LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

KINGDOM CONSEQUENCES: SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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Lynchburg, Virginia

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THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

KINGDOM CONSEQUENCES: SOCIO-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

OF EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

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Upon extensive study of contemporary literature, and current sermon trends, there is little

evidence to support a relationship between socio-political commentary and evangelistic

preaching. The purpose of this study is twofold. The first objective will be to establish that a

relationship does exist between social and political commentary, and the evangelistic mission of

the modern Church.

The second objective of the study will outline a proposed methodology for evangelistic

preaching that is grounded in Scripture, and contemporary theology. The desired outcome is to

provide a clear understanding of the preaching event as an opportunity for the Church to address

the social and political issues of our time, while maintaining the primacy of God's Kingdom.

Abstract length: 115 words

i

DEDICATION

Many of us are impacted and shaped by the people with whom we interact in our daily lives. However, there are rare occasions when we are profoundly affected by people we will never meet. This has been true in my own experience. The person who has impacted my life, and who epitomizes the very theme of this thesis project, is the late Rev. Robert Baines. Rev. Baines, until his recent passing, was a pastor, chaplain, and social justice advocate in the Buffalo, New York area.

For the last several years Rev. Baines was fulfilling his ministerial obligations while he was a patient at Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Although he was undergoing aggressive treatments for cancer, he continued to preach every Sunday seldom missing a church service. My wife, Connie, would often be the nurse who tended to Rev. Baines during his appointments at the institute. From conversations with Connie he knew that I was in ministry also. Despite the severity of his illness, he never failed to ask about my ministry or offer words of encouragement, to be passed along.

Rev. Baines exemplified the precepts that will be addressed in this study. He understood that social and political commentaries are not exclusive from evangelism opportunities. Instead, they are conduits for assisting the Church in defining the concerns of God, in a world that often denies that God is alive and active. Rev. Robert Baines understood the Kingdom consequences for a church that ignored the weak and marginalized, and he knew that humble service was the vehicle to bring about change in a post-Christian world.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | Page |
|-------|--|------|
| Intro | duction | |
| | Statement of the Problem. | |
| | Statement of Limitations. | |
| | Theoretical Basis for the Project. | |
| | Statement of Methodology | |
| | Review of the Literature. | |
| | Scripture References | xi |
| I. | Chapter One: Biblical Perspectives on Socio-Political Issues | 1 |
| | A. Part One: Jesus and Socio-Political Issues | |
| | B. Jesus' Social Stance | 3 |
| | 1. Oppression and Injustice | |
| | 2. Wealth and Entitlement | |
| | 3. Jesus' Stance on Violence | |
| | 4. Jesus and the Political Landscape | |
| | 5. Jesus and the Chief Priests. | |
| | 6. Jesus and the Pharisees. | |
| | 7. Jesus and the Zealots | |
| | 8. Jesus and the Essenes | |
| | 9. Paying Taxes and Tribute | |
| | 10. Jesus' Stance Toward Roman Rule | |
| | 11. The Integrity-Service Model | |
| | C. Part Two: Paul and Social Political Issues | 24 |
| | Paul and the Christian Integrity Service Model | |
| | 2. Paul's Evangelistic Preaching Formula | |
| II. | Chapter Two A Drotestant Decementing on Coais Delitical Issues | 32 |
| | Chapter Two: A Protestant Perspective on Socio-Political Issues 1. Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Thought | |
| | 11 1101111101111 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 | |
| | Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics | |
| | J Control of the cont | |
| | 4. Niebuhr's Social Problems | |
| | 5. The Role of Church in Society | |
| | 6. The Socio-Political Thought of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King | |
| | a. Dr. King's Social Posture | |
| | b. Dr. King's Political Stance | |
| | 7. Nelson Mandela's Socio-Political Thought | |
| | a. Mandela's Social Posture | |
| | b. The Political Worldview of Nelson Mandela | 52 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| III. | Chapter Three: Evangelistic Preaching in the Contemporary Church | 56 |
|------|--|-----|
| | 1. Haddon Robinson and Biblical Preaching | 56 |
| | 2. Applying the Biblical Text | 59 |
| | 3. Calvin Miller on the Preaching Landscape Today | 62 |
| | 4. Returning to Marketplace Preaching | 64 |
| | 5. Andy Stanley on Casting a Kingdom-sized Vision | 68 |
| IV. | Chapter Four: A Methodology of Contemporary Evangelistic Preaching | 75 |
| | 1. The Social Dimension | 75 |
| | 2. Politics and Evangelistic Preaching | 80 |
| | 3. The Evangelistic Imperative | |
| | 4. The Leader as Servant | |
| V. | Chapter Five: Conclusion. | 93 |
| APPE | ENDIX A: Evangelistic Sermon Sample | 106 |
| | a. Extravagant Hospitality | |
| APPE | ENDIX B: The Integrity-Service Model of Evangelism | 111 |
| | 1. Humility vs. Integrity | |
| | 2. Integrity combined with Service | |
| BIBL | IOGRAPHY1 | 15 |
| VITA | د 1 | 20 |

INTRODUCTION

As the Church enters the second decade of the current millennium it is confronted with the task of addressing social and political issues that are threatening to divide it beyond repair. However, there have been social and political issues at the core of the Church's message, and mission, even before the public ministry of Jesus Christ. While it is imperative that the Church does not remain silent regarding socio-political issues, the greater concern is that the evangelistic mission "to reach all nations" has become misplaced.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In hearing and studying the sermons of mainline Protestant preachers, one disturbing trend has emerged. As posited here, Protestant preachers appear to be advocating specific political ideologies, rather than providing biblical illustrations on how to understand sociopolitical issues today. Preachers often speak of their churches being either progressive, or traditional. Jesus, and the apostle Paul spoke unceasingly regarding equality for all, and that labels divide rather than unite people. However, preachers and pastors today appear all too eager to label and differentiate. There are also some preachers who insist that Jesus was a Democrat, forgetting that the Son of God transcends any political affiliation. Yet they do not understand why their congregations are upset about the political tone of their sermons, and why certain denominations resemble political parties rather than Christian churches.

STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS

The focus of this study will be on the impact of socio-political issues on evangelistic preaching, in the mainline Protestant church. However, due to the limitations of space, and time,

the project will primarily reference the United Church of Christ (UCC) throughout the study. The impact of Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr's theology in shaping the UCC's early roots provided an interesting dimension to this project. Furthermore, this study will not examine at length the debate for the separation of church and state. All Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE PROJECT

One of the long-standing debates within the Church is where to draw the line regarding social and political commentary. There are still congregations that strongly object to sermons that place emphasis on politics, seemingly at the expense of evangelization. However, there is convincing biblical and theological evidence that supports commentary on social and political issues. Moreover, it is the goal of this project to underscore the relationship between sociopolitical commentary and the evangelistic mission of the Church.

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The goal of this project to prove biblical support for political and social commentary, citing the political and social postures of Jesus and the apostle Paul (chapter 1). The project will also examine more recent developments regarding the social and political dynamic within mainline Protestant theology. This will be done through the examination of four key figures (chapter 2). The next portion of the study will examine current trends in evangelistic preaching from the perspective of three contemporary evangelistic preachers (chapter 3). The final portion of the project will outline a proposed methodology for narrative preaching, that addresses the social and political climate in the contemporary church (chapter 4).

This will be accomplished by examining the books of prominent theologians,

Journal articles, preaching resources, and the sermons of contemporary preachers.

In addition to the final chapter of the study providing a proposed methodology for socio-political commentary within an evangelistic sermon, the appendixes will provide additional reinforcement for this project's argument. Appendix A will demonstrate an example of an evangelistic sermon manuscript that addresses a social and political dynamic. Appendix B will provide an explanation the dynamics of the integrity-service model of evangelism for the Church today.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following is a representative listing of the literature that will be referenced throughout this study:

Making a Difference in Preaching by Haddon W. Robinson. This volume was published in 1999. Of particular interest to this writer is that the author covers a multitude of preaching topics. Haddon Robinson discusses topics such as evangelistic preaching, expository preaching, and life application for biblical preaching.

The Homiletical Plot by Eugene L. Lowry. This volume was originally published in 1980. The edition that will be referenced in this study was published in 2001. This writer found this volume informative due to the author's step-by-step approach in developing narrative sermons.

Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition by Calvin Miller. This volume was published in 2006. This volume is an exceptional resource for preachers of all experience levels. It covers a wide range of topics pertinent to contemporary narrative preaching, but also demonstrates clear examples of narrating biblical texts. The author also discusses the nuances of analyzing and communicating to an audience in evangelistic preaching.

City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era by Michael Gerson, and Peter Wehner. This compelling volume, published in 2010 examines the cultural shift that is developing in the relationship between politics and religion. In particular, the authors discuss the demise of the religious Right movement and the impact this reality will have on evangelicals in American religion and politics.

Love and Justice by Reinhold Niebuhr. This older volume, published in 1957 is a collection of essays by the author, who wrote extensively on the interaction between Christian faith, and social and political issues. Of particular interest to this writer is Niebuhr's unique perspective on socio-political issues, not only as an academic scholar but as a prominent voice from the pulpit.

Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit by Parker J. Palmer. This provocative volume is just recently published, in 2011. The reason this volume is so compelling is that the author genuinely understands the political turmoil engulfing America. However, Palmer also understands the synergistic relationship at the heart of both religion and politics, and that integrity and service are the building blocks of that relationship.

I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King Jr. by Michael E. Dyson. This volume published in 2001 provides an in-depth look at Dr. King's contributions as both a pastor, and as a civil rights advocate. This exhaustive volume uncovers the complex nature of this socio-political and religious figure.

Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament: New Perspectives by Richard J.

Cassidy. This volume was published in 2001. This volume is invaluable, in the opinion of this writer, for its perspective on Jesus' social and political attitudes as well as his relationship toward Roman authorities. Fr. Cassidy examines the four gospels, and the writings attributed to the apostle Paul to provide a wide lens through which we can examine society and politics in the New Testament.

Paul: In Fresh Perspective by N. T. Wright. This challenging volume was published in 2005. This is a book that can be very difficult to understand, as the author can be difficult to understand. However, he provides a very compelling look into the world of Paul, and discusses in detail the many facets of Paul's life and ministry.

Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul by Richard J. Cassidy. This provocative book was published in 2001. It examines in extensive detail Paul's social and political thought from the unique vantage point of being a prisoner of Rome. The book effectively treats all the writings that are attributed to Paul.

Statecraft as Soulcraft by George F. Will. This unique book was published in 1983.

George Will is a renowned political commentator and offers a different perspective on the relationship between religion, politics, and society. He also proposes a new model of citizenship that reflects this three-fold relationship.

The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching by Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson. This extensive volume was published in 2005. This book ought to be a required text in every preacher's library. The authors, and numerous other contributors, share their experience and wisdom in all aspects of preaching, from audience analysis, life application, and hermeneutics.

Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down by Marva J. Dawn. This volume was published in 1995. This book takes an in-depth study of the cultural trends that are impacting the Church today, as society shifts from the post-modern era to the post-Christian era.

True Worship by Vaughn Roberts. This brief volume was published in 2002. As preachers we often need to be reminded that the sermon is one aspect of worship. Vaughn Roberts examines the true essence of what authentic worship ought to be.

Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall. This volume was published in 1956. This book provides a thorough treatment of Niebuhr's convictions as to the profound impact that society and religion have on the institution of religion.

Christ and Culture by H. Richard Niebuhr. This older volume was published in 1951. In this timeless classic Niebuhr examines the multiple ways that Christianity has impacted society, and conversely, how society has impacted Christianity and its place within society. Go and Do Likewise by William C. Sohn. This book was in 2000. This book does a masterful job in examining the many ethical issues faced by modern Christians. Spohn accomplishes this task by looking at these critical issues through the lens of Jesus' public ministry, and then explains these issues from a contemporary perspective.

A Morally Complex World by James T. Bretzke. This volume was published in 2004. Fr. Bretzke provides a discussion of methods that are available to analyze moral ethics issues, and how we can apply them in coping with those issues.

Servant Leadership by Robert K. Greenleaf. This comprehensive volume was published in 1977. This book examines a wide range of topics that discuss the many facets of servant leadership. The feature of the book that was most helpful to this writer is that the author discusses servant leadership from the perspective of government, education, the church, and other settings. This gives the reader a clearer perspective on what constitutes true servant leadership.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

The following is a representative listing of the Scripture passages that will be incorporated into the project:

Luke 20: 22-25: "He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. He said to them, 'Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.""

Matthew 17: 24-27: "After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" Yes, he does,' he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak, "From who do the kings of earth collect duty and taxes- from their sons or from others?' 'From others,' Peter answered. 'Then the sons are exempt,' Jesus said to him. 'But so that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Romans 13: 1: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."

Romans 13: 6-7: "This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full-time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

1 Peter 2: 13-14: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right."

1 Peter 2: 18: "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh."

Luke 21: 1-4: "As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. I tell you the truth,' he said, 'This poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Luke 18: 2-5: "He said, 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town that kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 'For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming.'"

Galatians 6: 2-3: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself."

Philippians 2: 6-7: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant."

Ephesians 4: 1-2: "As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

CHAPTER ONE

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

PART ONE: JESUS AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

As the Church enters the second decade of the current millennium, the debate regarding the separation of politics and religion rages on. To introduce the argument that socio-political commentary need not be exclusive of evangelistic preaching, would appear to be ill-conceived at best and unbiblical at worst. Yet the words of the Lord's Prayer remind us that God's concerns extend beyond an eschatological vision. As Jesus instructed his followers to pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). While societal and political issues are not God's primary objective, nonetheless, we are reminded that according to God's will we do have the responsibility of dual citizenship, if we are to be true disciples.

To further make the argument that socio-political issues and evangelism are not mutually exclusive, the late Dr. Jerry Farwell can be used as an example to illuminate the point made...

For example, earlier in his ministry Dr. Farwell stated, "I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving Gospel of Jesus Christ and begin doing anything else – including fighting communism, or participating in civil-rights reforms."

However, in the late 1970s Dr. Farwell founded the Moral Majority, and in 1980 pledged his support during Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign. A case can be made that Dr. Farwell came to understand the need for moral integrity and service, not only within the Church but also

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¹. Mt. 6:10. (NIV).

² . Richard J. Neuhaus. *The Naked Public Square.: Religion and Democracy in America*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). 10.

in the public arena. Therefore, it is not inaccurate to suggest that Dr. Farwell understood the symbiotic relationship that existed between the societal and political issues, and evangelistic preaching in the church today. Moreover, he understood the biblical roots that this relationship was based upon.

Let us turn now to an exploration of Jesus' social and political attitudes, as documented in the New Testament. In this section, we will examine Jesus' position of eleven key issues: 1) oppression and injustice, 2) wealth and entitlement, 3)violence, 4) the political landscape, 5) Chief Priests, 6) Pharisees, 7) Zealots, 8) Essenes, 9) Paying Taxes and Tribute, 10) Roman rule and 11) The Integrity-service model. By focusing on his position on these issues, it will highlight the symbiotic relationship between biblical theology and its guidance for addressing social and political concerns during Jesus' time and their application for evangelism in the modern church. As posited here, many of the issues that Jesus addressed have direct impact on the issues facing evangelistic mission of the modern church today and the primacy of God's Kingdom.

For example, the transformational power of the Gospel will be examined with the goal of identifying and clarifying a methodology for contemporary evangelistic preaching. Evangelistic preaching should reflect our responsibilities to God. We should strive to seek the edification of God vs. man. We seek God's approval in all things, not mans'. The linchpin of Jesus' integrity-service model, as will be discussed here, is a model of evangelism predicated on integrity and service. For example, Jesus' model reflects two components: (1) individuals who serve and (2) service is rendered freely. In Jesus' view, God is the criteria against which the Church should apply evangelistic preaching as an evaluation model.

B. Jesus' Social Stance

Whether he was relating a parable, or addressing a real-life situation, Jesus frequently provided timely commentary on societal and political issues. He addressed issues that adversely impacted the lives of common people, pointing out the inequalities and injustices based on economic, social, and ethnic factors. Jesus' objective in providing commentary was two-fold. First, he wanted to raise awareness regarding the oppressive practices of Roman rule, to give a voice to the voiceless and a face to the faceless in Jewish society. Secondly, Jesus wanted to establish that citizenship in God's Kingdom was based on integrity of character and service, and not on social or economic entitlement. Moreover, Jesus identified himself as the agent of change who would usher in God's Kingdom, not only in heaven but also on earth. Jesus did not perceive God's Kingdom only in eschatological terms, he posited that God's Kingdom was possible in this world, through the transformational power of the gospel. We will examine the primary components of Jesus' social thought.

Oppression and Injustice

Throughout the course of his public ministry Jesus spoke out against the injustices endured by the weak and disenfranchised members of Jewish society. He voiced specific concern for women, the physically disabled, and the financially destitute. Nowhere is this more clearly depicted in the story of the persistent widow in Luke 18: 1-7 when Jesus states, "He said, 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town that kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused" (v. 2-4a) ³

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³. Lk. 18:1-7.

While married women did not enjoy even modest social standing in Jewish society at that time, for widows' social standing was nonexistent. Widow's who had been provided for through their husband's estates were able to provide for themselves and their children, and could afford legal protection in the event they were being sued or harassed by another party. A widow, who was dependent on government subsistence, was vulnerable to predators who desired to confiscate their property and possessions.

Another illustration of Jesus' social stance regarding his preferential option for the poor is located in Luke 21: 1-4:

As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 'I tell you the truth," He said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on. ⁴

While the other people in the temple were judging the meager offering given by the widow, and assuming their superiority over her, Jesus recognized the integrity of this women and her unselfish act of service. As Professor of Biblical Studies Craig A. Evans writes in his commentary on Luke, "Everyone, even the weak and lowly, is to be considered great...This idea is part of Jesus' unusual and unexpected criteria of evaluation, criteria which were unacceptable to many of the religious authorities of his time." We will discuss Jesus' evaluation approach regarding religious, social, and political issues in greater detail momentarily.

However, of primary importance is that we begin to recognize Jesus' universalistic vision that emerges from these biblical texts. At the heart of this vision was a society that not only did not differentiate based on social, economic, or ethnic status, but a society that was based on the

⁴ . Lk. 21: 1-4.

 $^{^{5}}$. Craig A. Evans. New International Biblical Commentary: Luke. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990. 158.

common good for all, not just the majority of citizens. In his superb book titled *Introducing Catholic Theology: Interpreting Jesus*, noted theologian Gerald O'Collins affirms Jesus' social stance: "However, if Jesus saw his own people as the primary beneficiary of the final revelation and salvation of God, his vision was universal. Although he directed his preaching to the chosen people, he called humanity as such to decision." ⁶ This provides us with solid footing to begin discussing the next phase of Jesus' social posture.

Wealth and Entitlement

While Jesus' attitude toward the poor and other minority groups appears to be straightforward, his stance regarding the wealthy is more complex. In Luke 18: 18-25, Jesus warns this ruler that his wealth will prevent him from entering the Kingdom of God, "Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (v. 25). This would appear to indicate that this outcome would be ascribed to anyone who has amassed substantial wealth and possessions. However, in the next chapter of Luke, Jesus' attitude toward wealth undergoes a subtle shift. In Luke 19: 1-10 Luke relates the account of Jesus accepting hospitality from a tax collector named Zacchaeus.

This story is noteworthy for two reasons. The first is that tax collectors had the reputation for being deceitful and lacking integrity. Many of them bilked their clients out of large sums of money, much like Bernie Madoff has done in our society today. That Jesus would be seen entering the home of a tax collector, and sitting down to dinner with him, appears to contradict his earlier confrontation with the rich ruler. The shift in Jesus' attitude occurs when Zacchaeus confesses his wrongdoing, and agrees to give half of his possessions to the poor, and

⁶. Gerald O' Collins. Introducing Catholic Theology: Interpreting Jesus. (London: Cassell Ltd., 1983). 54

⁷. Lk. 18: 18-25.

to make restitution to those whom he cheated in business. Jesus' responds to Zacchaeus' act of contrition by stating, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19: 9). Jesus' negativity toward wealth is based on those who hoard their resources, rather than alleviating the financial imbalance that was prevalent in Jewish society.

Although Jesus spoke out sharply, regarding the wealthy, he also commented often on the social and political disparities related to entitlement. In other words, those individuals who used the power of their position to take unfair advantage of the weak and powerless. This is clearly illustrated in the account of Jesus' temple protest in Luke 19: 45-46: "Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. 'It is written,' He said to them, 'My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it 'a den of robbers." This "den of robbers" can be directly attributed to the unethical practices of the chief priests who were holding office at the time. To summarize, Jesus was not opposed to wealth, but rather how it was used, particularly, if it was not used consistent with God's will to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate and weak among us. We will discuss Jesus' relationship to the chief priests in more detail momentarily.

Jesus 'Stance on Violence

If we are to adequately grasp Jesus' vision for the Kingdom of God, it is imperative that his attitude toward acts of violence be the cornerstone of that vision. However, it must be cautioned that Jesus' perceptions regarding non-violence do not remain static, as we will see momentarily. In the previous section we discussed Jesus' interaction with the money-changers in the temple (Luke 19: 45-46). This biblical text is also highly demonstrative of Jesus' stance on violence. As New Testament Professor Richard J. Cassidy writes in his compelling book titled *Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament*, "Nevertheless, this prophetic intervention is

⁸ . Lk: 19:9.

⁹. Lk. 19: 45-46.

made without the use of weapons and is fundamentally non-violent in character. Jesus, in effect, accomplishes a dramatic protest without physically injuring any individual." ¹⁰

However, it could be argued that scattering the items setting on the tables, and overturning those tables, constitutes an act of aggression if not actual violence. A case can be made here that an act need not be physical to be considered violent. Contemporarily, an example of that would be the recent suicide of Jamie Rodemeyer. Jamie was a high school student from Williamsville, NY who was verbally taunted and bullied because of his sexual orientation. His sexual orientation is not the debate here, the debate is that violence should not be categorized as being only a physical reality; words also can be powerful and destructive weapons. Having said that, let us return to the task at hand.

When discussing Jesus' attitude toward violence, we do well to remember that a component of his attitude is non-resistance to physical force. In other words, if you are an individual who is being treated violently do not retaliate against your attacker. The primary tenet of this position is that positive change will occur, both individually and collectively, only if violence is not answered with violence.

As Richard J. Cassidy states in his book titled *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*:

In contrast, those who adopt the position of nonviolence believe that challenges to and confrontations with those responsible for the existing social evils may serve as an effective means of bringing about a change in their behavior. They hold that as long as such challenges are made

 $^{^{10}}$. Richard J. Cassidy. *Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament: New Perspectives.* (New York: Crossroad, 2001). 23.

within the context of love and truth, as long as they avoid violence to persons, these challenges can serve as a creative means initiating a dialogue that may eventually result in a favorable change of behavior.¹¹

However, Jesus was cognizant regarding Jewish society's attitudes toward violence, that they had been impacted in large part by the teachings of Judaism. In particular, the early prophets often described a God who would bring about vengeance and destruction on his people for their evil acts. This is explicitly stated in Isaiah 61: 1-2:

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from the darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn. ¹²

When Jesus read this text from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth, however, he knowingly omitted the passage that alluded to God's vengeance. If God was going to bring about a cultural shift due to violence, the teachers and elders within the temples and synagogues would set the social and political tone. In order to cure the disease, it was necessary for Jesus to change the culture internally and not just treat the symptoms. To do so would only exacerbate the problem.

Jesus and the Political Landscape

Many scholars, as well as many preachers, attempt to ascribe to Jesus the ideologies and characteristics of specific political parties. However, this exercise is misguided in that Jesus never aligned himself with any political party or agenda. To typecast Jesus as a "liberal" or a "democrat" as argued here is to entirely miss the point of Jesus' public ministry. If we listen closely to politicians in debates or interviews, it would be ludicrous to draw comparisons

¹¹ . Richard J. Cassidy. *Jesus, Politics and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978). 41.

¹² . Is. 61: 1-2.

between them and Jesus. Where Jesus exudes integrity with his forthrightness and concern for all people, politicians today seldom give a straight answer to questions and often lack even a modicum of integrity.

Jesus' political stance was not a call to outright rebellion, but a call to heal the broken hearts and spirits of the world. The social and political tone that Jesus set was one that was open to active listening and dialogue, where every voice was heard and each person was valued equally. Jesus demonstrated his socio-political philosophy in two areas. The first area was in the relationships that he had with the political factions in first-century Palestine. For this study, we will analyze the interactions Jesus had with the Pharisees and the Chief Priests. We will also examine Jesus' relationship to the Zealots and the Essenes, two groups with whom Jesus is erroneously aligned. Suffice it to say, even though Jesus was not politically aligned with these four groups, he did outwardly reject all of their ordinances.

Secondly, we will discuss Jesus' response to the question of paying taxes and tribute, which is often misconstrued as defining Jesus' political stance as liberal and radical. Of primary importance to our discussion will be Jesus' evaluative approach regarding political situations. This evaluative approach is the linchpin to Jesus' disposition toward Roman authorities, as well as the centerpiece to Jesus' integrity-service model of evangelism. The integrity-service model is a model that is predicated on open, and thoughtful dialogue as this study will further demonstrate.

Jesus and the Chief Priests

Nowhere is Jesus' political stance more evident than in his complicated relationship with the chief priests of the temple, Luke does not provide any specific explanation as to the cause of the chief priests' adversarial posture toward Jesus. However, the temple incident that we discussed earlier (Luke 19: 45-46) provides some potential clues. The fact that Luke places this account immediately before the chief priests declare their intentions to assassinate Jesus, lends credibility to this allusion. New Testament Professor Richard J. Cassidy provides insight into this hypothesis:

First, since Luke has not indicated that Jesus had any previous contact with the chief priests, his protest is, seemingly, the only thing that could have earned him their hostility. Second, his actions in driving out the merchants very likely constituted a threat to the chief priests' authority and to their ability to continue the economic practices that they found personally remunerative. ¹³

Jesus recognized and exposed the corrupt, and self-serving, practices of the chief priests. In addition, he not only spoke truth to power but initiated positive actions to facilitate change. It is well to remember the political power wielded by the chief priests was substantial, as they were comprised of three powerful subgroups. The first group was the Sadducees, the aristocratic branch of the chief priests. Their primary function was to uphold and enforce the Mosaic law precisely as it was written, with no room allowed for interpretation. The Sadducees were not opposed to Jesus' message regarding God's Kingdom, however, they rejected the concept of bodily resurrection along with angels and other celestial beings. Again, we observe Jesus' ability to seek common grounds even with those who were considered adversaries. Even in conflicted relationships, Jesus looked for opportunities to teach about the Kingdom of God.

The next group that comprised the chief priests was the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin ruled on criminal cases within the context of the religious community, functioning comparably to the highest civil court or senate. While the Sanhedrin had extensive judicial power within the religious community in Jerusalem, it is doubtful they possessed the authority to impose the death

¹³. Cassidy. Jesus, Politics and Society. 52.

penalty. While the Sanhedrin was a religious and political body, whose edicts punished those who did not obey the laws of God, their actions often did not reflect God's will.

Luke relates the confrontation between Jesus' disciples and the Sanhedrin, when the disciples refuse to comply with Sanhedrin authority in Acts 5:29-32:

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. ¹⁴

The disciples argue that the directives set forth by the Sanhedrin do not accurately reflect the directives that come from God. As New Testament Professor Richard J. Cassidy asserts, "In effect, Luke's Jesus (and the Jesus of Mark and Matthew) expostulates that the things of God are the criteria against which the things of Caesar are to be evaluated." This biblical text clearly demonstrates both the reflection and action components of the evaluation model, which Jesus prescribed to his followers.

Of the three groups that comprised the chief priests, none was as instrumental regarding the outcome of Jesus' trial and crucifixion than the high priests. In particular, the actions of Caiaphas were pivotal in bringing about the verdict to condemn Jesus to death. However, it is crucial to remember that Caiaphas was appointed high priest during the reign of Valerius Gratus from 15 to 26 A.D. Jesus' execution occurred after Gratus had removed and named at least four other high priests. This fact, along with Caiaphas' role in Jesus' execution, had led to the dissatisfaction of the community with those holding the office of high priest.

¹⁴ . Ac. 5:29-32.

¹⁵. Cassidy. Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament. 55.

Moreover, the high priests were embroiled in disputes with the lower priests for misappropriating the tithes that paid the living expenses of the lower priests. Later in the first century, when the Zealot movement united the lower class in revolting against the oppression of Roman rule, it posed a serious threat to the office of high priest. In his informative book titled *Jesus and the Zealots*, S.G.F. Brandon explains this threat, "Dependence on Roman favor, moreover, inevitably meant that the sacerdotal aristocracy became increasingly concerned with the maintenance of Roman government, as its members felt their alienation from their own people." Eventually, this led to the Zealots appointing their own high priests.

Jesus and the Pharisees

The Pharisees were comprised mainly of the laity, who were charged with upholding and enforcing the precepts set forth in the Law. They were primarily responsible for overseeing those dietary laws, Sabbath observances, and laws regarding the payment of taxes were obeyed. It was the Pharisees who questioned Jesus regarding the payment of taxes to the temple, and to Roman authority. They also were the group most vehemently opposed to Jesus' performing miracles on the Sabbath. Additionally, the Pharisees were critical of Jesus accepting hospitality from individuals deemed "unclean" according to the laws of Torah, such as tax collectors. They were also in opposition to Jesus' interpretation and defiance of dietary laws.

The Pharisees were also made up of sub-group called scribes. The scribes were charged with re-copying the Law by hand. In the course of re-copying the Law there was zero tolerance for errors, thereby making the process long and arduous. The scribes also served as attorneys when civil or religious disputes arose, and the Law required concise interpretation and

¹⁶ . S.G.F. Brandon. *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967). 67-68.

explanation. However, the scribe's authority went beyond merely explaining and interpreting the Law. In his book titled *From Narrative to Homily*, author Ken Kinton states, "They also served as prosecutors, preferring charges and sentences in accordance with the precepts of the Law.

The scribes were the responsible party that charged Jesus with the crimes he was executed for." ¹⁷

Regarding the Pharisees attitudes toward Roman rule it would appear that they were primarily neutral. As the Pharisees formed their own social groups, they could be considered a self-contained and self-sufficient entity, as they maintained accountability to one another.

Richard J. Cassidy succinctly explains the Pharisees' relationship and disposition toward Roman authority:

It seems likely that the Pharisees cooperated with, or at least did not oppose, Roman rule in Judea. They would remain alert to, and aggressively counter, any transgressions of the Jewish law by the Roman governors, but they did not see any inherent conflict between Roman taxation and Roman-administered public order on the one hand and their own deep-rooted allegiance to the law on the other. ¹⁸

While it is clear that the Pharisees were bound to uphold and enforce the Law regardless if the offender were Jewish or Roman, they viewed the Law as indispensable for maintaining both religious and social behavior. Therefore, the Pharisees rejected the argument that the Law had become antiquated and obsolete, and that it was no longer applicable. We now turn our discussion to two groups with whom Jesus was erroneously associated, the Zealots and the Essenes.

¹⁷ . Ken Kinton. From Narrative to Homily: Biblical Narratives from the Perspective of Religion, Society, and Politics. (Enumclaw, WA: Pleasant Word, 2010). 41.

¹⁸. Cassidy. Jesus, Politics and Society. 122-123.

Jesus and the Zealots

The Zealots were identified as a group of Jewish patriots whose intention was to revolt against the oppression of Roman rule. There are scholars who support the plausibility of Jesus' being a member of the Zealots. This contention is presumably based on two factors. The first factor is that among Jesus' disciples the one named Simon, belonged to the Zealots. However, this fact is not sufficient evidence to support the argument of Jesus being a Zealot. The second reason that some scholars link Jesus to the Zealots is the lack of evidence in the gospels to disprove the claim. Neither of the arguments mentioned here is persuasive, nor are they wellconceived to support an argument that Jesus was perhaps a Zealot. In contrast, on the other hand, evidence that Jesus was not sympathetic toward the Zealot movement is readily apparent, and is demonstrated in both his political and social posture. For example, Jesus' position of nonresistance and non-violence was in direct opposition to the Zealots' fanatical and violent approach to solving social and political disputes. As author Ken Kinton posits, "Jesus' attitude of seeking further dialogue in matters regarding Roman authority would have run counter to the Zealots' attitude of aggressive revolution. Their position was not to enter into negotiations or to adhere to the Jewish tradition of an oral interpretation of the Law." ¹⁹

Unlike the Zealots, Jesus advocated for a pragmatic approach to solving disputes, and remaining flexible regarding potential outcomes. Conversely, the Zealots adopted an approach that exuded impetuosity over pragmatism, and rigidity instead of flexibility. The aggressive fanaticism is clearly explained by S.G.F. Brandon, "To secure these ideals, they were prepared to

^{19 .} Kinton. From Narrative to Homily. 41.

resort to violent action against both the Romans, who occupied their land, and those of their countrymen whose acceptance of Roman rule was particularly notable."²⁰

Moreover, the Zealots were opposed to the paying of taxes and tribute to Roman authorities, which ran counter to Jesus' attitude regarding payment, which we will explore in greater detail momentarily. Finally, we do well to remember the Zealots' revolt against the Roman system of appointing high priests, which we discussed earlier. There was no area of Roman rule in which the Zealots could have co-existed, given their refusal to reach consensus or even compromise on issues of contention. Moreover, their belief that violence was an acceptable response in settling disputes, led to the demise of their movement.

Jesus and the Essenes

Another group, to which Jesus' is erroneously linked, is the Essenes. However, it is understandable on two counts, why Jesus is closely associated with them. The first reason is the Essenes' emphasis on individual piety and holiness. The Essenes believed that males were to exemplify purity in both their personal habits as well in tithing. Secondly, the Essenes lived in community where each person shared equally in the material and financial resources of the others, leaving no one to experience poverty. These characteristics could give the casual observer the false impression that Jesus was a member of the Essenes.

However, as previously noted regarding other groups, there were tenets of the Essenes that opposed the teachings of Jesus. The first difference was that the Essenes' community isolated itself from every day society. As noted theologian Marcus J. Borg states in his book *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus,* "Living in isolated communes, they

²⁰ . Brandon. *Jesus and the Zealots*. 46.

avoided contact with the impurity of the *amme ha aretz* and Gentiles."²¹ Another area of disagreement between Jesus and the Essenes was in the status and treatment of women. Jesus sought to affirm as having elevated social status. The Essenes did not recognize women as having any social standing outside of marriage.

Additionally, Jesus would not have condoned their strict observance of the Law, and the Essenes would have opposed Jesus' performing miracles particularly on the Sabbath. The Essenes also opposed Jesus dining with tax collectors, and other groups deemed unclean according to Jewish dietary laws. Jesus would have perceived the Essenes as being haughty and proud because of their preoccupation with personal piety and self-righteousness. In addition, the Essenes envisioned their quest for holiness as preparation for a final confrontation with Roman authorities, which would result in a holy war to overthrow the evil empire and usher in a new age.

There is no disputing there are distinct characteristics within each of the groups discussed above, which could point to their connection to Jesus. However, the evidence arguing against the plausibility of Jesus being directly connected to these groups is substantial and conclusive. Jesus' vision for a new Kingdom of God was not grounded in the ideologies of a certain political or social group. It was based on healing the inequalities in a society that did not discriminate based on wealth, ethnicity, or gender, and settled disputes with active listening and dialogue, rather than violence.

²¹ . Marcus J. Borg. *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1984). 72.

Paying Taxes and Tribute

When examining Jesus' disposition toward Roman rule, it is well to begin with Jesus' stance on paying taxes and tribute. To facilitate our discussion we will examine two biblical texts that address this issue. The first is Jesus' response to his questioners in Luke 20: 23-25: "He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 'Show me a denarius. Whose portrait and inscription are on it?' 'Caesar's they replied. He said to them, 'Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." ²²

There are elements within this biblical passage which are crucial for discerning Jesus' social and political stance, and his disposition toward Roman rule. The first element is that Jesus' response appears to artfully dodge the question. Moreover, Jesus' verbal parry with his questioners is often interpreted as being highly radical. Upon closer scrutiny, Jesus' response considers the consequences for Jewish citizens who are negligent regarding their civic duty to pay taxes. In his commentary titled *Render to God: A Study of the Tribute Passage* J. Spencer Kennard writes, "When we realize the grinding burden of the Roman taxes and the savagery with which they were collected, the question asked of Jesus ceases to be academic. Inability to pay was punished by confiscation, slavery, and death."²³

Being aware of the consequences awaiting who felt compelled to non-compliance, Jesus advises his listeners to pay the tax, with the caveat to do likewise regarding their obligations toward God. While the payment of Roman taxes was obligatory, it was also an integral component of responsible citizenship. Tax revenue provided the funding for roadways, aqueducts, roads, and other conveyances to be built and maintained for public use. Moreover,

²² . Lk. 20: 23-25.

²³ . J. Spencer Kennard. *Render to God: A Study of the Tribute Passage*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950). 28.

Caesar was obligated to utilize tax revenues to ensure that all public amenities, and protections, were properly maintained and serviceable for all citizens. Head of state, as well as emperors, were understood to be in positions of service, not only to their citizenry but also to God. This is equally true of Christians today as C. Canfield states, "The Christian is under obligation to pay his dues to the state, because as a beneficiary of it, he owes it some payment in return for the protection and amenities which it provides, and because no state can function without resources, and therefore a fundamental refusal to pay taxes would be a fundamental 'No' to the state as such "24"

The third crucial element of this text is Jesus' specific request to see a denarius. This specificity of the request is noteworthy on two points. The first point is that while Caesar regarded himself as a god, with all-encompassing power, he would be considered a pagan according to the tenets of Judaism. Hence, Jesus knew that his Jewish listeners would be incensed by Caesar's image on the coin. Furthermore, Jesus was drawing attention to the reality that Caesar's power was limited in scope and duration as compared to God's power. As J. Spencer Kennard asserts, "The multitudes must have roared with amusement when Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of his enemies by asking them to show him one of their Roman coins. The hearty laugh cracked a tense moment. The denarius represented the coinage of the West; it was not the coin of tribute."²⁵

However, it could also be argued that Jesus is pointing out their own misplaced priorities as Catholic theologian C. Giblin states, "Either he reminds them that they already acknowledge

²⁴ . Canfield. "The Christian's Political Responsibility According to the New Testament." *The Scottish Journal of Theology 15* (1962). 184.

²⁵ . Kennard. Render to God. 51.

Caesar's authority by having in their possession the coin that bears his image or he calls to their mind the fact that they put in first place a question (the tax) which is really secondary."²⁶

Furthermore, this passage disproves the argument of Jesus being linked to the Zealot movement, which is another plausible reason for the silence of the questioners upon hearing Jesus' response.

However, the paying of taxes to Caesar was not the sole financial burden placed on Jewish citizens. As related in Matthew 17:24-27, they were also responsible for the temple tax:

After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, "Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes, he does." he replied. When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. "What do you think, Simon?" He asked, "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes – from their own sons or from others?" "From others." Peter answered. "Then the sons are exempt." Jesus said to him. "But that we may not offend them, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch, open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." ²⁷

Some scholars argue that this passage is merely another referendum on Jesus' position regarding the payment of Roman taxes. This assertion does not satisfy the data presented within the question asked of Peter, and Jesus' evaluation of, and response to, that question. Noted scholar Marcus J. Borg clarifies the distinction between the Roman tax and the temple tax, "Thus Jews in Palestine were subject to two systems of taxation, both of which they were powerless to affect. The one was dictated by Roman policy, over which they had no control, and the second was required by divine revelation."²⁸

While the temple tax was required of all Jewish citizens, there was an additional requirement placed on those in the farming industry. First, farming was the occupation of a

²⁶ . C. Giblin. "The Things of God' in the Question Concerning Tribute to Caesar." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly 33* (1971). 511.

²⁷ . Mt. 17:24-27.

²⁸ . Borg. Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus. 48.

majority of the citizens. Therefore, farmers were mandated to pay a percentage based on their crop yield for the year, and also a percentage of the assessed value of their land. The land tax was prorated at one-percent of the land's value, and the crops were prorated at 12.5 percent of their market value.

When evaluating the onerous burden placed on farmers to meet the requirement of the temple taxes, it is well to remember these taxes were demanded by Torah. This is clearly illustrated in Leviticus 27:30: "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy for the Lord." ²⁹ We now turn our attention to examining Jesus' attitude toward Roman rule. In summation, Jesus' stance on paying taxes and tribute was primarily based on his view of responsible citizenship in conformance with the tenets of God, that the paying of such fees and taxes would ultimately benefit all, thus carrying out God's will for his Kingdom

Jesus' Stance Toward Roman Rule

As we have observed throughout our examination of the two passages regarding the payment of taxes and tribute, Jesus' stance on Roman rule was dependent upon the situation he was faced with. In matters of injustice and oppression he was opposed to the brutal tactics of Roman officials. While Jesus did not demonstrate hostility toward the Roman tax system, or even the additional burden imposed by the temple, he rejected the use of violence against those citizens unable to pay. It is this predisposition toward violence exhibited by Roman authorities, as well as radical groups such as the Zealots, which impacted Jesus' adaptation of a model of discipleship based on integrity and service. This integrity and service was to be demonstrated to one's peers as well as those in authority, even when those in authority exercised their power in an unethical or violent manner.

²⁹ . Lev. 27: 30.

The Integrity-Service Model

Jesus adopted a model of integrity and service approach in dealing with authority for two distinct reasons. The first reason, as we have documented, was due to the oppressive practices of Roman authorities toward the weak, poor, and infirm. Jesus was also concerned that Roman rule was guilty of abusing and mistreating minority groups, such as women. Jesus' integrity-service model was predicated on the concept that all people deserved to be treated with civility and dignity. Moreover, Jesus argued that gender, ethnicity, or financial status is not the determining factors in having a voice in socio-political affairs. More importantly, Jesus firmly believed in the principle that each person is an integral member of society, and that no one member of society holds greater power through voice than any other member of society, including that of Roman authorities.

The second reason that Jesus advocated an integrity-service model was the sense of entitlement and arrogance displayed by the wealthiest members of Jewish society. Furthermore, Jesus believed the spirit of the Law had been abandoned in order to ensure the Law would be strictly obeyed, with no leniency in interpretation.

Let us examine two biblical texts in which Jesus explains the fundamental principles of the integrity- service model. In Luke 2:24-27 Jesus addresses the disciples' argument regarding who should be considered the greatest among them:

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." ³⁰

³⁰ . Lk. 22:24-27.

Another integral component of the integrity-service model, for Jesus, is that those who render service do so without expecting to receive thanks or recognition. Service is given freely, with no compensation required of the person(s) being served. Jesus clearly illustrates this in the story of the dutiful servant in Luke 17:7-10:

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat?" Would he not rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink?" Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." ³¹

The arrogance exemplified by Roman rule, and the disparity between the powerful and weak, are clearly illustrated in these two passages. Professor of New Testament Richard J. Cassidy further explains Jesus' teachings, surrounding these two biblical texts:

These teachings on humility and service can be compared with the *cursus honorum* ("course of honors"), which was designed to prepare members of the Roman elite for their role in exercising power within the empire, but the contrast could scarcely be more marked. A similar kind of contrast also emerges when Jesus' teachings regarding the importance of care for the poor and the infirm is juxtaposed with the characteristic Roman view regarding the despoiling and enslavement of those conquered.³²

According, to the Roman domination model, the poor and infirm provided justified opportunities to further abuse power and position. The Romans did so in such a way, as to keep the dispossessed in a constant state of confusion concerning where power and authority was derived by Roman rule, and not through the Kingdom of God.

³¹ Lk. 17:7-10.

 $^{^{\}rm 32}$. Cassidy. Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament. 22.

However, in comparison, the integrity-service model posits that true power is earned when dignity and respect is given to those individuals or groups who have been maligned by abusive leaders. This is clearly depicted in Luke 14:12-14:

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors, if you do they might invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." ³³

The integrity-service model stands in stark contrast to the political model in place in today's society. The nepotism, favor-swapping, and lobbyist groups that are part of our political landscape are detrimental to a political ideal based on integrity, service, and fairness.

Summarizing, we would do well to be mindful that Jesus is not merely offering a commentary about service and humility; he is forewarning them of the eschatological events yet to come. For Jesus, the social and political events of the day provided analogies which he utilized to communicate his evangelistic message to both his followers, and to his opponents.

In the second part of this chapter we will examine socio-political dimensions of evangelistic preaching from the perspective of the apostle Paul and his contributions toward a Christian Integrity-service model. However, the scope of Part Two, Paul and Socio-Political Issues will exceed merely discussing evangelistic preaching. For example, we will discuss Paul's relationships with Roman authorities, his dual citizenship (e.g., Roman and Jewish citizenship), as well as his evangelistic vision of both the present and future Kingdom of God. It should be noted that this dual citizenship vastly helped to shape Paul's unique perspective in applying the integrity-service model.

³³ . Lk: 14:12-14.

PART TWO: C: PAUL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

In our discussion of Jesus' social and political worldview we covered his attitudes regarding wealth, violence, and the abuses of Roman rule. Paul's worldview on these topics is identical. Therefore, our discussion regarding Paul's perspective on society, politics, and evangelistic preaching will take a decidedly different tack. For our discussion we will study Paul's time in prison, in order to ascertain his disposition toward the political climate of his era and how his imprisonment impacted his political thought. Finally, we will discuss one of Paul's preeminent speeches in order to define his evangelistic preaching style.

Paul and the Christian Integrity-Service Model

While it is inarguable that Jesus established the integrity-service model of discipleship, it is the apostle Paul who demonstrated its core principles. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the biblical texts that describe Paul's periods of imprisonment. The description by the evangelist Luke, in Acts 28:30-31, of Paul's imprisonment in Rome underscores the dynamics of the integrity-service model, "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." ³⁴ The first characteristic that stands out is that Paul is under house arrest under Roman guard. Even though he is in confinement, Paul is not only allowed visitors but he is able to evangelize them without censure.

The first tenet of the integrity-service model, as argued here, is to adopt a posture of cooperation with authorities. This is borne out by Paul's writing in Romans 13: 5: "Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also

³⁴ . Ac. 28:30-31.

because of conscience." ³⁵ However, it is imperative to the integrity-service model, to respect all authority as stated in 1 Peter 2:18, "Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." ³⁶

This is instructive for us in not only understanding Paul's experiences as a prisoner, but to begin to understand his political thought. If we look at only the theological meaning of Luke's account of Paul's house arrest, we miss the lesson to be learned regarding society and politics in our own lives. Paul is providing an illustration of the role and function of government, and the civic responsibilities of a society of people. This, then, begs the question "what is the role of the State?" In their recent book titled *City of Man*, Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner elaborate:

Some of the greatest Christian minds – from St. Paul, St. Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas to Jonathan Edwards, Richard Hooker, and Abraham Kuyper; from John Courtney Murray and Reinhold Niebuhr to Martin Luther King Jr. and John Paul II – have built an impressive tradition of interpretation around this question. As they have taught us, politics in its best sense is not about power for its own sake, it is about the ends we hope to achieve through the use of power.³⁷

Of even greater importance for Christians, is the message that is interwoven in Luke's account regarding Paul's house arrest. As Pauline scholar Richard J. Cassidy states in his authoritative book titled *Paul in Chains*: "First, Paul has a ministry of hospitality; significantly he is said to welcome *all* who come to him. Second and third, he has a ministry of preaching and a ministry of teaching. This preaching and teaching are focused on two subjects that are especially suspicious in a Roman location: "the *Kingdom* of God" and "the *Lord* Jesus Christ." ³⁸

³⁵ . Rm. 13:5.

³⁶ . 1 Pt. 2:18.

³⁷. Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner. *City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era.* (Chicago: Moody, 2010). 91-92.

³⁸ . Richard J. Cassidy. *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St. Paul.* (New York: Crossroad, 2001). 226.

Therefore, Paul clearly demonstrates two important characteristics that we do well to emulate in our own vocations or lay ministries. First, Paul received visitors who were Roman officials, which is what is being alluded to when saying that he received all who came to see him. Secondly, Paul utilized a politically-charged situation, and turned it into an opportunity to evangelize preaching the Kingdom of God and Jesus as the crucified Savior. However, there is one salient point that cannot be overstated. That is, that while it is evident that Paul is hindered physically, as is evidenced by two years under house arrest, we cannot ascertain to what degree he was censored by Roman authorities.

What becomes clearly evident is that despite any restrictions that were imposed upon Paul by Roman rule, the gospel can never be censored or restricted to even the slightest degree. As Mikeal C. Parsons writes, "The gospel is unhindered because of the sovereignty of God who ultimately insures its triumph in the face of adversity. But from Luke' perspective, this 'unhindered' gospel remains an 'unfinished' gospel." Therefore, until all people have been evangelized regarding the Kingdom of God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel remains unfinished. In Luke's account of Paul's imprisonment in Philippi, we encounter two additional characteristics, which are at the heart of the integrity-service model. The first of these characteristics is illustrated in Acts 16:26-28:

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" ⁴⁰

³⁹ . Mikeal C. Parson. *Mercer Commentary on the Bible, vol. 7, Acts and Pauline Writings* .(Macon: Mercer University, 1997). 64.

⁴⁰ . Ac. 16:26-28.

The integrity-service characteristic that Paul demonstrates is to never abandon those in physical, emotional, or spiritual distress. It could be argued that Paul would have been justified to escape, but seeing the jailer ready to take his own life rather than face his superiors Paul and the other prisoners stayed. As Richard J. Cassidy writes in his book titled *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, "There is, then, at least a hint of a suggestion in Luke's account that Paul could assure the jailer that no prisoners had escaped because of the fact that Paul himself had a certain amount of moral pre-eminence in the situation."

However, it is of even greater significance to document the obligation the jailer perceived he owed to Paul for preventing his suicide. In return, the jailer tends to the wounded disciples, has Paul baptize him and his family, and then invites Paul and Barnabas to share a meal at his home (Acts 16-32-34). The integrity-service model of discipleship is not one-directional but engenders an attitude of reciprocity from the individual or group which has been served. Thus, it also about mentoring those we evangelize. In this text Paul spends time with the jailer and his family after he has baptized them, and intentionally builds a mentoring relationship with them.

Having said this, I am reminded of my personal experience in the mainline church that, once an individual or family joins the church, they are not mentored as actively as when they were prospective members. Whether evangelizing new converts, or trying to keep established members engaged in the life of the church, the mentoring aspect of the integrity-service, like the gospel, is to remain "open" and "unfinished." The second characteristic of the integrity-service model that Paul exemplified was holding those in authority accountable for their actions. Particularly, when those actions were unjust, and those in power attempted to cover up the

⁴¹ . Richard J. Cassidy. *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*. (Maryknoll, Ny: Orbis Books, 1987). 68.

offense rather than assume responsibility. This is clearly depicted by Luke when the Philippi authorities attempt to release Paul and Silas, as told in Acts 16:36-37:

The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." 42

Under Roman law it was illegal for Roman citizens to be physically beaten upon being arrested and imprisoned. However, it remains unclear why Paul would not divulge his Roman citizenship prior to being flogged; instead waiting until after the abuse has occurred. It is worth noting, though, that the Roman authorities made no inquiries of Paul, Silas, or anyone else regarding their identities. As Richard Cassidy writes:

Nevertheless, attention to Luke's entire description of the incident makes clear that the magistrate's repentance did not result in a complete vindication for Paul. The magistrates do come and "conciliate" with him; however, nothing is said to indicate that the magistrates acknowledged that the charges against Paul were misrepresentations. 43

While the Roman authorities agree to meet Paul in order to facilitate his leaving the jail, they do not view this overture as a formal apology or as admission of guilt. As New Testament scholar Beverly Roberts Gaventa asserts, "Underscoring Paul's accusation is the claim at the authorities earlier acted in public but now wish Paul and Silas to disappear privately." Unfortunately, the Church has not been immune from the duplicity, and lack of accountability, that was prevalent during Paul's era. The PTL ministries scandal and the sex-abuse scandal in the Catholic Church ought to be constant reminders of the need for transparency and accountability. Particularly

⁴² . Ac. 16:36-37.

⁴³ . Cassidy. *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*. 89.

⁴⁴. Beverly Roberts Gaventa. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Acts. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). 241.

where people's lives are impacted forever, there is a responsibility to not protect the predators at the expense of the victims. For those who perpetrate these crimes there needs to be Kingdom consequences, both on earth and in heaven.

It was previously noted that Paul's worldview was identical to Jesus' regarding wealth, violence and the abuses of Roman rule. Paul's confinement was used as a backdrop to understand and exemplify how he used his confinement as a ministry of hospitality, preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, he cooperated and in some cases mentored to authorities, not out of fear of retribution, but out of his Christian conscience. For Paul, the ultimate model of service was in service to God's Kingdom.

Paul's Evangelistic Preaching Formula

From the vantage point presented here, the evangelistic preaching of Paul consists of two main elements. These elements are clearly defined in Luke's dramatic account of Paul appearing before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:1-11. The first element which Paul calls to our attention is that evangelistic preaching is to reflect our responsibilities toward God. As Luke writes, "Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, 'My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day" (v.1). ⁴⁵ Paul does not preach so that humans may be edified, but rather that God may be edified. In contrast, it can be argued that unlike the evangelism of Paul, preaching in the mainline Church today has become too concerned with political-correctness. Moreover, preaching has become an exercise in over-simplifying the gospel to the point of rendering it impotent.

Another possible theory is that preachers today place a priority on preaching sermons that will elicit positive feedback from their parishioners that they will be thought of as "good"

⁴⁵ . Ac. 23:1-11.

preachers. The reverse side of this theory is that if people leave the worship service in silence, giving no feedback regarding the sermon, then at least no one was upset by the preacher's remarks. In his excellent book titled *Worship as Pastoral Care* Methodist bishop William H. Willimon writes, "As Kierkegaard once said, the test of a good sermon is not that you heard it, enjoyed it, then went home to Sunday dinner. The test may be that you heard it and found yourself too sick at heart to eat anything afterward!" Evangelistic preaching, from Paul's perspective, is not centered on seeking the approval of humans but on seeking approval from God.

The second element of Paul's evangelistic preaching formula is the centrality of Jesus as the crucified and resurrected Savior. As Paul states in Acts 23: 7, "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." ⁴⁷ This statement clearly indicates Paul's theology being centered on the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for there is no hope of eternal life for human beings apart from this core belief. This is succinctly stated by Sidney Greidanus in his book titled *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, "In a world dead in sin, alienated from God, headed for death, the life-giving message of Jesus Christ is so urgent that it simply must be told. For it is a message of hope, of reconciliation, of peace with God, of healing, of restoration, of salvation, of eternal life." ⁴⁸ As argued here, at the heart of the problem, is the attempt by contemporary preachers to depict Paul as a political figure. To the contrary, Paul adopted the principle tenets of evangelistic preaching as an integrity service model akin to Jesus' stance on discipleship.

⁴⁶. William H. Willimon. Worship as Pastoral Care. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979). 93.

⁴⁷ . Ac. 23:7.

⁴⁸ . Sidney Greidanus: *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). 12.

Catholic theologian N.T. Wright writes, "Ironically, those who in our own day have decided that Paul was a 'political' thinker *rather than* a 'religious' or 'theological' one have, in maintaining that false either/or, perpetuated a particular theological point of view and thereby have ignored the role of Messiah ship in Paul for the opposite reason." In light of N.T. Wright's assertion, it is imperative that preachers today resist the temptation to impose political agendas and ideologies on Scripture. It can only lead to confusion and the incorrect teaching of the faithful. Jesus used social and political analogies in order to communicate to people on a level they could understand. We do well as preachers today, to communicate in a manner that is similar to Jesus' in its simplicity, and in reaching its intended audience.

Summarizing, chapter one provides a biblical perspective on the socio-political attitudes of Jesus and Paul by examining the theological constructs that informed their integrity-service model of evangelism. Both Jesus and Paul held at their core belief that the integrity-service model demonstrated their stance of a discipleship that is based on God's edification, not humans in the preaching, teaching and mentoring of the Gospel. They saw the power of the Gospel of God's Kingdom as transformational. Responsible citizenship thus rests in conformance to the tenets of God. Evangelistic preaching should reflect our responsibility toward God and the Kingdom of Heaven. Chapter two will explore in more detail mainline protestant theology by examining the views of four key figures: Reinhold Niebuhr, H.Richard Niebuhr, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela.

⁴⁹. N.T. Wright. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). 49.

CHAPTER TWO

A PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES

In our examination of the oral communications of Jesus and the apostle Paul, we discovered how frequently they utilized social and political commentary. However, they did not comment on these issues solely to encourage social reform or political activism. Jesus and Paul viewed their commentaries as a piece of a greater whole. In other words, their worldview extended beyond the boundaries of secular politics and society toward a vision of God's Kingdom as it ought to be.

While many theologians have written extensively on apologetics, hermeneutics, and systematic theology, there have been few who have examined the synergistic relationship between religion, society, and politics. In this chapter we will examine two Protestant theologians, as will be argued here, helped shape social and political thought in the mainline Church.

Reinhold Niebuhr's Social Thought

As it will be discussed, Reinhold Niebuhr's social thought was not based on a sentimental desire for peace and harmony. Conversely, Niebuhr approached his theories on what society ought to look like, by peering through a lens that was both analytical and pessimistic in a utopian sort of way. In fact, he often referred himself as a full-fledged cynic. Niebuhr's cynicism was grounded in his assertion that humans were victimized by their very nature. As Bob E. Patterson, a Reinhold Niebuhr scholar explains: "Niebuhr said that man, the "existing" individual, has the capacity to explore his environment and grasp its reality. But the relation of

the dynamic self to its environment poses a basic problem: Is the self to be completely identified with its environment of the natural world, or does it transcend its environment?" ¹

It can be explained that Niebuhr might argue that if we, as humans, merely seek to coexist autonomously from one another, then we abstain from becoming agents of change. If we
truly envision God's Kingdom as being earthly as well as heavenly, then we need to transcend
our surroundings. In order to transcend our individual surroundings, it requires an interest and
investment in the circumstances of others. Niebuhr identified four (4) planks of his social
platform. The first plank in his platform is that fully-functioning societies are grounded in an
atmosphere where citizens are treated with fairness and equality. Niebuhr came to this realization
after witnessing the treatment of laborers in the automobile industry in his home city of Detroit.
The unfair treatment of these workers led Niebuhr to speak out regarding the unfair treatment
they endured. The reality that the workers had no voice or recourse to rectify these injustices
prompted Niebuhr to become a surrogate voice on their behalf. Reinhold Niebuhr explains this
aspect of his social posture in his classic book titled *Moral Man and Immoral Society*:

The ability to consider, or even to prefer, the interests of others to our own, is not dependent upon the capacity for sympathy. Harmonious social relations depend upon the sense of justice as much as, or even more than, upon the sentiment of benevolence. This sense of justice is a product of the mind and not of the heart.²

For Reinhold Niebuhr, social transformation cannot occur on an individual basis. It requires an intelligent and intentional collaboration of people working alongside one another, as equals, for a common purpose. Moreover, authentic social transformation is a cognitive function not an emotional reaction. This premise aligns well with the integrity-service model presented

¹. Bob E. Patterson. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Reinhold Niebuhr*. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977). 64.

² . Reinhold Niebuhr. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932). 29.

earlier. Integrity-service is not predicated on hierarchical relationships based on emotional needs, but a partnership of like-minded peers.

The second plank of Niebuhr's social platform was the requirement for humility. For Niebuhr arrogance was the downfall of society as he perceived it. In particular, a society that arrogantly disavowed the need for the repentance, and forgiveness, which is the cornerstone of Christian faith. The fact that society, in Niebuhr's mind, rejected the need for repentance and forgiveness led him to his assertion that they could not experience God's grace. For this grace can only be experienced when a spirit of humility inhabits the person or society. Bob E. Patterson explains Niebuhr's theory, "For Niebuhr, nothing was more socially relevant than humility born of faith's encounter. Humility, rooted in repentance, expresses itself in the spirit of forgiveness." ³

The next section of Reinhold Niebuhr's social platform that we will discuss is his perception of the role the church occupies in society. In Niebuhr's view the church had two primary functions pertaining to society. In the first role the church was to function in an interpretive role. This is depicted succinctly in Acts 8: 30-31 in Luke's account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. As Luke writes, "Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked. 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him." ⁴

³ . Patterson. *Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Reinhold Niebuhr*. 143.

⁴ . Ac. 8:30-31.

As Bob Patterson explains Niebuhr's perspective, "The church must also make a rigorous analysis of society for its members because most Christians do not know the kind of world they live in."

The second function of the church, according to Niebuhr, is to provide a model of social behavior that reflects the characteristics of society as it ought to be. For Niebuhr, this occurred as the church fostered an atmosphere of love, as well as teaching its members to develop trusting relationships with other humans. Moreover, Niebuhr believed the church ought to teach an attitude of faith toward other humans. As Niebuhr himself posits, "Through such imagination the needs of the social foe are appreciated, his inadequacies are understood in the light of his situation, and his possibilities for higher and more moral action are recognized." ⁶

The last plank of Niebuhr's social platform for our discussion involves his advocacy of non-violent resistance. In Niebuhr's estimation, there was no more important role for the church than in its role as a voice for peace. In his book *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr underscores this assertion:

There is no problem of political life to which religious imagination can make a larger contribution than this problem of developing non-violent resistance. The discovery of elements of common human frailty in the foe and, concomitantly, the appreciation of all human life as possessing transcendent worth, creates attitudes which transcend social conflict and thus mitigate it cruelties. It binds humans together by reminding them of the common roots and similar character of both their vices and their virtues.⁷

Niebuhr, therefore, challenges us to look inside ourselves and realize that the flaws we perceive in others, and the strengths we perceive in ourselves, are held in common with all

⁵. Patterson. Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: Reinhold Niebuhr. 143

⁶ . Reinhold Niebuhr. *Love and Justice*. Edited by D. B. Robertson. (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1957). 38.

⁷. Niebuhr. *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. 254-255.

humans. In essence, Niebuhr is reiterating what Jesus was admonished his disciples for in Matthew 7: 3-4, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?" If society is to transcend its frailties

and conflict, and model how God's Kingdom ought to be, we cannot negatively judge others and deny our own failings. For Niebuhr, this is at the core of the arrogance that plagued society in his era. At this juncture we do well to proceed to a discussion of Reinhold Niebuhr's political thought.

Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics

While non-violent resistance straddled both Niebuhr's social and political thought there were three planks which characterized his political thought platform. The first plank in this platform revolved around his philosophy regarding power. In Niebuhr's estimation, power left in the hand of individuals had a greater potential for being misused, and causing more damage than it provided a tangible benefit. However, he also warned of the potential danger regarding power held by groups. In the book titled *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time*, contributor Langdon Gilkey writes:

Power is necessary to establish unity and order in a community; but it is always *a* group that establishes that unity; and so every achievement of order is saturated with injustice since each ruling group arrogates to itself more privileges than it deserves. Thus, paradoxically, the power necessary to control the wicked is the danger, not the wicked!

⁸. Mt. 7:3-4.

⁹ . Langdon Gilkey. "Reinhold Niebuhr as Political Theologian." *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Times*. Richard Harries, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986). 160.

For all its intrinsic problems Niebuhr was adamant in his conviction that power, harnessed correctly, could be affective in bringing about social change. Also, this power could affect a justice that was more acceptable to a society. However, Niebuhr asserts that power does not ensure political security, as Kenneth Thompson explains, "The tragic paradox of the quest for security is that power, the main instrument of political security, can't by itself ever guarantee security. Those who attain the advantages of great power might be assumed to have conquered insecurity." ¹⁰ We only need to look to individuals such as King Herod in the Bible, or Sadaam Hussein in our own time, as examples of how great power only exacerbated their insecurity rather than eliminate it.

The next plank in Reinhold Niebuhr's political thought platform is his stance regarding the use of the scientific method of analysis. The scientific method, in its basic form gathers data; it analyzes the data; and then forms a hypothesis from this data. For Niebuhr, the scientific method was a positive tool in regard to the study of political science. Niebuhr asserted that there were five main illusions connected with the scientific method. For the purposes of this study, and the limitations of space and time, we will examine three of these fallacies. The first illusion was that any meaningful research could be done without a system that was carried out in an organized framework. However, Niebuhr also recognized the stubborn character of modern science in adhering to rigid assumptions which often prejudiced scientific findings.

The second illusion we will address is that the scientific method is able to predict the future with consistency and accuracy. Niebuhr argued against the theory that predictions made under the assumption of cause and effect were reliable. He contended that cause was not always straight-forward and simplistic. Moreover, human involvement was a necessary consideration in

¹⁰. Kenneth Thompson. "The Political Philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr. *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social, and Political Thought.* Charles W. Kegley, ed. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984). 238.

any equation surrounding the scientific method. Kenneth Thompson explains Niebuhr's position, "There are recurrences and cycles in history, but a strong leader, an economic catastrophe, or the juxtaposition of novel forces may channel history in unexpected ways. Moreover, in contrast to the scientific laboratory, nothing is exactly repeated in history." The same argument can be applied to events taking place in our world today. One example is the financial crisis in countries such as Greece and Italy. We cannot go back in history to ascertain how these situations will evolve, because in each circumstance different variables are in play. The individuals in power are different today, and the global marketplace has changed dramatically. Therefore, we cannot accurately predict the final outcome.

The third illusion that Niebuhr ascribed to the scientific method was the notion that the profundity of science outweighs the validity of philosophical inquiry. In Niebuhr's view, humanity had become overly enamored with formulas, hypotheses, and facts. Furthermore, Niebuhr argues against the rigidity and arrogance that blind devotion to the scientific method has engendered, as Kenneth Thompson articulates, "Niebuhr proposes there there must be a movement from science to philosophy to counteract the movement from philosophy to science; and from this point the controlling aim of his approach becomes the recovery of the wisdom of philosophy and the humility and magnanimity of a transcendent religion." This assertion by Niebuhr is noteworthy, as it introduces a significant shift in his theology.

The fourth and final section in our discussion of Reinhold Niebuhr's political thought is his argument for the ambiguity of reason. This component tethers his religious, social, and political thought into an inseparable unit. For Niebuhr, the concept of reason is fraught with many of the same flaws as the concept of power. When it is properly monitored and harnessed

¹¹. Thompson, Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought. 227.

^{12 .} Ibid. 227-228

power can be a positive agent for social and political change. However, when power is not harnessed and regulated an imbalance or abuse of power is highly probable.

However, when power is abused it becomes debilitating for a society. Langdon Gilkey explains Niebuhr's perspective:

Modern savants, however, have overemphasized this critical, organizing and universal role of reason. Probably their professional work enacts it, they 'live off it'; further, since they are middle class intellectuals, the irrational, predatory and impulsive nature of social life has effectively been kept hidden from them.¹³

In Niebuhr's view, it was the liberal intellectuals who had misrepresented the importance of reason and its role in social transformation. In the same manner, these liberal intellectuals had elevated the role of power

Having provided a condensed perspective on Reinhold Niebuhr's social and political thought, it is well to close with his perspective on evangelistic preaching. Bob Patterson brings Niebuhr's philosophy of preaching into clear view:

There are numerous ways to present the good news with clarity; there are no guaranteed ways present it so that it will be accepted. Using common human experience as a base, Niebuhr sought to show that the secular view of life is inadequate: the secular analysis of man made less sense than the biblical one. He knew that the refutation of secular presuppositions did not compel the secularist to accept the Christian faith, but it gave the gospel an opportunity to be heard.¹⁴

Perhaps the only criticism that can be made regarding Niebuhr's, is that he was so fixated on the sinfulness of human nature. The result of this was that he neglected the opportunity for grace that God makes available to the penitent. This omission notwithstanding, it is clear that Reinhold Niebuhr understood the Kingdom consequences for the Christian Church in his time.

¹³. Gilkey. Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time. 161.

¹⁴. Patterson. Creators of the Modern Theological Mind: Reinhold Niebuhr. 153.

Concluding this section, at the heart of Reinhold Niebuhr's social and political views was the concept of a utopian view of what society ought to be. To become change agents, according to Reinhold, humans could not exist autonomously from one another. It requires an interest and involvement in the circumstances of others, the Christian way. His premise of social transformation relies upon an intelligent and intellectual collaboration of people working together, which is akin to the integrity-service model previously noted.

H. Richard Niebuhr on Society and Politics

In defining H. Richard Niebuhr's social and political thought there are two distinctions that bring it into focus. Similarly to his older brother Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard was considered a political theologian. However, as we will discover momentarily, he did not share the same political philosophy as his brother. The other distinction between H. Richard Niebuhr's social and political thought, and his brother's, is that his view of the human factor in society was in sharp contrast to Reinhold's. We can state unequivocally that both men could be described as behaviorists. However, their perspectives could not be more dissimilar.

Reinhold Niebuhr believed that human behavior, and its failings, was a direct result of *nature*. That is to say, that human behavior was inborn as a result of original sin. On the other hand, H. Richard Niebuhr was convinced that human behavior was not inherent. He posited that human beings were shaped by the culture in which they were surrounded. Therefore, it was *nurture* that would play a pivotal role in determining how people would respond socially and politically. As we will discuss momentarily, H. Richard Niebuhr also believed the Church was impacted by culture. This conviction was instrumental in shaping his view for a revolutionized Church that would not be enslaved by culture, but would run counter to the culture and even

transcend the culture. As we will discover, even the Church is not immune to the harsh lessons of a culture which is determined to quiet the socio-political voice of the Church.

Niebuhr's Social Problem

For H. Richard Niebuhr the problems inherent in society, politics, and the Church are directly impacted by the culture that surrounds them, as alluded to above. Presumably, Niebuhr believes the difficulty is that humans attempt to evade the impact culture places on their lives, rather than try to discover the lessons culture can teach them.

In his epic book titled *Christ and Culture*, H. Richard Niebuhr explains the impact of culture upon humanity:

Not only has the objective world about him been modified by human achievement; but the forms and attitudes of his mind which allow him to make sense out of the objective world have been given him by culture. He cannot dismiss the philosophy and science of his society as though they were external to him; they are in him – though in different forms from those in which they appear in the leaders of culture. He cannot rid himself of political beliefs and economic customs by rejecting the more or less external institutions; these customs and beliefs have taken up residence in his mind ¹⁵

Therefore, if we are to take H. Richard Niebuhr at face value, humans are both benefactors and victims of the nurturing they receive at the hands of culture. In other words, humans are hard-wired with certain social and political worldviews, views which have been molded by the course of historic events and decisions. However, Niebuhr cautions that these learned values and beliefs cannot be abandoned or ignored as if they do not exist. Moreover, humans cannot totally reject the institutions that have played a pivotal role in shaping their worldviews. As Niebuhr asserts:

¹⁵ . H. Richard Niebuhr. *Christ and Culture*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1951). 69.

The systems of laws and liberties, the customs of social intercourse, the methods of thought, the institutions of learning and religion, the techniques of art, of language, and of morality itself – these cannot be conserved by keeping in repair the walls and documents that are their symbols. They need to be written afresh generation by generation "on the tables of the heart."

In this statement H. Richard Niebuhr addresses a problem that strikes at the very core of his social thought. He warns of the dangers inherent when a society becomes preoccupied, even obsessed with preserving the symbolic aspects of their culture. For Niebuhr, societies become fixated on relics and materialistic representations of their past, even though they have become antiquated.

In his classic book titled *The Kingdom of God in America*, H. Richard Niebuhr states:

The challenge of the present is the preservation of American civilization – that is, the preservation of the customs which have been transmitted and particularly of the system of privileges which power has established in the past; or else it is the accomplishment of that economic and political revolution this has been the "American dream" from the beginning.¹⁷

It is not unreasonable to contemplate what H. Richard Niebuhr would think about the social and political machinations of our time. What might he think of a Congress that acts only out of self-interest, and not in the interest of the American public? What would Niebuhr think of churches who seek to preserve themselves by hoarding monies in endowment funds to upkeep buildings and pastors' salaries, rather than engaging in ministry projects? In view of the aforementioned, one could argue that Niebuhr would say that while the Church cannot be separated from world in which it lives, it can transcend the misguided power wielded by institutions. Moreover, he would assert that God's Kingdom is not generated by humans or institutions. As Niebuhr writes:

¹⁶. Ibid. 37.

¹⁷ . H. Richard Niebuhr. *The Kingdom of God in America*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937). 5.

The Kingdom of Christ is not originated and advanced by the spontaneous development of humanity; but a redeeming power comes down upon humanity from God, and enters into human history as an always working energy, quickening men to spiritual life and transforming society into the Kingdom of God.¹⁸

However, H. Richard Niebuhr reminds us that, like humans and their culture, the Kingdom of God cannot totally avoid its connection to society and politics as he states, "The coming Kingdom is no spiritual estate removed from contact with political and economic life; it is again life changed at its center and changed therefore also at its circumference, in all its relations." ¹⁹

The Role of Church in Society

While Niebuhr did not envision God's Kingdom as being completely severed from the world of politics and economics, he did envision a revolutionary role for the Church. The role he envisioned for the Church did not seek to disengage from society and politics, but rather sought to re-engage from a position of leadership. For H. Richard Niebuhr, the Church was to provide an ecclesiastical model which would create a new culture of addressing social and political issues. From Niebuhr's perspective there were three functions which were imperative for a responsible, revolutionary church.

The first function of such a church was that it would be a *pioneer* in relation to society. For Niebuhr, this new-model church was compelled to not only preach a gospel that was revolutionary, but to demonstrate how this gospel could revolutionize society. Moreover, the revolutionary church was to be the first-responder in hearing and carrying out God's will for all people. As H. Richard Niebuhr defines the concept, "In its relations with God it is the pioneer part of society that responds to God on behalf of the whole society, somewhat, we may say, as

¹⁸. Ibid. 160.

¹⁹ . Ibid. 161.

science is the pioneer in responding to pattern or rationality in experience and as artists are pioneers in responding to beauty."²⁰ However, Niebuhr offers the caveat that this responsible church must have its own affairs in order, for it to lead society toward a state of repentance and transformation.

The second function of a responsible church is to perform an *apostolic* role within society. The revolutionary church must proclaim a gospel that is not only radical, but a gospel that can transcend divisions and loyalties among all people.

As Lonnie Kliever explains Niebuhr's perspective:

This means bringing radical faith's iconoclastic power to bear on all finite loves and loyalties which divide and set persons and groups against one another. It means calling for active repentance and positive change in the lives of selves and communities. Most important of all, it means announcing in unmistakably relevant terms the trustworthiness and loyalty of the One Lord of life and death who affirms the worth, orders the relationships and renews and completes the wellbeing of all things in heaven and earth. ²¹

Nowhere is Kliever's statement regarding H. Richard Niebuhr's theological view more apparent than in Revelation 22:1-3:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.²²

Whether intentional or coincidental, H. Richard Niebuhr's perspective regarding the apostolic role of the Church aligns perfectly with the apostle Paul's. This is revealed in Galatians 3:26-29, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized

²⁰ . H. Richard Niebuhr. "The Responsibility of the Church for Society." K. S. Latourette, ed. *The Gospel, The Church and the World.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946). 130.

 $^{^{21}}$. Lonnie Kliever. Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: H. Richard Niebuhr. (Waco: Word Incorporated, 1977). 159.

²² . Rv. 22: 1-3.

into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.²³

The third role of the responsible church, according to Niebuhr, was to occupy a *pastoral* within society. Where society would ostracize particular individuals or groups, the church would reaffirm and welcome them in. Lonnie Kliever explains Niebuhr's position:

The revolutionary community must come to the side of the neglected and the oppressed. Proclaiming reconciliation is not enough. The church must also be reconciled to the alienated and the undesirable. Announcing deliverance to the captives is not enough. The church must free men from the chains of ignorance, poverty, and disease. Such pastoral outreach must go beyond rescuing the lost one by one.²⁴

In contrast to his brother Reinhold's, H. Richard Niebuhr's political views are not easily defined. For H. Richard the only political reference clearly made is naming anything government-related as the State. The closest political view we can ascertain is Niebuhr's stance regarding power. Niebuhr argued for limitations on power as it related to the human arena. However, in regard to the power of God, he asserted that God's power was not only sovereign but unsurpassable. It is well that we have looked at the impact the Niebuhr's have made regarding society, politics, and religion. We now turn our attention to two individuals who also have had a profound impact on contemporary social and political thought.

In summary, H. Richard Niebuhr was considered a political theologian similar to his brother Reinhold. However, H. Richard Niebuhr didn't share the same political philosophy. In fact, his political views aren't readily discernible, except for his views on power, which he argued for limits on its use. He did, however, believe in the absolute power of God. What is of

²³ . Ga. 3:26-29.

²⁴. Kliever. Makers of the Modern Theological Mind: H. Richard Niebuhr. 159.

fundamental importance here, and has a direct linkage to the methodology offered here for an evangelistic integrity-service model, is H. Richard's vision of a revolutionary role for the Church to re-engage from a position of leadership. In his view, the Church was to provide an ecclesiastical model which would create a new culture of addressing social and political issues. The Church should serve as a pioneer and preach a revolutionary gospel that could revolutionize society in carrying out God's will for everyone. By performing an apostolic role within society, the church could provide a radicalization of the gospel that can transcend divisions and loyalties among all people. Lastly, the church can occupy a pastoral role within society to reaffirm and welcome in people.

The Socio-Political Thought of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

When one considers the brevity of Rev. Dr. King's life, the impact that his social and political stance still has today is remarkable. In many sermons, and other commemorations of Dr. King, his "I Have a Dream Speech" and his March on Washington, D.C. at the Lincoln Memorial are two of the most frequently mentioned events in his legacy. While the significance of these events ought not to be minimized, these two events do not fully capture Dr. King's social and political ideology. Many equate Dr. King's social and political thought only with civil rights for African-American citizens. While this certainly has merit, we need to consider his views on a wider scale than that singular issue. Dr. King believed in the principles of justice, freedom and equality for all mankind. He aptly demonstrated the core tenets of a Christian integrity-service model through his role as pastor, pacifists, leader, freedom fighter, etc. He was concerned under God's Kingdom with the dignity, humility and humanity of man to his fellowman.

Dr. King's Social Posture

The core of Dr. King's social thought can be traced to a compelling speech that he delivered regarding America's involvement in the Vietnam War titled "Beyond Vietnam," While the speech is highly critical of American involvement in the war, it is instructive regarding Dr. King's social values. The following excerpt from the speech provides valuable insight, "We have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church."

In Dr. King's social thought there are three institutions that constitute a fully developed society (a broken society, family unit and the church). For example, to Dr. King the problems of racism, injustice, and oppression were the symptoms of a broken society. However, the full-blown effects of the disease were manifested in the institutions that made up the fabric of society. Many individuals believe that that Dr. King would see the same problems he observed in Vietnam, occurring in America today. For example, the family unit is not the same cohesive institution it was in the 1950s and 1960s. Even the media of television in that era portrayed the American family as an entity that shared meals, as well as supported one another in times of crisis. The American family today often has a single parent as the head of the household, and if there are two parents they are both required to work longer hours, leaving little time for interaction with their children.

²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam." Clayborne Carson and Kris Shepard, eds. A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (New York: Warner Books, 2001). 149.

The institution of the village is also an entity that is undergoing drastic upheaval. It was not uncommon in the 1950s and 1960s for people to leave their doors unlocked during the day, but with the higher incidence of crime in our towns and cities that is no longer feasible.

Moreover, in that era communities were tight-knit, and people showed concern for one another. Sadly, we as a society have become more suspicious of others, particularly people who do not look like us, or who do not think as we do.

The third institution that Dr. King mentions in this excerpt is the institution of the church. The church today does not resemble the church some of us may recall from our youth. Too often churches today are so busy employing marketing strategies trying to lure the unchurched, or those who are dissatisfied with the church to which they belong. Dr. King would lament the demise of the gospel in favor of becoming attractive to prospective members.

Another social concern of Dr. King's, particularly as it relates to the responsibilities of Christians while living in the secular world. His contention is that the morality of Christians has been distorted by the misplaced priorities imposed on them by society. This is illustrated in Dr. King's sermon titled "Paul's Letter to American Christians," "But I understand that there are many Christians who give their ultimate allegiance to manmade systems and customs. They are afraid to be different. Their great concern is to be accepted socially. They live by some such principle as this: 'Everybody is doing it, so it must be all right.' For so many of you morality is merely group consensus. In your modern sociological lingo, the mores are accepted as the right ways.²⁶

²⁶. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Paul's Letter to American Christians." Clayborne Carson and Peter Hooloran, eds. *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 1998). 27.

This is symptomatic of an observation made earlier regarding the mainline Church. Churches appear to be caught up in the same vicious cycle of imitating other churches, whether it is marketing strategies or other methods of attracting potential members. What is being ignored is the radical, transformational power of the gospel in its purest form. In other words, we need to consider a gospel that encourages individuals or groups to heed the voice of God instead of the voice of society. Unfortunately, many churches would rather imitate the church down the street than be set apart.

Dr. King's Political Stance

The first portion of Dr. King's political thought is discernable from his criticism of the Vietnam War. His conviction that true peace cannot be attained through the use of violence is the cornerstone of Dr. King's political posture. This is clearly stated in his speech titled "Beyond Vietnam," "It is with such activity in mind that the words of the late John F. Kennedy come back to haunt us. Five years ago he said, 'Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." Dr. King's view is that the peace process is not defined by passivity, "We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." Dr. King's advocacy of non-violent resistance runs concurrently with Jesus' stance regarding the questioning of authority, and also with the most essential plank in his political platform.

As argued here, the most important component of Dr. King's political thought, and his ongoing legacy, is the call to service as he states in his sermon "The Three Dimensions of a Complete

²⁷. Carson and Shepard. A Call to Conscience. 157.

²⁸ . Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream." Drew D. Hansen. *The Dream: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). 76.

Life", "Somewhere along the way, we must learn that there is nothing greater than to do something for others." However, Dr. King stresses that service to others is not done in the hope of reward or recognition but as a gesture of gratitude. Too often we have been conditioned to serve others with the expectation that there will be a reciprocal effect because of our service. We will now examine the social and political contributions of another important figure.

Nelson Mandela's Socio-Political Thought

In the latter part of the twentieth-century few people have impacted social and political discourse more heavily than Nelson Mandela. His imprisonment for opposing apartheid and his rise to the presidency of South Africa are life experiences which have given Nelson Mandela status as one of the preeminent statesmen of our time.

Mandela's Social Posture

For Nelson Mandela, his social thought hinged on two distinct components. The first component was the contribution that religious spirituality made in impacting society in positive ways. This concept came into focus in a speech that President Mandela delivered at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in 1997:

As with other aspects of its heritage, African traditional religion is increasingly recognized for its contribution to the world. No longer seen as despised superstition which had to be superseded by superior forms of belief, today its enrichment of humanity's spiritual heritage is acknowledged. The spirit of Ubuntu – that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings – is not a parochial phenomenon, but has added globally to our common search for a better world. 30

We are reminded of the biblical perspective regarding this concept in both the Old and New Testaments. We find the first example in Genesis 4:9-10: "Then the Lord said to Cain,

²⁹. Carson and Holloran. A Knock at Midnight. 131

³⁰. Nelson Mandela, "Renewal and Renaissance: Towards a New World Order," lecture given at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford England, July 11, 1977; available at www.anc.org..za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1997/sp970711c.html.

'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I don't know,' he replied, 'Am I my brother's keeper?"³¹ The second example is found in Luke 10:29 when the expert in the law questions Jesus, "But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?"³² These two passages clearly assert what President Mandela was telling the audience at Oxford, that humans are interrelated through creation. Moreover, we have a moral obligation to exhibit concern and compassion toward others, regardless if there is a biological connection or not. A society that is self-interested and self-serving is one that practices exclusivity over inclusiveness, and does not reflect the Kingdom of God envisioned by the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Another crucial aspect of Mandela's social posture is the importance he places on the study of history. For Mandela, history has much to teach a society not only regarding its past, and its present, but also how it can shape the future. As Mandela asserts, "Yet, as it has been said, the purpose of studying history is not to deride human action, nor to weep over it or to hate it, but to understand it. And hopefully, to learn from it as we contemplate our future." Too often the study of history serves as an investigation in order to affix blame for the problems that befall a society, in order to deflect criticism from those currently in positions of power.

However, Mandela argues for history being a teaching tool, in order that a society can discern constructive and efficient methods of functioning. In the same manner this study endeavors toward the same goal. Through the study of Scripture, our Christian history, we desire to understand the religion, society, and politics of our ancestors. However, we as Christians seek to use Scripture to place blame rather than try to understand the role of history. Moreover, we

³¹ . Gn. 4:9-10.

^{32 .} Lk. 10:29.

^{33.} Nelson Mandela, "Renewal and Renaissance: Towards a New World Order."

have often failed to understand the implications of Scripture not only on our world today, but the very real consequences for the Kingdom of God that is to come.

The Political Worldview of Nelson Mandela

The foremost political stance of Nelson Mandela was the right to live free from captivity, and the oppressive rule of apartheid. This worldview was no doubt impacted by Mandela's own imprisonment, which lasted over twenty-seven years. However, even in those periods in which he was not incarcerated, he was often denied the right to communicate or see his wife and family. Another key component of Mandela's political stance was his belief in equality for all people. In much of the writings and speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he addresses the issue of equality but primarily from the standpoint of race and ethnicity.

For Nelson Mandela, his stance on equality was that it encompassed all of humanity, and he particularly stresses the importance of equality for women. Moreover, he expresses an admiration for women who do not adhere to the stereotypical, submissive roles dictated by society. As Mandela states in his memoir *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself*, "The French lady Simone Veil has lived through frightful experiences to become President of the European Parliament, while Maria Pintasilgo cracks the whip in Portugal. From reports it is not clear who leads the Carter family. There are times when Carter's Rosalynn seems to be wearing the trousers." Most noteworthy is that Mandela's respect for women is neither patronizing nor insincere. He admires women who undertake leadership roles and acknowledges their capabilities. Moreover, he is quick to recognize that these women deserved the credit for their success, as Mandela asserts, "But all these became first ladies, in spite of themselves – through

³⁴ . Nelson Mandela. *Nelson Mandela: Conversations with Myself.* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010). 221.

heredity. Today the spotlight falls on these women who have pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps."³⁵

For all the good-will that Nelson Mandela's political stances on freedom and equality generate, his views regarding non-violence ought to be a cause for concern. On the surface Mandela does advocate for non-violence, and resistance that is peaceful in nature. However, if non-violence and peaceful resistance are not successful in bringing about the desired outcome, he does not hesitate to suggest that physical force or violence is an option.

As Nelson Mandela further states:

We took up the attitude that we would stick to non-violence only insofar as as the conditions permitted that. Once the conditions were against that we would automatically abandon non-violence and use the methods which were dictated by the conditions. That was our approach. Our approach was to empower the organization to be *effective* in its leadership. And if the adoption of non-violence gave it that effectiveness, that efficiency, we would pursue non-violence. But if the condition shows that non-violence was not effective, we would use other means.³⁶

What is intriguing is that Nelson Mandela professes to be a practicing Christian, yet it is clear that he does not adhere to the non-violent stance that Jesus teaches in the gospels. Furthermore, Mandela's political stance regarding non-violence is starkly opposed to the integrity-service evangelism model, which is the foundation for this study. However, Nelson Mandela's stance regarding leadership allows us to conclude our discussion of him on a positive note.

Mandela asserts, and justifiably so, that many individuals in leadership roles do so only from a frontal position. In this writer's opinion, preachers also can be guilty of this misconception. While Nelson Mandela admits that being up front is sometimes necessary, it is

³⁵. Ibid. 221,222.

³⁶. Ibid. 53.

not beneficial long-term. He advises that truly effective leadership often occurs when the leader nudges the group from the back, rather than pulls it from the front. As Mandela biographer Richard Stengel writes in his book titled *Mandela's Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love, and Courage*, "And the way to do that is not necessarily by charging out front and saying, 'Follow me,' but by empowering or pushing others to move forward ahead of you. It is through empowering others that we impart our own leadership or ideas." ³⁷

Another leadership trait that Mandela exhibited was that he always sought to find the good in others. Even though he suffered discriminatory treatment, as well as physical and emotional abuse, Mandela always responded positively regarding his detractors. Richard Strengel illuminates this characteristic, "While his colleagues saw their warders and jailers as monolithic, the embodiment of the heartless apartheid system, Mandela generally tried to find something decent and honorable in them. Ultimately, he came to see them as victims of the system as well as perpetrators of it." We do well, as evangelistic preachers of the gospel, to strike the same tone in our sermons. That is to say, we must afford all individuals or groups the same dignity and respect, regardless of their views or how they behave toward us.

Contemporary evangelistic preaching ought to set the highest standard of civility, respecting each person's dignity.

We have examined the various theories on the role of society and politics. We have done so through the lens of both noted theologians, as well as civil rights activists. Moreover, there is a convincing argument that the inner workings of social and political systems do, in fact, have a significant contribution to make in contemporary preaching. Furthermore, we have seen the stark

³⁷ . Richard Strengel. *Mandela's Way: Fifteen Lessons on Life, Love and Courage*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009). 77.

³⁸ . Ibid. 122.

contrasts in the social and political thought of these individuals. We can with a fair amount of certainty, discern that these social and political convictions were impacted by their cultures, and lived experiences. At this juncture, it is well that we proceed with our discussion and examine the role and function of evangelistic preaching. However, even as we move forward it is imperative that we not abandon the valuable insights that have been bestowed on us by Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela. The intention here is that these insights be seen as a vital tool in explaining the social and political dimensions of Scripture in the Church today.

CHAPTER THREE

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

In our discussion regarding society and politics above, we are reminded that Nelson Mandela advocated for the significant role of history in understanding a society. However, he saw history not only as an examination of the past, but also as a tool to understand present circumstances, and future events. In our discussion regarding evangelistic preaching we will endeavor to bear Mandela's convictions in mind. Therefore, we will examine contemporary evangelistic preaching from an historical perspective, but also as a present and future imperative. We will undertake this endeavor by examining the evangelistic thought of three prominent, contemporary evangelistic preachers (Haddon, Robinson, Calvin Miller and Andy Stanley). Each of the three preachers we will discuss will provide one area of the three areas which we have just outlined.

Haddon Robinson and Biblical Preaching

In defining the characteristics of evangelistic preaching, there is no characteristic more central than the primacy of Scripture. As Haddon Robinson clearly asserts, "Only the strong meat of Christian doctrine produces healthy Christians, and we never get very far as Christians without first understanding the great truths revealed to us by God in Scripture and then in faith applying them to life." While Haddon Robinson is right in saying that only a life grounded in the truths of Scripture is truly healthy, it does not go far enough regarding evangelizing the world for Christ. The important point to remember is that there can be no equivocation that Scripture is the beginning and ending point for evangelistic preaching.

¹. Haddon W. Robinson. *Making a Difference in Preaching*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999). 26.

This is clearly denoted in the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness as recorded in Matthew 4: 4: "Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." The same statement is true regarding evangelistic preaching. Preaching not based on biblical truth will only speak to secular interests and sensibilities, but when Scripture is the authoritative basis then God's interests and sensibilities are being addressed.

In Haddon Robinson's perspective of biblical preaching there are seven convictions which a preacher needs to understand.³ The first conviction is that the Bible is solely the Word of God. This is to say, that the words of Scripture are not to be understood as the words of men speaking for God, but that God is communicating directly with us. The second conviction of biblical preaching is that the authoritative Word of God is contained in all of Scripture.

Therefore, God's Word is not only contained in the more familiar books of the Bible, it is also found in the books that are largely disregarded by the Church, and its ministers. Contemporary ministers ought to challenge themselves to incorporate all books of the Bible into their personal reading, and sermon preparation time.

The third conviction, according to Haddon Robinson is that the Bible authenticates itself. As he states, "If people can be exposed to an understanding of the Scriptures on a regular basis, then they do not need arguments about the veracity of Scripture." The fourth conviction is that biblical preaching causes a "Thus saith the Lord" dimension of preaching. The result of this is that it opens up the Bible so that the sermon receives its authority totally from Scripture.

². Mt. 4:4.

³. Haddon Robinson. "Convictions of Biblical Preaching." *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators*. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). 23, 24.

⁴. Ibid. 23.

The fifth conviction of biblical preaching is that the person studying Scripture must work to uncover the deeper meaning of the biblical writers. As Robinson points out, "The first question is, 'What did the biblical writer want to say to the biblical reader? Why?' The Reader Response theory embraced by many literary scholars today will not work for the study of the Bible. Simply put, "The Bible cannot mean what it has not meant." We must add the caveat that it is well to bring our lived experiences to the study of Scripture, however, we must refrain from imposing our own interpretations to the biblical text.

The sixth conviction is that the Scriptures are solely about God. This is to say that the Bible is not a prescription, or a handbook, for all the problems that human beings encounter throughout their lives. The Bible is not meant to advise us on employment, acquiring wealth, or our health. As Haddon Robinson explains, "Although the Scriptures reflect on many of those issues, they are above all about who God is and what God thinks and wills. I understand reality only if I have an appreciation for who he is and what he desires for his creation and from his creation."

The last conviction of biblical preaching, according to Robinson, is that we cannot make the Bible relevant; we can only demonstrate its relevance. In our market-driven culture, often a product or service is imbued with a demand from society that does not actually exist. The Bible does not need hyperbole or a false sense of implied need or demand for it to be deemed necessary. What is advocated for here, is that if we truly long for a relationship with God, the Bible is the resource for deepening the understanding of that relationship. Moreover, the Bible can serve as a guide in governing our relationships with other humans.

⁵. Ibid. 23.

⁶. Ibid, 23, 24.

Applying the Biblical Text

The life application of a text cannot be determined until two initial steps are taken in preparing the sermon. The first step in preparing the sermon is to identify the congregational need being addressed in the message. Once this need is identified, then selecting the biblical text is the next step in the process. In his exceptional book titled *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*, Sidney Greidanus writes, "One must be careful, of course, not to diagnose needs superficially or to respond with a sermon to every perceived 'need'; but as long as the needs are discerned communally (e.g., with the elders) and in the light of the Scriptures, they are a legitimate consideration in selecting preaching texts." However, Haddon Robinson provides a different perspective on needs-based preaching as he critiques a sermon that failed to address communal need:

What happened? I didn't speak to the life questions of my audience. I answered my questions not theirs. Some of the men and women I spoke to that day were close to going home to be with the Lord. What they wanted to know was, "Will he toss me in some ditch of a grave, or will he take me safely home to the other side? When I get to heaven, what's there?

While life application is a necessary component of needs-based preaching, we do well to remember that our congregations also need some connection with the eternal. The next step in the life application of a biblical text, in Haddon Robinson's view, is determining the central theme or Big Idea. There are preachers who learned, and still use, the three-point sermon. For Robinson, the concept of a central theme or Big Idea sermon is more economical, and it facilitates a sharply focused message. In his book titled *Preaching and Teaching from the Old*

⁷. Sidney Greidanus. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). 125.

⁸. Robinson. *Making a Difference in Preaching*. 86.

Testament, Walter C. Kaiser Jr. writes, "Here is where the whole point, or what Haddon Robinson calls the "Big Idea," of the biblical text and the sermon can be reduced to a single statement or announcement of a theme. This is what makes the message cohere and prevents a random walking about in the biblical passage that trails off into unrelated themes and ideas."

However, the central theme or Big Idea sermon that is coherent, but has no impact, is of no value to the Church or to God. As Steven D. Mathewson states in his book titled *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*:

A good slogan tries to sell an idea. It slaps you round the face, thrusts its chin forward, and dares you to reply. But of course, if it's a really good slogan, it is so eloquent that you are stunned to silence. Preachers must do for their big idea what a good slogan writer does for an idea that a company is trying to sell. They must figure out how to get their ideas to stick. ¹⁰

These central themes and ideas must be presented in ways that will resonate with contemporary congregations, and ways which creatively convey the heart and will of God.

Haddon Robinson clarifies this point in his book titled *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, "People are more likely to think God's thoughts after Him, and to live and love and choose on the basis of these thoughts when they are couched in memorable sentences." ¹¹

Another component of biblical preaching that is central for connecting with congregations today, is the transparency exhibited by those in the preaching ministry.

⁹ . Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003). 55.

 $^{^{10}}$. Steven D. Mathewson. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002). 104.

¹¹. Haddon W. Robinson. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2d.ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). 104.

Haddon Robinson relates this in his book titled *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*, "Today's audiences expect the preacher to be personal and winsome. This means not only speaking to the personal needs of people, but also using illustrations out of the preacher's life experience. This is what many people listen for and a gauge by which they judge a sermon."

However, it must be cautioned that, while personal illustrations are helpful, they are not the transparency argued for in this study The desired transparency in the contemporary preacher is that which brings his or her audience into the presence of the holy. As Calvin Miller describes this state of transparency by preachers in his landmark book titled *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*, "They sometimes preach with an aura of power that is beyond what they learned about the art in seminary. They are 'caught up' in a better vision of God, and the power of their hunger for the holy blesses all who hear them." 13

Calvin Miller posits, and rightly so, that the most effective preachers bring an almost mystical quality to their preaching, "They huddle around the things too awesome to be told, so miraculous they stop the breath. But when heaven is in the wings, breathing is too earthly a virtue to be esteemed." Therefore, the most effective personal illustration preachers can offer is the love and passion they possess for God. When that love and passion is authentically projected, audiences will recognize it and will be transformed because of it. We will now move our discussion into the next phase of evangelistic preaching, understanding and engaging in the preaching context.

¹². Bill Hybels, Stuart Briscoe, Haddon W. Robinson. *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*. (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1989). 130.

¹³. Calvin Miller. *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006). 35.

¹⁴ . . Ibid. 34.

Calvin Miller on the Preaching Landscape Today

While biblical preaching is the cornerstone on which evangelistic preaching is grounded, understanding the worship landscape is the brick and mortar that shapes the wider Church.

There are many definitions and philosophies regarding what contemporary preaching ought to be in the overall worship experience. As Eugene Lowry asserts in his book titled *The Homiletical Plot*, "In presentation the sermon always begins with the itch and moves to the scratch." There are many Christians, as well as homiletic scholars, who would argue that Lowry's perception is too simplistic or dismissive of the true essence of the contemporary evangelistic sermon.

In his book titled *Finally Comes the Poet*, Professor of Old Testament Walter
Brueggemann states, "The artistry of the preacher must disclose both the power of guilt and of healing, and then lead the congregation through the delicate transaction whereby healing overcomes and overrides guilt." Conversely, there are many who would argue that
Brueggemann's perspective is being overly harsh and intimidating. This would be especially true in the mainline Church. For example, in the mainline Church, guilt is often applied as a means of eliciting behavioral responses that only reflect the preacher's agenda. However, Calvin Miller provides us with a fresh perspective on the role of the sermon, one that is sensitive and responsive to the evolving Church and the culture that it inhabits. Dr. Miller posits that the contemporary sermon ought to engage the ancient narrative of God's activity throughout
Scripture with the narratives of modern Christians today.

¹⁵. Eugene L. Lowry. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). 20.

¹⁶. Walter Brueggemann. *Finally Comes the Poet: Daring Speech for Proclamation*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989). 13.

In one of his earlier books titled *Spirit, Word, and Story* Dr. Miller explains his philosophy regarding narrative:

Stories pull interest into intensity. Stories fuse whole theaters full of persons into such a focus that they all rise as one to their feet in roaring applause. They weep in muffled tears that can be heard from the boxes to the lounge or the balcony. Stories pull the interest of thousands of people until they are truly fused in focused relationship. The stories of our lives are part and parcel of someone else's story, so that any single story welds the whole together.¹⁷

This is not meant strictly as a call to preach strictly in a narrative style. In truth it is a call to recognize that evangelistic preaching, if it is to be effective, ought to connect with the life stories of an audience. Dr. Miller has used the analogy of the marketplace in his analysis of contemporary worship in general, and of preaching, in particular. In the biblical epoch, the marketplace was an open-air bazaar, where merchants purveyed a wide range of goods.

Likewise, the consumers who frequented these markets encompassed a diverse representation of ethnicity, economic standing, and political ideology.

The early Christian Church mirrored the marketplace, in that, preaching was done out-of-doors, as it was deemed illegal to preach inside a building. As Dr. Miller explains in his book titled *Marketplace Preaching*, "Then every sermon made its preacher a potential martyr. Then church buildings were illegal and sermons had not made friends with Gothic architecture. It was only after Constantine legalized Christianity that worship moved indoors." While it would seem plausible that moving the preaching indoors would be viewed as a positive occurrence,

¹⁷. Calvin Miller. *Spirit, Word, and Story: A Philosophy of Marketplace Preaching*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989). 177.

¹⁸. Calvin Miller. *Marketplace Preaching: How to Return the Sermon to Where it Belongs*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995). 13.

Dr. Miller argues to the contrary, "The indoor sermon became housed, and in some cases caged, in worship forms and liturgy. Relevance, for some reason, gets harder to find indoors." ¹⁹

Returning to Marketplace Preaching

While Dr. Miller posits, and justly so, that the walls of brick-and-mortar buildings are responsible for acting as a barrier to marketplace preaching, there are other factors to consider. There are two other factors that have undermined the marketplace quality of preaching, which is sorely missing in today's Church. The first factor is the Church's proclivity to adopt the political ideology of one political party. When the Church engages in political activism that leans toward one ideology it no longer provides a universal voice for all people. Categorizing a church as being traditional/conservative or liberal/progressive only excludes those who are not in agreement with that political ideology.

The second factor is that the Scriptures have been reduced in importance in many mainline denominations. The Bible is often reduced to a secondary source in mainline preaching, and poetry and secular scholarship are given top recognition and primary respect. However, if we truly desire to return to marketplace caliber preaching in contemporary worship Calvin Miller has a prescription for preachers to follow.

For contemporary, evangelistic preaching to return to its marketplace roots, Calvin Miller outlines four characteristics that must be adopted by preachers: 1) relational, 2) casual, 3) colloquial and 4) relevant. We shall now turn our attention to each of these characteristics in depth. The first characteristic that our preaching must demonstrate is that it is relational. As Dr. Miller posits, "The predominant psychology of our day is relational. Television abounds with talk shows. Radio offers a totally dialogical format of call-in shows. We live in a "let's talk

¹⁹. Ibid. 14.

about it" day and age. The church in touch with this spirit will have a worship style that communicates friendliness and warmth. 20

While Dr. Miller is calling for worship that communicates warmth and friendliness, it is posited here that preaching ought to exhibit those same qualities. Preaching that is dictatorial and accusatory will not bring the power of the gospel into the open. In fact, it will further cage the gospel instead of setting it free to reach the far corners of the world. However, Dr. Miller posits that stories can serve as the conduit in building the relationship between preacher and audience, and with one another as the Church. As Dr. Miller writes, "Still, I want to suggest to you that one very important function is served by the preacher who is out to become the best possible raconteur: He is in the business of helping people relate to each other and their world."²¹

The second characteristic of preaching which epitomizes a marketplace philosophy is that it is casual. However, it must be clearly stated that a casual preaching style ought not to be equated with carelessness. Carelessness can take many shapes; from humor that is offensive or off-color, to language that is vulgar or insults the intelligence of the audience. In their book titled *Worship Words*, Debra and Ron Rienstra address the issue of language:

Thus, worship leaders have to recognize that we cannot simply take "every-day" language and assume it will be expressive in worship for everyone. There is no single or constant everyday language. Instead, a better goal is to remember that together we are always in the process of forming a communal expressive language. ²²

²⁰ . Ibid. 72.

²¹. Miller. Spirit, Word, and Story. 177.

²². Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra. *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). 31.

In order to preach in a "language" that will resonate with their audiences, preachers need to analyze the people that constitute their congregations. Contemporary preachers cannot assume that one language will suffice in reaching them. Secondly, preachers ought to consider the social milieu outside their churches, as this will assist them in forming the language of the sermon, and the overall worship style of the church. Calvin Miller offers his insight into this analysis, "Examining media advertising quickly illustrates that every commercial from cars to fast-food glorifies the casual lifestyle. This same principle packs the churches of Southern California. The style of Sunday dress itself will tell a church where it ranks on the casual-success scale." We do well to remember that our sermons will have more impact if we preach to where the people are, than where we want them to be.

The third characteristic of marketplace preaching, according to Calvin Miller, is that it needs to be colloquial. In other words, our sermons ought to be experienced as a conversation between preacher and congregation, rather than an admonition or righteous scolding. As stated earlier, Dr. Miller suggests that we live in an age where people want to talk things over, to have a "chat" where both sides participate in speaking and listening. While it is not practical to advocate for sermons that are two-way conversations, because of the potential chaos it would engender, the tone of the sermon can and ought to be conversational.

However, it is also imperative that a conversational style of preaching is not defined only by tone. As Dr. Miller posits, the conversational preaching style is concerned with the pacing of the sermon, "The pacing of a sermon has to do with movement and with linking blocks of content together as a freight train would link cars to keep all the issues of the sermon in

²³. Miller. Marketplace Preaching. 72,73.

motion."²⁴ A sermon which has a steady pace will be less apt to become disjointed.

Furthermore, a sermon that flows well with organized content will arrive at a conclusion that retains the momentum built throughout the message.

The last characteristics that epitomize marketplace preaching are that it needs to be relevant. We have already established that Scripture is relevant in and of itself, earlier in this chapter. The relevance we are arguing for at this juncture is the relevance that connects the audience to the sermon. When the relevance of the sermon is focused solely on the preacher, and the quality of his or her performance, the audience's engagement and edification is deemed irrelevant. In his book titled *The Empowered Communicator*, Calvin Miller drafts a fictional letter to a speaker who has dismissed the relevance of his or her audience, "Your ego has become a wall between yourself and me. You're not really concerned about me, are you? You're mostly concerned about whether or not this speech is really working...about whether or not you're doing a good job?²⁵

Dr. Miller asserts that it is human nature to seek our own ego-gratification ahead of the ego-gratification of others. However, in the preaching "marketplace", it is the preacher's ego that surrenders to the needs of others. As Dr. Miller explains:

The egotistic agenda of many preachers has resulted in a widening contempt for church altar calls. There exists a growing feeling that evangelists must have the people "come forward" to create publicity folders and wide reputation. Such needs tend to make synonyms of the words *God* and *Ego*. Preachers must, however, successfully convince audiences that they are in business for God, and such speakers find their sessions crowded. But those whose egos are squarely in the way do not.²⁶

²⁴ . Ibid. 244.

²⁵ . Calvin Miller. *The Empowered Communicator: 7 Keys to Unlocking an Audience*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994). 42.

²⁶. Ibid. 44, 45.

We have already discussed the importance of audience analysis in learning how to connect with our congregations, but we do well to conclude this portion of the chapter with sage advice from former pastor, and leadership expert, John C. Maxwell:

I think you begin to understand others better when you understand yourself, but to grow to another level, you have to work at understanding others. I experienced another *aha* moment that helped me connect with others when I read Florence Littauer's book *Personality Plus*. For the first time I recognized that different temperaments caused people to think and act differently than I do. That may seem obvious to you, but it was an important eye opener for me. More importantly, I realized that there is no one right temperament. To be honest, for years I thought my choleric temperament was superior to all others. ²⁷

This ability to better understand ourselves is clearly outlined in Proverbs 2:1-5:

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.²⁸

The insights and lessons presented within this section will serve us as we enter into a discussion on casting a vision for God's Kingdom.

Andy Stanley on Casting a Kingdom-sized Vision

The greatest challenge for contemporary preachers is the ability to cast a vision for the present and future Kingdom of God. Many mainline preachers might argue that social justice concerns ought to be the focus of contemporary preaching. Moreover, they may feel equally compelled to comment at length regarding the political climate within our country, or around the world. It will not be disputed here that these are valid concerns for the Church, and its people.

²⁷ . John C. Maxwell. Everyone Communicates Few Connect: What the Most Effective People Do Differently. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010). 124.

²⁸ . Pr. 2:1-5.

However, we are told throughout the Scriptures, and primarily in the New Testament, that these concerns are secondary in relation to the concerns of God and his Kingdom.

In contemporary evangelistic preaching, Andy Stanley offers a comprehensive and succinct explanation of vision-casting for the present and future Church. According to Stanley, casting a clear vision of the Kingdom of God for the Church needs to occur in two distinct requirements. The first requirement is that the vision has to be transformational. If the vision being cast only maintains the status quo, (i.e. maintaining a physical building, paying salaries, expenses, etc.), this is not casting a vision for God's future Kingdom. When we speak of transformation, we do it on two specific levels. The first level of transformation occurs within the individual person.

For example, the apostle Paul relates this in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52: "Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the last trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."²⁹ Paul describes this transformation in I Corinthians 15: 42-44, "So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." ³⁰It would be well for the contemporary Church if preachers spoke more often, regarding the transformation of our earthly bodies. Perhaps we are reluctant to do so for fear that our congregations will react in fear or anger, or will feel overwhelmed by the imagery of such a transformation. However, we do them a greater disservice, and risk instilling more doubt and fear, if we avoid the subject altogether. However, when we preach on the Transfiguration and Jesus' appearances to his disciples post-

²⁹ . 1 Cr. 25:51-52.

³⁰ . 1 Cr. 15:42-44.

Resurrection, these can be fruitful opportunities to reinforce the reality that our bodies will also be transformed in death. This can be accomplished as long as we refrain from turning the sermon into a scientific discussion of human anatomy.

The second requirement of Stanley's vision-casting, requires that the Church transform its role in the world based on the primacy of the Kingdom of God. He further explains this vision:

A vision of what our lives, our church, and even our world would look like if only we would apply the truth of God's Word. It's the inspirational part of the message. My goal at this point is to inspire people to make a change. Sometimes being faced with God's Word can leave the listener feeling defeated, if all they think about is how far they have to go. But if I can give them a picture of what life will be like once they apply the truth, then they have a little hope.³¹

The vision being cast for the present and future Kingdom of God is grounded in both the truth of Scripture, and the hope we have received through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are two caveats which are requisite to this truth and hope. The first caveat is that there is only one vision worthy of God's present and future Kingdom. That vision is God's vision. It is not the senior pastor's vision; it is not the vision of the deacons or trustees of a church. It is God's Will, solely. The second caveat is that vision is always shared. A vision that is shared is described as "our" vision, while a vision that is defined as "my" vision is not shared. Moreover, a vision that is categorized as "my" vision is also not God's vision. Furthermore, a vision that is unclear or doesn't seize an audience will be unable to be a shared vision. As Roger Bonem and Roger Patterson explain in their book titled *Leading from the Second Chair*, "For

³¹. Andy Stanley and Lane Jones. *Communicating for a Change*. (New York: Multnomah, 2006). 49.

now, think about *clear* and *compelling*. If your own understanding of God's preferred future for your ministry cannot be clearly explained to others, it will never be shared."³²

Moreover, a vision being cast for the edification of God's Kingdom needs to be a bold, new vision. If the vision being cast for the Kingdom of God is not bold or new it is analogous to putting a fresh coat of paint over a stained wall. The wall looks good at a distance, but up close the stain is still visible. The evangelist John gives us a description of God's vision for his Kingdom in Revelation 21: 1-2, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." 33

The next requirement of a vision being cast for God's Kingdom is that it is a vision that is expressed through action. When vision-casting is not followed by action, the vision is relegated to being a dream. For the vision of God's present and future Kingdom to become a viable reality, it will require Christians to demonstrate their faith through action. In the culture in which we find the Church today, merely professing our faith will not bring about God's Kingdom. As Bob Buford, entrepreneur and author writes in his book titled *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance*:

I believe the answer lies in individual responsibility. The church will never have credibility in the community at large without *expressed* individual responsibility. People need to *see* our faith, not merely hear about it. When our beliefs are personal and privatized, practiced mostly inside a building one one day a week, we Christians miss out on that glorious opportunity to be salt and light.³⁴

³² . Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson. *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams*. (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2005). 164.

³³ . Rv. 21:1-2.

³⁴. Bob Buford. Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance. (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1994). 165.

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah best exemplifies a person who expressed individual responsibility in an outward expression of his faith. He caught God's vision for rebuilding the wall that had surrounded Jerusalem, and carried through the vision to completion despite fierce opposition from the leaders of Judah. Nehemiah relates how this vision came about in Nehemiah 2: 11-12, "I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem." ³⁵

Nehemiah also illustrates the derisive comments he received, regarding the vision God had placed on him, and how he stood up to his detractors:

They mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it. (Nehemiah 2:19-20).³⁶

In his book titled *Visioneering*, Andy Stanley explains the nature of the opposition that Nehemiah experienced when he and his co-workers acted on God's vision:

Nehemiah and his crew certainly faced their share of criticism. His vision did not go unnoticed by the rulers of the regions around Jerusalem. As we pointed out earlier, the idea of Jerusalem becoming a walled city again sent a chill through the hearts of the governors nearby. They knew Israel's history almost as well as they knew their own. For Israel to get back on her feet economically and militarily meant the end to their control in the region.³⁷

This is a side of vision-casting that bears further commentary. We do well to remember that casting a vision for God's Kingdom, even in churches that we presume to be spiritually healthy,

³⁵ . Ne. 2:11-12.

³⁶ Ne. 2:19-20.

³⁷ . Andy Stanley. *Visioneering: God's Blueprint for Developing and Maintaining Vision*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 1999. 142.

is not going to be free of adversity. While Nehemiah faced opposition from leaders of the regions surrounding Jerusalem, often we will face opposition from people who sit in the pews around us on Sunday. Even in church settings there are people who are insecure, or fearful that the church will be changed too dramatically for their comfort.

Andy Stanley offers insight into what can happen when a vision is cast, but succumbs to criticism and pressure, "Regardless of what's driving your critics, if you let them get to you, your candle will go out. You will lose heart. You will give up. What could be and should be will never be. At least not as a result of your labor. And when your dream dies, a part of you dies as well." As Nehemiah demonstrated, a vision that is worthy of the Kingdom of God is a vision that is seen through to completion, regardless of the skepticism and criticism the vision engenders.

In order for us to proceed, and begin to develop a template for the contemporary evangelistic sermon, we do well to recap what we have discussed so far. We have laid a solid framework regarding the social and political thought of both Jesus, and the apostle Paul. We have examined the social and political challenges they faced, and how they viewed these highly charged issues in relation to their evangelistic missions. Furthermore, we have been able to discern that these socio-political commentaries were not necessarily indicative of Jesus' and Paul's political affiliations. These commentaries merely served as analogies and examples in painting word images of how God's Kingdom ought to look.

Secondly, we have examined the social and political thought of two of the foremost contributors to the mainline Protestant Church, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. We also discussed the social and political thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela, and how their contributions to social justice have shaped the contemporary church. Lastly, we have

³⁸ . Ibid. 145.

examined the concepts of three prominent evangelistic preachers. We examined the unique insights that Haddon Robinson, Calvin Miller, and Andy Stanley have contributed to current evangelistic preaching methodology. Now it is time for us to begin the process of developing our template for a contemporary evangelistic sermon. In Chapter Four, we will examine in depth the components of the integrity-service model and its application to modern preaching in the mainline Church today.

CHAPTER FOUR

A METHODOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

The overall purpose of this chapter is not to impose a method of sermon preparation, or to suggest a specific style of delivery. This study presumes that preachers reading this study will have already established a pattern of study, preparation, and sermon delivery that is suitable to them. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to establish the components of a contemporary evangelistic sermon that will resonate in the mainline Church. In order for an evangelistic sermon to resonate in a current mainline Church, that sermon needs to provide timely and provocative commentary on the social and political issues of our time.

However, juxtaposed along with current social and political commentary is Scripture which will lead the congregation into the presence of the holy, and a fresh vision for the Kingdom of God. At this juncture it is well for us to discuss the three elements of the evangelistic sermon individually.

The Social Dimension

The social dimension of a contemporary evangelistic sermon needs to address two specific levels of society. The first level is comprised of the people assembled to hear the sermon being preached. Within the social dimension of the sermon there are two fundamental questions that ought to be raised within the mind of each listener. The first question centers on identifying those individuals and groups who are in need of assistance. The second question asks what is my moral responsibility in helping these individuals or groups with their problems?

In order to ask these two questions, and subsequently discern the answers, there are two functions, which need to occur within each listener. The first part is the function of moral

perception. Moral perception is not to be misconstrued as being a separate psychological function. Moral perception is not only a function of the mind, but a function of the entire person. In his book titled *Go and Do Likewise*, ethicist William C. Spohn writes:

Analogously, moral perception is a function of the whole person which engages reflective, emotional, and imaginative capacities. It includes honest assessment, sympathetic appreciation, attentiveness to relevant detail, memory refined into useful experience, social skills, virtuous dispositions, and practical "know how."

In order for Christians to identify the problems inherent in today's society, it requires sensitivity, compassion, and creative thinking, in order come up with viable resolutions.

However, merely possessing a moral vision for the way society *ought* to function is not enough. This moral *ought to* require more than perception, ingenuity, and technical skills. As Spohn rightly submits, a moral vision that lacks the fortification of moral principles could lead to instances where certain problems are glossed over, or missed completely:

Knowing moral principles can support astute moral vision. Moral maxims and principles can help us focus on certain features of the situation that we might have otherwise missed. Knowing that "equal opportunity" is a component of social justice may help us recognize that some policies which claim to be racially blind, for example, are in fact cementing current inequities into permanent barriers.²

There are two criteria that can be applied to a situation in order to determine whether it is socially just and equitable for all. The first criterion is the presence of individual conscience. As we discussed above regarding moral perception, there needs to be an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the world in which we find ourselves. There needs to be a cognizance of the actions that shape our society, and an understanding of what constitutes right or wrong actions.

As James T. Bretzke states in his book titled A Morally Complex World, "Striving for the proper

^{1.} William C. Spohn. *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics*. (New York: Continuum, 2000). 96.

^{2.} Ibid. 87, 98.

realization in the world in which we live means we are ultimately seeking to be faithful and true to ourselves, being who we are made to be by God. Conscience then is the modality of that core nature that makes this particular way of being human possible."³

We do well to remember that conscience for the Christian is imbued with higher standards than it is for members of secular society. For the Christian, as Fr. Bretzke rightly asserts, is eternally connected to our profession of faith in the God who created us. Therefore, the function of conscience for the believer cannot be separated from our relationship with Jesus Christ. As Paul writes in Philippians 2: 2-5:

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.⁴

For the Christian to look at the actions of our contemporary world requires doing so with the mind of Christ. We are required to view the world not selfishly seeking to further our own interests, but to affirm the interests of others. However, the Mind of Christ is more than a mantra or catchphrase, as Dr. Ben Gutierrez writes in his book titled *Living Out the Mind of Christ*, "The word mind here means "attitude" or "thinking." Therefore, the word implies that the Mind of Christ is not a mere creed, theory, or formula – it is an attitude." Dr. Gutierrez continues by explaining Paul's conception of the Mind of Christ:

The word *mind* is not only the word for "attitude." It is interesting to learn that when Paul penned these words, he also chose the verb form of this word instead of the noun form. This means that Paul was not saying that the mind

³ . James T. Bretzke. *Living in a Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004). 125.

⁴. Ph. 2:2-5.

⁵. Ben Gutierrez. Living Out the Mind of Christ: Practical Keys to Discovering and Applying the Mind of Christ in Everyday Life. (Lynchburg: Thomas Road Baptist Church, 2008). 19, 20.

Christ is a concept, but an *action*. Living out the Mind of Christ is not just something that is known and understood; it is something that is acted upon, lived out, and demonstrated!⁶

At this juncture it is well to suggest a word of caution regarding the Mind of Christ. It cannot be stressed enough, in this writer's view that developing the Mind of Christ ought not to become a quest for individual perfection. Moreover, this like-mindedness or conscience ought to be developed within a community of faith, where standards of individual accountability are enforced. As professor of social ethics Albert Rasmussen writes in his book titled *Christian Social Ethics*, "It was long ago discovered that the conscience carries all the blindness and prejudices that have influenced our lives. The only conscience that is a Christian guide is one that is constantly enlightened and criticized by demands and relations beyond the individual." These desired attributes are clearly described in Proverbs 3:21-24:

My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight, they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble, when you lie down you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.⁸

We have established that moral perception, conscience, and being like-minded with Christ are essential to the social dimension of evangelistic preaching. At this point the question is how we can as preachers incorporate these essential pieces into a synergistic whole. It is suggested that during sermon preparation a study be conducted of societal events to determine the presence of the three essential components listed above. The Latin term for these events is *casus* (case). This method of using case studies, within the field of moral theology, is called

⁶. Gutierrez. 74.

⁷. Albert Terrill Rasmussen. *Christian Social Ethics: Exerting Christian Influence*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1956). 67.

⁸. Pr.3:21-24.

Casuistry. Using a case study approach, in conjunction with biblical illustrations, can provide powerful sermon images. As James Bretzke explains the nuances of casuistry:

Even in the height of the manualist tradition, the casuists recognized that the individual had to follow his or her conscience and that it would be technically impossible to foresee every possible set of variables so that the answer in one concrete case could easily and inevitably be applied to other cases, even if they initially appeared very similar. In fact, such cases were often called "cases of conscience" since the key moral problem centered on precisely what an individual should do in good conscience in this or that moral dilemma. ⁹

In developing a casuistry approach to sermon preparation, two elements need to be present. The first element, with equivocation, will always be the Word of God. There are vast arrays of Scripture texts that can serve as case studies. The texts we discussed regarding Jesus' stance on paying taxes and tribute are excellent examples of situations requiring moral conscience. The parables that Jesus related to his disciples also serve as good case studies. Also, we do well to not ignore the case studies that present themselves in the Old Testament. The prophetic books are one area that could be fruitful for finding case studies.

The second element is case study material that resonates in a more contemporary context. As Bretzke explains this necessity, "As we noted in the last chapter, casuistry has often been derided from the time of Pascal to the present, but as it has been argued here, we must move from the abstract level of moral principles into the concrete realities and complexities of our everyday lives." This aligns nicely with the seven (7) concepts identified by Calvin Miller and Andy Stanley that the Church needs to be more relevant, rational and transformative, etc., to be more effective in its preaching, ministry and mentoring roles.

In order to put a human face on the social dimensions of evangelistic preaching we can compare and contrast dilemmas of moral ethics from the viewpoint of Scripture, and from the

⁹. Bretzke. A Morally Complex World. 169.

¹⁰. Ibid. 169, 170.

viewpoint of today. One example of a more recent moral dilemma would be the moral controversy over the removal of feeding tubes from patients on life-support systems. The Terry Schiavo case was, perhaps, the most widely publicized and debated moral ethics issue in the latter part of the twentieth-century.

Another potential moral ethics issue would be the physician-assisted suicides that Dr.

Jack Kevorkian participated in, and later served prison time for. These are but two examples of the moral conscience issues that have informed and shaped our contemporary world. There are many more examples that would make powerful case studies in sermon preparation. However, many of these issues occur on a local level and do not gain national recognition or scrutiny as the aforementioned cases. At this time we will leave our discussion regarding the social dimensions of evangelistic preaching, so that we may examine the political dimensions.

Politics and Evangelistic Preaching

As this study is being written, our nation is embroiled in a heated and bitter presidential campaign. The tone of the campaign from both Republicans and Democrats has been defamatory, and has done little to address the serious problems facing our country. We might question what this has to do with the Church? We may prefer that politics and the life of the Church remain separate, as our forefathers intended. While both of these points are valid, each Christian is a member of society, and the impact that politics has on society affects Christians as well. Therefore, do we hide our heads in the sand for an hour on Sunday in the tranquility of a church sanctuary, or do we grapple with God's Kingdom in all its manifestations?

It is essential for the life of the Church that the sermon does not devolve into a political speech that favors partisanship over consensus or special interests over the common good. The contemporary evangelistic preacher does well to remember that God's Kingdom is not made up

of Republicans or Democrats, or liberals or conservatives. It consists of people of varying political ideologies, just as it consists of people of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the political dimension of evangelistic preaching needs to be focused not on ideology, but on the virtues that politics ought to aspire to.

In his book titled *Statecraft as Soulcraft: What Government Does*, political commentator George F. Will writes concerning virtue:

I understand, and really am reasonably cheerful about, the irrevocable triumph of modernity in justifying social orders based on wide release of passions and appetites. That is why I am so concerned about the shaping of passions and desires in the direction of virtue. By virtue I mean nothing arcane or obscure. I mean good citizenship, whose principle components are moderation, social sympathy and willingness to sacrifice private desires for public ends. ¹¹

It is argued here that, Mr. Will would do well to retract or revise his statement based on some of the questionable passions and appetites of those individuals inside and outside of government. If George Will were to revise this book in light of today's political climate, he might indeed long for moderation, social sympathy, and personal sacrifice for the common good. In a nation where members of Congress are legally allowed to use insider information to invest on Wall Street, amassing millions of dollars in profit, virtue would be desirable.

When we speak of virtue in relation to the political dimensions of evangelistic preaching, words such as integrity, humility, and honor come to mind. These are the attributes that spring to mind when we describe the public ministries of Jesus and the apostle Paul. Their lives exemplified moderation, social sympathy, and sacrificing their own needs and desires for the public good. When we intertwine political commentary with an evangelistic sermon, we need to focus on the criterion that restores nobility and virtue to our political sensibilities. Only focusing

¹¹ . George F. Will. *Statecraft as Soulcraft: What Government Does*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983). 134.

on partisanship or whether we are liberal or conservative will divide rather than unify the Church.

This caveat is explained succinctly by Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner in their book titled *City of Man: Religion and Politics in a New Era*, "The wrong kind of politics can not only compromise an individual believer but undermine the message of the church itself. Any political movement – even, or particularly, one viewed as virtuous – can become a consuming substitute for faith. And the line is fine between zeal and anger." It is essential that the political dimension of evangelistic preaching elicits a healthy passion for the Kingdom of God, not animosity within the Kingdom.

The second attribute concerning the political dimension of evangelistic preaching is the heart of our politics. There are two attitudes at work in our society that preclude us from engaging in a politic of the heart. The prevailing concept is that politics is engaged in only as a function of the human mind, not the human heart. The first attitude is naivete; we never conceived that the heart could inform our politics. The second attitude is cynicism; we have become convinced by history that the heart no longer plays a role in our politics.

However, Terry Tempest Williams sheds new light on the essential role that the heart ought to occupy in contemporary politics:

The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions? And do we have enough resolve in our hearts to act courageously, relentlessly, without giving up – ever – trusting our fellow citizens to join with us in our determined pursuit of a living democracy?¹³

¹². Gerson and Wehner. City of Man. 130.

¹³ . Terry Tempest Williams. "Engagement," *Orion*, Jul-Aug 2004, http://www.orionmagazine.org/indexphp/articles/article/143/.

These questions all raise valid concerns and anxieties within our hearts. We may very well look at these questions, and throw our hands up in despair as we begin to grasp the enormity of living out these questions in a democracy predicated on heart over mind. Author Parker Palmer addresses this conflict in his book titled *Healing the Heart of Democracy*:

As I make a case for the role of the heart in politics, hard-core political realists may dismiss it as naïve when it comes to the rough-and-tumble process of getting elected and governing. I want to meet the realists on their own ground by making a reality claim of my own: anyone who professes to understand politics but dismisses the heart's role in it is either being disingenuous about the leverage gained by manipulating emotions or has not taken a close look at how the world works.¹⁴

It is equally true, and which Palmer addresses, that the role of the heart in the world can impact outcomes both positively and negatively as he states, "Everything human can be found in the heart as both cause and effect of what happens in the external world. And nothing that happens in the human heart has more power, for better or for worse, than heartbreak." ¹⁵

It is imperative; therefore, that contemporary evangelistic preaching examines the triumph and the brokenness of the human spirit. In the political realm stagecraft is utilized to showcase a candidate in the most advantageous light, in order to enhance their voter appeal. Soulcraft portrays the human heart in its most transparent form. Therefore, true Soulcraft doesn't care just for the soaring heart, but also for the heart that has been reduced to tatters by a world hell-bent on destroying it. In his anthology of stories titled the *Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, pastor Charles Swindoll provides wisdom for contemporary preachers, "Joseph Parker's

¹⁴. Parker J. Palmer. *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit.* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2011). 51.

¹⁵. Ibid. 57.

comment to a young minister is always timely for pastors to remember, 'In every pew there is a broken heart. Speak often on suffering and you will never lack for a congregation." ¹⁶

The last attribute regarding the political dimension of evangelistic preaching is consciousness. Consciousness is awareness of both the self, and of the world in which we live. George Will argue that consciousness, and in particular consciousness-raising, have not provided individuals with a sense of security about who they are, or their place in society as he states:

As individuals have come to feel – have been taught to feel – an increasingly fragile sense of "self," they have become more obsessive and aggressive about "self-expression." There has grown an acute anxiety about the suffocation of the "self" by the modern state with its bureaucratic and communications technologies of social control, and even more by "society." The eighteenth century defined "society" as a friend, or at least as a beneficent mechanism. The twentieth century has defined society as a threat.¹⁷

In the almost three decades since Will wrote his book, it could be fair to say that the threat has materialized, and now society has become the controlling dictator. Particularly, with the explosion of the Internet, other technologies, and social media, more than ever we feel the presence of Big Brother in our daily lives. The vital role of evangelistic preaching, in order to ease the anxieties we may have regarding consciousness, is to remind us that we exist to serve and worship a God whose Kingdom transcends the limits imposed on us by secular society. Moreover, we know that these conditions are temporary in relation to the eternity we have been promised in God's Kingdom.

The Evangelistic Imperative

If contemporary preaching is to impact the world for the present and future Kingdom of God, it must understand and embrace the evangelistic imperative. The evangelistic imperative is

¹⁶. Charles R. Swindoll. *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1, 501 Other Stories*. (Nashville: Word, 1998). 459.

¹⁷. Will. Statecraft as Soulcraft. 57.

comprised of three primary components. These components are requisite if the Church is to not only survive, but if it is going to be a force for positive change in the world. The first component of the evangelistic imperative is the presence of an insatiable hunger for living out the gospel. We are reminded of this in the words Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5: 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." ¹⁸ Evangelism that is only interested in counting the number of people who come forward is only an exercise in self-aggrandizement and ego gratification. True evangelism seeks to quell the gnawing hunger of a world that is starved for positive affirmation that there is a God who loves them unconditionally, and who promises that He will never abandon them in their hour of need.

If the contemporary preaching of the Church does not trigger a hunger for righteousness in its people, it will become an endangered species. As Monika Hellwig states in her book titled *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*, "One who is never hungry is unlikely to have compassion or concern for those who are constantly hungry and never satisfied." ¹⁹ If we are unwilling or unable to understand the hunger of others we destroy their selfhood, and leave them bereft of compassion and comfort.

Monika Hellwig illuminates this very point, as she continues, "Such capacity for realistic empathy and motivating compassion is a great deprivation of humanity, an inadequacy of personhood, in those who are thus incapable, as well as a crushing burden to those whose suffering is a matter of such indifference to others." ²⁰ If our compassion is insincere, or seen as something to ease our conscience or boost our ego, then it is no different than if we did not act at all.

¹⁸ . Mt. 5:6.

 $^{^{19}}$. Monika A. Hellwig. *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*. (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 1992). 3.

²⁰. Ibid. 3.

The second component of evangelistic imperative is that it needs to be mission-driven. An evangelistic sermon that only addresses the confession and forgiveness of the repentant sinner, does little to prepare that believer to make an impact in his or her world. Therefore, to clarify a point made earlier, altar calls are not without value and merit in those faith traditions that employ them. However, unless there is a challenge to engage in an outreach mission, the altar call remains an inwardly directed experience.

To clarify what a mission-driven evangelistic sermon ought to accomplish we turn to Matthew 10: 5-7, "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: "The Kingdom of heaven is near." ²¹The essential feature of a mission-driven evangelistic sermon is that it is intentional in sending out the faithful to reach the lost. However, this sending-out directive must not be given lightly, nor should it be rendered without explaining that their message won't always be well received.

Jesus tells his followers this as he sends out the seventy-two in Luke 10: 2-4, "He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." This caveat is particularly true for the Church today. In an interview in *Preaching* magazine Pastor Reggie Mc Neal explains:

There are deeply embedded pockets of our population that never are going to come to church no matter what the church does. I'm trying to help existing churches explore how we reach those pockets of Americans. As we know

²¹ . Mt. 10:5-7.

²² . Lk. 10:2-4.

from the Pew study last year, the most comprehensive look at American spirituality, on out of every six Americans now is unaffiliated. It's the fastest growing company of people in terms of their spiritual identification. ²³

Pastor McNeal posits that for the contemporary church to embrace a mission-driven approach to ministry requires a shift in philosophical approach. Therefore, evangelistic preaching ought not to concentrate on the "what" of mission work, but rather on the "whom" of mission work. As Pastor Neal explains, "For me, it's the people of God partnering with him in his redemptive mission in the world. We don't have time to unpack all of that; but you can hear that it's a "who" and a movement. The focus of it is beyond us; it's in the world. It's not something we do but something we join, not something we create but something we discover."²⁴

Evangelistic preaching which is mission-driven needs to make two indisputable distinctions. The first distinction is the essential role occupied by the laity of the Church. It is imperative the laity is recognized and affirmed for its central part in the mission of the contemporary Church. As Fr. Paul Bernier states in his book titled *Ministry in the Church*, he discusses the importance of the laity, "The chief one is that laity, as part of the People of God, has the fullness of Christian life, dignity, and mission. They are not second-class citizens, people to be held only to a lower level of holiness or participation, but fully members of the church." Fr. Bernier also posits that there are a diversity of spiritual gifts within the church that need to be identified and utilized to their full potential in achieving the mission of the Church.

A third idea is that the role of the laity is an active one, as Fr. Bernier writes, "Their gifts are to be used for the good of all. Thus they are called upon to exercise initiative and generosity.

²³ . Michael Duduit. "Preaching in a Missional Church: An Interview with Reggie Mc Neal." *Preaching*. Nov-Dec. 2009. 17.

²⁴ . Ibid. 19.

²⁵ . Paul Bernier. *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach*. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third, 1992). 287.

The building of the Kingdom is the responsibility of all in the church, not only those in leadership positions."²⁶ The last point that Fr. Bernier makes is the need for open communication and cooperation between laity and clergy in accomplishing the mission of the Church. As Fr. Bernier continues:

Power in the church is not a one-way street. Rather, the gifts of all the members are mutually beneficial. Since all are responsible for the work of salvation by reason of the common priesthood which we share by reason of baptism, there should be a realization that we all learn from one another, and must be open as to how the Spirit speaks through even the weakest member of the community.²⁷

Moreover, it is imperative that we, as pastors, learn to delegate by encouraging the laity to assist in the ministry functions of the church. With ministry being one of the vocations with an alarmingly high rate of burn-out among clergy, it is in our best interest to share certain duties with laity. This brings our discussion around to the last important aspect of mission-driven evangelistic preaching.

The Leader as Servant

Our discussion on the mission aspect of evangelistic preaching focused primarily on the essential role of the laity, and the affirmation and utilization of their spiritual gifts. In this section our discussion will focus primarily on the clergy, and how we as pastors need to demonstrate servant leadership both in and out of the pulpit on Sunday. The most compelling example of authentic servant leadership is found in John 13: 3-5:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that,

²⁶. Ibid. 288.

²⁷ . Ibid. 288

he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.²⁸

There are some preachers who would offer the argument that the analogy of foot-washing does not resonate with a discussion regarding evangelistic preaching. However, this writer's rebuttal is that the attitude in carrying out the task of foot-washing outweighs the specific action. In his recently published book titled *Navigating Ministry*, Pastor Ken Kinton illuminates the essential attitude of foot-washing:

Rather than viewing foot-washing as a demonstration of subservience, we should consider it an opportunity to "wash away" our self-pride and arrogance. Our foot-washing, in a contemporary context, should be an intentional demonstration in which we offer comfort to those we minister to. It should indicate our willingness to roll up our sleeves and serve others instead of expecting them to serve us.²⁹

Our congregations do not require us to descend from the platform or pulpit wrapped in a towel, carrying a basin of water, they ought to know that we are willing to do anything we ask of them. Preachers, who are unable or unwilling to demonstrate the humility of a servant leader, will experience difficulty in getting people to follow them. Moreover, there has to be a visible connection between the servant leadership preached from the pulpit, and the leadership demonstrated in a boots-to-the-ground expression of ministry.

Scripture warns against those who don't demonstrate the characteristics of humble leadership by example. This is evident in Mark 12:38-40:

As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the market-places, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."³⁰

²⁸ . Jn. 13:3-5

²⁹ . Ken Kinton. *Navigating Ministry: A Compass for Authentic Pastoral Ministry*. (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress, 2011). 11.

One of the biggest obstacles facing preachers in their efforts to demonstrate authentic servant leadership is multi-media ministry. By this we are referring the media used by churches to broadcast their ministries. While television and the Internet provide vehicles for reaching a larger audience than is possible in a stand-alone church service, it also involves certain negative aspects. Those preachers whose services are aired on television, or streamed live on the Internet, can succumb to the intoxicating power of seeing themselves on large screens, reaching a multitude of people. These preachers can start to believe that they are celebrities, and that they are set apart from the work-a-day people to whom they preach.

When he had completed the task of washing his disciples' feet Jesus made the following statement to them, as recorded in John 13: 14-16, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. To tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master." As Charles R. Swindoll writes in his book titled *Improving Your Serve*, "Yes, these seem to be forgotten words, even in many churches with their smooth pastors, high powered executives, and superstar singers. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be much of the servant mentality in such settings."

Swindoll goes on to illuminate the point made above, regarding pastors who become enamored with their perceived celebrity, "The "celebrity syndrome" so present in our Christian thought and activities just doesn't square with the attitudes and messages of Jesus. We have

³⁰ . Mk. 12:38-40.

³¹ . Jn. 13:14-16.

³². Charles R. Swindoll. *Improving Your Serve: The Art of Unselfish Living*. (Waco: Word, 1981). 21.

skidded into a pattern whereby the celebrities and top dogs in our church life call the shots, and it is difficult to be a servant when you're used to telling others what to do."³³

However, it is posited here that all is not hopeless. In fact, as the lines between servant and leader blur it is hoped that a new vision will emerge, a vision where all Christians are seekers after a common goal. In his book titled *Servant Leadership* Robert K.Greenleaf states:

The change that I anticipate is a new awareness among seekers in which those whose needs will be met *only* as they serve others will separate themselves from those who are satisfied to remain committed almost wholly to meeting their own needs – which, in the nature of things, will probably never be met because one is rarely satisfied with what one seeks only for oneself.³⁴

It is only by investing in others, that we can truly capture a vision of God's present and future Kingdom. It is fitting that we bring our discussion full circle with these words from Jesus in Matthew 6: 33-34, "But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

In Chapter Four, a methodology of contemporary evangelistic preaching was outlined focusing on the key components of the model which are: the social dimension, politics and the evangelistic preaching, the evangelistic imperative and leader as a servant, which are further discussed in Chapter Five as an example of what the focus of, and how evangelistic preaching and sermons should be conducted in the modern Church today that focuses on the principle of God's Kingdom within the context of contemporary society.

In the social dimension of our contemporary evangelism model, it is important to identify the groups that are in need. Of particular importance is the identification of those individuals

³³. Ibid. 21, 22.

^{34.} Robert K. Greenleaf. Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power

³⁵ . Mt. 6:33-34.

who are in need both internally and externally to the Church. Additionally, how to discern the level, types of responsibility, and assistance that the Church should provide to its membership and society at-large. In doing so, the modern Church's evangelistic model must be mission-driven. Simply put, the model must focus on the servant-leadership aspect of Jesus' public ministry, whose principle focus is on the service-integrity approach of evangelism.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As previously noted, the theoretical basis for the project stemmed from the long-standing debates within the Church concerning where to draw the line regarding social and political commentary. It was also shaped by this writer's views and personal ministry both as a Chaplain, Intern, the Senior Pastor of a small rural church, and as a published Christian author.

The literature was examined and analyzed in such a way as to look at the issue posed from a different way than it has been studied. The intent was to provide an effort to address limitations in the existing literature and expand the theoretical knowledge base relative to evangelism and the role and purpose of the modern Church. The aim of the study was to primarily focus attention on God's Kingdom, but yet do it in such a manner that is also sensitive to the social and political needs of its members and society at-large.

The objective of the study has a twofold purpose. The first aim is to establish that a relationship does exist between social and political commentary and the evangelistic mission of the modern Church. The second aim is to contribute to the field of Christian ministry in general by furthering our understanding of an integrity-service model approach to evangelism in the Church today. Chapter Four clearly outlines a proposed methodology and model for writing and delivering a contemporary evangelistic sermon that is mission-driven and predicated on a new integrity-service model that is grounded in the truth of Scripture and also embraces new opportunities for the Church to address some of the most challenging social, political, and religious issues of the modern Church. It should be noted, that in addition to Scripture, this study was largely influenced by the work of several prominent theologians and other individuals mentioned throughout the text whose work helped to shape and guide the course of this research.

In this study, qualitative research methods were employed to conduct a theoretical study as the primary mode of data collection. The research began during the period of October 2010 to August 2011 utilizing the vast resources of Liberty University, Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, New York, ATLA Theological data base and other research archives. An extensive study of the literature and Scripture was conducted by examining the works of prominent theologians, journal articles, preaching resources and the sermons of contemporary preachers whose work provided the theoretical framework for this study.

Numerous theories were examined on the role of society and politics through the lens of noted theologians such as Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, as well as civil rights activists such as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela (see Chapter Two). These noted authors and others offered a useful approach to addressing our understanding of modern evangelism that is focused on an integrity-service model. Each of these individuals aptly demonstrated how they used their understanding of Scripture to guide, understand, and effect change within the social and political machinations of their time, without diminishing the glory and power of God's present and future Kingdom.

While similarities do exists in the positions of these individuals, there also, however, exist stark contrasts in the social and political thought of these individuals. For example, both Niebuhr brothers were considered political theologians and behaviorists. Yet, H. Richard Niebuhr did not share the same political philosophy as his brother Reinhold. For example, Reinhold adopted the view of "nature" and original sinfulness of human nature.

Additionally, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr's social thought was utopian in nature. He viewed society through the lens of what it ought to be vs. what it was. Reinhold argued, if individuals completely identified with the environment of the natural world, could they transcend

their environment? He concluded that if we exist autonomously from one another, than we abstain from becoming agents of change. To transcend our surroundings, according to Reinhold Niebuhr it requires an interest and investment in the circumstances of others as Christians. His social platform emphasized four (4) planks: (1) the principle of fairness and equality, (2) humility vs. arrogance, (3) the role the Church occupies in society, and (4) the advocacy of non-violent resistance, which are all necessary components in Reinhold Niebuhr's view if society is to transcend its frailties and conflict, and model how God's Kingdom ought to be.

In contrast, H. Richard Niebuhr prescribed to the philosophy that "culture" helped to determine individuals' worldview and played a pivotal role in determining how people would respond socially and politically. He also believed that the Church was impacted by culture, which contributed to shaping his view for a revolutionized Church that would not be enslaved by the culture, but instead run counter to it, and eventually transcend the culture. Simply said, H. Richard Niebuhr held that humans are both benefactors and victims of the nurturing they receive at the hands of culture. H. Richard reminds us that the Kingdom of God, like humans and culture cannot totally avoid its connection to society and politics, which is precisely one of the objectives raised in this study for modern evangelism in the Church today.

It is clearly demonstrated here that both Niebuhr brothers contributed immensely to mainline Protestant theology and evangelistic preaching in the modern church (See Chapter Two). Suffice it to say, that all of the individuals noted in this study, were impacted by both culture and lived experiences. However, at the forefront of their ideology was always the presence of the truth that is contained in Scripture of the primacy of God's Kingdom in Heaven.

Evangelistic preaching as the Apostle Paul articulated reflects our responsibility toward God – the edification of God vs. humans. What this means is that we seek God's approval in all

things, not man's. God is the criteria against which the Church should apply evangelistic preaching as an evaluation model. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul saw the power of the Gospel of God's Kingdom as transformational. Responsible citizenship rests in conformance to the tenets of God.

The linchpin of the focus of this study is a methodological framework for evangelistic preaching that is grounded in the integrity-service model of evangelism for the modern church today. This framework reflects God's will and the Kingdom of Heaven. The framework proposed here is grounded in Scripture and contemporary theology. It uses the preaching event as an opportunity for the Church to address social and political issues of our time, while maintaining the primacy of God's Kingdom. It adopts a narrative form of preaching through biblical illustrations on how to understand socio-political issues today in view of God's will and the common good for all. The goal is to evangelize the world for Christ.

In Chapter Three, as Haddon Robinson aptly described, the role and function of the modern church, acting through God's primacy and the Kingdom of heaven, is that the church can serve as a transformational change agent using life application of biblical texts through the love and passion one possesses for God. Haddon Robinson's "Big Idea" of the Biblical text and the sermon is predicated on seven (7) convictions of biblical preaching. First, the bible is solely the word of God, not of men speaking of God. Second, the authoritative word of God is contained in all Scripture. Third, the Bible authenticates itself.

Fourth, Biblical preaching opens up the Bible so that the sermon receives its authority totally from Scripture. Fifth, individuals studying the Scripture must work to uncover the deeper meaning of Biblical writers. Sixth, the Scriptures are solely about God, who God is and what God thinks and wills. Lastly, the seventh conviction relates to the relevancy of the Bible as a

resource for deepening an understanding of the relationship with God. Simplistically, according to Haddon, the sermon must be coherent and have impact and it must resonate, and convey the heart and will of God. In other words, the sermon needs to compel our congregations to not only hear God's word, but to act on God's word as a call to world missions.

In addition to Haddon's "Big Idea," in Chapter Three, Calvin Miller posited that understanding the worship landscape shapes the wider church. His view of what contemporary preaching ought to be in the overall worship experience is that, contemporary sermon ought to engage the ancient narrative of God's activity throughout the Scripture with the narratives of modern Christians today. In other words, it must connect with the life stories of the Church audience. According to Miller, to do so, requires that evangelistic preaching must be relational, casual, colloquial (conversational) and relevant to be effective.

Andy Stanley's framework for vision-casting proposes that a vision be cast for the present and future Kingdom of God (See Chapter Three). It is grounded in both the truth of Scripture and the hope that we have received through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is also a vision expressed through action, whereas Christians demonstrate faith through action. As noted previously, earthly concerns are secondary in relation to the concerns of God and his Kingdom as illustrated in the New Testament. As stated in Luke 10: 8-11:

Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, "the Kingdom of God is at hand for you. Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, "the dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you." Yet know this; the Kingdom of God is at hand. I tell you it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town.¹

These verses by Luke give further credence to the position that we should be concerned with the transformation of our earthly bodies first and foremost.

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¹ . Lk. 10:8-11.

It was not the objective of this study to instruct preachers on how to preach sermons about society and politics. Hopefully, this study helped to illuminate the central role that these issues held within Scripture. The integrity-service model as posited here is aptly suited for this task as Scripture is the beginning and ending point for evangelistic preaching. The project demonstrates through extensive literature and current sermon trends that a relationship does exist between social and political commentary and the evangelistic mission of the modern church. As such, the model presented here, which is grounded in Scripture and contemporary theology provides a clear understanding of the preaching event as an opportunity for the Church to address the socio-political issues of our time, while maintaining the primacy of God's Kingdom. Furthermore, the preaching event needs to stress the responsibilities of the dual citizenship of each professed Christian.

The integrity-service model of evangelism is interdependent on three (3) key components. These three components are: the truth of Scripture, proven theory, and practical application. Throughout this study biblical evidence has been presented that argues favorably for an integrity-service model of evangelistic preaching. In his encounters with both authorities and lay persons, Jesus addressed the essential characteristics that embody the integrity-service model. The characteristics that Jesus referred to frequently were compassion for the oppressed, equal and just treatment for those who were being wronged, and the self-less giving of one's self.

In presenting biblical evidence in support of the integrity-service model, it is readily apparent that Jesus stayed abreast of current social and political trends (See Chapter One). For example, Jesus understood the roles of women and other minorities and how Jewish society marginalized these segments of society. Specifically, Jewish society seized the property of widows and further denied them any voice in civic matters.

We also in Chapter One, discussed Jesus' clear understanding of the tax and tribute laws, and how he did not advocate defiance of these laws. Instead, Jesus used these platforms to raise awareness regarding oppressive practices, give voice to the voiceless, and to establish that citizenship in God's Kingdom was based on integrity of character and service, and not on social and economic entitlement.

Corresponding to Jesus' view, the Apostle Paul demonstrated the core principles of the integrity-service model of discipleship. For example, Paul's confinement aptly demonstrates how he used his ministry of hospitality to preach the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, both Jesus and the Apostle Paul understood the political machinations of both the temple and roman rule.

Moreover, the biblical evidence supports the integrity-service approach that is grounded in non-violent protest. For example, in our earlier discussion on Nelson Mandela, it was posited that violence was a potential recourse for a achieving a desired result if pacifist means of achieving stated results through non-violent means failed (See Chapter One). However, in Jesus' interpretation, the integrity-service model never considered violence as a viable option.

At this juncture, it is well to reiterate another characteristic of the integrity-service model; the characteristic of power. For example, Jesus spoke out forcefully against the abuses of power. Especially power that was attached to political appointments, such as the Chief Priests and Pharisees, etc. Jesus also argued against the abusive power wielded by those with financial wealth. However, the power connected to the integrity-service model cannot be gained by political appointment or inherited wealth.

The integrity-service model posits that power is not imposed by an appointed individual or small group, but instead power is shared equally among everyone. Moreover, this power is

based on the strength of our faith in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This truth is evidenced in 1Thessalonians 1:2 "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply by words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction."²

Therefore, if an integrity service model is to be effective, it requires that each person be empowered and equipped to become agents of change. In order for this empowering and equipping to occur, both clergy and laity will need to adapt to new roles within ministry. It will require clergy to share areas of their ministry with the laity, pastoral visits for example, which were considered duties for ordained ministers exclusively. Conversely, the laity will need to be willing to increase their involvement in the ministry of the Church or organization. In some instances, it will require a commitment for further education and training, in order to ensure that protocols and procedures are carried out properly.

In our discussion on the Niebuhr brothers, Dr. King and Nelson Mandela, there was compelling evidence that the elements of an integrity-service model exist in more contemporary thought. Moreover, individuals such as Dr. King and Nelson Mandela have actively lived out the integrity-service model. As noted previously, while Dr. King's life did not enjoy the luxury of longevity, his contributions to Christianity, and social and political thought transcended the limitations of space and time devoted to this study.

In order to begin implementing the integrity-service model, this study argued for a return to a marketplace approach to preaching that is mission-driven. If we follow Jesus' example, which was to reach people within their context, we might begin to see the pulpit as a barrier, rather than as a doer. St. Francis of Assisi was known to frequently walk through the business district of town and engage the merchants and villagers in conversation. We might surmise that

² . 1. Th. 1:2.

St. Francis was equally active in listening, as well as sharing the good news contained in God's word. St. Francis would take novitiates along on these journeys, in order to expose them to the diverse society that existed outside the monastery.

According to legend on one novitiate, St. Francis had hoped to preach, but was disappointed to only engage people in conversation. However, the essential lesson St. Francis imparted to his students was to talk to people, and not merely talk at them. Contemporary preachers, as part of their sermon preparation, ought to follow St. Francis' example and spend time engaging members of their communities in conversation.

However, it is best that we be prepared to listen as we speak. A well known axiom that is attributed to St. Francis, "Preach often, when necessary use words." St. Francis illustrates the need to listen first and speak last to further our understanding of the context in which we are ministering to the needs of individuals.

Another attribute of marketplace preaching, as demonstrated by St. Francis, is showing impartiality. St. Francis did not seek out people of a particular social rank or political affiliation to share his message. He gave the same consideration to the village jeweler as he did the village butcher. St. Francis engaged the poorest villagers, as well as those financially well-off. It is posited here, that modern day integrity-service evangelism ought to return to its marketplace roots. Suffice it to say here that preachers can no longer wait for people to come in, but they must be proactive in mobilizing the gospel both internally and externally to the Church.

This evangelistic model, which does not wait, hoping for success, but instead takes an assertive role is demonstrated by Paul and his followers in Acts 16:4-5:"As they traveled from

town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and grew daily in numbers."³

However, it is cautioned here that strengthening the Church ought to remain the primary focus of evangelism. The Churches in Acts grew as a result of being strengthened. It is argued here that had the churches not been fortified by biblical truth, and the leadership of the apostles and elders, growth would not have occurred.

Additionally, preachers must resist the temptation to overload their sermons with technology or gimmicks that detract from the heart of an evangelistic mission. Visual aids ought to be employed only when they are essential in conveying a specific point. The important point to remember is that the preaching event must focus on God's truth and the Kingdom of Heaven in its evangelistic mission and must not be reduced to a theatrical performance.

Moreover, the church itself needs to take a proactive role if its evangelistic mission is to transform the world. A church that professes a gospel that isolates itself from the world will direct the gospel inwardly, insulating the community of faith from society. This concept of a gospel that reaches outward, rather than inward, is referenced to in Matthew 5:14. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under

a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house."4

We discussed earlier the necessity of sharing power in the integrity-service evangelism model. The same maxim is true for the gospel. The gospel is not to be kept hidden, nor is it to be given selectively which would categorize the Church as elitist. The integrity-service model does

³. Ac. 16:4-5.

⁴. Mt. 5:14.

not advocate a "survival of the fittest" approach to evangelism. However, it does demonstrate a model that is based on acceptance and inclusiveness.

The modern Church must resist the temptation to withdraw from society into a monastic cocoon. St. Francis understood that his monastery could not sustain itself in seclusion from the village of Assisi. Likewise, the Church today cannot lock out the world because it fears these people or issues that are uncomfortable or unfamiliar. The contemporary Church can no longer avoid conflict, or chase to only lend a voice to non-controversial issues. It must be willing to engage and evangelize people of diverse social, political, and religious worldviews.

It is argued here that churches who sequester themselves in small groups and Bible studies, will find themselves out-of-touch with their surroundings. Moreover, these churches will be ill-prepared to respond to the social and political challenges of our time.

Conversely, if the Church chooses to remain aloof from society, then society will perceive the church as unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Therefore, a return to marketplace preaching can tear down the walls of suspicion that exist between the church and society today. Moreover, the Church needs to change the perception that it is inaccessible and secretive. In its place a new perception must be established.

This new perception will emulate the open-air markets of first-century Palestine, where goods and services were accessible to all. Most importantly, these open air markets fostered relationships built on transparency and cooperation, the very foundation of integrity-service evangelism. Individuals actively participated in civic and religious life as they were required to negotiate their concerns and differences through meaningful engagement in dialogue and listening to one another to achieve satisfactory resolutions to the issues at hand.

Moreover, today's Church must stop relying on the "stagecraft" that has overtaken the tone of American politics. It can no longer hope to attract prospective members with expansive programs, and expensive to maintain facilities. There must be a return to what George Will termed the phrase, "soulcraft," a retrieval of the very heart of the gospel. In other words, a gospel which is based on the purest concerns and issues of each person, both inside and outside of God's present and future Kingdom.

Glossy advertisements, and clever messages on signs in front of a church, are not the solution to the problems facing today's Church. The Church today has fallen victim to the same scandalous issues that have plagued politicians and corporate executives. As noted previously, some of these scandals include the noted events involving the Catholic Priesthood, embezzlement of Church funds, and lastly the disconnect between the Church and its role in providing evangelism focused on the ministry of God, while simultaneously addressing the socio-political needs of members.

There needs to be an intentional shift within the Church to discard the prosperity gospel, and return to a simple message of integrity. This message of integrity must be joined to a call to service. For example, the kind of service where those in authority mentor and empower the people whom they lead, to eventually become leaders themselves. This concept of unselfish leadership will only serve to increase the spiritual capital of the Church, and God's current and future Kingdom.

To summarize, the research process detailed here highlighted the use of a qualitative approach to a theoretical study, whose principle mode of data collection was based on a thorough examination of the literature review to include Scripture, prominent theologians, journal articles, preaching resources and the sermons of contemporary preachers. Chapter One provided an

overview of Jesus' and Paul's social and political attitudes and how their views shaped their evangelistic discourse. In Chapter Two, the works of the Niebuhr brothers contributions to Protestant theology and evangelistic preaching in the modern Church illuminated the similarities and contrast between their views about the primacy of God's Kingdom in Heaven and discourse for dealing with social and political issues.

Chapter Three provided the insights of Andy Stanley, Haddon Robinson and Calvin Miller concerning the role and function of the modern Church to serve as a change agent using life application of the biblical text. Each of these authors emphasized the mission-driven aspect of evangelistic preaching as the primary focus of an integrity-service model.

Lastly, in Chapter Four, a methodological framework for a model of integrity-service evangelism was aptly documented through analysis and interpretation of the data presented throughout this study. Both the study's limitations and guiding questions were identified.

Examples of sermons are included in the Appendix.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: EVANGELISTIC SERMON SAMPLE

APPENDIX B: THE INTEGRITY-SERVICE MODEL OF EVANGELISM

APPENDIX A

EVANGELISTIC SERMON SAMPLE

"Extravagant Hospitality"

Luke 10: 25-37

In our gospel reading this morning we heard Jesus relate the parable of the Good Samaritan. For many of us this is well-known story, one that is heart-warming in its motif of helping those in need. Since it is such a familiar biblical text it may tempt some of us to set our ears on automatic pilot. In order to give the story a fresh perspective we are going to imagine what this story might look and sound like, in a contemporary setting. Let us imagine this scene in the parable, as if it had occurred in our town just recently.

There was a young woman who was walking along Main St. in Buffalo, NY. She was on her way to the grocery store to pick up food for her family's evening meal. On the way to the store she was approached by two young males. At first, they were only going to steal her purse, but upon seeing that she was of Middle Eastern ethnicity they proceeded to assault her. They left her beaten and unconscious in an alley between two buildings. The first passerby, a city legislator, saw the woman and kept on walking. He was up for re-election, and the constituents in his district might not approve of him helping a person who could be a practicing Muslim.

The second passerby was a professional woman, who financially supported many of the city's cultural institutions. What would her friends who went to the theater and philharmonic

with her, think of her getting blood and dirt all over her expensive clothes? So the professional woman also passed by the assault victim without helping, or even calling the police.

The third passerby was a legal secretary on her way back from her lunch break. She saw the woman lying in the alley and parked her car at the curb. Though the victim was Middle Eastern as an African-American, she knew first-hand the pain and humility caused by racism. She was able to lift the woman in her arms and placed her on the back seat of her car. She then drove the woman to an outpatient clinic on the East Side, because the woman had no identification or money on her person. When they reached the clinic the secretary asked for a wheelchair to bring the injured woman into the clinic.

The doctor and nurse in the clinic immediately began to treat the woman's injuries, without asking for identification or her ability to pay the clinic bill. The young secretary stayed in the treatment room with the victim, until the staff had done all they could for her. The doctor told the secretary that the woman needed to stay the night for observation; however, there was an additional fee beside the cost of treatment. The young secretary took out her credit card and paid the entire bill in full, and said she would be back in the morning to check on the injured woman. When the secretary returned the next day she saw that the injured woman had regained consciousness, and was sitting up in bed having breakfast. The secretary insisted on paying for the injured woman's breakfast, and informed the staff that she would be sure to get the woman back home safely.

Having heard this story in a modern context it is easy to discern the parallels to the parable of the Good Samaritan. What may difficult for us is to see the parallels between the failure to respond to the needs of the injured woman, as did the legislator and the

businesswoman. How many of us have ignored a person who was in trouble or someone who approached us for a few dollars, or loose change. The prevailing mantra in our society is to not get involved, it isn't our problem to deal with.

As Christian ethicist William C. Spohn writes, "If we use our imagination honestly, the parable becomes a window on the world of Jesus and a mirror to our own existence. Anyone who has walked past the homeless and brushed off beggars in the street is no stranger to this parable." However, if we have volunteered at the local soup kitchen, or donated food or money to the various food pantries in the area, we too have "gone and done likewise," according to the example of the Good Samaritan.

What we are called to do, according to the parable, is to not only demonstrate compassion for our fellow humans but hospitality that extends beyond the minimum requirement. In the parable, as well as the modern rendition we heard this morning, the Good Samaritan and the legal secretary went beyond what would have been required or expected. The Samaritan paid two days wages for the care of the robbery victim, and the secretary paid not only for the medical care of the injured woman but also insisted on paying for her meal. Extravagant hospitality extends beyond what our secular society deems adequate, and mirrors the hospitality that is extended to those who are included in the Kingdom of God.

Our lesson this morning calls to mind a poem that captures our reluctance in coming to the aid of those in need, "Lord, why did you tell me to love all men as my brothers? I have tried, but I come back to you frightened. Lord, I was so peaceful at home, so comfortably settled. I

^{1.} Spohn. Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics. 89

was well furnished, and I felt so cozy. I was alone – I was at peace. Sheltered from the wind and the rain, kept clean."²

The question for each of us this morning is, are we going to continue to seek the security and safety of our privacy? Are we going to continue to choose to live insulated lives, not daring to get caught in the rain of life? Are we going to keep ourselves squeaky clean, like the priest and the Levite, and the legislator and the businesswoman? This morning each of us is asked, no each of us is challenged to live like the Good Samaritan and the legal secretary. To extend the extravagant hospitality that exemplifies the Kingdom of God. Not only the future Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom that exists in our world today.

In the month ahead each of us is encouraged to extend extravagant hospitality to at least one person with whom we have not had contact previously. However, this does not include our friends or family members. Taking your cousin to lunch or your aunt shopping does not count. It has to be a person who you have had no previous relationship with. Going with God's grace may each of us courageously and compassionately, "Go and Do Likewise" to all we meet. May God's peace be with each of us. Amen.

^{2.} Swindoll. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. 107.

APPENDIX B

THE INTEGRITY-SERVICE MODEL OF EVANGELISM

In regard to theories and models for engaging in evangelistic ministry, there would be too many to examine thoroughly in a study of this scope. Moreover, individual faith traditions would each espouse, and adhere to, their convictions as to the most effective method of evangelizing in today's culture. One such method has been called the service-humility model. The concise definition of this model is that it centers on emulating the humility of Christ in dealing with authority that is unjust or abusive to the citizens of a society. The main thrust of the service-humility model is that it favors thoughtful dialogue over disobedience or outright aggression in response to unjust treatment. However, it is not an economical model for the Church's evangelistic mission today.

Humility vs. Integrity

Regarding the characteristic of humility within a model for evangelism, there are two potential problems. The first problem is that humility is a characteristic that is inwardly directed toward the individual. This is problematic, in that, an individual can outwardly display an appearance of humility. Yet, in reality, the individual's interior motivations and intentions can be entirely selfish and self-serving. The Ponzi scheme orchestrated by Bernie Madoff is an excellent example of outward expressions not coinciding with interior motives. On the outside Mr. Madoff gave the appearance that he was helping his investment clients earn a high return on their portfolios. However, when his scheme was eventually discovered, after several years of stealing their money, his investors had lost all their money, which many had planned to use for retirement.

Therefore, we cannot say with certainty when individual humility is authentic or inauthentic. The second problem regarding the characteristic of humility is that it can circumvent the need for individual accountability. This is evident in the actions of a Bernie Madoff, who was not held accountable for his actions until the damage was beyond repair. Integrity, on the other hand, is grounded in honesty, and being held accountable to others.

In their book titled *The Ascent of a Leader* Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath posit, "In one sense, integrity is an uncompromising adherence to truth. The Hebrew concept of integrity includes straightness, as opposed to crookedness. This meaning has carried forward to our day. Crooked people lack integrity. Stealing from an employer makes you a crook." However, there are additional facets of integrity that are equally vital to the evangelistic mission of today's Church. As Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath continue, "Instead, integrity must be pursued as a heart quality that enables us to be love givers and truth tellers among those we influence. Our integrity is always for the benefit of those we influence. And vulnerability expresses and sustains such integrity."

We ought to think of integrity as something that is an essential element in the DNA of the evangelizing Church in the twenty-first century. Pastor Ken Kinton compares the integrity of the

^{3.} Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath. *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extrordinary Character and Influence*. (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1999). 83.

^{4.} Ibid. 83.

^{5.} Ibid. 83.

Church with the integrity of a naval ship in his book titled *Navigating Ministry*:

When a seagoing vessel is described as having "watertight integrity," it means that the ship is able to withhold water and is leak-proof. A ship that does not maintain watertight integrity will sink or capsize when it has taken on a vast amount of water. This analogy can be applied to various contexts within pastoral ministry. As pastoral ministers, we also need to maintain watertight integrity, as we have been charged with ensuring that the religious doctrines and tenets we teach will not cause our ministries irreparable damage. ⁶

Integrity Combined With Service

Integrity is not only essential in the ways that we engage in relation to one another, it permeates the manner in which we render service to our world. Moreover, the act of service has evolved to the point where it is no longer feasible to expect one individual to go out and have a profound impact. If we consider the tornadoes that decimated Joplin, Missouri and Hurricane Katrina that ravaged New Orleans it is inconceivable that one person could make a difference. Therefore, the call to service for Christians is to mobilize a team of workers rather than individuals.

Additionally, this will also be the new face of evangelism as we demonstrate God's Kingdom in action and the heart of Jesus Christ not only through our words but through our work. As Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath assert, "In other words, we must find ways to *integrate* our hearts with our hands, our agenda with our dreams, and our capacities with our character." The authors posit that we will realize this integration of hearts and hands when we understand that only God can equip us to build the Kingdom of God. This realization occurs at the fifth rung of what they call the Character Ladder, "The fifth rung transports us into the realm of the common good —the realm of grace. We will become leaders who serve others — who act as

^{6.} Kinton. Navigating Ministry. 30.

^{7.} Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath. The Ascent of a Leader. 153.

stewards rather than slaves of influence. This only comes when we believe, deep in our hearts, that ultimately all influence comes from the hand of God for the purpose of benefiting others."

It is integrity and service, endowed by grace that will bring about God's Kingdom in this world and the next. When we ignore this reality, and through false humility try to do this task alone, we are destined to fail and will evoke certain consequences for doing so.

8. Ibid. 151.

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