

A critical appraisal of inaugurated eschatology as a basis for
social and political ethics in evangelical theology in the
United States of America

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Abstract

This thesis addresses claims that evangelical theology ‘has moved toward a Kingdom consensus around the concept of inaugurated eschatology,’ and that such a consensus ‘carries with it... far-reaching implications for evangelical engagement in the public square’.¹ It engages with recent work on inaugurated eschatology by evangelical theologians publishing within the U.S.A. and examines two attempts to derive inaugurated ethics in detail: those made by Russell Moore, and David Gushee and Glen Stassen.

The first chapters of this thesis explore the viability of the eschatology at the centre of this claimed consensus, by way of four interrogatives taken in two pairs. Firstly, *when* was the kingdom inaugurated and *what* difference has inauguration made? Secondly, *where* is the inaugurated kingdom and *who* inaugurates the kingdom? From the outset, the thesis takes seriously the distinctively evangelical commitments of the theology it examines. However, through its investigation of a significant sample of the inaugurated eschatology articulated in the U.S. context, it progressively reveals the existence of areas of difficulty and inconsistency.

Having identified the issues with these eschatological positions, the research considers two particular ethical approaches which have been advanced in this context in the name of the inaugurated kingdom. Through close examination of what I have termed the *pessimistic* political ethics suggested by Russell Moore, and the comprehensive *participative* ethics outlined in Gushee and Stassen’s,

¹ Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2004), pp. 27-28.

Kingdom Ethics, the thesis demonstrates how the problems it identifies in inaugurated eschatology manifest themselves in these two prominent efforts to devise an inaugurated approach to social and political ethics.² Indeed, the thesis argues that the stark contrast between these two ethical approaches is a result of ambiguity inherent in this form of inaugurated eschatology.

This work presents a critical appraisal that suggests inaugurated eschatology in this context has, in fact, reached an impasse. The thesis then moves to consider what might be required of this particular strand of evangelical theology if it is to move beyond that impasse. What is offered in Chapter Six is a move which is designed to stimulate, perhaps even facilitate, future constructive proposals from within the context, rather than an effort to do so on my own part. This first step must be an attempt to widen a somewhat insular theological conversation. The thesis concludes by demonstrating how earnest engagement with the contributions made to Christian eschatology by thinkers such as Moltmann, Pannenberg, Hardy and O'Donovan may provide the type of resources needed by those in the context if they are to confront and move beyond the difficulties uncovered by this project. In choosing conversation partners who, though operating outside the immediate geographical and theological context share some theological ground with most American evangelicals, this thesis self-consciously attempts a modest, but necessary task, to open a window in a room where the air has grown stale.

² David P. Gushee and Glen Harold Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, Second edition. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), p.

Declaration

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For the two Emmas

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her namesake, my niece, whose recent arrival has brought me such joy during a time of personal upheaval. Indeed, it seems fitting that a work that is concerned with the already and the not yet of the Christian hope for the world should be dedicated to one life well-lived in service of others, and another just beginning.

Chapter One: Introduction and Methodology

Why the three Norths?

As my supervisor, Peter Scott, has remarked, this research project involves, and has been shaped by, three ‘Northern’ places: Northern Ireland, North America and the North of England. This particular combination of geographical contexts can only be explained by way of a brief autobiographical introduction to the project. Why would a Northern Irish theologian choose to conduct a research project on US theology? Why base the research at the University of Manchester?

The answer to the first part of that question lies in my growing awareness that my early theological formation and training for ministry as an Irish Presbyterian drew predominantly on resources provided by North American evangelicals. While this thesis does not examine the detail of the relationship between North American evangelical theology and the theological and cultural terroir of Ulster Protestantism, my initial motivation for embarking on this research project rested on the assumption that the former continues to influence the latter. This is an assumption based not solely on my own reflections on my personal experience, but one that is borne out by several writers with enough interest in both contexts to engage in comparison.³

³ See for example, Joshua T. Searle, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand: Evangelical Apocalyptic Belief in the Northern Ireland Troubles* (Havertown: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), p. 41: ‘There are clear points of both doctrinal and cultural overlap between American and Northern Ireland evangelicalism.’ For a dedicated comparative work aimed at ‘understanding the historically negotiated character of evangelical Protestantism’ in both contexts, see the collection of essays: David N. Livingstone and Ronald A. Wells, *Ulster-American religion: Episodes in the history of a cultural connection* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p.139. As Livingstone and Wells make clear, the way in which the contexts have shaped each other historically is much

The answer to the second part of this question in a way runs in the opposite direction. I hoped that basing myself in an environment that contrasted geographically and theologically with my own previous context and the one to which I was about to dedicate the next few years of research would provide the type of stimulation that I believed would be essential to the task at hand. As the abstract to this thesis mentions, and as will become clearer as you (hopefully) read on, this research project began with an assumption that the conversation which would be its focus, the discussion of the inaugurated kingdom and its implications for ethics, social and political ethics in particular, was one which was in urgent need of perspectives from outside its own theological and geographical comfort zone. Indeed, through discussions with many interested parties along the way the metaphor of opening the first window into a room in which the air has grown stale has emerged as, I think, a fitting descriptor of the overall task. While the need to focus intently on work emerging from the context itself in order to understand and explain the issues may at times give the impression that the metaphorical window has barely been loosed from its latch, this approach is a strategic necessity which bears fruit in the exposure of a number of issues which emerge, each of them reiterating the necessity of ultimately opening the door to the types of conversations and conversation partners for which the penultimate chapter makes a case. Even on the critical journey to that point the voices of scholars as different to each other and the US evangelical context as Moltmann, O'Donovan, De La Torre, Cone, and Westhelle are introduced to identify areas of difficulty. In

more complex than the unilateral process I have presented here for the sake of brevity and simplicity.

facilitating an informed recourse to such diverse scholarship, my choice of supervisor, sponsoring theological institute and postgraduate school of study has proven to be a wise one. Given the concern of this study with the ethics of politics and society, Manchester, and the North of England more widely, with its own particular set of social and political challenges has been fertile ground in which to work in this field.

Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ*: Two kingdom claims⁴

The genesis of this study predates the beginning of my research in Manchester by a number a of years. This study began as a response to two related claims about eschatology and social and political ethics in the context of evangelical theology in the United States of America. They were claims that I had met briefly before, in the course of researching my Masters thesis. These claims were made by Russell Moore in his 2004 work, *The Kingdom of Christ: A New evangelical perspective*.⁵ The first of the claims proposed that a consensus around inaugurated eschatology had come into existence within US evangelical theology.⁶ The second claim built on the first, by suggesting that this eschatological consensus could provide a basis for evangelicals to engage with US politics. As I will explain shortly, it was a second

⁴ The term 'kingdom' and associated terms such as 'inaugurated kingdom', 'kingdom of God', 'kingdom of heaven' etc. will not be capitalised in my usage. Where the term occurs in a quotation from another author their usage will be reflected. Moore, for example, choses to capitalise 'Kingdom', while Gushee and Stassen and McKnight chose not to.

⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, Moore, was then Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to this research project and during its completion Moore was President of the Southern Baptist Convention's 'Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission'. However, several weeks before the resubmission of this thesis Moore resigned that post and appeared to make a decisive break with the denomination.

⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.5.

look at Moore's sketch of the ethical content of that engagement with US politics which sparked this current research project into life.

At the outset of *The Kingdom of Christ* Moore claims that evangelical theology in the United States has reached a consensus position on the eschatological kingdom of God. As he put it, within 'the contemporary evangelical movement [of] conservative Protestants.... a quiet consensus is emerging about the Kingdom of God – a consensus that offers possibilities for evangelical theology to correct some longstanding errors and missteps.'⁷ Moore did not hesitate to make clear which way of thinking about the kingdom of God he had in mind: 'Evangelical theology [had] moved toward a Kingdom consensus around the concept of inaugurated eschatology'.⁸ Such was Moore's confidence in this statement that he later commented, 'One can now say there is an evangelical eschatology.'⁹

The use of the term 'inaugurated eschatology' in the US evangelical theology pre-dates Moore's claims by several decades. Indeed, the term appears to have first come to prominence in the context during the mid-Twentieth Century, largely through the work of George Eldon Ladd, in particular his 1959 book *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.¹⁰ Since then this view of the eschatological kingdom of God has been widely discussed, however, one of the clearest explanations of what is most fundamental to all inaugurated eschatology is provided by Benjamin Gladd and

⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.11.

⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.28.

⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 53.

¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1959),

Matthew Harmon in their recent work, *Making all things new: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*.¹¹ There, they state that ‘The word “inaugurated” reflects the observation that while the....kingdom has begun with the work of Jesus, it has not yet been consummated in all its fullness. Another way of referring to this phenomenon is to use the expression “already-not-yet.”’¹² It is just this fundamental belief about the timeline of the kingdom’s coming which Russell Moore’s listed as the first of his central assertions about the ‘new evangelical perspective’ on the kingdom of God.¹³

The developing consensus Moore described in *The Kingdom of Christ* involved a level of agreement in four related areas of which the ‘already-not-yet’ aspect is the primary feature:

1. An inaugurated timeframe (eschatology)

Moore outlined what he termed a ‘Kingdom eschatology’ which was committed to the idea of ‘the Kingdom as Already and Not Yet.’¹⁴ As stated above, this denotes an understanding of the biblical narrative which holds that the kingdom has been inaugurated with the initial coming of Christ and will be fully consummated on his return.

2. Holistic soteriology

The second of Moore’s key beliefs about the kingdom was described in terms of ‘Holistic soteriology’.¹⁵ This represents, for Moore, the view that God’s salvific

¹¹ Benjamin L. Gladd and Matthew S. Harmon, *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2016),

¹² Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.xi.

¹³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.25 ff.

¹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.25 ff.

¹⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.81 ff.

work in Christ involves the redemption of whole persons; that is to say, it addresses 'material' as well as 'spiritual' needs. This position takes the reference to 'a new heaven and a new earth' in Revelation 21:1 as indicating that the eschatological kingdom will include creation in a 'new' form.¹⁶

3. Cosmic redemption

A third position that is closely connected with that of holistic soteriology is discernible in *The Kingdom of Christ*.¹⁷ While Moore uses the term 'holistic' to emphasise the material dimension of God's redemptive activity concerning persons, he uses 'cosmic' to emphasise it concerning creation in its entirety.

4. 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'

Moore has coined the phrase 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology,' to denote his claim that, 'the various sides of the Kingdom divide [now] accept that the church is, at least in some sense, a new stage in the progress of redemption, brought about by the eschatological nature of the coming of Christ.'¹⁸

Recent echoes of the first claim

From the perspective of *The Kingdom of Christ*, written some fifteen years ago, Moore described the level of eschatological consensus he perceived in cautiously optimistic terms. However, his optimism was encouraged by the observation that in all the major strands of evangelical Protestantism in North America, the

¹⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.81 ff.

¹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.81 ff.

¹⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

kingdom of God was being talked about widely and increasingly in terms of a reign that had been inaugurated. Moore was, however, acutely aware of the temptation to overstate the level of consensus existing at that time, and characterised the consensus as still emerging rather than established. It appeared that a consensus had been inaugurated, however, in contrast to the kingdom that consensus centred on, Moore appeared slightly less certain of its eventual consummation.

In the years since Moore's survey, his optimism appears to have been justified. In one sense, the consensus is no longer emerging as a dominant voice in a debate; conceiving of the kingdom as an inaugurated reality could accurately be described as a foundational assumption for the vast majority of North American evangelical theologians writing today. Notably, it has been commonplace for recent works produced in the area of Biblical Studies which touch on the kingdom to characterise it in inaugurated terms and to acknowledge that this is the accepted view within evangelical scholarship. Indeed, David H. Wenkel's article 'When the Apostles Became Kings' displays this trait, proceeding as he does on the basis that, 'It is widely accepted that the two volumes of Luke-Acts are based on an inaugurated eschatological framework. The kingdom of Christ has already been established, but it is not yet present in its fullness.'¹⁹ Douglas Campbell goes even further at the beginning of his article 'Beyond Justification in Paul: The Thesis of the Deliverance of God'.²⁰ There he includes a view of 'divine action [understood] essentially in terms of inaugurated eschatology' within a list of assumptions of

¹⁹David H. Wenkel, "When the Apostles Became Kings: Ruling and Judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel in the Book of Acts," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 42, no. 3 (August 2012 2012), p.119.

²⁰ Douglas A. Campbell, "Beyond Justification in Paul: The Thesis of the Deliverance of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, no. 65 (2012), p.90.

which he says, 'I do not know of an evangelical who does not affirm everything that has just been said'.²¹

Indeed, dissenting voices have been fewer and farther between, with even Scot McKnight's 2014 intervention, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, proving less disruptive to this consensus than the title might suggest.²² McKnight's critique of how most of his fellow evangelicals understand the kingdom does not undermine its eschatological timeframe, for in this respect he is firmly in the inaugurated camp.

Moore's first claim continues to be echoed by others writing evangelical theology in the United States. Most recently, Benjamin Gladd and Matthew Harmon have essentially restated Moore's first claim in their 2016 work, *Making all things new: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*.²³ In the course of prefacing their attempt to unlock what they understand to be the insights of 'inaugurated eschatology' (insights which they derive explicitly and almost exclusively from G.K. Beale who writes the book's introduction) for the benefit of the wider church, they assert that 'this understanding of eschatology has been widely recognized and embraced within the academic study of the New Testament'.²⁴

The second claim: Kingdom consensus as a basis for political engagement

Out of Moore's initial claim that an eschatological consensus had emerged based on inaugurated eschatology, a further second claim emerged. For Moore, the

²¹ Campbell, "Beyond Justification in Paul," p.90.

²² Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos, 2014), p.206. Italics in original.

²³ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.ix.

²⁴ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.ix.

consensus on the inaugurated kingdom had an additional significance: it promised to provide a basis for evangelicals to engage with US politics. As he commented, 'This "already/not yet" Kingdom consensus... carries with it... far-reaching implications for evangelical engagement in the public square.'²⁵

Moore's claim suggested that this eschatological consensus would encourage US evangelicals to see political engagement as necessitated by their theology, in contrast to the isolationist ideas which had previously gained significant traction in US evangelicalism, in the earlier part of the Twentieth Century in particular. As he put it, 'The "already" nature of the Kingdom removes the chief obstacle of a fundamentalist withdrawal from politics and social action on the basis of a premillennialism that sees the Kingdom as wholly future.'²⁶ Moore's diagnosis of the issue was explicitly eschatological: 'While the future Kingdom of dispensationalist fundamentalism was used as an incentive for developing personal ethics, it was used as an incentive to avoid the development of a social ethic.'²⁷

But Moore's claim went further still, predicting that inaugurated eschatology would also shape that engagement by stimulating a renewed approach to social and political ethics:

The task of constructing an evangelical theology of socio-political engagement has been greatly aided by a growing consensus that evangelical eschatology must focus... on the invasion of the eschatological, Davidic

²⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.25.

²⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.66.

²⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.67.

Kingdom into the present age, thus bringing the eschaton into the history of the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. By advocating an 'already/not yet' model of this fulfilment, evangelical eschatology faces the challenge of integrating these interpretive issues into an understanding of how the present/future reign of Christ impacts contemporary problems of social and political concern.²⁸

An ambiguous ethical vision?

Moore's vision of inaugurated social and political ethics

Moore did not stop at hinting towards the potential which the consensus on inaugurated eschatology might have in this regard. *The Kingdom of Christ* also offers us an insight into Moore's vision of how inaugurated eschatology would inform social and political ethics for evangelicals in the United States:

An inaugurated eschatology actually supports the legitimacy of state functions in the 'already' that would be unthinkable in the 'not yet'. Evangelicals may support the right of governments to execute criminals or to wage just wars precisely because the Kingdom is not yet wholly triumphant over this present evil age.²⁹

This quotation, with Moore's particular vision of how inaugurated eschatology might shape evangelical social and political ethics in the USA, is central to the concerns of this study. Indeed, it was the shape of the inaugurated socio-political ethics sketched by Moore here, which suggested to me that these claims required

²⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.66.

²⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.71.

more critical attention than the precious little they have received. In particular, Moore's depiction of an inaugurated ethics seemed to me to have a surprising shape. It was, in fact, this personal response to this part of *Kingdom Ethics* that was the genesis for this research project.³⁰

Background to my engagement with the claims

To explain fully the significance of my perception of the strangeness of Moore's ethical vision for this project, I must return to the nature of my previous engagement with *The Kingdom of Christ*.³¹ As mentioned, I previously encountered this work in the course of researching my Masters dissertation, on 'Kingdom tension and social action'.³² However, my engagement with his work, and with inaugurated eschatology in US evangelical theology, in the course of my Masters research was limited. What is more, my engagement with inaugurated eschatology was relatively uncritically. It was, effectively, assumed to be a valid and viable eschatology, and effectively the default position for someone researching in my own Northern Irish evangelical theological context at the time. Similarly, the 'kingdom tension', which it described as arising between the 'already' and the 'not yet' transformed, was something I considered unproblematic. Likewise, in my previous research, Moore's vision of an inaugurated ethics had not struck me as significant.

³⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.71.

³¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.71.

³² Jonathan A. Dunn, "Kingdom Tension and Social Action" (Master of Divinity Queen's University Belfast, 2011),

Sometime later, a re-reading of Moore's sketch of inaugurated ethics provoked the beginnings of what would become the current critical appraisal. On that re-reading, a certain strangeness, a discordant note, did strike me. While the kingdom is being acknowledged as present in some sense in Moore's inaugurated eschatology, the ethics which he suggests might be derived from it are shaped, not from the fact of the kingdom's presence, but, apparently, from the fact of its absence. This is the root of the ethical approach which Moore himself associates with the term 'pessimism'.³³ This study will engage with that approach in detail in Chapter Four, but for now, I simply want to note the possibility Moore's proposition of an ethics based on the belief that the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated, might also appear virtually indistinguishable from an ethics based on an entirely future-oriented eschatology. While declaring that the kingdom is here, in some sense or part, it began to appear to me that Moore's socio-political ethic suggests we act as if it were not.

Dissonance between the eschatological claims and the ethical vision

Indeed, one might draw the exact opposite conclusion from Moore, and draw it more readily. It seemed at least equally plausible that: An inaugurated eschatology may actually contest the legitimacy of state functions in the 'already' because they are unthinkable in the 'not yet'. Equally, evangelicals may contest the right of governments to execute criminals or to wage just wars precisely because the kingdom is already present in this present evil age.³⁴ Thus, it appeared to me that

³³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77.

³⁴ Adapted from Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.71.

it is possible to draw the opposite implication for Christian social and political ethics from the implication drawn by Moore. This, in turn, suggested to me that inaugurated eschatology may not yield the united distinctive ethics he and others claim for it, or that, at least, it may be unable to do so without other unifying influences. At the very least, I detected ambiguity in Moore's claims, which suggested a requirement for further investigation.

The 'New Evangelicals' and the inaugurated kingdom

Before I turn to set out the renewed significance of Moore's claims in light of developments in US politics over recent years, it is necessary to outline the historic context of the conversation into which Moore spoke in making these claims. As anyone who has even a passing familiarity with Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* will be aware, the influence, and often the name of Carl Henry is to be found on almost every page. Henry was by Moore's own admission something of a mentor to him, and the history of late Twentieth-century US evangelicalism with which Moore supports his own narrative of an emerging consensus on the inaugurated kingdom is one which draws heavily on Henry's vision, and in which Henry is prominent. Moore's ascription of the subtitle 'The New Evangelical Perspective' is, perhaps, as much about signalling the legacy which he wishes to continue, as it is about announcing a 'new' position on the kingdom from an evangelical perspective.³⁵

The term 'New evangelicals' is also used by scholars such as Moore and Roger

³⁵ Although, it may be a little unfair to interpret Moore's opening statement on the title of his book as implying that he does not intend to suggest a new development: 'There really is no "new" evangelical perspective about the Kingdom of God.' Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.11.

Olson refer to ‘the new conservative postfundamentalism of evangelicals such as Harold John Ockenga, E.J. Carnell and Carl F.H. Henry.’³⁶ Significantly for our study, one of the key ways in which these new conservative evangelicals broke from fundamentalism was in their desire to see evangelicals engage in politics and the public sphere more generally.³⁷

In *The Kingdom of Christ* Moore effectively proclaims and celebrates the consummation of Henry’s hope for American evangelical theology.³⁸ In a recent article, Jerry Ireland has reiterated his earlier assessment that one of the things Russell Moore has shown most clearly in *The Kingdom of Christ* is that ‘Henry devoted much of his academic life to the pursuit of evangelical unity,’ and indeed, ‘Henry’s advocacy, along with that of others, for an evangelical consensus on the Kingdom of God as inaugurated eschatology emerged in part from Henry’s concern for a united evangelicalism.’³⁹ However, as Gregory Thornbury recalls in his book on Henry’s legacy, in 2009, five years after the publication of *The Kingdom of Christ* with its claim of an evangelical eschatological consensus, a panel discussion on the legacy of Carl F. H. Henry at the Evangelical

³⁶ Russell D. Moore, "The Kingdom of God in the Social Ethics of Carl F.H. Henry," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 2 (2012), p. 378. Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: A Postconservative Approach to Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI Baker Academic, 2007), p.68.

³⁷ See, for example, Jerry M. Ireland, "Carl F. H. Henry’s Regenerational Model of Evangelism and Social Concern and the Promise of an Evangelical Consensus," *Perichoresis* 17, no. 3 (2019), pp. 26-27. See also, Jerry M. Ireland, *Evangelism and Social Concern in the Theology of Carl F. H. Henry* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), pp.45-59, and A Cerillo Jr. and MW Dempster, "Carl F. H. Henry’s Early Apologetic for an Evangelical Social Ethic, 1942-1956," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (1991), pp. 369.

³⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

³⁹ Ireland, "Carl F. H. Henry’s Regenerational Model," p.26

Theological Society (ETS), consisting of Moore, Richard Mouw, Craig Mitchell, and Peter Heltzel, agreed that evangelicalism remained divided to an extent which would have disappointed Henry.⁴⁰ Against this background, it is not difficult to see how an eschatological consensus might perform a desired function here. Consensus is desirable in this area because it facilitates a long hoped for united position across evangelicalism.

Renewed significance of the claims:

At the same time, as I was reflecting on the ambiguity of Moore's claims, developments in the political context in the USA were beginning which would reawaken and intensify my reservations with Moore's ambiguous ethics. With the presidential campaign and later, the presidency of Donald Trump, evangelical theology in the USA appeared to be experiencing something of an identity crisis. What is more, Russell Moore emerged as a prominent evangelical theologian leading the opposition to Trump's candidacy in the US media. The basis of Moore's opposition was significant, it was a theological-ethical one. Indeed, the debate within evangelical theology in the US around the Trump candidacy, and presidency, centred on division over Trump's political agenda and personal ethics. Debates during the candidacy in particular reached levels that were at least suggestive of a crisis of evangelical identity, with some, like Moore, even suggesting the abandonment of the label 'evangelical' in favour of the term

⁴⁰ Gregory Alan Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2013), p.203.

‘Gospel Christians’, as a way of distancing the theological identity from the political constituency.⁴¹ Yet, no more than a decade earlier Moore’s had claimed that a call united political constituency could be galvanised around a shared eschatology.

Some evangelical Christians undoubtedly shared Moore’s reservations about the candidacy, yet significant numbers of self-identifying evangelicals were supportive-including prominent theologians such as Wayne Grudem.⁴² Moore himself appears to have become somewhat reconciled to the idea of a Trump presidency after the fact, and in the face of mounting pressure. It could be argued that what made a Trump presidency possible, at least to some extent, was a shared policy agenda and preference in terms of judicial appointments, priorities which were reflected in the reasons given by evangelical leaders who did support the candidacy. While personal ethics were at the heart of Moore’s opposition, socio-political ethics appear to have been at the heart of the support given to the candidacy, and presidency, by his peers: An ethics that reflects a constituency which, accurately or not, is closely associated with the term ‘evangelical’.

Yet, there is very little suggestion that this is a result of an eschatological consensus. Inaugurated eschatology or the kingdom were not referenced in the debate around the candidacy, nor were they referenced as a factor by theologians who supported the candidacy. Despite claiming a consensus on the kingdom as a basis for political engagement, Moore found himself disagreeing significantly on

⁴¹ Russell Moore, "Why this election makes me hate the word evangelical," Opinion, *The Washington Post* (Washington DC), 29/02/2016,

⁴² For an analysis and a comprehensive overview of the contours of ‘evangelical support for Donald Trump’s candidacy and presidency see Michele F. Margolis, "Who Wants to Make America Great Again? Understanding Evangelical Support for Donald Trump," *Politics & Religion* 13, no. 1 (2020), Particularly, p.90 ff.

political engagement with those he appeared to be in agreement with on eschatology.

Lack of critical engagement

Having observed a possible difficulty with both of Moore's claims, and in the context of renewed significance, I began to search for other research in this area that had engaged with Moore's claims, or inaugurated eschatology in the USA, in a critical fashion. However, I found that such research has not been conducted to date. As such, this study is intended as a response to a perceived lack of critical engagement with the two claims asserted by Moore.

The Research Questions

To draw out the full significance of its critical appraisal, this study will now formulate the research questions which will guide it.

How viable is the inaugurated model?

Given the issues which Moore's ambiguous vision of inaugurated ethics may suggest, this study will first ask whether the inaugurated eschatology emerging in the context of US evangelical theology is in fact viable. It will do so by asking three sub-questions. These three questions will take the form of interrogatives, When, Where, and What? The rationale for each of these is explained below.

When was the Kingdom inaugurated?

One apparent issue with the inaugurated eschatology which I have observed in this context relates to the question of timing. As will become clear, inaugurated eschatology appears to rely on a distinctively linear approach to time, while at the

same time exhibiting some difficulty in providing a precise marker of the kingdom's onset. This may be suggestive of an inconsistency which may hint at deeper problems.

What difference has Inauguration made?

Moore's attempt to establish inaugurated eschatology as the basis for evangelical engagement in the public square presupposes that inauguration has made a difference in this area, and thus raises the question at hand.⁴³ That inauguration has made a difference is assumed within the work of other evangelical theologians who advocated inaugurated eschatology, yet the nature of that difference is contested.

Where is the inaugurated kingdom?

As noted above, one of Moore's key statements suggested that inaugurated eschatology in this context includes a claim that some form of cosmic transformation has been inaugurated. Yet, I have also observed a tendency to describe the inaugurated kingdom almost exclusively in terms of what is happening within the church. Again, there seems to be a tension between these two commitments, which may suggest deeper issues with the eschatology on offer.

Who inaugurates?

How is the question of the agency of inauguration to be understood? In one sense God clearly is the primary agent, inaugurating and consummating the kingdom in

⁴³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

Christ, yet the question of whether and to what extent human beings are involved has been disputed. As we shall see, the ethical approaches considered by this study suggest different levels of 'participation' in the inaugurated kingdom, however, the extent to which that 'participation' constitutes human co-operation with the divine is unclear.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the inclusion of human activity might appear to expose the inauguration of the kingdom to a potentially problematic level of contingency.

Do existing attempts to develop an inaugurated ethics in the context suggest that inaugurated eschatology is a promising basis for ethics.

Chapter Four and Chapter Five of this study will focus on this second research question, which will examine examples of inaugurated ethics in the context. A comparison of this work will be conducted to ascertain whether Moore's claim that a relatively unified ethics would emerge from inaugurated eschatology. This question will also consider how issues with the eschatology, uncovered by the first research question in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, impact the development of inaugurated socio-political ethics.

Approach to evangelical theology

At the outset of this research, I resolved that the project should be directly relevant to evangelical theology in general, and its Northern Irish manifestations in particular. I was particularly exercised that this research project should approach evangelical theology in a way that meant its findings would represent a

⁴⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

critical contribution to a particular conversation within evangelical theology.⁴⁵ It was an approach that aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the theological commitments which evangelicals in these contexts held in common, and which sought to take those *prima facie* commitments seriously as a shaping influence on the adoption of certain eschatological positions and ethical stances. As a researcher I thus found myself in the position of insider attempting to place oneself at a critical distance. Not only has that critical distance been maintained through recourse to the critical lenses provided outside perspectives, but at the time of writing I no longer consider myself an evangelical Christian and thus I no longer consider myself an insider in the same sense.

Nevertheless, throughout the project, the research approach has remained consistent in taking seriously evangelicalism's self-confessed theological commitments. This approach reflects that taken by other recent studies of evangelical belief undertaken by scholars working across Irish and American contexts, notably Andrew Holmes' 2018 history of *The Irish Presbyterian Mind* and Joshua Searle's 2014 examination of evangelical apocalyptic belief in the Northern Ireland troubles, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand*.⁴⁶ The approach of both

⁴⁵ I am mindful here of the danger of overdrawing the theological context I am aiming to outline. While this thesis focuses on evangelicalism in the global North, and a specific part of it at that, I am mindful of the way in which recent scholarship has contributed to our understanding of the diversity of evangelical belief globally. See Donald Lewis and Richard Pierard, *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History And Culture In Regional Perspective* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2014), Also, Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History Of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Both are both good examples of such recent scholarship. For a useful historical overview of evangelicalism in the global South, see Orlando E. Costas, "Evangelical Theology in the Two-Thirds World 1880–1980," in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990),

⁴⁶ Holmes' monograph focuses on the theological thought of conservative Presbyterians in the period 1830-1930 in order to show that 'Presbyterian writers had logical reasons for being conservative that owed much to their Irish experience but to which their conservatism cannot be

works is to proceed ‘on the basis that scholars ought to take seriously the self-confessed religious motivations of believers rather than immediately jumping to explain them away by reference to other factors considered to be of more significance.’⁴⁷ Both historian (Holmes) and theologian (Searle) credit the influence of the Cambridge School of political thought in the development of such an approach. However, Holmes makes explicit the significance of Coffey, Chapman and Gregory’s 2009 collection of essays, *Seeing things their way*, in advocating the consistent application of this approach to religious ideas: ‘The approach of Coffey, Chapman, and Gregory “insists that..... religious ideas (like political, philosophical, or scientific ideas) need to be understood first and foremost in their own terms— not in terms of some competing set of religious ideas, nor in terms of some anachronistic standpoint”.’⁴⁸

In this vein, this thesis borrows the approach summarised by Joshua Searle: ‘The aim should not be to discredit or ridicule these convictions but to understand them.’⁴⁹

Searle references Skinner’s views on the matter in support of his assertion that approaches which attempt to do otherwise are antithetical to the researcher’s

entirely reduced.’ He argues that his approach demonstrates that their conservatism ‘did not have to involve a dismissal of the modern and a retreat into anti-intellectualism and fundamentalism’. Andrew R. Holmes, *The Irish Presbyterian Mind: Conservative Theology, Evangelical Experience, and Modern Criticism, 1830-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.1.

Searle’s study claims to be ‘the first, full-length systematic rebuttal’ of the ‘deprivation thesis’ (‘the notion that apocalyptic-eschatological belief can be explained primarily by understanding the social conditions out of which millennial visions purportedly arise’) ‘in relation to evangelical communities in the Northern Ireland context.’ Searle, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Holmes, *The Irish Presbyterian Mind*, p.1.

⁴⁸ Holmes, *The Irish Presbyterian Mind*, pp. 4-5. Holmes, *The Irish Presbyterian Mind*; Searle, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand*, p. 36, 36n. Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad S. Gregory, *Seeing things their way: Intellectual history and the return of religion* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009),

⁴⁹ Searle, *The Scarlet Woman and the Red Hand*, p. 36.

first task. However, taken as a whole Skinner's argument in this part of the first volume of his collected essays, *Visions of Politics*, also makes clear the limits to this approach:

I cannot see, however, why it should be supposed to follow that our interpretative charity must always be boundless. On the contrary, there may be many cases in which, if we are to identify what needs to be explained, it may be crucial to insist, of a given belief, that it was less than rational for a given agent to have upheld it.⁵⁰

In the course of conversing with evangelical eschatology, it is possible that this research will identify such cases which surpass the bounds of reasonable interpretative charity. This research will keep in mind the resource provided by *Cameron et al's 'Four voices of theology'* as 'a model for theological reflection' which can help identify where interpretative charity might actually require the identification of problematic theology.⁵¹ While doing so involves applying a method developed with practical theology in mind to a project working in the area of systematic theology and theological ethics, it is clear that as its creators themselves suggest 'the "four voices" description of theology may have benefits....in other areas of theological work.'⁵² Its usefulness here is in the way it can be used to ensure 'theological integrity,' in that way that it can alert the researcher

⁵⁰ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of politics: Regarding method* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.38

⁵¹ Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, and Catherine Duce, *Talking about God in practice: theological action research and practical theology* (London: SCM Press, 2010), p.2.

⁵² Cameron, Bhatti, and Duce, *Talking about God in practice*, p. 51, 1n.

to dissonance between the 'operant' and 'espoused' qualities of the formal voices speaking in this particular academic theological context.⁵³

Moltmannian eschatological apparatus

This study will also utilise the eschatological categories provided by Moltmann in *The Coming of God*, that is: the fourfold division of Personal (Eternal Life), Historical (The Kingdom of God), Cosmic (New Heaven-New Earth), and Divine (Glory).⁵⁴ This will enable the study to identify where the eschatology on display may prioritise between these aspects, with particular consideration for the potential emphasis on the personal and the potential neglect of the cosmic. The study will also draw on Moltmann's distinction between 'apocalyptic' and 'millenarian' dynamics within eschatology, paying particular attention to the way in which these may be in tension within an inaugurated eschatological framework.⁵⁵

Defining the context and choosing a sample

The geographic context of this study has already been alluded to: These claims have been made by theologians working in the context of the USA and the references to social and political ethics and engagement have been applied primarily to that area. The non-geographic boundary of the context being

⁵³ Cameron, Bhatti, and Duce, *Talking about God in practice*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1996),

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*,

described, however, cannot be so readily defined. This is due to the difficulty inherent in identifying who or what exactly is intended by the term 'evangelical'.

It is the assertion of this study that these claims have been made by theologians who self-identify as 'evangelical', and have been applied primarily to a context they understand to be 'evangelical'. This statement must be qualified with the recognition that while Moore's description of the context as 'evangelical' is explicit, as is evident in the title of *The Kingdom of Christ: The new evangelical perspective*, Gladd and Harmon use the term only once in the main text of *Making All Things New*. Whatever their reasons for such a sparing use, their employment of the term in describing how 'the evangelical church in the West struggles to empathize with the intensely persecuted church in the rest of the world' seems to indicate that identity of 'the church' they are writing for is bound up with this term.⁵⁶

This study will enquire about the wider identity and beliefs signalled by the use of this term by Moore, and its inference by Gladd & Harmon. It will attempt to assess how these relate to, and possibly facilitate, claims to consensus or agreement around the idea of an inaugurated eschatological kingdom. The study will also look at how ideas and priorities associated with evangelical identity impact the work of other theologians advocating 'inaugurated eschatology'. To this end, the current study will engage with existing attempts to define 'evangelical' identity, and not in any attempt to endorse one or the other or arrive at some new composite definition.

⁵⁶ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.57.

The 'Evangelical Characteristics' outlined by David Bebbington in the course of his history of *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* remain instructive:

There are four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.⁵⁷

As Larsen has pointed out, 'the eminent American historian of evangelicalism, Mark Noll, has repeatedly commended the quadrilateral as "the most serviceable general definition" in existence.'⁵⁸ Similarly, the relevance of these characteristics in the contemporary US context has been recognised by the National Association of Evangelicals as their recent initiative to define evangelical identity in conjunction with Lifeway Research draws on the Bebbington Quadrilateral, modifying it, most significantly by essentially replacing the practice of activism with a commitment to activism:

The NAE/LifeWay Research method includes four statements to which respondents must strongly agree to be categorized as evangelical:

- The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.

⁵⁷ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp.2-3.

⁵⁸ Timothy Larsen, "Defining and locating evangelicalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Timothy Larsen, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.2.

- It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
- Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.⁵⁹

This attempt at what might be called collective self-identification, in essence, the claim that we are North American evangelicals and so are all who pass our test of beliefs, is being advocated by the NAE as an alternative to both self-identification and the test of denominational 'belonging' used by the US social survey RELTRAD. However, the significant wane of the NAE's influence over the past four decades would seem to indicate amongst other things, a level of dissatisfaction with this catch-all approach. This impression is compounded by the emergence of smaller evangelical groupings such as The Gospel Coalition. Most notably such groups have a more stringent confessional basis for belonging than Bebbington's characteristics or strong agreement with the NAE's statements.⁶⁰

Most significant for this study is the aspect of 'evangelicalism' Bebbington identifies as '*biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible' and which the

⁵⁹ <http://nae.net/what-is-an-evangelical/> accessed Feb 2016

⁶⁰ See <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional-statement> accessed Feb 2016. A position on the kingdom of God is included among the 13 points of the confessional statement.

NAE/Lifeway method places first amongst their four statements, 'The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.'⁶¹ Both these criteria could be classed as relating to the *importance* or *centrality* of Scripture, however, they are not exactly prescriptive of how Scripture is to be used.

This study will take note of the insights provided by David H. Kelsey's 1975 work, 'Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology' which attempted 'to map several related but importantly different concepts of "the authority of scripture for theology"'.⁶² The intention here is to show how even where a commitment to the centrality and authority of Scripture is held in common as an aspect of a shared evangelical perspective, diverse approaches to the use of Scripture as authoritative in theology may persist. This study will consider how particular approaches to using Scripture may have influenced the inaugurated eschatology presented by the theologians under consideration, and thus whether this may account for any inconsistencies.

However, given the self-consciously sympathetic approach of this study, it will primarily consider the relevance of recent scholarship on evangelical theological identity from within as a means of understanding the commitments which it might encounter. To this end, this research will primarily use 'the Larsen Pentagon' as its creator intends, as 'a compliment to the standard definition of evangelicalism, the Bebbington Quadrilateral'.⁶³ Larsen's definition, which was specifically devised for

⁶¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain*, p.3 and <http://nae.net/what-is-an-evangelical/>

⁶² David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (London: SCM, 1975), p.2.

⁶³ Larsen, "Defining and locating evangelicalism," p.1

The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology, recognises as an evangelical, one who is:

1. an orthodox Protestant
2. who stands in the tradition of the global Christian networks arising from the eighteenth-century revival movements associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield;
3. who has a preeminent place for the Bible in her or his Christian life as the divinely inspired, final authority in matters of faith and practice;
4. who stresses reconciliation with God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross;
5. and who stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual to bring about conversion and an ongoing life of fellowship with God and service to God and others, including the duty of all believers to participate in the task of proclaiming the gospel to all people.⁶⁴

This apparatus is indeed more helpful than others in helping us to identify and outline an 'evangelical' context for us, particularly so, since, as Larsen points out, Bebbington's definition assumes key contextual information which Larsen here makes explicit; for example, the requirement to be an 'orthodox Protestant.'⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Larsen, "Defining and locating evangelicalism," p.1

⁶⁵ Larsen, "Defining and locating evangelicalism," p.2.

Works to be considered

Chapter Two and Three will take a sample of evangelical theology written in the USA since Russell Moore made his claims in 2004 in order to assess developments since. The sample taken will include a range of theological perspectives on inaugurated eschatology, including both 'conservative' and 'progressive'. As the aim of this study is not to prove or disprove a consensus, and due to the need to keep a manageable sample size, there is no claim to be comprehensively representative. This will be borne in mind in reaching conclusions on the basis of the sample analysis. However, since the approach is one which seeks to identify difference to uncover the issues, rather than for the sake of analysing the level of agreement itself, this is considered an acceptable limitation.

Given that this study has begun as a response to the claim to consensus made initially by Russell Moore in *The Kingdom of Christ*, this work would appear to be the most obvious choice for inclusion in the list of works to be considered. However, while this book contains Russell Moore's most sustained treatment of issues related to eschatology and the kingdom, he is largely concerned with establishing his claim that a consensus exists around these issues.⁶⁶ As a result, while he does attempt to identify the theological positions others take in relation to the kingdom, he does not give details of his own views on the matter. As a result, this study will also consider his recent 2015 work *Onward*, which does provide evidence of the view he has now formed on the matter.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

⁶⁷ Russell D. Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* (Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 2015),

While Benjamin Gladd & Matthew Harmon have echoed that claim, they have done so by drawing largely on the work of G.K. Beale. It is a debt that they explicitly acknowledge in the Preface to *Making all things new*, where they state that their book 'is an extension of Beale's project,' as they 'attempt to flesh out in practical terms how inaugurated eschatology should shape pastoral ministry and the life of the church'.⁶⁸ This study will apply its methodology to the work of Beale in the area of 'inaugurated eschatology', rather than to Gladd and Harmon's use of that work. Of particular interest in this respect will be Beale's introductory chapter to Gladd and Harmon's *Making all things new*, entitled 'The End Starts at the Beginning', and his much more extensive work *New Testament Biblical Theology*.⁶⁹

Given his prominence in the debate around the relationship between kingdom and Church, Scot McKnight's work in this area will be considered in light of these methodological questions.⁷⁰ However, it is recognised that as the main concern of McKnight's work in this area lies with the question of the location, the application of other interrogatives (see below) may yield less of an insight than in the case of the other theologians being assessed.

This study will also pose its questions to two theologians associated with The Gospel Coalition, namely D.A. Carson, co-founder and council member, and Stephen T. Um, the council member who produced TGC's booklet on the kingdom of God.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p. xi.

⁶⁹ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p. xii & G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2011),

⁷⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*,

⁷¹ Stephen Um, *The Kingdom of God*, (Wheaton IL: The Gospel Coalition, 2011),

Leaving aside his formative and continuing role with *The Gospel Coalition*, Carson arguably warrants inclusion as an eminent theologian within North American Evangelicalism whose position on the kingdom could be considered as within the consensus under discussion. This study will consider Carson's *Christ and Culture Revisited*, in an attempt to engage with him in a work where he writes extensively, if incidentally, about inaugurated eschatology.

Um's booklet on the kingdom of God, is included as an interesting example of a position on inaugurated eschatology outlined on behalf of a North American group that collectively self-identifies as evangelical. Furthermore, membership of this group is bound by a Confessional Statement which includes the belief that 'The kingdom of God [is] already present but not fully realized'.⁷²

This study will also engage with the work of David Gushee and Glen Stassen, who have self-identified as 'progressive evangelicals'.⁷³ The significance of their inclusion is also notable given their joint authorship of one of the relatively few works on inaugurated ethics, *Kingdom Ethics*.⁷⁴

The approach of this Study

This study will proceed on the basis that the lack of critical perspective highlighted in the introduction must be addressed if evangelical theology is to fully participate in, and benefit from, the wider conversation on the relationship between eschatology and ethics within Christian theology. This research will begin to

⁷² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents> recovered May 2016

⁷³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁷⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

address the lack of critical engagement by way of a critical appraisal drawing on theological perspectives from outside US evangelical theology, most notably the work of Jürgen Moltmann. In so doing, it is hoped that any issues with the eschatology which form the basis of the claimed consensus will be identified and problematized in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

This will be achieved by the posing of four interrogatives to the literature identified above.

In pursuit of this aim, Chapter Four and Chapter Five of this thesis will pay close attention to two ethical approaches in particular: in Chapter Four, the *pessimistic* ethics advocated by Russell Moore in *The Kingdom of Christ*, and in Chapter Five, the ethics of *participation* developed by Glenn Stassen and David Gushee in their *Kingdom Ethics*.⁷⁵ Chapter Four will begin with a brief analysis of the current state of inaugurated ethics in the context. This analysis will demonstrate the absence of developed ethical programmes based on inaugurated eschatology in this context before outlining the reasons for the selection of Moore and Gushee and Stassen for comparison in light of this.

⁷⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

Chapter Two: *When* was the kingdom inaugurated? *What* difference has inauguration made?

Introduction

As its title suggests, this chapter will put two questions to our sample: ‘*When* was the kingdom inaugurated’ and ‘*What* difference has inauguration made?’ However, we must first establish the relevance of these questions to the present study; a task made more pressing by the apparent absence of any real concern with these questions amongst the conversation in this context. This further underlines the importance of this chapter’s intention: to reveal area of disagreement and complexity which would otherwise continue to be overlooked, through posing two previously neglected questions.

Should such disagreement emerge, an additional insight would thus be provided, given that agreement is fundamental to the concept of consensus. Thus, while it is not a primary aim of this thesis to prove or disprove the claim to consensus in itself, uncovering disagreement over the question of timing would present a challenge to those claims.

Of course, this prospect relies on the disagreement being demonstrably significant. Is the level of disagreement serious enough to undermine the claims to consensus or to suggest the existence of some underlying issue? The evidence presented below certainly demonstrates that there is minimal agreement on several issues, particular the timing of inauguration. Furthermore, this chapter will argue that far from being inconsequential questions, on which disagreement may

be tolerated within a consensus established on agreement over central issues, the question of timing cannot be isolated from other aspects of inaugurated eschatology. Whether decisions concerning timing have a determinative effect on decisions made concerning the scope and impact of the inaugurated kingdom, (and, by extension, influence the shape of the emerging ethics) will also be assessed.⁷⁶ However, it is to the nature of such disagreement over timing that we must now turn.

When was the kingdom inaugurated?

How disagreement manifests itself in relation to the question of timing can be described in terms of two inter-agreement and intra-agreement between sources. The term inter-agreement will be used to describe agreement *between* individual theologians. For example, if nine of the nine theologians under consideration specified the resurrection as the event which inaugurated the kingdom, then the level of inter-agreement could be considered total. On the other hand, a different answer to this question from each theologian, meaning none of the nine individual theologians agrees *with each other*, would result in 'no' inter-agreement.

Given the small scale of the data generated by this study the use of a statistical method is not deemed necessary. Rather, the level of agreement (both 'inter-' and

⁷⁶ A helpful comparison from outside the immediate context will be made with the theological approach to political ethics exhibited in the work of Oliver O'Donovan here. O'Donovan's choice of ascension as the eschatologically significant event determines the shape of politics between that moment and the consummation. The ascension of Christ to the heavenly throne (which O'Donovan terms 'exaltation', determines that Christ is now exercising all but one aspect of political authority, judgment being the notable exception. For the significance of ascension/exaltation in his work see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.145 ff. For his outworking of an inaugurated political ethics on this basis see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2005),

‘intra-’) is to be presented in the form of a diagram, which will represent pictorially the answers given within the range of potential events. However, it should be noted at this point that, given the number of theologians surveyed will exceed the number of possible events, the number of choices made will be greater than the number of choices available. This means that the choices of different theologians may include the same events, due to the limited number of options available alone. In consequence, a result of zero inter-agreement will not be possible, and the true threshold of minimal inter-agreement may be considerably higher.

In addition to assessing the sample for levels of inter-agreement (i.e., agreement between theologians), this chapter will assess the level of intra-agreement (i.e., agreement within the body of work of a single theologian). Intra-agreement will be deemed to have occurred where one single event is identified as the inaugurating event throughout a single theologian’s work, to the exclusion of all others. Where a group of multiple events are specified, this will similarly be considered to represent intra-agreement, so long as the events included do not vary. The difficulty posed by such multiple event answers will be dealt with separately.

The benefit of assessing for intra-agreement is to highlight issues that may otherwise go unacknowledged where claims to consensus are made. Indeed, the existence of disagreement with a single theologian’s work may even call the extent of the claimed consensus into question. However, this is not a primary concern here. Again, in so far as timing effects impact, and impact effects ethics, a lack of intra-agreement on timing ought to be reflected in the emerging ethics. This

internal dynamic may hold additional significance in that it would suggest that theologians experience difficulty in answering the question of timing, at least in a particular format. The offering of different answers by one theologian may indicate that they understand the evidence to be suggestive of different answers, or that, at the very least, a single moment is not overwhelmingly supported by the evidence under consideration.

In addition to the significance of the disagreement revealed, there is, secondly, the insight provided by considering the complexity inherent in the question itself. This chapter will demonstrate that, to answer the question, 'When was the kingdom inaugurated', one must first make certain decisions about the nature of time as humans have understood and experienced it, about the nature of eschatological time, and about how these two forms of time relate to one another. It will become clear that, while the proponents of inaugurated eschatology under consideration offer different answers to the question of timing, a shared understanding of time is evident, influencing how they arrive at their decisions. What is more, as will be noted, this common approach has been accompanied by a dismissive attitude towards alternatives that adopt a more complex understanding of time.

What then is the nature of this approach to time that is held in common by these evangelical adherents of inaugurated eschatology in North America? The term which will be used in this study to describe the common approach is 'Linear

Time'.⁷⁷ Here, the present study draws on the work of Jürgen Moltmann, who has identified a particular assumption about the nature of time that is fundamental to various eschatological schemes.⁷⁸ Moltmann claims that an understanding of time as exclusively 'linear' is indeed foundational to inaugurated eschatology. Furthermore, he suggests that this exclusively linear understanding is in keeping with inaugurated eschatology's predecessors, realized and futurist eschatology. This might seem unremarkable: most readers will be familiar with the description of the human experience of the passing of historical time in decidedly linear terms. What is remarkable, according to Moltmann, is that this conception of time should be applied to describe eschatological time as well as historical time.⁷⁹ For Moltmann, this move is problematic. Indeed, it is the fundamental problem which his critique of inaugurated eschatology identifies:

Resignation knows that everything which 'now already' exists will 'no longer' exist tomorrow; for everything that comes into being passes away, even that which does 'not yet' exist. With these notions of linear time... eschatology can only be dissolved altogether.⁸⁰

The suggestion here is that the arrival of the eschaton will necessarily result in the passing away of all that came into being before it, including what is future from the perspective of the present. The eschaton cannot, therefore, facilitate a

⁷⁷ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

⁷⁸ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6. Vitor Westhelle shares Moltmann's concerns: 'It seems clear that much of the concern with history in relationship to eschatology is guided by a linear conception of time. And this in turn is used to fence off cyclical conceptions of time's recurrence. Vitor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present* (New York NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p.2.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

continuation of linear time, even under altered circumstances, but brings about its end.⁸¹ As Moltmann puts it elsewhere, 'the reduction of eschatology to time in the framework of salvation history also really abolishes eschatology altogether, subjecting it to *chronos*, the power of transience.'⁸² For Moltmann, it appears historical time and eschatological time do not mix: The arrival of the eschaton would more likely bring historical time to a close and with it linear chronology as we know it.⁸³ Moltmann concludes, then, that linear concepts of time cannot be used to understand or describe eschatological time.

If Moltmann is correct in this claim it can be hypothesised that approaches that take a linear approach to eschatological time will display symptoms of this foundational misstep. This chapter will identify potential difficulties, through the identification of areas of disagreement, and then consider whether these difficulties might represent symptoms of the root problem Moltmann has suggested.

This approach is justified by Moltmann's clear association of this particular issue with inaugurated eschatology. Indeed, he references the terms 'already' and 'not yet' as he makes his point about the dissolving effects of linear time on eschatology in *The Coming of God*.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Moltmann targets inaugurated eschatology more explicitly when he portrays it as inheriting the linear notion of time common to both its realised and futurist precursors. In fact, Moltmann suggests that inaugurated eschatology has come about as 'an *apparent* solution'

⁸¹ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

⁸² Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.13.

⁸³ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

⁸⁴ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

to the difficulties raised by the competing claims of the rival eschatologies which previously dominated and divided the landscape of North American evangelicalism.⁸⁵

The tension of modern theological eschatology is generally said to be the antithesis between futurist eschatology and presentative eschatology.... it is then also easy to find a reconciling solution when distinguishing in temporal terms between that which is 'now already' present and that which is 'not yet' present'.⁸⁶

Inaugurated eschatology, like its forerunners, appears to have found it unnecessary or impossible to look beyond 'linear time' to understand both historical and eschatological time and the relationship between them. For inaugurated eschatology, there was a time before the kingdom came, then the Kingdom came in part, and, at some time in the future, the kingdom will come in a final or 'consummated' form; just as for realized eschatology, there was a time before the kingdom came, then the Kingdom came, and for futurist eschatology, there is a time before the kingdom came and a time continuing even when the kingdom has come.⁸⁷ As Moltmann suggests, inaugurated eschatology has not challenged the foundational assumption held in common by both sides in the debate to which it is proposed as a resolution. If indeed, the eschatological

⁸⁵ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6. Italics added for emphasis.

⁸⁶ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

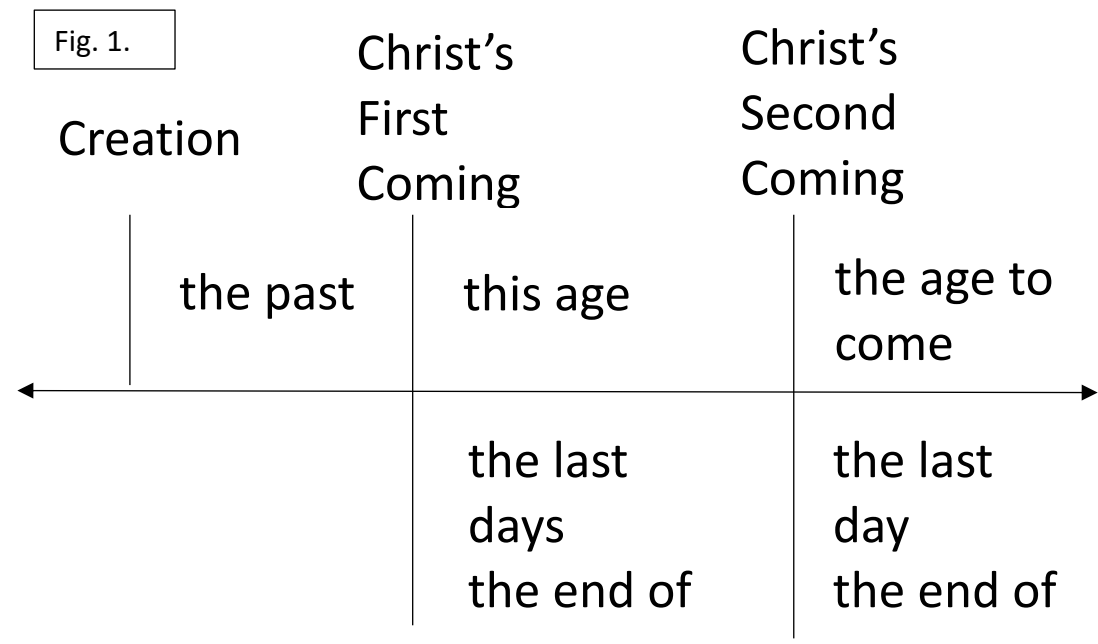
⁸⁷ The impression that futurist eschatological schemes in this context envisioned the continuing of historical time into 'the last days' is sustained by the various forms of millennialism (pre- and post) which accompanied these dispensationalist theologies. Realised eschatological schemes, usually associated the covenantal theology of the Reformed tradition, were more generally amillennial. For a discussion of these trends see Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.32

difficulties and divisions in North American evangelicalism have been overcome, it may be that the resolution has not been reached through a radical rethinking of eschatology. Rather, inaugurated eschatology has emerged, ostensibly through a process of synthesis and compromise, from an already shared assumption: eschatological and historical time interact, and that interaction is to be understood and communicated in linear terms.

This study will now move to demonstrate how 'linear time' is a discernible feature of inaugurated eschatology. It will do so by examining a distinctively linear phenomenon characteristic of inaugurated eschatology (and its forerunners in the context): the timeline of the ages.

The extent to which 'linear time' is constitutive of Inaugurated eschatology is most clearly in evidence in the use of 'timelines' in the literature advocating it. Such timelines have all but supplanted the infamous prophecy charts of the futurist dispensational movement as the ticking clock of North American evangelicalism. G.K. Beale's inclusion of such a chart (see Fig. 1, below), adapted from Anthony Hoekema's *The Bible and the future*, in his introductory chapter to Gladd and Harmon's 2016 work, *Making all things new: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, is evidence of the persistence of this approach.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ G.K. Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.20.



Beale's adaptation of Hoekema's timeline clearly displays two parallel linear chronologies in operation. Above the horizontal centre-line, historical time is depicted as progressing through a chronology of ages marked by biblically posited events; below a chronology of the last days and the last day, the *eschaton* in perhaps the most literal translation is depicted in much the same way.⁸⁹ This confirms, in a visual way, the phenomenon identified, and problematized, by Moltmann: eschatological time is considered to operate in the same (linear) way as historical time, and thus the possibility of their interaction is maintained.⁹⁰ Indeed, Beale provides a further example of how inaugurated eschatology proposes the very entering of the *eschaton* into historical time which Moltmann

⁸⁹ The arrows at each end of the horizontal centre-line appear to depict the expansion of this line in each direction, rather than suggesting a two-way direction of travel. There is no suggestion of retroaction in the work of either Beale or Hoekema.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*,

dismisses when he quotes with approval William Manson's statement that inauguration is 'the entrance into history, of the times of the End'.⁹¹

The significance for this study of these timelines is that they show inaugurated eschatology presenting eschatological time as progressing through a linear chronology in parallel to historical time. This study will then proceed on the basis that inaugurated eschatology does, in fact, rest on a common approach to time; that this approach is foundational to inaugurated eschatology (and its antecedents); that the marks of this approach may be clearly observed in the employment of illustrative timelines; and that this approach can, after Moltmann, be termed 'Linear Time'.⁹² Having established this, it is suggested that 'Linear Time' may then impose certain criteria upon the application of 'Inaugurated Eschatology' by its adherents. For example, in relation to the question of when the kingdom was inaugurated, it will demand that the answers given conform to a linear understanding of timing. It is to the task of identifying the criteria imposed by this approach that we now turn.

In their article 'Christ and Time – Part Three: "Telling Time" in the Fourth Gospel', Eric Rowe and Jerome Neyrey engage with anthropological literature to outline the four classifications of time which they deem to be 'most useful for reading the Fourth Gospel'.⁹³ Included among these classifications is the pairing of 'sequence

⁹¹ Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning," p.4. William Manson, *Eschatology in the New Testament, Eschatology: Four Papers Read to the Society for the Study of Theology*, (Edinburgh: Society for the Study of Theology, 1953), p.6.

⁹² Moltmann, *The Coming of God*,

⁹³ Eric and Neyrey Rowe, Jerome, "Christ and Time – Part Three: 'Telling Time' in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (2010), p79.

and duration'; a pairing fundamental to the operation of linear time.⁹⁴ As social anthropologist Jack Goody has noted:

The experience of time takes two major forms – sequence and duration.

From the standpoint of sequence, events are seen as located in a particular order along a moving continuum. The experience of duration derives from the relative span of events and of intervals within them.⁹⁵

For some, this approach may suggest an attempt to force the splitting of two or more events that should be held together as eschatologically significant. Cross and Resurrection, for example, may both be affirmed as bringing about the inauguration of the kingdom, and indeed are so affirmed in at least one of the approaches examined later in this chapter. One possible explanation here would be to understand these events as discrete but connected moments, which together brought the eschatological kingdom into historical time in a limited form. However, linear time's reliance on sequence would appear to preclude multiple discrete answers to the question of when the kingdom was inaugurated. Sequence forces us to choose one moment as the beginning. When two moments are held up as the beginning of something, whether it be a kingdom or a campaign, a linear concept of time suggests to us that the earlier moment may have been a mere prelude, or, alternatively, that the later moment represents only an intensification or extension of a prior commencement. The sequencing inherent in a linear

⁹⁴ Rowe, "Christ and Time," p79.

⁹⁵ Jack Goody, "Time: Social Organization," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, no. 16 (1968), pp.37-38.

conception of time suggests that one of the multiple timings constitutes the accurate representation of the beginning, and the other possibilities do not.

Alternatively, an affirmation of both cross and resurrection as bringing about the inauguration of the kingdom might also be explained in terms of extended duration. Such an explanation might propose an extended moment of inauguration beginning with the death of Jesus and lasting until his resurrection. This type of explanation also comes under pressure from the rationale inherent in a linear approach to time. How would the extended duration of time between the first and last events in this period be understood? Surely this period of time would require classification in its own way, being distinct from pre-kingdom time, time in the (fully) inaugurated kingdom and time in the consummated kingdom? In the example of Cross through to Resurrection, this would require classifying the time Jesus was in the tomb as 'kingdom pending' or 'inaugurating the kingdom'. There is no such attempt anywhere in the literature of inaugurated eschatology to introduce such a fourth category of time. To do so would be to expand the thin dividing line in Hoekema's chart and its successors to become an 'age', albeit a relatively brief one, in its own right.

Considering the question of inauguration's timing in light of both of these criteria then, 'linear time' demands an answer which denotes sequence. What is required is that the inauguration can be located as an event within 'a particular order along a moving continuum'.⁹⁶ In other words, to ask 'when was the kingdom

⁹⁶ Goody, "Time: Social Organization," pp.37-38.

inaugurated' is to ask for a marker of sequence; to identify in what order it arises along the moving continuum of linear time. The concept of duration, on the other hand, is not appropriate to this particular question of timing, derived, as it is, 'from the relative span of events and of intervals within them'.⁹⁷

This study presses the demand for a marker of sequence, not as a demand for a corresponding time stamp, as if it were possible to claim that the kingdom was inaugurated at 15:03:01 on a particular Friday. However, it is reasonable to demand a marker of sequence from within the range of possibilities offered by the gospel narratives themselves, given that the claims to consensus assert that the biblical material is the ultimate source of authority for inaugurated eschatology. The reasoning of 'Linear Time' applied to these narratives thus makes it possible, and necessary, to ask whether the kingdom was inaugurated at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross (as one of several possibilities). As such, it is considered appropriate to ask, at the very least, whether the kingdom was inaugurated on that particular Friday, as opposed to the following Sunday when Jesus was resurrected, or the day, weeks later, when he ascended to heaven.

This study contends then, that as 'Linear Time' is constitutive of inaugurated eschatology, so the answer given to the question of the timing of inauguration should take the form of a marker of sequence, and not a measure of duration. A failure to meet this criterion would represent a notable inconsistency between approach and application, which will require further investigation.

⁹⁷ Goody, "Time: Social Organization," pp.37-38.

It is now possible to assess the range of responses given in the three areas outlined above. The levels of inter-agreement and intra-agreement and whether an answer represents a marker of duration will be assessed, in order to highlight results that are at odds with the common approach to time.

The order in which these criteria will be put to the sources will be the reverse of the order of their previous explanation. This is the order suggested by the most efficient approach to interrogating the sources. On meeting a possible answer to the question of timing, it will be considered whether it represents a marker of duration; that is a single discrete event in biblical history. Continuing through that source, as further possible answers are met it will be considered whether they agree with the previous answer(s) (i.e.. an assessment of intra-agreement will be made). This approach will be adopted for the work of each theologian under consideration before a comparative summary of their positions can be arrived at to indicate the level of inter-agreement. This summary will also be illustrated with the aid of a diagram.

Having selected these criteria of assessment, Marker of Sequence, Intra-agreement, and Inter-agreement, a hypothesis may now be formulated:

1. A significant majority of theologians do not specify a single marker of sequence. The majority of answers given will be stated in terms of multiple markers of sequence or in terms of a duration spanning multiple events.

2. There will be less than total intra-agreement, that is to say, one or more theologians will be found to advocate different answers throughout their own body of work.
3. There will be a low level of inter-agreement, that is to say, theologians advocating the same answer will be found to be in the minority.

Such findings would a) undermine the claim that inaugurated eschatology represents a consensus position on the kingdom in the context, and b) suggest the need for further consideration of the concept(s) of time engaged by inaugurated eschatology.

The study will now move to examine the relevant work by the selection of theologians outlined in the introduction, beginning with the contribution of D.A. Carson.

D. A. Carson

D.A. Carson's most sustained engagement with the question of the timing of the kingdom's inauguration comes in the course of his 2008 assessment of H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* entitled *Christ and Culture Revisited*.⁹⁸ Carson's treatment of this question is notable on two counts.

Firstly, Carson appears to claim that the kingdom was inaugurated with the birth of Christ by stating that, 'In the New Testament, the kingdom comes with the baby

⁹⁸ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008),

who is born a king' (Matthew 2).⁹⁹ It is a claim that seems to provide a suitable marker of sequence, in terms of opting for a particular moment.

It must be noted at this juncture that the basis of Carson's choice here is a rather strained reading of Matthew 2. Given that the only direct reference to Christ's kingship at this point in the Matthean narrative is in Matthew 2:2 when the Magi ask 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews', it must be assumed that this verse is the foundation of Carson's claim. If so, unless Carson equates Christ's kingship over the kingdom of God with this apparently more limited title then it would seem that he is investing Matthew 2 with a little more eschatological significance than the text itself warrants.

The basis of Carson's choice of the nativity may be speculative, but left alone it would at least represent a marker of sequence. Carson, however, does not leave it there but, goes on to identify the coming of the kingdom with further events in the Gospel story. This is the second notable feature of his treatment of this question and perhaps the most problematic aspect. No sooner has Carson made his claim about the coming of the kingdom at the nativity than he states that 'it also comes with the onset of Jesus' public ministry and the announcement of the dawning of the kingdom.'¹⁰⁰ At this point, not only has the test of intra-agreement been failed but the previous evidence of a single marker of sequence has been voided.

⁹⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*; Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53.

¹⁰⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p. 53.

Carson's view of the timing of inauguration becomes even less clear as he goes on. In a section where he lists 'the major biblically determined turning points in the history of redemption', a list which appears to be ordered on the lines of a chronology suggested by biblical narratives, 'the onset of the kingdom of God' is placed after 'the ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ'.¹⁰¹ By holding together a duration spanning several markers of sequence (the ministry, death and resurrection) as if it were a single marker of sequence, Carson prevents himself from situating the onset of the kingdom anywhere within this sequence of events. However, if his earlier assertion about the birth narrative in Matthew is definitive, then the onset of the kingdom should surely be placed before 'a turning point' which begins with Jesus' ministry. The term 'turning points' Carson uses suggests 'markers of sequence' of particular significance.¹⁰²

Carson's understanding is revealed as even more complex by the next entry to this list, which describes the 'ongoing eschatological tension between the "already" and the "not yet,"' as 'consequent' to 'the coming of the Spirit'.¹⁰³ If this really is a tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet', then it must be considered to have arisen as a result of inauguration, and is therefore consequent to the kingdom's initial coming. In other words, if the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' Carson describes has indeed come about, consequent and therefore after, and as a result of, the coming of the Spirit, then it is Pentecost which marks the coming of the 'already'. In light of this, his comments here could be interpreted

¹⁰¹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p. 81.

¹⁰² Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p. 81.

¹⁰³ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p. 81.

as proposing yet another moment of onset for the inauguration. Carson's understanding of the place of Pentecost in the inauguration of the kingdom must also be viewed in light of comments he makes earlier in the book on the role of the Spirit:

In Paul's terminology, the Spirit is the down payment of the promised inheritance: here is a dimension of inaugurated eschatology that works out in limited but real measures of transformation, unity, revelation – in short, in experience of the presence and power of God.¹⁰⁴

The language of down payment here, suggests an aspect of the kingdom available in advance of, or outside of, the consummation, and thus appropriate to the kingdom in its inaugurated form. The implication of this reinforces the impression that Carson believes the coming of the Spirit to have an eschatological impact which is characteristic of the kingdom in its inaugurated era.

Overall, Carson appears to present Scripture as giving multiple answers to the question of when inauguration actually occurred. However, this impression may be owing to his particular way of using the terminology of a 'coming' kingdom, in which case his answer is presumably close to inauguration at Christ's birth followed by an unfolding that appears to reach a climax at Pentecost.

With reference to the first of our criteria then, it is noted that Carson initially appears to offer an answer which could constitute a marker of sequence, in

¹⁰⁴ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53.

identifying the nativity as the moment of inauguration. However, this position is not maintained consistently and is undermined by several alternative suggestions. Furthermore, Carson does not offer a framework for understanding how his claims about the nativity fit with his apparently contradictory comments elsewhere.

There is then no real intra-agreement here either. Three different answers are discernible throughout the course of Carson's treatment of the inaugurated kingdom in *Christ and Culture Revisited*.¹⁰⁵ To the nativity, we must also add his placing of the 'onset of the kingdom of God' after 'the ministry and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ' in his list of 'turning points'.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the eschatological significance Carson attributes to the 'coming of the Spirit' also suggests Pentecost as a possible answer.¹⁰⁷

In addition to assessing against these criteria, it should also be noted that Carson uses Scripture in at least three similar ways to support his argument here. He refers to parts of the biblical narrative like Matthew 2 and Luke 10, without including the actual text, as if they contain statements that reveal the timing of the kingdom. A similar approach is also evident in his listing of 'the major biblically determined turning points in the history of redemption' where Carson selects events recorded across biblical sources and orders them together to support his understanding of 'redemption'.¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, Carson attributes a particular understanding of the Spirit to Paul when he claims, 'in Paul's terminology, the

¹⁰⁵ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53.

¹⁰⁶ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.81

¹⁰⁷ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.81.

¹⁰⁸ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.81.

Spirit is the down payment of the promised inheritance.¹⁰⁹ Here he appears to be deriving what is essentially a doctrinal statement from an unspecified collection of biblical writings attributed to the apostle Paul, with an implicit claim that this reflects Paul's writings as a whole.

Carson's use of Scripture here then bears the hallmarks of an approach which Kelsey characterised as viewing the doctrine of Scripture as its authoritative aspect.¹¹⁰ This is perhaps unsurprising given Kelsey's association of this type of approach, which he discusses under the heading 'biblical concept theology', with 'classical Protestant orthodoxy [and] current "evangelical" theology'.¹¹¹ This appears to facilitate a linear approach for Carson here in one sense. By focussing on one particular narrative within Scripture, that of Matthew 2, he is able to present Scripture as revealing a marker of sequence as the timing of the kingdom's inauguration. However, as other parts of the wider narratives of the Gospels are brought to bear on his account, this choice is undermined to some extent.

Stephen T. Um

As previously acknowledged, D.A. Carson's position outlined above is drawn from his engagement with H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, and though Carson's instrumental involvement with The Gospel Coalition has been noted, his statements in this work cannot be taken to reflect the position adopted by that organisation. However, a position on the kingdom is offered on behalf of the

¹⁰⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53.

¹¹⁰ Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, p.21.

¹¹¹ Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, p.29.

organisation by Stephen T. Um in his 2011 work *The Kingdom of God*.¹¹² This publication is in fact one in a series of booklets produced on behalf of TGC, co-edited by D.A. Carson, to expand upon their 'Foundational Documents'.¹¹³

Um's view of the timing of inauguration is most evident in the opening paragraph of a section headed 'God's Messianic Rule in the New Testament':

In the New Testament, both Jesus and John the Baptist announce that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15), the final stage of the kingdom on earth being realized by the incarnation and ongoing ministry of Christ (Matt. 2:2; 4:23; 9:35; 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 16:16; 23:3; John 18:37). Although this earthly ministry is already present, the consummate and complete fulfilment will not yet be realized until the return of Christ in glory (1 Cor. 15:50-58; Rev. 11:5).¹¹⁴

Um's emphasis on both 'the incarnation and ongoing ministry of Christ' certainly reveals a similarity with Carson's approach, as does the significance of Matthew Chapter 2 he perceives, although Um is more specific in that he actually names Verse 2 as key. However, it should be noted that, rather than isolating the nativity as *the* moment of inauguration, Um situates it among a list of other verses spanning almost the entire length of the Gospel narratives. This suggests that Um's position differs from Carson, for he does not at any point commit to one particular event in the Gospel narrative as bringing in the kingdom. Thus, no marker of

¹¹² Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹¹³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents> recovered May 2016

¹¹⁴ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

sequence is offered, with Um appearing to take a longer view of the arrival of the particular form of the kingdom he terms 'Messianic Rule'.¹¹⁵

Um's account of the onset of the kingdom is also notable in that while he specifies a longer period of time, including incarnation and ongoing ministry, he does not explicitly include Christ's death on the cross or resurrection. The latest of his references to the Gospel narrative in support of his account are instances of Christ acknowledging his claim to the title 'King of the Jews' in response to Pilates' questioning.

Um's claim that it is 'the final stage of the kingdom on earth being realized' is also of interest here, suggesting as it does a prior stage or stages. This statement comes in the context of Um's understanding of the kingdom as God's Rule, a concept which will be considered in the second half of this chapter, in relation to the question 'what difference has the inaugurated kingdom made?' As such, Um writes of 'God's rule in Creation', 'God's rule in the Exodus', 'God's Rule in the Period of the Monarchy and the Prophets' preceding what he terms 'God's Messianic Rule in the New Testament'.¹¹⁶ In the interests of a meaningful comparison here Um's account of the latter of these categories has been taken as his account of the inauguration of the kingdom, however, the difficulty involved in this will be acknowledged in more detail below.

In considering the level of intra-agreement shown here, as indicated above, it is necessary to isolate what Um terms 'God's Messianic Rule in the New Testament'

¹¹⁵ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹¹⁶ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

from a series of other expressions of God's rule to be able to extract an intelligible answer to the When question. In light of this, even at this early stage in this treatment of the work, the sense in which *The Kingdom of God (The Gospel Coalition Booklets)* consistently exhibits an *inaugurated* eschatology is called into question.¹¹⁷ If for Um, the kingdom is equated with God's rule, and as he seems to suggest, that rule has already been made present in 'Creation', 'the Exodus' and 'the Period of the Monarchy and the Prophets' then it is difficult to understand how any moment he might choose in the Gospel story could represent a moment of inauguration. While it is not possible to say that Um's account lacks 'intra-agreement', it should be noted that his framework is problematic for the reasons stated above.

In relation to Um's use of Scripture, his own statements about how he is using the Bible in this work are revealing. As they relate most closely to his understanding of the impact and location of the kingdom, they will receive more attention in the following chapters. However, it should be noted here that they confirm the impression that for Um doctrinal content is the authoritative aspect of Scripture.

Take for example his statement that, 'There has been a diversity of interpretations [of the kingdom] throughout history because the biblical teaching embraces disparate emphases,' and 'the key to resolving the different emphases is figuring out what the Bible means by the word *kingdom*.'¹¹⁸ These statements reveal various assumptions: that there is such a thing as 'the biblical teaching' (on the kingdom), that there is an essential unity to this teaching despite disparate

¹¹⁷ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹¹⁸ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

emphases, that there is a distinct ‘meaning’ symbolised by the Hebrew and Greek words we translate as ‘kingdom’, that this ‘meaning’ is recoverable, and that’s its recovery will enable the resolving of the different emphases into unified teaching.

Um presents the distinct meaning he believes to be symbolised by the words rendered ‘kingdom’ as, ‘The biblical understanding that emphasizes the rank, rule, reign, dominion and royal authority of God.’¹¹⁹ From this, he arrives at what he presents as unified teaching on the kingdom: ‘The kingdom of God is fundamentally God’s sovereign rule expressed and realized through the different stages of redemptive history’. He refers to this statement using the term ‘this biblical doctrine’.¹²⁰

It is from this position that Um attempts to speak into the discussion on kingdom timing. I use that loose term to reflect the fact that for Um the question of ‘when’ is not then the question of ‘when was the kingdom inaugurated’ but perhaps ‘when was God’s sovereign rule first expressed and realized in a way that marked the beginning of the stage of redemptive history he terms “Messianic”’?

Russell Moore

As mentioned in the introduction, while his 2004 work, *The Kingdom of Christ*, contains Russell Moore’s most sustained treatment of issues related to eschatology and the kingdom, he is largely concerned with establishing his claim

¹¹⁹ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹²⁰ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

that a consensus exists around these issues.¹²¹ As a result, while he does identify the position of others, this work is not particularly revealing of his own views on the details of the inauguration. His 2015 work, *Onward*, however, does provide evidence of the view he has now formed on the matter.¹²² Although the question of when the kingdom was actually inaugurated is not addressed directly in the book, there are at least three occasions on which Moore makes statements that offer some insight into his possible understanding of the timings involved. Of these, two suggest Resurrection as heralding the arrival of the kingdom.¹²³ Firstly, in the chapter dedicated to 'the Kingdom', Moore asserts that, 'in his resurrection, Jesus has been granted authority over everything.'¹²⁴ Given that Moore has not explicitly equated the granting of authority with the arrival of the kingdom this can only be regarded as suggestive of his answer to the when question, but taken with his statement later in the same chapter that 'The Kingdom's advance is set in motion by the Galilean march out of the graveyard,' it is most likely representative of his understanding.¹²⁵ There is then some an initial impression that Moore may be answering in terms of a marker of sequence.

Moore's work does, however, seem to exhibit signs of a wider tendency to try to hold the Cross and the Resurrection together in a single episode. This is most evident in the conclusion to Moore's chapter on 'Mission' when he calls Christians to 'preach peace and justice, for individuals and for the whole world, found in the

¹²¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

¹²² Moore, *Onward*,

¹²³ Moore, *Onward*, pp. 58 & 66.

¹²⁴ Moore, *Onward*, p.58.

¹²⁵ Moore, *Onward*, p.66.

bloody cross and empty tomb of Jesus.¹²⁶ This does not entirely negate the case for the Resurrection as the most likely point at which Moore believes the kingdom to have been inaugurated. One might, for example, take this statement to relate to the grounding of the gospel message rather than the arrival of a new kingdom reality. The holding of cross and resurrection together appears indicative of a concern with affirming both events as instrumental to kingdom purposes. Yet, in the absence of an explicit reference to the moment of inauguration elsewhere, it serves to contradict rather than confirm the impression that he believes the kingdom to have been inaugurated at the Resurrection.

In the terms of our criterion of a marker of sequence then, Moore appears to fall short, by attempting to qualify a choice of the resurrection in maintaining its inseparability from the cross. Emphasising one of these events in isolation at one point, and then holding the two together at another is also not indicative of absolute intra-agreement.

Moore's use of Scripture to bestow authority on his claims about the centrality of these moments is strikingly similar to Carson's and Um's in places. For example, Moore's assertion that 'In his resurrection, Jesus has been granted authority over everything,' is followed by a reference to Matthew 28:18 which is simply left in brackets as a proof text.¹²⁷ While the interpretative leap Moore takes here is shorter than that taken by Carson's in his use of Matthew 2, it remains significant. As Matthew 28:18 finds Jesus claiming, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me', Moore considers that since this statement is made after the

¹²⁶ Moore, *Onward*, p.112.

¹²⁷ Moore, *Onward*, p.58.

Resurrection then it is reasonable to infer that the transference of authority happened at the Resurrection. In this instance, it is clear that Moore perceives Scripture in places such as Matthew 28:18 to contain doctrine which can readily be extracted and communicated

Like Carson, Moore's approach at first appears to accommodate a linear approach to time, by yielding a marker of sequence. However, it is also notable that Moore's desire to hold together the different emphases (e.g., on the eschatological priority of the Resurrection in contrast to the inseparability of the Cross and the Resurrection) that emerge from this approach to Scripture, places considerable strain on his commitment to 'Linear time'.

G.K. Beale

G.K. Beale's approach to this question can be gleaned sufficiently from his most concise engagement with these issues. In his introductory chapter to Gladd and Harmon's 2016 work, *Making all things new: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, at one point he locates inauguration at 'the first coming of Christ: it is Jesus' life of covenantal obedience, trials, death for sinners, and resurrection by the Spirit [that] has launched the fulfilment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creation reign'.¹²⁸ This statement alone makes it impossible to find Beale answering in terms of a single marker of sequence.

When markers of sequence do emerge then, the effect is only to render Beale's work deficient in respect of the criterion of intra-agreement. At another point,

¹²⁸ GK Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.10.

Beale invokes Matthew's recording of strange meteorological phenomena to argue that 'Christ's *death* was the beginning of the end of the old creation and the inauguration of a new creation', before stating that, 'by the power of the Spirit, Jesus's *resurrection* from the dead initially launched the latter-day kingdom and the new creation'.¹²⁹ This gives the impression that Beale is presenting the onset of inauguration in bands of time with varying widths. An approach that is hardly within the constraints of 'linear time'.

It could be said that, when Beale is not advocating a wider onset of inauguration, he most strongly and consistently suggests that the Resurrection is the moment of its arrival. Nowhere is this impression given more strongly than by his endorsement of William Manson's statement that: 'The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply a sign which God has granted in favour of His son but is the inauguration, the entrance into history, *of the times of the End*.'¹³⁰ Yet, despite such an explicit statement, it is his use of the term 'the first coming of Christ,' which most adequately reflects the breadth of Beale's answer to the question.¹³¹

Attention must be paid to Beale's use of Scripture to understand the subtlety of his approach in comparison to others above. For though Beale could be said to use Scripture in a way that takes the doctrinal aspects to be authoritative, in common with those previously analysed, Beale's approach to the differing emphases in the biblical narrative stand in contrast with those approaches, most notably the

¹²⁹ GK Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.14.

¹³⁰ GK Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p4. Manson, *Eschatology in the New Testament, Eschatology: Four Papers Read to the Society for the Study of Theology*, p.6.

¹³¹ GK Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.9.

approach taken by Um, which try to reconcile these differing emphases in a unified account of the kingdom. The impression that Beale is presenting the onset of inauguration in bands of time with varying widths may well be a result of his intention to preserve the integrity of the biblical narratives as distinct accounts of the kingdom. Beale's ordering of them in relation to the timing of the inauguration could be considered harmonising; they are presented as distinct but complementary.

Having said this, the function Beale's theology is called to perform in the introduction to Gladd and Harmon's work makes it difficult to avoid the demands of the first two of our three criteria. Their 'attempt to flesh out in practical terms how inaugurated eschatology should shape pastoral ministry and the life of the church' as 'an extension of Beale's project' is arguably ill-founded on Beale's harmonising approach.¹³² Such an approach, though painstaking in its attempts to reflect the breadth and subtleties of the biblical narrative, does not support one of the foundational assumptions of inaugurated eschatology, for it does not provide a single marker of sequence as a linear approach to time demands. Nor does the lack of intra-agreement in Beale's contribution do much to support the claims to consensus, which Gladd and Harmon echo elsewhere in the book.

Scot McKnight

While Scot McKnight's *Kingdom Conspiracy* is not littered with clues as to his position on the timing of the kingdom's inauguration, his position can be derived

¹³² GK Beale, "The End Starts at the Beginning" in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.xi.

from the comment that 'Jesus Christ, and his redemptive work in his life, death, burial, resurrection and exaltation on the cross establishes in the here and now a beachhead for the kingdom.'¹³³ This suggests that McKnight too answers the question of 'when' in terms of duration, and neglects to provide a single marker of sequence. However, the absence of references to the timing of inauguration means that it is not possible to make a judgment on McKnight's consistency on the issue. Neither is there enough evidence to pass comment on his use of Scripture to authorise his position on timing.

Gavin Ortlund

In reflecting on the soteriological significance of the Resurrection, Gavin Ortlund describes this event as inaugurating redemption.¹³⁴ Ortlund's approach is to consider the significance of the Resurrection in light of Christ's messianic offices of prophet, priest, and king; an approach that gives his reflection a clear Christological focus. Indeed his assertion that the Resurrection 'inaugurate[s] redemption' emerges from this focus.¹³⁵ For Ortlund, the resurrection inaugurates redemption because it results in the definitive and final transformation of Christ: 'What Christ is in heaven he was for forty days on earth: his ascended life is an extension of his resurrected life'.¹³⁶ In drawing this conclusion Ortlund recognises that he is largely echoing a similar conclusion offered by Richard Gaffin Jr.: 'What

¹³³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.23.

¹³⁴ Gavin Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah; The Risen Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King," *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 54, no. 4 (2011), pp. 750-1.

¹³⁵ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," pp. 750-1.

¹³⁶ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," p.755.

Christ is and continues to be he became at the resurrection and at no other point... Ascension and heavenly session are exponential of resurrection.¹³⁷

Ortlund's work here appears to owe a debt to another theologian within the Reformed tradition, in this case to G.K. Beale, specifically to Beale's intertextual approach to Scripture, primarily, how he reads the Old Testament in the New Testament. It is through reading Acts 2:30-35 (Peter's speech at Pentecost) in light of Psalm 110 and Acts 13:32-34 (Paul at Antioch) in light of Psalm 2 that Ortlund finds biblical support for the eschatological significance of the Resurrection.¹³⁸

Ortlund shows that these are not isolated instances by highlighting that both of these particular Psalms are 'quoted in Hebrews to establish Jesus' exaltation,' but the significance of these Psalms being used in Acts 2 and 13 is that the fulfilment of these Old Testament promises of exaltation is for Ortlund ascribed to the resurrection of Christ.¹³⁹ In these passages in particular Ortlund finds New Testament writings claiming that the resurrection represents the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant and Old Testament prophecy generally.¹⁴⁰

Ortlund suggests a link between his answer to the *when* question and those he offers to *what* and *where?* In posing the question: 'How does Jesus' risen life complete what is lacking in his earthly revelation', Ortlund answers that the risen Jesus spent his time 'teaching his disciples' and 'extending the gospel message in and through the church, which the risen Christ [now] inhabits as his chosen

¹³⁷Richard B. Jr. Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Philipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), p.92.

¹³⁸ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," p.760.

¹³⁹ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," p. 753.

¹⁴⁰ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," pp. 759-60.

redemptive vehicle in the world.¹⁴¹ For Ortlund, his answer to the question of when ('the resurrection') leads directly to an answer to the question of Where ('the Church') and in turn to the answer to the What question ('Teaching discipleship and extending the gospel message').¹⁴² The 'When' comes to represent the break across which comparison is made. As Ortlund understands post-resurrection activity to be post-inauguration activity, he asserts that the biblical record of Christ's activity immediately post-resurrection may be taken as characteristic of his activity in the inaugurated period as a whole, including the current post-ascension period.¹⁴³

Whether or not a different timing for inauguration would see Ortlund arrive at the same answers to the questions of 'What' and 'Where' is unclear. However, by employing a different dividing point for comparison, even similar conclusions would have to be reached via a different approach. For example, how would the Cross function as such a dividing point for comparison, including as it would the period of entombment in the account of characteristic post-inaugurated activity? Indeed, this type of difficulty, which suggests the Cross' unsuitability as a dividing point for comparison, may indicate why Ortlund does not consider it as the inaugurating event. Equally, this may also suggest why Ortlund resists offering an answer to the 'when' question which incorporates other events, as a measure of duration would not provide the clear before/after distinction required for Ortlund's comparative method. Only a marker of sequence can fulfil this function,

¹⁴¹ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," p. 762.

¹⁴² Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah,"

¹⁴³ Ortlund, "Resurrected as Messiah," p.762 ff.

and in providing one consistently Ortlund has met both of the first two criteria: His work proposes a single marker of sequence and demonstrates intra-agreement.

Douglas J. Moo

In the article, 'Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment,' Douglas Moo appears to be in line with the trend towards citing both the Cross and the Resurrection together as the 'When' of inauguration. Moo asserts that 'through his death and resurrection [Jesus] inaugurates the last days that the prophets had longed for.'¹⁴⁴ In a manner similar to Moore, Moo thus fails to fulfil the criterion of stating single a marker of sequence. However, as with Beale, Moo offers a nuanced argument to support his proposal of multiple inaugurating events in a way that suggests a level of intra-agreement. Moo's approach here involves deconstructing the effects of inauguration into constituent parts, each of which is linked to either cross or resurrection in turn.

Firstly, Moo presents the cross as a work of universal 'pacification':

Through the work of Christ on the cross, God has brought his entire rebellious creation back under the rule of his sovereign power. It is because of this work of universal pacification that God will one day indeed be 'all in all' (1 Cor 15:28).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Douglas J. Moo, "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 49, no. 3 (2006), pp. 457-458.

¹⁴⁵ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.472.

For Moo, the Cross inaugurates because it is foundational to the consummated kingdom reality– it has provided the basis for the coming of the kingdom in its ultimate form. As he goes on to explain:

The cross of Jesus Christ has ‘already’ provided the basis for the restoration of nature to its intended place in the plan of God, though we do ‘not yet’ see that restoration actually accomplished.¹⁴⁶

However, Moo understands the eschatological significance of the Cross to be truly inaugural, in that it does not simply secure the conditions for a consummated kingdom ‘one day’.¹⁴⁷ There is an immediate, preliminary impact:

The ‘already/not yet’ pattern of NT eschatology must be applied to Col 1:20 [‘and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross’ (NIVUK)]. While secured in principle by Christ’s crucifixion and available in preliminary form to believers, universal peace is not yet established.¹⁴⁸

In a similar fashion to Ortlund, Moo links a particular marker of sequence (in this case the Cross) to a change of eschatological significance (in this case the possibility of experiencing a preliminary form of universal peace).¹⁴⁹ The difference, and the difficulty in Moo’s case, is that he applies the same approach to two markers of sequence in turn, for Moo also treats the Resurrection as

¹⁴⁶ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.483.

¹⁴⁷ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.472.

¹⁴⁸ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.473.

¹⁴⁹ It should be noted that Moo is unclear whether this preliminary peace, whilst being made possible by the cross, became available to believers immediately, or only after a subsequent event e.g., resurrection, ascension, or perhaps with the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

heralding a change of eschatological significance. However, Moo's central claim about Jesus' resurrection appears to have less eschatological significance than his claims about the Cross. For Moo, the resurrection of Jesus 'signals God's commitment to the material world.'¹⁵⁰ Moo understands this signal in terms of the Resurrection essentially displaying the first evidence of the transformation made possible by the Cross: The risen Jesus exhibits in his body what is coming for the cosmos. While that signal may have an immediate impact, in engendering hope for what is coming, the transformation itself is not preliminarily available to believers or anyone else in the way that the pacifying effect of the Cross became available. There is a sense, then, in which the act of Jesus' being raised, and his physical form, belong to the future. This transformation is characteristic of the kingdom in consummated form, but it has not ushered in an age of resurrection acts or resurrection bodies. As a result, the eschatological significance Moo attributes to the resurrection of Jesus may be closer to the significance of a proleptic event rather than an inaugurating event.

The logic of Moo's treatment of the Cross and the Resurrection, with its implicit emphasis on the impact of the Cross, an emphasis perhaps unrecognised by the author, suggests that if pressed to name only a single marker of sequence he would choose the Cross. However, in the course of his hitherto published work, Moo has not made such a choice and therefore fails to fulfil the criterion imposed by a commitment to 'Linear time'. Given his careful linking of different impacts to

¹⁵⁰ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.464.

different markers of sequence, however, it is difficult to argue that this represents a lack of intra-agreement.

Thomas R. Schreiner

In 'New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ,' Thomas Schreiner approaches kingdom questions with an explicit commitment to 'Linear time'.¹⁵¹ Indeed, his statement that 'The work of the Father, Son, and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God's promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus,' is evocative of the timelines and charts of the ages so illustrative of inaugurated eschatology's commitment to 'Linear Time'.¹⁵² Somewhat surprisingly then, Schreiner's account of the timing of inauguration includes no less than five of the candidate events. He seems very far from being confined to a single marker of sequence by his commitment to a salvation-historical timeline.

The reason for such a plethora of timing choices seems rooted in his approach to Scripture, which shapes the structure of his book. After an introduction which includes a broad claim suggestive of an extended measure of duration, 'What we see in the New Testament witness... is that God's end-time promises reach their fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth', Schreiner proceeds to group sets of New Testament texts together and examines the inaugurated eschatology suggested by each group of texts.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008),

¹⁵² Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.23.

¹⁵³ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.25.

In the first section of the book, where the focus is on the synoptic Gospel accounts, Schreiner seems to find that the biblical narrative suggests Christ's ministry heralded the inauguration:

Jesus declared that God's kingdom had already arrived in his ministry, and its arrival was demonstrated in the exorcism of demons by the Spirit (Matt.12:28). Even though Jesus claimed that the kingdom had dawned in his ministry, he instructed his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2). The saving power of the kingdom manifested itself in Jesus' ministry, but the kingdom did not come in all of its apocalyptic power.¹⁵⁴

This is far from an isolated statement in Schreiner's treatment of the Synoptic Gospels, as he goes on to state that:

Jesus declared in his ministry that the eschatological promises were realized, for he gave sight to the blind, enabled the lame to walk, cleansed lepers, opened the ears of the deaf, raised the dead, and proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom (Matt. 11:5).¹⁵⁵

Here Schreiner makes clear that he is speaking of a measure of duration, which spans several markers of sequence, as various miracles which are represented in turn through the narrative are included, with a less specific reference to Christ's kerygmatic activity. Into this mix, Schreiner also adds Jesus' baptizing of his followers with the Spirit:

¹⁵⁴ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.25.

¹⁵⁵ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.25.

God sent Jesus into the world so that Jesus would baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit, thereby inaugurating the fulfilment of the promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).¹⁵⁶

Even within his treatment of one group of biblical texts, Schreiner appears to have difficulty naming a single marker of sequence. Moving on to the Pauline Epistles, there is further evidence that suggests his work does not meet the criterion of naming a single marker of sequence. What is more, the evidence casts doubt on the level of intra-agreement which exists.

Early in his study of the Pauline literature, Schreiner ties the ministry of Jesus, the Cross, and the Resurrection together, as occasioning 'the fulfilment of God's saving promises':

Paul proclaims that the fulfilment of God's saving promises has occurred in Jesus Christ, for through his ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation he has fulfilled God's word to Abraham and David (cf. Rom. 1:1-4).¹⁵⁷

Here, Schreiner appears to be suggesting that inauguration should be understood as the fulfilment of a promise, and a multi-faceted promise at that. However, if this is so, and the fulfilment is also multi-faceted, as his statement suggests, then the implication is that inauguration is effectively multi-faceted. This would prove extremely difficult to reconcile with the 'Linear time' integral to inaugurated models. However, Schreiner is not finished with Paul just yet, and he proceeds to associate the onset of inauguration with another event: 'The last days have

¹⁵⁶ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.26.

¹⁵⁷ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.30.

commenced with the resurrection of Christ as the firstfruits, but believers still await the bodily resurrection.’¹⁵⁸

Barely one page later, yet another marker of sequence is named as the eschatologically significant one:

The present evil age is not the only reality, for ‘the ends of the ages’ have now dawned in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:11 NRSV), and believers by virtue of the cross of Christ are delivered from this age (Gal. 1:4), so that the cross of Christ represents the intrusion of the new age, or as Paul says in Gal. 6:14-15, the new creation.¹⁵⁹

For Schreiner then, it appears that even the Pauline material, taken in isolation, is suggestive of three different responses to the question, ‘When was the kingdom inaugurated?’ These responses include the entire span of ministry to ascension, the resurrection, and the cross. This seems evidence enough to find that there is no intra-agreement within Schreiner’s *New Testament Theology*.¹⁶⁰

Schreiner moves on to the book of Hebrews, which he finds exhibits eschatology prominently, owing to the extensive citation of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 (cf. Heb. 8:8-12; 10:16-18).¹⁶¹ Schreiner’s interprets the eschatological message of Hebrews to be that the new covenant has arrived through the sacrifice of Jesus on

¹⁵⁸ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.31.

¹⁵⁹ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.32.

¹⁶⁰ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.32.

¹⁶¹ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.34

the Cross.¹⁶² This conclusion furthers the impression that there is no intra-agreement to be found here.

Finally, Schreiner also echoes Russell Moore in including the Cross and the Resurrection together as heralding the inauguration:

The age to come has been inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1Pet. 1:3, 11; 2:21, 24; 3:18), just as it was prophesied by the Spirit (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Hence his death and resurrection herald the inauguration of 'the last times' (1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 1:18-21).¹⁶³

Schreiner's failure to clearly identify a single marker of sequence, even within his groupings of the New Testament literature, in all but one case, is significant. He has made explicit his commitment to 'Linear Time', and his use of Scripture not only fits the broad pattern of being authoritative of doctrine but follows Beale in paying painstaking attention to the complexities and diversity of the biblical accounts. The similarity with Beale's approach is also evident in Schreiner's conclusions, as he offers answers to the question of timing which span five of the six possible moments of inauguration suggested by this study (although the five answers differ from Beale's five). It appears strange, then, that the two theologians here who are most explicit in their commitment to 'Linear Time' should be the two who experience the most difficulty in providing a marker of sequence. However, the reason for this difficulty no doubt lies elsewhere, namely

¹⁶² Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.34

¹⁶³ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, pp.35-6.

in the fact that their approaches incorporate are the most comprehensive in terms of taking into account the breadth of biblical evidence.

Gushee and Stassen

In their work, *Kingdom Ethics*, Gushee and Stassen's focus is on the outworking of the implications of inaugurated eschatology for ethics, rather than on the details of the eschatology.¹⁶⁴ However, *Kingdom Ethics* does reveal something about how Gushee and Stassen understood the timing of the inauguration.¹⁶⁵

The related concepts of 'participative grace' and 'transforming initiatives' are central to Gushee and Stassen's vision of inaugurated ethics.¹⁶⁶ In their reading, the inauguration of the kingdom has brought a 'way of grace,' in which it is possible for human beings to participate.¹⁶⁷ Such participation is possible through 'transforming initiatives.'¹⁶⁸ Gushee and Stassen argue that transforming initiatives are the focus of the ethical teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and, indeed, they make this text the focus of *Kingdom Ethics*. As will become clear, this is significant for their approach to the timing of the inauguration.

For Gushee and Stassen, a 'transforming initiative':

...participates in the way of grace that God took in Jesus when there was enmity between God and humans: God came in Jesus to make peace. This is

¹⁶⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

¹⁶⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

¹⁶⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, See, for example, pp.24 & 93.

¹⁶⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁶⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

the breakthrough of the kingdom that we see happening in Jesus. It is the way of grace that Jesus is calling us to participate in.¹⁶⁹

This statement reveals that Gushee and Stassen believe the inauguration of the kingdom, or as they put it here, 'the breakthrough of the kingdom', to have come with the 'transforming initiative' which shapes and grounds all others: 'coming in Jesus to make peace.'¹⁷⁰ It is not immediately clear how this translates into a position on timing. On this reading, the kingdom was inaugurated *when* 'God came in Jesus to make peace.'¹⁷¹ Similarly, inauguration comes with 'what we see happening in Jesus.'¹⁷² While, these phrases are certainly not precise about time, and there is no suggestion that they are intended to be given the focus of *Kingdom Ethics*, further analysis finds them to be revealing. Assuming that Gushee and Stassen understand the Cross to be the act by which God 'made peace,' the Cross appears here as a possible answer to the question of timing. It may also be the case that these statements reveal Gushee and Stassen as viewing the Incarnation as the moment at which the kingdom was inaugurated, given that this was the *coming* of Jesus, which made making peace possible.

On Gushee and Stassen's reading, the kingdom was inaugurated by the coming of God in Christ (suggesting Incarnation) to make peace between God and humans (suggesting Cross).

¹⁶⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁷⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁷¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁷² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

Gushee and Stassen's approach presents Christ's life and death as inaugurating the kingdom by constituting a 'transforming initiative' which is not only temporally primary, as the first of such transforming initiative to occur, but which is also the initiative which makes all subsequent initiatives possible.¹⁷³ When analysing their work in terms of our criteria, this makes it difficult to unpick their approach in such a way as to arrive at an indicator of sequence. Indeed, elsewhere in *Kingdom Ethics*, they use the term 'his kingdom-inaugurating ministry.'¹⁷⁴ This, too, appears to suggest an emphasis on the life of Jesus in its entirety as inaugurating the kingdom, rather than a particular event. Given that Gushee and Stassen speak about the 'breakthrough of the kingdom' in terms of an initiative rather than an event, this is unsurprising.¹⁷⁵ It appears, then, that *Kingdom Ethics* does not name a single marker of sequence. However, it does appear to demonstrate a degree of intra-agreement, with a consistent emphasis on the life and death of Jesus as the transforming initiative by which the kingdom 'broke through.'¹⁷⁶ Equally, while their approach to the timing of inauguration was unique in some respects, it did exhibit similar tendencies to other approaches analysed. In presenting inauguration as something which occurred over time, Gushee and Stassen took a similar approach to Carson and Um.

¹⁷³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁷⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.206.

¹⁷⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

¹⁷⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

Summary chart

The chart below illustrates all of the positions outlined above. The gold-coloured areas indicate the events included in each theologian's or pair of theologians', proposed timing of inauguration. Across the sample, six events emerge as possible markers of sequence corresponding to inauguration. These events being nativity, ministry, cross, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost. Of these six events, 'ministry' is notably difficult to understand as *an event*, in the sense in which *an event* is understood by this study as a potential marker of sequence: the ministry of Christ being considered to have had an extended duration, with estimates ranging between one year (as the account given in the Gospel of John appears to indicate) and three years (as the synoptic gospel accounts appear to suggest). Given that several of the candidate events (e.g., cross, resurrection, ascension) could be considered to represent the end of or consummation of that ministry, one possible way to understand the identification of 'ministry' with the inauguration of the kingdom would be to regard the use of this term as indicating a belief that the beginning of the ministry, which could represent a potential marker of sequence. However, this is relatively speculative, given that the theologians themselves do not in fact refer to the beginning of the ministry, but use the term to refer to the period in its entirety, up until the cross. Furthermore, this observation is in keeping with the general trend, previously identified and illustrated below, which does not limit the timing of inauguration to a single event suitable to marking sequence. As the diagram also shows, in the six instances where 'ministry' is identified as being connected to the timing of inauguration, in

every case it is included in an answer involving multiple events and extended duration.

Fig. 2	Nativity	Ministry	Cross	Resurrection	Ascension	Pentecost
Carson	Yellow	Yellow			Light Blue	Yellow
Um	Yellow		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Moore	Light Blue	Light Blue	Yellow		Light Blue	Light Blue
Beale	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Light Blue
McKnight	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Light Blue
Ortlund	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Yellow	Light Blue	Light Blue
Moo	Light Blue	Light Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Light Blue	Light Blue
Schreiner	Light Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Gushee & Stassen	Yellow			Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue

Analysis Summary

Assessing these results against the hypothesis, it is found that:

1. Only one of the nine theologians specified a single marker of sequence as the timing of inauguration. However, it is noted that several theologians included markers of sequence within multiple answers.
2. A minority of theologians displayed full intra-agreement across their work. This was mainly owing to the offering of multiple answers without any explanation of how these answers fitted together in a unified scheme.
3. As the chart above demonstrates there is minimal inter-agreement, with Beale and McKnight providing similar timings, and Moore and Moo providing an

alternative set of matching results. It should be noted, however, that some options were included more frequently than others. Resurrection, being included in the answers offered by all but two, with the Cross, included in seven out of nine.

Preliminary conclusions

These findings prove the hypothesis and therefore confirm the existence of the issues raised earlier. In addition, it has been observed that the approaches taken by Beale and Schreiner have produced results most at odds with their explicit commitment to 'Linear Time'. These results can, however, be explained in terms of a further commitment in common: their attention to the complexities and diversity of the biblical accounts. This may ultimately suggest a tension between these commitments. That tension may call into question the claims to biblical authority made on behalf of inaugurated eschatology if the biblical accounts cannot be said to produce an answer to the question of timing which is compliant with its linear concept of time.¹⁷⁷

The lack of both inter-agreement and intra-agreement in evidence in these responses to the question of when the kingdom was inaugurated is, perhaps, the most significant for this study going forward. It not only suggests problems with the claims to consensus but also creates an expectation that it will in turn be reflected in a similar lack of agreement in the ethics emerging from the eschatology. This expectation certainly calls into question the promise of inaugurated eschatology as the basis of a unified social and political ethics for

¹⁷⁷ For an example of such claims to authority, see Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.12 There, Moore describes the emergence of a consensus around inaugurated eschatology as the result of 'a half-century of searching the Scriptures.'

evangelicals in the USA. The extent to which this lack of inter-agreement is reflected in the resulting ethics will, of course, be examined in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. Before then, however, we must turn to the question of the difference made by the kingdom's inauguration.

What difference has inauguration made?

As with the question of timing, the question of what difference inauguration has made is not posed in a direct or explicit form within the context. However, the question is nonetheless a primary concern in each of the works under consideration. This is most obvious in those works which are explicitly concerned with establishing an ethical approach on the basis of inaugurated eschatology. The idea that the inaugurated kingdom brings with it an inaugurated ethics, which is both appropriate to its own era and distinct from that which has preceded inauguration, implies that inauguration has made a difference of one sort or another. Indeed, at the very least, the claimed genesis of such an ethical approach represents a claim that inauguration has made a difference through its impact on ethics.

Moore's effort, in *The Kingdom of Christ*, to establish inaugurated eschatology as the basis for evangelical engagement in the public square presupposes that inauguration has made a difference in this area, and thus raises the question at hand.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, his attempt to outline the shape of that engagement

¹⁷⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

constitutes an attempt to answer the question of what difference inauguration has made. Similarly, Gladd and Harmon's *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, presupposes and addresses this question by sketching an inaugurated ethics for the life of worshipping communities.¹⁷⁹ While, Gushee and Stassen's comprehensive *Kingdom Ethics*, leaves few areas of ethics untouched by its attempt to consider the impact of the kingdom's inauguration.¹⁸⁰ Any attempt to posit a distinctively inaugurated ethics, however contained or comprehensive it may be, presupposes that inauguration has made some difference. Furthermore, in developing such an inaugurated ethics it must proceed to identify the significance of the difference made by inauguration.

What then of those works under consideration here that do not have the construction of an inaugurated ethics among their primary tasks? Do they concern themselves with this question too, and in what way? As will be shown below, the work of McKnight, Carson and Um, though not concerned with the construction of an inaugurated ethics *per se*, otherwise demonstrate some consideration of the question of the kingdom's impact.¹⁸¹

While McKnight is not concerned with developing an ethical programme on the basis of inaugurated eschatology in *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*, he is attempting to advocate mission grounded in the inauguration of the kingdom. As the subtitle of McKnight's work suggests, he asserts a strong link between the (inaugurated) kingdom and the mission of the

¹⁷⁹ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

¹⁸⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

¹⁸¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

local church. In fact, McKnight's work concludes that 'Kingdom mission.... is local church mission'.¹⁸² For McKnight too then, the question 'what difference has the kingdom made' is presupposed. The title *Kingdom Conspiracy* refers to his belief that others have presented erroneous answers to the *what* question and his work is designed as a corrective, which points to the true difference made by the inauguration of the kingdom: it has brought about a specific 'mission' and has brought into being communities to further this 'mission'.¹⁸³

Carson, on the other hand, does not venture an answer to the question of what difference the inauguration has made, however, the fact that he deems the inauguration of the kingdom relevant to his discussion of the relationship between Christ and culture in *Christ and Culture Revisited*, suggests some acknowledgement that the 'what' question has some relevance.¹⁸⁴ If there was no question of the inauguration of the kingdom having an impact on culture then such lengthy discussion of it in this particular work would seem unnecessary.

Um's *The Kingdom of God* also presupposes that the inaugurated Kingdom makes a difference.¹⁸⁵ For Um this impact of the kingdom is experienced through its 'shaping' effect. Indeed, Um's pamphlet is divided into three sections – 'A theology shaped by the kingdom', 'The Christian's identity shaped by the kingdom' and 'Community shaped by the kingdom'.¹⁸⁶ Thus, Um's work in this area can be considered a response to the question of what difference the inauguration of the

¹⁸² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208.

¹⁸³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208.

¹⁸⁴ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*,

¹⁸⁵ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹⁸⁶ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

kingdom has made. His response is that the inauguration of the kingdom shapes Christian identity, community and theology.

It is clear that the works under consideration in this study do recognise and engage with the question of what difference the inauguration of the kingdom has made. Furthermore, in the majority of cases, these works represent various attempts to present a discernible answer to that question. The question then, while not made explicit in the context, is suggested by the context and cannot be considered external to it. Having established this, the chapter must now consider the relevance of this question to the aims of the current study.

To a large extent, the question of the kingdom's impact is necessarily raised by the other interrogatives posed by this study. Any discussion of timing, location and agency will necessarily raise questions about the impact of the phenomenon which has begun, its impact on the location, and the actions of the agent. In a sense then, all of the questions suggest the possibility that change has occurred, that such change is significant and therefore some difference has been made by the inaugurated kingdom.

This chapter has already demonstrated the differences and difficulties present in the range of answers offered to the question of timing. However, despite these differences and difficulties, all the theologians surveyed agree that inauguration has 'already' occurred. Each of the answers has in common the fact that they locate the inauguration in the past. In addition, each theologian considers this

event as awaiting a consummation that has 'not yet' occurred and is, therefore, to be experienced at some time in the future.

In our introduction to the question of impact, we have already seen that the works under consideration assume that inauguration has made a difference in one sphere or another (to ethics, mission, culture etc.). Indeed, all of the work examined here identify inauguration as a past event, determining that the inauguration has 'already' begun to have an effect in the past and the impact of inauguration may be expected to continue in the present 'already'. In turn, the future consummation which has 'not yet' occurred brings the expectation of a future effect.

In the present 'inaugurated' era then, the kingdom may be experienced as both the presence of an effect, or set of effects, introduced with a past inauguration, and the absence of an effect, or set of effects, which will only be experienced with a future consummation. The answers to the *when* question already given, then, portray the current era as a time characterised by the presence and absence of the effects of the kingdom. This engenders the expectation that the kingdom has made some difference to life in the creation, but also emphasises that this difference is limited. This part of the chapter will draw on this observation and explore how theologians in this context understand the nature of the difference made and the limits they perceive.

When the *what* question is posed to the texts, the answers, in so far as any are to be found, appear to speak of the difference made by inauguration in terms of 'the

reign' or 'the rule' of God. A notable example of this tendency which will receive more sustained attention in the next chapter, is Russell Moore's claim that the cosmic impact of the kingdom's inauguration consists entirely in the inauguration of the *reign* of Christ; simply by virtue of that reign being cosmic in its extent.¹⁸⁷ However, as a brief assessment of the work of Moore's peers will show, this tendency to cast the inaugurated of the kingdom of God in terms of the inauguration of a reign or rule of God is pervasive in the context.

G.K. Beale is explicit in casting the impact of inauguration in terms of divine reign, describing it as launching 'the fulfilment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creation *reign*.'¹⁸⁸ Carson adopts a similar approach, introducing a further term 'kingdominion' (presumably, a portmanteau of kingdom and dominion), and explains the rationale behind it thus:

When Jesus inaugurates the long-awaited and long-predicted kingdom, 'kingdom' carries diverse weight, depending on the context – or, as the specialists put it, 'kingdom' becomes a tensive symbol that is decisively shaped by the surrounding contexts. Often 'the kingdom of God' is best thought of as 'the reign of God,' for 'kingdom' is far more commonly dynamic than static, rather more 'kingdominion' or 'reign' than 'kingdom'.¹⁸⁹

In their, *Kingdom Ethics*, Gushee and Stassen repeatedly characterise the inauguration of the kingdom as the inauguration of the reign of God. This tendency is most evident in their statement that 'God's reign has been *inaugurated* in Jesus

¹⁸⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.152. Italics added for emphasis.

¹⁸⁸ G. K. Beale in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.25.

¹⁸⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53

Christ.¹⁹⁰ For Gushee and Stassen the inauguration represents ‘the in-breaking dawning of God’s reign’, and subsequently, the current time is characterised as the time ‘between the inauguration and consummation of the reign of God.’¹⁹¹ Stephen T. Um also speaks of the inauguration as ‘the entrance of ‘God’s powerful rule’ into historical life in a new way.’¹⁹²

The tendency to express the impact of the kingdom’s inauguration in terms of the inauguration of a reign or rule appears to be a result of a more fundamental tendency to equate the concept of the reign or rule of God with the kingdom of God. Within the body of work under consideration, the term ‘reign of God’, and in some cases ‘rule of God’, appears to be virtually synonymous with the term ‘kingdom of God’. Indeed, the majority of these theologians appear to use the terms interchangeably with ‘kingdom of God’. So much so that in the Second Edition of Gushee and Stassen’s *Kingdom Ethics*, the term ‘kingdom’ rarely occurs, its place being taken by ‘reign’.¹⁹³ Among the theologians under consideration, only McKnight appears to resist this tendency to describe *the Kingdom of God*

¹⁹⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.11 ff.

¹⁹¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.11 ff.

¹⁹² Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

¹⁹³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*. See for example in his ‘Preface’ to the Second Edition, David Gushee states that this edition continues to ‘seek an ethic focused on Jesus Christ, [and] on the reign of God that he proclaimed and inaugurated’ (p.xiii). This is indicative of an approach which interprets the expressions kingdom of God and reign of God as synonymous. Jesus proclaimed a ‘kingdom of God’ which is understood by Gushee and others as a ‘reign of God’. Equally, the kingdom deemed inaugurated by the eschatological approach under consideration is here rendered a ‘reign.... Inaugurated’.

primarily in terms of the *reign or rule of God*; he objects that 'the kingdom of God' cannot be understood apart from a 'realm' which is being reigned or ruled over.¹⁹⁴

This observation, that a close relationship between 'the kingdom' and 'the reign' or 'rule of God' is being maintained by the majority of these theologians, suggests the need for closer examination of the use of these terms. Several questions present themselves as a result. Firstly, how is the use of two terms, rule and reign, to be explained? Are these two terms being used to describe the same dynamic? If so, might it be determined whether one term is preferable to the other, through enquiring whether either of the terms predominates? Having answered these questions, it will then be possible to determine whether a distinction is maintained between *the reign/rule of God* and *the Kingdom of God*, as the terms are used in this context.

The first question to present itself at this stage is whether *reign* and *rule* are being used to describe the same thing. Does the use of two different expressions here, 'reign of God' and 'rule of God,' result from a superficial preference in vocabulary, or is a distinct meaning attributed to each? To ascertain this, we must first make note of where these terms are used interchangeably by each theologian and where their usage implies contrast.

Throughout *Making All Things New*, Beale, Gladd & Harmon make no clear distinction, and for the greater part, the terms appear to be used

¹⁹⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*,. p.14.

interchangeably.¹⁹⁵ However, on one occasion the two terms are used together as they describe how, 'John, while in exile on the island of Patmos and physically enduring "tribulation," rules and reigns in God's end-time kingdom, albeit in a spiritual manner.'¹⁹⁶ In this instance either the authors are using two different words which give the same meaning, thus effecting a redundancy, or they do, in fact, hold there to be some difference between the terms, justifying the employment of both terms. However, if the authors do, in fact, maintain a distinction of meaning between these two terms they do not make it clear.

In common with Russell Moore, Gushee and Stassen do not use 'rule' and 'reign' together, and, as will be shown below, like Moore, they demonstrate a strong preference for the term 'reign' in their work. In the case of Gushee and Stassen however, it should be noted that they use the terms 'rule' and 'rules' extensively to refer to ethical or moral regulations. As a result, it might reasonably be inferred that their use of the term is restricted to this one sense for the avoidance of confusion.¹⁹⁷ As will be shown below, McKnight and Carson demonstrate such a preference for one term over the other that it is not possible to assess whether they perceive any distinction between the terms.

On the evidence of the works under consideration, it is difficult to argue that a significant distinction exists between the use of reign and rule as synonyms for the kingdom of God. In light of this, this study will proceed on the basis that no significant distinction ought to be drawn and as such the continued use of two

¹⁹⁵ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

¹⁹⁶ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.102.

¹⁹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*; Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

separate expressions is unnecessary. However, if one of the terms is to be used to signify both, then a decision must be made to determine which expression is most appropriate. That is to say, we must ask whether the question should be, 'How does the reign of God relate to the kingdom of God,' or 'How does the rule of God relate to the kingdom of God?' In the first instance, such a decision is to be made on the basis of which term predominates in the context.

When the context is considered as a whole the usage of rule and reign is evenly balanced, however, a slight predominance of the term reign is discernible. Only McKnight displays a strong preference for 'rule', with Beale, Gladd & Harmon, and Um displaying a slight preference for the term.¹⁹⁸ McKnight uses the term 'rule' exclusively and extensively, and displays an explicit preference for the term as his way of expressing what he elsewhere terms the '*redemptive-rule dynamic*'.¹⁹⁹ While 'reign' terminology does occur on occasion in the course of McKnight's work, this is limited to the direct quotation of other sources. 'Rule' is also preferred in Gladd & Harmon's *Making All Things New*, although to a lesser extent, with 37 occurrences compared to 16 uses of the term 'reign'.²⁰⁰ Um uses the terms in a similar proportion with 28 occurrences of 'rule' to 10 of 'reign'.²⁰¹

Three writers also demonstrate a preference for 'reign' over 'rule', however, in all three cases, the usage demonstrates that this preference for this 'reign' is strong.

¹⁹⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

¹⁹⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.12 Italics in original.

²⁰⁰ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.5 ff.

²⁰¹ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

As mentioned above, Gushee and Stassen display a strong preference for the term 'reign', and they tend to restrict their use of 'rule' to refer to moral and ethical codes or regulations, this being the case in all but four occurrences. This restricted use of 'rule' pales in comparison to 99 uses of 'reign'.²⁰² Carson uses the term 'reign' to refer to the reign of God 13 times, whereas 'rule' is only used once to express divine rule.²⁰³ While Russell Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* exhibits a higher usage of 'rule' to Carson and Gushee and Stassen, his preference for 'reign' is still considered strong, using 'reign' 37 times in contrast to only 4 uses of 'rule'.²⁰⁴

Given that there is only a marginal preference discernible in the literature, it is necessary to take additional considerations into account if the study is to deem one term more appropriate than another. With this aim in mind, it is worth considering how the New Testament literature uses the terms commonly translated as 'rule' and 'reign'.

Among the New Testament writings, the use of the term βασιλεύειν (to reign) and its derivatives appears to outweigh the use of terms which might be translated 'to rule'. This term occurs 14 times in the course of the New Testament canon; 3 times in writings attributed to Luke (Luke 1:33, 19:14 & 27), 6 times in writings attributed to Paul (Romans 5:17, 5:21 and 6:12, 1 Cor 4:8 and 15:25, 2 Tim 2:12) and 5 times

²⁰² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

²⁰³ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, pp.9, 53 (5 occurrences), p.63 (6 occurrences), p.143, p.63.

²⁰⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.34 (4 occurrences), p.35 x 7, p.36, p.45 x 4, p.58 x3, p.62 x2, p.64 x6, p.76 x2, p.142 x 3, p.152 x5. p.64, p.99, p.46 x 2.

in the Johannine literature, all in Revelation, (5:10, 11:15, 11:17, 20:6, 22:5). This term is also notable given its close relation to βασιλεύς, the term for a monarch, and βασιλεία the term for a kingdom. In contrast, there is only one clear use of the term ἄρχω, which is translated ‘to rule’, in Romans 15:12). The term ποιμαίνω which is sometimes translated ‘to rule,’ but which carries this meaning in the sense of ‘to shepherd’, deriving as it does from ποιμήν (a shepherd), also occurs. Its usage is confined to Revelation, where it occurs 3 times (2:27, 12:5 and 19:15).²⁰⁵

Given the predominance of the term ‘reign’ within New Testament literature, it would appear that this term best encapsulates what the theologians in this context are trying to convey by their use of rule and reign. The New Testament from which their theology of the kingdom is drawn appears to speak predominantly in terms of reign, and so it is this term that will be used from this point onwards.

Several of the theologians under consideration are explicit in describing the inaugurated kingdom as an inaugurated reign. None more so than Carson, who claims that ‘often “the kingdom of God” is best thought of as “the reign of God.”’²⁰⁶ Um makes a similar equation when he states that ‘the biblical understanding,’ of the word ‘kingdom’, ‘emphasizes the rank, rule, reign, dominion and royal authority of God’ and even more conclusively, ‘The kingdom of God is fundamentally God’s sovereign rule expressed and realized.’²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th Edition, (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Timothy Friberg, and Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament (GNM)*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Timothy and Barbara Friberg, 1994),

²⁰⁶ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53

²⁰⁷ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

Only Scot McKnight appears to draw any distinction at all between the terms, by identifying 'reign', or in his terms 'rule', as a component element of 'kingdom' which cannot, therefore, be equated with 'kingdom' in the absence of the other elements which constitute it. For McKnight, 'kingdom is – a complex of king, rule, people, land, and law.'²⁰⁸ To a context that isolates one element of this complex and calls it kingdom then, McKnight offers a corrective: 'The word "kingdom" in Judaism (the OT, Josephus etc.) has a natural synonym in the words "nation" and "Israel", not the words "redemption" or "salvation." Thus, kingdom is front and center [*sic*] about a people and cannot be limited either to a social ethic or a redemptive moment.'²⁰⁹

Elsewhere McKnight presents an alternative breakdown of the kingdom's components to the 'complex of king, rule, people, land, and law'; Kingdom consists of reign and realm together.²¹⁰ As he puts it, 'If one simply combs through the Old Testament with a concordance and looks up the word "kingdom," one can see it used to describe both the realm over which someone rules (a nation, a people, a territory) and the active rule of a king.'²¹¹ McKnight's claim is that 'These texts prove beyond doubt that "kingdom" in the OT refers to both realm and governing (or ruling), sometimes emphasizing one and sometimes emphasizing the other, but always having a sense of both.'²¹² As this suggests, McKnight's objection is that the majority of theologians in this context have gone beyond de-emphasising realm in favour of reign (or rule), for he goes on to state that 'Somewhere along

²⁰⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

²⁰⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

²¹⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

²¹¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.11.

²¹² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.11.

the line, someone... argued that the Hebrew word “kingdom” meant “rule” or “reign” or “sovereignty” but not “realm” ... [and] nearly everyone (but not all) fell in line, and a consensus arrived: kingdom meant “rule” and not “realm.”²¹³

McKnight’s reflection thus confirms the finding that no distinction is being made between kingdom and reign in this context. At some point, as he puts it, ‘consensus arrived: kingdom meant “rule”’.²¹⁴ For McKnight however, this is self-evidently illogical, for to him, it is:

...abundantly clear that the word ‘kingdom’ means *both rule and realm*.

Think about it: you can’t have a realm without someone to rule it, and anyone who rules has to have a realm over which he or she rules, and it is unfair to the Bible to force us to choose.²¹⁵

While McKnight’s objection is significant and convincing, his contribution also highlights the ascendancy of the idea he is attempting to rebuff. For the vast majority of evangelicals adhering to an inaugurated eschatology, the kingdom of God means the reign of God.

In summary, then, no meaningful distinction is discernible in the use of ‘reign’ and ‘rule’ in this context. While there is a slight predominance of the term reign in the context, there is a very strong preference for the term within the New Testament literature and as a result, ‘reign’ is used to denote the use of ‘reign’ and/or ‘rule’ from this point on. This section of our study has also demonstrated that the majority of theologians in the context make no distinction between ‘reign’ and

²¹³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.11.

²¹⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.11.

²¹⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp.11-12.

'kingdom'. While McKnight represents a solitary dissenting voice here, arguing as he does that kingdom must also be understood in terms of 'realm', his contribution serves to highlight that the overwhelming majority of theologians in the context understand the inaugurated kingdom of God exclusively in terms of an inaugurated reign.²¹⁶

McKnight has raised one potential difficulty with conceiving of the inauguration of the kingdom of God as the inauguration of the reign of God. However, while the neglect of the concept of 'realm' as an integral part of the concept of 'kingdom' is undoubtedly a significant issue, it is not the only potential difficulty inherent in the consensus position.

When the inauguration of the kingdom is conceived of as the inauguration of the reign of God, one logical difficulty presents itself almost immediately. Given that the belief that God has always reigned or ruled is assumed in this context, then how is the difference made to that reign by inauguration to be explained? Can inauguration mark the beginning of a reign that pre-existed? Surely this option is excluded in the context. When theologians here speak of the inauguration of the reign of God, they are not, it has to be assumed, speaking about a reign beginning where there was no reign before. The implication then is that some change in the reign of God has occurred.

²¹⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp.11-12.

Despite continuing to speak of the kingdom of God as the reign of God, Gushee and Stassen appear to recognise this logical dilemma:

Clearly, the Christian affirmation of the ancient Jewish belief that God is sovereign king over all the earth is more complex than it at first appears.....
If God is king, and has always been king, why would a late-arriving Son be needed to inaugurate his *coming* reign? Hasn't God always been king and thus the world always God's kingdom?²¹⁷

One way in which theologians in the context have attempted to negotiate this logical dilemma is to see the change brought about by inauguration in terms of a change in the response to God's reign. This approach attempts to discern a difference in the level of contestation to God's reign. Gushee and Stassen, recognise that such contestation of, or opposition to, God's reign has long existed:

If we take as our main issue the question of where the reign of God is, exactly in our broken world, the sad answer is that God's reign over God's earth and even over God's chosen people has been contested from the very beginning.²¹⁸

However, while Gushee and Stassen follow this statement with the observation that 'the history of the church shows plenty of failure as well', as we will see below, many others in the context emphasise that the church provides a point of contrast to the contestation of God's reign.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.14.

²¹⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.14.

²¹⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.14.

In many cases the difference made by the inauguration is expressed in relation to the church; a tendency which will become all the more significant in light of the findings of the next chapter. More specifically, the church is presented as a community that displays a unique response to the inaugurated reign of God. Moore demonstrates this tendency by claiming that inauguration has made a key difference by bringing about a situation wherein ‘an already exalted Davidic King rules the Christian community’.²²⁰ For Moore, the church appears to be uniquely the place where Christ rules over people who respond with submission. Carson makes a similar assertion in more explicit terms when he claims that while ‘all authority is given to Christ in heaven and on earth, so all culture is subsumed under his reign.....yet a distinction must be made. *Only* in the redeemed community do we find human beings who have cheerfully submitted themselves in principle to the reign of Christ’.²²¹ Even Gushee and Stassen express the same essential idea in a slightly different way, asserting, ‘Jesus was the One the Father sent to inaugurate the long-delayed reign of God. And we believe that the “church” must be defined as that community of men and women who follow after Jesus, the trailblazer and pioneer of God’s reign.’²²² Beale, Gladd and Harmon speak of ‘the inauguration of his rule through the church,’ which also carries the sense of the church as somehow uniquely affected by and responsive to the inaugurated reign.²²³

²²⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.69

²²¹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63 Italics added.

²²² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.443.

²²³ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.11.

While it is clear then that this tendency is widespread across the context, it is Russell Moore who expands upon this idea most extensively. For Moore the church has come about as a result of the inauguration:

The various sides of the kingdom divide accept that the church is, at least in some sense, a new stage in the progress of redemption, brought about by the eschatological nature of the coming of Christ....They agree that the church is the focal point in the present age of the inaugurated reign of Christ as Davidic Messiah.²²⁴

For Moore, if we want to see the difference between the reign of God before and after inauguration then we need only look at how it operates within the church. Moore goes on to make clear that this focus on the church is an exclusive one. The inaugurated reign and the response which appears to characterise it cannot be found elsewhere:

The move toward a kingdom ecclesiology maintains rightly that the definition of the 'already' reign of Christ is the church. This means that the righteousness and justice of the messianic order cannot be found, in the present age, in the arenas of the political, social, economic, or academic orders. Instead, the reign of Christ is focussed in this age solely on His reign as Messiah over the people called into the kingdom, namely, those who make up the church.²²⁵

²²⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

²²⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.151-2.

In stark contrast to Gushee and Stassen's admission that there is often little difference in the level of contestation inside and outside the church, Moore asserts that:

Since the church is the one visible manifestation of the invisible reign of the Davidic ruler who will one day exercise indisputable sovereignty over all peoples.... the church must be able to say to the world through its efforts at social compassion and reconciliation across racial, economic, and gender lines, 'if you want to see God and the promise of his powerful, transforming rule, look at what he is doing among us [in the Church].'²²⁶

For Moore, then, the kingdom makes a difference through 'social compassion' and 'reconciliation across racial, economic and gender lines' *within* the church.²²⁷

Moore's exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, appears to be closely related to his conception of the inaugurated kingdom as an inaugurated reign, and more specifically his view of the church as unique in its response to that reign. In adopting this view, Moore acknowledges his debt to Ladd, as his lengthy quotation from the latter's work below demonstrates:

The church is the people of the Kingdom, those who have accepted the redemptive rule of God. The rule of a King must have a people, and the church consists of those who have received the Kingdom of God (Mark

²²⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142. Darrell L. Bock, "Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment " *Trinity Journal*, no. 15 (1994), pp.87.

²²⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

10:15), i.e., who have bowed before God's rule in Christ, and have been brought thereby into that sphere of life over which Christ reigns. They have been delivered from the power of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of Christ (Col, 1:13). They know the blessings of God's rule which are righteousness and peace and joy (Rom 14:17). In addition, they are those destined to enter in its eschatological consummation.²²⁸

While McKnight opposes the isolation of the concept of *reign* from that of *realm*, in limiting that realm to the church, he clearly comes close to suggesting that the church is unique in its response to the reign of God. He, too, presents the life of the church as a point of contrast to the contestation of God's reign, asserting that 'kingdom citizens are a moral fellowship marked by a cruciform life of righteousness and love, and this life permeates every dimension of life, including peace and possessions.'²²⁹

For these theologians, it is clear that only the church responds to the reign or rule of God with submission/obedience, i.e., a response that appears to render that reign effective. Outside the church contestation continues as before, as the inaugurated reign is ignored or met with disobedience. In light of this, the answer which appears to emerge to our question ('What difference has inauguration made') is that a contested reign is now somehow less contested, within the confines of the church community.

²²⁸ George Eldon Ladd, "Kingdom of God and the Church," *Foundations* 4 (1961), p.168 quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 137.

²²⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208

As a summary of the difference made by the inauguration of the kingdom of God, the statement that a contested reign is now 'already' less contested, although 'not yet' entirely uncontested, appears less than satisfactory. On one hand, this suggests a change in the response to a pre-existing reign rather than the inauguration of a reign where before there was no reign. Can such a change really be described as the 'inauguration' of a reign, as opposed to, say, the augmentation of a reign?

On the other hand, is the difference made to the contestation significant enough to distinguish it from what went before? Doesn't Gushee and Stassen's admission that 'the history of the church shows plenty of failure as well,' suggest that contestation is prevalent, even where submission is now 'already' exclusively to be found!²³⁰ Are the bold claims regarding the inauguration of the kingdom reducible to the assertion that the level of contestation has subsided a little; to such an extent that it is possible to claim, as it were, 'Now God reigns.... a bit'. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that casting the inauguration of the kingdom of God in these terms of 'reign' reduces the claim that the kingdom has, in some sense, already come, so that it effectively means very little: so little, perhaps, that it seems unbecoming of the 'kingdom of God' proclaimed by Jesus in the Gospels.

This position appears even more untenable when a further serious objection is considered. In focussing on the level of contestation and response to the reign of God, doesn't this approach cast that reign as unduly subject to human agency?

²³⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.14.

The impression that the reign of God is contingent on human response to it is a difficult one for this approach to dispel.

In light of these serious difficulties facing the idea of the inauguration of the kingdom as the inauguration of the reign of God, the basis on which this approach is founded must be reconsidered. Given evangelical theology's Biblicist commitments, any such examination must begin by asking whether this idea emerges from the biblical text.

Is this interpretation of the kingdom of God as synonymous with the reign of God justified by Christ's proclamation of the kingdom of God in the synoptic Gospel accounts? Given the biblicist commitments of evangelical theology, such justification is not only essential but would necessitate the rebuttal of the difficulties outlined previously rather than the abandonment of the kingdom-as-reign position.

As one of my previous research studies has highlighted, the synoptic gospels record Jesus speaking about the kingdom on many occasions. Mark uses kingdom terminology twenty times, with the term 'the kingdom of God' predominating, while Matthew makes over fifty references to the kingdom with his unique phrase 'the kingdom of heaven' representing well over half of these instances, often being used as a direct replacement for Mark's 'kingdom of God'. Luke has over forty references, and as with Mark, 'the kingdom of God' is by far his preferred term.²³¹

²³¹ Dunn, "Kingdom Tension and Social Action," pp.19-20. The lexicon used to conduct this research was Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament (GNM)*,

In contrast to this, the use of terms that might be translated as 'reign' or 'rule' is extremely limited in the synoptic Gospels. The term βασιλεύειν (to reign) and its derivatives occurs only 3 times; as previously mentioned all of these occur in Luke's Gospel at Luke 1:33, 19:14 & 27. The second and third of these occurrences in Luke 19:14 are not related to the concept of the Kingdom, coming as it does in the context of the Parable of the Ten Pounds, where it refers to the proposed reign of the nobleman over a kingdom. However, the use of βασιλεύσει in Luke 1:33 is relevant, 'And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'²³² This use is notable for several reasons. Firstly, it is not used by Jesus, but rather is used to speak about Jesus, and so cannot be considered part of his kingdom proclamation. Secondly, a realm over which he will reign is specified, in this case, the house of Jacob. Furthermore, the word for kingdom is then used in the next clause, apparently in parallel, describing this reign over a specified realm as a kingdom.

There are no instances of Jesus using words signifying reign or rule in the synoptic gospels, and, in fact, there are no further instances in these texts beyond those previously mentioned. It appears then that Jesus uses the term kingdom rather than reign exclusively in his kerygma, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. This certainly casts doubt on the notion that the biblical evidence supports the interpretation of the kingdom as a reign. At the very least it can be said that Jesus did not proclaim the reign of God but the kingdom of God.

²³² The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

One possible objection to this conclusion is that, as has been previously noted, the Greek terms for kingdom and reign are closely related. However, while this is true, it must also be maintained that the terms are not synonymous and are certainly distinguishable. Given that Jesus is never recorded using a word which would be primarily translated as 'reign', this observation does not lend any additional credence to the supplanting of 'kingdom' with 'reign'.²³³

A further objection to this approach might be that the use of 'reign' and 'kingdom' in other portions of Scripture ought to be considered. Given the biblicist commitments of those in this context, it would indeed be surprising if no attempt was made to justify this approach from biblical sources, and given that these are not forthcoming from the Synoptic Gospels, it must be assumed that examples will be presented from elsewhere.

Presenting examples from elsewhere in the biblical material is, in fact, the approach of Gushee and Stassen, whose equation of kingdom and reign is unrelenting. Indeed, the title of *Kingdom Ethics*' first chapter 'Jesus Began to Proclaim – The Reign of God' underlines their belief that, in some sense, when Jesus said 'kingdom' he often meant 'reign'.²³⁴ The content of their work, time and time again, reinforces this impression, as they interchange 'reign' and 'kingdom' repeatedly. For example, 'Jesus came preaching and incarnating the long-promised and desperately awaited kingdom of God....We have chosen to

²³³ See, for example, the relevant entries in Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament (GNM)*,

²³⁴ *Gushee and Stassen, Kingdom Ethics*, p.4.

ground our discussion of the Christian moral life right here, in God's reign, as Jesus proclaimed and embodied it...' And again, 'Scholars, as well as everyday Christians, have been puzzled about what Jesus meant when he spoke of the kingdom, and it has often played little real role in Christian life. *What exactly did Jesus himself understand by the reign of God?*'²³⁵

This approach is justified by Gushee and Stassen with the claim, 'The embodied drama of the contested reign of God lies at the heart of the biblical record.'²³⁶ The obvious question then, is whereabouts in the biblical material are they getting the idea that this contested reign is to be equated with the kingdom? For Gushee and Stassen the answer, as we will see, appears to be 'in Isaiah'.²³⁷

Gushee and Stassen are committed to setting Jesus' proclamation and embodiment of the kingdom in the context of 'the entire background of Jewish eschatological hope.'²³⁸ This leads them to Isaiah: 'We see the background of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God in the deliverance passages of the prophet Isaiah, which brings far richer content to our understanding of the reign of God in Jesus' teaching.'²³⁹

There is indeed evidence for seeing Isaiah as being a prominent influence on Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God, and Gushee and Stassen present it well and at length. Their claim that Jesus appears to refer to Isaiah when announcing the kingdom is a credible one: 'In the specific New Testament passages where Jesus

²³⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp.1 & 4.

²³⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.1.

²³⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.5.

²³⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.1.

²³⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.xviii

announced the Kingdom of God, he seems to have used terms that come particularly from the prophet Isaiah.²⁴⁰ However, their claim that these passages from Isaiah should be understood as “‘reign of God” passages’ appears to be unfounded.

Their argument is founded, fatally as it turns out, on the claim that these passages in Isaiah actually refer to the reign of God. When Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God he meant the reign of God, even though he does not use that term, because he was drawing on passages in Isaiah which announced that reign. As they put it, it is important to understand what ‘Isaiah’s “reign of God” passages mean, since Jesus announced the kingdom by referring to Isaiah.’²⁴¹ Even more pointedly:

Jesus came proclaiming the reign of God. The reign of God in Isaiah, as we have seen, announced God’s justice and deliverance of those below, the outcasts, the poor, and the oppressed, from the domination of greed and concentrated power, and the restoration of community with peace. It called for repentance for injustice.²⁴²

Gushee and Stassen, make the idea that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as the reign of God contingent on the idea that certain passages in Isaiah, encoded in his proclamations, actually announce the coming reign of God. However, their certain that these passages should be understood as ‘Isaiah’s “reign of God” passages is ill-founded.²⁴³ Isaiah does not use the term in these passages. Nonetheless,

²⁴⁰ *Gushee and Stassen, Kingdom Ethics*, p.5. Gushee and Stassen show how the passages Matt 8:11, Mark 1:15; 9:1; Luke 4:18,19,21; and 16:16 draw on Isaiah: 24:23; 25:6; 31:6; 40:10; 41:8-9; 42:1; 43:5,10; 45:6; 49:12; 51:7-8; 53:1; 50:19; 60:20-22; and 61:1.’

²⁴¹ *Gushee and Stassen, Kingdom Ethics*, p.131.

²⁴² *Gushee and Stassen, Kingdom Ethics*, p.138.

²⁴³ *Gushee and Stassen, Kingdom Ethics*, p.131.

Gushee and Stassen remain convinced. In a section entitled '*Kingship as Deliverance in Isaiah*', they assert that:

Many passages in Isaiah...speak of the *kingship* or *sovereignty* of God and the *coming reign of God*. God is sovereign and God is king, over Israel and over the world. But in Isaiah, these affirmations almost always take the sense of God's delivering the oppressed and bringing holistic salvation. God is a king who delivers, rescues, and saves people in need of such delivering, rescuing and saving. And that is what we see in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom: delivering the oppressed and bringing holistic salvation.'²⁴⁴

When Gushee and Stassen state that 'many passages in Isaiah... speak of the coming reign of God', they mean to say that these passages speak of it *by implication*. Isaiah includes a term translatable as 'reign' only once, in 32:1, when it states 'Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.'²⁴⁵ How then do they understand Isaiah to be describing the reign of God? The answer is that they identify what they term 'Seven Marks of God's Reign' and finding these marks in certain passages in Isaiah, interpret those passages as being about the reign of God.²⁴⁶ These seven marks and their occurrences in Isaiah are explained as follows:

Deliverance, which is what 'salvation' means, occurs in all seventeen passages in Isaiah;

²⁴⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.5.

²⁴⁵ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

²⁴⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.8.

Righteousness/justice occurs in sixteen of the passages

Peace in fourteen;

Joy in twelve;

God's presence as Spirit or Light in nine;

(and God's dynamic presence is implied in all seventeen).

In addition, *healing* occurs in seven passages.

Return from exile, restoration of outcasts to community, and the rebuilding of the covenant people Israel in their land occur in nine passages, more if we link the healing theme to the outcast theme, as we should.²⁴⁷

Gushee and Stassen are, no doubt, correct in claiming that 'these themes recur throughout Isaiah.... [and].... Jesus saw these characteristics as essential to the kingdom of God.'²⁴⁸ However, this does not prove that Jesus took 'kingdom' to mean 'reign' on the basis of Isaiah. Rather, Gushee and Stassen have come to this conclusion through an interpretation that originates outside the text, not one which emerges from it. This deficiency is all the more serious given that, in light of this interpretation, Gushee and Stassen proceed to read the kingdom sayings of the Gospel to mean 'God's Reign Is at Hand'.²⁴⁹ For them 'Jesus was saying this: the time of God's reign is at hand. The light of God's presence is dawning for his people and for all nations. Celebrate the in-breaking reign of God.'²⁵⁰ Equating the

²⁴⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.8.

²⁴⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.10.

²⁴⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.344.

²⁵⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.344.

inaugurated kingdom of God and the reign of God is, then, fundamental to their approach to ethics. As such, Gushee and Stassen are found putting considerable store by an interpretation that is imposed on the biblical text.

The import of this is clear as Gushee and Stassen quote Dallas Willard approvingly:

Jesus' words and presence gave many of his hearers' faith to see that when he acted God also acted, that the governance or 'rule' of God came into play and thus was *at hand*. They were aware of the invisible presence of God acting within the visible reality and action of Jesus.²⁵¹

To these grand claims, Gushee and Stassen add their own, all based on an interpretation which does not emerge from the biblical text:

In a vicious world where daily life for most was a struggle for survival....Jesus taught that God was a Father who *could* be trusted, *must* be trusted, and, in light of the evidence of God's in-breaking reign, *should*, right now, be trusted.²⁵²

In this interpretation can be seen the pervasive influence of biblical theology in this context. Indeed it is an influence acknowledged by Moore in his description of how the consensus position he outlines came into being: 'Covenantalists and dispensationalists have re-examined their respective systems in the light of biblical theology, and have come to strikingly similar conclusions.'²⁵³ Gushee and Stassen's reading of Isaiah and their interpretation of Jesus' kingdom proclamations in light

²⁵¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.344. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco CA: Harper, 1998), pp.19, 21.

²⁵² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.345.

²⁵³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.53.

of is an example of a particular biblical theology, namely one which interprets the whole of scripture as presenting a metanarrative about the reign of God. Everything in Scripture including Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom must then be understood in light of this. The logic of this approach dictates that because the reign of God is central to the story of Scripture, the central message of Jesus must be about that reign. The fact that Jesus does not use this term is only a minor inconvenience. 'Kingdom' is central to Jesus' proclamation, and it is deemed close enough to 'reign' as to be read as 'reign.' This leaves one question unaddressed: If Jesus meant 'reign', why is he not recorded as saying 'reign'? Gushee and Stassen's attempt to circumvent this question, by claiming he was picking up on a pre-existent tradition of speaking about the kingdom of God as reign, does not solve this issue, as that tradition, in Isaiah, has been shown to demonstrate a similar absence of reign terminology.

This discussion has shown that there is a significant difficulty with assuming that in proclaiming 'the kingdom of God' Jesus meant that he was proclaiming 'the reign of God'. The gospel narratives only record Jesus speaking in terms of the 'kingdom of God'. He never uses a term commonly translated as 'the reign of God'. It must be concluded, then, that the equation of these terms, and the use of 'reign' as if it was synonymous with 'kingdom' is a result of a particular interpretation. That interpretation does not emerge from the texts, but rather is advocated by a particular approach within the field of biblical theology which identifies the reign of God as a central unifying theme of Scripture and proceeds to read 'kingdom' as

'reign' in light of this. This type of approach appears to be evident in the case of Gushee and Stassen's attempt to exegete the Gospel material in light of Isaiah.²⁵⁴

However, while Gushee and Stassen take such steps in an attempt to ground their reading of 'kingdom' as 'reign' in the biblical material, other theologians under consideration appear to make little or no attempt to ground their equation of 'reign' with 'kingdom' in this way.²⁵⁵ Rather, it is simply assumed. The grounds of such assumptions must now be sought.

Indeed, if the concept of kingdom-as-reign does not emerge out of the biblical accounts, the question must be asked, where else might it emerge from? The concept of the kingdom of God as reign has long roots in this context as is shown by H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Kingdom of God in America*.²⁵⁶ In this work, Niebuhr traces this way of conceiving the kingdom back to the religious assumptions of the pilgrims and settlers.²⁵⁷ McKnight however, believes this tendency to be a rather more recent development, suggesting in his critique of this position, that it was, in fact, popularized by the work of George Eldon Ladd, the figure most associated with the inception of inaugurated eschatology in this context.²⁵⁸ McKnight explains the genesis of the current consensus positions by claiming that 'George Ladd forced the choice when he argued over and over for "rule" and that

²⁵⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

²⁵⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

²⁵⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, 2nd ed. (Hamden CN: The Shoe String Press, 1956),

²⁵⁷ Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, See for example p.x, 'In the early period of American life... "kingdom of God" meant "sovereignty of God"; in the creative period of awakening and revival it meant "reign of Christ".'

²⁵⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.12.

“kingdom” did not, therefore, mean “realm.”²⁵⁹ McKnight is also specific about the effects of Ladd’s influence in the context, ‘The result of this sort of conclusion is that the word “kingdom” has come to mean *God’s redemptive rule and power at work in the world....*For Ladd, then it is fair to reduce kingdom to a *redemptive-rule dynamic.*’²⁶⁰

If McKnight is correct here then it appears that the concept of kingdom-as-reign was popularised in US evangelical theology at the same time as inaugurated eschatology, and by the same theologian who did so much to popularise. The implication, then, is that inaugurated eschatology in this US evangelical theology has always involved a view of the kingdom being inaugurated in terms of the reign of God. This furthers the impression that kingdom-as-reign is inseparable from inaugurated eschatology. It may also suggest that the concept of kingdom-as-reign performs a function that is indispensable for this form of eschatology. It is to the questions of the exact nature of that function that this study will now turn.

In light of the findings of the previous sections – that the kingdom-as-reign concept is not native to the biblical material and that the viability of inaugurated eschatology may rest on it — we must now ask why is this concept being used and what work is it doing? This will be done by looking first at McKnight’s contrasting approach.

²⁵⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.12.

²⁶⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.12.

Given the lack of scriptural support for conceiving of the kingdom as a reign which is independent of a realm, and given that normal usage of these terms also appears to ward against such a separation, this study considers McKnight to be correct in his insistence that the kingdom consists of reign and realm and cannot be present in the form of one of these components alone. McKnight might here be described as insisting on the integrity of the kingdom, in that both reign and realm are integral to the kingdom.

It is maintaining this integrity (the idea that the kingdom can only exist as a realm being reigned over), in the context of a commitment to inaugurated eschatology, which appears to push McKnight to an unacceptable conclusion: The church must be the kingdom. Believing the kingdom to already have been inaugurated, and believing that it must refer to a realm as well as a reign, McKnight is pressed to identify that realm. Given his positive conception of church life, and his stated desire to address what he perceives to be the decentring of the church in kingdom theology, both of which we will see in detail in the next chapter, one conclusion seems likely: For McKnight, the realm of the inaugurated kingdom must be the church.²⁶¹

As the next chapter will underline, the equation of church and kingdom is deemed unacceptable by the consensus position, even though some within the proposed consensus appear to come very close to sharing McKnight's dissenting position on their relationship. Furthermore, the next chapter will also demonstrate that this possibility is excluded with good reason. The church as kingdom is excluded as a

²⁶¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207

viable option, not least by inaugurated eschatology's claim to be a cosmic eschatology. On the evidence of this section, which supports McKnight's claim that 'reign' and 'realm' cannot be separated without a strained reading of the biblical material, it would appear that only by abandoning inaugurated eschatology can the integrity of the kingdom (as reign and realm) and its cosmic scope be maintained. Compromise is necessary in one of several areas if a feasible eschatology is to be maintained. Put simply, an eschatology that advocates an inaugurated, cosmic, integral kingdom is implausible. McKnight is willing to compromise on the cosmic commitments and thus advocates an inaugurated, integral kingdom exclusively spatialized in the church.

The traditional approach of inaugurated eschatology in this context, which remains the position of the majority of our sample, has been as unwilling to compromise in the area of its cosmic claims, just as it has been unwilling to compromise on the inaugurated framework from which it takes its name. It may well be, then, that it is in order to facilitate an inaugurated kingdom that is cosmic in scope that 'kingdom' has been recast as 'reign'. Indeed, shorn of the concept of 'realm', as 'reign', 'kingdom' is relatively free from the demand for tangible, concrete manifestations. As a 'reign', the 'kingdom' can be explained as something which is essentially hidden perhaps, one might say, well-hidden. We are reassured of its presence by an eschatology that is barely able to offer any sign of the difference it has made. As the beginning of this chapter has shown, only the vague assertion that some change has happened to the reign of God is forthcoming; an assertion which, as has been shown, is incongruent with the notion, prevalent in this context, that God has always reigned.

The compromise which is urged upon us by the biblical evidence about the kingdom is the one which inaugurated eschatology, is incapable of agreeing to. The biblical texts relating to the proclamation of the kingdom speak of it as an integral kingdom in which God reigns over a realm. The biblical witness emphasises that this realm encompasses the entire creation, that is to say, it seems to suggest that the kingdom is cosmic in scope. If such an integral cosmic kingdom can be an inaugurated one, it is yet to be reflected in US evangelical theology on the evidence of this study.

A further consideration is that a kingdom where God reigns in God's creation in the way proclaimed in the kingdom teaching of Jesus is evidently somewhat at odds with present reality. This is, in effect, the work that the concept of kingdom-as-reign is doing. It allows the kingdom to be presented as a phenomenon that has a present and cosmic aspect. It does so by rendering the kingdom a dynamic invisible phenomenon rather than a physical tangible realm. This in turn creates a further problem, which will be considered in the next chapter on ethics. An invisible reign hardly represents a promising basis for determining Christian attitudes and actions. Indeed, this approach does not lend itself to accountability and may in fact facilitate the construction of arbitrary positions aligned with vested interests, as the invisible reign's presence and absence may be invoked to shore up or challenge whichever present reality one chooses.

Fig. 3. Table Summary of options for reign and realm

Eschatology	WHEN?	WHERE?	WHAT?	Excluded by this option
Inaugurated (Majority position)	Already, not yet	Cosmos (Church as location and locus)	Reign	Realm
Inaugurated (McKnight's position)	Already, not yet	Church	Reign & Realm	Cosmic dimension
Future	Not yet	Cosmos	Reign & Realm	Inauguration

Of all the problems this chapter has identified with kingdom-as-reign, the most fundamental for evangelical theology is that this concept is external to the biblical record of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom. Indeed, not only is this concept extra-biblical but given the way in which the biblical witness speaks of both 'reign' and 'realm' as integral to the kingdom, maintaining it may run contrary to US evangelical theology's Biblicist commitments.

This chapter has shown that the reason for the existence and persistence of the concept of kingdom-as-reign in the context may be due to it being necessary for inaugurated eschatology's viability as a plausible doctrine. Kingdom-as-reign

renders the kingdom flexible enough to maintain that it is present in some form and that this form has a cosmic dimension.

Despite excluding the notion of 'realm' and the equation of the church with the kingdom, the concept of *kingdom-as-reign* contributes to another problematic tendency to which we are about to turn our attention: the exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church. This results in a tendency to explain the difference made by inauguration in terms of the church as uniquely responsive to the reign of God.

Rendering the kingdom as an invisible dynamic reign rather than as a material, tangible realm, the concept of kingdom-as-reign appears to be in contradiction with the holistic commitment to the materiality of the kingdom advocated by the consensus position. As 'reign', the kingdom may act on, and in, the creation and have an effect on matter, but it does not, in any sense, consist of matter.

Finally, the kingdom-as-reign does not appear to present a promising basis for ethics. In asking what difference the inauguration of the kingdom has been made, we have found surprisingly few answers. Furthermore, the one affirmation which could be construed as a clear answer to this question is a distinctly underwhelming claim: The reign of God is now less contested within certain parameters, namely within the church. This is indeed a modest and spatially limited claim on which to base inaugurated ethics.

Equally concerning are the potential difficulties posed by an invisible, dynamic reign in terms of accountability. If ethical approaches are to be determined on the basis of the presence and absence of the kingdom, and that presence is only here in the form of an invisible dynamic reign, then the perception of that presence may be affected by all manner of other considerations. Indeed, this may go some way to explaining the ambiguity that permeates Moore's vision of inaugurated ethics in *The Kingdom of Christ*, as well as the marked contrast between his approach and that taken by Gushee and Stassen which will be the focus of the next two chapters. If Moore's vision there is reconsidered as an answer to a particular question, that question could be accurately posited in the following way: What state functions might an inaugurated eschatology actually support as legitimate in the 'already' that would be unthinkable in the 'not yet'?²⁶² Recasting that question in light of the kingdom-as-reign approach adopted by Moore, Gushee and Stassen, and others, we may go a little further: What state functions might the presence of an invisible dynamic reign actually support as legitimate that would be unthinkable in the 'not yet'?²⁶³ While Moore's answer leaves space for evangelicals to support state functions such as prisoner executions and the waging of just wars, despite these being unthinkable in the consummated kingdom, Gushee and Stassen's approach suggests that a superficially simpler answer, none.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 71.

²⁶³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 71.

²⁶⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p. 71. Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.

However, before we turn our attention to these contrasting attempts to outline an ethics on the basis of this inaugurated reign, we must consider two further questions directly related to the eschatology.

Chapter Three: *Where is the inaugurated kingdom? Who inaugurates the kingdom?*

Where is the inaugurated kingdom?

In *Eschatology and Space*, Vitor Westhelle, embarking on a quest to begin recovering 'time' as the 'lost dimension in theology,' highlights the deficit of spatial concerns in Christianity in the West, and explores the reasons behind that neglect.²⁶⁵ While the concerns which drove Westhelle's theological endeavour in *Eschatology and Space* are at some distance from evangelical theology in the USA, nonetheless, his observation of this deficit of concern comes as a timely reminder that spatial concerns, or their neglect, are worthy, and necessary, objects of theological reflection on eschatology.²⁶⁶ Yet, this chapter raises the first of its two major questions, that of 'Where is the kingdom present', not as a question external to the context, but because it is a question which inaugurated eschatology in this context poses to itself, albeit by implication. Just as with the previous chapter's titular question, 'When was the kingdom inaugurated' this is a question of which theologians in the context have not shown themselves to be conscious. However, as with that question, this is a question which they appear to be attempting to answer even though they have not voiced it first. Yet, in their attempts to settle another, long-running, question within the context, that of the

²⁶⁵ For Westhelle, this 'deficit of spatial concerns was not an unfortunate neglect, but an intentional and militant bracketing of dimensional reflections from the core of theological scholarship.....Eschatological discourse in Western modernity has been sequestered by the dominance of historical thinking.' Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, p.xii.

²⁶⁶ Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, p.xii.

relationship between the kingdom and church, they have shown themselves to be responding to an unacknowledged 'where?'

Undoubtedly, the kingdom's relationship with the church has been a central concern for inaugurated eschatology in this context. Indeed, in Russell Moore's *Kingdom of Christ*, 'Towards a Kingdom Ecclesiology' numbers among the three chapters forming the central planks of his claims to a consensus.²⁶⁷ As Moore goes on to reflect, the agreement he perceives on this question would represent significant progress on the road to consensus:

Evangelical theology would seem to have amassed a consensus on what was once perhaps one of the most troubling dissensions in the evangelical coalition, the relationship between the visible church and the Kingdom of God... this consensus seems at many levels to span the ideological fault-lines of contemporary evangelical theology as representatives of both the traditionalist conservative and reformist progressive wings of evangelical theology are moving toward a common understanding of the Kingdom orientation of the doctrine of the church.²⁶⁸

This chapter will suggest that a spatialized view of the inaugurated kingdom is discernible in the context of the discussion surrounding how the kingdom and church relate to each other. This appears to be, at least in part, a result of associating the church and the kingdom in the strongest terms, in a context where spatialized views of the church are influential. This strong association of church

²⁶⁷ 'Towards a Kingdom Eschatology' and 'Towards a Kingdom Soteriology' being the other two. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131-174.

²⁶⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.138

and kingdom is evident in the positions this chapter will analyse, ranging from Scot McKnight's view that 'the kingdom is the church, and the church is the kingdom,' through Moore's portrait of 'the church as Kingdom community', to Beale, Gladd and Harmon's use of the term 'eschatological people of God' to describe the church.²⁶⁹ Similarly, it will be shown that spatialized views of the church predominate in this context. In this respect, Darrell Bock's description of the church as 'the place where' is of particular significance.²⁷⁰ As stated in a 1993 article in Dallas Theological Seminary's journal, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Bock's view is that 'the place where God expresses his character most visibly is in the church and through the church.'²⁷¹ While only Moore acknowledges his debt to this view, this chapter will show how the approaches of other theologians in this context appear to share it.²⁷²

It is the premise of this chapter that the interaction of these two ideas, a close relationship between the church and the kingdom, and the church as '*the place where....*', has rendered the inaugurated kingdom as '*the place where....*', in the models which dominate this context. It is this rendering of the inaugurated kingdom as '*the place where....*', which is meant by the term 'spatialization' in this chapter. While, so far, in its use of the phrase *the place where* this chapter has retained the definite article, it is recognised that Bock's formulation qualifies this somewhat by describing the church as '*the place where....most visibly.*' As a result,

²⁶⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131. Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.25.

²⁷⁰ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993), p.457.

²⁷¹ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993), p.457.

²⁷² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142

the possibility is left open that the church may in fact be '*a place where...*'²⁷³ Indeed, much of this chapter will be involved in untangling such distinctions, however, the chapter's spatialization hypothesis is not dependent on resolving the exclusivity of the space. It will be deemed proven even where claims are made with self-conscious use of the indefinite *a place where...* In light of this, I will, for the time being, use the intentionally ambiguous term *place where.....*

Not only is this a question which inaugurated eschatology in this context raises unsuspectingly, but it is, this chapter will suggest, a question which it cannot adequately answer without great difficulty. The spatialization of the inaugurated kingdom tacitly assumes the appropriateness of the question, 'Where is the kingdom present?' By consciously voicing that question, this chapter aims at disclosing several key issues and areas of potential difficulty, which will be outlined below. But before moving to outline these issues, this chapter will first seek to arrive at an appropriate term to describe the 'space' implied by the spatialization associated with the inaugurated kingdom.

At first, the phrase *place where....* may suggest the term 'location', given this term's common use to denote 'the particular place or position occupied by a person or thing; precise situation.'²⁷⁴ However, an alternative term, 'locus', is suggested from within the context. This is the term Moore uses when summarising

²⁷³ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993), p.457.

²⁷⁴ "Location, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2017.

Bock's description of 'the church as the place where...'²⁷⁵ For Moore, Bock sees 'the church is the locus of kingdom activity.'²⁷⁶ Moore gives no rationale for his preference for this word, over say 'location', however, by reflecting further on Bock's key statement, a rationale can be discerned independently.

While, in common usage, the choice between 'location' and 'locus' may be determined by the tendency of the latter to refer to 'the effective or perceived location of something abstract,' on the evidence of Moore's claims elsewhere, it can be safely assumed that he would resist the subjectivity of 'perceived', and the assertion that the kingdom is 'something abstract'.²⁷⁷ A possible alternative reason for Moore's choice of 'locus' emerges from closer inspection of Bock's statement, for there we find a subtle distinction being made.²⁷⁸ Not only does God express 'his character most visibly... in the church', but also 'through the church.'²⁷⁹ While the word 'location' may capture the sense of 'in the church,' it remains too limited to capture the sense of 'through the church.'²⁸⁰ The use of an additional term to recognise this distinction is therefore necessary.

This spatial implications of God's activity *through* the church might be more fully expressed by adding the phrase '*place from where*' alongside '*place where*'. On examining Bock's elaboration on his statement, such an expression can be shown to capture his intended meaning:

²⁷⁵ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993), p.457

²⁷⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142. Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993), p.457.

²⁷⁷ "Locus, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2017.

²⁷⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142.

²⁷⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142.

²⁸⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142.

He [God] does it through individual relationships *within* His body and also through the way Christians relate to those *outside* the believing community. As a result, believers should be sensitive to the wide variety of ways and forms they can show God's love concretely, depending on *where* they serve God and how He calls them.²⁸¹

The distinction between 'relationships *within* His body, [the church]' and 'Christians [as the church] relat[ing] to those *outside* the believing community [the church]' parallels Bock's early use of '*in*' and '*through*' the church.²⁸² God acts in this way *outside* the location of the church, but even this activity, whereby 'God expresses his character most visibly,' is never described without reference to 'the church'.²⁸³ This activity is not confined to the church as location, but it is always defined with reference to it, as rooted in this location but extending beyond it. Therefore, as 'location' might imply a place to which activity is confined, 'locus' might be used here to imply a place from which activity emerges. The use of the term 'locus' by this chapter then, differs from that of Moore, in that it is used with the explicit intention of carrying the sense of *place from where...*, in addition to the use of 'location' to carry the sense of *place where.....*

With this question settled, a further question presents itself: Singular location and locus or plural locations and loci? That is to say: Do the theologians speak in singular or plural terms: Of a *place where* and *place from where....* or of *places where* and *places from where....*? While the debate over kingdom ecclesiology has,

²⁸¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142. Italics added.

²⁸² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142. Italics added.

²⁸³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142. Italics added.

for the main, been conducted in the singular terms of 'the church', and often 'the church visible', Scot McKnight's work, in particular, has brought a focus on the agency of local churches. Indeed, '*returning to the radical mission of the local church*,' the subtitle of McKnight's *Kingdom Conspiracy*, reflects an approach that considers these issues at the local level of individual parishes and congregations.

²⁸⁴ An approach made explicit in McKnight's statement that 'the only place kingdom work is and can be done is in and through the local church when disciples (kingdom citizens, church people) are doing kingdom mission.'²⁸⁵ This heavy focus on activity at the local level, however, does not apparently necessitate the use of plural referents such as 'loci' or *places where*. McKnight himself speaks of 'the local church' in the singular, not, it must be assumed, because he is directing attention to one particular congregation or parish at a time, but because he understands these to be localised forms of a singularity known as the church. With McKnight, as with all others in the context, there is a concern that catholicity is maintained, however it might be construed, such that different and distinctive localities remain united by being in common *the/a place where...or from where*. This being the case then, the chapter will proceed to use, with its meaning expanded, Moore's singular term, 'locus', to refer to the spatialized concept of the kingdom as it relates to the church.²⁸⁶ From this point on, 'location' will be used to denote a *place where*, while 'locus' will be used to denote a *place from where*.

²⁸⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*,

²⁸⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208.

²⁸⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* p.142.

We have already glimpsed how theologians in this context have in common a tendency to associate closely the church and the kingdom. This tendency is expressed in a range of positions. These range from Scot McKnight's view that 'the kingdom is the church, and the church is the kingdom,' through Moore's portrait of 'the church as Kingdom community', to Beale, Gladd and Harmon's use of the term 'eschatological people of God' to describe the church.²⁸⁷ In the context of claims to a consensus, and in particular, the perception of a need for such a consensus, differences among the ways in which the relationship between the church and the kingdom is formulated presents an issue. The extent to which such differences of formulation indicate deeper differences of understanding is, perhaps, even more significant.

A further issue, connected with that of the differences between these formulations, is the ambiguity of some of the formulations, with Moore's call for a 'kingdom-oriented ecclesiology' being the most obvious case in point.²⁸⁸ Even Moore's more specific offering, 'the church as the kingdom community' requires further scrutiny to ascertain the exact nature of the relationship referenced in this way.

There is further potential for ambiguity and difference in the ecclesiological assumptions underlying these formulations. Even if a form of words can be agreed to capture the sense of how the church and the kingdom relate to each other, then different understandings of what is meant by 'the church' may render such

²⁸⁷ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131. Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.25.

²⁸⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

consensus illusory. What is more, given the historical division on issues of ecclesiology in this context, the resolution of such differences in understanding would be an unexpected development indeed.

It is just such an unexpected and long-awaited development that Moore believes to be afoot:

A move toward a Kingdom consensus in evangelical theology cannot avoid ecclesiology, since the church has been in many ways ground zero in the evangelical skirmishes over the Kingdom. The developments in evangelical kingdom theology at this point, especially within the dispensationalist and covenant traditions, represent a real doctrinal advance toward a coherent and distinctively evangelical theology of the Kingdom.²⁸⁹

Even if Moore's claims are taken at face value, they do not exclude the very real possibility that what evangelical theologians mean by the term 'the church' may differ. It is always a term that has numerous assumptions embedded within it, and these ecclesiological assumptions vary, not least across the range of denominations and traditions included within the projected consensus.

The significance of this for our study is that, even when the relationship between 'the Church' and the kingdom is expressed in similar ways, the level of inter-agreement may actually be less than first appears. Equally a degree of inter-

²⁸⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.146-7.

agreement may be expected to derive from areas where assumptions are more commonly held across the context.²⁹⁰

The church as *location* and *locus* of the kingdom has implications for inaugurated eschatology's cosmic commitments; commitments which are suggested mostly strongly by Moore's claims to consensus. In the course of *The Kingdom of Christ's* chapter on 'Kingdom soteriology', and following Robert Saucy, Moore contends that 'the growing theological consensus on the Kingdom of God as the goal of salvation and the theme of history necessitates a view of salvation that is cosmic in scope, encompassing the all-embracing nature of the kingdom itself.'²⁹¹ Indeed, Moore himself points to the emergence of just such 'an evangelical soteriology focussed on the cosmic purposes.'²⁹² There is, then, according to Moore, a consensus that the kingdom is cosmic in scope.

Yet, an inaugurated kingdom with the church as location and locus suggests that it may be difficult to conceive of cosmic transformation beginning in the 'already'. Proscribing the limits of the kingdom's spatialization in accordance with the limits of the church's spatialization would limit the kingdom's reach to the reach of the church. This is, of course, a reach that does not currently extend beyond creation on Earth, and which is arguably limited even within the confines of this planet. The implication of this would surely be that cosmic transformation is not possible in

²⁹⁰ This may be the case with regard to the influence of evangelicalism's individualistic or personalist soteriological commitments, stemming from what David Bebbington has termed 'conversionism', one element in his 'quadrilateral' distinguishing evangelical identity, and the fourth and fifth sides to Larsen's more recent pentagon, designed to complement it. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain*, p.3. Larsen, "Defining and locating evangelicalism," p.1

²⁹¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.94. Robert L. Saucy, "The Crucial Issue Between Dispensational and Non-dispensational Systems," *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (1986), pp.156-8.

²⁹² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.109.

the inaugurated age and must be postponed until the consummation. The methodology of this chapter must then, include a means of engaging with this issue as it arises in the context.

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Russell Moore stresses that the consensus he perceives, involves a greater focus on pneumatology, asserting that ‘the newer consensus offers.... a corrective attention to pneumatology.’²⁹³ It is true that *The Kingdom of Christ* is not unconcerned with pneumatology, however, the structure of the book reflects a focus on three other ‘doctrinal loci’, as Moore terms them.²⁹⁴ These three ‘doctrinal loci’ each receive a dedicated chapter and are, namely, eschatology, soteriology and ecclesiology.²⁹⁵ There is, however, no section dedicated to a discussion of pneumatology. In light of this, this chapter will consider whether such a focus on pneumatology has emerged, within Moore’s own work, and the work of others in the consensus context. Indeed, the impact of such pneumatological claims as are made, and their implications for the spatialization of the kingdom in relation to the church, are all issues worthy of consideration within the scope of this chapter.

In keeping with the methodological approach established in the previous chapter, this chapter will also assess for inter-agreement and intra-agreement across the sample. In addition, it will also consider various aspects relating specifically to spatialization. Firstly, the chapter will draw a distinction between a ‘location’ as a

²⁹³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.58.

²⁹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.138.

²⁹⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.25 f., 81 f., 131 f.

place where... and a 'locus' as a *place from where....* As such, spatialization will be categorised in terms of 'location', 'locus' or 'location and locus'. The exclusivity of the spatialization which occurs will also be assessed, by considering whether each formulation presents the church as a definite or indefinite *location and/or locus*; *a place where/ from where or the place where/from where*. In cases where a definite formulation is used, this will be categorised as 'exclusive' spatialization. Where an indefinite formulation that approaches, but stops short of, a definite formulation is employed, this will be categorised as 'intensive' spatialization.

The assessment will also attempt to ascertain whether, and how, cosmic claims are maintained. Such an assessment will note where these claims, outlined above, are referenced or restated. The assessment will be conducted bearing in mind the observation made by Douglas J. Moo that, where 'Greg Beale and others have put forth the notion of "new creation" as at least one central unifying theme within this [inaugurated] structure of eschatological realization....insufficient attention has been paid to the place of the cosmos in this scheme of fulfilment.'²⁹⁶ This observation will inform one of the four hypotheses below.

It is hypothesised that the results of the survey will indicate that:

i) With regard to church/kingdom claims

- a) There will be majority inter-agreement between primary formulations of the church/kingdom relationship. A minority of theologians in the context will diverge from a broadly similar position.

²⁹⁶ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.458.

b) There will be significant intra-agreement on the primary formulations advanced, that is to say, most theologians will advocate their principal way of expressing the church/kingdom relationship consistently throughout their body of work. However, it is anticipated that some theologians will offer additional ways of expressing the relationship alongside their principal formulation.

c) It is anticipated that all of the theologians in the context will spatialize the kingdom in relation to the church. With regard to the categories of assessment offered, it is anticipated that this spatialization will be predominantly 'intensive', and will portray the church as 'location and locus'.

ii) With regard to the assessment of ecclesiological differences

It is anticipated that the presence of ecclesiological differences will not be easily identified. This in turn suggests a limited collection of data, with the result that a meaningful comparison of ecclesiological assumptions will not be possible.

iii) With regard to cosmic claims

In light of the criticism offered by Douglas J. Moo, mentioned above, which suggests the neglect of cosmic considerations by inaugurated eschatological schemes in this context, it is hypothesised that cosmic claims will not feature heavily in discussions of the church/kingdom

relationship.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, where these claims do feature, it is expected that there will be no reference to or acknowledgement of any difficulty posed in this respect by the theologians in the context.

iv) With regard to pneumatology

The material surveyed will demonstrate some acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit's involvement with the kingdom but will fail to offer an account of that involvement.

The principal ways in which the surveyed theologians express the relationship between the kingdom and the church can be divided into four categories.

The church is the kingdom community – Russell Moore and Stephen T. Um

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, the first way in which one encounters Russell Moore addressing the relationship between the church and the kingdom is through his advocacy of an approach he terms, 'kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'.²⁹⁸ This expression refers to what he claims is a common feature of 'the new evangelical perspective' (the term he uses to refer to consensus around inaugurated eschatology).²⁹⁹ While this expression suggests a close association of church and kingdom and indicates that the consensus Moore perceives involves kingdom concerns orientating ecclesiology, it is hardly a clear formulation of the relationship between the two. Thankfully, the subtitle to Moore's chapter on

²⁹⁷ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p.458.

²⁹⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

²⁹⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

‘Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology’, ‘The Church as Kingdom Community’, promises a clearer indication of how exactly Moore understands their relationship.³⁰⁰

Indeed, this emerges as one way, and indeed the principal way, in which Moore expresses the position he claims to be the basis of the consensus in this area of the church and kingdom relations. The church is described as ‘Kingdom community’ on five occasions throughout *The Kingdom of Christ’s* chapter on ecclesiology, as ‘the community of the Kingdom’ at one point, and as ‘a new eschatological Kingdom community’ at another point; terms which are effectively synonymous with one another.³⁰¹ What Moore means by ‘the church as Kingdom community’ will be more fully explored in the discussion of spatialization below.³⁰²

Stephen T. Um also uses essentially the same formulation in his *The Kingdom of God*, which purports to express *The Gospel Coalition’s* position on the kingdom.³⁰³

Um begins by making it clear what his position on the church/kingdom relationship is not; stating that while ‘some have.... equated the kingdom with the visible church,’ this is for him an error.³⁰⁴ Rather for Um, ‘Christians... are members of a radically different community, God’s kingdom’.³⁰⁵ He then comes even closer to Moore’s term, writing about the creation of ‘a “Kingdom community” – a counter-culture, the church’, and describing the church as a collective of ‘kingdom-driven alternative communities.’³⁰⁶ If there is a contrast to be made with Moore’s

³⁰⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131

³⁰¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131, 140, 142, 156, 164, p.145, p.113

³⁰² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131

³⁰³ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁰⁴ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁰⁵ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁰⁶ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

formulation here it is in Um's emphasis on the distinctly counter-cultural and alternative character of 'church as kingdom community'. In addition, his use of the term 'kingdom-driven...communities', may have implications for the spatialization hypothesis examined below.³⁰⁷

The church as a community in unique submission to the kingdom- D.A. Carson

D.A. Carson also expresses the relationship in a way that appears to put him in close proximity to Moore and Um. However, an important distinction must be maintained, given the way that Carson always expresses the relationship with reference to the kingdom as the reign of Christ. The expression above, the church as a community in unique submission to the kingdom, is not a formulation used by Carson but is rather a summary of the position he maintains. For Carson, the church is unique, in being the *only* place where submission to the kingdom takes place: 'All authority is given to Christ in heaven and on earth, so all culture is subsumed under his reign.....yet a distinction must be made. *Only* in the redeemed community do we find human beings who have cheerfully submitted themselves in principle to the reign of Christ.'³⁰⁸ The church is unique in being the place where Christ 'rule[s] over people who have submitted themselves to his reign.'³⁰⁹ The significance of this distinction will be explored more fully when Carson's position is assessed in terms of spatialization below.

³⁰⁷ Um, *The Kingdom of God*, Italics added.

³⁰⁸ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63. Italics added.

³⁰⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63.

The church is 'the end-time (eschatological) people of God' – Gladd, Harmon, and Beale

A further formulation emerges from Gladd and Harmon's *Making All Things New*, which, drawing on the work G.K. Beale, proposes two synonymous formulations to describe the relationship between the church and the kingdom.³¹⁰ The subtitle of this work, and indeed the premise of the book, 'Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church', precipitates the presumption that a close association of the church with the kingdom is about to be made, and indeed, it is.³¹¹ All three theologians involved agree that the church is 'the end-time people of God' (twenty occurrences) and similarly 'the eschatological people of God' (forty-one occurrences).³¹² These two expressions are deemed synonymous for the purposes of assessing agreement, given that they may both be taken to indicate the belief that the church is definitively the people of God in this era of the inaugurated kingdom: 'Eschatological people of God' being taken to mean, literally, God's people in the last day(s) and 'the end-time' being taken as an alternative but synonymous way to refer to the last day(s).³¹³ Certainly, no distinction between the uses is made explicit by the authors. Just what position being 'the eschatological' or 'end-time people of God' might put the church in *vis-à-vis* the kingdom inaugurated with the onset of those times, will be explored in the assessment of spatialization which follows.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ *Gladd and Harmon, Making All Things New*,

³¹¹ *Gladd and Harmon, Making All Things New*,

³¹² *Gladd and Harmon, Making All Things New*, p.xiii ff.

³¹³ *Gladd and Harmon, Making All Things New*,

³¹⁴ *Gladd and Harmon, Making All Things New*,

The kingdom works in and through the church – Thomas R. Schreiner

A further formulation is provided by Thomas R. Schreiner in his *New Testament Theology*, and again it suggests a position close to Moore's 'church as kingdom community'.³¹⁵ After asserting that, 'the early church tended to equate the kingdom with the church,' Schreiner goes on to distance his own position from such an equation: 'It is more satisfying, however, to say that the kingdom works in and through the church but is not coequal with the church.'³¹⁶ Schreiner clarifies his rationale for this distinction saying, 'The church per se cannot be identified with the ruling power of God, even though God's transforming power is manifested in the church.'³¹⁷ It appears that Schreiner is here offering the terms 'ruling power of God' and 'God's transforming power' as descriptions of the kingdom itself, a position which also places him close to Carson's approach. The use of the term 'in and through the church' is also notable here as an echo of Bock's formula with which we began the chapter's discussion of spatialization. The full implications of this echo will of course be explored in turn.

The church is the kingdom - Scot McKnight

The final, principal formulation by which the relationship between the Kingdom and the church is expressed is the most unequivocal. For Scot McKnight, the view we have seen refuted already by several others in this context is the truth about this relationship: 'the church is the kingdom'.³¹⁸ This is, then, a most obvious and

³¹⁵ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*. p.131ff.

³¹⁶ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.68.

³¹⁷ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.68.

³¹⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

significant instance of disagreement, however, it should be noted that this is a position occupied solely by McKnight, within this selection of theologians at least. In fact, such is the divergence from the other positions offered here, that McKnight's position on this issue may well place him outside the side consensus claims. If Russell Moore's assertion that 'the various sides of the Kingdom divide... affirm that the church is not to be equated with the Kingdom,' is to be accepted, then the very inclusion of McKnight's viewpoint here may be contested.³¹⁹

Can McKnight's statement survive Moore's claim that the consensus position excludes such an equation of the church and the kingdom? Moore's position seems clear; he presents himself as following George Eldon Ladd in 'refus[ing] to identify the Kingdom with the church', on the grounds that, 'a starkly "spiritual" equation of the church within the Kingdom is impossible... once "new creation" eschatology and a holistic vision of cosmic salvation are embraced.'³²⁰ McKnight's claims, however, require further investigation, as he does attempt to make a distinction that may qualify the boldness of his claim somewhat. For in his 2014 book, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, McKnight states:

It is reasonable to say that *the kingdom is the church, and the church is the kingdom* – that they are the *same* even if they are not identical. They are the same in that it is the same people under the same King Jesus even if each term – kingdom church – gives off slightly different suggestions. In particular, 'kingdom', emphasizes royalty while 'church' emphasizes

³¹⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147

³²⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.137 & 147. Ladd, "Kingdom of God and the Church," pp. 168-9.

fellowship. Slight differences aside, the evidence I have presented in this book leads me to the conclusion that *we should see the terms as synonyms*.

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To what extent then can McKnight's claim that the church and the kingdom are 'the *same* even if they are not identical' be considered a meaningful distinction?³²²

If this does constitute a meaningful distinction does that qualify his claim in such a way that it is in keeping with the consensus position outlined by Moore?

It would appear that the distinction being made is solely a distinction between different emphases; the 'royalty' of the kingdom and the 'fellowship' of the church.³²³ For McKnight, this difference of emphasis, which he does not elaborate on, is sufficient to conclude that the kingdom and the church are not quite identical identities, despite being sufficiently similar to conclude that they are 'the same'.³²⁴ This leaves McKnight's position somewhat unclear. If it is true that 'the kingdom is the church' and 'the church is the kingdom', and the church and the kingdom are 'the same', and the different terminology reflects only a distinction of emphases, then it is difficult to conclude that they are not, in fact, identical entities being described differently. If one names the same apple as at first 'red apple' and then 'crisp apple' the shift in terminology reflects a difference of emphasis, from colour to texture, however, 'red apple' and 'crisp apple' remain not only the same but identical. There is no suggestion here from McKnight that

³²¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³²² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³²³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³²⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

the kingdom exists without fellowship, or that the church is devoid of royalty. This could be the case, however, if it were so, then this would not merely be a case of differing emphases, and the two could not be described as ‘the same’.³²⁵ Nor is this a case of some difference in the relationship between the church and kingdom on either side of the consummation, for McKnight, is clear that, ‘when we compare present kingdom and present church, or future kingdom and future church, we come out with near-identical identities.’³²⁶

McKnight’s stance may, then, be rendered as alternatively, the church as ‘near-identical’ to the kingdom, or the church and the kingdom are ‘the same’, or ‘the church is the kingdom’.³²⁷ While the latter alternative may place him outside the limits of the consensus proscribed, the former would see his position as an extreme outlier within those limits. On this basis, McKnight’s formulation would be notable in an assessment of inter-agreement, as the source of a significant but minority disagreement. That his treatment of the church/kingdom relationship produces two alternative formulations also indicates less than full intra-agreement in his case.

Additional formulations

Aside from McKnight, who, as we have just seen, exhibits a less than full intra-agreement, the only theologian surveyed who presents multiple distinct formulations is Russell Moore. Of course, the assertion of these multiple distinct

³²⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³²⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³²⁷ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

formulations may still be considered to represent a high level of intra-agreement in his case, should they prove to expand on rather than contradict his principal expression, 'the church is the kingdom community'.³²⁸ However, even where this is the case, by determining *how* Moore understands the church to be the kingdom community, these further formulations will still be of interest to our study.

The church as 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom'

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Moore affirms the suggestion from a paper given by Gerry Breshears, at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in November 1993, that, 'the idea of the church as an initial manifestation of the kingdom is.... "widely accepted."' ³²⁹ Referring to the church as, 'the regenerate body', Moore goes on to describe it, further affirming Breshears suggestion by adding that, in his opinion, 'the regenerate body is an initial manifestation of the Kingdom.' ³³⁰ The implications of this ecclesiological assumption embodied in this definition of the church will be explored in the relevant section below. This formulation may demonstrate more clearly *how* Moore understands the church to be a kingdom community. In being a 'manifestation' of the kingdom, it manifests the kingdom, which is to say, it makes the kingdom visible. The church then is a community that makes the kingdom visible. As 'an initial manifestation',

³²⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

³²⁹ Gerry Breshears, "New Directions in Dispensationalism" (Annual meeting of the Evangelical Theology Society, Kansas City MO, Nov 23 1991 1991), p.16. As quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142

³³⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

the church is a community that makes the kingdom visible and does so in an inaugurated rather than consummated form.³³¹

However, the way in which the church makes the kingdom visible is left open by simply describing it as ‘an initial manifestation of the Kingdom.’³³² There are, broadly speaking, two possibilities here. One possibility is that the church manifests the kingdom *directly*, in which case, the church is actually part of the kingdom, specifically a part of it that is being *revealed* in this inaugurated age. The alternative is that the kingdom is being manifested *indirectly* by the church, by in some way being *reflected* in it, as an *image*. The significance here is that on the first reading, as a *direct* or *revealed* manifestation, the church actually *is* the kingdom, at least in part. Admittedly, this does not result in the position which McKnight takes; if the church is a *direct* manifestation of the kingdom, this does not mean that the two can be equated, as ‘the same’ or as ‘synonyms’.³³³ It cannot be said, as McKnight says, that ‘the kingdom is the church’, however, it can be said that in a sense, ‘the church *is* the kingdom’.³³⁴ In Moore’s reading then, ‘the church is the kingdom’ in the sense that it is the part of the kingdom which is initially visible. It is not the whole of the kingdom, for this will only be made visible with consummation, however, Moore is clear that it is ‘*the one* visible manifestation’ which precedes consummation.³³⁵ An invisible manifestation being a term with more than a hint of an oxymoron about it, given that ‘manifest’ is understood to

³³¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

³³² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

³³³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³³⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

³³⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

signify making or becoming visible, the church is on this reading the sole manifestation of the inaugurated kingdom. Or, to put it another way, the church is the only visible presence of the inaugurated kingdom.

If the *direct* or *revealed* reading of the formulation, the church is 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom' is synthesised with Moore's principal formulation that 'the church is the kingdom community,' then a further formulation is produced: The church is the inaugurated kingdom visible *as* a community.³³⁶ Should this reading prove right, then the resulting synthesis would reopen the question of inter-agreement. While this study has just shown the statement 'the church is the Kingdom community' to be compatible with most other formulations of the church/kingdom relationship in the context, that compatibility hinges on the ambiguity of the statement. When the meaning of this statement is determined by one possible reading of another statement, the church is 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom', the ambiguity which accommodated this inter-agreement is removed.³³⁷ While, this position may still be compatible with Beale, Gladd & Harmon's, 'the church as eschatological people of God', it is difficult to see how Carson's, 'the church as a community in unique submission to the kingdom', can be reconciled with it.³³⁸ Only with great difficulty can it be affirmed that the kingdom *is* the reign of God to which the community is in submission, while also *taking the form of* that community. Moore appears to be attempting to do just this when, drawing on the work of Bock, he states that 'the church is the

³³⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp. 147, 131ff.

³³⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

³³⁸ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p. xiii ff. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63.

one visible manifestation of the invisible reign of the Davidic ruler who will one day exercise indisputable sovereignty over all peoples.³³⁹ It is not the 'reign of the Davidic ruler' over the church which is described as 'the one visible manifestation' of his 'invisible reign' in the inaugurated kingdom.³⁴⁰ Rather, Moore affirms that 'the church' herself is 'the visible manifestation of the invisible reign'.³⁴¹

The church is the focal point of the current regal activity of Christ

Moore also expresses the relationship between the church and the kingdom in another way, albeit indirectly, when he states, 'Because the church has been knit together by the Messiah himself, and because it has received in inaugurated form the new covenant blessings He dispenses, the church is the focal point of the current regal activity of Christ.'³⁴² Elsewhere in *The Kingdom of Christ* Moore posits 'agree[ment] that the church is the focal point in the present age of the inaugurated reign of Christ as Davidic Messiah.'³⁴³ These similar terms, 'the current regal activity of Christ', and 'the inaugurated reign of Christ as Davidic Messiah,' appear to be indirect ways of referring to the kingdom. Elsewhere Moore equates the kingdom with this 'regal activity' or 'reign'. This demonstrates that along with Carson, Moore himself conceives of the kingdom in terms of the reign of God, in the specific person of Christ, which suggests that his view of the church as 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom' has implications not only for

³³⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142. Bock, "Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise," p.87.

³⁴⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

³⁴¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

³⁴² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp. 141-2.

³⁴³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

inter-agreement but also for intra-agreement as well.³⁴⁴ In addition to this, in *Onward*, Moore goes to the extreme of equating the kingdom with the person of Christ himself, saying 'Jesus is the Kingdom'.³⁴⁵ A statement which, at the very least indicates an isolated but significant lack of intra-agreement by any measure.

Instrumental formulations

Instrument/Agency

A further formulation is discussed by Moore in his reference to George Eldon Ladd's contention that, 'the church exists as the instrument or agency of the Kingdom since it possesses the power of the keys of the Kingdom and the preaching of the gospel of the coming age.'³⁴⁶ Moore also approvingly quotes Ladd as saying that, 'God's Kingdom creates the Church and works in the world through the Church.'³⁴⁷ While describing the kingdom as 'creating the church' may appear to run contrary to Moore's affirmation of the church as a manifestation of the kingdom, this quote is also significant here for highlighting how Moore understand the church's relationship to the kingdom to be *instrumental*. 'The kingdom works in the world,' and it does so 'through the Church'.³⁴⁸ It is in this sense that the church is presented as instrumental in relation to the kingdom: It is an instrument or agency of the kingdom. This instrumental view of the relationship is reflected in the 'signpost'/'preview'/'vehicle', 'colony'/'embassy'/'outpost', 'model', and 'declaration of war' formulations which follow.

³⁴⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

³⁴⁵ Moore, *Onward*, p.57.

³⁴⁶ Ladd, "Kingdom of God and the Church," pp. 168-9, quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.137

³⁴⁷ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p.117, quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.137

³⁴⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.137

Signpost/Preview/Vehicle?

Moore introduces a further formulation of the relationship between the church and the kingdom when he states that ‘the church is a vehicle or sign of the Kingdom inasmuch as it now reflects the rule of the very same Jesus who one day will exercise global monarchy.’³⁴⁹ Writing some years later in 2015’s *Onward*, Moore revisits the ‘sign of the Kingdom’ aspect of this description of the church, stating that ‘the church is a signpost of God’s coming Kingdom’.³⁵⁰ In support of the signpost expression, Moore cites Ephesians 3:10, a verse which asserts that ‘through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,’ that is to say, a verse which makes direct reference to neither the kingdom nor the earthly realms.³⁵¹ He then adds a further expression, the church is ‘a preview to the watching world of what the reign of God in Christ is to look like.’³⁵² The sign (post) and preview expressions are closely related to the formulation ‘the church is the Kingdom community’, in so far as they are likely to be constituent parts of any kingdom community, or indeed ‘eschatological people of God’.³⁵³ Such a community might be expected to signal or display its unique nature to a greater or lesser extent to those within and without. The use of these terms then does not suggest a lack of intra-agreement with Moore’s thought, nor do they pose potential difficulties for inter-agreement. The inclusion of the term ‘vehicle’ here, as if it were interchangeable with ‘sign’, is

³⁴⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.153.

³⁵⁰ Moore, *Onward*, p.59.

³⁵¹ Ephesians 3:10 in *The Holy Bible: New International Version (UK)* London, International Bible Society, 1984.

³⁵² Moore, *Onward*, p.59.

³⁵³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.153. Moore, *Onward*, p.59. Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.25.

slightly curious, and so the implications of such a description will be dealt with where it occurs with more closely related expressions.³⁵⁴

Colony/Embassy/ (Functional) outpost

Close to the use of the 'signpost' and 'preview' expressions in *Onward*, we find a further collection of expressions. Firstly the church is 'a colony of the Kingdom coming.'³⁵⁵ To the colony image a similar one is then added: 'In the church, God has created an embassy of the Kingdom of Christ.'³⁵⁶ Further still into *Onward*, Moore uses a parallel description to the 'colony/embassy' expression, this time speaking of 'a kingdom assembling itself all around us in miniature, in these little outposts of the future called the church.'³⁵⁷ Perhaps sensitive to the allegation that the eschatology behind these claims might appear over-realised, Moore qualifies the outpost expression by adding, 'the church is the embassy of the coming Kingdom, not the fullness of that kingdom.'³⁵⁸

Here it is clear that for Moore, the three terms, colony, embassy and outpost are interchangeable descriptions, which can be appropriately used to express the church's relationship to the kingdom. Indeed, there is a logic to this, given that all three terms can be used to describe a presence in a place that is perceived as somehow foreign or alien. Likewise, all three are established to serve a particular purpose through fulfilling particular functions. It is in the nature of those particular purposes or functions that a distinction usually arises between these terms,

³⁵⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.153.

³⁵⁵ Moore, *Onward*, p.59.

³⁵⁶ Moore, *Onward*, p.59.

³⁵⁷ Moore, *Onward*, p.70.

³⁵⁸ Moore, *Onward*, p.65.

however, the nature of these functions is not under immediate consideration here. Moore also uses the term 'functional outpost' elsewhere, a term which seems to point to a range of functions being associated with this foreign or alien presence, rather than the basic defensive or informative functions most readily associated with the term.

The use of these three connected terms by Moore, is not a contra-indicator to intra-agreement, given that colony, embassy and outpost imply are compatible with the idea of community. They do however go beyond 'the church as kingdom community' description, extending the description to include the sense that the presence of this community is alien or foreign to the space they occupy, or at least which surrounds them. In this sense, the use of these terms is in inter-agreement with Stephen T. Um's description of the church as a 'counter-cultural' and 'alternative' community.³⁵⁹ The community description is also extended by the addition of the idea of a community with specific functions. In this area of extension, there may be overlap with Carson's idea of the church as a community is unique, and 'cheerful submission' to the kingdom, in so far as fulfilling these functions is understood to involve such a form of submission.³⁶⁰

There is, however, a sense in which the addition of these specifics might have a reductive effect on the church as kingdom community. The sense of being alien or foreign to the context would be expected to have a determinative effect on the nature of external, and perhaps internal, relations of that community. The prescription of specific functions too would have a narrowing effect on the range

³⁵⁹ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁶⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*,, p.63 Italics added.

of authorised activities for that community in comparison with a community left open to determine its own functions. While this does not suggest a lack of intra-agreement within Moore's body of work, it represents a potential source of difference with regard to inter-agreement amongst those who favour the 'church as kingdom community' expression and similar formulations.³⁶¹

Beachhead - Gushee and Stassen

Reflecting on the account of the church given in *Kingdom Ethics*, David Gushee has observed that 'our text's ecclesiology is instrumentalist, in the sense that the Church mainly exists to advance the (social-ethical-political) kingdom of God.'³⁶² Indeed, this is borne out by *Kingdom Ethics'* only explicit attempt to describe the church's relationship with the kingdom: 'The church, [is] the beachhead of the kingdom of God.'³⁶³ The way in which the church acts as an instrument of the kingdom becomes clear as the formulation is elaborated on, for the church is, 'to be that community that in its life gives evidence that intentional, violent, and premature death from any source can be resisted and overcome, not just in the eschatological future but beginning now, in the eschatological kingdom present in mustard seed form.'³⁶⁴ On this reading, the church is 'the beachhead' of the kingdom, through its provision of evidence, in effect its witness, to the transforming activity of the kingdom in the present.³⁶⁵ There is, then, a clear parallel between this instrumentalist formulation and those employed by Moore.

³⁶¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.153

³⁶² David P. Gushee and Codi D. Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 31, no. 1 (2018), p.7.

³⁶³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.424.

³⁶⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.424.

³⁶⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.424.

Unfortunately, however, *Kingdom Ethics* does not contain any sustained discussion of the relationship between the kingdom and the Church. When commenting on the instrumentalist ecclesiology of *Kingdom Ethics* with Norred in 'The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics', Gushee reflects, with a tangible note of regret, that '*Kingdom Ethics* says almost nothing about the church beyond that.'³⁶⁶

The church as 'modelling what the Kingdom will look like'

A further formulation of the church/kingdom relationship emerges from Moore's engagement with Bock's view of the church as 'the locus of kingdom activity.'³⁶⁷

Moore explains how through Bock's work, 'progressive dispensational theology may contribute a sixth option to the five relationships between Christ and culture outlined by H. Richard Niebuhr.'³⁶⁸ In the place of these, Bock offers 'Christ as the transformer of His community as a model for other cultures.'³⁶⁹ From this view of the relationship between Christ and culture, Moore then produces a further formulation of the relationship between the church and the kingdom: The church as 'modelling what this kingdom will look like.'³⁷⁰ This formulation is undoubtedly similar to the preceding formulations, in positing the church as an *instrument* of the kingdom, serving a function, or functions. What is more, the 'church as model of the kingdom' view is instrumental in a similar way to these previous

³⁶⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.424.

Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.7.

³⁶⁷ Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, no. 150 (1993), p.456. As quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

³⁶⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1st, expanded ed. (San Francisco CA: HarperOne, 2001),

³⁶⁹ Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," p.456. As quoted in Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

³⁷⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.59.

formulations. Russell Moore, again using Bock, demonstrates this in the following explanation:

Since the church is the one visible manifestation of the invisible reign of the Davidic ruler who will one day exercise indisputable sovereignty over all peoples, Bock argues that the church must be able to say to the world through its efforts at social compassion and reconciliation across racial, economic, and gender lines, ‘if you want to see God and the promise of his powerful, transforming rule, look at what he is doing among us.’³⁷¹

On this view, by ‘modelling what this kingdom will look like’ the church is also conceived of as a signpost and preview, to which attention is called with the plea, ‘look at what he is doing among us’.³⁷²

Spatialization

As has been shown, the formulation, ‘the church as kingdom community’, is broad enough to facilitate inter-agreement across the range of principal formulations, with the exception of McKnight’s position.³⁷³ However, the assessment for inter- and intra- agreement has shown that this agreement is possibly due to the sheer ambiguity of the formulation. With this in mind, the assessment of spatialization will be conducted by bearing in mind the additional formulations.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p.142. Bock, “Current Messianic Activity and OT Davidic Promise,” p.87.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, p.131.

Moore's Kingdom community

The way in which Russell Moore understands the church to be the 'Kingdom community' is determined by three additional formulations: The church as 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom'; the church as 'the focal point of the current regal activity of Christ'; and the church as an 'instrument' of the kingdom.³⁷⁴ Taking these formulations together to form a position on the church/kingdom relationship, it must then be asked, does this position describe the church in terms of *a place where... and/or place from where....*the kingdom is present? A positive answer to this will indicate spatialization.

In describing the church as 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom', Moore appears to understand the church as a place where the kingdom is made visible in advance of its full visibility at the inauguration.³⁷⁵ Alternatively, the church may be spoken of as a collective of people who make the kingdom visible in this way. It is suggested that this expressing also represents a spatialization of the kingdom, given it is then portrayed as present through physical bodies which occupy space in time.

Where the church is understood to be the 'Kingdom community' by being 'the focal point of the current regal activity of Christ', spatialization is even more obvious.³⁷⁶ As a point of focus, the church is understood to occupy a particular space or spaces, in contrast to other space or spaces which are not points of focus. It is a place with this focus on it, in contrast to elsewhere, beyond that focus.

³⁷⁴ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131, 137, 141-2, 147, 153. Moore, *Onward*, pp. 59 & 70.

³⁷⁵ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

³⁷⁶ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.141-2, 153.

Amongst Moore's instrumental formulations, it is the Colony/Embassy/Outpost formulation which most evidently spatializes the kingdom, given that these terms by definition refer to forms that occupy space. This is most clearly communicated by Moore's description of 'a kingdom assembling itself all *around us* in miniature, in these little outposts of the future called the church.'³⁷⁷ The inclusion of the phrase 'around us' presents the church as a series of outposts in which physical bodies occupy space, and experience the spaces around them being occupied, as places where the kingdom is present.

All three of these additional formulations are ways of presenting the church as a *place where* the kingdom is present. They, therefore, indicate that the way in which Moore understands the church to be the 'Kingdom community' is spatialized. However, it must now be asked whether these formulations go beyond presenting the church as a *place where* the kingdom is present, which is a *location* of the kingdom. Should they also present the church as a *place from where* the kingdom is made present then they will be deemed to spatialize in terms of *locus* as well as *location*.

It is clear that Moore views the church as an instrument of the kingdom that will have an impact outside itself as the church. This is borne out by the functions ascribed to the church as an instrument: As a signpost and a preview, it is to be seen by those who exist outside of itself, as well as inside. It is then the place from where the kingdom is made visible as well as being the place where the kingdom is visible. Furthermore, Moore endorses Ladd's statement that God's kingdom

³⁷⁷ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, p.70. Italics added.

'works in the world through the church.'³⁷⁸ With this in mind, it is concluded that Moore does indeed understand the church to be a *locus* as well as a *location* of the kingdom.

The formulations we have already examined from Moore appear to at least leave room for doubt concerning the exclusivity of his spatialization of the kingdom in the church. However, elsewhere we do find evidence that Moore's spatialization is beyond intensive, and is in fact exclusive. One such piece of evidence is in the following definitive claim:

The move toward a Kingdom ecclesiology maintains rightly that the definition of the 'already' reign of Christ is the church. This means that the righteousness and justice of the messianic order cannot be found, in the present age, in the arenas of the political, social, economic, or academic orders. Instead, the reign of Christ is focussed in this age solely on His reign as Messiah over the people called into the Kingdom, namely, those who make up the church.³⁷⁹

It would appear that taking the kingdom to signify Christ's reign, Moore is claiming that the church is definitive as the inaugurated, 'already', kingdom.³⁸⁰ This is exclusive spatialization in that 'the righteousness and justice of the messianic order', which define the kingdom here, are to be *found nowhere else* in the present, inaugurated age.³⁸¹ Equally, the 'church as focal point' formulation is

³⁷⁸ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, p.137. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p.117

³⁷⁹ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.151-2.

³⁸⁰ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.151-2.

³⁸¹ Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.151-2.

here actually shown to be exclusive in nature, for 'the reign of Christ is focussed in this age *solely* on.... those who make up the church.'³⁸² However, perhaps it is in posing and answering a spatial interrogative of his own, that Moore most succinctly demonstrates an approach which spatializes the kingdom exclusively in the church: 'If Jesus does not yet rule the world, where does he rule? He rules, in the present age, over his church.'³⁸³

Um's 'kingdom-driven' community

While Stephen T. Um's principal formulation has already been identified with Moore's, a distinction between their positions must now be made with Moore's additional formulations in mind. Furthermore, Um's own elaborations on his principal formulation must be taken into consideration. One example of where such details hold significance for spatialization is in Um's statement that, 'the biblical description of the kingdom highlight[s] God's people, his place, and his power.'³⁸⁴ In holding together 'people', 'place' and 'power' as aspects of the kingdom, Um indicates that his understanding of the biblical description of the kingdom is likely to result in a spatialized approach. Um understands that the presence of the kingdom is to be recognised in the form of people and place as

³⁸² Moore, *Kingdom of Christ*, pp.142, 151-2.

³⁸³ Moore, *Onward*, pp.58-59. Moore cites Ephesians 1:22-23 as a proof text for this claim: 'And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.' *The Holy Bible: New International Version (UK)* London, International Bible Society, 1984. The sense of this text does not appear to support Moore's argument, at least in this translation. The headship is unqualified, it is over *everything*. The reference to the church is not describe the headship as limited to it, but to describe it as being for the sake of it.

³⁸⁴ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

well as power. By describing the church as the kingdom 'community', it is clear that the church is the people and place of which he is thinking.³⁸⁵

Um's emphasis on God's 'power' alongside his 'people' and 'place', is telling, however. Elsewhere he states that 'the biblical understanding...[of the kingdom] emphasizes the rank, rule, reign, dominion and royal authority of God.'³⁸⁶ This may go some way to explaining what Um means by perhaps the most obscure of his additional formulations, the church is a collection of 'kingdom-driven alternative communities.'³⁸⁷ It must be assumed that Um here sees the kingdom in terms of a maintaining, motivating power connected with the church, such as the rule or reign of God over the community. Given the dynamic implications of the expression 'kingdom-driven alternative communities', it would appear more likely that Um is spatializing the kingdom in terms of the church as a *locus* as well as a *location*.³⁸⁸ While Um's spatialization is certainly intensive, given that it is limited to discussion of the church, there is no evidence to suggest that it is exclusive other than this limitation.

Carson's community in unique submission to the Kingdom

Whether Carson spatializes the kingdom, and to what extent, can only be assessed with his fundamental assumption that the kingdom is best understood as 'the reign of God' in mind:

³⁸⁵ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁸⁶ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁸⁷ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

³⁸⁸ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

‘Kingdom’ carries diverse weight, depending on the context – or, as the specialists put it, ‘kingdom’ becomes a tensive symbol that is decisively shaped by the surrounding contexts. Often ‘the kingdom of God’ is best thought of as ‘the reign of God’, for ‘kingdom’ is far more commonly dynamic than static, rather more ‘kingdominion’ or ‘reign’ than ‘kingdom’.³⁸⁹

It is in making an important distinction about this definition, that Carson reveals the form of his own spatialization:

All authority is given to Christ in heaven and on earth, so all culture is subsumed under his reign.....yet a distinction must be made. *Only* in the redeemed community do we find human beings who have cheerfully submitted themselves in principle to the reign of Christ.³⁹⁰

The church is the place where people are in submission to the kingdom. This renders the church a spatial *location* of the kingdom. Carson does not, however, explicitly portray the church as a *locus* of the kingdom. If the kingdom is defined by this unique submission, a submission exclusive to the church as the redeemed community, then it must be shown how the church could also be the place *from where* this submission impacts the world. As such a possibility is left open and can be conceived of through the ‘church as model’ formulations elsewhere, it can be concluded that Carson’s spatialization includes both ‘location’ and ‘locus’.

While the church is spatialized by Carson in apparently exclusive terms, such as ‘*only* in the redeemed community’, it should be borne in mind that this uniqueness

³⁸⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.53

³⁹⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63 Italics added.

is associated only in relation to human beings. For example, elsewhere Carson states that ‘the church is unique in being the place where Christ ‘rule[s] over people who have submitted themselves to his reign.’³⁹¹ The church is uniquely the place where the king rules *over people*, and while Carson does not refer to non-human aspects of creation, it cannot be said that his spatialization is explicitly exclusive. In light of this, his view will be characterised as intensive.

Gladd, Harmon & Beale’s ‘the church as end-time people of God’

Making All Things New spatializes the kingdom through the church in several ways. Firstly, by presenting the kingdom as the rule of Jesus, the book then describes ‘the inauguration of his rule through the church.’³⁹² This making present of the kingdom through the church identifies the church as a *locus* of the kingdom; a place from where the kingdom is made present. It also spatializes the church as a *location* of the kingdom, by claiming that, ‘in this initial phase of the end times, Christ and the church begin to fulfil the prophecies concerning Israel’s tribulation and end-time kingdom, because Christ and the church are seen by the NT as *the true Israel* (see Rom. 2:25-29; 9:6, 24-26; Gal. 3:29; 6:15-16; Eph. 2:16-18; 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 3:9; 5:9-10)’.³⁹³ Not only is the church presented as constituting, with Jesus, ‘the true Israel’, but it is also described as ‘God’s latter-day temple’³⁹⁴

Due to the way in which this work refers to the relationship between the church and the kingdom indirectly, it is difficult to conclude that the spatialization going

³⁹¹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63.

³⁹² Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.11.

³⁹³ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.13.

³⁹⁴ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, pp.13 & 52.

on here is exclusive. Certainly, in terms of the spatialization of the kingdom in and through human beings, it is exclusive. Thus, definitively, the church is *'the end-time people of God'*; the kingdom is not present in or through any other people outside of it. However, that may not exclude the possibility that the kingdom could be spatialized in non-human forms of creation. While no such possibility is mentioned, it must be concluded that this represents intensive rather exclusive spatialization.

Schreiner's 'kingdom working in and through the church'

The wording used by Schreiner to formulate his viewpoint actually corresponds closely to our definition of location and locus spatialization. The church is for Schreiner, a place where the kingdom is present, as it works *'in'* it, and a place from where the kingdom is made present, as it works *'through'* it.³⁹⁵ As Schreiner does not explicitly state that the church is the only location and locus of the kingdom, it cannot be said that he spatializes exclusively. However, as he does not mention possible alternatives, it is adjudged that he spatializes intensively.

Does the church as the kingdom spatialize?

McKnight's equation of the church and the kingdom results in a spatialized view of the kingdom. McKnight suggests this most clearly when he describes God's redemption of *'from the world into the kingdom/church.'*³⁹⁶ This sense of the kingdom/church as a place in his work seems to stem from his reading of its use in

³⁹⁵ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, p.68.

³⁹⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

Judaism, with McKnight claiming that ‘the word “kingdom” in Judaism (the OT, Josephus etc.) has a natural synonym in the words “nation” and “Israel”, not the words “redemption” or “salvation.”³⁹⁷ However, McKnight also makes clear that he understands “nation” and “Israel” to signify people primarily: ‘Thus, the kingdom is front and centre about a people and cannot be limited either to a social ethic or a redemptive moment.’³⁹⁸ This is then spatialization by equating the kingdom directly with a particular group of people, occupying particular spaces, distinct from other groups occupying other spaces. The church is the place where the kingdom is present now because the church is the people who *are* the inaugurated kingdom.

McKnight’s description of just how the church is the people who are the inaugurated kingdom gives an even stronger sense of the church as a location. It does so by stressing that this is not an atomized group of ‘kingdom citizens’, but rather a people who share a common, distinctive life: ‘Kingdom citizens are a moral fellowship marked by a cruciform life of righteousness and love, and this life permeates every dimension of life, including peace and possessions.’³⁹⁹ Here too, McKnight’s description suggests that his spatialization includes the church as the *locus* of the kingdom. ‘The cruciform life of righteousness and love’ that marks the fellowship that is the kingdom/church, and the permeation of this into ‘every dimension of life, including peace and possessions’ suggests his ‘kingdom/church’

³⁹⁷ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

³⁹⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

³⁹⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208.

is a *place from where* the kingdom makes its presence felt beyond itself.⁴⁰⁰

McKnight, in common with the others surveyed, is no isolationist.

This is, however, an *exclusive* spatialization of the kingdom in the church.

McKnight is explicit in communicating that for human beings, the kingdom is exclusively the church: 'Unredeemed persons are not kingdom citizens, and so only the redeemed can do kingdom work.'⁴⁰¹ It is a point he reiterates time and again, 'Only kingdom people do kingdom work'.⁴⁰² However, what makes McKnight's spatialization truly *exclusive* is the equation of the church and the kingdom. In this equation, the kingdom is rendered as exclusively human, as the church is exclusively human. McKnight's understanding of the church is, as has been shown, exclusively human.

Ecclesiological assumptions

In surveying how theologians in this context discuss the church/kingdom relationship, it is clear that definitions of the church are assumed by each of them. Many of the assumptions which comprise such definitions are not made clear in the course of the church/kingdom discussion, and as such are not available to be assessed within the scope of this chapter. However, one aspect of their definitions is visible enough in this discussion to warrant examination here. That aspect is the way in which the theologians conceive of the membership of the church they describe as the kingdom community, or kingdom.

⁴⁰⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.208.

⁴⁰¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

⁴⁰² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.255.

For Moore, Carson and McKnight, the make-up of 'the church', in this regard, is distinguished from broader definitions of church membership or belonging. In Moore's case, what distinguishes 'the church as the Kingdom community' from other definitions is the experience of regeneration: the church which is 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom' is the church which is 'the regenerate Body'.⁴⁰³ For Carson and McKnight, the terminology is slightly different. In their cases it is the experience of redemption, expressed corporately as 'the redeemed community' by Carson, and personally, in the distinction between 'redeemed' and 'unredeemed persons', by McKnight.⁴⁰⁴ In the other work surveyed here, such assumptions, in so far as they are made, are not made explicit. In the cases of Um, Schreiner and Gladd et al, neither regeneration nor redemption is employed to qualify the identity of the church they are relating to the kingdom.⁴⁰⁵

The making of such distinctions by Carson, McKnight and Moore are significant, given that they have the effect of narrowing the church they are relating to the kingdom to less than the visible church. Instead, what seems to be offered is a definition of church which is closer to the idea of the invisible church within the visible church.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

⁴⁰⁴ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63. McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

⁴⁰⁵ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, Um, *The Kingdom of God*, Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. the definitions of these terms offered by the Westminster Confession of Faith: WCF 25.1 'The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof'. WCF 25.2 'The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: *and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ*'. Westminster Confession of Faith, 1643-1647, Electronic version by BibleWorks, 1991. Italics added.

Cosmic claims

Cosmic claims do not feature at all in the majority of the works surveyed, and indeed where they do, they do not feature heavily. Russell Moore offers the most sustained discussion of the cosmic aspect to the kingdom, and it is to this discussion that we will now turn.

The cosmic aspect to the kingdom is within the church - Moore

Russell Moore attempts to maintain that, even in its inaugurated form, the kingdom has a cosmic aspect. It is a bold attempt, for he does so by locating this cosmic aspect in what he acknowledges to be a human community exclusive to one planet within the cosmos. For Moore, this is possible only by considering the cosmic aspect of the kingdom to be the cosmic extent of the reign of Christ, rather than the actual transformation of the cosmos. The cosmic claims of the consensus position then, are drastically reduced, at least for the “already”. For Moore, the inaugurated kingdom turns out to be cosmic only in the sense that, ‘the cosmic reign finds its expression, for now, within the church.’⁴⁰⁷

This conclusion seems to rest on Moore’s principal formulation of the church/kingdom relationship, ‘the church as Kingdom community’, together with his additional formulation, the church as ‘modelling what this Kingdom will look like.’⁴⁰⁸ Moore claims just as ‘focus on the church as Kingdom community is.....informed by a holistic vision of salvation. The church is the model of the reconciliation and redemption that extends to every aspect of created

⁴⁰⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131, 152.

⁴⁰⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.59.

existence.⁴⁰⁹ It is only in the sense that it is modelled within the kingdom community of the church that the cosmic transformation of the kingdom affirmed by Moore as a consensus position actually begins at all in the already:

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are presented in the New Testament Scriptures as indeed granting to Jesus the cosmic ruling authority promised to the Son of David (Eph. 1:20-21), but this ruling authority is only visible, indeed in one sense only 'already' fulfilled, in the context of the regenerate community of those in voluntary submission to the Kingdom of God in Christ (Eph. 1:22).⁴¹⁰

The extent to which this gives a 'cosmic' dimension to the kingdom in its inaugurated form is seriously dubious. Such a conclusion seems to rest on the cosmic character of the transforming power and, as Scot McKnight claims, the cosmic character of the opposing powers: 'Kingdom citizens are Jesus-redeemed humans, people who have been saved from sin [and] liberated from cosmic powers.'⁴¹¹ However, Douglas Moo offers a necessary corrective:

The land promise in the NT is expanded, in a manner typical of the shape of NT fulfilment, to include the whole world....this restoration of 'the world' is not to be spiritualized, nor can it be reduced to human beings only. It

⁴⁰⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.140.

⁴¹⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.152.

⁴¹¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

includes a material element. God is at work bringing blessing not only to his people but to the physical cosmos itself.⁴¹²

Moo's contribution highlights that the 'cosmic' dimension of the inaugurated kingdom purported by Moore and McKnight is not only anthropocentric but makes no claim on the physical cosmos at all. In contrast to their position, which postpones the beginning of cosmic transformation until the consummation, Moo asserts a view which is one of cosmic transformation inaugurated: 'God is [already] at work bringing blessing *not only to his people but to the physical cosmos itself*'.⁴¹³

In the face of the restriction of the location and locus of the kingdom to the church disclosed by this chapter, particularly in the cases of Moore and McKnight, such an assertion is difficult to maintain.

Pneumatology

Amongst the works surveyed, only Russell Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* exhibits significant engagement with pneumatology.⁴¹⁴ As a result, this will be the focus of the pneumatological assessment.

The church as 'the focal point of the Spirit's present activity

As with the cosmos, so with the Holy Spirit, Moore claims the consensus maintains an appropriate concern: 'Seeing the church.... in terms of an already developed view of the Kingdom, the emerging consensus rightly maintains the New Testament interrelationship between Christology, pneumatology and

⁴¹² Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p. 458.

⁴¹³ Moo, "Nature in the New Creation," p. 458. Italics added.

⁴¹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

ecclesiology.⁴¹⁵ So too, this is seen as addressing the failings of earlier movements within evangelical theology:

Evangelical Reformed theology has at times failed to focus on the Christological and Kingdom orientation of pneumatology, in terms other than those narrowly limited to personal salvation and Trinitarian order.....The newer eschatological consensus....redirects Reformed theology toward[s] a[n]... emphasis on the newness of the Spirit as an eschatological blessing.⁴¹⁶

Moore describes the perception that this failure is being addressed: ‘Some have observed a Reformed “revival of interest in the role of the Holy Spirit” as modified covenantalists relate pneumatology to larger questions of the resurrection of Christ and the onset of the Kingdom.’⁴¹⁷

Moore goes on to relate his own position on the church/kingdom relationship to a particular pneumatological view:

This understanding of the church as Kingdom community comes with the progressive dispensational view of pneumatology as tied to the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Thus, Blaising and Bock do not simply relate the church to the Kingdom, but actually, *define* the church in terms of the Kingdom....on Israel’s Day of Pentecost, Jesus (acting from heaven) gave His disciples a ‘down payment’ on the new covenant blessing of the Kingdom,

⁴¹⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.152.

⁴¹⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.61. Edmund Clowney, P. , "Politics of the Kingdom," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1972), p.292.

⁴¹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.49. Sinclair Ferguson, "The Whole Counsel of God: Fifty Years of Theological Studies," *Westminster Theological Journal*, no. 50 (1988), p.279.

the gift of the Holy Spirit. This action constituted His disciples a community of the eschatological Kingdom of God, under the rule and blessing of Jesus the Messiah. All who come to faith in Jesus are likewise blessed by the gift of the Spirit and join this Kingdom community, which has come to be known as the church.⁴¹⁸

It is the Holy Spirit, on this reading, which constituted the church, originally in the form of the disciples, as the kingdom community. Furthermore, the Spirit blesses all those who 'join this Kingdom community, which has come to be known as the church.'⁴¹⁹ Likewise, Moore describes the Spirit as being sent 'to form sinners into a new eschatological Kingdom community.'⁴²⁰ In that, the church is 'the focal point of the Spirit's present activity... as the community of the Kingdom'.⁴²¹

Despite the detail Moore offers on the Holy Spirit's present activity here, we are not offered a formulation of the Spirit/kingdom relationship, in the way that we are with the 'church as Kingdom community' expression. The expression 'focal point of the Spirit's present activity, does suggest that the Holy Spirit is engaged in activity outside the church.'⁴²² However, given Moore's exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church, whatever that activity might be, it cannot be kingdom activity. Activity that does not have its location or locus in the church cannot be, for Moore, kingdom activity. While the Holy Spirit may be involved in transforming the cosmos away from its focus on the church, any such

⁴¹⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142. Craig A. and Bock Blaising, Darrell L., *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1993), p.255

⁴¹⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

⁴²⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.113

⁴²¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.145

⁴²² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.145

transformation would be, on Moore's reading, outside the kingdom. As such, while Moore's work does exhibit a concern with pneumatology, his presentation of the role of the Holy Spirit cannot recover his cosmic claims.

Analysis Summary

There is almost full inter-agreement on principal formulations of the church/kingdom relationship. Moore's formulation, 'the church as the Kingdom community' is an expression that can accommodate the other principal formulations offered.⁴²³ The exception to this is Scot McKnight's formulation which equates the church with the kingdom.⁴²⁴

The offering of additional formulations by Russell Moore qualifies the depth of this inter-agreement. In particular, his claim that the kingdom is 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom,' appears to have significant implications in this regard.⁴²⁵

The work of most theologians in this survey demonstrated total intra-agreement, as expected. In the case of Russell Moore, it was found that the proliferation of expressions did not in itself indicate a lack of intra-agreement on his part. Furthermore, most of his additional formulations did not contradict each other or the principal formulation. However, his view of the church as, 'an initial manifestation of the Kingdom,' has implications not only for inter-agreement, as

⁴²³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131.

⁴²⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

⁴²⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

stated above, but also for intra-agreement as well.⁴²⁶ This follows because Moore tends to describe the kingdom in terms of the reign of God, a description that appears at odds with the implications of the church being a ‘manifestation’ of the kingdom.⁴²⁷ In addition to this, in *Onward*, Moore goes to the extreme of equating the kingdom with the person of Christ himself, which indicates a lack of intra-agreement.⁴²⁸

Scot McKnight also demonstrates a lack of intra-agreement by effectively producing two conflicting formulations of the church/kingdom relationship, as the church is said to be on one hand ‘the same’ and ‘synonymous’ with the kingdom, while also being only ‘near-identical’.⁴²⁹

The results of the spatialization assessment are presented in the following table

(Fig. 4):

Theologian	Principal formulation	Spatializes	Exclusive/ Intensive	Location/Locus
Moore	The church as the Kingdom Community	Yes	Exclusive	Location and Locus
Um	The church as the kingdom Community	Yes	Intensive	Location and Locus
Carson	The church is a community in unique submission to the kingdom	Yes	Intensive	Location and Locus
Gladd, Harmon & Beale	The church is the eschatological/end-time people of God	Yes	Intensive	Location and Locus
Schreiner	The kingdom works in and through the church	Yes	Intensive	Location and Locus

⁴²⁶Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

⁴²⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147.

⁴²⁸ Moore, *Onward*, p.57 [Italics in original].

⁴²⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

McKnight	The church is the kingdom, the kingdom is the church	Yes	Exclusive	Location and Locus
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As hypothesised, across the body of literature, all of the theologians spatialize the kingdom in relation to the church.⁴³⁰ The spatialization was a combination of 'explicit' and 'intensive', and the church is portrayed as both location and locus of the kingdom across the context.

In the absence of ecclesiological discussion among the sources, no assessment of agreement could be carried out. However, it was observed that Moore, Carson and McKnight qualify their definition of 'the church' as it relates to the kingdom, with the addition of the respective terms 'regenerate body', 'redeemed community' and 'redeemed persons'.⁴³¹ No such qualifications were offered by the others.

The general neglect of the cosmic dimension of the kingdom was found, in line with the hypothesis. In addition, where this aspect was considered, most extensively by Russell Moore, it was found that there was insufficient recognition of the problem posed for these claims by spatializing the kingdom in the church.

⁴³⁰ In those cases where discussion of the relationship between the Kingdom and the church was adequate for analysis. Gushee and Stassen are a notable example here. See, Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.7, for Gushee's acknowledgement of *Kingdom Ethics'* failure to discuss ecclesiological considerations.

⁴³¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147. Carson, *Christ & Culture Revisited*, p.63. McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

Moore's suggestion that the cosmic aspect to the inaugurated kingdom is within the church, was found to highlight the problem rather than solve it.⁴³²

Again, a lack of engagement with pneumatology is evident across the survey with Russell Moore's work being the exception. Moore's engagement was however found to be deficient in one regard. While his description of the church as the 'focal point of the Spirit's present activity', allows that the Spirit might be engaged in activity outside the church, his exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church, means that whatever that activity might be, it cannot be kingdom activity.⁴³³ As such, while Moore's work does exhibit a concern with pneumatology, his presentation of the role of the Holy Spirit cannot recover his claims that the inaugurated kingdom has a cosmic dimension.

Conclusions

This section has shown that theologians in this context share a common approach to the church/kingdom relationship. In light of the findings above, that common approach can now be described as a spatialization of the kingdom in the church as location and locus. This spatialization approaches, and in at least two cases constitutes, an exclusive conception of the church as *the* location and locus of the kingdom. In this part of the conclusion, I will explore some of the possible explanations for this intensive, and in some cases exclusive, spatialization. The

⁴³² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.152.

⁴³³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.152.

implications for the cosmic aspect of inaugurated eschatology will be considered in section three below.

Just as Moore's 'church as Kingdom community' formulation has been shown to facilitate inter-agreement between principal formulations in this context, so too his precursor to this, the term 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology', can be said to have some currency.⁴³⁴ It too is loose enough to describe the focus on the church as the locus of kingdom activity in the inaugurated age. However, this term is arguably an even more accurate description of this tendency when the order is reversed. That is to say that what this assessment of the context reveals is an ecclesiology-oriented eschatology. What appears to have emerged is not the development of a convergent evangelical ecclesiology informed by biblical teaching on the kingdom as is implied by 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'.⁴³⁵ Rather, we find an eschatology that privileges the church as the location and locus of kingdom activity.

Several of the theologians surveyed offer some account of their motivation for this intensive and exclusive focus on the church. It should not be surprising that Russell Moore and Scot McKnight, who spatialize exclusively, are foremost in offering such accounts. Moore presents the consensus position in contrast to previous

⁴³⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

⁴³⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

erroneous approaches. These approaches were erroneous in Moore's view, in so far as they deprioritised the church:

Despite all their best efforts to oppose the Social Gospel liberals, at the point of ecclesiology Henry and the postwar evangelical movement fell into precisely the same error as Rauschenbusch – namely the tendency to replace the church with 'Kingdom priorities.'⁴³⁶

McKnight, offers a similar analysis, although his critique is directed towards Liberation theology and what he perceives to be its conservative counterpart. He also differs from Moore in describing this error in terms of decentring rather than deprioritising the church:

Liberation theology *decentred the church* and made the church *an arm of the government's progressivist aims*. It is not unfair to see conservative Christian politics as a conservative liberation theology rather than its opposite. Either way, each side of the culture war has succumbed to Constantine and operates with the mistaken belief that the most important arena of God's mission in the world is the political sector.⁴³⁷

Indeed, McKnight understands his book on the kingdom to be an attempt to counteract this decentring of the church in relation to the kingdom:

What has now happened in our Christian culture needs to be faced directly. The liberation approach overtly decentralizes the church as it strives to undo the injustices at work in the systems of this world. Ironically enough, many

⁴³⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.159.

⁴³⁷ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

proponents in [sic] the transformation approach are leading one Christian after another out of the church to do kingdom work in the public sector because it perceives over and over the kingdom as larger than the church. Its framing story is that the kingdom is cosmic and speaks of the universal rule of God in this world. One can therefore do kingdom work and have nothing to do with the church. Kingdom work, in other words, has become good things Christians do in the public sector, and church work is what Christian people do within the confines of the church. *Kingdom Conspiracy* attempts to reconstruct a kingdom theology rooted in church, not the public sector.⁴³⁸

This paragraph provokes several observations. Firstly, as a reaction to what he perceives to be decentralizing of the church, McKnight consciously spatializing the church in a particular way: He is attempting to recentralize it. McKnight is intentionally trying to make the church the place at the centre of the kingdom. Secondly, he denies that the kingdom is larger than the church. This suggests that he is spatializing in another way: he tries to make the church exclusively *the* place of the kingdom. Thirdly, in doing so, he seems to take issue with the cosmic scope of the kingdom. Lastly, in attempting to 'reconstruct a kingdom theology rooted in church,' McKnight confirms that his kingdom theology is intentionally rooted in an equation of church and kingdom. A kingdom theology ought to be, by definition, a theology rooted in the kingdom.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.254.

⁴³⁹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.254.

For McKnight, Liberation theology has led to ‘a *radical* decentering of the church. The church is summoned into the world to participate in the struggle by and for the poor for justice, peace, and power.’⁴⁴⁰ McKnight perceives this to be an error because, ‘Christ came to build the church/kingdom, not to make the world a better place and not for the “common good”.’⁴⁴¹ It is in this statement that we see a connection between his term and Moore’s. McKnight perceives the church to have been decentred because it has been deprioritised in favour of making ‘the world a better place and...the “common good”.’⁴⁴² The result for McKnight is intolerable, ‘Instead of calling the world to the church, which is the church’s mission, the world solicits the church to aid the world’s progress.’⁴⁴³

The concern with the deprioritising and decentring of the church appears to be connected to a common evangelical commitment to conversionism. McKnight makes such a connection when he discusses the diminishing effects of the process he wishes to reverse. ‘What is increasingly diminished,’ he states, ‘is the place of the church *as well as the need for personal redemption*.’⁴⁴⁴ The findings of this chapter would also appear to suggest that a commitment to conversionism has a determinative influence on how the church/kingdom relationship is formulated, at least in some cases, most notably McKnight’s.

As has been observed, Moore, Carson and McKnight qualify their definition of ‘the church’ with the addition of the respective terms ‘regenerate body’, ‘redeemed

⁴⁴⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.246. Italics added.

⁴⁴¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

⁴⁴² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

⁴⁴³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.241.

⁴⁴⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp. 247-8.

community' and 'redeemed persons'.⁴⁴⁵ It is suggested that the terms regenerate and redeemed are being employed to define membership of the church, as it relates to the kingdom, in terms of conversion experience. In the case of McKnight, at least, this conversionism is also marked by explicit personalism, for the church consists of 'redeemed *persons*'.⁴⁴⁶ While Moore and Carson use collective terms 'body' and 'community', this may signify no less a personalist understanding of conversion.⁴⁴⁷ It is doubtful that the redemption and regeneration they describe is not the collectivised result of personal experiences.

If 'the church', however conceived, is to be understood as the location and locus of the inaugurated kingdom, claims for personal and holistic transformation are not necessarily contradicted. Contact with 'the church' is possible for whole persons, and that contact may be instrumental in God's transformation of multiple aspects of their person and life, so that the transformation which has begun may be reasonably described as holistic. Indeed, the activity of the church may even extend beyond narrowly anthropological concerns in such a way that it seeks to have a transformative impact on every aspect of life on Earth. Contact and engagement with other creatures on earth, indeed flora and fauna, the soil, the waters, and the ecosystems which connect and underpin forms of life, is conceivable for the church and continues to be attempted. Therefore, conceiving of the church as the exclusive location and locus of the inaugurated kingdom may

⁴⁴⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63. McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

⁴⁴⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206

Italics added for emphasis.

⁴⁴⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63.

not theoretically exclude the transformation of whole human persons or the entire earth and life thereupon. However, it is difficult to conceive of the transformative impact of the kingdom extending beyond the limits of the Earth if its influence is exercised exclusively through the church.

Even taking the widest sphere of influence implied, a cosmological impact this side of consummation appears to be excluded. The influence of the church is limited in so far as the influence of humanity is limited. Given that they *exclusively* spatialize the kingdom in the church, it is no surprise that Moore and McKnight readily reduce the cosmic dimension of the kingdom to an aspect of the life of the church. If the kingdom is spatialized exclusively in the church, then cosmological concerns must be postponed until either consummation or such times as humans might be able to claim a determinative influence on the cosmos beyond Earth. While the work of the other theologians surveyed could not be categorised as spatializing exclusively, on the grounds that they do not do so explicitly, *intensive* spatialization in the church may also lead to the neglect, and ultimately abandoning of the commitment to a truly cosmic inaugurated eschatology.

The analysis of pneumatological concerns here has yielded two findings. Firstly, a general lack of engagement with pneumatology, and secondly, a deficiency where such engagement does occur. This deficiency is closely connected to the difficulties intensive spatialization presents for the cosmic commitments of inaugurated eschatology in this context. Even if it is allowed that the work of the Holy Spirit involves cosmic renewal in the current age, then that work cannot be

classified as kingdom work without having a direct connection with the church. As such the spatialization of the kingdom in the church may not limit the work of the Holy Spirit *per se*, but it does place limits on the work of the Holy Spirit *vis-à-vis* the kingdom. This study considers such a placing of limits on the divine person of the Holy Spirit to be erroneous. Furthermore, the study will consider the potential of a pneumatologically grounded alternative to the church/kingdom spatialization as a step towards resolving these difficulties.

The eschatological significance of the Holy Spirit is readily recognised within evangelical theology in the USA. As Moore acknowledges: 'Anthony Hoekema points specifically to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as an eschatological event in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies regarding the last days of the messianic Kingdom.'⁴⁴⁸ Conceiving of kingdom activity in terms of the activity of the person of the Holy Spirit is not then a completely radical point of departure. Indeed, the central importance of pneumatology for inaugurated eschatology has been heavily stressed by US evangelical theologians in the recent past, no more so than in the case of Mark Saucy.⁴⁴⁹ Because of its central importance, Saucy has also been critical of what he perceives as the previous neglect of pneumatology in this respect.⁴⁵⁰ Not only does Saucy propose that 'the person of the Holy Spirit [is] an important way in to understanding the aims and

⁴⁴⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.48. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp.55-67.

⁴⁴⁹ Mark R. Saucy, "Regnum Spiriti: The role of the Spirit in the Social Ethics of the Kingdom," *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 54, no. 1 (2011),

⁴⁵⁰ Saucy, "Regnum Spiriti,"

means of the kingdom of God in the present age,' but he suggests that, 'Questions of the kingdom for the present age are basically questions of pneumatology.'⁴⁵¹

Saucy goes on to reveal one possible answer which he believes that pneumatology can offer to the question of the kingdom in the present age which has dominated this chapter: 'The locus of the kingdom's presence [is] the activity of the Holy Spirit in the present age.'⁴⁵² Given the clear echoing of the terminology of spatialization identified by this chapter, the approach suggested by this statement is worthy of further investigation.

On closer examination, however, Saucy's article does not generate an eschatological pneumatology, nor does it effectively point the way towards such a pneumatology. The discussion of how the activity of the Holy Spirit represents the kingdom's presence in the inaugurated age is truncated. This is largely due to how Saucy fails to consider the distinctive personal agency of the Holy Spirit. Despite terming the Holy Spirit, 'the alter ego of Christ,' there is little in '*Regnum Spiriti*' to give the impression that the personas are at all distinguishable.⁴⁵³ Instead, a particular Christology is imposed upon the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, Saucy has identified a significant direction for future research, the potential benefits of which will now be briefly considered.

⁴⁵¹ Saucy, "*Regnum Spiriti*," pp.89 & 105.

⁴⁵² Saucy, "*Regnum Spiriti*," p.105.

⁴⁵³ Saucy, "*Regnum Spiriti*," p.92.

An alternative understanding, which conceived of the kingdom as being present wherever the person of the Holy Spirit is present, would have the benefit of transcending the human limits imposed by approaches that spatialize the Kingdom in the church. In contrast, the activity of the person of the Holy Spirit is not bound by limits imposed through the spatialized and anthropocentric concepts of the inaugurated kingdom examined in this chapter. In contrast to the intensive and exclusive spatialization of these approaches, spatialization of the kingdom through the presence of the Holy Spirit could be characterised as *extensive*. Only this type of extensive spatialization would allow the possibility of eschatological transformation for other aspects of creation on Earth and throughout the cosmos.

Any proposed alternative need not disregard the concern for the church which appears to motivate at least several of the church/kingdom approaches seen in this chapter, particularly in the work of Moore and McKnight. Adopting the type of pneumatological approach suggested by Saucy's statement does not necessarily come at the expense of diminishing the significance of the Church. Indeed, in light of the prevalence of such concerns among US evangelical theologians observed by this study, it is recognised that an approach that also grounds the life of the church in the life of the Holy Spirit would likely be necessary.

Jürgen Moltmann's *The Church in the power of the Spirit* provides an example of how the relationship between the church and the Spirit can be understood in a way that doesn't neglect the significance of the church.⁴⁵⁴ How this work 'grounds' ecclesiology in pneumatology is evident in Moltmann's remark that, 'The church

⁴⁵⁴Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 1977),

is what it truly is and what it can do, in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵⁵ Engaging with this approach could stimulate evangelical theology in the USA to develop its own vision of this relationship in a way that may allow the satisfaction of both the concern with the church's centrality for the kingdom and the concern with a cosmic dimension to eschatological transformation in the already.

However, should inaugurated eschatology in this context develop such an alternative approach it may also encounter at least one new problem. Without abandoning a linear approach to time, this would undoubtedly mean identifying the onset of the inaugurated kingdom with Pentecost. As we have seen in the previous chapter, not only was there a lack of agreement on the issue of timing, but not one of the surveyed theologians selected Pentecost as the moment of inauguration.

⁴⁵⁵ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, p.xiv.

Chapter Four - Russell Moore's *Pessimistic* inaugurated ethics

Introduction

Having disclosed several pressing issues within inaugurated eschatology by way of the four interrogatives posed by the preceding chapters, the thesis now moves to consider such attempts as have been made to develop an ethics of the inaugurated kingdom within this context. This shift in focus is necessary to ascertain if, and how, the previously identified problems with inaugurated eschatology manifest themselves in the outworking of the resultant ethics. In pursuit of this aim, the following chapters will pay considerable and close attention to two ethical approaches in particular: In this chapter, the *pessimistic* ethics advocated by Russell Moore in *The Kingdom of Christ*, and in Chapter Eight, the ethics of *participation* developed by Glenn Stassen and David Gushee in their *Kingdom Ethics*.⁴⁵⁶ As this current chapter will show, a focus on two specific approaches has been necessitated by the tendency of US evangelical theologians to stop short of developing an elaborated ethical programme on the basis of inaugurated eschatology. To date, the focus on espousing inaugurated eschatology's potential as a foundation of a kingdom-based ethics appears to have come at the expense of the development of those ethics. In constituting notable exceptions to this tendency, Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* and Gushee and Stassen's *Kingdom Ethics* are of particular interest.⁴⁵⁷ Both these ethical programmes have undergone development significant enough to sustain the detailed examination so essential

⁴⁵⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁴⁵⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

to the task of tracing how the eschatological difficulties identified might manifest themselves in inaugurated ethical positions.⁴⁵⁸

On one hand, then, this focus on Moore's 'pessimistic' and Gushee and Stassen's 'participatory' approaches is made necessary by the absence of other suitable examples in this context. Yet, focussing on these two approaches also presents a significant opportunity for meaningful comparison, on account of the potential contrast between ethical programmes which appear to sit at opposite ends of a spectrum. Much of what follows will concern the drawing of that contrast. However, some indication of the nature of that contrast must be offered at the outset. By way of such a preliminary observation it should be noted that, while Moore's 'pessimistic' ethics is shaped and constrained by the experience of existing political conditions, Gushee and Stassen's 'participative' ethics emphasises that the participation in the kingdom they advocate often involves attempting to challenge and overcome aspects of these conditions.⁴⁵⁹

Despite the contrast between these two approaches, the detailed analysis which follows will also highlight features common to both ethical programmes. It is reasonable to assume that if these features are present at both ends of the

⁴⁵⁸ In addition to these few attempts to elaborate a comprehensive inaugurated ethics, there have been attempts to address specific areas of ethical concern from a discernibly inaugurated ethical perspective, although many of these fall outside the immediate context of US evangelical theology. One such example, a dialogue between a British Methodist and an American Roman Catholic, is notable for the way in which both theologians support their distinctively different ethical stances (Pacifism and Just War) on the grounds of an inaugurated eschatology. See, David Clough and Brian Stiltner, *Faith and force: a Christian debate about war* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2007),

⁴⁵⁹ See Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77, 'A comprehensive agenda of political engagement actually helps to maintain the "pessimism" inherent in evangelical apocalypticism, since politics is by its very nature an arena of compromise and negotiation, not of utopia-building.' See Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.424, where they argue that, 'intentional, violent, and premature death from any source can be resisted and overcome, not just in the eschatological future but beginning now, in the eschatological kingdom present in mustard seed form.'

spectrum, then they are likely to be characteristic of attempts to develop inaugurated ethics. Such shared features will be of most interest to the thesis where they are suggestive of difficulties and unresolved issues. Where such difficulties and issues are identified, the chapters which follow will consider the extent to which they are rooted in the common eschatological foundation.

The chapter will explore these two approaches, the contrast between them and the issues in common, by examining them in light of the findings of Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Applying these findings to any issues with the ethical approaches which might be uncovered will enable the following chapters to relate the issues in the ethics to their eschatological underpinning.

Before proceeding to examine the ethical approaches taken by Moore and Gushee and Stassen it should be established that these approaches do in fact represent exceptions to a wider trend of underdeveloped inaugurated ethical proposals in the context. This will be done by identifying where theologians have advocated inaugurated eschatology as a foundation for ethics, but have stopped short of elaborating on the details of such an inaugurated ethics. One such example is that of Gladd and Harmon's *Making All Things New*, which differs from the wider pattern in attempting to interpret and apply *Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, but ultimately failing to present a developed inaugurated ethical approach.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

How can the underdevelopment of inaugurated ethics in this context be explained? Where descriptions of ethical approaches drawn from inaugurated eschatology are offered, there is a noticeable absence of detail and elaboration. The evidence of such ‘absences’, as they will be termed here, can be seen clearly when what little each theologian has to say on the matter is recorded. However, some of the literature does not project any ethics on the basis of inaugurated eschatology whatsoever, for example, Thomas Schreiner’s, *New Testament Theology*, which is not at all concerned with the application of eschatology in this regard.⁴⁶¹

In his one work which touches on the subject of kingdom ethics, *The Kingdom of God*, Stephen T. Um does not elaborate on the details of the inaugurated ethics he is advocating.⁴⁶² That this should be the case is not altogether surprising, given that this is a brief work that is self-consciously focussed on communicating the central claims of his inaugurated eschatology. However, this absence remains notable as evidence of the trend which this chapter is highlighting.

What Um does say about ethics is limited to a brief discussion of how ‘The Christian’s identity [is] shaped by the kingdom’, a discussion conducted exclusively in terms of the ‘works’, ‘benefits’, and ‘effects of grace’, and his presentation of the church as a ‘community shaped by the kingdom.’⁴⁶³ Concerning the latter, Um quotes Paul’s ethical instruction from Galatians 6:10, ‘As we have opportunity, let

⁴⁶¹ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*,

⁴⁶² Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

⁴⁶³ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.’ However, Um leaves open the question of how an inaugurated ethics might direct and inform the doing of such ‘good’. Um does clarify that he understands the doing of good here to mean that the church has a ‘responsibility to pursue both public compassion and personal piety, and even gives an example of how such public compassion might be expressed in offering support for a failing school system.⁴⁶⁴ This, however, is as much detail as the reader is offered when it comes to the inaugurated ethics Um has in mind.

Like Um’s work, Carson’s *Christ & Culture Revisited* does not offer an outline or an extended discussion of what an inaugurated kingdom ethics might look like.⁴⁶⁵ As with Um’s *The Kingdom of God*, such an absence can hardly be termed an omission when considered in light of *Christ & Culture Revisited*’s stated aims and scope, ‘to frame Christian thinking about the relationships between Christ and Culture’ within ‘a full-orbed biblical theology’. Yet, even so, the absence of an outline or an extended discussion of what an inaugurated kingdom ethics might look like remains relevant to the observation of a general trend towards such absences.⁴⁶⁶ In the course of writing *Christ & Culture Revisited*, Carson, like many others in this context, advocates inaugurated eschatology as a suitable basis for an inaugurated ethics, without proceeding much further to the task of developing such an ethics.

⁴⁶⁴ Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

⁴⁶⁵ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*,

⁴⁶⁶ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.vi. Um, *The Kingdom of God*,

What Carson does say about the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom, demonstrates a further parallel with the work of Um. Carson also describes such ethics, albeit indirectly, in terms of public 'good'. For Carson, 'doing good to the city [and] doing good to all people (even if we have special responsibility for the household of faith), is part of our responsibility as God's redeemed people in this time of tension between the "already" and the "not yet".'⁴⁶⁷ Carson again parallels Um, in proceeding to give a limited number of examples of such action:

...See the temporally good things we can do to improve and even transform some social *structures*. One does not abolish slavery by doing nothing more than helping individual slaves. Christian educational and academic structures *may* help countless thousands develop a countercultural way of looking at all reality under the Lordship of Christ. Sometimes a disease *can* be knocked out; sometimes sex traffic *can* be considerably reduced; sometimes slavery *can* be abolished in a region: sometimes more equitable laws *can* foster justice and reduce corruption; sometimes engagement in the arts *can* produce wonderful work that inspires a new generation.... Of course, none of these good things is guaranteed to be enduring; none bring in the consummated kingdom. Yet in these and countless other ways, cultural change is possible.⁴⁶⁸

Yet even here, Carson is merely hinting at the possibilities inaugurated ethics may hold for 'cultural change', rather than detailing the approach which might attempt

⁴⁶⁷ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.206

⁴⁶⁸ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, pp.205-6

to bring about such change.⁴⁶⁹ Here too then, we find a developed ethics to be absent.

Scot McKnight is critical of attempts to 'ethicize' the kingdom, describing this tendency as one of 'Three modes in the Constantinian Temptation'; the other two being the 'temptation' to 'secularize' and 'politicize' the kingdom.⁴⁷⁰ By the term ethicize, McKnight claims to mean the process by which some thinkers attempt to turn 'the kingdom into justice and then turn justice into "social" justice.'⁴⁷¹ As we have already seen, for McKnight, 'kingdom is front and center [*sic*] about a people and [therefore] cannot be limited... to a social ethic,' a position which is rooted in his belief that the kingdom cannot be reduced to the concept of a reign, or any other form which denies its integrity as a reign over a realm.⁴⁷²

Does McKnight then reject the idea of kingdom ethics entirely? While he clearly believes that the kingdom cannot and should not be reduced to an ethic, presumably ethics are not external to it. Nevertheless, contrary to Um and Carson, McKnight rejects the notion of a wider or common 'good' as a starting point for a discussion of any possible kingdom ethics. McKnight's view of the goal of the inaugurated kingdom is that 'Christ came to build the church/kingdom, not to make the world a better place and not for the "common good".'⁴⁷³

Indeed, much of McKnight's treatment of ethics in *Kingdom Conspiracy* is negative.

He is repudiating much of what has passed for kingdom ethics in his context over

⁴⁶⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, pp.205-6

⁴⁷⁰ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

⁴⁷¹ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

⁴⁷² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.205.

⁴⁷³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

recent years.⁴⁷⁴ Again, this has resulted in an understandable absence, given the remit of the work in question, for as the title, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, suggests, McKnight is primarily concerned with rebutting aspects of the kingdom theology of others.⁴⁷⁵ Yet, the absence of a distinctive kingdom ethic in McKnight's work may also be explained by a claim central to his own eschatology. Given that McKnight finds the church to be synonymous with the inaugurated kingdom, then it must also be likely that he equates the ethics of the church with the ethics of the inaugurated kingdom. If McKnight believes that such an ethic of the church is already clear and obvious, he may feel that it is unnecessary to outline an ethical programme on the basis of the inaugurated kingdom. On this reading of McKnight, his version of inaugurated ethics is to point to how 'the church' already seeks to live.

Do the absences noted above undermine Moore's claim that inaugurated eschatology can be a basis for ethics? If inaugurated eschatology is as promising a basis for ethics as Moore has claimed, then why has so little attention been paid to inaugurated kingdom ethics in this context? Does this perhaps suggest that inaugurated eschatology is not as suggestive, or as productive, of ethics as Moore has claimed? Or is the issue that those working in the area of eschatology in this context tend to be theologians rather than theological ethicists or social ethicists as Gushee and Stassen are, and as such are concerned with developing a sound

⁴⁷⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

⁴⁷⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.207.

theological basis for ethics rather than with the task of defining or even shaping the resulting ethics?

In addition to the work of Moore, and that of Gushee and Stassen, Benjamin Gladd and Matthew Harmon's *Making All Things New* represents another notable exception to these absences. As the subtitle of this work declares at the outset, this book constitutes an attempt to interpret 'Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church'.⁴⁷⁶ Gladd and Harmon certainly appear to recognise that the task they have set themselves necessarily involves deriving ethical applications from inaugurated eschatology: 'Since all believers equally participate in the kingdom, we are now bound to a set of latter-day "kingdom ethics" (Matt. 5-7). All Christians belong to the new age and are required to live accordingly.'⁴⁷⁷ In so far as Gladd and Harmon pursue this 'set of latter-day "kingdom ethics"' by which 'all Christians.... are required to live', their work cannot be said to suffer from the absence of ethical content that characterises other efforts in the context.⁴⁷⁸

There remains, however, a distinct deficit between Gladd and Harmon's stated goal and the ethical content which results from their pursuit of it. While the task Gladd and Harmon have set themselves here is essentially one of deriving ethical content relevant to 'the life of the church' from inaugurated eschatology, *Making All Things New* appears lacking in content of the import one might expect from an eschatologically informed re-visioning of church life. In contrast to the idea of a

⁴⁷⁶ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*,

⁴⁷⁷ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.42.

⁴⁷⁸ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.42.

kingdom that is 'making all things new', Gladd and Harmon struggle to identify concrete examples of the transformation which has begun this side of the consummation. This deficit between the stated aim of *Making All Things New* and its ethical content means that, despite its efforts, this work reflects the broader tendency in the context, by offering an underdeveloped inaugurated kingdom ethics.

The deficit between the expectations set by *Making All Things New* and its conclusions may be due, in part, to the boundary which the authors place on their task by confining their work to 'the life of the church'; a boundary which is both narrowed and reinforced by the authors' somewhat restrictive interpretation of that phrase. Gladd and Harmon clearly circumscribe the task they have set themselves in terms of 'the life of the church', and in light of this, a degree of silence on wider political and social ethics may be intentional.⁴⁷⁹ The focus of their work rests on the internal activity of the church; indeed, much of the book is addressed primarily at those in leadership, pastoral or otherwise, within a church setting. As they duly acknowledge at the outset, 'our goal is to explain how understanding and applying the already-not-yet perspective significantly enriches several key aspects of the life and ministry of the church... to start a conversation about how inaugurated eschatology enhances pastoral ministry.'⁴⁸⁰ This focus is also reflected in the outline of the book. After G.K. Beale lays the eschatological foundations in Part 1, Part 2 addresses 'Pastoral Leadership: Leading God's End-Time Flock in the Already-Not Yet', by tackling the challenges surrounding 'Feeding

⁴⁷⁹ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.42.

⁴⁸⁰ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.xii.

the Flock’, ‘Guarding the Flock’, ‘Guiding the Flock’.⁴⁸¹ The third and final part of the book is entitled ‘End-Time Ministry: Service in the Latter-Day Temple of God’ and consists of chapters on ‘Worship’, ‘Prayer’ and ‘Missions’.⁴⁸²

It must be noted that, by interpreting their task as they have done, the authors have made a choice of some significance. The focus on the internal activity of the church reflects a particular understanding of what ‘the life of the church’ entails and what holds priority within it. That Gladd and Harmon do not engage with questions of social and political ethics in *Making All Things New* cannot be explained entirely by the fact that this work is concerned with ‘the life of the church’.⁴⁸³ Rather, their approach suggests that they deem the concerns of social and political ethics to be peripheral to that life.

It is entirely conceivable that the questions addressed by social and political ethics may be central to ‘the life of the church’ in the inaugurated kingdom.⁴⁸⁴ For example, the participation of all believers in the kingdom, which Gladd and Harmon propose, must involve participation in the bringing of the justice and peace so strongly and frequently associated with the kingdom in the biblical descriptions. Any ‘set of latter-day “kingdom ethics”’ which claims to guide the church in its participation in the kingdom must, then, address these kingdom ‘goods’.⁴⁸⁵ If such kingdom ‘goods’ are also recognised as social and political ‘goods’, that is to say, justice and peace are acknowledged as being unavoidably

⁴⁸¹ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, pp. 59-114.

⁴⁸² Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, pp. 115-170.

⁴⁸³ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, pp.115-170.

⁴⁸⁴ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, pp.115-170.

⁴⁸⁵ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.42.

involved with social and political structures and practices, then questions of right attitudes and actions regarding these structures and practices are not only relevant but are of paramount importance to the life of the church. While these issues may be deemed equally relevant to the types of discussion about pastoral leadership, worship, prayer and missions which *Making All Things New* focuses on, they do not feature.⁴⁸⁶

The context for Moore's ethics of socio-political engagement

The ethical approach outlined by Russell Moore in *The Kingdom of Christ* is concerned primarily with politics.⁴⁸⁷ After taking 'a look at the Kingdom through the prism of evangelical political action', Moore moves to develop an ethics of evangelical political action informed by his conclusions on the kingdom.⁴⁸⁸ As such, Moore focuses on questions of how the church should engage with political issues in light of the presence of the inaugurated kingdom, and the ethical approach he outlines reflects that focus. Moore begins by defending the very notion that the church should actually engage with politics and indeed much of his work to date has been designed to counteract what he perceives to be the historic disengagement of evangelical theology from the wider culture in the United States. While the title of his 2015 work, *Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel*, is most explicit about that concern, it is also very much to the fore in *The Kingdom of Christ*.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.42.

⁴⁸⁷ Moore, *Onward, Moore, The Kingdom of Christ*,

⁴⁸⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.11.

⁴⁸⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.11.

Moore's reading is that the tendency towards cultural disengagement is characteristic of fundamentalism, whereas 'the call to socio-political engagement was not incidental to evangelical theological identity, but was at the forefront of it'.⁴⁹⁰ For Moore, the emergence of the consensus he perceives around inaugurated eschatology offers a promising basis for that socio-political engagement:

The task of constructing an evangelical theology of socio-political engagement has been greatly aided by a growing consensus that evangelical eschatology must focus... on the invasion of the eschatological, Davidic Kingdom into the present age, thus bringing the eschaton into the history of the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. By advocating an 'already/not yet' model of this fulfilment, evangelical eschatology faces the challenge of integrating these interpretive issues into an understanding of how the present/future reign of Christ impacts contemporary problems of social and political concern.⁴⁹¹

For Moore, the key contribution of inaugurated eschatology to the task of socio-political engagement is that, 'The "already" nature of the Kingdom [inaugurated eschatology proposes] removes the chief obstacle of a fundamentalist withdrawal from politics and social action on the basis of a premillennialism that sees the Kingdom as wholly future.'⁴⁹² Moore acknowledges past criticism of evangelical theology with regard to its lack of concern for socio-political issues and the link

⁴⁹⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.19.

⁴⁹¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.66.

⁴⁹² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.66.

that such critiques have made between this lack of concern and the eschatology which dominated the context. Giving explicit recognition to the critiques put forward by Jürgen Moltmann and Gary North, Moore concedes that 'Evangelical theology...faces the (often valid) criticisms of both liberation theologians on the left and theonomic theologians on the right, that evangelical theology has been hijacked by an eschatology that ignores socio-political issues in an apocalyptic flight from the world.'⁴⁹³ Moore is willing to recognise these substantial criticisms here in order to claim that the inaugurated eschatology he is advocating now renders them redundant. His claim in *The Kingdom of Christ* is that 'the developments toward an inaugurated eschatology can address just such critiques'.⁴⁹⁴ Just as previous evangelical eschatology had previously been presented as a theological basis for socio-political disengagement, Moore presents recent developments in eschatology as the theological basis for a re-engagement. As he puts it, 'The emerging evangelical eschatological consensus can call the church away from cultural withdrawal... because the throne of David is occupied and active even now.'⁴⁹⁵

It is in the course of unpacking the type of socio-political engagement which the church might undertake having been called away from this cultural withdrawal, that Moore develops his ethical approach. It is an approach that envisages three connected political functions for the church which can be summarised as:

⁴⁹³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.69. Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a secular society : the public relevance of theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999); Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990),.

⁴⁹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.69.

⁴⁹⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.69.

1. To model loyalty and submission to the kingdom of God.
2. To offer political solutions out of that model.
3. To scrutinize political relationships in light of that model.

The first of these functions, whereby the church is to demonstrate what it means to live in loyal submission to the rule and reign of Christ, follows from Moore's view of the 'Church as Kingdom Community' which, as Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrated, carried with it the sense of the church as modelling the kingdom to the world.⁴⁹⁶ Here Moore has in mind that, 'as the church deals internally with matters of justice, it witnesses to the political powers-that-be of the kind of Kingdom righteousness the gospel demands, not only of individuals but also of communities'.⁴⁹⁷ He gives several examples to illustrate how a church might fail to do so, noting that, 'the church with a slumlord as chairman of deacons has little right to engage the city council regarding economic justice for the poor', and borrowing Hauerwas' example, 'the congregation that refuses to deal decisively with an adulterous husband among its own members can hardly protest the lack of "family values" in the White House'.⁴⁹⁸ By acting appropriately in such situations, however, Moore believes the church identifies 'itself as a witness to the eschatological Kingdom and to its submission to the present rule of the Messianic King'.⁴⁹⁹

This first proposal is perhaps the least contentious of the three, in the sense that this function of the church involves a less direct form of engagement with the

⁴⁹⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131ff.

⁴⁹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.169.

⁴⁹⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.169.

⁴⁹⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.169.

wider culture. Indeed, it is possible for the church to model this loyal submission to the rule and reign of Christ while being relatively disengaged from wider society and political processes or discourse, as long as openness about its life and practices is maintained. However, in the second of the political functions Moore advocates for the church he makes clear that he does not envisage a passive or isolated role for the church. Rather, Moore means for the church to go far beyond modelling the kingdom with a degree of openness. In fact, Moore is encouraging the church to actively and vocally promote the political solutions that emerge from the modelling of the kingdom.

Moore is clear that 'it is not only the discipline of the congregation', as discussed above, 'that has the force of public socio-political witness.... it is also the internal ministries and activities of the congregation'.⁵⁰⁰ It is in the work of these 'internal ministries' and the 'activities of the congregation' more widely that Moore sees most scope for providing and advocating solutions to those with responsibility for public services. He cites two ways in which these church ministries and activities offer political solutions out of their modelling of the kingdom:

As the outside governmental and cultural structures observe Kingdom righteousness at work in alleviating poverty or resolving conflict within communities of believers, they... find workable model solutions to social problems.... At the same time, the church models the way in which a

⁵⁰⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.169.

multinational messianic Kingdom must reflect reconciliation between diverse ethnic, economic, racial, and social groups.⁵⁰¹

The third political function Moore assigns to the church, the function of scrutinizing political relationships in light of the standards of the kingdom, represents a much bolder assertion than the others. Indeed, Moore appears to recognise the boldness of his claim, as he perceives the need to provide a theological grounding for the church's right to function as a scrutineer of public and governmental bodies. The mandate he perceives for such scrutiny is, as he sees it, solidly founded upon inaugurated eschatology's central claims:

Because an already exalted Davidic King rules the Christian community, evangelical theology has the mandate to scrutinize the features of current political relationships against the characteristics of the now-ruling messianic King, characteristics for which there stands an overwhelming canonical testimony.⁵⁰²

For Moore, inaugurated eschatology's claim that the church is now under the rule of the eschatological king, makes it necessary and possible for the church, and by extension evangelical theology, to contest the use of political authority in ways that run contrary to that rule. Thus, Moore seeks to assert that inaugurated eschatology demands and facilitates a political function for the church which was denied to it by the eschatology which dominated evangelical theology prior to the emergence of the consensus: The future eschatology of premillennial

⁵⁰¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.169.

⁵⁰² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

dispensationalism located this reign firmly in the future, while the realised eschatology of amillennial thinkers conceived of this kingly rule as strictly spiritual in character and having no bearing on politics. Moore's reading is that inaugurated eschatology has made a unique contribution in making political scrutiny both necessary and possible for the church.

It should be noted, however, that it is not the presence of the inaugurated kingdom, in the form of the rule of the Davidic King over the Christian community or otherwise, which provides the ethical content which informs the church's scrutiny. It is 'the canonical testimony' to 'the characteristics of the now-ruling messianic King' which for Moore sets the standards for this scrutiny and thus determines the content of the church's ethical judgement. This 'canonical testimony' to 'the characteristics of the now-ruling messianic King' will be the rule or measure, the standard to be upheld and the example to be advanced, and yet, this testimony is not dependent on inaugurated eschatology.⁵⁰³ Inaugurated eschatology only gives the church 'the mandate' to take on the function of providing scrutiny.⁵⁰⁴

All this leaves one wondering whether, in the absence of an inaugurated kingdom, the church would find itself in possession of a vast ethical resource which it was gagged from articulating. Indeed, the examples which Moore provides to illustrate the comprehensive mandate provided by inaugurated eschatology serve only to further the impression that his kingdom claims may be less significant than he believes. For example, Moore argues that it is 'because the Davidic ruler reigns

⁵⁰³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

⁵⁰⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

presently with justice and wisdom (Ps.72:1-2; Jer. 23:5), [that] believers are given an authoritative standard by which they may condemn political tyranny and domestic abuse of power, even by those who claim evangelical identity.⁵⁰⁵ The implication here is that if the kingdom of God is not inaugurated, as Moore believes it to have been in the form of a reign, then believers would have no grounds on which to condemn political tyranny or domestic abuses of power, despite having a canonical testimony which contests these practices; a canonical testimony, much of which predates all possible timings of inauguration, such as the sources from Psalms and Jeremiah that Moore cites.

Moore appears to inadvertently suggest such a weakness in his argument when he claims that 'International human rights abuses may be resisted in light of the King who one day will exercise righteous diplomacy between the nations (Isa.2:4).'

⁵⁰⁶ If International human rights abuses may be resisted on the grounds of an eschatological event that has not yet happened, then why is the resistance of other abuses of power contingent on the realisation of eschatological events that have already happened? When Moore argues that 'believers cannot have the option of inaction against judicial abuses since they are presently ruled by One whom the Scriptures describe as judging His subjects with fairness and equity,' he implies that a future eschatology would leave believers free to ignore such abuses despite knowing that the one who will rule in the future demands fairness and equity.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

⁵⁰⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

⁵⁰⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

The socio-political scrutiny Moore is advocating is undoubtedly wide in scope, as he goes on to explain that the church cannot ignore ‘the political oppression of the underclass,’ or what he calls the ‘proliferation of abortion rights and euthanasia’.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, in summarising his vision of this scrutiny, Moore suggests an ethics of socio-political engagement that seems comprehensive, even radical:

The initial fulfilment of the Kingdom spotlights the Kingdom *priorities* of the One of whom it is prophesied, ‘He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in his sight’ (Ps. 72:13-14). Because the initially realized Kingdom is governed by the Davidic heir who is described as an advocate ‘for the afflicted of the earth’ (Isa. 11:4), evangelicals have the biblical impetus to plead for the life and liberty of the powerless in every stage of life.⁵⁰⁹

The tone of such a statement seems at odds with what this thesis has described as a ‘pessimistic’ ethics. An ethics which ‘pleads for the life and liberty of the powerless in every stage of life’ in light of the inaugurated presence of the kingdom of God suggests anything but pessimism. However, as will become clear, Moore’s framing of these three political functions of the church places such limits upon them as to negate any potential they might have to contest and overcome present conditions.

⁵⁰⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

⁵⁰⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.69-70.

Why is Moore's approach 'pessimistic'?

The terms 'pessimistic' and 'pessimism' are used to describe Moore's ethical approach here on account of his own use of the term 'pessimism'. This term occurs in his description of how evangelical theology and its eschatology, in particular, interacts with political engagement. Moore identifies a "'pessimism" inherent in evangelical apocalypticism' and claims that this 'pessimism' is actually maintained by 'a comprehensive agenda of political engagement' such as the one he advocates.⁵¹⁰ This claim is rooted in Moore's own view of the nature of politics as an essentially pragmatic enterprise, being 'by its very nature an arena of compromise and negotiation, not of utopia-building.'⁵¹¹ In this view, an evangelical eschatology, such as the inaugurated view he is advocating, is inherently pessimistic about what can be achieved prior to the kingdom's consummation and finds mutual affirmation of that pessimism in its interaction with political discourse, processes and institutions, all of which enforce and reinforce strict limits upon what is possible.

Moore himself sums up his approach thus, 'In short, the commitment to an "already" of the Kingdom protects against an otherworldly flight from political and social responsibility while the "not yet" chastens the prospects of such activity.'⁵¹² For Moore then it seems, an inaugurated ethics means modelling and advocating change while believing that very little is actually going to change, at least not dramatically. His three political functions of the church are thus proposed within

⁵¹⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77.

⁵¹¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.77.

⁵¹² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.79.

these narrow horizons of possibility, a situation that denies them the edge of eschatological contestation that they appear to promise.

In what sense is this 'pessimism' an eschatological ethics?

Moore's approach is shaped by the experience of politics, an experience which he characterises in terms of 'compromise', 'negotiation' and ultimately 'pessimism'.⁵¹³ The result is an ethical programme that has its horizons determined by, and therefore limited to, present and past conditions. Placing such limits on what is possible shapes expectations accordingly, and it is in this sense that his ethics is pessimistic. There is also a sense in which, by urging the church to accept such limits as past and present conditions place on it, Moore's approach is at odds with the inaugurated eschatology upon which he claims it is founded. What room does such an ethical approach afford the eschatological kingdom to shape it, if it is determined by past and present experience? Is not the coming of the kingdom necessarily about the entrance of something radically new? If an ethical approach precludes radically new possibilities, can it feasibly maintain its claim to be an eschatological ethic of any description, least of all an inaugurated ethic?

As Moore's summary of his position makes clear, the 'already' of the kingdom simply forces the church to recognise that it has political and social responsibilities, but it is actually the 'not yet' which determines the possibilities for responsible action.⁵¹⁴ This leads to a political ethics on which the dominant influence is the

⁵¹³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77.

⁵¹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.79.

‘not yet’. For Moore, the presence of the kingdom ‘already’ demands that evangelical theology devise an ethics of socio-political engagement, but it is the absence of the kingdom which determines the shape of those ethics. As with Gladd and Harmon, so too with Moore, here we appear to find an approach to kingdom ethics that is largely determined by the fact of the kingdom’s absence.

Moore’s statement regarding inaugurated eschatology’s support of state violence, which was noted to be somewhat incongruous at the outset of this thesis, now appears less so in light of what has since been disclosed about his ‘pessimistic’ ethics.

An inaugurated eschatology actually supports the legitimacy of state functions in the ‘already’ that would be unthinkable in the ‘not yet’. Evangelicals may support the right of governments to execute criminals or to wage just wars precisely because the Kingdom is not yet wholly triumphant over this present evil age.⁵¹⁵

Despite being ‘unthinkable’ in the ‘not yet’, state violence of the type described by Moore here cannot be adequately contested by an ethical approach that is bound by past experience of the political realities. While the details of whether governments have the right to execute criminals or wage particular wars may be debated, the right of the state to use physical force against its own citizens or other states is so characteristic of past and present political realities that, on Moore’s reading, to question that right in the already is just as ‘unthinkable. Despite being made ‘thinkable’ through the Kingdom kerygma with its vision of a

⁵¹⁵ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.71.

peaceful creation, this possibility is closed off by Moore's approach. With such a closing off, the church's capacity for scrutinizing political relationships is greatly reduced. Indeed, Moore's approach calls for the church to scrutinize but deprives it of the resources for contestation, not least the hope that change is possible. While Moore's approach adheres to inaugurated eschatology's dictum 'Already, not yet', the accent is unmistakably on the 'Not yet'. In this Moore's pessimistic political ethics is susceptible to the criticism that it may, in fact, constitute a flipside to James Cone's memorable description of eschatological hope as 'a focus on the future in order to make us refuse to tolerate present inequities'.⁵¹⁶ Moore's pessimism may be interpreted as a focus on the past in order to make us tolerate present inequities.

How are these issues with Moore's ethics rooted in his eschatology?

Evidently, Moore's pessimistic ethics has raised several significant issues. The chapter will now move to trace the possible origins of these issues within inaugurated eschatology. As before, it will do so with reference to the three interrogatives used throughout the thesis.

When?

As Chapter Two of this thesis demonstrated, when Moore's view of the timing of inauguration is interrogated, we find that he postulates two markers of sequence

⁵¹⁶ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation (40th Anniversary New Edition)* (New York; Edinburgh: Orbis, 2010), p.38.

as denoting the arrival of the kingdom's 'already'. Like Gladd and Harmon, the two events Moore associates with the inauguration are the cross and resurrection. Throughout his work, Moore attempts to hold these two events together as precipitating the arrival of the inaugurated kingdom. It appears significant, then, that, like Gladd and Harmon, Moore's ethical approach maintains the reality of the believer's present share in Christ's victory and reign, but tempers this with a strong emphasis on the persistence of defeat and suffering as of her present experience. Indeed, not only is this emphasis on this latter diptych, but in the pessimism of Moore's ethical approach, with its limited possibilities for progress, it is the expectation of suffering and defeat which appears to be determinative. Moore's ethics follows his eschatology in attempting to hold together the Cross and Resurrection as the determinative events, however, the evidence suggests that it is the shadow of the Cross which has the greatest bearing on his ethical approach.

What?

The posing of the question 'What difference has inauguration made' in Chapter Two, also revealed that Moore, like most others in the context, conceives of the inaugurated kingdom in terms of an already present reign of Christ. There it was also shown that this reign is described as being spiritual in nature, while the physical realm of the kingdom is deemed to absent. This attempt to assert a separation within the integral concept of the kingdom between reign and realm was dealt with at length in that chapter, however, here it is important to note that this separation implies and even invokes parallel associated separations between spiritual and physical realities in the present, and by extension between co-

reigning/victory and suffering/defeat. Moore's attempt to maintain dual emphases on victory and defeat in his ethics appears to be directly linked to the contrast he sets up in his eschatology, between a spiritual reality in which the church reigns with Christ and shares in his victory and a physical reality in which the church continues to experience suffering and defeat and thus expects this experience to continue until the kingdom is consummated. The victorious spiritual reality of life under the reign of Christ the King is the essence of what Moore means by the inaugurated kingdom. In contrast to this is the 'already' present kingdom is the 'not yet' physical reality characterised by suffering and defeat.

This theological partition between spiritual triumph and physical defeat limits the impact that spiritual victory has upon the present experience of physical reality, and thus places severe restrictions on the shape and scope of Moore's political ethics. However, there is also a sense in which this partition fuels an expectation of a political programme that will bring a degree of tangible success in achieving its aims. After all, this is the programme of those who, to borrow Moore's memorable description of 'evangelical churches', 'are the rulers of the universe', albeit not yet.⁵¹⁷ The desire to see a social and politically engaged church may reflect a reluctance to contest the fullest consequences of suffering and defeat; remaining, isolated and excluded from the public discourse. It is, after all, the presence of the inaugurated kingdom as a spiritual reign that demands and drives such engagement on Moore's reading.

⁵¹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p13.

On the other hand, the pessimistic approach that characterises this engagement may also reflect a similar desire to limit avoidable suffering and defeat for the church. An agenda that is limited by the possibilities of past and present conditions runs less risk of leaving the church ignored as irrelevant, and limits the demand on her members for activity that might put their liberty or property at risk. Effectively, the already/not yet, spiritual/physical, victory/defeat, reigning/suffering dichotomies drive socio-political engagement and the expectation that this engagement will show some signs of advancing the stated agenda while placing strict limits on the nature and scale of the change being sought. In fact, the expectation of political success may be validated by the limited nature of the change (or continuity) being sought, and vice versa. The drive to make a difference despite suffering and defeat then leads, despite being encouraged by the presence of the already, to a political programme seriously curtailed by the limited possibilities associated with a creation that is 'not yet' a consummated realm.

Where?

The question of the kingdom's location is all the more relevant to Moore's ethical approach, given that the expectation of political possibilities based on lived experience plays such a determinative role in that approach. This begs the question of whose experience is determinative. As James Cone's remarks on the link between eschatological hope, the focus on the future and the refusal to tolerate present inequities reminds us, social location can have a marked impact on the level of contrast one experiences between the conditions of the present

and those promised in the eschatological kingdom of God.⁵¹⁸ This suggests that the readiness of Moore's pessimistic ethical approach to tolerate the prevailing conditions, seeking only to modify them through compromise and negotiation, may reflect the perspective of a socially privileged location from where the present inequities experienced are significantly more tolerable than elsewhere.

How then does Moore's ethics relate to his spatialization of the kingdom in the church which as Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrated approached exclusivity? This spatialization of the kingdom in the church leads directly to Moore's vision of inaugurated political ethics in terms of a set of political functions for the church. For Moore, inaugurated political ethics appears to be primarily the preserve of the church. The church engages in it actively, while those outside the church are invited to learn the lessons it models and offers, and heed its criticisms. To what extent this allows for those outside the church to make meaningful contributions to the development of these ethics is unclear. This is a particularly pressing concern, given the significance of social location raised above. An exclusive model of the inaugurated kingdom appears to have produced an exclusive political ethics, begging the question: What perspectives does this include and exclude? Just as Moore answers the question, 'Where is the inaugurated kingdom' with the response: it is in 'the church', so he appears to answer the question, 'Whose ethics are these' in a similar way: "these are ethics for the church". But this in turn provokes a further question: Who exactly does Moore mean by the term 'the church'?

⁵¹⁸ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p.38.

The role of experience in Moore's approach

Moore's approach is undoubtedly susceptible to potential criticism on the grounds that, in casting political ethics as the political functions of the church, he is unduly curtailing the scope of political ethics. However, given the extent to which Moore's work spatializes' the kingdom in the church, as its almost exclusive location and locus, it would be difficult for him to develop an eschatological ethics which did not appear to reduce ethics to a function of the church. His decision to do so also provokes significant questions about the influence of some social and political perspectives on his ethics, and the exclusion of other such perspectives. By privileging experience of what is possible in politics as a determinative factor in his ethics, it must be recognised that Moore's approach may privilege the experience of some at the expense of others. Equally, the extent to which the experience of 'the church' as he understands it is homogenous in this regard is unclear. There is the distinct possibility that even among evangelical churches in this context, there may be found communities and individuals who would characterise their experience of politics in a way that is at odds with Moore's image of it as 'an arena of compromise and negotiation, not of utopia-building' which maintains an air of 'pessimism.'⁵¹⁹ As the next chapter will show, analysis of Gushee and Stassen's, *Kingdom Ethics*, reveals that a very different concept of society and politics is also having a determinative influence on how inaugurated ethics are imagined in US evangelical theology.

⁵¹⁹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77

Chapter Five - David Gushee and Glen Stassen's Participative inaugurated ethics

David Gushee and the late Glen Stassen represent two self-identified evangelicals working in the USA who have not shared Moore's pessimistic eschatological outlook. Whereas Moore has only presented us with what might be termed a sketch or vision of an inaugurated ethics, Gushee and Stassen have produced a developed ethical programme on the basis of inaugurated eschatology, an attempt which resulted in the publication of the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics* in 2003, and a further, substantially revised, second edition in 2016.⁵²⁰ The central idea guiding the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics* was Gushee and Stassen's belief that the inauguration of the kingdom facilitates participation in the kingdom.⁵²¹ Not only did Gushee and Stassen assert that right ethical action could be equated with participation in the inaugurated kingdom of God, but they proposed that the theological narrative of the kingdom of God ought was determinative of Christian ethics. Their approach renders the central ethical question in Christian ethics as: How might we live in a way that sees us participate in the kingdom which God has inaugurated? Despite the substantial revisions made to the second edition, Gushee and Stassen's central premise remained intact. It is in this sense, that their approach is termed an ethics of 'participation': It involves and encourages the idea that human actors are able to participate in the kingdom by right ethical action.

⁵²⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁵²¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.20 ff.

'Participative Grace' and Participation in the Kingdom

As Gushee has subsequently explained, the prominence of this idea in *Kingdom Ethics* owes much to Glenn Stassen's development of the concept of 'participative grace'.⁵²² In *Kingdom Ethics*, the term 'participative grace' is defined as meaning, 'God's grace viewed as an invitation to participate in what God is doing in the world.'⁵²³ It is not difficult to see how a participative kingdom ethics emerges when this definition of grace begins to operate within an inaugurated eschatological framework. By proposing that the kingdom of God is in some sense 'already' present, inaugurated eschatology strongly suggests that 'what God is doing in the world' in the present must be understood primarily in terms of the kingdom.⁵²⁴ While a future-oriented eschatology dictates that alternative ways of describing God's activity in the present must be found (if God's present activity in the world is not to be denied), an eschatology which proposes that the kingdom has, at least in part, been realised, encourages the identification of 'what God is doing in the world' with the kingdom.⁵²⁵ Presumably, it is by equating God's present activity in the world with the presence of the kingdom of God that Stassen's participative grace developed into a participative kingdom ethics. Thus the 'invitation to participate in what God is doing in the world,' is recast as an invitation to participate in the kingdom God has inaugurated.⁵²⁶

⁵²² Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.6. See, for example, Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.24.

⁵²³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.468.

⁵²⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.468.

⁵²⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.468.

⁵²⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.468.

The approach taken in *Kingdom Ethics* can be understood as consisting of two connected components. One of these components is the narrative horizon for the ethical programme, which has been introduced in the preceding paragraphs. This narrative horizon is provided by the coming of the inaugurated kingdom and is understood as inviting participation in that kingdom.⁵²⁷ Within this narrative horizon, Gushee and Stassen outline the ethical content of the work, in effect the programme for participation. This ethical content is derived almost exclusively from the second component; their exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount and participation in the Kingdom

Situating the Sermon on the Mount within this particular narrative horizon has a direct bearing on how its content is to be interpreted. By placing this collection of Jesus' teachings on the kingdom in the context of an eschatological approach which, they assert, encourages the possibility and necessity of participating in the kingdom in the present, Gushee and Stassen reject readings of the Sermon which interpret it as presenting high and unobtainable ideals.⁵²⁸ Rather, for Gushee and Stassen, the Sermon is given with the intention of being taken seriously as a guide to participating in the kingdom through ethical action. That this is, in fact, their reading of the Sermon on the Mount is made explicit with their conclusion that the Sermon presents us with 'Not "High Ideals" but "Transforming Initiatives"'.⁵²⁹ In a similar vein, they describe their approach to these teachings as 'a way to rescue the Sermon from the antithetical interpretation as perfectionist ethical

Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵²⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.93.

⁵²⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.93.

prohibitions.⁵³⁰ For Gushee and Stassen, then, it is clear that the Sermon on the Mount presents ethical teachings which are given with the intention that they are put into practice. As they put it, ‘We see these initiatives as regular moral practices that are commanded by Jesus.’⁵³¹ Indeed, this reflects their judgment on the form of Jesus moral teaching as a whole. The Jesus Gushee and Stassen present in *Kingdom Ethics* is a Jesus who ‘taught practice norms’.⁵³² Consequently, Gushee and Stassen find it incongruous that the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount should be found teaching ‘mere inner attitudes.’⁵³³

The Sermon on the Mount as a collection of ‘Transforming Initiatives’

Gushee and Stassen’s assertion that the Sermon on the Mount does not provide unobtainable ideals, but rather ‘Transforming Initiatives’, is based on their reassessment of the underlying structure of the Sermon.⁵³⁴ As they explain, ‘We argue that the pattern of the Sermon is not twofold antitheses but threefold transforming initiatives. Therefore, our interpretation should emphasize not idealistic prohibitions but instead the way of deliverance Jesus teaches through the transforming initiatives.’⁵³⁵ Their approach involves, first, facilitating a re-reading of the Sermon’s instructions by considering each instruction as having a threefold structure and then, conducting that re-reading with an emphasis on the third part of the instruction. As Gushee and Stassen explain, it is this third part

⁵³⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.94.

⁵³¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵³² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

⁵³³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.96.

⁵³⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵³⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

which yields the 'transforming initiative': 'Wepropose the simple shift in perspective of putting the emphasis on the [third] climactic part, where the imperatives are. We propose to label this part the transforming initiative...[because].....it transforms the person.....the relationship.....and it hopes to transform the enemy into a friend.'⁵³⁶

The Incarnation as the archetypal 'Transforming Initiative'

Gushee and Stassen find that the transforming initiatives of the Sermon are foreshadowed in Christ's transformation of the relationship between God and humans.⁵³⁷ On their reading, the transforming initiative:

...participates in the way of grace that God took in Jesus when there was enmity between God and humans: God came in Jesus to make peace. This is the breakthrough of the kingdom that we see happening in Jesus. It is the way of grace that Jesus is calling us to participate in.⁵³⁸

Their interpretation here suggests that they view the Incarnation, in general (as the act by which the transformation was made possible), and the Cross, in particular (assuming that this is the act by which the enmity was transformed), as constitutive of a transforming initiative by God to move from a state of enmity with humans to one of peace with humans. For Gushee and Stassen, Christ's life and death constitute a 'transforming initiative' that is not only temporally primary, as the first of such transforming initiative to occur, but it is also the initiative that

⁵³⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵³⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵³⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

makes all subsequent initiatives possible. Furthermore, by identifying this primary transforming initiative as, 'the way of grace that Jesus is calling us to participate in,' Gushee and Stassen suggest that it functions as an archetype for all subsequent transforming initiatives.⁵³⁹ This has a twofold significance of the current chapter. Firstly, in describing the transforming initiative by which 'God came in Jesus to make peace' as 'the breakthrough of the kingdom', Gushee and Stassen are in effect stating that this initiative inaugurated the kingdom.⁵⁴⁰ This assertion has implications for Gushee and Stassen's understanding of the timing of inauguration, which will be examined in due course. Secondly, by holding up God's coming 'in Jesus to make peace' as the archetypal transforming initiative, Gushee and Stassen declare this initiative to be normative for their concept of participation in the inaugurated kingdom.⁵⁴¹ One implication of Gushee and Stassen's argument here may be that participation in the kingdom occurs only where conformity to this archetypal initiative is found.

It is clear, then, that Gushee and Stassen's concept of participation in the kingdom proceeds from the belief that 'God came in Jesus to make peace', thereby inaugurating the kingdom.⁵⁴² Furthermore, this coming 'in Jesus to make peace' represents the archetypal transforming initiative.⁵⁴³ As a result of this archetype, Gushee and Stassen appear to suggest that participating in the inaugurated kingdom involves responding to divine initiatives which conform to its pattern. However, there remains a further influence on Gushee and Stassen's ethics of

⁵³⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵⁴⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵⁴¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵⁴² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

⁵⁴³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.95.

participation to be considered; namely, the legacy of ‘virtue’ as a concept central to, and instructive for, theological ethics.

Kingdom Ethics as Virtue Ethics

The prominence of the language of ‘virtue(s)’ in *Kingdom Ethics* is unmistakable, even to the casual reader.⁵⁴⁴ Indeed, the second chapter of the book, entitled ‘Blessed Are You – Virtues of Kingdom People’, is dedicated to the question, ‘Which virtues should Christians nurture?’⁵⁴⁵ In this chapter, and elsewhere, Gushee and Stassen largely affirm and adopt the language of virtue for their ethics of participation in the kingdom. However, as will be shown, in doing so they move the discussion from the language of ‘virtue’ to the language of ‘character’, while also sounding a note of caution regarding past iterations of virtue-based Christian ethics.⁵⁴⁶

Virtue Ethics and Participative Grace

The aforementioned cautionary note is sounded by Gushee and Stassen to articulate a type of virtue ethics that is rooted not in the virtues themselves, but in Stassen’s concept of participative grace. ‘We believe that people have put too much emphasis on the virtues,’ they assert, ‘and not enough emphasis on what Jesus was emphasizing – God’s presence, God’s active deliverance, God’s giving us a share in that deliverance and so blessedness and joy.’⁵⁴⁷ In unpacking this statement, Gushee and Stassen wish to make clear that the type of grace they

⁵⁴⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.20 ff.

⁵⁴⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.20 ff.

⁵⁴⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁴⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.24.

have in mind when they emphasise, 'God's presence, God's active deliverance, God's giving us a share...' is a grace which invites us 'to participate in what God is doing in the world.'⁵⁴⁸ Again, they make an assertion that is cast as a corrective to what they perceive to be a common error, 'Some have erroneously taken this miracle of divine grace to imply passivity, disempowerment of those of us who receive it: if God is giving grace, it means that we are doing nothing...'⁵⁴⁹ Neither the error they perceive here nor the corrective they propose, are new, something which Gushee and Stassen, implicitly acknowledge in their employment of Bonhoeffer's critique of cheap grace to force this point home.⁵⁵⁰

The ethics they are advocating, then, are recognisable as standing in the 'virtue ethics' tradition, in that they are based on the development of virtues, but what Gushee and Stassen suggest is significant about their approach is their emphasis on the distinctive theological framework within which virtues develop. That distinctive framework is the concept of participative grace, which in *Kingdom Ethics*, has come to mean participation in an inaugurated kingdom. Gushee and Stassen also propose that rooting virtue in participative grace makes their approach distinctively Christocentric. As they see it, 'participation in delivering grace does not mean any kind of random empowerment. Grace is christomorphic, not amorphic; it has a specific shape, a shape revealed in Christ.'⁵⁵¹ For Gushee and Stassen then, the virtues of their virtue ethics are necessarily the virtues revealed in Christ. The grace through which such virtues develop, through our

⁵⁴⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp.24, 468

⁵⁴⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.25.

⁵⁵⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.25. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Discipleship," in *Works*, vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 2001), p.43 ff.

⁵⁵¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.25.

participation in that grace, 'has a specific shape.... revealed in Christ.'⁵⁵² Gushee and Stassen discern a pattern in the beatitudes themselves, which they believe suggests the presence of an inaugurated kingdom which has come with Christ, and is to be participated in by his followers: 'Each beatitude begins with the joy, the happiness, the blessedness of the good news of participation in God's gracious deliverance. And each Beatitude ends by pointing to the reality of God's coming reign.... And this experience is already beginning in Jesus.'⁵⁵³ What is more, they are clear that virtue is a primary means of participating in this inaugurated kingdom, for 'virtues are a way of participating in that gracious deliverance.'⁵⁵⁴

Virtue Ethics as Character Ethics

Yet early on in *Kingdom Ethics*, its authors appear to drop the explicit language of 'virtue' in favour of a related term, 'character'.⁵⁵⁵ Gushee and Stassen describe the relationship between the two terms as thus: 'Virtues are character traits that enable us to contribute to community.'⁵⁵⁶ This statement's mention of contributing 'to community' gives some indication as to the reason for Gushee and Stassen's preference for the term 'character ethics'.⁵⁵⁷ As they put it, 'Character ethics intends to correct disconnected individualism, emphasizing virtues that contribute to the common good of the community.'⁵⁵⁸ Character ethics is, then, a

⁵⁵² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.25.

⁵⁵³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.26.

⁵⁵⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.26.

⁵⁵⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁵⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁵⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁵⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

virtue ethics with an explicit orientation towards the 'common good of the community'.⁵⁵⁹

Of course, with the concept of participative grace taking priority in Gushee and Stassen's approach, virtue's orientation towards the community's common good, signified here by their use of the term 'character ethics', must emerge from the idea that God's kingdom has been inaugurated. In fact, Gushee and Stassen do explicitly root the community orientation of their virtue ethics in their eschatological assumptions by stating that, 'in biblical character ethics, the good we serve is the reign of God, and the reign of God is oriented toward community with God (God's presence and salvation) and community with our fellow human beings (peace and justice).'⁵⁶⁰ This orientation of virtue towards community, with God and with our fellow human beings, is not, then, something that is inherent in the virtues themselves, but rather is present in them as a result of the community orientation of the kingdom of God, referred to here by Gushee and Stassen in terms of 'the reign of God.'⁵⁶¹ The virtues are a means of participating in that reign. Indeed, Gushee and Stassen write in even more profound terms of the way in which the virtues are shaped by the kingdom when they state that, 'our central virtues.....are the virtues of the reign of God.'⁵⁶² Just how, and how far, Gushee and Stassen's eschatological convictions about the kingdom, as the reign, of God, shape the virtue ethics approach they advocate in their character ethics, will be

⁵⁵⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁶⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁶¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

⁵⁶² Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.40.

explored in the course of the following analysis of the issues which present themselves.

Issues with *Kingdom Ethics*

Since the publication of the second edition of *Kingdom Ethics*, David Gushee has come to identify a number of potential problems with the book's approach. In 'The Kingdom of God, Hope and Christian Ethics', an article produced in collaboration with Codi Norred, Gushee highlights several areas where he now perceives difficulties in his previous work.⁵⁶³ In my analysis of the issues with *Kingdom Ethics*, I will begin by outlining these perceived difficulties, before moving to explore their relationship with the eschatological problems disclosed by the preceding chapters of this thesis.

Participation Frustrated

Foremost among the difficulties which Gushee now perceives with the ethics of participation he proposed in both editions of *Kingdom Ethics*, is the fact that the participative perspective generated expectations that have been almost universally disappointed. The type of progress Gushee projected as being made possible by God's invitation to participate in his inaugurated kingdom has, he now admits, been frustrated.⁵⁶⁴ Gushee has arrived at this reflection by way of his interaction with Miguel De la Torre's critique of liberation theology (which De la Torre once advocated but has now distanced himself from) in *The Politics of*

⁵⁶³ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics,"

⁵⁶⁴ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

Jesús.⁵⁶⁵ De la Torre's critique is, specifically, directed at the optimism of hope as a perspective informed by middle-class privilege.⁵⁶⁶ De la Torre's objection is one borne out of the frustration of such hope, for his experience has come to suggest to him that the arc of history does not bend towards justice.⁵⁶⁷ Indeed, without signs of progress, and in the face of mounting evidence of that conditions are in fact worsening for the many, how can such hope be maintained? Gushee, sharing De la Torre's frustration, has also come to take seriously De la Torre's objection to the type of eschatological optimism he and Stassen asserted in *Kingdom Ethics*.⁵⁶⁸ For Gushee, the pressing question is whether, in light of experience, belief in the idea of participating in an inaugurated kingdom be maintained?⁵⁶⁹

Gushee's Self-Criticism

In 'The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics', Gushee poses five searching questions about the positions he and Stassen adopted in *Kingdom Ethics*.⁵⁷⁰ Of these five questions, at least four may be said to raise issues related to issues which this thesis has already identified. These four questions will be outlined briefly below, and the significance of each for this thesis will be explored.

⁵⁶⁵ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," pp.9-11. Miguel A. De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús: A Hispanic Political Theology* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), pp.133-139.

⁵⁶⁶ De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús*, pp.133-139.

⁵⁶⁷ De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús*, pp.136-7.

⁵⁶⁸ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.10.

⁵⁶⁹ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.10.

⁵⁷⁰ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," pp.8-9.

'Question 1'

The first of the questions Gushee and Norred raise when looking back at *Kingdom Ethics* is, 'Have we 'kingdom ethicists' really recovered what Jesus himself hoped? Or have we affixed our own social-political hope, twenty centuries later, in very different historical contexts, onto that first-century man named Jesus?'⁵⁷¹ This question is undoubtedly very directly related to the concerns which De la Torre's critique of hope has provoked in Gushee. The frustration of the 'social-political hope' which *Kingdom Ethics* exuded has confronted Gushee with the prospect that such a hope may not originate in the example and teaching of Jesus himself.⁵⁷² To maintain that it did, in the face of evidence suggesting the frustration of this hope, would be to cast doubt on the validity of the Gospel record of Jesus' life and teaching. To give way to such doubt would be, in effect, to concede the core evangelical commitment to a Biblicism which maintains the absolute validity of such testimony. Thus, the question raised is whether the frustrated social-political hope embodied by, though by no means confined to, *Kingdom Ethics*, is, in fact, alien to the Jesus of the Scriptures. This question opens up the possibility of Gushee moving closer to Moore's approach, which, advocating a pessimistic outlook on the basis of experience, finds that the Jesus of Scripture did not encourage a 'social-political hope' of the type advocated by *Kingdom Ethics*.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷¹ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵⁷² Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵⁷³ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

‘Question 3’

In the second of their relevant questions, Gushee and Norred suggest that the early church experienced and reacted to a similar frustration of hope:

What do we make of the fact that the inaugurated kingdom hope, if that is what we really find in the Synoptic Gospels, proved unsustainable (or was consciously altered) within the lifetime of the first Christians? We see the transmuting of this hope already in the Apostle Paul, and certainly, we see by the time of the early creeds that the social hope has given way to a very different kind of hope, or hopes—mainly in a faithful church, personal resurrection, a just judgment by a returning and triumphant Lord, and only after that, a kingdom that will have no end.⁵⁷⁴

Here we appear to find Gushee and Norred suggesting that the evidence of Pauline epistles and the creeds casts doubt on the validity of inaugurated eschatology and that this doubt arises from a very similar source to those being experienced by Gushee as he reflects back on the claims of *Kingdom Ethics*, namely the failure of experience to meet the expectations generated by hope for social-political transformation in the already.⁵⁷⁵ In light of the Biblicist commitments highlighted by the methodology of this thesis, the claim that such hope has already begun to be transmuted in the writings of the Apostle Paul, must be taken very seriously.

⁵⁷⁴ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵⁷⁵ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

‘Question 4’

Moore and Norred go on to ask:

What about the fact that the account offered in books like *Kingdom Ethics* has a modern traceable lineage? It emerged in the late C19th under the urgent pressure of ‘The Social Question’ posed by the depredations of urban capitalism, and the Marxist challenge to the opiate-like impact of otherworldly Christianity. It began in northern Europe (Germany, Great Britain), leapt the Atlantic, and flowed into the Social Gospel movement which, though it petered out, still left traces of a Kingdom-of-God version of Christianity all over (especially progressive) North American church life.⁵⁷⁶

Indeed, this question appears to reflect an issue that has caused Gushee a great deal of reflection. Gushee goes on to note that, ‘one of the most remarkable ‘meta’ observations to be made about the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics* is that we did not situate our kingdom of God narrative in that lineage. We just read it off the biblical text and the background biblical studies literature.’⁵⁷⁷ It is interesting to note at this point that those who have attempted to refute and correct the Social Gospel movement have also, nonetheless, been influenced by it. In this sense, many other evangelical theologians in the USA, not least Moore and McKnight, are equally indebted to a similar modern traceable lineage for their view of the kingdom.⁵⁷⁸ As with Gushee and Stassen, they have not recognised or

⁵⁷⁶ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵⁷⁷ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

⁵⁷⁸ In addition, as the chapter on the timing of inauguration has demonstrated, they are beholden to a particularly modern understanding of time, yet have failed to recognise these assumptions and their origin.

situated their narrative in this lineage. While Gushee is now recognising this issue, there is no evidence of a similar awareness elsewhere.

"Question 5"

The final question of relevance to this chapter is:

What if Jesus himself, and maybe the rest of us who share his narrative horizon of the dawning kingdom of God, were and are, just wrong? What if this kingdom of God theme is a very powerful, very devout, but still very much mythical story that Jewish and Christian believers have sometimes told ourselves to motivate righteous action and have reason to hope? What would that do to our ethics? To our faith?⁵⁷⁹

Interestingly, Gushee assumes that the particular narrative horizon of the kingdom of God he holds to is undoubtedly that of Jesus himself, to the extent that if he is wrong about the kingdom then Jesus is wrong. The inadequacies Gushee has identified in his own interpretation of the kingdom, and those which this thesis identifies in other evangelical iterations of inaugurated eschatology, do not necessarily suggest that the message about the dawning kingdom of God attributed to Jesus is wrong. They may simply indicate that inaugurated eschatology, at least in its current forms, is deficient as an expression of that message.

⁵⁷⁹ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.8.

Summary of the Issues with Kingdom Ethics

Kingdom Ethics argues that believers can participate in the inaugurated kingdom through developing, and acting on, community-oriented virtues, or in Gushee and Stassen's terminology, 'character'. Yet, as Gushee has come to acknowledge, the evidence of experience often calls into question the assumption that participation in the kingdom is possible, by suggesting the absence of progress towards the type of society associated with the kingdom of God. In fact, in many cases, experience of the present conditions may suggest the opposite of progress. It is this 'evidence from experience' which leads De la Torre to conclude that progress towards justice 'is a faith statement assumed without proof', and that 'one is hard-pressed to notice any type of progressive dialectical march toward a better human existence.'⁵⁸⁰ In recognising the truth of De la Torre's observations, Gushee has acknowledged that the optimism of *Kingdom Ethics* is unsustainable.⁵⁸¹ The participation it advocated appears frustrated.

Eschatological roots of the issues

From our discussion of Gushee and Stassen's approach, it is evident that they derive a vision of inaugurated ethics that differs significantly from Russell Moore's.⁵⁸² Yet, their outworking of inaugurated eschatology has presented similar problems for both parties, something which may further suggest difficulties

⁵⁸⁰ De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús*, pp.134, 136-7.

⁵⁸¹ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.7. Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁵⁸² The fact that progressive and conservative evangelicals in this context appear to have developed diverging political and social ethics from inaugurated eschatology may suggest that eschatology in this context is in danger of being reduced to little more than another battlefield in the culture wars (perhaps again!).

with this eschatological schema itself. That Gushee has become aware of problems in his own 'progressive' approach, which mirror the issues the previous chapter found with Moore's pessimistic inaugurated ethics, further supports the critique of the inaugurated eschatology's viability developed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Not only has a similar inaugurated eschatology yielded two radically different ethical visions, but it appears to have caused both visions to suffer similar problems.

When considering Gushee and Stassen's *Kingdom Ethics* in comparison with Moore's approach, it might be observed that Moore's pessimistic ethics is in one sense a more logical extension of an inaugurated eschatological position. The claim that an inaugurated kingdom has taken effect as an inaugurated reign emphasises a spiritual dynamic, which as Chapter Two and Chapter Three have shown de-emphasises the prospect of material transformation, and therefore by extension de-emphasises the prospect of changes to political and social reality. In this sense, pessimism about the prospect of such transformation appears to be a logical extension of this eschatological approach to social and political ethics. Chapter Two demonstrated that Gushee and Stassen hold a similar eschatological position, describing the inaugurated kingdom as inaugurated reign. Yet, as this chapter has just shown, in *Kingdom Ethics* they outline an approach that assumes that changes to political and social reality were underway. Indeed, their ethical programme was designed to encourage their readers to participate in such change. Thus, the disappointment and frustration experienced by Gushee more recently may be interpreted as the result of this ethical programme over-reaching its eschatological basis.

A participative ethics may, in fact, be more consistent with the claim that an integral kingdom, that is a reign over a realm, has come. However, as Chapter Three concluded, this eschatological position is unsustainable. As this thesis has shown, only McKnight attempts to maintain that a kingdom that is both reign and realm has been inaugurated, and even then, McKnight is forced to make the unconvincing case that its realm is confined to the church. Convincing or otherwise, that case has been rejected by other advocates of inaugurated eschatology in the USA on the basis that it contradicts the foundational assumption that the church cannot be equated with the kingdom.

On this evidence, it is little wonder that Gushee has found his earlier ethical optimism to be unsustainable in the face of reality. The eschatological foundations which he and Stassen establish in *Kingdom Ethics* do not, and cannot, sustain such optimism about the prospects of social and political transformation in 'the already.'

The role of experience: The significance of Social Location

Can social location determine both ethical approaches?

Chapter Seven has already suggested that Moore's pessimism may represent the flipside to James Cone's view of the relationship between the desire for eschatological transformation and present social conditions.⁵⁸³ Yet, in light of what this chapter has revealed about Gushee and Stassen's *Kingdom Ethics* we must now revisit this observation, and the question it suggests: Does inaugurated

⁵⁸³ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p.38.

eschatology and inaugurated ethics only work for the socially privileged who are relatively comfortable under current conditions?⁵⁸⁴

If we answer this question in the affirmative, we must first allow the possibility that one's experience of politics, and particularly one's social location have a distinctive, determinative effect on one's vision of eschatological ethics. Yet, if we do so, then how do we explain the participative *Kingdom Ethics*, with all its hope for transformative initiatives in the present and near future, offered by Gushee and Stassen?⁵⁸⁵ That is, offered by two theological ethicists from a seemingly similar social environment to Russell Moore.

Solidarity in *Kingdom Ethics*

One explanation for this emerges out of a careful reading of Gushee and Stassen's, *Kingdom Ethics*.⁵⁸⁶ On such a reading we find that this is not only a work of kingdom ethics but also, and as Gushee and Stassen argue, by extension, a work of 'solidarity ethics'.⁵⁸⁷ That is to say, *Kingdom Ethics* was written from a perspective of solidarity with those experiencing social conditions which are different, often, presumably markedly different from the authors.⁵⁸⁸ The book is explicit about the type of social conditions its authors have in mind:

⁵⁸⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁵⁸⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁵⁸⁶ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁵⁸⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.377. Gushee self-consciously, and to a degree retrospectively uses this term with reference to the recent work of Peters, which was published some years after the first edition of *Kingdom Ethics*. Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014),

⁵⁸⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.377.

A kingdom ethics – a Christlike ethic – helps shape people of a different type of character. Such people do not need to try to grind nonconformity, or conformists, out of existence. Instead, they move to the side of those who are marginalized and different, with compassion and solidarity.⁵⁸⁹

Indeed, there is a particular sense of solidarity with those who are socially marginalized as a result of economic factors, as Gushee and Stassen emphasise that, ‘the community as a whole has responsibilities in meeting the needs of the helpless poor as effectively as possible.’⁵⁹⁰ Equally, a call for solidarity with those being affected by racial injustice is issued to white evangelicals as an appropriate response in light of the inaugurated kingdom:

The problem is that when white evangelicals speak of forgiveness and reconciliation, they normally do not do so out of the experience of solidarity with blacks in suffering for justice but instead as a substitute for that work of justice. In short, while black Christians are morally entitled to emphasize the ultimate aim of reconciliation, white Christians are generally not thus entitled. Our calling is to join in the struggle for justice, only within that context can we then speak credibly of reconciliation.⁵⁹¹

While this statement, in particular, recognises the significance of the authors’ own social location, it also recognises the determinative influence of the social experience of those with whom they are called to show solidarity. In this sense,

⁵⁸⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.251.

⁵⁹⁰ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.377.

⁵⁹¹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.416

then, social location and experience may yet be found significant for inaugurated ethics.

Chapter Six: Towards a Constructive Proposal

This study leaves open the possibility that these issues can be resolved. However, given the number and nature of the issues, it must be concluded that overcoming the current deficiencies will be difficult. While it is beyond the scope of this study to suggest exactly how this might be achieved, this chapter aims to identify what might be required of a sufficient inaugurated eschatology. The primary task of this chapter, however, is to go beyond that and engage with the work of theologians outside the immediate context whose work holds the promise of widening the conversation on inaugurated eschatology among US evangelicals, and thus increasing the potential paths beyond the impasse this project has set out.

While this study shows that this is currently not the case, it remains possible that a single marker of sequence could be advocated consistently within evangelical theology in the USA. This would suggest greater compliance with the constraints of a linear approach to time than has been the case among the body of literature examined by the current study. However, this would not address the concern, raised by Moltmann, that attempting to integrate eschatological and historical time in this way is itself an erroneous enterprise.⁵⁹² Indeed, the concept of ‘inauguration’ seems to be so reliant on a linear approach to time that any move away from it would likely result in a move to a different type of eschatology.

⁵⁹² Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, pp. 6-13.

In addition to this, there are three clear issues related to the role of the church *vis-à-vis* the inaugurated kingdom, which appear to be in need of resolution. As was suggested in Chapter Three, a shift in focus towards the role of the Holy Spirit, with the role of the church grounded in 'the presence and power of the Holy Spirit following Moltmann's *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, may reopen the possibility of cosmic transformation seemingly excluded by the intensive and exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church observed in the body of literature analysed here.⁵⁹³ This would, obviously, further emphasise the need for a developed kingdom pneumatology, one which explores the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit more thoroughly than has been the case in evangelical theology in the US so far. This shift in focus may also have the effect of making ecclesiological divisions in evangelical theology less significant. However, such divisions would likely remain problematic. A developed kingdom-oriented ecclesiology would still be required, although the possible developments in pneumatology outlined above may prove generative in this regard. Indeed, such a focus on the eschatological significance of the Holy Spirit may also be suggestive of a particular marker of sequence for inauguration, e.g., Pentecost, thus addressing the first eschatological deficiency, at least partly.

The difficulty posed by a shift in terminology from 'kingdom' to 'reign' or 'rule,' and the effective neglect of 'realm' is perhaps the most difficult to resolve. Failure to conceive of the kingdom in a way that integrates 'reign' and 'realm' would leave

⁵⁹³ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, See for example, p.xiv. 'The church is what it truly is and what it can do, in the *presence and power of the Holy Spirit*.'

inaugurated eschatology susceptible to McKnight's critique.⁵⁹⁴ Similarly, any attempt to identify a specific realm, such as the church, remains problematic, for it would return us to the question of cosmic transformation. It may be possible to resolve this dilemma by equating the realm with the presence or reach, of the Spirit, a move which would probably result in the cosmos being named as 'realm'. However, this would be unlikely to satisfy concerns with a lack of tangible transformation, and may even intensify them.

Even then, could an inaugurated eschatology that was able to resolve these issues, and overcome these deficiencies, represent a viable basis for social and political ethics?

Between pessimism and frustration?

If such a kingdom ethics is to be an eschatological ethics at all it must avoid the pessimism of Moore's approach, shaped as it is by the experience of past and prevailing conditions. It must then exhibit an openness to the radically new, more akin to the optimism of Gushee and Stassen's approach, while somehow avoiding the desperate frustration that has resulted from the disappointment of expectations. The evidence of this study emphasises the difficulties involved in such a task. Indeed, it has highlighted some of the pitfalls from which it will be difficult for inaugurated ethics to escape.

Not least among the difficulties suggested by this study is the tendency of inaugurated eschatology to suggest that socio-political ethics involves the balancing of expectations about transformation. The negative effects of this

⁵⁹⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp.11-12.

tendency have been evident, in different ways, in Moore's pessimism and Gushee's frustrated hope. An inaugurated eschatology which suggests some transformation is 'already' possible, while at the same time maintaining that full transformation will only come with the consummation, invites its advocates to determine just how much transformation is possible, what form that transformation will take, where it will take place, and for whom. While the Biblicist commitments of evangelical theology in the USA determine that such questions are answered with a focus on the biblical material, long-standing questions of interpretation and the factors which influence are raised again by the way in which this study has found social location and experience to be evident in their determinative influence on what inaugurated ethics.

A Fourfold proposal on the way ahead

Ultimately, a final conclusion on the viability of the cosmic claims within the type of inaugurated framework advocated here cannot be reached until these cosmic claims are considered in light of the Spirit's agency. This remains a key recommendation of this thesis. While this is yet to happen, in the event that it does happen it may yield alternatives to Moore's suggestion that the cosmic dimension is in the church. One possible approach which warrants consideration would be to adapt Moltmann's view of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church into an inaugurated account whereby the Spirit is viewed as an agent of inauguration.⁵⁹⁵ This would go some way to addressing concerns about

⁵⁹⁵ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*,

the divine agency of inauguration, while also allowing for the possibility of cosmic transformation without decentring the church; the latter being a concern voiced by Moore and McKnight in particular.

However, a further note of caution must be sounded here, for, while this may offer a way to an expression of inaugurated eschatology more consistent with the commitments of Moore *et al*, it cannot address the previously identified difficulties which arise from the inaugurated framework to which they are likely to remain committed. In this inaugurated eschatology in the context would benefit from heeding the work of Anglican theologian Daniel Hardy in relation to the importance of contingencies. Of particular relevance is Hardy's critique of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's view of how human sociality arises:

Bonhoeffer derives sociality directly from relationship to God; human sociality arises in (is given with) relationship with God – as a necessary part of it, not as a *post facto* addition to it. Therefore, human sociality is inseparable from community with God; human and human-divine community are mutually necessary.⁵⁹⁶

The problem with Bonhoeffer's view on Hardy's reading, and where this view is shared by our sample, is that it supposes 'the necessity of God's specific work in Christ as the solution of the social problem [and it supposes] that witness to the work of God is specific to the Church.'⁵⁹⁷ The effect of all this, in Hardy's view is to

⁵⁹⁶ Daniel W. Hardy, "Created and Redeemed Sociality," in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, ed. Colin Gunton; Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1989), p.42.

⁵⁹⁷ Hardy, "On Being the Church," p.43.

ultimately restrict God's work in sociality to 'redemption and the Church.'⁵⁹⁸ That this type of restriction is evident in much of the work examined by this thesis is obvious, however, the problem with this may be less so. For Hardy, this leaves Christian social teaching largely obsolete in a world faced by contingencies which grow more and more complex and numerous. Furthermore, by disconnecting creation and eschatology these approaches limit what can be affirmed as good about the good creation.

The only viable option which Hardy sees for responding to life's contingencies is to trace human sociality to 'the Logos of God operative in creation', rather than 'God's specific act of redemption in Christ.'⁵⁹⁹ This, then, presents a further challenge which any attempt to formulate an account of human sociality, and by extension, socio-political ethics, on the basis of an inaugurated eschatology. Hardy's suggested way forward, in 'Creation and Eschatology', is to develop a dialogical rather than monological account, that is to say, any reconstruction of creation and eschatology requires 'a dialogical correlation with nature (as understood by the sciences) and the general history of the world and the human race' to be an effective one.⁶⁰⁰

In addition to this issue, a further feature of inaugurated eschatology's approach which is made discernible by this study is its static format. By this, I mean to say

⁵⁹⁸ Hardy, "On Being the Church," p.44.

⁵⁹⁹ Hardy, "On Being the Church," p.43.

⁶⁰⁰ Daniel W. Hardy, "Creation and Eschatology," in *God's ways with the world : thinking and practising Christian faith*, T & T Clark academic paperbacks (1996), p.152.

that the inaugurated timeline appears to reflect its dispensationalist legacy by confining a period of time to a particular state which can only be transformed by the onset of the next state. This is problematic because such an approach can facilitate the insulation of certain areas of life from critical perspective; they are accepted as a characteristic of life in this age or dispensation and therefore are inescapable. This is reflected in Moore's position that gun ownership and the execution of criminals may represent a permissible response to life in the 'Already/not yet' where violence and injustice are inescapable facts of life. Here too, engagement with a dynamic dialogical approach such as Hardy's may be constructive.

Moltmann, too, makes a productive contribution to discussions around the nature of any such eschatological dynamic, by emphasising the way in which the preservation of an Apocalyptic/millenarian tension in a dynamic, rather than an attempt to resolve it in a particular state, can resource a social ethic which is both affirmatively (millenarian) while being appropriately critical prior to consummation (apocalyptic).⁶⁰¹ Such a dynamic approach holds the possibility of social transformation by generating richer possibilities of social order in response to contingencies. This may have a particular resonance in the context amidst calls from some evangelical theologians for a new type of politics in the US.

The way forward must be a dialogue, and as such those advocating inaugurated eschatology in this context can rightly be expected to ask pressing questions of their new conversation partners. One such question is likely to be: Is this type of

⁶⁰¹ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*,

dynamic better able to avoid the temptation to identify particular manifestations of the kingdom's presence? Equally, while such a dynamic maintains the already, not yet character of the evangelical eschatology, can it adequately be described as inaugurated? Might terms such as, 'inaugurating', 'future', 'realised', 'proleptic' etc. be more appropriate?

It is in considering these questions in the course of a wider dialogue that the challenges facing inaugurated eschatology in this context may be met.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The benefits of this study's critical perspective on the claims

This project set out to critically appraise inaugurated eschatology as a basis for ethics within the context of evangelical theology in the United States of America. The starting point for this appraisal was an engagement with two connected claims made by Russell Moore in his 2004 work, *The Kingdom of Christ*.⁶⁰² These claims, taken together, constituted a proposal that inaugurated eschatology had attracted a consensus among American evangelicals and, as a result, now represented a viable basis for a common evangelical socio-political ethical programme. In its introductory chapter, this study found a critical perspective on this proposal to be lacking. This lack of a critical perspective was evident both within the context, where the assumptions embedded in Moore's claims remained untested and outside the context, where these proposals appear to be considered the exclusive concern of US evangelical theology.

On one level, this study proceeded on the basis that this lack of critical perspective must be addressed if evangelical theology is to fully participate in, and benefit from, the wider conversation on the relationship between eschatology and ethics within Christian theology. Indeed, by identifying the need for critical engagement, and beginning to address it by way of a critical appraisal drawing on theological perspectives from outside US evangelical theology, most notably the work of Jürgen Moltmann, this study has attempted to take the first step towards involving

⁶⁰² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*,

the discussion of eschatology and ethics in US evangelical theology with the wider theological debate. In the course of doing so, the benefits of such a critical engagement with the claims have been underlined, as issues with the eschatology which form the basis of the claimed consensus have been identified and problematized in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Furthermore, the critical perspective offered by this study has also disclosed evidence that supports its hypothesis that the ambiguity in the vision of inaugurated ethics offered by Moore reflects the underlying issues with the particular eschatological position, which will be summarised below. In addition, by drawing attention to the radical contrast between the ethical positions taken by Moore, and Gushee and Stassen in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, this study has underlined that ambiguity further.

The interrogatives posed by each of the three chapters in Part Two each led to the uncovering of an associated issue with the inaugurated eschatology on offer as the subject of Moore's claimed consensus. By asking 'When was the kingdom inaugurated,' Chapter Three disclosed an issue related to the consistent application of a linear approach to time, while Chapter Four, 'Where is the inaugurated kingdom,' uncovered a tension between the tendency to spatialize the kingdom in the church and the commitment to cosmic transformation in the already. 'Chapter Five: What difference has inauguration made,' noted that the use of the term 'reign' or 'rule' in the place of 'kingdom' was common among the approaches surveyed, and considered the issue raised by Scot McKnight's

observation that such usage neglects the concept of ‘realm’ implied in the term ‘kingdom’.⁶⁰³

Conclusions

Inaugurated eschatology does not conform to the rules of linear time which it imposes on itself.

Chapter Three began by demonstrating that the inaugurated eschatology advocated in this context assumes a linear approach to time. It considered Moltmann’s observation that inaugurated eschatology, like the realized and future-oriented eschatologies which previously dominated this context, appears to have found it unnecessary or impossible to look beyond ‘linear time’ to understand both historical and eschatological time and the relationship between them.⁶⁰⁴ Chapter Three then tested Moltmann’s observation and found evidence to support it in the proliferation of eschatological ‘timelines’ in the literature, using an example from G.K. Beale’s introduction to Gladd and Harmon’s *Making All Things New* to illustrate how these timelines typically represent historical and eschatological time as two parallel linear chronologies.⁶⁰⁵

Linear Time demands a single marker of sequence

Having established that this linear approach to time was indeed constitutive of inaugurated eschatology, Chapter Three considered what criteria this common

⁶⁰³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp.11-12

⁶⁰⁴ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6

⁶⁰⁵ Beale, “The End Starts at the Beginning,” in Gladd and Harmon, *Making All Things New*, p.9.

approach might impose upon inaugurated eschatology. Specific consideration was given to what demands this linear approach to time placed on the answers which might be given to the question of when the kingdom was inaugurated. Drawing on the classifications of time suggested by the work of US-based Roman Catholic theologians Eric Rowe and Jerome Neyrey, and social anthropologist Jack Goody, 'sequence' and 'duration' were found to be essential to the experience of linear time.⁶⁰⁶ In light of this, Chapter Three argued that 'linear time' requires an answer to the question 'when was the kingdom inaugurated' to take the form of a marker of sequence. That is to say, the linear approach to time which underlies inaugurated eschatology demands that its advocates identify the point at which inauguration arises along the moving continuum of linear time.

Inaugurated eschatology in the context fails to provide a single marker of sequence. When a sample of the inaugurated eschatologies advanced in the context was interrogated with the question of timing it was found that only one of the nine theologians examined was able to specify a single marker of sequence. That is to say, eight out of the nine theologians surveyed in Chapter Three appeared unable to answer the question 'When was the kingdom inaugurated' which was consistent with the assumptions underlying their inaugurated eschatology. This inability to identify a single marker of sequence indicating the onset of inauguration suggests that inaugurated eschatology cannot conform to the rules of linear time which it imposes on itself. This thesis argues that this indicates one

⁶⁰⁶ Rowe, "Christ and Time," Goody, "Time: Social Organization,"

of the eschatological deficiencies in the inaugurated model advocated in the context.

The significance of the eschatological deficiency in relation to timing

This deficiency in relation to timing appears to have gone unnoticed within evangelical theology in the USA. Indeed, even the observation that the inaugurated eschatology being advocated assumes a particular approach to time also appears to have gone unnoticed within evangelical theology in the USA. This failure of recognition suggests that the eschatological deficiency in relation to timing can only be addressed by engagement with theological perspectives external to the immediate context of evangelical theology in the USA. Indeed, it was through such an engagement, primarily with the perspective offered by Moltmann, that this study was able to identify the deficiency.⁶⁰⁷ As such, this critical appraisal has already facilitated the first step towards addressing this deficiency by beginning a discussion that is not restricted to evangelical theology.

Inaugurated eschatology cannot maintain its cosmic commitments in light of its intensive spatialization of the kingdom in the church.

Intensive and exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church as locus and location

The posing of Chapter Three's first question, 'Where is the inaugurated kingdom' arose from the observation that a close relationship between the church and the kingdom was evident in the inaugurated eschatology of the context. Indeed, as

⁶⁰⁷ Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p.6.

this chapter noted, Russell Moore's claims to consensus included the claim that 'Evangelical theology would seem to have amassed a consensus on... the relationship between the visible church and the Kingdom of God'.⁶⁰⁸ Taking note of recent work external to the context which has sought to address the neglect previous of eschatology's spatial dimension, most notably Vitor Westhelle's *Eschatology and Space*, Chapter Three considered the extent to which the relationship between the church and the kingdom was presented by theologians in the context as a spatialization of the latter in the former.⁶⁰⁹

This approach was also informed by Darrell Bock's description of the church as 'the place where' and 'the place from where', a description originating from within evangelical theology in the USA, and one explicitly acknowledged by Moore as influencing his conceptualisation of the church as the 'locus of kingdom activity'.⁶¹⁰ From this concept, Chapter Four derived one of the two sets of criteria with which it sought to categorise the responses to the 'Where' question; was the kingdom being spatialized in the church as a 'location', effectively a 'place where' and, or, a 'locus' effectively a 'place from where'?⁶¹¹ In addition, Chapter Four enquired whether this spatialization in the church occurred intensively or exclusively. The findings of Chapter Four demonstrate that a spatialization of the kingdom in the church, as its location and locus, represents a common approach within the context. Furthermore, this spatialization was shown to approach, and in the cases

⁶⁰⁸ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.138.

⁶⁰⁹ Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space*, p.xii.

⁶¹⁰ Bock, "The Son of David and the Saints' Task: The Hermeneutics of Initial Fulfillment," p.457. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

⁶¹¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.142.

of Moore and McKnight, to constitute, an exclusive conception of the church as the location and locus of the kingdom.

The significance of the eschatological deficiency in relation to location

Chapter Three found these results to be indicative of the existence of a further issue with the eschatology advanced among the sample, in this case in relation to location, on the grounds that this widespread spatialization of the kingdom in the church was at odds with the commitment to cosmic transformation which Moore presents as an integral aspect to the eschatological consensus.⁶¹² This was deemed to be the case given that, even taking the widest possible sphere of influence implied by such spatialization, a cosmological impact this side of consummation appears to be excluded by the fact that the influence of the church is limited in so far as the influence of humanity is limited. Evidence for this conclusion was strengthened by the reduction of the cosmic dimension of the kingdom to an aspect of the life of the church by the two theologians, Moore and McKnight, who were found to spatialize the Kingdom exclusively in the church.⁶¹³ The extent of this reduction is most evident in Moore's conclusion that 'the cosmic reign finds its expression, for now, within the church.'⁶¹⁴ It is difficult to understand what exactly Moore means by this expression and it is offered without further explanation.

⁶¹² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.93-4.

⁶¹³ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.131.

⁶¹⁴ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131, 152.

Pneumatological deficiency

Chapter Two and Chapter Three also noted that inaugurated eschatology in this context does not currently articulate a sufficient account of the Spirit's agency, an issue which has been raised within the context by Mark Saucy.⁶¹⁵ However, this study has found little evidence of any real engagement with Saucy's criticism. Indeed, a lack of engagement with pneumatological considerations was noted in Chapter Three's analysis, with Russell Moore's work being the exception.⁶¹⁶ Moore's pneumatology was, however, shown to be subsumed within, and made subordinate to, his ecclesiology, as his statement that the church is 'the focal point of the Spirit's present activity... as the community of the kingdom' suggests.⁶¹⁷ Indeed, Chapter Three argued that Saucy's own attempt to articulate an inaugurated eschatology grounded in the Spirit demonstrated a 'weak' pneumatology, which was essentially, a Christology imposed upon the Spirit, whom Saucy terms 'the alter ego of Christ'.⁶¹⁸ Despite significant recognition of the importance of a well-developed pneumatology in the context, this continues to represent an area in which inaugurated eschatology remains deficient.

A pneumatological alternative

This pneumatological deficiency has contributed to inaugurated eschatology's failure to account for the cosmological transformation it proposes. This study suggests that addressing the pneumatological deficiency, by developing an account of the Spirit that gives due consideration to the Spirit's agency, may go

⁶¹⁵ Saucy, "Regnum Spiriti,"

⁶¹⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.48.

⁶¹⁷ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.145.

⁶¹⁸ Saucy, "Regnum Spiriti," p.92.

some way to addressing the eschatological deficiency in relation to inaugurated eschatology's cosmic commitments. This study proposes that, rather than reducing the agency of the Spirit to a secondary consideration within an approach that focuses on the church-kingdom relationship, as Moore's approach does, consideration should be given to alternative approaches which take the Spirit to be the primary transformative agent. Indeed, such an approach need not neglect the eschatological significance of the church, as evidenced in Jürgen Moltmann's, *The Church in the power of the Spirit*.⁶¹⁹ Such an approach would, however, have the benefit of transcending the human limits imposed by existing anthropocentric approaches which take the kingdom spatialized in the church as their starting point for understanding life in the 'already'. In contrast to the intensive and exclusive spatialization of these approaches, spatialization of the kingdom through the presence of the Holy Spirit holds the possibility of being extensive, rather than intensive or exclusive. Only this type of extensive spatialization would open up the possibility of eschatological transformation for other aspects of creation on earth and throughout the cosmos.

Ecclesiological deficiency

The church as central to the kingdom in this context

This study has shown the church to be a central concern for the inaugurated eschatology being espoused by evangelical theologians in this context. This is not

⁶¹⁹ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*,

altogether surprising, given that several of the theologians examined by this study, notably Moore and McKnight, have acknowledged themselves to be engaged in a conscious attempt to re-centre kingdom theology on the church. This determined focus on the church was most evident in Chapter Three, as it became apparent that the intensive and even exclusive spatialization of the kingdom in the church is a common approach in this context.

Insufficient development of ecclesiology

In light of the centrality of the church for inaugurated eschatology, Russell Moore's *The Kingdom of Christ* attempts to do what Moore terms 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'.⁶²⁰ However, this study has shown that attempt to be a relatively isolated endeavour in this body of literature. Furthermore, Moore's effort fails to convince the reader that he is actually engaged in the work of ecclesiology. Moore does not explore what the doctrine of the inaugurated kingdom means for the doctrine of the church in this section of *The Kingdom of Christ*.⁶²¹ Rather what emerges is a church-oriented eschatology, that is to say, Moore simply explains why the church is of central importance to the inaugurated kingdom. An eschatology in which the church is central is proposed without utilising that eschatology to elaborate on how the church is to be understood. As Chapter Three demonstrates, in so far as the church is considered in light of the kingdom, Moore describes it in instrumental terms as, variously, a 'signpost', a 'preview', a 'vehicle', a 'colony', an 'embassy', an 'outpost', and a 'model' of the kingdom.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131-173.

⁶²¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131-173.

⁶²² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.131-173. Moore, *Onward*, pp.59, 65 & 70.

No further light is cast on who or what is meant by the term 'the church' in this exercise in 'Kingdom-oriented ecclesiology'; a common ecclesiology is simply assumed.

Yet, as Chapter Three highlighted, such an assumption is a curious one, even within the confines of evangelical theology, given its spanning of denominational lines which often operate with diverging ecclesiologies. However, one particular ecclesiological assumption does appear to be held in common across the context: The church is conceived of in personalist and conversionist terms as a collective of redeemed persons, most explicitly in the work of Moore, Carson and McKnight.⁶²³

Ultimately, this study has shown that the one significant attempt, that made by Moore, to unfold a sufficient ecclesiology for inaugurated eschatology in the context fails to do so. The reasons for this failure reflect the typical features of what constitutes an ecclesiological deficiency that is common in the context. Firstly, the centrality of the church to the inaugurated kingdom is restated in the strongest terms, a move that appears to emerge out of concerns that are independent of the eschatology. Secondly, the nature of the church in relation to the kingdom is explored only in terms of how it functions as an instrument of the kingdom. Finally, in so far as a definition of what is meant by 'the church' is offered, it is restricted to pre-existing conceptions rooted in personalist and conversionist assumptions, which appear unaffected by exposure to inaugurated eschatology.

⁶²³ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.147. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, p.63. McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206.

Consequently, a significant question is left hanging: How do churches which do not share this ecclesiology figure within the kingdom?

Inaugurated eschatology's substitution of 'the reign of God' for 'the kingdom of God' is necessary, but add odds with its biblicist commitments.

Conceiving of the kingdom as 'reign' is essential to the viability of Inaugurated Eschatology.

Chapter Two demonstrated that not only is it commonplace for US evangelical theologians in the context to conceive of the inaugurated kingdom as an inaugurated reign or realm, but that this conception proves indispensable for inaugurated eschatology. Indeed, the exception to this tendency, Scot McKnight's objection that presenting the kingdom as a dynamic reign, or rule, is contrary to Scripture's testimony that the kingdom always involves both reign and realm, turned out to prove the rule.⁶²⁴ Despite McKnight's dissension being an isolated case, Chapter Two found his objection to be convincing, on the grounds that the biblical material bears out his argument that the kingdom is always presented as an integral entity that consists of both reign and realm together.

The problem of identifying an inaugurated realm.

How then does McKnight's taking exception to the kingdom-as-reign prove the rule that this concept is indispensable for inaugurated eschatology? The answer, as Chapter Two has shown, lies in the difficulty which inaugurated eschatology encounters as soon as it attempts to identify a realm for the kingdom within the

⁶²⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, pp.11-12.

already. While McKnight appears to find a possible solution all too readily, by identifying the church as the kingdom's reigned-over-realm, he does so at the expense of contravening what has otherwise been accepted as a foundational tenet of inaugurated eschatology in this context: 'The Church... is not the Kingdom of God.'⁶²⁵

The alternative conclusion: rejecting the inaugurated model?

An alternative conclusion that was open to McKnight, but which he did not proceed to explore, was the possibility that inaugurated eschatology ought to be rejected in light of its inability to accommodate the kingdom as it is presented in all its integrity in Scripture. This study finds this alternative conclusion to be a more convincing resolution to the kingdom conundrum which McKnight's contribution has brought to light. If the only way in which inaugurated eschatology in US evangelical theology can be made consistent with a commitment to faithfully reflect the biblical portrayal of the kingdom is to reject one of its own foundational principles, then that possibility should, of course, be considered. However, when the reasoning behind the inaugurated eschatology's longstanding aversion to equating church and kingdom is considered, it is easy to understand why McKnight's position is an isolated one. That the church is not the kingdom, even in an inaugurated form, should be self-evident to all who have experienced church life, and with it the gulf between that experience and the expectations of the kingdom which are encouraged by its portrayal in the biblical material.

⁶²⁵ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, p.206. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, pp.137 & 147. Ladd, "Kingdom of God and the Church," pp. 168-9.

Expectation and Experience of socio-political transformation in the 'Already'

Chapter Four and Chapter Five found that the two ethical programmes under consideration demonstrated a tension, or gap, between the expectation and experience of socio-political transformation in the 'already'.

Pessimism privileges experience and moderates expectations

Chapter Four found that Russell Moore's pessimistic ethical approach privileged experience at the expense of moderating, and at times, ignoring, expectations of eschatological transformation in the inaugurated era. This was considered to be the result of Moore's attempt to resolve the potential tension between expectations of socio-political transformation fuelled by the biblical presentation of the kingdom and experiences characterised by the perceived absence of such transformation. Moore's pessimistic ethics attempts to moderate such expectations, by effectively ruling out the pursuit of radical social or political change prior to consummation. In doing so, Moore makes experience determinative in the formation of the ethical approach he proposes, specifically experience of politics. Perhaps, it might be said, even more specifically, his own experience of politics, which he characterises in terms of 'compromise', 'negotiation' and ultimately 'pessimism'.⁶²⁶

⁶²⁶ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77. As noted in Chapter 7, Moore has considerable experience of involvement in US politics, from working for Democratic Congressman Gene Taylor as a young adult to the lobbying aspect of his more recent work with the "Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission" of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The problem with pessimism

Chapter Four has shown that privileging experience over eschatological expectation, in the way Moore's pessimistic approach does, is highly problematic. In doing so, the extent to which his ethical approach can be described as eschatological is called into question. If it is past experience of political realities which shape the possibilities for future ethical activity, then what determinative influence does the presence of the inaugurated kingdom have? It appears that inaugurated eschatology's primary contribution to Moore's pessimistic ethics is to inform it that no significant socio-political transformation should be sought on this side of the consummation. In this respect, Chapter Four has shown Moore's inaugurated ethics to be little different from ethical approaches informed by future-oriented eschatologies which indefinitely delay all expectations of social or political transformation. The thrust of Moore's ethical approach is more readily characterised as 'not yet, not yet', than as 'already but not yet'.

There are, of course, further issues with making experience determinative of ethics in this way, that is the question of which political realities, and which experiences of them? However, this issue will be explored further in relation to the second ethical deficiency which deals with the determinative effects of social location on inaugurated ethics.

Participation frustrated by experience and questioning expectations

As Chapter Five has demonstrated, the approach of Gushee and Stassen is in marked contrast to that of Moore in many respects, and the way in which their

approach reflects the tension or gap between experience and expectation is no exception. Indeed, the contrast in their approach to this difficulty appears to be at the heart of many of their differences. Gushee and Stassen's participative ethics encourages the expectation that societies and politics can, and will, be transformed in the already.⁶²⁷ However, as Chapter Five observed, David Gushee has recently expressed frustration that in the main, experience does not appear to bear out those expectations as realistic.⁶²⁸ Responding in particular to Miguel De la Torre's critique of hope as 'a middle-class privilege', a critique which marked De la Torre's departure from the fold of Liberation Theology, Gushee has questioned the approach taken in *Kingdom Ethics*, and the eschatological assumptions underpinning that approach.⁶²⁹

Social Location as determinative of ethics

Pessimism and privileged social location

Chapter Four found that social location was most clearly a determinative influence on Moore's pessimistic ethics. Faced with the deficit between experience and expectation, Moore's own social location and experience appear to have been influential in his choice of response. This study argues that the appeal of a pessimistic ethics, which privileges past experience over eschatological expectation, is conditional on the nature of that experience and the social factors

⁶²⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁶²⁸ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," pp.3-16.

⁶²⁹ Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," pp.3-16. De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús*, pp.136-8.

which determine that experience. As such, the appeal of a pessimistic ethics is likely to be heightened by a relatively privileged social location.

On the other hand, the previous chapters have argued that a pessimistic ethics has limited appeal for those whose social location and consequent experiences are characterised by the absence of privilege and a vulnerability to oppression. As this study's engagement with the work of James Cone has shown in Chapter Four, where social location is linked to the experience of mistreatment and hardship, an ethical agenda that emphasises the possibility of the eschatological transformation of current conditions has a strong appeal.⁶³⁰ This study's conclusion that social location is determinative of ethics rests on Chapter Four's analysis that the more strongly the need for social and political transformation is perceived, the more appealing the prospect of transformation opened up by eschatological expectation becomes.

Borrowing from De la Torre's criticism of 'all talk of a coming kingdom of God' as 'a middle-class illusion which undermines radical commitment to ethical praxis for justice', this thesis argues that the type of eschatological pessimism which underwrites Moore's approach 'undermines radical commitment to ethical praxis for justice', under the influence of white, middle-class privilege.⁶³¹ Such pessimistic ethics may be understood as resting on a perspective that represents the flipside of James Cone's perspective in *A Black Theology of Liberation*.⁶³² While

⁶³⁰ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p.38.

⁶³¹ This quotation is Gushee and Norred's paraphrasing of De la Torre's critique. Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics," p.3. It draws on De la Torre, *The Politics of Jesús*, pp.134-9.

⁶³² Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*,

Cone describes the eschatological hope for transformation as that ‘which focuses on the future in order to make us refuse to tolerate present inequities,’ Moore’s pessimistic ethics focuses on past experience, presumably because he occupies a social location from where the present inequities appear much more tolerable.⁶³³ From Moore’s perspective, the type of future on which Cone focuses, is a post-consummation future, while the future of ‘the already’ remains characterised by a continuation of the conditions experienced in the recent past.

Participation: solidarity with the oppressed

How then does this study explain the contrasting approach of Gushee and Stassen’s *Kingdom Ethics*, given the apparent similarity between the social location of its authors and that of Moore? Gushee and Stassen’s participative ethics has been shown to highlight the possibility, and necessity, of the type of transformation which Moore’s pessimistic ethics precludes. In this sense, Gushee and Stassen do not appear to be influenced by their own social location but appear to look beyond it. Rather than being bound by their own social location, they appear to be attempting to transcend it. Their ethical approach recognised the need for solidarity with the oppressed, on the grounds that such solidarity is mandated by the content of Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom, particularly concerning the place of the poor within that kingdom.⁶³⁴

⁶³³ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, p.38.

⁶³⁴ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp.206, 251, 377, 416.

Social location, as such, does then have a determinative influence on their work, even though it is not their own social location that informs their perspective. *Kingdom Ethics* offers a reading influenced by present inequities and the refusal of the authors to tolerate those inequities where they perceive them, largely on the behalf of others.⁶³⁵ In doing so it privileges particular social locations, namely those affected by the experience of oppression in its various forms. This study concludes, then, that the determinative influence of social location should be recognised. Furthermore, it is suggested that the influence of social location may not necessarily present an irresolvable problem if solidarity with particular social locations can be shown to emerge from biblical sources.⁶³⁶ However, unrecognised and unexamined, the determinative influence of social location on current expressions of inaugurated ethics represents a deficiency.

Foundations in inaugurated eschatology

While the full implications of the two ethical deficiencies outlined above have been previously unexplored, they have had what might be termed a 'reflexive' effect on the inaugurated eschatology. That is to say that deficiencies in the eschatology have resulted in ethical deficiencies which have, in turn, brought a challenge to the validity of the eschatology.

⁶³⁵ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁶³⁶ Gushee and Stassen attempt to make the case that such solidarity does emerge from biblical sources. See for example Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.206, where they describe solidarity with the marginalized as 'a critical part of the content of [Christ's] kingdom-inaugurating ministry.'

Pessimism: inauguration ignored?

In the case of Russell Moore's pessimistic ethics, a challenge to the validity of the eschatology is implicit. Pessimism implicitly questions the reality of inauguration by positing an ethics that is little different from what might be expected from an ethics attached to a future-oriented eschatology. In effect, the claim that the kingdom has in some sense 'already' been inaugurated is deprived of any supporting evidence by an ethical approach which perpetuates the impression that very little has, and will, change prior to a future apocalyptic event.

Participation: inauguration questioned?

On the other hand, David Gushee's recent concerns about the validity of the inaugurated eschatology he and Stassen advocated as the basis of *Kingdom Ethics*, represents a more explicit challenge.⁶³⁷ As Chapter Five observes, he has expressed these concerns in light of the problems he has come to recognise within the ethical approach laid out in *Kingdom Ethics*.⁶³⁸ These problems are closely related to the ethical deficiencies identified by this study, primarily the deficit between expectations and experience. What is more, Gushee's recognition that there are problems with the ethical approach of *Kingdom Ethics*, and that these problems are rooted in the eschatology, has come about as a response to criticism offered from perspectives external to US evangelical theology. Thus, Gushee's recent critical reflection demonstrates the importance of this type of engagement.

⁶³⁷ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, Norred, "The Kingdom of God, Hope, and Christian Ethics,"

⁶³⁸ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

Indeed, Gushee has noted that such critical reflection on certain aspects of *Kingdom Ethics* was lacking at the time of writing, and this contributed to the problems which he now perceives it as having.⁶³⁹

Consensus

This study has not attempted to prove or disprove that there is a consensus on inaugurated eschatology within evangelical theology in the USA. However, consensus remains a central plank of the claims which this study took as its starting point, and as such, the possibility that consensus holds significance for evangelical theology in the USA, and perhaps beyond, has been an overarching consideration for this project. Moore's concern with consensus is the strongest, unsurprisingly, given that he is the originator of the claims to an eschatological consensus. Throughout this study, the nature of his concern with consensus, in particular, has been probed. That probing has taken shape in the question: What function does consensus play in Moore's claims?

Why might consensus be central to Moore's political ethics?

This study's reflection on Moore's socio-political ethics has found that the type of political engagement that is required by his approach makes a level of consensus among evangelicals necessary for the success of that approach.⁶⁴⁰ Indeed, the reading of Moore's approach that is presented by this study concludes that a united evangelical political constituency is an indispensable feature of his

⁶³⁹ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*,

⁶⁴⁰ See Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.175 where Moore describes theological cohesion as necessary if evangelicalism is 'to serve as a vital force in the arenas of culture and politics.'

'pessimistic' ethics. Moore's characterisation of the political process in the USA as, 'by its very nature an arena of compromise and negotiation' is further evidence that his approach is one that recognises the need to construct and maintain a large and cohesive political power bloc in order to exert an influence.⁶⁴¹ Only when evangelicalism is brought together as a unified political constituency can it exercise its full influence on executive and legislative processes, for example, through lobbying and coordinated electoral strategies.

The significance of eschatological consensus for evangelical political engagement

In *The Kingdom of Christ*, Moore acknowledged that eschatological divisions had been a 'real threat to evangelical theological cohesiveness', and a barrier to a theologically coherent programme of political engagement for evangelicalism in the context.⁶⁴² This suggests a perception that the type of political engagement Moore is calling for in his pessimistic ethics can only be facilitated by the formation of an eschatological consensus. Furthermore, eschatological consensus is significant here, not only because eschatology has been a long-standing source of division in the context, but because some had argued that political engagement was unnecessary or undesirable on the basis of a dispensationalist future-oriented eschatology. Thus, a particular type of eschatological consensus is required to facilitate evangelical political engagement. The consensus must centre on an eschatology that underwrites engagement with, rather than isolation from, the political process. Inaugurated eschatology fulfils this requirement by way of its

⁶⁴¹ Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.77.

⁶⁴² Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, p.21.

realised component, which, in maintaining that the kingdom of God is, in some sense, a present reality, suggests that God's people ought to involve themselves with the processes shaping that reality, including political processes.

Gushee and Stassen's ethics of participation, on the other hand, does not appear to be as dependent on the existence of a consensus among evangelicals to function. Their 'character ethics' approach, does not appear to be as concerned with exerting political influence, focussing instead on the development of virtues within church communities.⁶⁴³ Some consensus, at least at a localised level, on the character traits to be encouraged would appear to be essential to the efficacy of this approach. However, as Chapter Five points out, the 'character ethics' approach taken by *Kingdom Ethics* is less dependent on the book's inaugurated eschatological framework, than the authors contended. As a result, an eschatological consensus is not as integral to Gushee and Stassen's ethical approach as it is to Moore's.

Is consensus a constructive concern for Evangelical Theology?

This study has sought to raise, and engage with, the question of whether the concept of 'consensus' has a place within evangelical theology, or theology more widely. It is recognised that this is indeed a difficult thing to assess. However, one starting point may consider this question from an instrumentalist perspective: Does 'consensus' produce good theology? It is, of course, recognised that a discussion in search of the criteria involved in determining what constitutes

⁶⁴³ Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, p.20 ff.

good theology is beyond the remit of this study, and indeed could go on indefinitely. However, one approach which may result in a provisional conclusion about the benefits of 'consensus' would be to reflect on the fact that, measured even against the narrow criteria of US evangelical theology's own commitments, on the evidence of this study, inaugurated eschatology in this context demonstrates a theology operating contrary to its own assumptions and commitments. Limited as a measure of 'good' theology though it may be, the requirement to operate in keeping with stated assumptions and commitments is presumably an important prerequisite for 'good' theology. This is a requirement that does not appear to be satisfied by the eschatology examined in Part One.

Is this failure to be consistent a direct result of the drive for consensus? It is difficult to say. However, it does appear that, for at least some of the theologians included in this study, consensus itself is being made a criterion of good theology. This study has shown that, in the case of Moore's approach, a particular consensus is pursued out of an instrumental interest. Yet, it is also clear that, for Moore too, consensus is considered a good in its own right, that is to say, for Moore, part of what might make good theology 'good' is that it is theology that can be agreed upon, among evangelicals at least! Inaugurated eschatology's deficiencies, as uncovered in this study, exist independently from any consensus which may or may not have come to exist. Indeed, in so far as this study could be used to assess whether such a consensus exists, it may provide some evidence for it: a significant level of agreement was evident in relation to most issues, with the exception of the question of timing. The direct concerns of this study, however, lie elsewhere, in the viability of inaugurated eschatology as theological doctrine and as a basis

for ethics. With that in mind, it is worth considering that it is possible for deficient theology to attract a consensus, at least an apparent one. Furthermore, this study has gone some way to identifying deficiencies in this particular theological approach.

A future without consensus?

In light of this, should consensus be of concern to evangelical theology? If the theological benefits, and indeed the very possibility, of consensus on issues such as eschatology, are as questionable as this study has suggested, is consensus an appropriate objective for evangelical theology? These questions cut to the heart of recent discussions about the boundaries of evangelical theology. The issue of evangelical theology's boundaries was raised in *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, a collection of essays by British and American evangelical theologians published in 2010.⁶⁴⁴ In his postscript to this collection, Richard B. Hays describes the volume as advocating and modelling a paradigm shift for evangelical theology, from a bounded group, 'which draws up clear lists of membership criteria and erects heavily guarded fences to protect itself, like a gated residential community [which] closely monitors its members to ensure the purity and safety of those inside,' to a centred group, 'that is much less concerned about outer boundaries, less worried about policing uniformity of thought,' and which, 'understands group

⁶⁴⁴ Tom Greggs, ed., *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging with God, Scripture and the World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010),

membership in terms of a common directional orientation towards a shared centre'.⁶⁴⁵

This thesis argues that the prioritisation of consensus which it has been observed is symptomatic of a context where the dominant conception of evangelical theology is that of a 'tightly bounded' group.⁶⁴⁶ Indeed, it is suggested that the consensus claims made by Moore and echoed by others, in fact, presuppose a tightly bounded evangelical theology, or at least presuppose that such a tightly bounded group is desirable. Where do the claims for consensus leave those who continue to identify as 'evangelical', but who are not in agreement with inaugurated eschatology, or at least inaugurated eschatology in the form on offer? How are those who dissent from a consensus position viewed from that position? As external or internal to an evangelical theology that has apparently settled on an eschatology which they cannot accept? It is difficult to escape the conclusion that such claims to consensus have the effect of drawing an insider/outsider boundary, even if such an effect is not perceived or intended by those making the claims.

While the centred group model proposed in *New Perspectives* continues to have 'a shared centre', the extent of the commitments and assumptions which that 'shared centre' might include would be unlikely to extend to agreement on a particular eschatology model.⁶⁴⁷ That this is indeed the case is brought home by the volume's advocacy of Hans Frei's 'generous orthodoxy'.⁶⁴⁸ An orthodoxy that

⁶⁴⁵ Richard B. Hays, "Postscript" in Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, p.217.

⁶⁴⁶ Richard B. Hays, "Postscript" in Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, p.217.

⁶⁴⁷ Richard B. Hays, "Postscript" in Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, p.217.

⁶⁴⁸ Richard B. Hays, "Postscript" in Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, p.216.

demands consensus on an eschatological model, would hardly qualify as a generous one, given the historical lack of agreement in this area. Indeed, Tom Greggs' chapter on eschatology in the volume emphasises the need for rethinking this particular area by opening 'our theology up to a generous particularism which recognizes the complexities of Scripture and of human life.'⁶⁴⁹ As this study has shown, in so far as inaugurated eschatology has recognized and incorporated such complexities, it has done so with great difficulty. Perhaps, the quest for a consensus that binds US evangelical theology together on this issue has exacerbated these difficulties.

Consensus/dissensus and difference/similarity in this study

This study has been attentive to the existence of difference within the inaugurated eschatologies it has analysed, using the terms difference and similarity rather than consensus in its assessments. However, this attentiveness to difference does not reflect an attempt to problematize it. In this sense, the study has not conceived of US evangelical theology as by definition tightly bound. Rather, it has concerned itself with difference, not because the existence of difference represents a difficulty in itself, but because difference may be a marker of underlying difficulties, and, potentially, deficiencies. This has proven to be the case, as differences over the timing and impact of inauguration (Chapter Three), and location and agency (Chapter Four), and differences over the shape of inaugurated ethics (Chapters Five and Six), have pointed to significant difficulties with the

⁶⁴⁹ Tom Greggs, "Beyond the binary: Forming evangelical eschatology," in Richard B. Hays, "Postscript" in Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*, p.161.

inaugurated kingdom as an eschatological model and as a basis for ethics. These difficulties have, on closer inspection, revealed eschatological and ethical deficiencies. This approach is in contrast to the assumption suggested by the quest for consensus: that difference is itself a difficulty, that is to be overcome. Rather, this study has taken the existence, and indeed persistence, of difficulty to be reflective of the enduring complexity of the theological task. Difference is therefore not problematized but welcomed as a feature of theology that reflects the complexity of the theological task, just as consensus is not privileged as indicative of the absence of difficulty.

Sufficiency

At its outset, this study proposed that a lack of interaction with eschatological perspectives outside evangelical theology in the USA suggests that Moore *et al* believe the resources of US evangelical theology to be sufficient for the task of doing eschatology. By demonstrating the existence of eschatological deficiencies in the inaugurated model being advanced as the subject of the claimed consensus, this study has suggested that US evangelical theology may not currently have sufficient resources for the task of doing eschatology within its own orbit. This study has not only shown that there are serious issues with the form of inaugurated eschatology which Moore claims attracts a consensus here, but it has demonstrated that these issues can only be identified and understood with the help of theological perspectives typically considered to be external to evangelical

theology.⁶⁵⁰ The existence of eschatological deficiencies in the inaugurated model, such as those disclosed in the course of this study, and, moreover, the means of that disclosure, leads this thesis to suggest that evangelical theology in this context would benefit from reflecting on what has been characterised here as its 'self-sufficiency', particularly in light of recent efforts to develop a more open, 'centred' rather than 'bound' evangelical theology described above.⁶⁵¹

If demonstrating the benefits for understanding the deficiencies in inaugurated eschatology that can be brought about by applying perspectives external to evangelical theology in the US represents the first, tentative step towards enriching this discussion, then Chapter Six of this work represents an attempt to a second, equally tentative step in the same direction.

⁶⁵⁰ The way in which the perspectives of Moltmann, Cone and De la Torre etc. have contributed to this critical appraisal is offered as evidence of this.

⁶⁵¹ Greggs, *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology*,

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