between the kingdom and church can therefore be defined as follows: The kingdom of God creates the church."⁴² Dever's approach to biblical theology, resonant as it is with work done in this area by scholars such

as Graeme Goldsworthy, combined with his commitment to a robust ecclesiology that starts with the life of the local congregation rather than with the church as an abstraction, provides a rich and fertile terrain for ongoing biblical application of the Kingdom of God to the church.

Most of the contemporary ecclesiological treatments presuppose certain connections between Kingdom and church, but often these connections are not explored in detail. A more explicit focus on the Kingdom would only, in our view, enhance the groundbreaking work these scholars are doing on issues of a believers' church vision. Within a Baptist framework, the evangelical consensus on the Kingdom/church relationship makes sense not simply at the level of theory but also at that of practice.

Toward a Baptist Understanding of Church and Kingdom

Evangelicalism is prone to fads, theological and otherwise. Inaugurated eschatology is not one of these fads. The already/not yet structure of the Kingdom "caught on" among conservative Protestants precisely because it was not new, and not restricted to the American evangelical subculture. In the Patristic era, Justin Martyr, for example, appealed to the already/not yet Kingdom fulfillment as his hermeneutical key in his famous dialogue with Trypho.⁴³ Since then, flashes of inaugurated eschatology—to varying degrees of consistency—were to be found in the history of the church. The theme of inaugurated eschatology was recognized in the scholarly works of mainline Protestantism—chiefly through the work of Brevard Childs and the biblical theology movement—and even in Roman Catholic writings, including the

Christological scholarship of Pope Benedict XVI.⁴⁴ Most significantly, however, the inaugurated Kingdom motif makes sense of a tension found in the Scriptures themselves, a tension repeated everywhere in the text. Jesus is “crowned with glory and honor” but we do not “yet see all things in subjection to him” (Heb 2:8-9).⁴⁵ The “sons of God” bear the Spirit of Christ and are “more than conquerors” through him and yet, for now, we groan with the creation for the resurrection of our bodies (Rom 8:15-23; 37). The Serpent of Eden has been defeated by the Kingdom-ruling man-child, but the old dragon still rages dangerously “because he knows his time is short” (Rev 12:1-12).

But without a clearly developed doctrine of the church the benefits of inaugurated eschatology are nullified, as it is then almost impossible to differentiate between the “already” and the “not yet” aspects of the Kingdom. In Scripture, the new society created by the “already” reign of Christ is not some unexplainable force or indefinable group, but rather an assembly, a church, a colony of the Kingdom itself. As Carl Henry put it, “When Christianity discusses the new society, it speaks not of some intangible future reality whose specific features it cannot yet identify, but of the regenerate church called to live by the standards of the coming King, and which in some respects already approximates the kingdom of God in present history.”⁴⁶

This is where a Baptist vision of the church can serve to help further the discussion about the Kingdom reality of the church. Baptist ecclesiology, after all, has always been built upon inaugurated eschatology. We do not baptize infants, because the “last days” of the new covenant have arrived in Christ. We do not

merge the church and the state because the consummation of those “last days” is not yet here. Recent attention to inaugurated eschatology can serve to forge a more consistent—and more biblical—Baptist witness, even as the Baptist witness can spur other Christians to test their models of the church against the biblical witness to the Kingdom of God. A Baptist understanding of the church as the present reign of Christ would mean that local congregations should anticipate the Kingdom in three ways: composition, proclamation, and transformation. This is to say, the church is made up of subjects of the Kingdom, the church announces the onset of the Kingdom, and the church lives out the ethics of the Kingdom.

Composition: The Church Is Made Up of Subjects of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God is where God rules or reigns, where his enemies are put beneath the feet of his king. This is why Jesus announces, “if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). In the New Testament, Jesus has been given “as head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:22), which is where the King rules now. The church is “new,” not in the dispensationalist sense of a parenthesis, but in the sense of the promised arrival of the Kingdom in inaugurated form. The world still has a rebel force, those who do not acknowledge the rightful rule of Messiah—as did those within unregenerate Israel of old. When Jesus and his disciples used the imagery of a bride, a flock, a vineyard, and a temple for the church, they were not conjuring up new concepts but pulling from the prophetic promise of a restored and purified Israelite kingdom. Old covenant

Israel is seen as a harlot (Jer 31:31-33; Hos 2:16)—but the church is the promised pure Bride (Eph 5:22-32). Old covenant Israel is a fruitless vine, yielding at best wild grapes (Ezek 19:10-14; Isa 5:1-7)—but the church branches off of the faithful Vine of Christ, and bears the promised fruit (Isa 11:1; Isa 27:6; John 15:1-17; Gal 5:22-23). In the old covenant, the people of God travel to the temple in Jerusalem, but in the new covenant, the Temple is the believing community itself, where Jesus is with his people through the Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16). Old covenant Israel is, like the world, a mixed flock of sheep and goats (Ezek 34:11-34), but the new covenant church is a flock finally separated and tended by the Shepherd, the heir of David himself. When Jesus gathers “other sheep” into “one flock” with “one shepherd” (John 10:16), he is acting as David’s son and he is keeping a promise to restore the “flock” of the Kingdom to Israel. The gathering of the flock in the Old Testament prophecies is an act of *judgment* and restoration, and the nation is gathered together in the last days as a vindicated people. When the nation is restored, gathered together into a flock, it is then that they are “sons” of God, heirs according to promise, and those who call God their Father (Jer 3:19). These sheep, Jesus says, “hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

The church, in its membership, is to model the coming Kingdom, which means that it will be made up only of those who will be spared as sheep instead of those condemned as goats by the coming Judge. It is true that *all* men will someday bow the knee to King Jesus and confess him as Lord (Phil 2:9-11), but that does not mean that they do so willingly or joyfully. Instead, the church is to be made up of

those who acknowledge Jesus’ Kingship *now*, confessing that one day all men will see by sight what those who are in the church believe by faith. If the church is the manifestation now of the Kingdom, and if Jesus’ words to Nicodemus are true—that “unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3)—surely then only those who have been born again may be admitted to membership in the new covenant community. The Kingdom colony, then, is to be pure and undefiled in her membership (2 Cor 6:14-7:1), being made up only of those who have been united to Christ by faith. Paul’s frequent explanations of spiritual gifts do not make much sense if there are members of the church not yet given gifts of the Spirit in order to contribute to the building up of the body (1 Cor 14:26). The church, then, is not a democracy, but rather a Christocracy, with King Jesus ruling from David’s throne. All of the members of the Kingdom colony, both individually and corporately, acknowledge this rightful Kingship of Christ. In fact, joining the church is in itself a public declaration of being rightly related to the King.

This is why church membership and the ordinances are not insignificant “denominational peculiarities.” Baptism is a matter of inaugurated eschatology, considered by Paul as a sign, not only of union with Christ in the present, but also of resurrection in him in the eschaton (Rom 6:1-11). The Petrine teaching likewise presents baptism in light of the eschatological enthronement of Christ after his resurrection, ascension, and triumph over the powers (1 Pet 3:20-21). In addition, Jesus treats the question of the Lord’s Supper eschatologically in its institution, not only by relating it to the new covenant but also by tying it to the

messianic table in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:16-17, 20).

In the act of baptism both the church doing the baptizing and the one undergoing the baptism are declaring the reality of one who has bowed the knee to King Jesus and has therefore entered into Christ's Kingdom. Baptism signifies a believer's union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3-6). The baptism itself does not affect *ex opere operato* the believer in Christ, but is "an appeal to God for a good conscience" through Christ who has been raised from the dead and is now lifted up above "angels, authorities, and powers" (1 Pet 3:21-22). Upon hearing and believing the "preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ," people in Samaria "were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). And the command to baptize is given by Christ to the church, as a part of the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). It signifies not only entrance in to the Kingdom at hand, but also signifies a relationship to the Kingdom come.⁴⁷

A church made up of Christians and their "covenant children" doesn't make sense within an already/not yet framework of the Kingdom, nor does a church made up of the citizens of a nation-state, automatically enrolled in the membership at birth, as a part of one's citizenship rights. Paul Jewett is correct to note that the Kingdom nature of the church, a Kingdom that cannot be inherited by flesh and blood, militates against the "federal holiness" of those who enter the covenant community through physical lineage or proxy faith.⁴⁸ If baptism is a Kingdom act—as both John the Baptist and Jesus insisted it is—then how could those who do not share in the blessings of the Spirit, those who have not been through judg-

ment and raised with Christ, seated with him in the heavenly places—participate in this sign of the new age?

But just as foreign to the understanding of the church as Kingdom community is a "Baptist" church that retains on its membership rolls those who do not evidence the new birth. Such a church presents a picture of the Kingdom of Christ in which that which is "unclean" enters into the New Jerusalem, in which those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life inherit the Kingdom, a vision in conflict with the revelation of Jesus himself (Rev 21:27). Moreover, a church—whether "Baptist" is on the sign out front or not—that restricts its membership on the basis of class or race is a repudiation of the Kingdom itself, a Kingdom made up of those from "every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev 5:9-10). A truly Kingdom understanding of the church would mean more than believers' baptism and a verbal assent to regenerate church membership. It would mean church discipline, and intentional discipleship to see that the membership of the church reflects Christ and his future reign rather than the petty idolatries of this age.

Proclamation: The Church Announces the Gospel of the Kingdom

Too often, evangelical Christians have assumed that preaching is a matter of instructing the mind or exhorting the will of individual Christians. Hence, many contemporary Christians see the preaching of their local churches as one more aspect of discipleship, right along with the latest podcasts or television programs

of Christian celebrity spokesmen. Many evangelical Christians also have seen evangelism as chiefly an individual activity, with the church a helpful place for masses of unbelievers to hear the gospel or for masses of believers to gain encouragement to share the gospel. If the local congregation, though, is an initial manifestation of the Kingdom, then the proclamation of the church is unique. Jesus tells us his flock, again representative of the Davidic kingdom, is ruled by his voice. The resurrected Jesus then tells Peter, the apostolic foundation of his church, to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17)—drawing on kingly Davidic language from Ezek 34:23. How is this apostolic “feeding” of the Kingdom flock to take place? It is through the inspired writings of the apostles and prophets, which provide the foundation on which the household of God is built (Eph 2:20), pointing to the final foundation of the New Jerusalem, which bears the names of the twelve apostles of Jesus (Rev 21:14).

The Kingdom/flock of Jesus is governed by the voice of the King, a voice recorded in Holy Scripture and advanced by the Great Commission proclamation of the church. Through the preaching of the Word, the Kingdom colony is being prepared to discern the voice of Christ, as opposed to the words breathed out by the spirit of antichrist (2 Tim 4:3-4). John warns the churches about the false teachers who come in the spirit of antichrist, looking to deceive and lead astray members of the flock (1 John 4:1-6). However, the churches are to trust the voice of the apostles and prophets, whose testimony is true. This is why Paul admonishes Titus to appoint as elders only those men who may be able to stand firm on and teach the truths of the Word of God and will

“rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). The inerrancy debate, and those that preceded it about the trustworthiness of Scripture, is then not a matter of “theology,” as though what is at stake is a set of propositions we should affirm. At stake is the Word of the King himself, the vehicle through which King Jesus governs his colonies and calls into existence his Kingdom.

This is not simply a matter of *hearing* God’s voice, or even being able to discern the voice of Christ among all of the other voices that exist ubiquitously in a world fallen and held under the sway of the wicked one, a wicked one who, after all, has a voice as well (Gen 3:1-5). Indeed, our father Adam heard clearly the voice of God in the Garden—and shrunk back in fear because of his guilt and shame at his nakedness (Gen 3:8-11). The voice of Jesus will someday call from the grave both the just *and* the unjust (John 5:28-29), and those who stand justified and those who remain dead in their sins will both hear their final verdict from the same Judge (Matt 25:31-46). Rather, what matters in hearing the voice of Christ in the Words of Scripture is the obedient response to it, a response characterized by repentance and faith. The plea of the knowingly sinful disciple of Christ to his King’s voice is a continual cry: “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24) The response of a sheep to his Good Shepherd’s voice is to follow after him as he leads (John 10:27). The church, then, as the outpost of the kingdom is made up of those who hear the voice of the Holy Spirit of Christ and harden not their hearts, but rather respond in belief (Heb 3:7-4:16).

Each Kingdom colony is also given the responsibility to proclaim verbally the gospel of the Kingdom, the good

news that Jesus is Lord (Matt 28:18-20). This verbal proclamation of the Kingdom was at the center of the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt 3:2), Jesus of Nazareth (Matt 3:2; Acts 1:3), and Paul of Tarsus (Acts 19:8). This same message Christ commands his disciples, the foundation stones of the church, to proclaim as well (Matt 10:7). The gospel of the Kingdom is preached not only in terms of individual forgiveness of sins found through the shed blood of Christ, but also in terms of a resurrected Christ who has defeated the principalities and powers and who reigns triumphant at the right hand of the Father. Indeed, the church proclaims that its very existence comes from the fact that Christ has risen from the dead.⁴⁹ The gospel should also be preached with the goal in mind that its hearers would forsake all other “kingdoms” in order to submit voluntarily to the invisible reign of the Lord Jesus in his church, into “a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Heb 12:28).

The preached gospel comes as an invitation, but an invitation with an authority because the one giving it is a King (Matt 22:8-10). It also comes with a sense of urgency, for “everything is ready” (Matt 22:4). The gospel is a victory proclamation, knowing that what Christ has accomplished in the past will be consummated in the future. By its very nature, the Kingdom is to be made available to all men, and all men may enter into it granted they respond in obedience by faith in Christ. The good news is an invitation to partake in fellowship not only with King Jesus but with other subjects of his Kingdom in the church (1 John 1:3). The preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom is to bring men and women to salvation in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15), urging people to repent of sin to be a part of the Kingdom now even as

the church prays for God’s Kingdom to come (Matt 6:10).

Because the Spirit of Christ works through the preached word in order to rip sinners out of the domain of darkness and into the Kingdom of God’s Beloved Son (Col 1:13), Baptists have historically—and, in our opinion, rightly—seen preaching as the central focus of the church’s corporate worship service. That is why the preaching act is not to be replaced by a dialogical “conversation” within the church, or by videotape or podcast outside of it. When the church is gathered together in a covenant community, with the Word of God faithfully proclaimed, Jesus is present as King (Matt 18:20; 1 Cor 5:4). The ordinances are themselves a continuation of the preaching ministry of the church. The very fact that Jesus promised that he “will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25) conveys a certain confidence within the church in the ultimate victory of God. The church proclaims “the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26), a death that was overcome in resurrection, and a triumphant return that is certain. Partaking of the Lord’s Table is no light matter (1 Cor. 11:27-32), and unbelievers or those in persistent sin are not to partake of this church ordinance (1 Cor. 5:6-13). The Lord’s Supper, then, is to look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when all the redeemed of all the ages will eat with a slain and resurrected King Jesus of Nazareth seated at the head of the table (Rev 19:6-9). But until that day, the church eats together of the broken bread and the fruit of the vine in anticipation of the Kingdom to come and in celebration of the Kingdom at hand. No doubt many Baptists have misunderstood the

sign nature of the Lord's Supper and baptism, translating the ordinances into hyper-Zwinglian terms. Baptists are right to deny sacerdotalism, but we would not speak of the baptismal waters or the Eucharistic bread and wine as "just symbols" any more than we would speak of the Bible preached as "just words." All of these are proclamations—the voice of Jesus announcing an invading Kingdom through the first stage of the invasion force, his church. Where Jesus speaks, he is *there*. And he is there as King and Lord.

This uniqueness of the local church is also significant in terms of worship. Worship in Scripture is not principally a devotional exercise or a pedagogical tool. Worship announces the presence of the Kingdom. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" is a verse memorized by generations of Southern Baptist Sunday school children, and sung to little choruses in the children's department. The context of the text though, from Psalm 122, is that worship flows from being within the walls of Jerusalem, where God dwells. "The thrones for judgment were set," David leads the people to sing, "the thrones of the house of David" (Ps 122:5). Therefore, the people are welled up with thanksgiving in the presence of God (Ps 122:4). That picture continues in the canon right up until the worship around the heavenly throne, in which thanksgiving is offered around the throne of the "Root of David," who has conquered (Rev 5:1-14). The old Landmarkers of Baptist life were correct that a "church" means an "assembly." They were wrong to argue that a universal church cannot assemble. The New Testament teaches that such happens every time the covenant community locally

gathers in the name of Christ for worship. The congregation then comes to "Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb 12:22-23). The worship of the local congregation, then, is a participation in the invisible, universal, heavenly worship of the Kingdom, and is therefore to be undertaken with "reverence and awe" (Heb 12:28). Again, the definitive issue here is the presence of Jesus (Heb 12:24) and the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb 12:28), both of which are true uniquely and covenantally with his people, his church. The primary focus then of worship ought not to be chiefly an "industry" in Nashville or Wheaton or elsewhere, or stadiums filled with "evangelicals" in conference with one another, but in the joyful and awe-stricken singing and praying of people accountable to one another in local churches.

Transformation: The Church Lives Out the Ethics of the Kingdom

As an initial manifestation of the Kingdom of Christ, the church is not only to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom verbally and ritually, but also to exhibit personally the ethics of Jesus' rule and reign. In other words, the subjects of the Kingdom will live in such a way that signals the truth that the Kingdom has come and that the Kingdom is coming. "The church has a dual character, belonging to two ages," notes Ladd. "It is the people of the age to come, but it still lives in this age, being constituted of sinful mortal men. This means that while the church in this age will never attain perfection, it must nevertheless display the life of the perfect order, the eschatological Kingdom

of God.”⁵⁰ This is quite right. Darrell Bock and Craig Blaising are also correct to speak of the church as a “workshop of Kingdom righteousness,” that signals to the temporal social and political powers that which constitutes justice in the evaluation of God.⁵¹

Good is done by the church to those who are outside of the church, but especially to those who are within (Gal 6:10). The unity between Jew and Gentile within the church declares to the outside watching world, including to the demonic powers, that Jesus Christ has torn down the dividing wall of judgment in his death, burial, and resurrection (Eph 2:11-22). Church members should treat others better than themselves, showing the same kind of humility that was exemplified by the King (Phil 2:1-11). The Kingdom colony should exude peace with God and with one another (2 Pet 3:14), knowing full well that Christ is still to return in judgment. The love shown to one another within the church, John reminds us, is a love that is expressed not in empty and idle talk but rather “in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). The King of the Kingdom has also given his subjects a new standard by which they must strive to treat one another (Matthew 5-7). Peter urges the churches to supplement their faith in the Lord Jesus with virtues such as knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love, in order that they may persevere and enter the gates of the Kingdom of Christ, an entrance that is here and is yet still before them (2 Pet 1:5-11). Faith works itself out in good shown to the poor and outcast, in order that one day the King will say to us, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt 25:40).

Living out the ethics of the Kingdom

is never to replace the verbal proclamation of the Kingdom, of course, but is its natural outgrowth. We disagree then with statements such as this by pastor Rick McKinley which suggests the superiority of “being” as opposed to “speaking” in witnessing to the Kingdom: “What *would* the world think if we loved our sisters in Cuba enough to take them medicine? And how much could our lives say *without speaking* if we were willing to suffer for the sake of the kingdom? The act alone would preach volumes.”⁵² The acts of the church without verbal interpretation are as useless as verbal proclamation without the power of the Spirit. It is manifestly true, though, that churches are reminded to conduct themselves as those who ultimately belong to another Kingdom, that those outside the church may see their “good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:11-12). And those in churches are to conduct themselves in such a way that any member of the colony may be able to say to any man, believer or unbeliever in the Lord Jesus Christ: “You would like to know what the Kingdom of God is like? Then come with me to my local church at nine o’clock this Sunday morning, and I’ll show you.”

The church also serves as a training ground for ruling and reigning authority in the coming Kingdom. The way in which believers in the Lord Jesus act now will have direct impact upon how and in what way they will rule with the King. Jesus promises the churches in Thyatira and Laodicea that to those who persevere in faith to the end, Christ will grant them ruling authority over the nations (Rev 2:26-27; 3:21). In other words, Jesus is training his subjects of the Kingdom to be kings and queens of the cosmos. This is why Paul can be so furious with

the disordered nature of the church at Corinth: "Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!" (1 Cor 6:3). If a church cannot even handle matters of gross sexual immorality within the new covenant community, or issues of legal dispute amongst those within the body of Christ, then, Paul reasons, how will they be able to be shown worthy to judge and rule in the coming Kingdom? Tumultuous church business meetings and congregational power plays are not only destructive in terms of the unity of a church; such attitudes and actions also display an inability to rule and reign in the now, and in the not yet, of the Kingdom of Christ.

Such ruling and reigning authority in the church, however, often looks quite different than what is found and taught in contemporary corporate leadership manuals. Christ was exalted to the right hand of the Father and given as head over the church specifically because he emptied himself by taking on flesh and being obedient to death, "even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-11). In Christ, cultivating humility does not mean negating the desire for glory, even glory for ourselves. It is instead cultivating a desire for greater glory, the glory that comes in Christ at the eschaton. If we understand this, we can gladly have ignominy now, for ruling splendor later in Christ. We humble ourselves not because we are craven but because we know in due time God will exalt us (Prov 15:33; Matt 23:12; Luke 18:14; James 4:10; 1 Pet 5:6). If one really believes in the judgment seat of Christ and his future rule over the entire universe, then who really cares to be envied by coworkers around the office coffeepot?

The reign of Christ within the church

already but *not yet* within the world would protect our congregations from the Constantinian appropriation of Augustinian amillennialism. We do not yet rule over the nations "with a rod of iron" (Rev 2:27). Jesus rules over us, and we will reign with him, but the concept that we reign now over the world is ridiculous and pitiable (1 Cor 4:8). Thus, the centuries-old Baptist commitment to the separation of church and state and religious liberty is, at its heart, a biblical affirmation of the inaugurated-but-not-consummated Kingdom of God. Seeing the "already" aspect of the Kingdom in the church, and not in the state or the culture, will save Christians from a naïve utopianism on the one hand or a satanic tyranny on the other. How many Christians on the right of the political spectrum have spoken as though posting the Ten Commandments in secular courthouses or electing "born again" politicians could bring in God's Kingdom? And how many Christians on the left of the political spectrum have applied the Old Testament laws on Jubilee to current debates over welfare or the minimum wage, bypassing the church as the locus of God's present Kingdom activity in Christ? How many people in our churches, listening often to Christian television and radio, assume that the blessings of the Old Testament for righteousness, blessings of prosperity and health, belong to us "now" apart from the unveiling of Christ at the end? Would not the clear proclamation of the "not yet," that we must suffer with Jesus if we are to be glorified with him (Rom 8:17), present a more joyful hope? Such an emphasis might reorient Christian political activity. Yes, we must speak prophetically to Caesar, appealing for justice. But we do not see ourselves as a protected interest group, clamoring

for attention from the princes of this age. Instead, we ask the state to hold back the chaos of this present violent order so that we may lead “a peaceful and quiet life,” preaching the gospel, living as the covenant community, and preparing to rule a renovated universe with our King.

Conclusion

Jesus told his disciples to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33). He also told them that the keys to that Kingdom were with the church he was building (Matt 16:18-19). The evangelical turn to the Kingdom is a turn toward the Bible itself, a turn indeed toward Jesus. A true evangelical commitment to the Kingdom of God as the unifying theme of Scripture will mean giving attention to the present vehicle of the Kingdom, the church. We believe that Baptist ecclesiology can be a helpful conversation partner for evangelicals of all traditions as we seek the Kingdom. Baptists have often avoided this conversation, by isolating ourselves into a hyper-Baptist position such as Landmarkism that equates the Kingdom simply with the local church or by homogenizing ourselves with a generic evangelicalism that pretends as though the King has not given a pattern for his churches in order that they point rightly to his Kingdom. One of us is a lifelong Southern Baptist, with Royal Ambassador badges and Training Union pins and a mind full of memorized Fanny Crosby songs. One of us became a Christian in a non-denominational church, studied in a Campbell/Stone tradition university, and came to Baptist convictions the long way around—just as have so many Baptists of the past, from John Smyth to Charles Spurgeon to Billy Graham. Both of us believe that Baptists will best serve

the whole community of Christians not by being less Baptist but by being truly Baptist, and by emphasizing what too many of us have ignored, the church. We believe the Baptist vision of the church to be biblical—otherwise we would be something else—but we pray that Baptist churches might lead the way for all Christians to see in our fellowships a glimpse of the Kingdom. We do not pray that Baptists would be bigger than all other groups, nor do we pray that Baptists would be the most politically powerful or culturally relevant. We pray that our churches might signal the Kingdom in miniature, though through a glass darkly. As citizens of two kingdoms, and residents of two ages, we hope for a just state. But we hope more for a holy church. With our nation’s forefathers we pledge our temporal allegiance to a more perfect union, and with our Kingdom’s forefathers we pledge our eternal allegiance to a most perfect communion.

ENDNOTES

¹E. B. White, *Writings from the New Yorker, 1927-1976*, ed. Rebecca M. Dale (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 54.

²Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (repr., Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), 322.

³Ibid.

⁴Augustine, “The City of God,” in *St. Augustine’s City of God and Christian Doctrine* (ed. Philip Schaff; vol. 2 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 426-31.

⁵Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 222.

⁶Ibid., 145.

- ⁷The first of these widely influential works to be published was Ladd's *Crucial Questions about the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952).
- ⁸George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 103.
- ⁹For a detailed discussion of this consensus and its implications, see Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 131-73.
- ¹⁰Carl F. H. Henry, "Reflections on the Kingdom of God," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35 (1992): 40.
- ¹¹Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 111-19.
- ¹²George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 262.
- ¹³George Eldon Ladd, *The Young Church: Acts of the Apostles* (Bible Guides; vol. 15; London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 72.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 36.
- ¹⁵For a discussion of this evangelical consensus and its implications for social and political action, see Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*.
- ¹⁶Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2:1222.
- ¹⁷Carl F. H. Henry, "Isolated from the Church?" *Christianity Today*, 29 March 1968, 23.
- ¹⁸Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 22-24.
- ¹⁹For Anderson's understanding of Ladd's influence on him, see Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 96.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 115-16.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, 116.
- ²²Ryan K. Bolger and Eddie Gibbs, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 61.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 89.
- ²⁴John L. Dagg, *Manual of Church Order* (Charleston: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857), 139.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 141-42.
- ²⁶James P. Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Charleston: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 294.
- ²⁷Graves argued that since God's Kingdom is said in Scripture to be unable to be broken to pieces, then Baptist churches must always have existed. This is because, he elaborated, that "which John called 'the Bride,' and which Christ called His church, constituted that visible kingdom, and today all His *true* churches on earth constitute it; and, therefore, if His *kingdom* has stood unchanged, and will to the end, He must always have had true and uncorrupted churches, since His kingdom cannot exist without true churches." J. R. Graves, *Old Landmarkism: What Is It?* (Memphis: Baptist Sunday School Committee, 1880), 84.
- ²⁸J. R. Graves, "Satan Dethroned," a sermon preached in the First Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee, shortly after the city was evacuated by Union troops, published in *Satan Dethroned and Other Sermons* (ed. Orren L. Hailey; New York: Revell, 1929), 18.
- ²⁹J. R. Graves, *The Work of Christ in the Covenant of Redemption Developed in Seven Dispensations* (Memphis: Baptist Book House, 1883), 290.
- ³⁰Edgar Young Mullins, *Baptist Beliefs* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1925), 56. Later Mullins equates the universal church—"all believers, whether they are thought of as existing on earth, or on earth and in heaven at any particular time"—with the Kingdom of God itself. *Ibid.*, 61-63.
- ³¹Mullins writes, "The local church is in harmony, or is meant to be in harmony, with the principles of the kingdom. In a real sense it reproduces, or localizes, and perpetuates the kingdom of God on earth. Its doctrines and polity must conform to the teachings and to the essential nature of the kingdom." *Ibid.*, 57.
- ³²The *Baptist Faith and Message*, a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, 14 May 1925.
- ³³Herschel H. Hobbs, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1964), 117.
- ³⁴*Ibid.*
- ³⁵The *Baptist Faith and Message*, a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, 9 May 1963.
- ³⁶Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine Based on Biblical Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 515-29.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*, 440-42.
- ³⁸See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1051-52, and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An*

Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 863-64.

³⁹See R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just A Name: Preserving Our Baptist Identity* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2001); *The Baptist Way: Distinctives of A Baptist Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2005).

⁴⁰John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 147.

⁴¹See Mark E. Dever, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); *The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006); and *Nine Marks of A Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

⁴²Mark E. Dever, "The Church," in *A Theology for the Church* (ed. Daniel L. Akin; Nashville: B&H, 2007), 774-75.

⁴³For an overview of Justin's approach, see Russell D. Moore, "Personal and Cosmic Eschatology," in *A Theology for the Church*, 876-77.

⁴⁴See, for instance, Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁴⁵Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

⁴⁶Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority* (6 vols.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 4:522.

⁴⁷"Baptism is eschatological in orientation likewise in that it is practiced with a view towards participation in the kingdom of God, the glorious eschatological fellowship of

God with his people. . . . [T]his act points to the coming of God's reign and symbolizes our hope of participating in that eternal community." Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 701.

⁴⁸Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace: An Appraisal of the Argument that as Infants Were Once Circumcised, So They Should Now Be Baptized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 67.

⁴⁹Henry, "Reflections on the Kingdom of God," 44.

⁵⁰Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 268.

⁵¹Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Victor, 1993), 285-88.

⁵²Rick McKinley, *This Beautiful Mess: Practicing the Presence of the Kingdom of God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), 154.