THE DANGEROUSLY DIVINE GIFT:
A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF POWER

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops a large-scale biblically-shaped theo-ethical narrative of power. Propelled by a liberationist commitment, this work first stands in solidarity with earth's marginalized majorities, and then focuses its lens on the social location of "middle agents." In the global economic/power structure, middle agents (the eighteen percent) live and work in the space between the two percent who own over half the world and the eighty percent who earn less than ten dollars per day.

The method is constructive. The work develops a scriptural narration of power that starts in creation, moves through the fall (the first act of commodification), and into violence, empire and the demonic. The central part of the project concentrates on the particular predicament of middle agents in complex globalizing regimes. Staying close to the gospel (particularly Luke and Mark), in the second half, an ethic of hospitality is developed – one that rearranges power structures, moving practitioners personally, communally, and societally toward a world of shared power. The story of power closes with a reading of apocalypse as the falling away of parasitic and violent structures, and the emergence of new creation on earth.

The academic approach is interdisciplinary. At each stage, relevant academic conversations are engaged in biblical studies (e.g. Ellen Davis, Terence Fretheim, William Herzog, Richard Horsley, Sylvia Keesmaat, Catherine Keller, J. Richard Middleton and Ched Myers), liberation theology/praxis (e.g. James Cone, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Martin Luther King Jr., Kwok Pui-Lan and Letty Russell), and social theory (e.g. Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault).

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I offer particular thanks for the teaching of Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat at ICS and Dr. William Herzog at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (CRCDS) who made scriptural interpretation exciting and socially relevant. Dr. Herzog taught me to see with the eyes of Jesus' Galilean followers, to understand their socio-economic context, and to hear their veiled radical social critique. And Dr.

Keesmaat taught me to contexualize that reading into a faithful canonical biblical theology with all its rich interconnections and echoes. This work stands on their shoulders.

I have been profoundly shaped by my study at CRCDS where I started my theological training. Rather than structuring my theological outlook in the typical Western manner, I jumped right in with the liberationists. I learned that theology is always contextual and conversational even when those factors are not made explicit. I am immensely grateful to Dr. Melanie May and Dr. James Evans and the faculty of CRCDS for teaching me to stake my theological thinking with those who live in the margins of dominating systems. More recently, conversations with Dr. Mark Brummitt have enriched my thinking and encouraged me to endure.

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INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

The following dissertation develops a biblically-rooted liberationist narrative of power centered in the social location of middle agents. Following a liberationist approach, this study starts in the pressing concerns of social context. The theo-ethical work that follows "comes from a pre-theological commitment to change and improve the world."[1] With this "frame of reference" reflection is "not the first but second act." The first act is "a commitment to actions and involvement in the total eradication of oppression."[2] This project is driven by the desire to understand how I am called by my biblical faith to respond to my particular situation, living in the heart of global empire in the 21st century. From my location in Rochester NY, a post-industrial mid-American city suffering the effects of industrial flight, poverty and violence, I see increasingly complex, entrenched, ever morphing, and terrifyingly sociopathic power structures. I also see individuals and small communities bringing intelligent love to their local surroundings. Community builders are nurturing connections with others of similar vision across town and across continents. If I squint, I can almost glimpse these seemingly fragile efforts coalescing into an infinitely-centered global community of communities – a global network of healing. Some call it beloved community. Some call it new creation.

I am intensely concerned about our path of greed and the collective devastation that flows from it. I live pinned between imperial forces of domination and a globalized lifestyle that puts me in relationship with myriad struggling peoples around the world before I finish my morning coffee.[3] This dissertation is shaped by this social predicament – one I share with millions of others in my country and around the globe. We despise the very same parasitic structures to which our daily lives

are inextricably tied. This dissertation is my attempt to theologically and ethically ground myself in the scriptures and work my way through this dilemma.

In addition to being a scholar, I am a pastor and community organizer. So, despite the academic context, the reader may catch my passion slipping through. Perhaps this comes from living in the burned over district and the home of the social gospel. Whatever the source, I can't contain it entirely. My deepest and most fervent desire is the freedom and thriving of all people and all creation. This project is driven by my commitment to embodying the divine promise that the shackles are falling away and the world is coming alive.

Middle Agents, Power, and Hospitality: Defining Key Terms

To reference my particular location in globalizing hegemonic structures, I use the term *middle agents*. In our twenty-first century world, two percent of the global population owns over half of earth's wealth.[4] Eighty percent earns less than ten dollars a day.[5] This leaves eighteen percent, who are neither the architects of empires nor the disposable fodder of those empires. I am referring to this neither/nor group as middle agents – middle because we are buffers between the oligarchs and the masses, agents because (actively or passively) we serve a specific role (a role of agency) in supporting and legitimating the deployment of power and earthly resources by the two percent. Through our belief structures, our allegiances, our ways of making a living, our cultural production, we serve as agents who share in generating and sustaining social and economic structures that serve a minority.

The gospel presses us to see and joyfully proclaim God's liberating activity on behalf of the hungry, naked, and bound. Middle agents are challenged by this demand along two specific planes: 1) The first is cosmological. Because broken imperial structures basically work for us, we are hesitant to embrace their temporal fragility relative to a sovereign God who breaks into reality on behalf of

the suffering majority. We panic when we see our rotted structures slipping away, pouring effort into shoring them up. 2) The second is historical[6] (or in theological terms, incarnational). We have been born into a social situation where the pain of global life is assigned to others and the benefits are assigned to us. We like to outsource redemptive suffering to others. We hesitate to fully embrace the truth that we are living off the backs of others, and we hesitate to struggle for a world where the sacrifices and the benefits of society are distributed justly among all people. While the gospel is good news for the poor, it is uncomfortable for middle agents. To avoid the discomfort, we reduce Christ's message to one of personal salvation, easily obtained through saying a few magic words, dismissing the radical social change he calls us to embrace, embody, and proclaim.

This dissertation seeks to dig into biblical, theological and ethical resources for the purpose of shaping a liberating narrative of power for middle agents. What do I mean by power? I am using the term *power* to describe a deep and pervasive sense of movement in the world – which is found in macro dynamics of social change that engage millions of human beings, and in the smallest action of an amoeba.[7] For our purposes, power is the "oomph" that moves creation forward – that energizes, enlivens – that moves creatures to create. We are swimming in power all the time. Michel Foucault expresses this immersive quality of power when he says:

> Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization . . . individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.[8]

Foucault comes to this understanding through his meticulous study of the operation of power in institutions – carefully documenting how circulating power is directed and deployed through increasingly complex and hegemonic "instruments." These instruments develop an intricacy and magnitude that engulfs us – evoking images of Nazi bureaucracy or 21st century concepts of universal surveillance. Yet, in his unflinching presentation of the horrors we collectively shape,[9] Foucault continues to remind us that power is something more than these instruments, never fully

contained in them.[10] Jacques Derrida speaks of this uncontainable quality as "gift."[11] He finds an "asymmetry" – a tipped-ness – to the world. There is a generosity that precedes everything we make, do, or offer. In Christian terms, our lives are rooted in and a response to grace – something we receive that we can never fully meet or match.

Arendt, in her technical observations of totalitarian regimes, makes a similar proposition. She sees her philosophical colleagues naming and dissecting the phenomenon of mortality in the political and natural worlds – observing the inexorable way that things break down and die. Yet even in her post-Holocaust environment which is burdened with an overwhelming sense of large-scale patterns of destruction, she notes an equal or greater phenomenon, whereby newness is constantly born into the world. Never before seen creations are constantly being birthed – actual babies and unexpected emergences of all kinds. Each innovation sets off an unpredictable trajectory of happenings – a creative unfolding, rippling through space and time, altering the composition of the world. She names this ever-present generativity natality.[12]

Arendt, Foucault and Derrida are not explicitly asking theological questions, yet their exploratory and descriptive observations about the generative forces of existence point us in a theological direction. What is the source of this natality – this unmatchable gift, this non-localized "something more" that can never be appropriated? As a theological enterprise, this dissertation pushes into such speculative territory – into the realm of the Un-nameable. Exploring the dimensions of a theo-ethical narrative of power, we probe into questions about the Giver and the gift of power, by turning to biblical creation narratives. To assist in this conversation, and in full acknowledgment that all names for the ultimate mystery are provisional, I name the mysterious emergence of "oomph" into the world, the gift that precedes all creaturely giving – Original Power.

From the one-ness of Original Power, the text moves to the dangerously divine gift that Original Power is to the human race. What does it mean for human beings to receive a gift so potent

– so joyfully creative and yet, so devastatingly destructive? What does it mean to be made in the image of God – inextricably linked to our Maker, and at the same time a people who can plant and build up, tear down and destroy[13] – people who bear the responsibility for binding and loosing in heaven what we bind and loose on earth?[14] What does it mean to be people who in our childish relation to this grownup gift have created a global predicament of pain?

As a theo-ethical project, the text follows power from its creational origins, through its bestowal as a gift, through the consequences of a gift so dangerously divine, to the maturing deployment of Original Power through the unfolding body of humanity and creation. What does it mean to embody power as a mature humanity – as Jesus embodies power? Turning to biblical texts for direction, we find the enduring teaching of hospitality. From our Creator's care in speaking a home for us into existence, to the social practices of the ancient Hebrews, through the daily activity of Jesus' ministry, to the Pauline directives of the early church, hospitality is perhaps the most significant and consistent biblical ethical teaching we can find when it comes to managing God's gift of power.

Biblical hospitality, whether between creatures, creatures and the earth, or creatures and God, involves a commitment to mutual well-being, a dance of shared power, and a movement toward shalom. In this work, at the creaturely level, I am defining *hospitality* as a meeting between individuals or communities that includes the negotiation of unconscious and conscious dynamics of power for the purpose of mutual well-being.

Individuals and communities come to an encounter of hospitality with complex identities. We bring a particular history. Our individual or collective existence represents an intersection of multiple community affiliations (including nationality, race, religion, class, gender, orientation, ability, urban/suburban, academic/non-academic, among many others). These historical allegiances and affiliations (chosen, evolved, or bestowed through birth or chance) carry associated deployments of

power. Hospitality, as I am defining it, and rooted in my biblical understanding, begins with recognizing this complexity and its potentially damaging and liberating consequences for relationship. Out of this humbling recognition and a willingness to make oneself vulnerable (that is, a willingness to drop damaging deployments of power that feel and may actually be protective at the expense of the other), individuals and communities engage in the messy activity of consciously exposing and confronting the historical practices of deploying power emerging from these identities, histories, and communities of aggregated power. The purpose of this risky[15] effort is the removal of pre-established patterns of subordination and domination, for the sake of mutual well-being and thriving.

Biblical hospitality, as defined above, must be strongly differentiated from social practices called "hospitality" that, while superficially gracious, function to re-inscribe institutionalized patterns of social inequality. This distorted form of hospitality often involves a distracting display of temporary generosity, allowing suppressed individuals and communities to release a little exhaustion and tension, before returning them to the rigid system of domination. In the Roman Empire, prior to the 4th century, a celebration called Saturnalia served this function.[16] During the festival, poor revelers ate and drank to their hearts content while their masters made a great show of serving them. The festival was meant to evoke a dream-like state, a far off eschatological hope of equality. By acknowledging and temporarily satisfying the frustrations of the people, power-holders strategically forestalled violent or nonviolent rebellion and renewed consent for the immediate political reality of suffering. We find similar strategies today in grandiose gestures of charity, in displays of *noblesse oblige* that reinforce rather than problematize the structures of power, and in trickle-down ideologies and other-worldly theologies that promise "pie in the sky in the by and by."[17] For the purposes of this work, hospitality that is designed to keep oppressive power structures intact is not biblical hospitality. With this caveat, biblical hospitality, in its evolving incarnations through the narrative of

the faith community, provides a rich vein of material for developing a Christian ethic of power which heals both persons and societies.

The preceding points us to the holistic understanding of power that drives this work. In this context, power is singular, prior, emanating from the Un-nameable, always generating creation, always being gifted to humanity, misshapen by an immature humanity into hegemonic institutions, resistant to commodification, circulating, prodding us to new acts of freedom, and ethically shaped by a mature humanity through the practice of hospitality.

Architectural Approach

For my undergraduate work, I studied architecture. Given five years to practice and reflect on the creative architectural process, I came to think that the architectural method offered an equally significant method to the scientific method.

The scientific method looks at the messiness of life and pulls out a carefully circumscribed set of data for experimentation. My physicist friends used to jokingly say: "First, you start with a spherical chicken." The problem is that sometimes we mistake the methodological tools for a worldview – that is, we start to really think that chickens are spheres. We use this deductive method so much that we start thinking that the world is measurable, thus blocking out non-measurable information. It is important to remember that our reduction techniques are useful heuristic devices, not full-bodied descriptions of reality.[18]

The architectural method, as I've come to conceive of it, is both inductive and creative. Rather than reduce, it builds. When working on an architectural project, we begin by broadly gathering information. Early on there is no elimination of data. We invite the complexity into our study. We walk around the site. We notice colors and views. We create collages that express these observations. Perhaps we overlap depictions of the functions of the new building on the space –

draw how people move through the site, diagram the sizes of the relative uses. We might make study models, trying out different shapes and sizes to see what feels right in the space. We might read history and paste up significant people and events related to the project. We sketch things from every angle. We talk to the users of the building. We try to understand their needs and sensibilities. We paste cardboard together, trying idea after idea. We wind up with a big wall of information. From there we feel out patterns and connections, making decisions about what matters. We move from tiny details back to the broad sweep of the big picture and back to tiny details. Through this engagement with existing conditions, user needs, and the overlay of our own ideas, we shape and build something new.

In this large-scale effort to theologically shape a story of divine/human power for middle agent Christians, I take an architectural approach. This means feeling into our context and our text for patterns and shapes. This requires a dance between deconstruction and construction. We are breaking apart fixed interpretations to allow more depth and complexity to flow through. At the same time we are taking our capacities and responsibilities seriously, as we prayerfully build and shape new meaning out of our history and our situation.[19] Sallie McFague puts it this way: "The encompassing agenda would be to deconstruct and reconstruct the central symbols of the Jewish and Christian traditions in favor of life and its fulfillment, keeping the liberation of the oppressed, including the earth and all its creatures, in central focus."[20] So this dissertation couples deconstructive and constructive efforts utilizing an architectural methodology.

Biblical Approach

I have been strongly influenced by my teachers when it comes to scriptural interpretation. With William Herzog I learned to attend to the social and economic reality of Galilean peasants, and to interpret the unfolding of gospel events and Jesus' teachings, especially the parables, through this

lens.[21] With Sylvia Keesmaat I learned to appreciate canonical ways of reading. My eyes opened to intertextualities and Torah echoes and the way they deepen meaning. I also began to understand the larger theological thrust of the whole canon, and learned to place specific texts into the larger currents of biblical narrative and thought.[22]

In my approach to interpretation I integrate various techniques I've learned: 1) canonical context (biblical theology/worldview); 2) social location (Galilean agrarian,[23] reader response); 3) Roman imperial context; and 4) rhetorical structure and flow (see Figure 1).

Each of these dimensions of the text provides rich meaning. By laying out the insights gained in these areas, a field of meaning is created. Contemplating the range of information gathered from the various methods and lenses, areas of consonance and dissonance draw my attention. Sometimes the consonance is clear, for instance when Jesus says something straight out of Torah (e.g. care for the widow, love your neighbor). Sometimes he is contradicting the expected message from Torah (e.g. I don't care if my disciples wash their hands). Often the implicit Torah teaching stands in glaring opposition to the Roman imperial context (e.g. give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's). We need to pick up on this dissonance between text and context to derive meaning. Doing this, we find that this teaching does not provide us a simplistic answer (pay your taxes), but rather forces us as adults to choose our allegiance between competing models of the world (a world where everything belongs to Caesar or everything belongs to God). This multi-contextual approach integrates modern techniques (e.g. historical-critical method) and postmodern techniques (e.g. hidden transcripts, reader-response). Because it is inductive, rather than deductive, new methods can be added, enriching the texture of the interpretation.

Great Tradition, Little Tradition and Hidden Transcripts

Because I want to focus on what matters – I do not want to waste time straining out gnats and swallowing camels[24] – I look to Jesus to see what biblical strands he picks up (e.g. jubilee and debt codes, care for the widow, orphan, and wanderer, liberation) and which ones he lays aside (e.g. monarchal elevation, violent triumphalism, and purity codes). Overall, he sets aside the "great tradition" and draws from what biblical scholars call the "little tradition."[25] The little tradition generally offers a counter-imperial voice coming from the prophets and people living a subsistence life.

The little tradition is communicated in subterranean ways. James Scott, Richard Horsley and others have taught us to notice the hidden transcripts in the text.[26] Hidden transcripts carry the messages of oppressed voices. Across cultures and time, they have found a pattern of veiled speaking by communities who would experience violence if they spoke their truth openly. Hidden transcripts are a sophisticated way that oppressed people speak to one another in the public space. It is a condensed form of speech that simultaneously sends an innocuous message to the power-holders while conveying subversive information to peers in an oppressed community. It is a dual way of communicating messages (using songs, jokes, double-entendres, art, patterns sewn into quilts hanging on laundry lines and any other creative means). For instance, when American slaves sang, "wade in the water, wade in the water children"[27] white missionaries smiled at their pious adoption of Christianity, while slaves waiting to escape were letting their training soak in – when you escape, and the dogs come after you, jump in the water so they lose your scent. One public message provides two vastly different meanings for two different audiences.[28] Watching Jesus enter Jerusalem on the back of ass, in a mock imperial procession is another example. While loyalists to the empire may feel a bit baffled and find the whole thing a silly game – the followers of Jesus are communicating a radical claim about the true holder of divine power. Jesus and Paul use intentional dissonances between Torah, rural poor experience, and the Roman context to generate such dual

messages in public settings.[29] Who is the Son of God? Caesar or this controversial peasant leader of rebellious movement? In a gathering of disciples, or in an early house church, Roman soldiers hear one message while the listening crowd hears another.

On Not Trying to Find a Pristine Jesus Layer

There is a productive strain of scholarship that strives to strip the gospel authors' "framing" and get to the Jesus parables underneath.[30] While this work yields important insights, I am not trying to do this. I am interested in the way the authors frame the Jesus experience. In the case of this work, I am particularly interested in the Lukan frame. In my study of Luke, I've grown convinced that the author of the gospel of Luke is intentionally shaping a narrative for the middle agents of his day.[31] For this reason, Luke's telling is particularly rich for gleaning biblical ethical advice for today's middle agents living in imperial regimes. I also am interested in the Marcan frame, since Mark is closest to the ground, expressing the gospel from the heart of the crowds.[32] Moving between these frames, we can begin to discern how middle agents relate to a gospel that is good news for the poor majority. Overall, I view the authors as knowledgeable interpreters who, through their contact with early Christian communities, add insight and value as they compose their gospels.[33] Committing to a tradition in process, I do not feel the need to perfectly excise the "actual" words and work of Jesus.

The Bottom Line: Does the Interpretation Bear Fruit?[34]

As a disciple of Jesus, I am fundamentally interested in bringing more love into the world.[35] This commitment influences my interpretation of scripture. In shaping my understanding, questions arise, such as: Does my interpretation increase life, beauty, thriving, flourishing, shalom? Does it increase the quality of human life in creation? Does it create healing and joy starting with the most vulnerable? Does this make change? Does it reflect today's wrestling with God and life? Does it

matter? Does it heal lives? Ultimately I am not seeking sparkly intellectual ideas for their own sake (though I do like these), but rather a deeper understanding of God's purpose to help us with ethical engagement with the daily reality of our lives for the sake of personal and collective thriving.

Addressing Fears of Relativism

My approach, as outlined thus far, may raise fears of relativism. While these fears are understandable, the rigidity that results from such fears is not beneficial to either our understanding of the Bible or to the preservation of our faith. Over time, rigid and controlled traditions become increasingly irrelevant and die. Dynamic and negotiated traditions, by responding to changing circumstances, remain relevant and survive.[36] The Torah itself was never thought of as a simplistic set of easily followable rules.[37] It was always a constantly negotiated work in progress.[38] While there is an important role for "priests" who are specialists in and caretakers of a tradition, we are invited to do our "priestly" task with a light touch, always knowing that to pin down the mystery is a futile task. It is at the heart of our faith in the great I AM, that the absolute position can never be gained by mortals. It is taken by the Creator. So we confess that we are in a very real and biblical sense relative. God is God. We are in the image of God. Like images in a mirror in relation to that which they reflect, we exist in relation to our source. Ethically, our intrinsic relativism to God does not doom us to a path of licentiousness or hopelessness. Instead, we can see the uncertainness and mystery of our identity as a calling to a serious process of exploration, interrogation and conversation – a kind of due diligence.[39] In releasing our demands for black and white answers, and allowing the Love that made the universe to draw us in, we just may encounter something deeper and truer than we ever imagined.

Part of this interrogation is shaking loose the way patterns of power have confined the text and tradition.[40] This up-setting of things can cause distress.[41] Yet, in doing so, we release "the pliant

multiplicity of the innumerable traditions that are sheltered within 'tradition'."[42] This constant engagement keeps the "event of tradition going" by "continually translating into new events." Tradition is "bigger, wider, more diffuse and mobile, more self-revising and 'auto-deconstructing'" than rigid forms of conservatism can accept.[43]

So we ask: how is power functioning in this interpretation? who will gain power by it? who will lose power by it? This is our hermeneutic of suspicion.[44] It is the deconstruction that we couple with our construction. We are always breaking down meaning and making new meaning, in the context of millennia of history. Arendt calls this remembering, and says it is a check against recklessness.[45]

> Tradition at its best is able to house or archive historical testimony that would be long forgotten by individual rememberers. Tradition can thus be seen, statically, as a storehouse of communal memory that is bequeathed from one generation to the next, or, more dynamically, as the active donation and reception of historical treasures that are reinterpreted and worked upon by the generation that receives them, just as the generation that bequeaths them once had to do when they engaged in the work of reception. Tradition in either sense stands for a communal and intergenerational work of remembering and interpreting that transcends the ability of anyone individual in that community to remember or interpret on his own.[46]

For me, interrogating the scripture and tradition, questioning, considering present circumstances and finding and making meaning is what it means to take scripture seriously. The Bible is not a relic or an artifact that we rub for luck. I have often seen it treated this way. Someone throws a scrap of text into a conversation like a good luck charm, but refuses to fully engage it in a meaningful and honest way. I've witnessed extraordinarily intelligent people refuse to express an honest doubt about a passage, for fear their salvation would be put in jeopardy. From my view, to refuse to engage the Scripture truthfully – to withhold doubts, questions, disagreements, the full measure of our capacity for critical thinking, the full range of our experience with God's present nature – is to fail to accord the text the respect it deserves.

We are blessed with a rich tradition, given to us by our forebears, sharing honestly about their encounters (and all-too-human wrestlings) with the living God. This wonderful, strange, and

sometimes disturbing testimony remains relevant for our lives, if we roll up our sleeves and honestly engage it. If we fearfully put on the kid gloves and pull out archaic cultural rules, the text will remain an irrelevant relic. In this dissertation, I am interested in diving in and seeing if we can recognize the One who is the Alpha and Omega, the One who dealt with our ancestors and is dealing with us today.

A Liberationist Narrative of Power

This liberationist narrative of power seeks to address three interlocking concerns: survival, resistance and transformation. Liberationist work has generally started in communities whose physical and cultural survival is threatened. For this reason, a primary dimension of liberationist narratives is focused on not being eradicated from the earth by violence or poverty. A second dimension of liberationist narratives is resistance. As suffering communities contemplate the threats to their own survival, they begin to think critically about the environment around them. They see the behavior and beliefs of hegemonic communities that cause their suffering and destruction and begin to covertly and overtly oppose them. A third dimension of liberationist narratives is transformation. As communities continue to think critically and assess their environment, they begin to see the interconnectedness of all being, the ultimate futility of banishing parts of humanity and earth and labeling them evil and unredeemable – and begin to shape an understanding of the world as a shared predicament, with an ultimate goal of freeing the whole of humanity and of creation into a state of shared thriving.[47]

I believe it would be a mistake to view these as a progression – as in, I am more advanced because I am committed to transformation, and you are stuck in resistance. Nor do I see these as a kind of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where base needs must be fulfilled before higher levels can be sought. Take the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Often we see Dr. King as the

bearer of a narrative of transformation, and Malcolm X as the bearer of a narrative of resistance. Yet, in actuality both recognized the absolute necessity for their narratives to address all three dimensions simultaneously. Both literally gave their lives for the survival of African-American people. As their time on earth came to a close, they drew closer together in thought, with King seeing the profound necessity for militant (non-violent) resistance as expressed in Black Power and Black Nationalist movements in the face of the overwhelming structures of racism, and Malcolm X increasingly recognizing that segregating into a Black nation without concern for the whole body of humanity was an insufficient solution to the suffering.[48] Or take the example of Jesus, who gave his life for the survival of rural agrarian people in Galilee, who were being pushed off their land by the regionalizing economy and the insatiable greed of the Roman Empire. At the same time, Jesus shared a gospel – good news – a narrative about the nature of power in this world – that directly resisted first century Temple and Roman narratives, and offered a profoundly inclusive and transformative vision of the world at large.

Well-meaning middle agents can be quick to dismiss the dimensions of survival and resistance and want to jump right into transformation. Middle agent physical and cultural survival tends not to be threatened, so we don't feel the pressing urgency of the struggle. Resistance is complicated, because often we have consciously or unconsciously identified our lives with the very narratives – the beliefs and commitments – that are destroying suffering communities. We don't want to harm the world, but neither do we want to change our lives. We may feel ambivalent about hegemonic narratives – unsure whether or not they bring thriving, because of the privileges we receive through them. If our lives are deeply intertwined with hegemonic commitments – our livelihood dependent upon them – we may perceive that they are the source of our well-being. Being integrated into the very thing we are resisting can cause us to experience our own and others' resistance as a threat.

Feeling uncomfortable, we often prefer to jump to the part where we all hold hands around the globe – where the wolf and lamb lie down together. The problem is that authentic liberation is a struggle. The institutional mechanisms of greed, racism, fear, suppression and exploitation of the earth – our own Frankenstein-like mechanisms of deploying power – will destroy us if we do not consciously resist them. Our critical minds must be engaged as Malcolm X taught, deconstructing the story of inevitability, even as we creatively build new life-giving stories and structures with Dr. King. This effort will take every ounce of determination and capacity we have. Middle agents are famous in suffering communities for rushing in half-cocked, feeling powerful, ready to fix the world, and then collapsing, giving up, and fading away when the immensity of the challenge is realized.[49] For a community whose survival is threatened, there is no retreat afforded. Middle agents have the luxury of disappearing into a false world – fabricated for us by the elite and their media conglomerates – a Truman-show-esque[50] social space of superficial comfort.[51] I call this the epistemological bubble.[52] Those of us with the option to escape are faced with the decision moment by moment, day by day, whether we are committed to staying in the struggle of liberation.[53]

Engaging our context and our biblical text, this dissertation seeks to shape a narrative of power for middle agents in a 21st century globalizing world. As a liberationist narrative it attempts to hold these three simultaneous and interlocking dimensions together – survival, resistance and transformation.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation rests on three disciplinary legs. The first leg is scripture. Here I draw on the field of Bible and empire (e.g. Carter, Crossan, Herzog, Horsley, Howard-Brook, Myers, Portier-Young, and Wink), creation-loving biblical scholars (e.g. Brueggemann, Davis, Keesmaat, Keller, McFague, and Wirzba), and scholarly work on what it means as people of faith to live in a biblically-

shaped world (e.g. Keesmaat, Middleton, and Wright). In biblical studies, and especially in conversations about structural power, these areas (empire, creation, and living in a biblically-shaped world) are intertwined by scholars. Also, many of these scholars, as people of faith concerned with present application, integrate exegesis, theology and ethics.

The second discipline is liberationist contextual theology (e.g. Cone, Gebara, Isasi-Diaz, King, Russell, and Segundo). Flow moves from context to biblical text to context. Letty Russell describes this as "a spiral method of action and reflection."[54]

> This style of theologizing in a continuing spiral of engagement and reflection begins with a *commitment* to the task of raising up signs of God's new household with those who are struggling for justice and full humanity. It continues by *sharing experiences* of commitment and struggle in a concrete context of engagement. Third, the theological spiral leads to a *critical analysis* of the context of the experiences, seeking to understand the social and historical factors that affect the community of struggle. Out of this commitment to action in solidarity with the marginalized, and out of sharing of experiences and social analysis, arise *questions about biblical and church tradition* that help us gain new insight into the meaning of the gospel as good news for the oppressed and marginalized. This new understanding of tradition flows from and leads to *action, celebration, and further reflection* in the continuing theological spiral."[55]

In this dissertation, the context shapes questions we pose to the text. The text, in turn, directs our attention to particular aspects of our contextual situation. Insight flows between the two – allowing us to find patterns and make connections, spiraling our attention more deeply into particular areas of ethical inquiry[56] and weaving current experience to the scriptural history and tradition of Judeo-Christian faith communities.[57]

Letty Russell, in her 1974 work[58] and her following books, draws upon the techniques of liberation theologians of Latin America and elsewhere, and applies their methods to the situation of women in Christian theology and the church. In her application of liberation theology, I note three methodological strategies. First, she recognizes that a societal shift to liberation for women cannot be achieved by iterating from current historical realities of power. She knew that her work must be based on something stronger (and ultimately cosmological) that can break the trance of present inequities. To solve this, she bases her theology and biblical interpretation in eschatology (new

creation).[59] For her, Christian norms that guide our lives must be seen through the lens of the "total liberation" that God promises. Our theology and ethics emerge from "memories of the future" found in the scripture.[60] Second, she lifts up women's voices in ways that shape the questions that are brought to the text, and that enhance and vary the interpretations that are derived from the text.[61] Third, she emphasizes deeper reading of the historical context of the text, including women's experiences.

All three liberationist strategies are present in this dissertation. First, significant attention is given to the cosmological framing of our theology of power. We consider where power came from and where it is going, our origins and our eschatology. I am in agreement with Russell that a strong inbreaking cosmology is essential to penetrate what I (drawing from Arendt) term "the hypnotic quality of internal coherence"[62] that governs present power relations.

Second, I, like all liberation theologians, am working toward the elevation of suppressed voices. In contrast to Russell and many others, I am not focusing on a particular group that is suppressed.[63] Rather, I press toward Russell's vision of total liberation, by studying the complexity and shared predicament of the Domination System.[64] Also, I seek to comprehend the multi-dimensional identities of individuals (and communities), our intersubjectivity, and layers of disproportionate power.[65] We can simultaneously be oppressors and oppressed. With this analysis, supported by work with social theorists, I propose an ethic of biblical hospitality as a technique for surfacing unconscious layers of oppressive power, leveling the field, and negotiating a path toward power sharing and mutual well-being. Thus, I am building on the work of Russell and others who have emphasized particular underrepresented demographic groups, and taking the issues of negotiation of power, removal of oppression, liberation of suppressed voice, and healing to a different level. This is, if anything, an extension of Russell's fundamental thinking, which presses us

to always lift our eyes from the narrow scope of political divisions to the broader work of God in our shared life together.

Regarding her third strategy, working with the historical context of the scripture, I have a tremendous advantage. Recent work on the imperial context of the scriptures, hidden transcripts, and intertextuality have unlocked a wealth of subversive and liberative information in the Hebrew scriptures, Gospels, Pauline letters, and Revelation that comes to bear in this study of power.

The third disciplinary leg of this project is continental social theory. I've chosen social theorists, primarily Derrida, Arendt and Foucault, who doggedly work to articulate the dynamics of power. For their part, they provide heuristic focus, language, and conceptual structure.

Power is a slippery subject, especially among middle agents and elites, whose lives are built on imperial social structures that cause suffering to marginalized majorities, and who, to avoid discomfort, generate collective modes of evasion to veil the effects of the operation of power in their lives. These habits of masking our knowing distort biblical interpretation, theology-making, and ethical formulations. Liberation theology that emerges from marginalized majorities has the epistemological advantage of being less immersed in elite propaganda.[66] Among well-meaning middle agents, whose sense of power has been systematically dulled, the discussion of power can be over-simplified into dualistic conceptions of helpers and victims, a model that merely re-inscribes power inequities.

In order to enliven our reflection on biblical power, we think with theorists who've dedicated their lives to complexifying our understanding of the operation of power in personal and societal relationships. In addition to thorough documentation of facts on the ground (Arendt via the trial of Eichmann, or Foucault via his study of institutions), these theorists hone large bodies of intricate thought into crystalline structures that give us entry into major components of our discussion. Arendt evokes the massive and pervasive bureaucratic oppression, which she and

Foucault both witness, in her concept of "banality of evil." Derrida captures the overflowing more-ness of power that he discovers in his "economy of gift." Arendt, in her study, hits on "natality." In our pursuit of a biblical theology of power, I draw on their attentive work and constructive theory, appropriating and adapting, in dialogue with biblical scholars and liberation theologians.[67]

The primary objective of this dissertation is to sketch a theo-ethical narrative of power which follows the plot of the biblical narrative. The story starts in creation, moves through the fall (herein understood as the first act of commodification which sets off a decline into the Domination System), and closes with redemption, which includes hospitality (the means) and eschatology (the ends). The narrative is wrapped in the cosmological – opening with creation and closing with eschatology. The center of the narrative is the historical (or incarnational). The gift of power takes shape in the body of humanity and creation, through a process that includes idolatry, violence, empire, struggle, learning, maturing, hospitality, healing, and social transformation.

The dissertation is shaped chiastically.[68]

(A1) Let There Be Power (Creation)

(B1) From Innocence to Hegemony

(C1) The Predicament of Middle Agents

(D) The Chasm

(C2) The Salvation of Middle Agents

(B2) From Hegemony to Hospitality

(A2) Maturing into a World of Shared Power (Eschatology)

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 (Let There Be Power) starts in the primordial depths of chaos – the wild waters of love. Out of this limitless fluidity comes an intention – a creative spark that sets off the dynamic

proliferation and creativity that is the essence of earthly existence. I call this divine offering of aliveness and movement into the world, Original Power. We explore Original Power as "Derridian" gift. Drawing on the process theology of Catherine Keller and constructive theology of Sallie McFague, we engage God as homemaker and artist shaping a world for human beings who share power with God. This chapter develops a creation theology that grounds and unifies our understanding of power. Midway, we pause to compare our approach to several established creation theologies that divide power or minimize creation's dynamism and explore how these theological moves serve hegemonic interests. Having opened with the creative power inherent in God's creation, we close with "a love song to the law" expressing appreciation for the boundaries falling in pleasant places,[69] and the mystery of a biblical God who is at once incomprehensibly transcendent and a tender companion. We notice that God doggedly walks with humanity, teaches us, and will not let us go as we struggle to grow in our ability to constructively embody the dangerous gift of divine power.

Chapter 2 (From Innocence to Hegemony) starts in the nature of humanity, created as innocent and made in the image of God. We look at the intersubjective nature of human identity as expressed in the first earth creatures. From here, we experience the first imperial impulse – in Hebrew, seeing (*ra'ah*) and taking (*laqach*). This primal human act of turning gift into commodity (or idol) lies at the root of our pain. The story unfolds as we deploy the gift of Original Power in a proliferating complexity of instruments for personal control and material gain. Imperial structures are generated by the creative capacity of human beings directed by immaturity and greed. Our deployments of power become so enormous and complex that we experience them as natural, transpersonal and demonic.

Chapter 3 (The Predicament of Middle Agents) brings us to the middle agent struggle. We ask: what is the unique location and situation of middle agents in imperial structures? We begin by

breaking the category of middle agents into sub-categories of active, passive, and insider collaborators. The insider collaborator category is further analyzed according to social power and capacity for agency. Of the gospel writers, Luke is most acutely interested in this question, parading middle agent examples in front of us to help us see how we are stuck. We examine two key Lukan examples of the middle agent predicament: "The Shrewd Manager"[70] and "The Recalcitrant Investor."[71] Luke expresses the understanding that middle agents live in an epistemological bubble that is not easily penetrated. So, with Luke, we explore the qualities of our bubble. We see how our co-creative efforts can become distorted and misshapen, how deceptive language is used to keep us from coming out of our bubble, how the curated coherence of our middle agent arena can be hypnotizing, how guilt, blame and shame serve to immobilize us, and how we acutely experience humanity's pain when we open our knowing. This chapter moves back and forth between present context and the Lukan world as we, in Leonard Cohen's words, begin to "see how [we] are pinned."[72]

Chapter 4 (The Chasm) stands in the center of the chiasm. We open with the un/comfortable man[73] gazing across at Lazarus, who was once homeless at his gate and now rests in the arms of Abraham.[74] Between them is a chasm, which I argue (given the larger frame and purposes of Luke) is caused by the un/comfortable man's allegiance to imperial structures which divide, an allegiance that he cannot shake even in death. Probing this dilemma of middle agent allegiance and its consequences, we dig into the question of where life-giving power is located in our world. Who do we believe holds the power to sustain our lives? Which master will we serve? For help, we turn to the rapid-fire on-the-ground world of Mark, where two banquets appear side by side.[75] The first banquet happens in the hallowed halls of Herod. The second happens on a grassy shoreline, where thousands of families, many poor and suffering, chase after Jesus seeking life. The contrast puts the question of the location of power in stark relief. We then move to contrasting "banquets" in our

present world, starting with the World Economic Forum, an annual gathering where the global elite meet. Our counter-banquet is an evolving set of revolutions of non-violent social change, manifest most recently as the World Social Forum, the Arab Spring and Occupy movements. In closing, we return to the chasm – to the difficult question of relinquishing loyalty to systems of separation and privilege. What does it mean to repent – to change course? Recognizing the particular fears and losses that come to middle agents as we peer into our chasms, we pause with Henri Nouwen on the brink of "downward mobility."

Chapter 5 (The Salvation of Middle Agents) opens with Luke's insistence that the comfortable are not saving the poor, the poor are saving the comfortable. Examples include the persistent widow banging on the door of the judge[76] and the friend calling upon the man locked in his house at midnight seeking help to host a stranger.[77] Rejecting the aliveness of Original Power in creation, middle agents tend to experience this salvific disruption as violent. We examine our aversion to this disruption of our epistemological bubble. Then, we explore three effective forms of disruption found both in the Lukan portrayal of the Jesus Movement and in current non-violent movements. I label these fact collection, performance art, and authenticity. Continuing in Luke, we explore a range of ways that middle agents evade, resist and fail in the course of their salvation. In this journey we encounter a few unusual souls who hear the knock of the poor, face the overwhelming need and demand, and, slipping their burdened camel bodies through the eye of the needle, sacrificially change their allegiance and their lives – most notably, Zacchaeus.[78]

Chapter 6 (From Hegemony to Hospitality) names biblical hospitality as a canon-wide ethical rubric for negotiating the gift of divine power. This chapter posits that the practice of hospitality can serve to liberate individuals, relationships, communities, and systems; and that it particularly serves individuals and communities that are trapped in demonic crushing collective realities, such as racism and imperialism. Biblical hospitality guides practitioners in the negotiation of power for the sake of

realignment of destructive patterns, mutual liberation and opening to the flow of Original Power, leading to thriving. We enter into the protocol and dynamics of biblical hospitality via the interchange between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman.[79] In our study of this passage, we explore the complexity of identity of each participant, including a range of community affiliations that each party holds and the social advantages and disadvantages that these affiliations add to this encounter. We examine the verbal spar that ensues, witnessing an unsettling and disruptive, yet life-giving, negotiation of power disparities, whereby multiple chasms are crossed and a level field is created. We see how this disruptive interchange allows healing to enter not only individual lives, but also the social systems to which they are connected. At the same time, we recognize that interchanges of hospitality – where all parties are vulnerable and willing to be changed – are risky undertakings. We are advised to enter encounters aware of the possibilities for healing and for harm. As the chapter closes, we reiterate the role of hospitality in allowing mature human beings to participate in the shaping the living boundaries of self, communities, and creation; and propose an ethic of generating positive net effects from boundaried creational entities (persons, communities, nations etc.).

Chapter 7 (Maturing into a World of Shared Power) returns our theo-ethical narrative of power to the cosmological framing of our existence. Opening with creation, we close with eschatology. We name destructive formulations of eschatology that support hegemonic interests. In contrast we turn to womanist and feminist theologians who offer a range of perspectives on "liberating eschatology." Then we enter into the question of apocalypse. Here we find an ambitious theological art form that relativizes enormous imperial persecution to an even more enormous divine reality. God enters the historical frame and breaks the back of empire. We find contextually-rooted narrative – subversive theological meaning-making – by communities who are being crushed. Seeking a middle agent route into apocalyptic thinking, we return to the Lukan Jesus and see what happens to the tradition in his

hermeneutical hands. Hearing Jesus describe the fall of the temple, we understand the day of judgment as the disruption of oppressive patterns and the clearing away of unfruitful deployments of power. In the ruins of fallen imperial structures, we find God's new creation ever being born. Eschatological communities serve as the site for this divine emergence. Out of the hyper-local we begin to glimpse larger patterns – communities of communities, movements of movements – a rich, vital, and global web of eschatological communities. We close with God's dream for the world – a mature embodied world of shared power, a state of shalom where there is no more predator and prey,[80] a banquet among all the nations,[81] a golden city of angels and saints enlivened with the wild waters of love and healed by the leaves of the tree of life,[82] all in all.[83] This is not a static end point. This is a creative, dynamic, complexifying, and embodied eschatology.

Contribution to the Academy

There are two key purposes for this dissertation, which serve as its contribution to the academy. *The first purpose is to sketch out a macro biblical, theological, and ethical story of power that is coherent and unified.* A significant segment of Christian theology and ethics rests upon a dualistic understanding of power to account for the lived experience of evil – fracturing our understanding of power into at least two categories "God power" and "bad power." Understandably, witnessing suffering has led many theologians to conclude that an independent power exists that opposes God – sometimes named chaos, the devil, or Satan. The biblical unity of God in the first stages of creation and later, for instance, as God "directs empires,"[84] challenges us to develop a non-dualistic story of "God power" that accounts for both personal pain and "catastrophes"[85] inflicted by what Walter Wink calls the Domination System.[86] Can we develop an understanding of power rooted in the oneness of our Creator that includes truthfulness about the suffering in our experience? In an effort to respond to this question, the text sweeps from creation, through fall and empires, to Jesus'

ministry, to ethics and eschatology. This broad view allows us to sketch a picture of power that links foundational theological commitments with the ethics of middle class North American Christians today. In this effort, much is, by necessity, left out.

Now one might be justified in asking whether I am engaged in metaphysics or ontology with their worrisome tendencies to reduction and coercion. I am not proposing a fixed framework that is static, absolute, or universal. Rather, I am surfacing a conversation about large scale models we carry culturally and individually for explaining how power comes into the world and functions in our relationships and systems.

There is an analogy for this macro shaping of narrative in the architectural process. In an architectural project, after a wide array of data is gathered, one experiments with "massing" models shaped out of chipboard and glue – a 3D equivalent of sketching. This is a way to propose big architectural elements and explore how these elements might relate with each other. I see this dissertation that way. It is about relating the macro elements of power in our biblical narrative.

There are certainly many pitfalls when working at this scale. One is making it too rigid. Another is getting lost in the details. Massing models intentionally avoid specifying windows, doors, and materials, to discourage conversation at the wrong level. The point is to keep our mind on the right scale. So too we have a problem theologically if we remain in the details and refuse to articulate the big stories about power that are operating unconsciously in our culture and our lives.

In seeming contradiction, the architect will, in the midst of this macro study, choose a salient detail and develop it (e.g. a cross-section of window where steel and glass meet, or the point in a lobby ceiling where three planes intersect, or a door handle that mirrors the themes of the whole project). The working out of all the details will take a team months or years. At this stage, the architect wants to check for coherence – to see that the macro is on course – and has not moved too far afield. I have a similar approach. Within the broad canonical plot, we unpack the gospel of Luke

more carefully. So too I choose a few salient scriptures to detail broader themes. For instance, the story of Jesus and Syrophoenician woman provides the opportunity to specify larger patterns of biblical hospitality.

As with chipboard massing models, the result is not a neatly packaged solution. It is an initial offering, with much left undeveloped, offered for the purpose of collaborative conversation. It gets a creative process rolling. I invite you to enter this conversation and to consider whether the big elements I am proposing (Original Power, the demonic structures entrapping us, the Lukan predicament of middle agents, the struggle between elite strongholds and movements of people power, the Lukan proposal that the persistent poor are inviting middle agents and elites to salvation, hospitality as a biblical ethic for negotiating power, and a dynamic, embodied eschatology of mutual liberation and shared power) work. Are they the right elements? Is there coherence to their relationships? Does the flow work? Do they represent the thrust of biblical teaching, especially the currents that Jesus chooses? I hope for playful conversations about the macro scale, including rearranging parts, dumping parts, adding parts – as well as exploration of endless opportunities for development, testing, refining and working out details. What I hope we gain though this writing is a "theo-ethical framework of power in progress" that serves communities of biblical scholars, theologians and practitioners, and generates interest and response.

The second purpose of this dissertation is to focus this liberationist theo-ethical narrative of power on the social location of middle agents. Liberationist theology and ethics have rightly focused on the social location of the majority who are dehumanized, harmed, and rendered non-existent by hegemonic hermeneutics, ideologies, policies, ecclesiastical structures, and political and social orders. This text seeks to adopt the theological commitments established by liberation theologians, while exploring the particular predicament of middle agents and the different ethical shape liberationist commitments take in the middle agent situation. In other words, the text seeks to engage the particular dilemmas, struggles,

questions, and ethical demands upon those who, if even in an ambivalent or unconscious way, are integral to the perpetuation of hegemonic structures and benefit from this participation.

The narrative of power developed in this dissertation results from a conversation between three primary disciplines – biblical studies, liberation theology, and continental social theory. These three disciplines interact, supporting and interrogating each other, providing depth and strength to what is, I confess, a large-scale proposal – one that, I hope, will lead to vigorous engagement and dialogue.

CHAPTER 1

LET THERE BE POWER

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young at your altars[.]
(Psalm 84:1-3a)

In the introductory chapter, we explored how the Judeo-Christian understanding of God is simultaneously cosmological and historical (or incarnational).[1] The biblical text reveals a transcendental mystery that, at the same time, breaks into history and personally companions humanity. Our narrative of power opens in the cosmological.[2] We start by immersing ourselves in the story of our origins as told in the book of Genesis. Taking in the story at large, we focus particularly on the nature and dynamics of power. We begin in the poetry of the primordial, not to root out "the causal mechanisms for creation," but rather to explore "the question of ultimate meaning and purpose."[3] Partway through our depiction of the scriptural origins of power, we pause to name distorted creation narratives that are used to lead humanity to hegemony and violence. Through a process of deconstruction and construction,[4] this chapter seeks to weave our daily factual reality, with its disproportionate and broken relationships of power (on personal, communal, and global scales), into the larger unfolding cosmic drama of our sacred universe, created, sustained, and redeemed by God.[5]

Wild Waters of Love

The story of existence has a beginning before the beginning. Scripture takes us back, back, back – before Wisdom dances with delight at the human race,[6] before the planet earth, before the heavens, before everything we know. Contemplating our origins, we are invited to imaginatively reverse the film of world history – until everything created is uncreated. And what do we find? As the earliest layers of created existence are undone, we enter into a dark watery realm, an overwhelming oceanic formlessness. A vast mysterious darkness. Watery, like a womb ready for the act of conception. Void, like an empty stage. Waiting for the first act, with only this little bit of foreshadowing. A pre-existent presence, a conscious beingness is shifting into motion. Ripples travel through the stillness. Wind acts as messenger – sweeps across the vastness, whispering the news. Something is coming. God has plans.

> In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,
> while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.[7]

Swimming in the Deep

Theodor Schwenk, in *Sensitive Chaos*, describes the way that water mediates between self, Earth and cosmos.[8] He tells the tale of smelt who live in the open ocean. Each year, in May, they make their way to the California coast. They gather and pause a distance from the shore – waiting for the third day after the full moon when the tide reaches its peak. At the perfect moment, they surf the last highest wave into the beach. Here they lay and fertilize their eggs before being carried back out to sea. The perfection of this timing means the receding tide will not carry away their eggs for another fourteen days, the exact time needed to hatch. Once hatched the returning tide carries the little smelt back out to open ocean. Somehow they return the following May, the third day after the full moon, and complete the cycle.[9]

Our bodies and our world are made of water. Water springing into the desert is our image of salvation.[10] And yet these same waters overwhelm and scare us, threatening to undo creation.[11] We

live in an age, like other ages, where tsunamis devastate whole peoples, wiping away entire cities with all the intricate machinery of human life floating away like sticks in a creek. It is no wonder that we mortals harbor mixed feelings about water – this utterly uncontrollable deep that both holds us and swallows us – our inescapable substance and source.

God's primordial waters live and move and breathe in creation, stirring things up and ending oppressive patterns of power.

> When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; the very deep trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea, your path, through the mighty waters; yet your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.[12]

The Red Sea parts and a little band of slaves run on dry land. The Hebrew children miraculously escape. Pharaoh's military might, hot on their trail, gets mired and drowns.[13] In world-altering social movements, the deeps do rise. Justice flows like mighty waters, righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.[14] We hear the words of U.S. slaves singing the old spiritual: Wade in the water. Wade in the water, children. Wade in the water. God's gonna trouble the water.[15]

Ezekiel describes primordial waters moving through the temple like a great spring.[16] He is led eastward from the temple. First the water is ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then up to the waist, and then a river too wide to cross. This same water that drowns the Egyptian captors also nourishes all living things. It fills the sea with fish and feeds the trees. "Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail . . . because water for them flows from the sanctuary."[17]

Jesus is baptized in the primordial waters.[18] He chooses fishermen for followers.[19] He pulls abundance from the sea.[20] He crosses stormy seas to move between the boundaries of Jew and Gentile regions.[21] He troubles the waters for the man who wished to walk.[22] He offers living water to the woman at the well.[23] He is our guide when it comes to negotiating these wild waters, breaking into our created order, pressing for healing and justice. He says a word and the seas obey.[24]

We are more like Peter – desiring such powers, but uncertain on our feet. So Jesus takes our hand. We wade in the waters of baptism, and we become a fountain.[25] Rivers flow from our hearts to satisfy the thirsty, make rivers in the desert of greed and militarism, enrich the earth so it will make good food, and heal all whom the living waters touch.

As the canon closes, the primordial waters that ran through the garden, fled for the Hebrews[26], sprang up in the desert, and flowed from Ezekiel's temple find their rightful place nourishing our living creation:

> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. The tree of life grows on both sides, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.[27]

We have names for this primordial deep. Sometimes we call it chaos – a word invested with existential human fear – fears of losing our boundaries, fears of non-existence. Yet scripture continually reminds us that God has no trouble with these wild waters. They are indeed a dimension of God – an aspect of the original oneness. God encompasses these deeps and teaches us to live with them.[28] For us, chaos is the threat of non-existence. For God, what we call chaos (or Leviathan[29]) is integrated into God's creative manifesting – for the purpose of play.[30]

> Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.[31]

What are we to do with our fears of this vast deep – this uncontrollable whirlwind that surrounds us like a swaddling band? [32] Catherine Keller, an adventurer in primordial realms, leads us to embrace this *tehom*.[33] With Ambrose, she counsels us to "be the fish, so the waves do not overwhelm" us.[34] As the fish, we allow the oceanic deep with its overwhelming power – its chaos and struggle – to be our element. We allow this aspect of reality to press into our daily experiences. In this exercise – this fishy shift in perspective – we may discover with Keller an "an infinity of unformed and unfathomable potentiality," an ever-present "womby chaos" from which our personal being (and our universe) is being born.[35]

Keller offers "tehomophilia" as a life orientation, "embracing the depths of life in which are mingled the depths of divinity itself."[36] She contrasts this orientation to "tehomophobia," an existential fear of the feminine deep.[37] If we take Keller seriously, it changes the daily moments of our lives. Baptism becomes a model for our inner journey. As the mystery presses into the mundane, we may suddenly (or slowly) find ourselves called to radical surrender. Here we (re)experience full immersion, allowing ourselves to die to all that we know. In our tehomophilia, in our profound trust in the love that holds us, we are born again and again.[38] The *tehom* and the living waters of Christ become one. Is this what a mature relationship[39] between the embodied creature and the infinitely vast Creator of the universe feels like?

Three Kinds of Chaos

To claim the vital life-generating nature of *tehom* is not to minimize its uncontrollable wildness or to dismiss the massive and damaging impact of chaos in the hands of humanity. For the sake of making this distinction, I divide chaos in three major categories: holy chaos, natural chaos, and imperial chaos.[40] So far, we've been talking about *holy chaos*, the boundless love of God to which we surrender.[41] Holy chaos is the "always more" of God. It is the well from which newness arises. It is Derridian gift that embraces and floods our narrow structures of exchange. It is the uncontrollable undomesticatable (however much we may try) essence of our Source. It is the mystery at the heart of every human soul, and in the natural world, that moves us to reverent wordlessness. It is the trickster that playfully foils our egoic strategies, and breaks apart imperial schemes.[42] It is the life flowing through the heart of all matter, causing inert material to breathe and dance. It is elusive, refusing to be caught in temples and idols – "nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained."[43] It lives in the messy complexity of human life, on the ground, in every corner of the earth. Holy chaos is trustworthy – the wild waters of love, flowing slowly and surely into our world, until the whole creation is alive with the divine.

A second category is *natural chaos*. I use this term to refer to earth events such as floods and earthquakes, events that can lead to massive pain and suffering. I also refer to the resistance of the natural world to our efforts at conquest. Earth is a complex created being filled with mystery. She is not an object to be commodified and exploited. She is a partner and mother on whom we depend, who tolerates us, so far, yet does not need us in the way we need her. The relationship between humanity and the earth is an intersubjective one, involving an unconquerable "otherness" that cannot be eradicated.[44] It is a relationship with the potential of mutual thriving and joy, and the potential of mutual violence.[45] We live in a culture that caricatures the natural world. When I visited Yellowstone Park I learned that recently a father had placed his infant son on the back of buffalo to get the perfect picture and the buffalo bucked and tragically killed the child. In another example, I heard from a friend that his son was disappointed when they adopted a dog and his child realized that the dog could not talk like in the movies he'd seen. In our relationship with the natural world, even a domesticated dog, we find an otherness that does not conform to our expectations, that invites our reverence (and fear), awe, and respect. So, we start by acknowledging the living, breathing, sacred dignity of the natural world, and then in a careful dance of hospitality negotiate relationship. The natural world is uncontrollable, so there is always the possibility of both danger and wonder. If Jesus models what maturity looks like, then, as we listen and practice and learn, we too can grow to experience restful evenings on mountaintops, outpourings of fruitfulness at moments of need, the support of stony outcroppings in our quest for justice, and conversations with stormy seas.

There is a third category of disruptive chaos. While the holy chaos is trustworthy and natural chaos can be dangerous and must be carefully negotiated, *imperial chaos* consistently delivers large-scale pain and destruction. It is important to say, that when we wax poetic about the beauty of opening our boundaries to the holy chaos of God, we are in no way talking about accepting the

decimation of boundaries by demonic forces of imperial domination. Imperial efforts to control populations and extract their resources create miserable and exhausting daily suffering for subject populations.

This is not a new phenomenon. Ancient Israelites experienced sustained pain under Assyrian and Babylonian rule (among other nations in a string of occupiers). So too the gospels, Pauline letters, and Book of Revelation are written from the perspective of subject populations under Roman domination.

> The Romans sometimes destroyed the environment deliberately, especially during wars. Their armies often devastated the surrounding countryside, sometimes to intimidate, sometimes out of sheer malice. After destroying Carthage, the Romans salted the fields so nothing would grow there again. It is not for nothing that a British chieftain said of the Romans, "They make a desert and call it peace." The ecological disasters which were caused by the rapacity of the Roman Empire are, then, well documented. Whole forests disappeared, countless species of animals were wiped out, large areas were devastated by mining, the air was polluted and the water made unsafe for drinking. Rome itself was a terrible place to live. It was overcrowded, polluted, and unsafe. The rich left Rome for the countryside at every opportunity. Revelation's depiction of Rome as a 'wasteland' is not perhaps as hyperbolic as some people imagine.[46]

Because the demonic, like creation, is dynamic,[47] through history imperial chaos morphs and escalates. Through time, imperialists grow more technological in strategy and global in scope.

In *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein gives us a picture of modern-day hegemony, and its well-documented strategy of exploiting disaster.[48] The social shock following disaster enables exploiters to tear apart the existing social fabric – the carefully tended boundaries of well-being that keep community intact – and systematically impose a new order that aggressively extracts wealth.[49]

> That is how the shock doctrine works: the original disaster— the coup, the terrorist attack, the market meltdown, the war, the tsunami, the hurricane— puts the entire population into a state of collective shock. The falling bombs, the bursts of terror, the pounding winds serve to soften up whole societies much as the blaring music and blows in the torture cells soften up prisoners. Like the terrorized prisoner who gives up the names of comrades and renounces his faith, shocked societies often give up things they would otherwise fiercely protect. Jamar Perry and his fellow evacuees at the Baton Rouge shelter were supposed to give up their housing projects and public schools. After the tsunami, the fishing people in Sri Lanka were supposed to give up their valuable beachfront land to hoteliers . Iraqis, if all had gone according to plan, were supposed to be so shocked and awed that they would give up control of their oil reserves, their state companies and their sovereignty to U.S. military bases and green zones.[50]

This imperial pattern takes different forms in different parts of the globalizing world. Over the last few generations in the United States, industrialists treated our cities (our human beings, communities, rivers and soil) like coal mines. They took all they could and then left them blown apart and poisoned and used up, and moved overseas to fresh territory. What remains in their wake is an exhausted community and landscape struggling to rebuild itself.[51]

God speaks to this experience of making life in the ruins of fallen imperial schemes. The prophet Ezekiel describes emperors and their empires across the ancient ages (Pharaoh/Egypt, Sennacherib/Assyria) as being allowed to grow into huge trees, cedars of Lebanon that contain prolific life.

> Mortal, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: Whom are you like in your greatness? Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon, with fair branches and forest shade, and of great height, its top among the clouds.[52]

Instead of viewing their power and capacity as gift, a gift that comes with weighty responsibility, they mow down the people, the animals, and the creation. They leave devastation. And God's creatures are forced to make home in the ruins.

> Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it. On its fallen trunk settle all the birds of the air, and among its boughs lodge all the wild animals.[53]

God's purpose in disrupting imperial schemes is to re-establish shalom. Where God's children cannot be in their rightful place due to displacement and violence, God encourages us to try to tend to the details of daily well-being in our alien context. For example, in the context of Babylonian exile, God demonstrates concern about the cohesion of human relationships, trust, and local economy:

> Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.[54]

Empires destroy the living healthy boundaries and structures of community in a similar way that large-scale farming destroys the tender complex structure of soil that forms over generations.[55] God is interested is creating, sustaining and restoring these living structures and boundaries.[56]

We've considered holy chaos (a.k.a primordial chaos, the wild waters of love). And we looked at two major creational experiences of chaos, natural chaos and imperial chaos. In all three cases, chaos is a disruption of the order. Middle agents,[57] due to our social location, have particular relationships to each kind of chaos, and the disruption of order in our lives. Imperial chaos may have less of an obvious effect on us than it does to the majority of the world. In fact, the extraction of labor and resources in other communities may accrue to our benefit. Thus we may be resistant to exposing and resisting this suffering and evil. So too, regarding natural chaos, we may be complicit in maintaining exploitive and commodified relationships with the earth, and be insensitive to the need for negotiating hospitable mutually supportive relationship. As the result of our location and predicament,[58] we may fear holy chaos and the ways it disrupts oppressive structures, and liberates humanity and the earth.[59]

Through all disruptions, holy, natural, imperial, and otherwise, the scriptures teach us that rooting our lives in God is the source of our stability:

> Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for [God] gives sleep to [the] beloved.[60]
>
> I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. That one is like a [person] building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not act is like a [person] who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.[61]

We hear that in those early days of creation "a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground."[62] After watering the earth of Eden, this stream branches into four rivers – the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates – carrying life to the four corners of the world.[63]

From the beginning to the end of the canon, living waters flow. Perhaps this is the uncontrollable *tehom,* that deep essence of Being that generates all life, moving through the created order. Creation is surrounded by *tehom*. The deep presses on us to wake up and become fully engaged co-creative beings. In our journey we may find ourselves surrendering, falling in love with the un-nameable uncontainable mystery animating it all. In this dance, we also negotiate creational forms of chaos, natural and imperial. Anchored in the divine rock, we find our stability, as God "puts a hook in the nose" of every violent impulse, pulling us toward the promise of a new earth, where the sea is no more.[64]

Power up the Grid

Biblically, our first expression of power is vast, overwhelming, oceanic. It is utterly undifferentiated – a *tohuwabohu*, uninhabitable, waste and void – yet, bristling, rippling with potential as spirit moves over its face.[65] From such "Olthian"[66] wild spaces, out of annihilating, uninhabitable love, comes the first act of hospitality. "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."[67] Scientists call this the big bang.[68] I imagine that loud whooshing sound as the lights come up in a huge stadium – creating the arena for a marvelous spectacle. A field of energy is created – a grid of power is established – Original Power.[69] The biblical narrative brings us from undifferentiated oceanic power to radiant light power. This vibrating energy is the substance and space for the form to follow.

When stretching our imaginations to consider these primordial acts of God, we feel our way, using all our senses. Music touches aspects of this experience that our logical minds cannot. Haydn knew this. He opens his oratorio, "The Creation," with a "Representation of Chaos" filled with "shifting, ambiguous harmonies."[70] The bass solo sings in C minor with the choir's low tones, lulling us into watery space. As the story unfolds, something new enters – a pizzicato on the strings.

What is this? The sound grows, as they sing "let there be" until "a sudden, massive fortissimo chord of C major from the now unmuted full orchestra" is unleashed on the word *Licht*. This glorious moment, the massive eruption of light, the first creative act in the drama of our world, still knocks me over every time I hear it. According to a friend of Haydn's, this moment was stunning at its Viennese premier:

> [A]t that moment when light broke out for the first time, one would have said that rays darted from the composer's burning eyes. The enchantment of the electrified Viennese was so general that the orchestra could not proceed for some minutes.[71]

God starts the engines, powers up – lights up the world (*'ôr*). This is not to be confused with the later step of putting lights (*mā'ôr*), the sun and moon, in the sky. We are further back in the story, at a more primary and comprehensive step. God is establishing the original field of energy that will move all of creation itself. God is kindling, fueling creation.

Considering the Canonical Significance of Light

To help us see that something more is at work here, let's peek ahead at the biblical story. How is light depicted? How is the presence of divine radiance understood in the canon? Here we move through the canon, looking at where light appears, to help us feel our way back into that primordial appearance of light. We are surveying later manifestations of light to capture a sense of its origination. In this survey, we find that God's presence is experienced as light, an active guiding force, alive in the world.

> [In the words of David:] Indeed, you are my lamp, O Lord, the Lord lightens my darkness.[72]

> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light.[73]

This divine presence, expressed as light, is the source of all our power. There is no power apart from God's radiant power, brought into existence in Genesis 1.

> The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?[74]

> For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.[75]

This light/power from God is utterly pervasive, penetrating every bit of creation:

> [Daniel said:] Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.[76]

> Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth?[77]

> If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.[78]

> [Jesus] said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.'[79]

> [In the words of Paul:] Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.[80]

Contact with God makes us shine:

> Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him.[81]

> And [Jesus] was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.[82]

We have a role in bearing God's light and bringing it to the world. We can choose to accept or reject this call:

> But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what they stumble over.[83]

> Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.[84]

> You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.[85]

Jesus came to show us how to embody light in our lives:

> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'[86]

> For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.[87]

Original Power, primordial divine light, is available to all, should we choose it. It heals broken bodies, liberates the oppressed, ends war, and changes the structure of society:

> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.[88]

> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.[89]

> Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.[90]

> And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength— he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." Thus says the Lord: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, "Come out," to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves." They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. And I will turn all my mountains into a road, and my highways shall be raised up. Lo, these shall come from far away, and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene. Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.[91]

> Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."[92]

> She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?'[93]
>
> For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."'[94]

Original Power can never be destroyed, because it is the essential power that creates and moves all creation:

> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.[95]

This eternal light coming from our divine source is infusing our bodies and all creation, sanctifying us. Through incarnation, we are becoming a new creation that lives in the light.

> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.[96]

Original Power as Gift

As an opening act, God pours power into a field of space and time.[97] This divine hospitality can never be matched. Everything we do is derivative in some way. In the face of God's original gift, our gifts become, in the language of Jacques Derrida, "impossible."[98] In this opening explosion of grace we have a tipping of creation. An imbalance, a structural asymmetry, is established that sets creation in motion.

Others have run into this transformative life force. Hannah Arendt noticed that her philosophical colleagues were endlessly exploring the predictable behavior of mortality in the world. Yet they had failed to account for the new, the emergent, the non-linear. She named this natality.[99] For Arendt, every time the mystery of birth occurs, in the newborn child (or any act of creation or innovation), we set an utterly unpredictable trajectory of events in motion.[100] Paul gives us the categories of grace (unbalanced and undeserved goodness) and law (a balanced set of actions and consequences). The Greeks talk of the eternity of *kairos* erupting in the steady march of *chronos*.

Derrida writes that there is a gap between "gift" and "economy." In what he terms economy he finds "the domain of knowledge, philosophy, and exchange"; "calculation and balanced exchanges"; "laws and regularities"; and "ordinary life and time."[101] The gift, by contrast, is: "exceeding all presence"; "leading us on, drawing us out of ourselves"; "beneficent, transcendental illusion" and "our passion."[102] The gift is "what gets things moving" [103] and gives us "ways of exceeding and surpassing ourselves."[104] He visualizes humanity living in the gap between gift and economy.[105] At our best, we are "always trying . . . to relieve the harsh structures of the law with the gentleness of a gift."[106]

From a biblical standpoint, this creational asymmetry is generated by the original gift of power in Genesis 1: 3. From a theological standpoint, Derrida wrestles with the impossibility of gift, because it is intrinsic to the origins of reality that we cannot give apart from God. Every subsequent gift is thrown off-kilter, lacks originality, is indebted.

Original Power is the radiant life-force that is the substance of creation and its Shaper. Attempting to claim originality for the animated over the Animator creates a bind. It exposes the gift's "doubleness," the tension between its unconditionality and conditionality.[107] In biblical terms, when we absolutize anything in creation, we are mistaking the manifestation for the Source – the error of idolatry. Idolatry depends on using dualism to make the creation into objects distinct from God. Idolatry cuts the connection to Source, leaving us mired in a world of sin – hopelessly trapped in the economy of exchange.

In an effort not to oversimplify the creator/creature distinction, we acknowledge that we are interwoven with our God – apart and together, free and dependent, created and co-creating, on an incarnational journey.[108] Derrida drops us into this aporia[109] – talks us circularly (or perhaps spirals us) through these paradoxes. Even as we feel the hopelessness of gift, we don't abandon the effort of gift. We are outrageous givers, sharing extravagantly, even though our gifts are impossible. We are

made in the image of God. How can we not give?[110] We are not some strange shadowy "other than God." There is no dualism. Hear, O humanity, God is one.[111] We are experiencing the eternal unity from the location of the body. We are both – the eternal oneness and the free creature. We are light and we are bodies – energy flowing into matter, returning to energy as Einstein found.[112]

Our divine indebtedness is also our joy and our salvation. However far we may stray in our freedom, we remain inextricably connected to our first love, our closest companion, our own eternity, our God. Perhaps you can hear Derridian echoes as we sing the words of the old hymn: "O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!"[113]

Walter Brueggemann addresses our tipped creation with his theology of blessing. He sees that there is a blessing before all other blessings. We receive before we can give. "God, then, is the primal speaker and giver of blessing."[114] The flow and movement of blessing is intrinsic to the nature of creation.[115] Through a theology of blessing, the dualistic view of "a deep gulf between the goodness of God and the unhealthiness of the world is denied."[116] His theology of blessing is incarnational. The body of the world is "a vehicle for the blessings God has ordained."[117] We receive divine blessing and are called to transmit blessing. We are not the originators of the gift, yet are integral to its fulfillment

So, in Genesis 1: 3, a marvelous opening of space and time bursts into existence. In the midst of the *tehom*, a pulsating, alive grid of divine power is established. Is this the same power that Michel Foucault observes in his detailed observation of the power dynamics of entrenched institutions? It is not entirely fair to suggest this since, "Foucault objects to the very idea of a knowledge or truth outside a network of power relations."[118] Like Arendt, he is interested in the facts on the ground. He is not interested in dreaming up prior ontologies. Yet his observations reveal points of connection to our biblical theology. He notices that while power gets aggregated into hierarchical regimes, this is not its essential nature. Rather, power is diverse and dispersed.

While he finds a "heterogeneity of alignments that distribute power," including "agents," "instruments" and "practices and rituals through which it is deployed," for him, power is "never localized here or there" rather it "circulates."[119] It is dynamic and "swarming."[120]

Connecting Foucault to our biblical theology (he may be a hostile witness here), we can say that human beings, animals, the earth, agents and instruments serve as vehicles of a more dynamic and original reality.[121] It may be that the relation between the original gift of power (this network that circulates) and the agents (human beings and other creational entities that embody it) is so inextricable that Original Power has only potential (that is, no "actual-ness") without incarnation. Maybe, in this sense, the philosophers and the theologians are not so far apart.

Original Power is Love

As theologians, we must carry the question further, and claim that Original Power (be it potential or actuated/incarnated) is not neutral – it is love. Ultimately power equals love.[122] Catherine Keller says: "If love and power do not contradict each other in the divine nature, we have the clue we need."[123] We have long struggled over this point. I recall in philosophy class, claiming that truth and love are the same thing – that ultimately if something is not loving, it cannot be truthful. You can imagine the heated discussion that broke forth. For the theologian, in watery speculative realms of creation, truth and love become indistinguishable. Martin Luther King Jr. hit this point of conflict when reading Friedrich Nietzsche. He began to question, with Nietzsche, why anyone would follow a weak and suffering savior. King had to make a choice, as illogical as it may seem, to see the truth of the enduring power of weakness. He had to find in God, and in his own soul, that place where power and love are the same thing.[124] This existential struggle, and his own ultimate commitments, animated his non-violent society-altering work.

I am not denying the need to look at difficult realities. King certainly insisted upon intellectual honesty. Yet he did not conceive of creation as solely an economy of exchange – as self-contained, objective, and measurable. He accepted the grace as the heart of life, and the resulting asymmetry of creation's unfolding.

> When our days become dreary with low hovering clouds of despair, and when our nights become darker than a thousand midnights, let us remember that there is a creative force in this universe, working to pull down the gigantic mountains of evil, a power that is able to make a way out of no way and transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.[125]

And so, in our theo-ethical narrative of power, we have a beginning. Stepping back, before human beings arrive on the scene, back into the primordial realms of the big bang that unleashes universes, we affirm that biblically there is no power but God power – the power of love. We are empowered to shape this divine gift into swords or plowshares, as we choose.[126] Everything that ever was, is and shall be comes from it and returns to it.

> These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.[127]

Call it the original gift. Call it a circulating grid. Call it natality. By any name, it is the source of our provision and security. It is our origin and our destination – God's gracious generosity, an abundant overflow of power shared freely.

Holy Homemaking

We have encountered the vast timeless, spaceless *tehom*. From the *tehom*, burst forth a great field of energy, the first act of creation. And now we move from energy into matter – the creation of a dynamic, life-supporting physical reality. *Tehom* is where we find the infinite transcendent mystery of God. The created world – matter and energy wrapped in wisdom[128] – is where we find God's immanence (see Figure 2).

In Genesis 1 we encounter God as an artist and a homemaker. God sculpts energy into matter – working, shaping, stepping back to evaluate. Wisdom dances in the deep[129] – those wild waters of timeless and spaceless love – hovering, as the Nameless One dreams.

> What shall we do today? Hmmmmm . . . I know! I think I'll make a universe for my beloveds. Yes, a universe! Let's see. How can I make this universe delightful? Delicious? Fun? Free?
>
> First we'll need to make a dimension of time and space – bounds in the boundlessness – a field of energy for all that is to follow. Bring up the lights! Let there be power! Yes, now we need some daily rhythm . . . day and night. Oh, that is brilliant! What next?
>
> Well, we have to do something about all this water. Let's separate the waters with this dome. Nope, too flat . . . too round . . . ah, that's it. We need a nice atmosphere, a beautiful space to support life. I think we should call it sky. Now my beloveds are going to need dry land for their toes to dance upon . . . let's call that earth . . . let's make it fresh, rich, and fertile. And these waters, let's form them into rivers and waterfalls, enticing lakes, tiny streams, and roaring oceans. I like that!
>
> Now let's get some real energy going. Let this fertile earth start birthing trees and plants, with flowers and fruits that make seeds that make more trees and plants with more flowers and fruits that make more seeds that make more . . . don't get me rolling!
>
> This is amazing. Now let the sun come out from its bridal canopy and run its course with joy! [130] And let the magnetic moon pull the tide. And billions and billions of stars. This place is magnificent.
>
> All right you seas, time for you to share in the birthing, bring forth swarms of swimming creatures. Oh look! There goes Leviathan swimming about.[131] And, you skies, your turn, let's see birds of every size and shape soaring through the air. I cannot believe my eyes it is so gorgeous. Now, wild ones, keep on multiplying. I love to create creators. So, dear fish and birds and trees and earthly life: bear fruit, birth, fill this place, move, sing, play, be free and joyful. Now, everything is perfect. Time to give this home to my beloveds. [132]

Homemaking is about making inviting, interesting, safe space. God is the homemaker of homemakers.[133] The project of shaping a physical universe starts with shaping in Arendt's words "a world fit for human habitation."[134] Through the drawing of boundaries,[135] this great palette of space and time starts getting articulated. Time is punctuated by light and darkness. Space is divided into earth and sky. Earth is divided into land and sea.[136] God starts complexifying the cosmos with seasons and stars, adding the rhythm of day and night.

It is boundaries that allow incarnate reality to be born in the womb-like waters of unbounded love. Infinite undifferentiated formless power is shaped and directed in a grand artistic vision of vibrant living home. These boundaries are deemed by God to be good. They are the source of well-being, of shalom.[137]

Reading the scriptures, we linger on the sidelines with Wisdom, watching the greatest artistic Master of all create the greatest masterpiece of all – a multi-dimensional wonder of matter and energy with endless layers of movement, intelligence, complexity, and beauty.[138] We see the birth of a world made of love, by love, for love. Is there order?[139] Yes. And this is no rigid predictable order. We sense the order, but we cannot grasp it. Our minds are too small. Even Wisdom herself is humbled. We can only watch and wonder and delight.

There is a mysterious play between the ordering of creation and its creative freedom. There is another mysterious play between space for independence and the enduring intimate presence of our Creator. God's project of making home is not once and for all. God keeps nurturing and providing.

> You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.[140]

According the Sallie McFague, "God the creator is fiercely protective . . . just as any parent or artist."[141] She goes on to say:

> Just as human parents would give their life for their children (and sometimes do), so God's love for creation is particular, boundless, and total. Just as artists feel that they are embodied in their work, that who they are is expressed in their creations, so also God's glory is reflected in each and every creature, from the mite to the whale, from the acorn to the mountain, and in each one of us human beings. The doctrine of creation is not primarily about whether God produced matter from nothing, nor is it about a moment in time when the universe appeared. The doctrine of creation is about God's total graciousness in the gift of life and total commitment to the life so created.[142]

In this sense the original overflowing gift that tips creation on edge, is not a one time event. It is the Derridian gift that keeps on giving, arriving in many forms. One is the dynamism of a creation that is made to create. Another is the enduring intimacy of our God.[143]

This intimacy is epitomized when the first people come to life in Genesis 2. God lovingly integrates matter and energy – mud and breath – and makes a human being. God personally plants a garden for the newly born beloved. "Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."[144] God fills the senses with visual wonder, interesting

textures, intoxicating fragrances, music for the ears, and delicious tastes. There are good green things so that "everything that has the breath of life" will have good things to eat."[145] There is water flowing from the mountains, grass for the cattle, and oil to protect, heal, and make the face shine. There is bread to strengthen the human heart, high rocky places for goats, and dens for lions. All find their needs met in God.[146]

God keeps on giving and tending in the unfolding of creation history. Even later, when arrogant leaders and their empires wreck our garden home, as we were warned they would if we gave them our power,[147] our broken-hearted God gathers us up and binds up our wounds.[148] Surveying the battered landscape, God makes shelter for us in the ruins.[149] Walking the streets of Roman-occupied Palestine, God keeps teaching us through the incarnate one. Jesus shows us how to thrive as God intended – fully embodying the gift of Original Power – building and nurturing communities, full of teaching, healing, and abundance. Well-being does not have to wait for the fulfillment of time. It takes root, like invasive mustard bushes, in the interstices of imperial control.[150] This is God's creation, and even when free creatures tear it up, God, our hospitable homemaker, keeps holding our hands and teaching us how to have a beautiful life in it.[151]

Dynamic, Complexifying, Creativity

Let me start by saying I am suspicious of talk about creational norms. One reason is that the word norm, to me, evokes a fixed immovable static feeling – an is-ness that restricts us.[152] A more significant reason for my suspicion is that often imbedded within our Christian conversations on norms is the attempt to deploy coercive power.[153] The assertion of norms can become a basis for demanding that the diversity of creation calm down and conform to the cultural preferences of the dominant group. When human precepts are elevated to the status of doctrines,[154] those who manifest characteristics and behaviors that differ can be wrongly relegated to living outside the circle

of God and the human family. Having said that, worries about the erroneous and destructive application of power do not relieve us of the task of thinking about the way creation is structured. So cautiously, I ask: are there creational principles (norms) offered in the Genesis 1 text that support rather than diminish the diversity of life on earth?

Reading the text, four norms surface that inform our conversation about power. The first is *generative creativity*. This includes fertility and multiplicity.[155] The earth pours forth vegetation and food[156] setting abundant fruitfulness in motion.[157] The earth is full of God's creatures; sentient beings are more than can be counted.[158] The waters unleash swarms of swimming creatures.[159] The heavens and earth contain multitudes.[160] The creation is given the mission to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.[161]

Keller speaks of the "divine invitation to generate life."[162] McFague too uses generative metaphors to contemplate creation:

> The major models of creation are based on common human activities – giving birth, making a work of art, and speaking. Since all expressions of God's activities are necessarily metaphorical and no one model can be adequate, it is appropriate to use all three models, since they complement and enrich one another. Any one of them alone presents difficulties: giving birth (pantheism), art (distance), speaking (disembodiment). The advantage of the three together is that one can speak of creation in bodily, appreciative, and humanly significant ways.[163]

As we take up our call to be co-creative, models that come to mind are gardening, mid-wiving, and dancing. Each of these requires us to step into the light – to take risks – while holding an intimate, yet reverent, relationship to the world around us and to the animating presence of God's Original Power.

A second norm emerging from the text is *dynamic movement and change*. Creation is living, breathing, and fully energized from the get go. Living creatures swarm in the waters; birds soar across the sky.[164] Descriptors are dynamic: "every living creature that moves"[165]; wild animals and creeping things[166]; "every living thing that moves upon the earth."[167] Waters flee and take to flight,

rising up mountains and down valleys.[168] The earth trembles; mountains smoke.[169] Hendrik Hart describes this movement that is at the heart of our biblical understanding of God.

> King David wanted to build a temple, but God really didn't like that, because the ark allowed God to be picked up by human beings and taken on a journey. An ark would allow God to move, to be a historical God, a God who didn't want to be stuck in Jerusalem, even if it was in a building of splendor (2 Sam. 7:1-17). So, although he let David build the temple, God got himself a better ark later on, called Jesus, who allowed God to move all over the face of the earth again.[170]

The divine and thus "aporetic"[171] nature of this gift of Original Power – its inaccessible priorness to all subsequent gifts – generates creational movement. All life is pulled into a flow of generosity that invites us to respond – to make our own attempt at gift.

A third norm that manifests in the text is *extravagant joyful abundance*. There is a sheer volume and generosity of life expressed throughout the narrative. The skies, the waters, and the earth are full of life. Trees are watered abundantly.[172] This overflowing quality is extended in the ministry of Jesus when he pulls so much fish from the sea that nets are filled to breaking[173] and when he feeds thousands to satisfaction with more left over.[174]

The last norm I draw from the text is *Sabbath rest*.[175] There is a rhythm to our God-filled dynamic abundant creativity. This participatory process reaches quiet points where we can feel that something is completed. These pauses, like rests in music, enrich the beauty of the larger unfolding.[176] We are invited to stop to feel our connection to God and to the whole.[177] In our stopping, we reflect on all we are experiencing and absorb the wonder of it.[178] We express gratitude. Keller notes the "divine pleasure in the results" [179] We stop to release with joy what is done and to point ourselves to what is emerging. In the same way God is satisfied with the creation of the earth; the earth is satisfied with the provision of God.[180]

Sabbath serves the purpose of orienting our individual and communal lives to the eternal[181] creationally, historically, and eschatologically. Creationally, Sabbath helps humanity live in a healthy and thriving relationship with our garden home.[182] "[S]habbat completes the creation of the

universe— by demonstrating that the proper response to the gifts of life is celebration and delight."[183] Sabbath orients us historically.[184] [185] As created co-creators, living in freedom, we find ourselves buried in confusing and idolatrous messes of our own making.[186] [187] This social reality betrays an erroneous departure from God's intent for all to be connected to the land and thriving.[188] Sabbath provides course correction.[189] It "carries a strong emancipatory thrust[.]"[190] It "is a challenge" to "those societal forces which enslave us."[191] In addition to orienting us creationally and historically, Sabbath orients us eschatologically:[192]

> When we attempt to proclaim and enact the radically alternative way of being human that sabbath and jubilee envision, we point to the rest and shalom which God promises to bring when the kingdom comes finally and dramatically on earth. As imagebearers of this God, we can do no less.[193]

So, exploring Genesis, we find there are no static ideals which we can uncover and enforce in this story of our origins.[194] What we have is a healthy, alive world with an "evolutionary, adaptive freedom" that we are called to appreciate and nurture. If these are indeed creational norms – creativity, movement, abundance, and Sabbath – then violations of our norms include: 1) impeding the emergent creativity of ourselves and others (failing to bring forth our gifts); 2) commodification and idolatry (trying to own creation and/or Creator); 3) acting out of scarcity[195] (failing to "trust in God's provision"[196]); and 4) falling out of relationship with God (forgetting our eternal identity and purpose). The scriptures describe a creational reality of prolific emergent mystery and irreducible difference – a wild, teeming, extravagant place. So, in the lyrics of Sonya Kitchell, "Why would [we] chain a wild thing to the ground?"[197]

Distorted Creation Theology Supports the Domination System

In this opening chapter we are lingering in creation, feeling our way around our primordial origins. We are exploring the gift of Original Power at its inception, before it gets into immature human hands. We are intentionally staying in a pre-fall space, experiencing the goodness and blessing of creation that envelopes our existence.

Having articulated elements of a biblical creation theology of power, we pause to take note of specific distortions of creation theology that are utilized by the Domination System[198] for its exploitive purposes.[199] The Domination System is a comprehensive distortion of Original Power. It involves the systemic manipulation of the circulating grid of God power that refreshes and animates our lives. The purpose of the Domination System is channeling Original Power, via fear, violence, and lies, from the whole of the human family to the few.[200] It is an ultimately futile effort to grab the gift and use it to create a world apart from the Giver. This disconnected world depends on distorted creation narratives to underwrite its claims. It creates and promotes cosmologies that support its continued existence in the collective consciousness. These creation stories, theologies and philosophies are often cloaked in the biblical story or in reason. They sound familiar[201] and coherent[202] so they may slip into our thought patterns unnoticed and shape our behavior and ethics.

In what follows, I briefly name seven distortions of creation theology that consciously or unconsciously serve the aims of the Domination System. Given the large-scale purpose of this work – to de/construct a biblical narrative of power – I can't get too sidetracked developing full-bodied arguments against each of these distortions. A full exegetical study of prevalent distortions of creation theology and how they underwrite imperial ambitions deserves its own book. For our purposes, we will bring several key stories into view. The creation theology developed above, in close alignment with the Genesis 1 text, stands as the primary case against each alternative creation story that follows. To that I add a sentence or two about how the counterclaim in Genesis 1 text manifests in the life of ancient Israel, through the ministry of Jesus, and through biblical eschatology. This interrogation serves as a shorthand check that we are engaging significant components of a coherent biblical theology. Where helpful, I point to scholars who've done in-depth exegesis on the subject.

My intent in naming of distorted creation stories is to surface unconscious cosmologies we may be carrying, due to the relentless colonization of our minds. Middle agents, in particular, are systematically distracted from facing our deep stories and considering the ways our stories shape our lives. If we want to have gospel shaped lives, we need to be intentional. We must sift through our bedrock assumptions about the origin, nature, and purpose of the world. How do our beliefs compare with prevalent elite/global capital/free market/patriotic narratives that flood our media environment? How do they compare with our ancient scriptural stories? How do they compare with Jesus' example and teachings? What is shaping us? This section serves to dip our toes into that work.

The Blank Slate

The first common creation narrative that departs from scripture is *the blank slate*, or *creatio ex nihilo*[203] – creation out of nothing. This view states that there is nothing in existence before creation comes into being. A key claim is that the elements of the universe do not coexist with God prior to the act of creation and there is nothing with inherent power outside of God. While the idea that no thing and no power exists outside of God is consistent with biblical thought, this story can be reductive. It can evoke a solitary God in an empty space directing the manifestation of a universe like a symphony. Orderly control is emphasized. Uncontrollable chaos is expunged. Reducing God's wildness to something theologically tame moves us in the direction of suppressing life's wildness and puts us on the track to hegemony. This line of thinking can support an authoritarian controllable order and a patriarchal God.[204]

In Genesis 1, God is not an orchestra conductor. God is a complicated multi-dimensional mystery, with internal relationships (including a relationship with Wisdom and Logos/Christ) prior to creation. Our text describes the presence of a wild, empty oceanic *tehom* – a womby, oceanic environment within which interactions and conversations occur.[205] We start by swimming in what I

term annihilating love – a state of boundary-less-ness that is always present and threatening to undo boundaried creation. This transcendent unboundaried wildness of God and the immanent tender attentiveness of God (homemaker/artist/teacher/caretaker/emotive companion[206]) as a divine complex are present in the text at the origins of our existence and remain present as history unfolds. Our living, breathing, spirit-filled existence evolves as a play between the wildness of God's inbreaking (the living water) and the shalom of the garden (healthy structure for our living and growth). The movement of history and development of culture flows from this endless interchange.[207] At points, the dance is thrown off balance. Structures become rigid and must collapse. The waters press in at various points – e.g. the flood, Ezekiel's temple. Jesus, the first fruits, a fully mature human being, embodies all these aspects of God. He tears down calcified structures and passionately feeds, heals, teaches, and companions community. The chaos of demons and storms, that threaten to undo immature human beings, do not bother him. He tames them with ease. Eschatologically, this dynamic relationship of living water and garden home come into balance in the new Jerusalem.

The complexity of our biblical Creator includes a watery abyss. This challenges us to let go of any possibility of defining or containing God. It means that holy love can be entirely unreasonable and unpredictable, breaking apart our orderly lives. It is tempting to block this part of God out. As we seek to shape a picture of power, dispensing with creational chaos is an indication we are slipping into a more impoverished, individualistic, and patriarchal view of God.

Original Dualism/Original Violence

The second narrative that departs from our biblical reading of creation involves original dualism and/or original violence. It is hard to wrap our heads around the ongoing pouring forth of divine grace and power into the world – this unconditional gift, to which all other gifts are indebted.

So we think of other ways to explain the energy, momentum, and tragedy of life. Dualism can serve this purpose. We imagine two entities – a good guy and a bad guy.[208] In the tension between the two, the action gets moving. And this action often takes on the character of violence.

In *The Liberating Image*, J. Richard Middleton discusses the role of creation-by-combat myths (the *chaoskampf motif*) in the ancient Near East. Creation-by-combat myths place violence at the beginning of creation in the heart of God.[209] In these myths creation is the result of a cosmic battle between God and the forces of chaos.[210] This sets up a model of power at the beginning of creation that is zero-sum. God's power and creation are established at the expense of something right off the bat. There is a scarcity of power from the beginning, establishing a paradigm where one group's success is obtained at the expense of another. Success comes from defeating another in battle. "Such cosmogonies are not simply ethnocentric; they are inherently competitive, even violent and militaristic."[211]

Middleton shows us that creation-by-combat myths serve violent leaders in the ancient Near East by allowing them to ground their violence in God's violence.[212] The creation-by-combat myth is at work throughout modern day systems and structures. Pedro Trigo shows that "the same basic chaos-cosmos polarization that functioned in ancient Babylon undergirds various geopolitical and ideological splits in the contemporary world . . . especially between the wealthy and poor of the world."[213] Our understanding of creational structure gets formed around the polarities of us/them and win/lose. Identity is formed around the enemy. Without the enemy we do not exist. Violence precedes goodness in the order of creation. Chaos, an ever-present threat, must be held at bay by endless violence. This narrative also fuels what Walter Wink terms "the myth of redemptive violence."[214]

A dualistic and violent origin supports a dualistic and violent theology. We end up with Satan, a real and substantive "other" to God, that thwarts God's purposes and that God, in fact,

must battle. We also end up with a cross-centered faith that puts violence at the center of our understanding of salvation.[215] Creation-by-combat, and its resulting conviction that violence is salvific, has its own compelling internal coherence that gets infused into theological, social, political and economic structures.[216]

With exegetical study, Middleton comes to the conclusion that while there are combat myths in the Hebrew Bible, there is no creation-by-combat myth. Combat myths may be intrahistorical, but they are not creational. Clarifying that combat myths are not creational is critically important, because creation-by-combat ontologizes violence. "[N]ot only is evil (in the form of chaos) given primordial status, the conquest of this evil/chaos to found the ordered world enshrines violence as the divinely chosen method for establishing goodness."[217]

Trigo says that the Genesis creation account serves to "break the spell" of the creation-by-combat narrative.[218] Genesis 1, in a radical break from the Mesopotamian stories, offers "a conception of the God-creation relationship distinct from creation-by-combat that can ground normative, non-violent human agency."[219] There is no "other" in creation. There is no battle. There is no resistance. There is only a primordial watery God space. The waters, which to the Babylonian mind represent chaos, now appear as a vast creative set of possibilities. The Genesis account implies something that is close to natality – a birthing of something new and good by a God who shares power. As the biblical history unfolds, humanity engages in dualistic conflicts, while God encompasses the chasms we create and continually prods us to expand our thinking to approach the oneness that is possible. This reaches a pinnacle in Jesus who heals Gentiles and forgives his executioners. While he confronts patterns of oppression and those who sustain them, his larger objective is abundant life for all humanity and creation. Eschatologically, all chasms are bridged and former enemies enjoy fruitful life together in safety.

Our creational assumptions have concrete impacts on the patterns of our lives. What kind of world would take shape if we embraced a worldview that de-ontologizes violence and ontologizes natality instead? What happens to our churches, our communities and our lives if we embody the non-dualistic non-violent relentlessly reconciling nature of God?

Creation as a Cul-de-Sac

A third creational concept in currency among faithful Christians I term *creation as cul-de-sac.* This view states that static norms were established in creation and if we confine life to these norms we can right this ship and get things back on track. In its simplistic form, creation is viewed as a road that circles us back to where we started. We start down the road of history. We make mistakes, busting up the neat order that was set up. In our brokenness, we gaze back to humanity's innocent childhood, the place and time when everything was right. We put all the pieces back the way God set them up, returning to the garden place where we started.

Imperialists benefit from the theological cul-de-sac, because it is a highly effective means to coerce people into behaving in prescribed ways. If imperialists can convince us that there are static norms established in the creation narrative, and that they know what they are, they can shove us into boxes designed for the purpose of social control.

Deism (addressed below) and process thought live on the other end of the spectrum. In these conceptions, creation is set forward on a trajectory of endless change. There is no looking back, no returning to where we came from. Any possible norms we can find are not static, but underlying rules for growth and change.

Here we are proposing that the biblical story runs a third way. The biblical story unfolds incarnationally through an enduring covenant between humanity and God. Human beings and creation itself have much space for freedom and innovation. We get to make up our own dance

moves. God dances with us – picking us up off the floor, bandaging us up, and lovingly nudging us toward our most beautiful and life-giving inclinations.

We neither ignore our origins nor return to them. In the text, Hebrew communities are always looking back to make meaning out of the circumstances of their lives – telling and re-telling the old old story in light of new experiences and revelations. As we approach the never-before-seen, we recall the great saving acts of God – the way God stepped into history and shifted us on to a better course.

We must also note that there is a strong biblical theme of restoration throughout the canon. Biblical restoration, often to the disappointment of the faith community, is never a straightforward return to the storied past. Believers frequently make this mistake. We think God is going to give us the lost land, the lost temple, the lost child, the lost king, or the lost great age gone by.[220] The book of Job is a humorous extended reflection on the complicated nature of God and restoration (among other things). Job loses his home and family, suffering to the extreme for seemingly no reason. In the end, as a kind of joke, he gets a new home and family, all multiplied. This is tragically funny and true. Seven sons and three daughters, however beautiful they might be, can't replace his lost beloveds. Jesus expresses the promise and complexity of divine restoration by referencing Job: "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life."[221] There is an acknowledgement here that God's restoration is neither direct nor simple. All of us live lives that include suffering and loss. Throughout the canon God provides a consistent promise that these losses will be restored in profoundly satisfying ways – but not with an exact replication of past experiences we loved.

This same pattern (of moving forward in relationship to the past) is found in the layers and layers of chiastic structure all over the canon. In a chiastic structure, there is an integral relationship between the matching layers (e.g. A, B, C, B2, A2). Yet this is not a cul-de-sac. A2 is not a simple return to A. A2 is connected to A in recognizable ways, but pushes A forward. It is A transformed. So in the book of Revelation we see many elements of our original garden paradise, but mightily transformed by the incarnational journey of a free people.[222]

Our theology of power, if it is to be biblical, must include a story of restoration. While this restoration does not turn history backwards, it does sustain a deeply integral relationship with our forebears in the faith. We continually reengage the ancient themes of our shared existence, as the whole human story, in our dance with the mystery, moves in the direction of an endlessly emergent eschatological reality, a reality that includes the reconciliation of all humanity and creation.

Deism and the Uninvolved God

The fourth distortion of biblical creation theology is deism.[223] In deism, we imagine God inventing a world machine that has self-organizing principles. God sends this machine off on its own to work out its own destiny, and remains at a distance, uninvolved in the world's trajectory. A deistic view turns human beings, animals, and the natural world into remote objects. God is a mastermind, a tinkerer, who stays at an emotional distance.[224] The earth is a thing, rather than a living breathing reality longing for life and love. This leads us to commodify rather than sacralize our world.

God's power is wielded through intellect and design.[225] The Creator holds no relationship or responsibility for the outworking of God's own actions. In terms of human power, this narrative supports disconnected creating with no regard to relationship or consequence. The deism that underlies American political culture (married to global neo-liberalism) perpetuates the delusion that

everyone's disconnected self-interests (actions, creations) will magically work out for the collective whole via the free market.

As we saw in Genesis 1, God is anything but disconnected. God is enthusiastic, expressive, and emotional. We find an intimate God, deeply attentive and engaged in the unfolding of life.[226] There is a tender relationship between Creator and creation.[227] There is a back and forth, a call and response.[228] At each step our Maker checks in. How are we doing? Good. Very good. God explains and nudges and supports. And later when humanity breaks covenant relationship, God cries out in pain. And sews clothes for our naked bodies. So too, creation is a living, breathing, teeming, thriving sacred realm.[229] This realm responds to love and care from Creator and creature. It overflows with delicious delights for every sense when all relationships are intact. It grows dry and sad and barren when relationships are broken.[230] Creation is an actor in the unfolding of God's plan for universal well-being, conspiring to loosen the bindings that entrap human beings. As the victims of dominating power escape, seas flee and mountains skip like lambs. The presence of an emotional and involved God, this unbreakable solidarity, endures through our history, to the point where God takes on human flesh and walks among us, transforming suffering into shalom before our eyes. Our Maker won't leave us even to the point of enduring the torture and death, pain we create, by our side. Not only does God stay involved through our history, the whole point of creation is God's involvement. Eschatological images evoke a God who comes to dwell in creation.[231]

Our biblical view of power, rooted in Genesis, strongly counters the deistic underpinnings of our present free market form of economic imperialism. Our ancient and ongoing covenant demands emotional engagement with the most vulnerable and the earth.[232] It is rooted in the mundane details of communal life and is concerned with bodily well-being.

An Authoritarian, Punishing God

An authoritarian, punishing God is useful to authoritarian, punishing imperialists. Whenever person or group shows interest in imposing a controlling God, it would be wise for us to apply our hermeneutic of suspicion. Who benefits by the adoption of this particular way of conceiving of God? Terence Fretheim explores this question:

> [R]eaders have often suggested an image of the Creator God that is in absolute control of the developing creation, working independently and unilaterally. . . . [I]f this understanding of God in creation is correct, then those created in God's image could properly understand their role regarding the rest of creation in comparable terms—power over, absolute control, and independence. By definition, if nonhuman creatures are understood to be but passive putty in the hands of God, then the natural world becomes available for comparable handling by those who go by the name "image of God." . . . . What if the God of the creation texts is understood to be imaged more as one who, in creating, chooses to share power in relationship? Then the way in which the human as image of God exercises dominion is to be shaped by that model.[233]

My underlying thesis is that God has offered immature humanity the dangerously divine gift of power, and in covenant relationship, is guiding us to mature co-creative abilities with this power, for the purpose of mutual joy. As we learn, we prove ourselves to be immensely destructive, engaging in personal and communal acts of abuse, oppression and creational devastation.

The God of Genesis 1 is the antithesis of authoritarian and punishing. There is no coercive force – no violence, no domination – in the way creation comes into being. It is an artistically creative process. It is a process of loving homemaking. World comes into being with vision and word.[234] The process is relational and generous. God expresses joy in the space made for created co-creators. God's mode of relating is love, mutual appreciation, and guidance. Our Maker enjoys walking humbly with us in the evening and exploring how we are doing.

Wirzba expresses God's nature in similar terms, drawing from the book of Job:

> Among the lessons Job learns, one of the most important will be that creation needs to be perceived theocentrically. All of creation, even those elements that are of no interest or notice or benefit to us, is of value to God as its creator. God takes notice of every creature's move and takes considerable satisfaction in their activities, even when those activities verge on the chaotic (38:8-9). In the speeches from the whirlwind God utters a view of creation that has an integrity all its own. The parts and processes of creation form a dynamic whole in which chaos and order, work and play, life and death altogether contribute to the glory of God. Moreover, this is a creation that is not ruled with an iron fist. God's watching over creation, not unlike a parent's watching over a sometimes obedient, sometimes rebellious child, entails the extension of a fair measure of freedom to it: "Yahweh governs with an open hand, sustaining creation in all of its variegated forms, leaving both good and bad

> characters to weave their existence into the complex network of life."' There is, in other words, an openness and an unpredictability about creation that follows from its freedom and its divinely bestowed integrity. Creation does not exist solely to suit or benefit us. It has a sublime character that has the potential to stun and amaze us, if we care to look. It also has the potential to cause us pain.[235]

The scriptures represent the honest testimony of a people growing in relationship to the living God. As it unfolds, the story becomes more complicated. There are decidedly contradictory strands. God is portrayed as violent at times, and others, steadfastly loving. Because, for the most part, we can only imagine God to be as vast and mature and aware as we are, we can't help but cast God in our immature image. (Most of us are not prophets in the model of Isaiah, who can cast our vision of Creator and creation way beyond what we've seen and known.) So it is not surprising that retributive, authoritarian motifs appear in the ancient scriptures, as they do in the modern world. This is the only model of power many of us have experienced. It is remarkable that the wideness, tender mercy, freedom, and radical inclusion of God break through our narrow, scarce, fearful, domineering, tribalistic mentalities repeatedly in the Bible (and in modern life). We could view the scriptures as a dialogue between these life-giving and life-destroying strands, between struggling creatures (and our immature Babel creations) and the sometimes gentle, sometimes overwhelming inbreakings of our uncontainable Creator.

In Jesus, we encounter for the first time, power fully ripened in humanity.[236] After a litany of empires, kings and religious leaders who harm the people, we finally touch and feel and walk and talk with one worthy of leading our lives. We heard of such a shepherd in Ezekiel – one who binds up the broken and feeds the flock, rather than trampling the sheep and fouling the green earth.[237] Finally, we experience a leader of leaders in whom there is no domination or retaliation or guile[238] – one who shares power and forgives everyone, even those who execute him.

Not only does Jesus model what true authority looks like,[239] Jesus models what true community looks like. It is not hierarchical. It is about making space where two or three (or more) are gathered and nurture each other into the fullness of power that is our inheritance. And then we

move into the world where that power manifests in healing and feeding and liberating until the whole creation is free.[240] Jesus is the clearest image we have in our world for how God wields power. Eschatologically, he tells us that the kingdom is in our midst. He initiates the new age of shared power and sets forth a blueprint for our maturing into this reality personally, communally, societally, and creationally.[241]

We cannot, in a couple of paragraphs (or a stack of tomes), explain away violent images of God or the violence in our lives. We all suffer. I can only say that I have encountered God's healing in my most intense pain (and my most ecstatic joy). I've enjoyed God's friendship in the most mundane little details of my existence. And I've been devastated by a sense of God's utter abandonment. This journey is intensely experiential. Theological constructs fail. Many friends and congregants say the same. At this point, I would simply add the words of Richard Rohr:

> The people who know God well—the mystics, the hermits, those who risk everything to find God—always meet a lover, not a dictator. God is never found to be an abusive father or a tyrannical mother, but a lover who is more than we dared hope for.[242]

A Hopelessly Flawed Humanity

The concept that human beings are inherently sinful serves the Domination System. The military-industrial complex depends on us agreeing to make segments of society unimportant. A creation theology that says that humans are fundamentally broken or depraved paves the way for exclusion and scapegoating.[243] This thinking allows our current global economic system to relegate the majority of the world into categories that allow their land and labor to be taken with impunity. Through our willingness to see humanity on negative terms, a minority becomes free to enrich themselves in cannibalistic[244] ways – ways that literally feed off the lives of others – with little outcry. If all human beings are sacred and must be treated with dignity, then the machinery of exploitation and war become impossible. Negative anthropology keeps empires intact, keeps the church

hierarchy unquestioned, and keeps people so low in self-esteem that we can't see the truth of our identity and we do not claim God's gift of power.

Genesis 1 is an antidote to this error. There is zero negativity in it. Humanity is very good. Creation in all its marvelous moving complexity is very good. The foundation of our existence is goodness. Our true nature is goodness. This realization is enormously empowering. When we comprehend the sacred identity of each person we encounter and the world itself, we can no longer tolerate human beings and the earth being treated as resources or commodities.[245] It sickens us to witness human life and sacred earth being greedily consumed. The scriptural truth leads us to be immensely respectful and to fight systems that exploit and denigrate children of God. In ancient Israel, this positive theology of humanity, led to an insistence that all human beings be treated with dignity and justice, including the widow, orphan, and stranger in the community. Slaves, animals, and land were all included in the sacred realm of care – a radical concept for an ancient tribal culture. Jesus dramatically re-calls his community to this understanding, spending his time healing and restoring all categories of social outcast, and reprimanding the teachers for not living according to the scripture. Eschatologically, all is reconciled. The false distinctions are gone, and all are clothed in our right minds, and full God-given identities, at the great banquet.

Seeing the pain of the world, and the devastations we create, it is tempting to collapse into a sense of sin that is so original that it defines us – that it blocks out the image of God in us. Staking out our original goodness in no way diminishes our awareness of sin and evil in the world. We are a humanity that is utterly incompetent when it comes to handling the gift of power. We must look at what we've wrought squarely and lament.

Still, as Henry Nouwen says, under the brokenness we find blessing. Blessing is the deepest part of us.[246] Brokenness exists. Obviously, sin exists. But, first, blessing.[247] A theology of Original Blessing leads us to be humble students and to dedicate our lives to learning to use power in life-

giving ways. Starting with a sacred humanity and earth, we pray that we will not cause harm as we learn, and that God will heal our mistakes.

A Disposable Creation

The benefits of a disposable creation to an imperial order are similar to those of a hopelessly flawed humanity. Those that wish to greedily consume the creation need to de-sacralize it.[248] They need to convince us it is temporary and fleeting anyway. Something held in low regard is ripe for unquestioned exploitation. Lack of care for the earth allows corporations to extract resources and pollute endlessly without any collective outrage. The Domination System wants us to believe that the world can be used up freely with no offense to God.

After immersing ourselves in the joyful homemaking heart of God as expressed in Genesis 1, theologies that support harm to the world, not to mention its desecration and ultimate disposal, can only be described as blasphemous. When we experience the tender care that God puts into building a home for us – when we witness God step back and appreciate the magnificence of the artistry of creation, declaring it good – it is hard to defend our indifference and violence toward the earth. How would any of us feel if we built a home for our beloveds and they blew it up or burned it down? How does our emotionally involved God feel about this?

The theme of relationship to the land and care for the earth runs through the Hebrew scriptures.[249] From the beginning, we are tenants in a creation belonging to our Maker. Yahweh values all life, values people in all social conditions, values the land itself. In our tenant covenant, we are expected to honor these divine values in our daily ethical actions, shaping our lives around reverence, gratitude, generosity, restraint, and justice. Fruitfulness is the sign we are on the right track, barrenness and exile indicate we have lost our way.

Jesus amazes onlookers with his relationship to the earth. Storms grow still at his command and seas pour forth their bounty. Stones shout out in support of his embarrassingly public critique of the religious/political system.[250] He does not hesitate to drink the fruit and eat the bread and enjoy the riches[251] of the earth, to the point of being called a drunkard and a glutton.[252] At the same time, he refuses to live his life at the expense of others. He demands a world where the riches of the earth are enjoyed by those who bring them forth. He exposes systemic exploitation to the point of losing his life to the guardians of the system. He refuses to tolerate the bread of the workers of Galilee (the children of Israel) being taken by the merchant dogs of Syro-Phonecia[253] or the temple elite of Jerusalem[254] or the tributary system (soldiers, tax collectors[255] and toll-takers[256]) of Rome.

How do we square our theology of power with a God who "so loved the world"[257] – who loves this planet so fiercely – who is so intently concerned with our living on it well? To start, we can consciously image the qualities of our Creator. We can be passionate about this creation, we can be deeply involved, we can be patient and faithful in our covenant, and we can bear responsibility for the injury our misuse of divine power has caused to this miraculous gift of life.

We may feel that God's prodigious capacity to generate newness frees us from the old messes we have made, but this would be an evasion. Arendt doesn't let us get away with this. Natality and "love for the world" (in the Arendtian sense) are deeply linked. We have a responsibility to future generations to give them a healthy vibrant world that is able to hold the newness that will emerge for them. "It is a promise to the child on behalf of the community . . . that the world will be preserved as a place of appearance for the child's unique capacity to begin[.]"[258]

Theologically, we do not want to kill the body of the world through which God lives and breathes and has being with us. And herein lies our eschatology: we care for the world because it is our purpose to make the world (to make our bodies) a holy temple, a vessel where God can dwell. As we mature in our embodiment of the gift of Original Power, God is more and more and more

present. We experience holiness in our bodies and the body of the earth. God's newness is ever being born through incarnate reality. If we wish to be in relationship with the living God, helping to bear our Source into body,[259] we must reverently care for our own bodies and the physical creation.

This brings our section to a close. We've named seven distortions of creation theology that support the project of domination. First, the blank slate tempts us to expunge the wild, uncontrollable, inbreaking, structure-disrupting[260] dimension of God. Second, many imperial stories begin in violence and dualism, and we may erroneously assume that Genesis does the same. Third, we can become convinced that the goal of creation is to return to our innocent and perfect origins, resulting in coercive efforts at social control. Fourth, through deism, we envisage God as a distant genius tinkerer who made creation and sets it off to unfold on its own. Fifth, we view God as authoritarian and punishing. Sixth, we believe that human beings are deeply and fundamentally flawed from our inception. Seventh, we are indifferent or hostile to the gift of creation. Genesis 1 remains a powerful antidote to these imperial impulses, offering us precise corrections to each distortion.

This biblical story of our origins will ground and orient our theology of power as it develops. In Chapter 2 we will discuss how the demonic is dynamic in the same way that creation is dynamic. It constantly morphs its truth-distorting strategies in an effort to trick us out of our God-given power. It keeps thinking of new ways to convince us to conform our lives to its destructive logic. As stated above, it is a totalizing system with its own creation narratives that justify it. Significant distortions are mentioned here, but the list is not exhaustive. Innovative distortions will keep coming. We need to be vigilant. The Domination System works overtime to insinuate itself into our thought processes. We have to keep our antennae alert to the liberating nature of our biblical creation story, with our critical minds engaged.

A Love Song to the Law

We opened the chapter by proposing that chaos, the watery deep, is actually God's unbounded love – the unincarnate God. In this, we drew upon Jim Olthuis' concept of the "wild spaces of love."[261] We suggested that the philosophical abyss – theological chaos – is not our enemy or God's enemy, but actually the overwhelming unbounded love of God. This is the love that annihilates boundaries, that undoes all structures, and thus scares us. We taste this unbounded love in mystical union and falling deeply in love – the complete loss of boundary. We also start to experience it in panic attacks through the complete loss of our sense of structure and order. Our terror makes this a horror. All our fears rise to the surface causing us to resist and run. Our running terrified from this unboundedness causes psychological suffering. This may be why the most common command we hear in the Bible is "be not afraid." Fear of the void – of the wild spaces of love – is a source of suffering. This fear of God's unboundedness is prevalent biblically. This is why the Israelites tell Moses to ask God to please stop talking to them.[262] This is why the prophets are all a little crazy. As fragile creatures, it is not easy to live one's life too close to God's wild side. And yet this love is entirely trustworthy. It is also this love to which we surrender over and over again in a life of faith.

God is concerned with our well-being and thus establishes the law as a protective boundary for us – a container in which we can grow. Wisdom and the law form a living breathing structure that gives our lives and creation integrity (see Figure 3). In the words of Sylvia Keesmaat: "An ethos of compassion which is biblically based needs to be directed by something, needs to be striving for and constrained by a good creation. . . . [A]n ethos of compassion needs the integrity of creation."[263] Having the right boundaries is essential for our growth. The psalmist says: "The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage."[264] Here is how Wisdom is described:

> Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.
> She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.
> The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding established the heavens;
> by knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.
> My child, do not let these escape from your sight: keep sound wisdom and prudence,
> and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck.
> Then you will walk on your way securely and your foot will not stumble.
> If you sit down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
> Do not be afraid of sudden panic, or of the storm that strikes the wicked;
> for the Lord will be your confidence[.][265]

The key here is that the presence of wisdom and the mediation of the law exist for the sake of liberation. The purpose of the law is creational thriving. Have you ever noticed how different children need different amounts of structure and rules? Some seem to be fine making their own way in the world. Others are lost without strict rules and boundaries. Despite my personal pacifism and love of creative freedom, I have observed that there are some for whom military school – or something strictly disciplined – seems to be a real need. God is a good parent and knows that different people need different boundaries. There is nothing wrong with rules as long as we don't forget the point. The point is thriving. When rules harm or destroy they are no longer useful.

God's word – God's law – is not static words on a piece of paper. It is a living breathing boundary – embedded in Torah and in creation itself – between the immanent and transcendent aspects of God. This is a central gift in God's project of holy home-making – a sweet loving container – a careful, compassionate unfolding – that allows us to relate to God, our cosmic companion[266] – without being blown away by the whole picture.

Torah has always been debated and revised, always been adapted to new circumstances. In teaching us to observe and embrace the signs of the living God in our midst, old rules are relativized or reframed to honor the God who is beyond all rules. So too, life has a relationship between structure and freedom.[267] We can't free ourselves entirely from structure – from law – but as we grow we can keep revising our understanding, and evolving more liberating forms of structure.[268]

Take the ten commandments. First we note that the text places the commandments in the context of liberation. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." Before commandments even start, God wants us to know who God is. God is the one who liberates. This law exists for the sake of liberation. It is about our freedom.

It is common to read the ten commandments as straightforward rules for behavior, e.g., do not kill. George Mendenhall points out a more covenantal way of reading the Hebrew – as fruits of the Spirit.[269] You shall not kill. In other words, through relationship with the living God, you will awaken a deep desire to preserve life. In this reading, the commandments are not so much rules, as a set of benefits that accrue through being connected to the spirit of God. Stick with God, and you shall not find yourself tangled up in all that trouble.

I would argue that both levels of reading are valid. The rules are there for those who need the rules. And the fruits of the spirit are there for those in a different place on their spiritual journey. This is the genius of the law. It grows with us.

The Bible teaches us a God-centered cosmology and history. And within that narrative, a deep set of values are constantly reworked for life's circumstances. We are called to work out our true selves – our God-created selves – in the joys and struggles of daily life. And we are invited to embody a set of values that allows us to embrace the unprecedented.

The author, A.J. Jacobs, a self-proclaimed agnostic, was curious about the question of biblical literalism, and committed to a "radical life experiment" of taking the Bible literally for one year. Then he published his musings on the experience.[270] When he started out he wanted to show how impossible taking the Bible literally is – and to inject some humor – but to his surprise he kept experiencing elements of the sacred and after the year found himself genuinely transformed. He loved keeping Sabbath and tithing and not gossiping and not watching TV (no making images). As

the result he made real changes to his life and revised his own self-definition from "agnostic" to "reverent agnostic." Reflecting on his year, he had this to say:

> What scared me about doing this? I guess how easy it is to become self-righteous. I had to fight it every day. But my Bible year taught me something that I wish I had known for the first 38 years of my life. If you want to be happy, you should pursue other people's happiness. You should do good things for others. It's a paradox, but it works.[271]

It fascinates me that a non-religious person can so earnestly take up what I consider to be a mistaken idea of biblical literalism, and discover in it, the sweetness of God's law.

If we want to explore the beauty of the law, a good place to start is Psalm 19.

> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; the awe of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.[272]

Psalm 19 is an effusive expression of the wonder and beauty and gratitude for the gift of the law. This may seem a bit strange to those of us who are trained to think of the law as rules. But for the ancient Hebrews, the law is not a rigid set of archaic rules. The law is a constantly evolving set of boundaries that help us live in creation productively and joyfully. The law is a living evolving mediator between humanity and God. This understanding of law pushes us deeper – into the divine structures that order our existence – an intelligence in creation that keeps us aligned with the Love that created us.

> Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on God's law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.[273]

I love this image of the well-being offered by the psalmist. Those who meditate upon the law thrive. Like a robust and healthy tree. Rooted deeply in the rich earth. Surrounded with streams of living water. Fresh and alive. Pulling vibrant nourishment up through the trunk and out the branches to shining green leaves. And as if to express delight in this miraculous arrangement, flowers spring forth in an array of color. And in the right season – at the divinely appointed hour – when called by

our extravagant loving Creator – these tender petals transform into delicious fruit, weighing down the boughs with their abundance. Evidence of goodness. The life-giving miracle of creation itself.

And so we bring our exploration of our primordial origins to a close. We have stretched into our cosmological depths, encountering a wild and creative goodness that shapes our earthly home and guides our journey. In the next chapter, our narrative moves into the origins of humanity and our relationship with Original Power.

CHAPTER 2

FROM INNOCENCE TO HEGEMONY

Adam and Eve carved their initials on the back porch
Took a ride in daddy's car and landed in jail.[1]

In the biblical narrative, life unfolds. We start as innocents in a carefully crafted home, deeply in relationship with our Creator. This is what it means to be made in the image of God.[2] God chooses to be imaged, not in static idols, but rather in living breathing human beings. Power is the central quality expressed through our identity and purpose as God's image bearers. We are given the dangerously divine gift of Original Power. The text explains that we are co-creators with dominion.[3] J. Richard Middleton says that human beings have been given "power to share in God's rule."[4] John Wall says that being made in the image of God affirms human capacity to create, in imitation of the Creator. It is imperative for us, as set forth in Genesis, to be generators of the new. He says that we have the responsibility to morally narrate our world into existence in imitation of God who narrates the creation into existence.[5] We are gifted (and intensely challenged) with a capacity to make and to destroy in the created order.[6] This endlessly prolific ability is dangerous for us in our immaturity.

Our embodiment of divine power is a profound responsibility that requires adherence to covenant, willingness to learn, and constant support and correction from our Maker. We thrive when our link to our Source is intact. We are connected like vines to branches to the power that creates universes. We are created co-creators, holding freedom and creativity in our hands. Like a master teacher, the living God remains present, walking with us, providing divine instruction about the life we've been given and the world around us. God engages us in conversation about our

experience, including warning us when we are considering free acts that will lead to suffering. From the beginning, God is not interested in controlling us. God allows us the space to grow into mature souls who participate in the marvels of creation. Along the journey, God longs for us to make wise choices and choose a path of love and peace.

Once we discover that we bear the image of God, the question is, what do we do with our power? We can use this gift in a way that remains deeply connected to our Creator, co-creating to our heart's content. Or we can use it to seize pieces of creation, put up barricades, and shape an illusory shadow world of human control "owned" apart from God. Our first experiment in this choice leads to suffering. Eventually it leads to violence and exclusion.

In this chapter, we explore how the gift of power behaves as it morphs from small indiscretions, to increasingly destructive aggregations, to the experience of transpersonal evil (or the demonic), to a global empire of pain.

Innocence and Instruction

What is our starting point? What is our initial power environment? In Genesis 2, we pause. God is resting from the great burst of energy that gathered the wild waters and made a cosmic home. We are in that day (*yowm*) – that age – when God first made our reality of heavens and earth[7] and we are surveying the results.

What do we see? The next field of potential.[8] The earth. Ready for the hand of the great Homemaker. At this point, there is not much going on except for a mysterious mist or vapor watering everything – a taste of the wild waters of the *tehom* that surround this creation.[9] This creation has holy life flowing in it. If you've gardened, this hazy mist may conjure a sense of fertile potential – a warm wet garden in the dawning morning, brimming with life.

God wants company. God wants more than company. God wants partners in this cosmic venture. And so God forms an earth creature out of the debris of the earthly realm and breathes holy spirit into this new being's nostrils. The result is a sentient, green, fresh, living soul (*nepeš ḥayyâ*).

Then God goes into nesting mode and plants a garden. Of all the proliferating trees available, God chooses the most pleasing, the most beautiful, and the most delicious. Included among these trees are the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.[10] The river of life springs from this garden in Eden (or pleasure), and travels out in the four directions that encompass the world.

Learning to Live in a Fruitful World

The first human being is given this pleasurable garden as home and the responsibility to care for it.[11] Up until this point God is like a lover who builds a house to share with the beloved. Now God also becomes a teacher. By making a being in God's image, God has shared creative power and unleashed the capacity for choice and consequence. Yet the human being remains a child, so far only knowing the beauty and joy of life. Perhaps God wants to protect the new soul from pain for a little longer, like a mother saying, "don't touch the hot stove, you will die!"[12] Or, perhaps God is like a Zen master pushing the baby out of the nest with reverse psychology. It is hard to know the mind of God. But for whatever reason, God says: "You may freely eat of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."[13]

Considering the Canonical Significance of Fruit and Fruit Trees

It is helpful to pause here and consider the canonical significance of fruit and fruit trees. Fruit trees can represent creation itself or the people of *Israel as the microcosm of creation*. In relationship with God, in covenant, Israel produces fruit.[14] Out of relationship with God, Israel is fruitless,

barren, withered. "[T]he fig tree droops . . . and joy withers away among the people."[15] When Israel breaks the covenant, the prophets refer to her as a fruitless fig tree.[16]

Fruit trees represent *peace and prosperity* and a sign of hope: "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near."[17] The fruit tree is also an eschatological symbol for God's generous provision. It is said that each will have her own fig tree[18] and "no one shall make them afraid."[19]

This eschatological reality is not limited to the future. God does not ask the people to wait. Glimpses of creation's ripening can occur in the past and present. Even in conditions of occupation and exile, God guides the people toward making a fruitful life.[20] People of God are perpetually called to live according to God's principles as a sign of eschatological fulfillment amidst broken circumstances.

> 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 'Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 'Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. 'Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'[21]

Biblical economic teaching is rooted in a practical and local understanding of homemaking.[22] Where we love one another and the earth, where we attend carefully to supporting one another in community and putting God at the center of our lives, we can craft good lives even under extreme social and political distress.[23]

God exacts *judgment* through the symbolism of the fruit tree.[24] God strikes vines and fig trees, splinters them and lays them to waste.[25] God sends blight and locust to devour the fig tree.[26] God sends foreign nations in to eat up all the vines and fig trees.[27] Fruit trees figure prominently in the day of judgment.

> All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall wither like a leaf withering on a vine, or fruit withering on a fig tree.[28]

> When I wanted to gather them, says the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them.[29]

The reason for God's judgment is stated directly in Jeremiah: "because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest everyone deals falsely."[30]

God provides a way to avoid judgment, one that has eluded the faithful, both ancient and modern – *restraint*. Through the law, God teaches life-giving boundaries and limits. As described above, our early ancestors were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[31] In Leviticus, we find a model of discipline.

> When you come into the land and plant all kinds of trees for food, then you shall regard their fruit as forbidden; three years it shall be forbidden to you, it must not be eaten. In the fourth year all their fruit shall be set apart for rejoicing in the Lord. But in the fifth year you may eat of their fruit, that their yield may be increased for you: I am the Lord your God. [32]

Restraint as a route to redemption is particularly emphasized in the teachings regarding *first fruits*. As a practice, all Israelite farmers are expected to offer the first fruits of the harvest to God, to ensure that they never forget that God is the source of all prosperity.[33] Bringing forth the first fruits is a sacrificial act of relinquishing the choicest fruits. This annual ritual is a statement of anti-greed – an act of anti-consumerism – an act of covenant – a statement of stopping with enough. Further, at the end of the harvest the fields are not to be utterly emptied. Those that harvest are commanded to leave fruit in the fields for those that have no land to come and glean – "the alien, the orphan, and the widow."[34] The concrete actions that begin and end the harvest are acts of restraint.

In the hands of the prophets, the image of Israelite farmers and their first fruits becomes a metaphor for the role of Israel in God's salvation history. "I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season."[35] God chose Israel to be the first fruits in God's harvest – the coming fullness of all creation. Paul and early church leaders continue this metaphor as the covenant is extended to the Gentiles.[36] Sadly, the faith community of old, the faith communities of the early church, and the faith communities of today, frequently disappoint our divine Teacher. We "consecrate ourselves to a thing of shame"[37] and become drunk and "bloated with rich food."[38] "[T]he official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire."[39] God

comes along seeking fruit and finds an empty field. God cries out in the voice of Micah: "Woe is me! . . . there is no first-ripe fig for which I hunger."[40] Walking the earth again with us, God in Jesus, echoes this frustration as he curses the fig tree before proclaiming judgment on the temple leadership.[41]

Amidst our error and the repeated devastation of judgment, God models the teaching of restraint. Through struggles, a remnant of the faith community is ever preserved and with it the promise of a true harvest. After Jeremiah tells the people that others will come and eat up their fig trees, he adds: "But even in those days, says the Lord, I will not make a full end of you."[42] When Jesus withers the fig tree in Mark, it appears devastatingly permanent. Yet later, after Jesus sees the widow devoured by the temple treasurers and predicts the temple's destruction, he returns to the fig tree.[43] Amidst apocalyptic imagery he promises again that the fig tree will bear fruit.[44] In the book of Revelation we return to the fig tree. Echoing the cursed fig tree in Mark, this fig tree too is followed by the image of mountains being removed to the sea.[45] Here we have a case of late fruits (slow to learn and grow?) in contrast to first fruits. As the martyrs wait through this time of judgment, "the stars of the sky [fall] to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale."[46]

Through all of this biblical symbolism of fruit trees we find the consistent conviction that God holds all power over creation and its fruitfulness, in contrast to the false yet compelling claims of earthly kings and earthly systems of exploitation. The faith community is called to repent, to return to right relationship, and to trust that God will redeem us from violent leaders, as well as our own errors and calamities.[47]

Fruitfulness and Power

What does this review of fruitfulness have to do with our theo-ethical narrative? Following the thematic pattern of the canon, the image of fruitfulness presents a (if not the) central biblical

metaphor for understanding the flow of power into the world. Figure 4 is titled "A Biblical Model of Fruitfulness and Power." In it, the large-scale movement of the biblical narrative (creation, fall, and redemption) is listed down the left hand side. Creation and eschaton are paired, since together they represent the cosmological fullness of life – original and ultimate. On the right are fruit-related metaphors that relate to each stage. Our original and ultimate nature is fruitfulness. Through the fall, in our individual and collective acts of separation, humanity and the earth are made barren.[48] At times, we cover our barrenness with false images of fruitfulness. For instance, throughout the canon, imperial rulers present themselves deceptively as bearers of blessing, resulting in their exposure by the prophets.[49] Through an incarnational process of redemption, we reconnect to the tree of life, our source in God, and become first fruits of the new creation.[50]

Along the bottom of the diagram (Figure 4) I identify three aspects of Original Power that are gifted to humanity: identity, agency, and economy. Identity is how Original Power flows through the image of God to humanity. Agency is our exercise of that power individually, interpersonally, and collectively. It is the oomph we put out into the world. Economy is the systemic organization of power, particularly in relation to unlocking the abundance of the earth to meet human needs and bring pleasure. In creation (and eschatological fulfillment) we experience a state of joyful fruitfulness that is our ground and our birthright. Through the lens of identity, agency, and economy, fruitfulness manifests as dignity, creativity, and extravagance. These are the qualities that God builds into our bodies and our creation home. In the fall – through separation from our Source – the gift of power becomes distorted into the three parallel curses: domination/submission, violence/destruction, and commodification.[51] Notice the dualism created by separation. God becomes an authoritarian dominator, rather than a beloved who strolls in the garden with us. We feel impotent to heal ourselves and the world. We move into a competitive relationship between self and other. Our identity as inseparable equals becomes veiled to our sight. Predatory and victim

relationships emerge. Fear leads to acts of violence, creating hierarchies of identity with their requisite patrons and scapegoats, and converting parts of creation into idols and commodities. Idolatry is at the heart of this view of life. In our dis-eased minds, elements of creation can be segregated from the Source and imagined to have independent power. This is illusory, because there is only one power, and it is God power. In our story of separation, we imagine containing and controlling, buying and selling, little pockets of power to gain advantage. All the while failing to see that we are hooked up to an infinite flow. The more isolated and disconnected we get from our extravagant Creator in our daily living, the more distorted our creative power becomes. The earth gets more and more destroyed and empty and barren.

As our minds heal, we become re-integrated. We mature through an incarnational process and repeatedly repent (turn to covenantal relationship with God again and again). Doing so, we experience God's creational gifts returning to us as co-creativity (with God, others, and the earth), intersubjectivity (a recognition of the constitutional interrelatedness of self and other),[52] and shared abundance. We ripen, as Christ ripened, and the world is transformed.

As we create and destroy and mature in the gift of power, God never breaks covenantal relationship. God the teacher walks with us, showing us the reality of barrenness that we have wrought. God keeps inviting us to grow, to observe, and to learn to use our power with wisdom. We take this journey of the pain and wonder, of differentiation and maturing, for as long as is needed. At some point we are ready to choose to be in a grownup relationship with God, and we turn toward the light. We grow more and more connected to our Creator and life itself through care for the suffering, sharing everything we have, and seeking shalom in our world. Slowly we awaken to our integral relationship to everything. As we move in this direction, we ourselves become first fruits of the new creation. Little by little, we become holy temples where God can dwell, enjoying the pleasures of our cosmic garden home.

Learning to Live in an Interrelated World[53]

God is not only concerned with creativity (fruitfulness), God is concerned about relationship. The first relationship that God establishes for the new earth creature is with the earth itself. The creature (*adam*) and the ground (*adamah*) are profoundly interrelated – of the same substance. This is a relationship of responsibility and care.[54] Next, God wants the earth creature to have a relationship of equals – a partnership.[55] So God brings forward every kind of bird and animal, presenting them. The earth creature then names each animal. That the human can name the creatures signals to the reader that this is a relationship with differing levels of power. The narrative makes the extra point that God honors the names that were offered. It is significant to note that once God offers power, God does not take it away. Humanity is given a dominion that has irrevocable impact on the created order.

While delightful, these animals, amusingly, do not satisfy the requirement for genuine partnership. God sees what is missing and decides to give the human being a relationship of equals – a relationship of shared power and shared responsibility. So God makes a second human being – the first human "other" – out of the same flesh and bone.

The interpretation of this text commonly focuses on marriage, which overly restricts the scope of the text. Given its location in the canon at the founding of life itself, it is appropriate to say that this text establishes the first human relationship of any kind. Marriage is an important form of relationship, yet it is only one example, biblically and in modern life, of a vast array of human relationships. Rather than seeing this text as a statement about marital bonding, we might consider that God is establishing something more foundational about all human relationship.

Creating humanity in relationship from the get-go, implies a constitutional Levinasian intersubjectivity. Building on Levinas, Derrida describes "the failure to glimpse the radical otherness

that structures our existence. . . It is . . . toward a pluralism which does not fuse into a unity that we wish to make our way[.]" He goes on to say there is: "a radical incommensurability between the other who exists before the self, and a self that is broken open, demanded of, or called by the other, before it can hole itself up in the ivory tower of self-sufficiency, self-consciousness, and mastery." There are ontological implications. "[B]efore there is any identity of any kind, there is an other who calls me forth."[56]

In establishing the prototypical human relationship, the text reminds us that human beings are of one flesh.[57] We are inseparable from the other. We are "one flesh" in the sense that Hafiz means when he says: "I have come into the world to see this, humanity drop the sword at the height of their arc of rage, because we have finally realized there is only *one flesh* we can wound."[58]

Human relationships include familial relationships, friendships, relationships with workmates, relationships with immigrants, relationships with strangers, lovers, enemies, and much more. All of these kinds of relationships involve the negotiation of power, a mixture of familiarity and irreducible difference,[59] and experiences of separation and unity.

In the biblical narrative (and our lived experiences) we discover that our greatest learning and growth comes from the exceedingly challenging path of negotiating relationship. Our struggles with relationship help us grow into adults who handle our power with maturity. In the "other" we encounter a mystery, a person of equal God-granted power[60] and dignity with whom we must contend. We must place our view and theirs side by side and learn to live with contradictions. We must learn to see the holy breath of life in them, the image of our Creator. There is much difficulty and beauty in this journey. There is plenty of opportunity to go astray as we will soon see. God set up "this inescapable network of mutuality"[61] from the beginning and intends for us to work it out.

Pausing to Contemplate Essential Innocence[62]

I am now going to suggest something that always gets me in trouble. I am going to suggest that – no matter how worldly you feel, no matter how jaded you feel you've become, how worked over by the evils of this world your tired spirit is, how angry and mean you get some days, or how collapsed and hopeless and just plain hurt you are – at your very core, you are innocent. I am going to suggest that even the most corrupt of leaders, even the most violent of enemies, are also innocent at their cores.

Our biblical narrative establishes this reality. It invites us to ground our lives in a divine context. The radical claim of our faith is that there is more to our story than what we observe in daily life. We are born in a loving mystery. However far we wander, a sighing that is deeper than words – a sweet anguished longing – keeps pulling on us.[63] This is our original innocence – an infinite font that springs from the deepest most mysterious spot in the garden of Eden of our souls. It presses on us from that place we usually avoid like the plague, where, contrary to all our fears, we encounter the miraculous well through which divine life pours. And there is nothing we can do (and nothing that can be done to us) to get rid of it.

Does this mean that we have no responsibility for our choices? Quite the opposite. When God shares power with us, God shares responsibility. We bear the burden of the reality of our lives, including the consequences of our choices, and the effect we have on other human lives. We know we are responsible because we live daily with the consequences.[64] We even share responsibility for the world as it has evolved through millennia around us – with its massive aggregations of pain and abusive power – even though most of it is not personally our fault.

This mystery of responsibility goes even deeper. Having established intersubjectivity – an irreducible relatedness – from the beginning, we find that there is nothing that happens in our lives outside of relationship.[65] All life struggles, from the most global to the most personal, are integrated into the web of human relationships. In this sense, all problems, regardless of how small and hidden

they may feel, are bigger than us.[66] Herein lies the paradox of responsibility. We are responsible for our lives, for the ways we direct the power God has given us – even though the situations we face are never entirely our own – they are intersubjective and thus beyond our control.

Amidst error and the burden of responsibility, we retain an inner core of innocence, our child-of-God-ness, established at the very beginning. Isn't this what Jesus is after, when he tells us to enter the kingdom of God like a child?[67] He is opening us to our deeper innocence until we surrender the illusion that we control our own destinies. We are part of larger mystery – a larger complexity – a larger love – that is not of our own making.

We are humbled by the truth of our own mystery. And in this humility – in this profound, sometimes gut-wrenching, sometimes terrifying, sometimes gentle and tender, recognition of our limitations – we turn to God. Sometimes in desperation from the gutter of our addictions. Sometimes in stillness and calm. Sometimes just at the right moment. Sometimes, like the late fig falling in a winter gale, long overdue. Sometimes openly and freely in our youth. Sometimes with scars, and wrinkles, and grey hair after a lifetime of struggle. And there we find grace. There we find a love so full and so precious and so complete, we know not how to express it in our fragile bodies. There we reclaim our original, primordial, and eternal innocence.[68]

For a time, I shared my home with a friend and her free-spirited five year old daughter. We had endless conversations with her about why clothes were necessary when she went running out the back door into our urban garden to pick berries and play among the fruit trees in full view of myriad neighbors. None of our explanations made the slightest bit of sense to her. I call to mind her laughter as she shrugged off our flawed adult logic, and see our ancient ancestors winking at me. "They were naked in the garden and they were not ashamed."[69]

Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification

Up to this point in our story of power, God has established the basic parameters for key relationships. Between God and humanity, a relation of loving parent and child[70] and a relation of co-creativity have been established. Between the human being and self a relationship of innocence, goodness and dignity has been established. Between human being and "other" human being a relationship of equality and partnership has been established. Between humanity and creation, a relationship of care and responsibility has been established.

Wisdom Offers up a Challenge

In walks Wisdom. Reading canonically, Nicholas Ansell makes the case that the "crafty" serpent is Wisdom stopping by for a visit.[71] According to Ansell, the serpent is not an evil entity or Satan,[72] operating via an untrustworthy aspect of creation in our original garden environment. Rather the first human beings are encountering Wisdom for the first time, calling to them through the voice of creation. Humanity is being tested on our comprehension of God's teaching.[73] We are to subdue creation – that is, not allow creation to rule over us. Human beings have a proper relationship to creation in which we have a position of authority and responsibility.[74] Also, we are to discern questions, and experience learning, in relationship to God. This means trusting God to withhold information and gifts from us that we are not yet ready to receive. Wisdom challenges the newly minted humans to see if we are up to living in a trusting covenant with God,[75] and thus able to live abundantly in our new home.

Wisdom offers a pop quiz on their first lessons. "So did God say you could not eat of any fruit tree in the garden?" And the newly schooled human creature answers: "God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'"[76]

Now for the second test on the quiz.[77] Have the new human beings learned to trust (or place faith in) God? In my skepticism about dominating power creeping into our theology, I want to

emphasize that this is about *trust* and not *obedience*. I am convinced that our preoccupation with obedience comes from a distortion of God and power. The subtext of the obedience line of thinking is that God wants or needs affirmation of God's dominance and our submission. This imagined need for hierarchical control runs counter to God's whole project. From the beginning God has been engaged in an exercise of sharing power. God has shown no interest in creating relations of domination and submission.[78] Where differences in knowledge or capacity exist – such as between God and humanity, or between humanity and animals – a relation of *care* is established. In our relationship to creation we are obliged to be trustworthy. The one with more capacity or knowledge has the greater obligation. The one with the greatest capacity and knowledge of all is God who is always trustworthy.

So God steps out of view, and Wisdom is about to find out if we are trustworthy. "Oh no, you won't die. God knows that if you eat that fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."[79] This is a monumental moment in human development – the moment where the human being realizes that she can say no to God. It is like the two year old who experiences her own autonomy for the first time. I can say no to my mother! A whole world of personal power opens up. I have freedom and choice.

She does the natural thing. She tries out this new freedom. She sees (*ra'ah*) and takes (*laqach*).[80] This Hebrew construct – seeing and taking – sums up biblical idolatry. Some person or thing is desirable and appealing. It looks good and beautiful. We want it. This wanting to possess is the imperial impulse.[81] Imperialism starts right there, in the heart. We move from desire to action. And we take it. Now we discover an irony. Apart from God, the thing we wanted to control now controls us. It has become our god. The process of addiction shows how this works. First, we want a substance (drugs, alcohol, food). We feel in control. Then our desire for the substance takes over

our life and all our choices.[82] For this reason, God guides us to stay away from things that will harm us and to wait to receive all good gifts with God, in God, and through God, only when we are ready.

In the journey to maturity, we err repeatedly. We see and take, alienating ourselves from our Source. We destroy good gifts and lose much. The one thing we can never lose – even when we try – is our relationship with God. God relentlessly pursues us, lovingly showing us what in creation is good for us at a given moment in our lives. There are beautiful dimensions of creation that in our particular state of development are not good for us. They may be good for us later when we spend more time with God, and learn some more lessons.[83]

So here we have our first failure of hospitality and the pursuant damage to relationships. The most heartbreaking damage is to the relationship with God. In a poignant scene, God is walking into the garden in the cool of the evening,[84] looking forward to seeing the earth couple. We get the gut-wrenching sense that something is wrong as God asks: "Where are you?" We miss the point if we pursue this as an epistemological question. How could God not know where they are? This is not about what God knows and does not know. This is an emotional statement. We have to hear the accusation in it. God feels betrayed.[85]

And now we have to face the fallout of our choice.[86] Their eyes are opened to the possibility of separation and its misery.[87] The relationship to the self is damaged. The human beings are hiding, and feeling fear and shame for the first time.[88] The partner relationship between self and other is damaged. They have created the first alliance among thieves. They have aggregated their power for the first time against God. They have caused harm to the "one flesh" that connects them through scapegoating. The relationship between humanity and creation is damaged. The beautiful gift of God (fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) has been separated from the Giver and turned into an empty commodity. Through "seeing and taking" the goodness of Original Power gets twisted. Co-creativity becomes painful labor. Fruitfulness turns to barrenness. The collective damage

is the real consequence of employing the divine gift of power in a disconnected ego-centric and fearful manner.

Now we come to the pivotal point in this ancient drama where the sharing of power is tested. Will God now take back power and fix everything? No. God wants a real relationship with responsible human beings of character, and this will never occur if God treats us like spoiled children whose parents pay lavishly to keep them from ever experiencing the consequences of their actions. Will God abandon us? Also, no. God will keep covenant even when we break it, maintaining the proper relationship of trustworthiness and care.[89] God protects us from accessing of the tree of life in our dangerously immature state.[90] And in an act of excruciating tenderness, God sews garments to cover our naked human bodies.

The Accumulating Effects of Pain and Separation

Because we are constitutionally intersubjective, our actions have consequences that impact others. There is no way to isolate our choices as they ripple through the world around us. We suffer for things we have not personally done. So too others suffer for things we have done. Biblically the process moves from seeing to taking to blaming. From here things spiral down further. Pain aggregates and travels through our human interconnectedness across distances and through generations.[91] Cain feels jealousy and murders Abel. Then he denies his responsibility and relationship to his brother.[92] The consequence is a deepening chasm in all relationships – greater isolation and pain. God will not take his choices and his path from him. Still, even though Cain refuses to walk with God, God keeps walking with Cain[93] and protecting him.[94]

The Bible narrates an expanding downward spiral of idolatry, [95] broken relationships, separation from blessing, and shared suffering.[96] The brokenness of life moves through our intersubjective reality like wildfire, becoming utterly overwhelming.[97] Creation gets so out of balance

that a flood sweeps over the world.[98] God decides to save and protect creation, by saving a remnant through Noah. In the aftermath, God re-establishes covenant with all living creatures.[99] This does not end idolatry. Indeed, in our immature state, human beings continue to test the gift of power in idolatrous ways. What started as two persons against God in the garden aggregates into larger and larger alliances until the whole world is allied, speaking one language, and building an imperial project against God.[100] As expressed in Chapter 1, it is structured into creation that humanity's power is inextricably indebted to God power. Thus, creative efforts that grow increasingly separated from God's grace – from the animating presence of Original Power – while they may stand for a bit, will, in direct correlation to their attempted autonomy, inevitably collapse and be scattered.[101]

Descent into Poverty, Violence and Empire

In this section, we move from humanity's origins and continue to trace the temporarily damaging side[102] of the trajectory of the gift of power. Here we connect small scale errors such as personal and communal idolatry and commodification with the emergence of large scale devastations including the demonic and empire.

We start by setting a framework of key terms with Hannah Arendt, specifically, power, strength, force, violence, and terror.[103] Despite being formed in the context of the Holocaust, her definitions are apt both for biblical encounters with the demonic and contemporary encounters with post-September 11th globalized empire. I will present her definitions and then suggest some modifications.

Arendt defines *power* as the human capacity to act in groups. Power disappears when the group stops functioning. Power is differentiated from *strength*, which is a capacity to act that is found within the innate character of the individual. Arendt reserves the term *force* for "the energy released by physical or social movements" such as "forces of nature" or "forces of circumstances."[104]

Authority is something that people can invest into persons or offices. "Its hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed."[105] Lastly, Arendt defines violence. For her, *violence* is instrumental; it is the attempt to multiply strength through the use of implements.

> Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. . . Violence can destroy power; it is utterly incapable of creating it.[106]
>
> Out of the barrel of a gun grows the most effective command; resulting in the most effective and most perfect obedience. What never can grow out of it is power.[107]

Arendt describes *terror* as the condition that occurs after violence has destroyed all power, yet remains in control. She goes further to say that in order for terror to go forward, society has to be thoroughly fragmented and every form of opposition ended.[108]

> The decisive difference between totalitarian domination, based on terror, and tyrannies and dictatorships, established by violence, is that the former turns not only against its enemies but against its friends and supporters as well, being afraid of all power, even the power of its friends . . . when the police state begins to devour its own children . . . when power disappears entirely.[109]

Arendt believes that all political institutions are held up by the "living power of the people."[110] Once this power is destroyed by violence the institution decays and dies. The commands of violence only remain effective if there is someone left who is willing to obey them. Purveyors of violence intuitively know its limits. Thus invaders will immediately work to set up localized power bases within the ranks of the invaded people to shore up a foundation for their dominion.[111] Violence exhausts and destroys power; thus ultimately destroying the source of its own existence. In Arendt's words, "violence itself results in impotence."[112]

While agreeing with most of *On Violence,* I find Arendt's definition of violence less helpful than her other definitions. For our purposes, I will propose an alternate definition that, I believe, is in keeping with Arendt's line of thinking. Arendt claims that violence by definition is instrumental. It is the extension of strength by means of implements. This definition is taken from the perspective of the agents of violence. It is a top/down perspective.[113] For our purposes, and in keeping with our

liberationist orientation, it makes sense to approach the question of violence from the bottom – turning it around and starting with the victim of violence. From this angle, I propose that violence is an action or complex of actions (or a lack of action[114]) that de-humanizes – that robs rightful strength from another human being. This de-humanization may be accomplished with implements or weapons. It may also be accomplished with cultural, economic and political systems – social, cultural, and political implements. Racism is violence. Heterosexism is violence. Poverty is violence.[115]

As Martin Luther King Jr. found out when he left the south and came to the purportedly un-racist north, violence is elusive. In contrast to literal lynchings, institutional violence can evade the naked eye. It slips from our fingers just as we reach out to grab it. So, we cannot limit our definition to overt displays of violence. We need a definition that can lead us to its subterranean manifestations. For this reason, I find it most enlightening to determine the presence of violence by witnessing its effects upon persons. If a person is depleted, suffering, hungry, broken, or de-humanized in any manner – she stands before us as evidence of violence. If the victim is a battered woman, then the means of violence and the responsible person are fairly obvious (although more elusive and complex forms of systemic violence are certainly also at play). If the victim is a sick and hungry child on the streets of a blighted neighborhood, then we find ourselves faced with direct evidence of violence but the responsible persons and the means of violence are not so immediately apparent.

Arendt's definition of power works well for this work. As she observes, the well of power resides in the people. Though I do want to extend her observation into the theological, by stating that people power is the inextinguishable gift from God. It is God's power shared with us.

Scapegoating

In the garden, and with Cain and Abel, scapegoating becomes a key mechanism of evasion. The damaging trajectory of Original Power is set off by scapegoating. This seemingly self-preserving but ultimately disastrous decision becomes a central vehicle that moves individuals and communities from personal sin to collective violence. What starts as personal error (sin) moves through our human intersubjectivity. This shadowy sense of separation grows and gathers momentum like panic moving through a mob.[116] At a certain point, our collective fear (imagined apartness from love) develops a transpersonal quality.[117] Like the boys in the *Lord of the Flies*,[118] in our immaturity, we focus our collective fears onto a projection. In the case of the boys, it is a beast. Biblically, this projection is called the demonic or Satan.[119] Tragically, our response to our projection is very tangible. Our organized fears lead us to physical and emotional violence. In the *Lord of Flies*, the boys get more and more out of their right minds, torturing the "weaker" children. In the biblical narrative (and modern reality), weaker populations get sacrificed in wars and imperial endeavors.[120]

My understanding of scapegoating is consonant with that of René Girard.[121] Scapegoating involves substituting victims for the real target of anger and frustration, on personal and community-wide levels. Using "rituals of expulsion" to identify and expel a victim (from families or communities up to genocides) is a mechanism for restoring calm and unanimity. By creating "a wave of opinion" against the victim through a process of "collective transference," fragmenting groups can become reconciled.

Girard describes the process as "mimetic contagion," that is, an accelerating mirroring of behavior. Jesus strategically stops this process when he asks the person without sin to throw the first stone. The most difficult step is the first step – the one without a model.[122] Once the model is there, whether it be violent and non-violent, it is increasingly and easily imitated. A mob mentality catches fire.[123]

Scapegoating is a mechanism for demonic delusions to take root in the collective consciousness. Leaders with imperial ambitions step in, poisoning the environment with fear, convincing people to hand over their God-given power. Once populations consent to scapegoating, we are ripe for exploitation.[124] What starts as a small deception, grows to transpersonal proportion.

Jesus and the Demonic[125]

Studying Jesus' encounters with the demonic, we discover that there is a connection between demons (*daimonion*) and unclean spirits (*pneuma akatharton*) and a larger system of violence referred to as Satan (*satanas*) or Beelzebul (*Beelzeboul*). It is this complex of death-dealing forces that causes physical and mental illness, as well as economic exploitation and the tragic withholding of creation from its rightful heirs (all of God's children). It is these forces that lead to greed and exploitation and cause fear. These forces lead to hopelessness and despair. The same forces of death overtake the epileptic child,[126] extract resources from peasant communities, burn down homes and villages as a deterrent, and nail Jesus to the cross. In this narrative of power, the word "demonic" points to a unified interrelated distortion of the created order, taking form dynamically in particular events.[127] Due to the intersubjectivity that is the structure of created life, a discrete manifestation of disorder, brokenness, illness, pain, or oppression cannot be strictly isolated from all other suffering, error and sin. So when Jesus faces a victim of possession, Jesus faces the totality of Satan.[128] Each exorcism is then a substantive undermining of the forces of death that hold together the Domination System.[129]

While this may sound strange to us, it is perfectly clear to first century political and religious leaders. The authorities do not write off Jesus' actions as the privatized healings of a compassionate wayfarer; they recognize the implications for the imperial social order and feel threatened.[130] Their fear is well founded. Through these public displays, Jesus is undermining the peasants' faith in the authority of the major institutions and their designated spokespersons.[131] He soundly demonstrates

that the chief priests and scribes do not hold a monopoly on the interpretation of Torah, nor do they hold a monopoly on God's power to heal, to exorcize demons, or to make the land abundant. As Arendt explains, it is the crowds who hold the power. When the people withdraw trust from existing structures, their power is depleted. The only vehicle left for the leaders is violence, which is the sign of a desperate lack of power, and the vehicle of destroying any residual power that may be left.

Jesus, through parable and performance art[132], is exposing the structure of domination to masses of struggling people on whom Rome feeds. He is making the devastating claim that the religious structure on which they base their lives has been co-opted by systems of patronage. Roman overlords are using their trusted leaders and teachers to maintain their hegemony. When Jesus breaks the spell, people stop believing in the religious authorities, and the tributary system[133] begins to lose its purchase at the local level. In his ministry, Jesus pulls on a thread and the imperial system begins to unravel.

While this intersection between the personal and political is present in all of Jesus' healings and exorcisms, it is particularly highlighted in the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac.[134] The systemic issue of violent Roman occupation is made literal when the demoniac identifies himself as "Legion" – the word for a Roman military unit.[135] Legion reveals that his personal suffering represents the suffering of an entire oppressed community when he says of himself: "for we are many."[136]

Paul Hollenbach convincingly shows that the presence of demoniacs can serve as a communal coping strategy for violent occupation.

> Situations of social tension . . . are often indicated as the causal context of possession: class antagonisms rooted in economic exploitation, conflicts between traditions where revered traditions are eroded, colonial domination, [and] revolution.[137]

He explains that across times and cultures the human behaviors associated with possession increase under the conditions of colonial occupation. The possessed (or occupied) person (or people) "develops a kind of divided mind."[138] Allowed no way to manifest their full identity or speak truth, people become divided against themselves. When one would risk her life by asserting her identity or speaking out against abuses, possession becomes a safe way to retain and express judgment against the lies. The demoniac can be written off by the principalities and powers – it is just the voice of a demon.

Successful oppressive regimes understand that the frustration of the people must be expressed. Allowing the continuance of demoniacs (and other impotent forms of expression) ensures that the collective frustration is not released in ways (such as violent revolution or active non-violent resistance) that are threatening to their hegemony.

Another manifestation of the systemic quality of exorcism is the judgment on the temple in Mark 11. Jesus casts out (*ekballo*) the money changers in the temple in the same way he casts out demons from oppressed persons. Behind the cases of individual suffering that Jesus encounters is the larger oppressive political and economic system maintained through patronage and violence by the Roman Empire.

Like Creation, the Demonic is Dynamic

Seeing and taking, scapegoating and violence, get inscribed into imperial structures. Feeding off the source of life, these structures have the same dynamic properties as creation itself. They morph and change. Those that put their trust solely in laws, penalties, prisons, anti-terrorism measures, and more subtle and complex forms of social engineering fail to recognize that evil, like creation, is dynamic. It cannot be contained so easily. No fixed set of rules will ensure our safety. Worse yet, evil finds ways of inhabiting rules – ways of inscribing itself in our social, cultural, and

political patterns and structures.[139] Law and order itself can become evil.[140] Systems and structures are not safe havens. In fact, they are prone to evil on scales beyond that of the individual human imagination, and they deceive us and trap us in ways that make it extremely difficult to extricate ourselves.

If we take seriously that evil can and does inhabit human structures, then as Christians we must be relentlessly discerning about our relationships to our government, our economy, and our organized religion. We cannot take for granted that particular structures, however well-ordered and beneficial, are bastions against an outer evil. We become susceptible to this erroneous assumption when we are convinced that democracy is an inner force for good against an outer evil to be found in other "totalitarian" governing structures. Or capitalism is an inner force for good against other economic structures like "communism" which are havens for evil. Or Christianity is an inner force for good against other religious structures like Islam which hold only evil.

If only it were so easy to contain the demonic. Just as creation contains the dynamic and living quality of God and thus cannot be pinned down or fixed, so our shadowy projections are also dynamic. Fallenness pervades our lives. It lives in our enemies and it lives inside us. The demonic is present in democracy and totalitarianism, capitalism and communism, Christianity and Islam. We can't escape easily. There is no slate of guidelines – no set of principles, no magic words or rituals – that will keep us free from error, free from the evil of the world.

Some guidelines are more liberating than others. I am a fan of democracy. The guideline to "love our enemies," many would agree, is a major advance over "an eye for an eye," which itself is a major advance over escalating retribution. Still, as we construct a biblically shaped theo-ethical narrative of power, we acknowledge that conformity to rules and structures, however life-supporting they may be, is no protection. Evil is ever morphing and changing.[141] We proclaim, with our ancestors, and with Jesus, that the only safe haven is the living God – the narrow gate, the eye of the

needle. We place our fragile trust in God's compassion and God's counter-intuitive call upon our lives. Only a vital relationship with the living God – only the moment to moment struggle to conform our living bodies to the active will of God – will protect us.

Empire

Gathering enough energy, consent, and power (via projection) from the well of the people, a transpersonal demonic order grows into a totalized phenomenon. It becomes a pervasive shadow side to reality – a devastating comprehensive alternative narration of existence competing for our allegiance against God's extravagantly beautiful, diverse and creative story. This is what Walter Wink calls the Domination System.[142] Walter Rauschenbusch calls it the kingdom of evil.[143] Emphasizing the extreme suffering of humanity, animals, and the earth – the horror inflicted on our creation home and its inhabitants – I call our current global predicament an empire of pain. This transpersonal globalizing shadow order deceitfully offers us security, seducing us with shiny objects and terrifying us with displays of shock and awe.

Corporations and Empire

Corporations are central to the globalizing imperial reality of the twenty-first century.[144] Wendell Berry says that we in the developed world have "given our proxies to corporations to produce and provide all of [our] food, clothing, and shelter" including "entertainment, education, child care, care of the sick and the elderly" and many other needs we once met inside our communities.[145] According to feminist ethicist, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, the corporate system has the effect of "disabling our moral agency."[146] We no longer pay attention to how our basic needs are getting met. We don't think about who grows our food. Are they treated well? Are their practices good or bad for the environment? Our lives have become so complicated that we can't worry about that, so we trust corporations to handle it.[147]

Unfortunately, corporations are not human beings; they are legal structures. They have no concern for human community. Corporations exist to maintain themselves. They exist to gather wealth. The corporate complex seeks to extract whatever money, resources, and talent it can from every community it can, globally. Wendell Berry tells us that:

> A corporation, essentially, is a pile of money to which a number of persons have sold their moral allegiance. [But], unlike a person, a corporation does not age. It does not arrive, as most persons finally do, at a realization of the shortness and smallness of human lives; it does not come to see the future as the lifetime of the children and grandchildren of anybody in particular. It can experience no personal hope or remorse, no change of heart. It cannot humble itself. It goes about its business as if it were immortal, with the single purpose of becoming a bigger pile of money.[148]

The corporate complex behaves like a parasite.[149] It serves as an elaborate mechanism with multiplying tendrils for taking resources from every corner of the globe and filtering them up to the very richest people on earth.

Surveillance and Empire

Michel Foucault describes "the diabolical aspect" of power as "a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised . . . it becomes a machinery that no one owns."[150] Foucault defines a progression of social/political power from a monarchal sovereign model, in which a king figure demands periodic signs of loyalty and tithes, toward a disciplinary model, in which a system of surveillance ensures conformity at a microcosmic level – systematically tracking time, labor, bodily conformity, etc.[151] The former model permits a kind of independence over one's life assuming general requirements, such as tribute, are met on a periodic basis. The latter – which measures the "time and labour" that is "extracted from bodies" – is inescapable. One's life is watched and governed.[152] In its undeveloped and unsophisticated manifestations this approach can be complicated and costly, as with the concept of the TIPS program here in the US, where it was proposed that one in ten Americans be on the government payroll as overseers of the other nine.[153] When it becomes more developed and inscribed into the culture, it can be quite efficient. We oversee ourselves.

Totality and Empire

Keesmaat and Walsh define empire in *Colossians Remixed*. They say that "empires are totalizing by definition. In the words of the psalmist, imperial 'mouths lay claim to heaven and their tongues take possession of the earth (Psalm 73:9).'" They name four characteristics of empires. First, empires are "systemic centralizations of power." Second, they are "secured by structures of socioeconomic and military control." Third, they are "religiously legitimated by powerful myths." And, fourth, they are maintained by a "proliferation of imperial images that capture the imagination of the population."[154]

I take empire to be the most comprehensive category for understanding the experience of evil in the biblical canon and in our lives. Empire is the name for the increasing complexity and relationality of distortion that emerges alongside the increasing complexity and relationality of creation itself. Empire is a distortion that touches everything in creation – that moves through the interconnectedness and the interdependence of everything that exists in form. Empire is the ever evolving, aggregating and complexifying destructive totality, which results from a multi-dimensional cascade of error caused by "seeing and taking" – that is, acting on the imperial impulse as the first human beings did in the garden. Fears that morph into larger-than-human demonic forces, that in turn get more and more organized, manifesting as a totalizing and encompassing shadow view of creation, a version of reality that competes with God's story and masks our relationship with the radiant and fruitful home gifted to us by our Creator.

Empires Collapse

When we understandably look for security in life, we are prone to gravitate to imperial power. Our biblical narrative stands as warning. Imperial power may impress in the short-term; but it is built on stolen power, becoming more and more closed off to the source of life.[155] It is a Babel

project destined to fall. The more it destroys the very life upon which it feeds, the more collapse becomes inevitable.

By contrast, the seemingly "weak" power of Christ's love is indestructible, enduring even death. The false claims of the Roman Empire to be a source of power, wealth, and peace are consistently exposed by the ministry of Jesus[156] – perhaps most paradigmatically in the temptation story,[157] where demonic order attempts to convince Jesus of its reality and superior power. In contrast to our early ancestors in the garden, Jesus sees through the lies and escapes error.

In another key example, the Marcan Jesus gives us a roadmap to help us understand the relationship between the demonic and God.

> How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.[158]

Here we learn that the demonic is not a freestanding and independent power. Rather, it is a co-opting of God's power (freely given by God in creation to God's children) that has been turned back against God. This condition cannot stand, since the false power is attacking its own Source. Divided against itself, it will fall.

We can conclude that the demonic is not an original force that opposes God. The Source is in no danger. There is no authentic contention for power. There is only a choice. Will we as God's children rest our lives in the Source of power? Or will we be tempted by imposters with dramatic claims that are destined to exhaust themselves? If there is a battle, it is fought within our own immature souls as we struggle to resist our fear, to reject false powers, and to remain in the wild and generative unpredictability of God.

Jesus does not stop with a theological treatise on the relationship of the demonic to God. He pushes his observation directly into the political circumstances in his midst. In the "binding of the strong man" passage, we can read the house as the temple. The house is being robbed. In Mark 11

Jesus refers to the temple as a den of thieves. He explicitly states that the temple leaders, those responsible for the house, are robbers. This has shock value because it is commonly understood that Roman authorities are stealing from the children of Israel. To call Rome a robber would make sense. It is a significant accusation to say the keepers of Israel's law are in collusion with the theft. Those entrusted with protection have relinquished their responsibilities and are harming the most vulnerable in their charge.

Ched Myers sees Jesus declaring "ideological war" against the scribal establishment that enforces political and economic hegemony. In his model, Jesus is the one plundering the house/temple.[159] I agree with Myers that the passage is an indictment of hegemonic structures and the leaders who maintain them. While coming to that same conclusion, contra Myers, I see Jesus as the one bound.[160] He is bound by children of God (given authentic power to bind and to loose[161]) who reject his life-giving teachings, and instead choose to utilize their God-given inheritance of power to fuel hegemonic structures. I find this reading strengthened by the fact that the term ισχυρος (Greek for strong – strong enough to cast out demons) is used to describe Jesus in the opening of the Gospel.[162] John proclaims that one is coming who is ισχυρος.[163] The same term describes the bound strong man. Further the word for binding (δεο) is later used to describe the imprisonment of both John[164] and Jesus.[165] δεο is also used to describe the binding of the Gerasene demoniac.[166] So, human beings, who have been given power as inheritors of God, have the power to bind and loose within creation. We even have the power to bind the strong man – Jesus himself. We can reject Jesus and his teachings. We can even torture and kill him.

We can also bind those ordained to represent God's ways on earth, the temple leaders and religious authorities. The Roman elite of Jesus' day bound God's representatives on earth (temple leaders, teachers, Jesus) and plundered God's house (the temple and the people and land of Israel).[167] The temple (that should have been Israel's bulwark against imperial values) becomes the agent of

Rome's endless demonic hunger to suck resources from the poorest of the poor, ending their independence and leaving them landless and in debt slavery. In this way, the Roman Empire, a demonic manifestation, feeds on the authentic power of God while rejecting the purposes of God. In binding up truth and replacing it with lies (taking religious structures designed to serve the people of God and converting them into systems that enslave), empire starts disconnecting from Source and moves along the path of exhausting itself.[168] Structures, like the temple and the Roman Empire, which separate from the living Spirit and aims of God, and which thereby divide against themselves, eventually fail and fall.[169]

Figure 5 traces the trajectory from innocence to hegemony to collapse. We begin in innocence, receiving the dangerous and divine gift of Original Power. An imperial impulse leads to "seeing and taking." Relationship to self, other, and God is damaged as the gift of life is stolen, appropriated, and turned into a commodity. Blame follows, then the feeling of nakedness and scarcity, then fear, then violence. Through our intersubjectivity, our fears spread and grow, until they develop into a shared projection – gaining a transpersonal quality that we call demonic. Transpersonal fears get inscribed into systems and institutions growing into a totalizing system. In its effort to perpetuate itself, the system extinguishes people that reveal the reality of universal circulating power.[170] In turning against its own Source, the system cuts off its connection to Original Power, and begins to collapse.[171]

Closing

As we start to comprehend the reality of power we've been granted by God in our biblical story, and our potential to cause destruction, we may feel uncomfortable. We may prefer to view ourselves as powerless. We may prefer to do less thinking about the big picture, and to live a simple life. We may prefer to stay in polite circles, where such matters are not discussed openly. We may

prefer to contain our response to the suffering around the world that results from demonic power and globalizing empire into once-a-year telethons supporting people too far away to touch. We may not want to look directly at the reality of pain in our world – even less, consider ourselves responsible.[172]

While many of us who claim to be Christian cover our eyes, hold our noses, and keep on collaborating (actively and passively, consciously and unconsciously), imperial devastations expand.[173] Huge swaths of factory farms are so contaminated with antibiotic waste that farmers are literally spraying their overflowing cesspools of toxic sludge into the air to get rid of it.[174] Children are shooting each other in our streets.[175] In our desperate insatiable need for fuel we are drilling unfathomable depths, destroying centuries old fishing industries and entire ecosystems[176] and creating manmade earthquakes.[177] McFague reminds us that we need to expose our destruction of creation as we wrestle with our theology.

> [T]heology ought . . . to underscore and elaborate on the myriad ways that we personally and corporately have ruined and continue to ruin God's splendid creation – acts which we and no other creature can knowingly commit. The present dire situation calls for radicalizing the Christian understanding of sin and evil. Human responsibility for the fate of the earth is a recent and terrible knowledge; our loss of innocence is total, for we know what we have done.[178]

Through the immature childhood of our humanity we have misused this gift of divine power. While our original innocence can never be totally eradicated,[179] it is the concurrent claim of this biblical theology of power, that we cannot escape the devastating consequences of our collective action (and inaction).

Proceeding from this lament and confession, we move to the next chapter where we focus our attention on the particular predicament of middle agents in biblical and contemporary imperial structures.

CHAPTER 3

THE PREDICAMENT OF MIDDLE AGENTS

Yes you who must leave everything that you cannot control.
It begins with your family, but soon it comes around to your soul.
Well I've been where you're hanging; I think I can see how you're pinned:
When you're not feeling holy, your loneliness says that you've sinned.[1]

In our evolving theo-ethical narrative of power, we moved from original innocence, through idolatry, scapegoating, and violence, into the complex predicaments of hegemony and empire. In this chapter, we socially locate middle agents in globalizing power structures, examining the question of how we are pinned.

Gandhi describes how miniscule minorities establish control over massive majorities.

> It is as amazing as it is humiliating that less than one hundred thousand white men would be able to rule three hundred and fifteen million Indians. They do so somewhat undoubtedly by force but more by securing our cooperation in a thousand ways and making us more and more helpless and dependent on them as time goes forward.[2]

How does a minority maintain control in a society with one extravagantly rich person for every forty people in abject poverty?[3] It takes more than violence.

This chapter discusses a consistent strategy in imperial structures that can be analyzed in Jesus' first century context and in our present globalizing context. The top of the spectrum prefers not to directly manage the system that extracts wealth from the poor on their behalf. They instead achieve the desired result through a system of cascading layers of patrons and clients. Bits of privilege are doled out in exchange for loyalty. The patron-client arrangement creates a protective (and protected) layer between marginalized majorities and the minority elite.[4] Those of us that live in this protective/ed layer do the hands-on work of moving wealth and power from the many to the

few. In our biblically-shaped narrative of power, I am calling those of us that occupy this stratum of the imperial power structure, middle agents.[5]

Who are today's middle agents? We are not the global elite who meet in Davos every year, treating the world as their personal playground, strategizing methods for accumulating more wealth, and determining the fate of billions of human beings.[6] Nor are we on the streets in Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Haiti or the many places in the world that form the pulse of mass social movements today.[7] We are sandwiched in the middle of this global power structure. We keep a roof over our heads and feed our children by conforming to the global regime. And we stay sane by remaining as blind as possible to its realities.[8] We do not allow cameras into the factory farms that produce our food. We have elaborate media establishments that hide our devastating impact on the laborers of the world. We are surrounded by stories that explain the need for people to drive chemicals deep into the earth and to blow the tops off mountains.[9] The 24/7 news cycle, owned by the two percent,[10] generates an incessant and hypnotizing narrative[11] – distorting the world, numbing the pain, and rendering the majority invisible – to keep us on board.

The Role of Middle Agents in Imperial Regimes

The principle of middle agency claims that we are more than inhabitants of this regime; we are integral to it. We keep the imperial project moving, much like the Herodians, merchants, religious leaders, and tax collectors kept the first century Roman regime functioning in first century Galilee. Like Esau trading his birthright for a pot of porridge,[12] middle agents trade in our divine birthright as human beings gifted with Original Power – relinquishing our identity as people of dignity and depth, heirs to the abundance of creation – for a secure location in the system. Forgetting our scope and destiny, we take a few crumbs of privilege and do our part to sustain an anemic shadow order.

Middle agents hold the system together. We are roped into our roles using techniques such as patronage, fear, and scapegoating. Many of us do this passively and unconsciously. As a modestly paid pastor in the United States, I have grown accustomed to a standard of life that is unimaginable in most of the rest of the world. I have a home and a garden. I have piles of education and enjoy enriching cultural experiences all the time. I eat food everyday.[13] I've grown strangely accustomed to hysterical voices on giant glowing screens in public spaces warning me that there are terrorists all around who hate me for my freedoms – intermixed with the mindless banter of "reality" TV and American Idol. Meanwhile, in actual reality, neighbors in upstate New York get up in the morning and go to work at Hancock Airforce Base in Syracuse and murder my Pakistani sisters and brothers with unmanned drones.[14] I am supposed to look the other way and thank God I have a decent life. As middle agents, we are supposed to keep our heads down, manage the system, and be glad we have shelter and food for our children. Don't thank God; thank the "job creators."[15]

Within the category of middle agent, I identify three subcategories. There are *active middle agents*. Active middle agents explicitly manage the imperial order for their benefactors. Examples include political, economic and military leaders. These are the architects and evangelists of the imperial narrative. Active middle agents have attained a high status and are well compensated for their efforts.

A second category is *passive middle agents*. Passive middle agents don't think much about their role. They live off the imperial order, blindly receiving basic social privileges. They internalize the public image of peace and security, and politely avert their eyes from the collateral damage. They have found a niche in the empire that works for them, so they choose not to over-analyze things. These are the people who live off the empire's largesse, consuming bread and circuses. The majority of those living in the world are not sociopaths, yet an alarming number of us contribute our life energies, more or less unthinkingly, to sociopathic structures.

A third category is *insider collaborators*. These are members of struggling communities that imperial regimes are occupying. Insider collaborators suppress the community (and manage the extraction of resources) on behalf of their occupiers. To make sense, this category must be further broken down by class and power.[16] Some are collaborating willingly and some by force. There are differences between an indigenous person forced into a paramilitary group as a soldier and tasked with violently suppressing the dissent of his own people and a person working as a manager of the military contractor that provides his weapons. They are both middle agents in the "totalizing" reality of the Domination System, but their locations and pressures, their power and potential empowerment, and the opportunities and risks of resistance are quite different.

To oversimplify, we can recognize at least two subcategories of insider collaborators. The first subcategory is wealthy leaders. In the first century this includes the Herodians and the high priests (see Figure 6). In our 21st century global empire, this subcategory includes leaders in "developing" nations that collaborate with U.S and global imperial interests for personal benefit against their own people. The second subcategory of insider collaborators comes directly from the ranks of the majority poor. While their willingness to take jobs as soldiers and tax collectors and enforcers of imperial policies is viewed by their own people as betrayal, we must consider that they are struggling to survive and are easily bought off (or may be coerced more directly).

Having laid out a broad framework of categories of middle agency, we now fill out the frame with first century and twenty-first century examples. The examples are described in summary in the text below. For the more complete discussion, see Appendix 4: Middle Agents and Imperial Structures in the First and Twenty-first Centuries.

Middle Agents in First Century Galilee

Figure 6 shows the arrangement of middle agents in the Roman imperial occupation of Galilee.[17] In the Galilean context, 50-65% of the wealth is controlled by 2% of the population.[18] Wealth runs in a tributary fashion via taxes, tolls, rents, and tithes[19] from the land and the labor of the majority through a cascading network of privilege, and eventually to Rome. Debt instruments and land foreclosure[20] serve to remove land from the majority and put it into the hands of the few. The structure that holds this system together is actively managed by Roman thinkers and Roman military leaders. A carefully constructed worldview is propagated through the Roman Imperial Cult, monuments, coins, and other means.[21] The removal of wealth is also actively facilitated by merchants, who encourage communities to change from a subsistence way of life to planting and selling commodities that can be transported, like wheat, wine and olive oil.[22] The merchants carry the wealth across the seas, becoming prosperous in the process, while "the people of the land" work harder and harder and cannot survive.[23] Passive middle agents are the comfortable citizens of the regime, including Roman citizens, who consume entertainment and food and enjoy the overflow of the largesse of the great flow of wealth moving to Rome.[24] In exchange for their take, they do everything required to keep their patrons satisfied. This keeps their positions secure.[25]

In the gospel context we find insider collaborators who sell out to Rome, giving away the fruits of Jewish covenantal life. These betrayers include the Herodian royal families and the temple leadership. Nested a bit a lower in the hierarchy are chief tax/toll collectors and large landowners. Doing the dirty work at the bottom, physically extracting resources and suppressing dissent, are tax collectors and soldiers. The crowds hate the collaborators that are the lowest on the spectrum most, because that is where they directly experience the pain. Jesus is less inclined to blame the most powerless cogs in the machine. He exposes the whole predicament through parables. We examine two examples below. He invites Pharisees and tax collectors and land workers and debt slaves and women and all manner of person to dinner, thereby encouraging members of his movement to

question all forms of division and hatred and to be "wise as serpents" as they think about the larger predicament and the local pressures it creates. In turning over the tables in the temple,[26] he confronts the collaboration of the temple leadership, exposes the demonic nature of the system, and challenges all the observers, whatever their status, to consider their particular commitments and allegiance.[27]

Middle Agents in the Early Twenty-first Century

Walter Wink says that the shadow imperial order (the Domination System) – that same system of minority control that Gandhi is trying to understand – morphs through the eons (ancient Near East, Pax Romana, global market imperialism), yet "the basic structure has persisted for five thousand years, since the rise of the great conquest states of Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C.E."[28] As in Galilee, the principle of privileging active and passive middle agents and insider collaborators to achieve imperial control can be found today in many settings around the globe. A current example is the relationship between the United States and Mexico (see Figure 7).

The economic dynamics between the United States and Mexico, since the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA[29]), are reviewed in some descriptive and statistical detail in Appendix 4.[30] In today's context, the particular case of Mexico and the United States cannot be separated from the larger globalizing imperial situation. The architects and beneficiaries of so-called free trade are not bound to any nation-state.[31] They are most visible to the global public in the World Economic Forum.[32] Through unfettered contributions and lobbying, the three branches of the United States government (executive, legislative, and judicial) have become a powerful clients (or in Foucault's terms, instruments) of this small cadre of global operators.

Active middle agents in our present system include the military, private military contractors, and the weapons industry. Additionally, in our relationship with Mexico, as well as others around the world, we see major agricultural industries, like Cargill and Monsanto, aggressively managing the

planetary extraction economy as they attempt to develop control over the world's food supply. Keesmaat and Walsh call this destructive consumption of human beings and the earth the "crucifixion economy."[33] As coins and monuments perpetuated the fantasy of Pax Romana, the corporate media immerses passive middle agents in today's imperial narrative. We are placated with the certainty that free markets will liberate the world and create a good life for all. The blatant evidence that they do the reverse, enslaving the world so a few can live obscenely, is relentlessly masked with trivialities. Rome had the "barbarians" to scapegoat for its wars and violence. The architects of the free market economy have "terrorists." We, the 18%, the passive middle agents upon whose consent this whole system depends, watch our reality TV, take our designer drugs, and close our eyes.[34]

From age to age, managers of regimes enlist insider collaborators to assist in controlling distant communities. This is true in Mexico, as it was in Galilee. That way they can efficiently move resources from each local community, where actual production happens, to wherever they want them. Imperialists start by allying territorial kings and presidents, who then execute policies that tragically give away the land and labor and dignity of their own people. Client kings and presidents then replicate layers of privilege and threat, enlisting and coercing local leaders to manage their policies of extraction. We see this in Chiapas, where Mexican government support of paramilitary groups has long been tearing the social fabric of indigenous communities apart. This is accomplished by paying and training struggling young men to violently suppress their own communities.[35] And thus the strategy continues. Elites control increasingly large numbers of people, globalizing their efforts, while keeping themselves far from the human cost of their actions and policies.

Herein lies the hope and the challenge. Mapping how the system functions reveals that middle agents have leverage. As passive middle agents, in our lynchpin position, we have the

opportunity to redirect our allegiance (and power) to the most vulnerable and away from the elite. This is not just an altruistic personal act – it is a strategic and structural move that undermines empire.[36]

Jesus demonstrates this approach. He emerges from the ranks of a marginalized majority, fully free and alive with Original Power. He demonstrates a living power coursing through people on the streets, visibly proving that the story that power trickles down from the mighty is false. Power trickles up based on our consent, and we can withdraw that consent. Jesus recognizes that middle agents are lynchpins in the life-crushing system of occupation, and he addresses them repeatedly. He first confronts insider collaborators, local religious and political figures, showing them their destructive involvement in human suffering and how it is in direct violation of God's covenant. He also spends time with passive middle agents, including ones who reside outside his faith community, revealing the power of healing and blessing that flows from covenantal living. He doesn't waste time with the minority elite or active middle agents who generate and manage imperial narratives. He concentrates his energy on helping confused middle agents see the human cost of their misplaced loyalties and inviting them to change their allegiance from their occupiers to the majority. This strategy is central to his program of freeing creation.

We will explore Jesus' interactions with middle agents (which are a central feature of the gospel of Luke) in the following chapters. As indicated above, in Chapter 6, we will give special attention to Jesus' interaction with the Syrophoenician woman. This encounter offers a particularly striking model for ethical negotiation of power between a passive middle agent and a member of a marginalized majority. First, let's spend a little more time unpacking the middle agent predicament.

Luke and the Pressure on Middle Agents

Mark views the gospel from the perspective of the masses (the crowds or multitudes) who make up the majority of the world.[37] The action is brisk, wide-eyed, on the ground. Listeners are enveloped in the Jesus movement. We witness the energy building. We feel the pulse of Original Power moving through the people. Matthew centers the gospel in the temple/kinship culture, negotiating the wonders of the Jesus movement within the orderly sensibilities of those who find their security in the cultic life of Israel. He converses with teachers in the synagogues – viewing, commenting, debating about the disruptive teachings of Jesus.[38]

Luke takes a different angle. In this dissertation, I propose that Luke's gospel focuses on the particular predicament and attitudes of middle agents. The gospel attends carefully to the ways Jesus interacts with those sandwiched in the imperial power structure. Luke's observations are aimed at land managers, toll collectors[39], soldiers, rulers and middle managers of all kinds. In addition, he interprets the transformative events on the ground in rural Galilee for Romans citizens (e.g. the Centurion[40]) who serve as buffers between the emperor and the suffering people of occupied regions. He reframes middle agent reality from imperial-centric to God-centric.[41] The Lukan Jesus presses middle agent listeners to decide where true power resides in the world (what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God?) and thus decide their allegiance. Will I join Jesus and the majority of the world (e.g. Zacchaeus) or will I return to my imperial life (e.g the rich young man), and continue helping consolidate power in the hands of a minority elite?

This is our middle agent predicament. While the gospel is good news for the poor, those who occupy a little niche in the regime may wonder if the news is good. Luke is interested in our elaborate entanglement. He pauses with us in our captivity and reflects back to us how we are pinned. He is teaching middle agents to relinquish our vestiges of dominating power and to jump into the ocean of liberating power – that is, to commit class suicide and craft lives in socially-leveled

communities that model God's banquet. Luke is encouraging us to become "people of the way"[42] – teaching us how to slip through the narrow gate into authentic discipleship.

In Luke's gospel we discover a deep vein of material for middle agents.[43] Indeed if one reads the gospel through from beginning to end, it reads like "Gospel 101 for middle agents." We will explore this material in the coming chapters. Let's start by examining two Lukan parables that reveal the particular pressures on those who are squeezed between the angry masses and the rulers of the social order – those client managers who are expected to do the dirty work of extracting resources from the people on behalf of their imperial patrons.

The Shrewd Manager

Jesus tells the tale of a shrewd manager (or unjust steward),[44] offering a detailed exposition of the middle agent dilemma. As we've discussed, middle agents manage the tributary system that moves wealth from the masses to the elite. In this role, we are trapped between enacting the parasitic agenda of our patrons and feeling the pain of those whose lives we impact. We live in a buffer space that can be negotiated in a number of ways. Three possibilities are explored here: 1) Remaining loyal to our imperial master and doing our job, by shutting down our compassion[45] and making ourselves impervious to the pain of those we exploit;[46] 2) developing creative strategies to protect the people under our care; and 3) keeping both sides at bay while using our position to maximize our own personal profit.[47] I propose that the central figure in this story takes the third route,[48] cleverly maximizing his own security and profit, while feigning allegiance to both master and the people.[49]

This passage is about pressure. The pressure intensifies on both sides of the middle agent. The mindless regime is moving inexorably forward, taking everything it can. It crosses a line where it is forcing the poor out of existence. This sends the system off kilter and a veiled rebellion begins.

For a while the manager is drawn along in the tide of the regime – making a living, getting by.[50] Now circumstances force him out of the shadows. Everyone knows his role – to mediate. He has failed to do this, by losing touch. What is the mediator to do? [51]

The master calls him in to say he has heard that his resources are being wasted. The manager panics at first. Visions of losing his position run through his head. "To lose his stewardship and join the work force of laborers is to drop out of the class of retainers into the class of expendables."[52] *What will someone like me do? I could never survive as a day laborer.* This causes him to realize that he will be at the mercy of the very people he has exploited and abandoned. If he does not make friends with them, they will let him die on the street.

The manager has the power to release debts, and cannot be sued for the loss.[53] Masters leave room for their managers to manage things. This keeps the masters at a distance from the dirty work, which is critical, because usury is illegal in Torah law. The manager's unspoken job is to record the principal on all debts at an increased level to include the interest, without a separate entry for interest showing up on the books. In addition to these undocumented profit margins, the manager is expected to throw in an additional amount for themselves. As long as the master gets a decent profit, toll collectors and managers have personal leeway to determine how much they wrangle from the poor. They are aggressive in exploiting this social contract, and thus are generally hated among the people, famous for being cheats and home-wreckers.

Here is where the manager gets creative. Under pressure, he appears at the homes of the people – seemingly so out of touch that he has to ask about the nature of their debts. After orienting himself to the situation, he systematically removes the hidden illegal usury in the total debt amounts.[54] At least for this time being, he refuses to do the dirty work for his master.[55] This is quite ingenious. On one side, he befriends the people, thereby creating a safety net for himself should he lose his job. On the other, he backs the master into a corner, since any complaint or

retribution would expose the master's usury and the pernicious social arrangement that facilitates his avoidance of Torah law.

Stepping back, Herzog helps us to see that the people engineer the whole scenario. They lodge the accusation that the manager is squandering the master's money.[56] Rather than complain about their own suffering, about which the master cares not at all, they throw a monkey wrench into the system, distracting the master with what he does care about, his wealth.[57] And once the whole thing plays out, the master, rather than cutting off the manager and demanding the lost profits, accepts the whole game and embraces his public image as generous benefactor. While the people publicly praise their master, they privately pay the manager a kickback off the books.[58] In the meantime, they have given their manager a visceral life lesson in people power. Now they have a more alert, creative middle agent, who knows where real power lies.

There are layers in this text. There is the Jesus layer, where he is teaching his agrarian followers how to use their power to undermine oppressive regimes. He is revealing to the most impoverished that they are the well of God's power in creation. And there is the Lukan layer, explicating the pressures and ethical requirements of the gospel on middle agents.

In terms of literary structure, Luke places this story as a response to the grumbling Pharisees – those "lovers of money."[59] Luke and Jesus go after their (and our) deep motivations around money. The manager (a child of this world) stumbles into allying himself with the agrarian majority. The manager is not a model for us to follow. The story is more complicated than that. It explicates the elaborate manipulations of those who are woven into the client/patron system. Like the unjust judge,[60] the manager is temporarily obedient to Torah (care for the vulnerable) – not out of a sincere heart – but out of survival and self-interest.

The Pharisees and followers of the gospel (children of the light) should be able to do better than inept and temporary obedience, since care for the community is the very essence of their role in

life. For followers of Christ, attention to the struggling is the central focus of our discipleship. And still, as Jesus (and Luke) observe, middle agents have a habit of superficially following Torah law (and the gospel) while fastidiously shoring up our position and wealth.

This parable has baffled interpreters (who are largely located in the middle agent position in society) because it strikes directly at this blind spot.[61] We may think, *it is the task of the manager to manage and collect the debts of his master. Why is he commended for bringing in less profit?* [62] This teaching is confusing to people whose minds are thoroughly colonized by the top 2% and their trickle down theories. It is confusing if we think that God is basically a capitalist and we are the labor. It is confusing if we think that God will punish us, justifiably, even violently, if we do not return a proper profit.

Interpreters, shaped by the commitments of imperial privilege, develop acrobatics to say that this first century message is about the right use of wealth and almsgiving.[63] Our full investment in a social structure that depends on extracting resources from marginalized majorities prevents us from grasping Jesus' radical critique of exactly this.[64] Jesus is talking in a tone that only the masses can hear. In our capitalistic worldview, we unconsciously equate moral behavior with protecting the interests of the master.[65] Let's remember that Jesus likely taught his followers that paying taxes is optional.[66] Jesus turned over the tables in the temple to expose the sinfulness of a system that steals the fruit of people's labor and land.[67]

Jesus does not have a colonized mind. He knows there is nothing righteous about protecting the greedy schemes of the master. He has told us repeatedly what is righteous. It is righteous to use whatever position we have to redistribute the abundance of God's creation to the poor – even if that means stretching and breaking the rules of the regime. So we should not have trouble understanding his point when the Lukan Jesus says to us middle agents: "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into their

eternal homes."[68] The rules about caring for the poor are God's, and therefore part of our eternal story. The rules for managing money for the benefit of the elite are a temporary pitfall of fallen life. If you get into a pressure situation where you have to break one set of rules or the other, Jesus is clear about which way to go. For "[i]f then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?"[69]

The Recalcitrant Investor[70]

The next parable for consideration is carefully placed, by Luke, as the opening to the passion. As the disciples approach Jerusalem, Jesus senses their hopes. They envision a dramatic victory over their imperial occupiers. To help them grasp what is about to unfold – to help them face the painful realities of the broken social order, the hard path of non-violent resistance, and the suffering they must face at the hands of determined imperialists – the Lukan Jesus tells a story we commonly refer to as the parable of the talents.[71] Given Luke's efforts to teach middle agents the difference between oppressive and liberative economics, and seeing a literary parallel with the story of the ten lepers, I prefer to call it the parable of the ten investors.[72] (The literary parallel is addressed below.)

The power situation is set before us. The nobleman has an insatiable appetite for imperial power. He is planning to travel away from the people, with the goal of acquiring a new royal designation.[73] He calls ten investors into his court and gives them each ten pounds. While he is away, he wants them to go out and use that money to make more money off the labor and land of his dominion. There is a rebellion in his absence, revealing the frustration of the people.

As his investors report back, the nature of the nobleman's parasitic financial scheme is covered in veiled language.[74] "Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds."[75] It is not proper to state the reality forthrightly. The polite language of the effective investors implies: 1) that the money

rightly belongs to the nobleman; and 2) that the nobleman's money itself does the work of making more money and thus the acquired money rightly belongs to the nobleman. Their polite language masks: 1) the labor and land of the people; 2) the role of the investor (middle agents) in doing the dirty work of obtaining the wealth of the people; and 3) the violence of the process overseen directly by the nobleman.[76]

By contrast, the language of the recalcitrant investor is bold and clear.[77] It reveals precisely what the masked language covers. "Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow."[78] If we have Torah ears, we hear the echoes of Ezekiel 34 in the complaints against the newly designated king.

> Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.[79]
>
> [T]herefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand.[80]

The king is rebuked for his harshness by a faithful prophet. He is a bad shepherd who fails to feed the flock and bind up the broken. He abandons the sheep to pursue his own greedy ends. Luke's listeners are challenged to consider their own allegiance to imperial economies and leaders. In presenting the middle agent view of this dilemma, Luke does not veil either the truth of the parasitic schemes of the bad shepherd or the extreme personal cost of non-compliance.

The story of the ten investors parallels the earlier story of the ten lepers.[81] Like nine of the lepers, the nine effective investors take whatever they can get personally and remain inside the oppressive regime. One recalcitrant investor comprehends the radical implications of the Jesus movement – sees the false claims of the Domination System and true claims of the gospel – and risks it all to follow the way.[82] Luke is writing for people who are accustomed to comfort – those of us who have enough social privilege to retreat back into the system when the going gets tough.

It turns out that penetrating our bubble is no easy task. The history of interpretation demonstrates that our stubborn bubble holds up valiantly in the face of this most blatant of social commentaries. Biblical interpreters, middle agents themselves, can't help relating to the effective investors.[83] In the Domination System, which is the world of most biblical interpreters, money-makers are heroes. But as Luke's listeners, lovers of God who have committed to the way, we can see that these "lovers of money" [84] betray the Jesus movement. They take the comfortable path inside the destructive regime. If we are tracking with Luke, it will be clear to us that the recalcitrant one, who embraces a gospel economics that protects the most vulnerable, is our model of faith.

Discipleship and its Costs

Structurally the parable of the ten investors serves as the Lukan opening to the passion narrative, placed here to remind his middle agent audience that the path of discipleship involves gut-wrenching decisions and suffering.[85] This prophetic investor is more successful at embodying the gospel than the shrewd manager. Like Jesus, he refuses to play the game. Yet his success does not result in accolades from the world. The reward for his courage is the wrath of his patron. He is treated with violence and ejected from the only home he has ever known – a fitting prologue to the remainder of the gospel.

The dilemma faced by our ten investors exposes our own stressful predicament. It reveals the specific pressures of our location in the regime. This is a scared straight moment.[86] It is our reality check. Luke offers middle agents listeners then and now a moment to pause and count the cost. We are not headed for easy triumph. The motley entourage of disciples is bound for confrontation. This is the last chance to quietly slink away (with nine healed lepers and the rich young ruler[87]) to our comfortable imperial *oikos* (home/economy). By placing this story as the

opener to the passion narrative,[88] it is as if Luke is saying to middle agents, *it would be wise to stop and think about it. Life is going to change fast. Are you serious about following Jesus?*

Unholy Homemaking

The parables we explored above deepen our study of the middle agent predicament. Now we place our biblical study in theological context and develop some theoretical structure. As developed in Chapter 1, humanity inhabits a blue green world of dynamic boundaries designed by our holy homemaker. In our theo-ethical narrative of power we affirm the strong biblical claim that there is only one power and it is God power. Imperialism has no separate source of power. It is always parasitic on God's power. The problem is that imperialists are homemakers too. God's gift of power can be manipulated. We end up consumed in the Domination System – an illusory shadow home built by humanity inside a fuller more alive God world. The shadow world of empire is like Herod's walled off palace sitting in the midst of the vibrant reality of the Jesus movement. It is a carefully constructed and controlled reality that builds a hedge against the liveliness and truth of life on the streets.[89]

A thoroughly devastating system like this needs its own worldview to keep it going. People don't operate against the nature of creation (liberation, sharing, thriving, freedom) and against their own interests for long without an aggressive emotional, intellectual, and spiritual campaign. Imperialist homemakers build a worldview, based in greed and ego with its own set of foundational beliefs, symbols, myths, rituals, organizations, and networks of aggregated power.[90] In the first century it was crafted by the emperors' creative advisors.[91] Today it is crafted by experts and think-tanks.[92] In both cases, it is a conceptual and embodied world that is carefully stewarded and defended – a thoroughly articulated competitive alternative to a larger, livelier, freer God-centered world.

Today the imperial catechism goes something like this. Resources are scarce. Thus, we must accept that huge portions of the human race don't have enough. Human beings are consumers. Human beings are units of production. Our identity is understood in relation to our utility to the machinations of the system. People are inherently neutral or bad. Thus we are expendable. We should take what little crumbs we can get from the empire and be thankful. The empire can poison us, take sixty hours a week of our labor until our bodies fall apart, destroy our food supply, and send our children to war, but we should thank our corporate benefactors ("job creators") for the food we are eating and that we have a job at all. Those of us who fail to survive under corporate rule are barbarians and our suffering and starvation are our own fault. We may rightly be imprisoned, deported, tortured. Good people find a way to make it in the system by pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps. Those who miraculously make it out of the expendable class into the middle and upper realms exist to entertain the operators of the system with our unusual and interesting qualities. We are supposed to tell our stories and dance for Herod.[93] If, like John and Jesus, we fail to entertain – if we refuse to exchange our souls for crumbs, if we operate in ways that call the system into question – then we must be silenced and extinguished.[94]

When faced with the two basic options in the imperial home, perks or violence, most take the perks. The problem is that it is a false home. It is a false reality. There is the pesky problem of the beauty and the suffering of the majority intruding on this false narrative. If too much actual data gets in, the imperial narrative breaks apart. So, more and more energy and resources get poured into keeping the imperial home intact.[95] Incessant messages enter our minds and shape our outlook.[96] Still, reality is reality. A power structure designed to move wealth to the minority requires inflicting pain on the majority. This pain cannot be so easily swept out of sight.

The Epistemological Bubble

Imperialists, ancient and contemporary, are aware that the middle agent task would quickly become untenable if we could feel the harmful consequences of our actions on human lives. Their system stops working when our conscience kicks in. To prevent this, carefully crafted stories are installed all around us. We saw this in the two parables above. The master of our first parable allows the steward his fictional accounting methods and faux benevolence to enable him to continue his work. The king in the second parable insists on veiled language that falsely evokes images of wealth spontaneously growing by itself to sooth his own sensibilities and that of his loyal investors. We are offered the ancient story of Pax Romana (or the modern one about the invisible hand of the free market) and endless entertainment and consumption to distract us from basic facts around us.[97] *Instead of the hard path of discipleship, how about something a little easier? How about triumphal images of barbarians tamed under the feet of civilizing emperors on your coins?*[98] *Or a good story about enlightened self interest and some retail therapy?*

I call this societal fabrication the epistemological bubble. The bubble is epistemological because it blocks our knowing. As middle agents, we often presume that we are epistemologically privileged. We think we have greater access to knowing things about the world because we have resources, education, and travel. In reality, we are epistemologically handicapped. The trappings (literally) of middle agent life prevent our minds from knowing about whole swaths of human experience. We are specifically blocked from seeing our place in the functioning of imperial structures. We are systematically trained to avert our attention from ways that power is operating destructively, and when data about the operation and impacts of imperial power become so intense that they penetrate our awareness, we have subconscious methods for inoculating that knowledge.

I remember when I started to realize that my knowing was distorted. I was volunteering as an advocate for a young woman in her early twenties. The Department of Social Services was seeking to remove her child from her home. She had grown up in foster care, had been repeatedly

abused, had very limited education, and no support of any kind. In an effort to survive, she befriended drug-addicted men. At that point, I was in my early thirties, had an Ivy League education and an international consulting business. I assumed that I could sum up her situation and articulate the options better than she could and therefore could be of use to her. I assumed incorrectly. Prior to meetings, she would lay out the power picture for me. She would run down the list of everyone who would be there, what their roles are, and exactly what each one can and cannot do legally and institutionally. She would describe what each person's personal agenda was and how they would behave. She would explain power dynamics within and between the agencies and how these would play out. Consistently we would get to the meeting and everything she described to me would turn out to be true. I began to realize that she could see the operation of systemic power far more clearly than I could. There were patterns of power at work that had a tremendous impact on her life that my well-trained brain erased. This experience awakened a curiosity in me. What am I not seeing and why?

That the majority in our global context can see power better than those of us in the middle became evident after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Haitian farmers, especially post-earthquake, are some of the most struggling people in the world. And yet, when Monsanto, in response to their tragedy, sent four hundred seventy five tons of hybrid seed, the head of the Peasant Movement of Papay called the gift "a new earthquake." Haitian farmers recognized that the seeds were covered with toxic chemicals, and that they were genetically designed to force poor farmers into a permanent relationship of dependence upon Monsanto that would destroy both the earth and their farms. Many held public burnings of the seed.[99] I knew how destructive Monsanto is to people and the earth in their quest to control the world food supply, but could not imagine a starving farmer burning the dubious gift of seed. This unfolding of events further seared the epistemological problem in my mind. Those of us in the middle are brain-blocked. My Haitian sisters and brothers see the operation

of destructive power in their lives and are creatively responding to it. Except for a few marginal efforts, the mainstream U.S. public does not have a clear handle on the power issues at work in Monsanto and other global corporate power plays, and is unable to pull together a meaningful response.[100]

This biblical and contemporary evidence leads me to conclude that middle agents are socially privileged and epistemologically handicapped. We have erected physical barriers to our knowing, including gated communities, panic rooms, free speech zones, and security fences. We have institutional barriers to knowing, including race, class and caste systems.[101] There are educational barriers and perceptions of expertise that are stumbling blocks. We have an array of narrative methods that block uncomfortable information from entering our awareness including:

- acrobatic ways of telling history that preserve hegemonic control and disappear dissent;[102]
- ideological commitments to the status quo such as, "we deserve our wealth or poverty," "a negotiation of self-interests will solve our problems" (i.e. greed is not the problem it is the solution);
- anti-creational theological assertions such as, "human beings are inherently flawed and expendable," "it is the way the world works," "the world is hopeless and expendable," or "salvation and justice are only possible through a radical break from the earth and current reality";[103]
- delaying tactics such as, "it is too hard to understand," "we are not ready," "we have no power," "don't rock the boat," "it is too big";[104]
- emotional blocking techniques such as, "my suffering is to be avoided at all costs" or guilt, which vaguely acknowledges unavoidable data while blocking authentic feeling and change;
- public communication strategies that neutralize the presence of problematic data, such as, "tell a false version of reality enough times and it becomes the truth"; and

- large-scale organizing strategies for proactively warping the public's perception about its own needs and concerns, such as "astroturfing."[105]

As the first line of defense against connecting with the struggles of marginalized majorities, the bubble keeps data out. If the architects of empire can't keep data out, as in the case of soldiers where contact with suffering is unavoidable,[106] the second strategy is to shut down moral thinking. A study conducted by the military after World War II revealed that 75% of soldiers became conscientious objectors when they stood in front of the enemy and had to decide whether to pull the trigger. Only 25% fired. The military determined that they had to overcome the "problem" of the human conscience. They had to prevent soldiers from experiencing that moment of moral realization that all human souls are connected (intersubjectivity)[107] and deciding that they don't want to use their power to cause suffering. So they buckled down and created a strategy to rewire soldiers so they would fire without thinking. The method is simple. Someone stands behind the soldier and screams at them to fire at targets over and over and over and over, until the trigger action is entirely automatic. The command goes directly to the trigger finger without a hint of hesitation or thought. Recent studies show the method is stunningly effective. Firing rates in active war zones are now well over 90%.[108]

Passive middle agents are trained in a similar way. We are shaped to do the things that the 2% minority wants us to do. Like the shrewd manager and the ten investors, our job is to keep money flowing from the poor to the rich, to support war and destruction of the earth, and to manage the resulting unrest from the global majority. Many of us would become conscientious objectors (or recalcitrant investors) if we allowed moral thinking to enter our decision-making process. So our culture pushes us relentlessly, screaming at us like an overzealous drill sergeant. Buy! Buy! Buy! We are given Walmart, American Idol and the 24/7 news cycle to distract and direct our minds. Like soldiers, we are told to shop first and think later.[109] We get advantages for being loyal to

our place in the scheme of things, and in turn we agree not to draw attention to the suffering. We stare into our tiny little devices. Our eyes do not see. Our ears do hear.

The epistemological bubble presents at least two problems. First, we are making decisions with a lot of missing data. Having erased awareness of the majority of the human race, our thinking is distorted.[110] We are operating with a fraction of the data, so our solutions to life's problems are ineffective. Second, the human conscience has a way of eventually kicking in. And this is painful. The military is starting to realize this. Training soldiers to fire without thinking has a measurable consequence: dramatically rising rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide.[111] One wonders what middle agents around the world will experience as we awaken to devastating consequences of our actions and inactions.

The Lure of Deceptive Language

In Chapter 1 Catherine Keller spoke to us of the divine lure. Process thinkers talk about the way God invites us forward into the dynamism of life, drawing us toward the mystery and beauty and newness of God. In the divine lure we find a good kind of temptation – a sweetness, a longing for life. For God, life is fresh, new, surprising, open and moving. Through the lure, God takes initiative in our relationship – calls to us, invites our response.[112]

Imperial homemakers have a lure as well. They too offer an invitation to the mockery that they call life. For them, the goodness of life does not flow from an infinite mystery always generating an uncontrollable emerging co-creative environment of shared power and shared thriving. For them a good life is secure, still, predictable, and well-insured. They call out to us from billboards and internet ads. Come into the middle class bubble where it is warm and safe. Leave your questions at the door. Take a few designer drugs. Get nice and numb. You'll be fine.

Remember Sennecherib?[113] The king of Assyria had taken over the entire region and was bearing down on little Judah. He was the thousand pound gorilla. The people had no chance and

they knew it. He sent his messengers to Jerusalem. The messengers did not speak quietly to the leaders. Instead they yelled loudly in the language and hearing of the people, unleashing a set of questions. *Who are you relying on? Egypt? Well they cannot be trusted. O God, you say? Well God has put us in charge.* They mocked the leaders. *You think you can stand up against our enormous military?*

The leaders were concerned that the messengers were scaring the people. *Hey, please talk to us quietly in the language of diplomacy, so the crowds can't hear this.* The messengers responded: "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?"[114] Yelling even louder, the messengers intentionally discredit Judah's king. *Don't rely on Hezekiah who is weak. Count on us. We are strong.*

They could not have had a better campaign had they hired a 21st century Madison Avenue public relations firm. First strategy: instill fear. Next strategy: distort the words of scripture. They offer false promises of safety and security in a strangely familiar language:

> Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: "Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you may live and not die"[115]
>
> These were the words of Sennecherib which he [sent] to mock the living God.[116]

In the face of Assyria's compelling and terrifying power, Hezekiah offers an impassioned prayer to Yahweh.[117] He is rightly afraid. God responds to Hezekiah through Isaiah saying, *trust me and stand still. Don't submit. Don't respond. Don't fight back. Over time the people will truly plant their own vines and their trees will bear fruit.* In an extraordinary act of faith, Hezekiah heeds Yahweh's command. And in a miraculous series of events, the Assyrians are turned back, as promised. Hezekiah is remembered through the generations as one of the few faithful kings.[118]

We are also exposed to manipulations of religious language. As it was for the people watching on the wall, this disingenuous use of religious language has a confusing quality. It is both

intimately familiar and warped. When we are made afraid, we are also made susceptible to arguments in favor of violent power.[119] Words draw us in. The words of Sennecherib sound comforting and scriptural. But, as we know, even the devil quotes scripture.[120] The words of Fox News commentators (and most mainstream news sources) are strangely emotionally satisfying. But what is the cost of our emotional satisfaction? Imperialism can deck itself in leaves, pretending to be a fruitful tree, but closer inspection reveals its barrenness.[121] When we find ourselves drawn in by language, we are cautioned to question what we are being lured into. Are we being lured forward into the vast creative open-ended loving life of our Creator, or into someone's hegemonic project?

The Hypnotic Quality of Internal Coherence

Once, like the shrewd manager and the ten investors, we are lured into the house of empire, what keeps us there? Hannah Arendt helps us consider this question. She derives insight about entrapment in imperial regimes from her study of Adolph Eichmann. Eichmann is a Nazi war criminal who under trial reveals himself to be an unthinking bureaucrat who orchestrated unspeakable atrocities under orders from superiors without ever considering that he was a person with independent agency and conscience who bears moral responsibility for the consequences of his own actions.[122] For Arendt and many other observers of the trial, Eichmann's pure focus on climbing the ladder, following the rules, befriending people of status, and doing what he was told, without reflection on the horrors he was managing, was shocking. Out of this observation, she coins the phrase, "the banality of evil."[123] This leads her to theoretical reflection on bureaucracy. In her words:

> The latest and perhaps most formidable form of . . . dominion [is] bureaucracy or the rule of an intricate system of bureaus in which no [persons], neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible, and which could be properly called rule by Nobody.[124]

For Arendt, this is the worst tyranny of all since there is no one left to take responsibility for the consequences.[125] In her study, Arendt notices that people have both a predisposition to dominate and a predisposition to submit, tragic qualities that are exploited by bureaucracies.

> If we would trust our own experiences in these matters, we should know that the instinct of submission, an ardent desire to obey and be ruled by some strong man, is at least as prominent in human psychology as the will to power.[126]

We willingly hand over our critical minds and capacity for action in the world to imperial systems.

A mark of our dehumanization is our lack of rage. According to Arendt, rage is only present when we believe that there is the possibility of making change. We don't rage against what is inevitable and unstoppable.[127] Thus the absence of rage in the face of injustice is a sign of collapse – a sign that we have relinquished the possibility of full personhood, dignity and justice. Rage and a critical mind are important complements, not opposites. Arendt notes, "Absence of emotions neither causes nor promotes rationality. 'Detachment and equanimity' in view of 'unbearable tragedy' can indeed be 'terrifying.'"[128] Persons who abdicate their rage (along with their critical mind and power to direct their actions) in submission to authorities are often the same ones who seek opportunities to dominate others. Thus obedience and domination are paired traits. In comparison, Arendt observes that resistance to obedience – aliveness, awake-ness, the capacity to think and act independently – is often coupled with reticence to dominate and control others.

Arendt argues that the bureaucratic order is sustained by an orderly theory of life that unites the myth of progress with an ideology of inevitability. Reality, with its unpredictable and non-linear interruptions, is constantly messing up this neat theory – or in my terms, bursting the epistemological bubble. "[E]very action, for better or worse, and every accident necessarily destroys the whole pattern in whose frame the prediction moves and where it finds its evidence."[129] To account for these intrusions, the myth of progress assumes that "the motion of . . . progress is supposed to come about through the clashes of antagonistic forces[.]"[130] This helps it account for

each regress "as a necessary but temporary setback."[131] An ideology of the inevitability of progress forecloses the capacity to look honestly at non-linear intrusions of terror and horror (which get re-framed and buried inside the supervening theory of progress).[132] An ideology of progress also forecloses the capacity to look honestly at natality[133] – the birthing of newness and the unpredictable trajectories that unexpected emergences launch.

In forbidding non-linearity, adherents view violence as the only possible interruption of the inevitable. Arendt challenges the idea that violence is the only means of interruption. She argues that all human action (conscious action in contrast to habitual behavior) serves to interrupt what might otherwise proceed along predictable lines.[134] Of course, the bureaucracy continues to resist any undermining of its orderly description of existence, and finds endless ways to dismiss it.

> To call such unexpected, unpredicted, and unpredictable happenings 'random events' or 'the last gasps of the past' condemning them to irrelevance or the famous 'dustbin of history,' is the oldest trick in the trade.[135]

This trick allows one to shore up the structure of one's theory, "at the price of removing it further and further from reality."[136] The result is an array of persons trapped in self-perpetuating bureaucratic constructs that police their own coherence by becoming less and less connected to any real experience. "[B]ecause [these constructs] have an inner consistency, they have a hypnotic effect; they put to sleep our common sense, which is nothing else but our mental organ for perceiving, understanding, and dealing with reality and factuality."[137]

The walls of our bubble get thicker.[138] We spend our time polishing the internal logic of our existence. We keep buffing our ideologies up, making sure they appear reasonable and coherent. From our orderly and numb position, as middle agent Christians, we use pat phrases and ritual to keep us feeling safe (saved).

Structures, systems, forms of governance, and rituals are not inherently bad. Jesus did not see the temple and first century synagogues as inherently bad.[139] These institutions serve as creative

vessels for the shared life of the people. When their purpose is reversed and they exploit the people and earth for a few and bring death to many – when they become hypnotically internally coherent in their operation – what was a gift of God becomes a tool of the Domination System. This drives faithful disciples to stand, like Jesus, and publically proclaim that God's house[140] has become a den of thieves.[141]

Blame, Guilt, and Responsibility

The vitality of God's home is not so easily suppressed. It turns out that we need stronger medicine than deceptive language, imperial hermeneutics and bureaucratic hypnosis to inoculate us against the intrusive beauty and the suffering of the majority of the world. So we invented blame and guilt. Much of our lives revolve around the question of who is to blame for what. On the flip side, many of us spend our time immobilized in a generalized guilt and unable to bear the real burden of our lived circumstances, our daily practices, and our specific relationships. Arendt has no patience for this kind of immobilizing guilt. She points out that Himmler was able to play on this guilt with those who committed murder in death camps.[142] He fed them an ideology of self-pity. *It is so sad and unfair that you have to witness this horror*. Witness the horror? They implemented the horror. *Poor me, I feel horribly guilty*. This diversion technique bolsters an assumption of powerlessness. In a kaleidoscopic deflection of any admission of personal agency, they become convinced that killing people is something that happened to them.

In his trial, Eichmann is questioned about what he would have done if he had been placed in the death camps and ordered to murder people. He says that he pities the people who were placed in that position. The only way out he could hypothetically imagine would be killing himself. Himmler's strategy of redirecting guilt works perfectly. Eichmann pities the murderers and has no thought of those being murdered. Eichmann suggests that he would voluntarily remove himself, rather than

assert any agency on the part of the most vulnerable. Hitler and Himmler's ideology of total control and bureaucratic powerlessness has been fully assimilated in Eichmann.

Blame is a futile effort at individual fairness. *Let the really deserving person take the burden. Let the ontologically evil person take the burden.* This person does not exist because ontological evil does not exist. What we experience as evil is distorted relationality. It is the product of the widest possible array of interconnections and interdependence – our creational intersubjectivity. Even something as seemingly confined as cancer is connected to a whole range of prior actions and judgments, and simultaneous relationalities. Every choice, every decision, comes from a local and global context, as well as the collective history of all contexts. Every decision is connected to everything that has ever happened.[143] This makes the effort to isolate and contain blame a futile project. Walter Rauschenbusch, Baptist theologian and father of the social gospel, expresses this cogently in his concept of systemic sin.[144]

Responsibility is another matter all together. There is nothing less fair than responsibility. A person has a child with a disability that requires life long in-home care. The parent is not to blame. Still, the parent is responsible for the child. I attended a session on racial justice a few years back. A Euro-American woman on the panel was being grilled in great detail about the current societal impacts of the institution of slavery in the United States. She was deeply sympathetic with the issues being raised, but she reached a point where she could no longer bear the weight of the burden being placed upon her in a very personal way. She cried out: "I was not there!" The room erupted into cries of sympathy and of disgust. On one level, she was stating a simple fact. She was not there. She did not personally commit acts of physical, emotional and spiritual atrocity on her sisters and brothers. She did not physically whip and lacerate another person. She cannot be blamed. But, she, along with every other person born into a state of white privilege (and all of us born into this racialized predicament as a whole) bears responsibility to help heal this collective trauma. We have

been born into a situation not of our personal making. It is not fair. Still it is our context. It is our actual reality. And it is our responsibility.

The project of assigning blame (for the sake of avoiding the unfairness of responsibility) is rooted in a notion of intention that Arendt discredits. Building on *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Arendt's unfinished work on *judgment*, Susan Neiman helps us to see the distinction that Arendt makes between intention and judgment. For Arendt, the question of intent is irrelevant. People with bad intentions can accidentally do good things. People with good intentions can be part of terrible things. Eichmann, in particular, in his own defense, claims to have good intent, despite using his logistical brilliance to orchestrate the factories that efficiently moved massive numbers of Jews from their homes, stripped them of all their property, and brought them to their own torture and extermination in death camps. Arendt explains that intention is an inner matter that can never be satisfactorily determined, and which in any event bears little relationship to real outcomes. She, instead, chooses to focus on judgment. Judgment is evidenced in concrete actions in specific circumstances in observable space and time. A person's judgment is evidenced in their choices and this can be evaluated.[145]

Arendt doesn't brook our endless techniques for evading judgment, including the project of assigning blame. Her insistence on staying with the facts prevents this evasion.[146] This frustrates everyone. It frustrates Zionists who want to make the Eichmann trial into both a pedagogical tool for Jewish youth and a trial against the whole history of anti-Semitism. It also frustrates the efforts of Eichmann who wants to be viewed as a blameless cog in a system – totally controlled by superior authorities. Arendt's relentless focus on the facts[147] has the positive ancillary effect of keeping responsibility correctly circumscribed. Arendt insists, however unfair it may seem, that we share responsibility for the world into which we are born, and bear personal responsibility for our judgment within that world.

Taking responsibility for daily judgment is particularly challenging for middle agents. Eichmann found the concept literally unthinkable. In his case, as it did with Jesus, it can mean losing one's life. For the shrewd manager, it would have meant falling into the ranks of the people he exploited. He feared he was not strong enough to be a day laborer. For the recalcitrant investor it meant punishment at the hands of the king, and potential loss of position and livelihood. Not all circumstances are so dramatic. While we may lose status and privileges, we gain, along with Zacchaeus, the joy of saving our souls and being welcomed into God's home – the fullness of humanity and creation.

On the Pain of Knowing

In struggling with the middle agent predicament, we have reviewed a range of strategies, conscious and unconscious, that we use to block our knowing. We've seen how Arendt confronts our epistemological bubble with relentless attention to facts. This is an important, but partial, solution. Our bubble – the invisible barrier that blocks our knowing – is not solely a problem of the mind. If pastoral ministry has taught me anything, it is that knowing is a full body experience. Sometimes the heart knows things that make no sense to the head. Sometimes the body knows things about our history that the mind has erased. Knowing involves conversation between the body, heart, and mind and likely includes other lesser understood faculties like intuition and spiritual consciousness.

What we know is intimately connected to how we feel. Here is an example. Recently I heard a man speak about his experience serving as pastor to a large, well-known historically white church. He was their first black senior pastor. He repeatedly attempted to arrange a pastoral visit with an older woman in the congregation. She was perpetually unavailable. She also avoided speaking to him in worship. He wondered about this and kept reaching out to her. Later, he took on a young white pastoral intern. As a learning challenge, he asked the intern to try to visit this woman. She

immediately welcomed the young man into her home. The intern explained the obvious to his supervisor. The woman is racist. In the words of the senior pastor, upon hearing this – facing this – "my heart tore apart." After he spoke, friends in the audience commented to me, saying, "Of course, he must have known." These comments underestimate the protective qualities of the mind – the capacity of the mind to hide profoundly difficult information from extremely bright people. I believe he truly did not know, and confirmed this with him in later conversation. The mind has a mechanism that blocks out what is too painful to know.

Arendt finds a far more extreme version of this epistemological phenomenon in her study of Eichmann.[148] A mysterious obliviousness arose in the questioning both of Eichmann and the leaders of the Jewish Councils. In video, we see the confused look on Eichmann's face as he is questioned about whether he knew the people he was so efficiently deporting were being sent to death camps. The same evasive and uncomfortable look appears on the faces of the Jewish leaders who were cruelly coerced into helping with orchestration on the ground.[149] Did they think they were simply assisting with deportation? Or did they know they were sending people to a miserable mass death? In both cases, they make the claim that they did not know. *Maybe there were rumors. We were worried.* But the various departments were so carefully separated that one hand did not know what the other was doing. *We did not know.* It seems unbelievable. But I believe them, like I believe my pastor friend. There are some things that are so painful, the mind erases them.

Camilo Mejia, Iraqi war veteran, learned this.

> When I was stationed in the city of ar Ramadi, in central Iraq, one day my platoon was ordered to respond to a political protest outside the city's main government building. After a while, the protesters, who were demanding the end of the U.S. occupation, decided to start throwing grenades at the building.
>
> I was ordered to occupy a defensive position on the rooftop. A young man emerged from the crowd. He was holding a grenade. As he drew his arm back to throw it we all opened fire on him. Before I squeezed the trigger, I remember thinking that he was too far to hurt any of us. I still fired on him. I saw that young man, first alive, walking, breathing, and then on the ground, covered with blood, dead.
>
> After the incident, I went into a dark room by myself; I removed the magazine from my rifle, and I counted the bullets that were missing from it. I had fired eleven bullets at the young man. The reason

> I needed to count the rounds fired was that immediately after the incident, my mind erased all images of the moment of the killing. All I remembered, then and now, were the moments immediately before and after the young man was shot dead.
>
> That day I knew something had forever changed inside me. I felt a hole within me that had no bottom, an infinite void that could never be replenished. For weeks after the incident my mind could not shake off the images of the young man walking, and breathing, and then down on the ground, bloody, and dead.[150]

Trained to shoot first and think later, the bullets started flying. Later, he remembered evaluating the situation and calculating that the boy was at a safe distance, unable to cause any damage. At the time, the firing just started (*somewhere. where? with me?*) and his trigger finger went on automatic. His mind protected him by erasing what he could not process – what was too painful to know.

There is wisdom in the mind's protective mechanism. Unfortunately, this basically good, self-protective mechanism of the mind is utilized by sick power structures. Collectively the minority elite and their middle agents erase all knowing about the effects of our behavior on the tangible lives of the marginalized majorities.[151] As the pain of the world grows, in a tragic dynamic, so does the obliviousness of those that exact the pain. Increasingly we live in an unsustainable false reality.[152] More and more effort goes into erecting physical and ideological defenses against the tidal wave of beauty and suffering in the world.

As it did in the first century, this setup puts excruciating pressure on middle agents. We who are in the middle cannot entirely separate ourselves from observable reality. Wealth is traveling up. Violence is traveling down. Still, our livelihoods are deeply entrenched in our loyalty to the imperial narrative, which (contrary to all observable data) insists that peace, prosperity and security are traveling down the hierarchy and loyalty and patriotism are traveling up the hierarchy. The facts on the ground and our ideological commitments are irreconcilable. Our worldview is under constant threat, so our mind erases obvious data. As the dissonance intensifies, we keep having to amp up our defensive posture.

When the pain of knowing reaches a high level, and middle agents remain determined to keep knowing at bay, we become susceptible to charismatic leaders and radical regimes of domination. We don't want to give up our comfortable, yet unsustainable, narrative. We don't want to know about the suffering that our way of life is causing.[153] And we don't want to feel responsible in any way. This desire to live in a comfortable fantasy world and to relinquish any sense of personal power is fertile ground for totalitarianism to take root. In *Escape From Freedom*, Eric Fromm says:

> There is a wish to submit to an overwhelmingly strong power, to annihilate the self, besides the wish to have power over helpless beings . . . The [masses] are told again and again: the individual is nothing and does not count. The individual should accept this personal insignificance, dissolve himself in a higher power, and then feel proud in participating in the strength and glory of this higher power . . . Sacrificing the individual and reducing it to a bit of dust, to an atom, implies, according to Hitler, the renunciation of the right to assert one's individual opinion, interests, and happiness.[154]

There is relief in surrender to the imperial story. The problems are too large for us anyway. We are invited to find peace by accepting a false version of reality. This version of reality promises that the managers of our social, political and economic systems are benevolent and are handling things. In the days of Assyrian Empire, we were invited into Sennecherib's false story that his empire would provide a vine and fig tree to all. In the first century we were lulled to sleep by the story of *Pax Romana*. During the Holocaust, we were hypnotized by the story of an Aryan super race. In today's information-rich environment we are immersed in the story of our benevolent corporate job creators, and their passion for the "free market" which will solve all our problems, if we just give them our money and our bodies and silently wait for the invisible hand to fix everything. What a relief not to have to think and feel and know and take responsibility for the shape of our lives.[155]

There is another side to this coin of pain. On one side, we simply block out the pain of the marginalized majorities of the world and our daily part in keeping that pain going. On the other side, we consume the pain as entertainment. We immerse ourselves in horrific images. We make pain into something distant and beautiful. And then, as a further delaying tactic (our evasions are elaborate),

we critique ourselves for this remote voyeurism.[156] Susan Sontag, in her last book (on war photography), writes a nuanced reflection about our complex relationship to the pain of others.

> Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated. If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do— but who is that 'we'?—and nothing 'they' can do either— and who are 'they'?— then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic. And it is not necessarily better to be moved. Sentimentality, notoriously, is entirely compatible with a taste for brutality and worse. (Recall the canonical example of the Auschwitz commandant returning home in the evening, embracing his wife and children, and sitting at the piano to play some Schubert before dinner.) People don't become inured to what they are shown— if that's the right way to describe what happens— because of the quantity of images dumped on them. It is passivity that dulls feeling. The states described as apathy, moral or emotional anesthesia, are full of feelings; the feelings are rage and frustration. But if we consider what emotions would be desirable, it seems too simple to elect sympathy. The imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the faraway sufferers — seen close-up on the television screen — and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is yet one more mystification of our real relations to power. So far as we feel sympathy, we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence. To that extent, it can be (for all our good intentions) an impertinent— if not an inappropriate— response. To set aside the sympathy we extend to others beset by war and murderous politics for a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may— in ways we might prefer not to imagine— be linked to their suffering, as the wealth of some may imply the destitution of others, is a task for which the painful, stirring images supply only an initial spark.[157]

It is not just refusing to think that blocks our knowing. What also blocks us from understanding our participation in the power structures that destroy that lives of large swaths of the world is the refusal to open our hearts to the pain of the world. It is refusing to notice, see, and connect – with sincerity[158] – with the understanding that we are "one flesh" – in Susan Sontag's words, with the understanding that we are on the same map.

Fretheim reminds us that, theologically speaking, pain is the signal of broken relationship. God expresses excruciating pain when humanity breaks covenantal connection.[159] We destroy God's and our creation home, leaving God with memories of our past connection, and dashed hopes for our future together. God's response is to passionately and emotively work with us in history to repair the breach.[160] So too, the pain of war and poverty, the pain of marginalized majorities, is the crucial signal to humanity that our relationships to one another, to the animals, and to the earth are broken. It is our wake-up call, one we sleep through at our own peril. Yet, as Sontag so artfully describes, pain is not the point. We miss the mark if we make pain into a fetish or an end in itself. It

is something we move through – or that moves through us. It is the catalyst – the "initial spark" – for honest reflection on where we reside in the mechanisms of present imperial suffering, and what we ought to do about it. Our feeling the pain of others is meaningless if we are not then moved to understand what is causing the brokenness between us and to work to correct it together.

Perhaps, as so many middle agents do, we prefer to remain ensconced in our bubble. And what do we miss? We may avoid some hurt. We also miss God's arrival in the world. Jesus, who, affirming the spirit of Fretheim's God, lived a vibrant full-bodied emotionally-engaged life, said it this way. It is as if homeless street children were dancing and playing in our marketplaces and you could not see them. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We wailed and you did not mourn."[161]

Here, the chapter comes to a close. We have been sketching a liberationist, biblically-grounded, theo-ethical narrative of power. We began in the dynamic co-creative world of Original Power. We moved through idolatry and violence, into parasitic shadow structures that feed off humanity and the earth. In this chapter we examined the particular predicament of middle agents in the Domination System. The next chapter, the center of our chiasm, is titled *The Chasm*. Before specifying biblical ethical responses to our dilemma (which happens in Chapters 5 and 6), we pause and consider the deep aversion middle agents have to moving out of the bubble. Here we teeter on the brink of the rich man's chasm gazing at Lazarus in Abraham's arms. Are we ready to return to communion with God and the human family?

CHAPTER 4

THE CHASM

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky
and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish
– no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean,
plunge it into the deepest fullness.[1]

In the previous chapter we lay down some contours of the middle agent predicament. In this chapter, we consider the heart of the dilemma. The Lukan Jesus confronts us with a choice, between an assumption of scarcity and a vision of abundance, between a world of personal greed and awakening to universal love. We stand on a precipice and gaze across the chasm toward Lazarus and Abraham, hovering between conflicting versions of reality – the reality of power and control by the few and the reality of Original Power circulating freely through all that is.

Middle Agents and the Location of Power in the First Century

Which Master Will We Serve?

After illustrating the social bind of the middle agent (pinned between elite patrons and the suffering majority) in the story of the shrewd manager, Luke presses the point further. He says if we do not repent of our blind addiction to privilege, if we do not extend our awareness outside our epistemological bubble, if we do not surrender our (conscious and unconscious) sense of superiority and open our hearts to all human beings, the broken condition of our souls and our world will endure.[2]

Middle agents must choose. How will we expend the gift of our lives? What will we love? The Lukan Jesus makes this point explicitly to the Pharisees. He calls them "lovers of money," and exposes their situation. "No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."[3] The Pharisees respond to this teaching by ridiculing Jesus.

This is a difficult teaching. The starkness of the choice Jesus offers – its mutual exclusivity – offends our post-modern sensibilities.[4] Where is the nuance? Where is the both/and? Where is the doing good and doing well? The Lukan Jesus leaves no wiggle room for the comfortable. Luke's gospel calls for a radical socio-economic leveling, an opening of love in our hearts for every one of God's children. If this understanding of the kingdom, this agape love, is not first in our hearts[5] – before all our possessions, before even our own lives – the gate will prove too narrow for us.[6]

As explored in Chapter 3, Luke focuses on middle agents[7] who, due to the epistemological bubble[8] that surrounds us, are blocked from understanding the the truth of the gospel. There is a patient and repetitive persistence to Luke's efforts[9] to get the message through the imperial noise. There is also a pressing urgency. Luke is "using history to preach."[10] The gospel writer wants listeners to be struck to the heart by the truth, and to see the significance of the choice that lies before us between false regimes and true power. Where the Matthean Jesus is provocative to the religious establishment,[11] the Lukan Jesus is provocative to the comfortable citizens of the empire and insider collaborators[12] in subjected communities (those known in this dissertation as middle agents). Perhaps this is why, after comforting his disciples with images from nature of God's good provision,[13] Jesus announces that he has come to bring division.[14] With Pharisees, toll collectors, and middle agents in general, Jesus is forcing the question. This causes disruption[15] and leads individuals, families and groups into conflict. To emphasize the immediacy, he tells the parable about the un-fruitful fig tree that gets one more year.[16]

If we haven't gotten it yet, Luke sears an image into our minds as his narration comes to a close. In his horrific last moments, Jesus takes note of the two criminals next to him. One is like the cynical bullies who tortured him in the home of the high priest.[17] This one is surrendered to the Domination System, caring nothing for others, seeking only to save his own skin. The other is reverent, in his dying moments tenderly opening his spirit to a gospel view of the world, asking Jesus to remember him in the new order. In a dramatic closing visual, Luke lifts up the chasm, the stark choice of loyalties, on either side of Jesus' crucified body.[18] With his last breath, Jesus proclaims liberation for the reverent, repentant criminal.

The Un/comfortable Man's Chasm

The larger narrative movement in Luke's gospel is pressing middle agents urgently to make a decision about our allegiance to (and subsequent sacrifice for) the kingdom of God. While the Pharisees ridicule[19] Jesus for exposing their choice to love money more than human liberation, Jesus offers a disturbing image, a depiction of the fate that we create for ourselves when we reject our connection to our struggling sisters and brothers.[20] A man, formerly of leisure and comfort,[21] gazes from his place of torment across a great chasm toward the once homeless Lazarus, who now rests in Abraham's bosom.[22] Jesus tells this story to illustrate what happens to religious leaders who follow the money instead of working on behalf of the people they are called to serve.[23] There is a certain shock value associated with this illustration.[24] The Pharisees presume their own salvation and Jesus' contradictory message is not veiled.[25]

A comfortable man passes by the suffering, homeless Lazarus[26] every day at his gate. He spends his days in his gated community. He dresses in purple garments and fine linen[27] and dines sumptuously every day.[28] The crumbs from his table would be a delight to Lazarus, but the comfortable man pays no attention to God's teachings about leaving fruit in our fields[29] and bread

scraps from our tables for the poor. Blinded by his dedication to pleasure, the comfortable man has no comprehension that it is his responsibility to care for the ill man.[30] Indeed the only ones who show Lazarus mercy are the wild dogs who come by and lick his sores, making him unclean and even more destitute socially.

There are a variety of views of the dogs in the literature.[31] Some see them as a simple sign of uncleanness, an indication of how far Lazarus has fallen.[32] Others see the dogs as Lazarus' helpers and friends.[33] Adewale explains that there is a long African (and Jewish) belief that dog saliva heals wounds and then says:

> The message here is very subtle. It implies that anyone who is blinded by the deceit of riches could become less than human. If, in their bestial sense, the dogs could realize Lazarus's need of help, and indeed helped him as far as they could, then the rich man's failure to realize that Lazarus needs his help points to the fact that the rich man in his thinking is lower than the dogs.[34]

Amid the layered communication that happens in parabolic imagery, I would add that Luke is drawing upon the Hebrew understanding that creation itself is an active witness to the covenant and thus supports God's project of liberation. In the Hebraic view, mountains skip and seas part for escaping Hebrew slaves. So too creation witnesses in Jesus' day. The religious leaders who are the audience of this parable have failed to the extreme extent that creation must respond and help the vulnerable – dogs are helping the destitute and stones are crying out to give voice to the silent.[35] Adding another layer to the parabolic cake, Jesus creatively makes his point about creation's participation in justice while simultaneously making a not so subtle dig at the Pharisees about their misplaced obsession with purity codes (creation's witness against them comes via unclean dogs).

Time passes and Lazarus dies an anonymous death on the street. Angels come and take him directly to the bosom of Abraham where he receives consolation and comfort. The formerly comfortable man dies and finds himself in a place of torment. The early part of the story indicates that the comfortable man cannot see Lazarus. Yet he must have seen Lazarus and his suffering, because later, when suffering himself in his disconnected hell, the now uncomfortable man

recognizes Lazarus instantly[36] – at least he recognizes him partially. He sees the person who used to lie at his gate. Still, he cannot see the truth of Lazarus through his frozen narrative which permanently defines Lazarus as his inferior and servant. His erroneous commitment to his own privilege is on full display, as he asks Abraham[37] to command Lazarus to serve and comfort him.

Abraham explains that the uncomfortable man, through his mistaken view of the world – a view that relegates his brother Lazarus to the dregs of life – has created a chasm.[38] His refusal to open his heart to the equality[39] and dignity of his brother has fixed a separation around him that no one can cross.[40] The only one who can remove the separation is the one who created it, the uncomfortable man himself, through awakening and repentance.[41]

Tragically, the uncomfortable man refuses to change his way of looking at the world.[42] In his confusion, he continues to think of Lazarus as a servant, asking Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them of their fate. The shocking persistence of his commitment to a relationship of superiority and servitude deepens our awareness of the misunderstanding that shapes the chasm.[43] This second request simply confirms the hopelessness for the man. Readers of Luke can observe that the chasm would be removed – that the arrogant man would be restored to the human family – if only he could accept the reality that Lazarus is his full and equal brother and care for him.[44] Yet, our uncomfortable man remains confused.

And Lazarus' voice remains silenced. In a generally helpful chapter, Bailey goes off the rails when he starts riffing on what a gentle silent, noble, and forgiving soul Lazarus is.

> Who, for heaven's sake, would want to journey from heaven to hell? Obviously, Abraham has a volunteer. There is only one other person on stage. Lazarus is whispering in Abraham's ear and saying something like, 'Father Abraham, that's my old neighbor down there. We have known each other for years. Poor man-he is in such a fix. We have plenty of water here, and if it pleases you, I will be glad to take a glass down to him!' More of Lazarus's nature is now revealed. His *makrothymia* motivates him on the deepest level of his being. He not only refrains from gloating over the rich man's well-deserved predicament but shows compassion for his fallen oppressor."[45]

This imaginative reconstruction of Lazarus' inner world exposes a glaring blindspot of middle agent biblical interpreters. Like plantation families of the pre-Civil War south who thought slaves were

happy with their lives, it is a habit of the comfortable to think that those who suffer for them are "glad" to sacrifice and serve. It is a pernicious middle agent habit to idealize individuals and groups who suffer horrendously in the very system that benefits middle agents. It is also a pernicious habit to apply values of non-disruption and long-suffering to them.

> Lazarus created meaning by what he chose not to do. He was quiet in his days of powerless suffering, and remained silent in his days of power as he listened to his former tormenter demand services from him.[46]
>
> Jesus paints a clear picture of Lazarus's gentle soul. He was a man at peace with himself-within his suffering-and managed to live in harmony even with the wild guard dogs around him.[47]

They are so good for keeping the system intact. As I describe in greater detail in the next chapter, middle agents tend to mistakenly conflate disruption of oppressive systems with violence, and thus to think that good oppressed people don't create disruption.[48]

For now, we note that Jesus was not a nice silent and unobtrusively longsuffering oppressed person. He did not quietly swallow his pain and the pain of his community. He was a feisty and disruptive irritation to middle agents of all kinds, for the sake of their salvation and the healing of the whole. Given the confrontational thrust of the Lukan narrative and the overt division that Jesus generates, it is safe to say that neither the historical Jesus, nor the Lukan Jesus, were idealizing a silent Lazarus. It is far more likely that in the construction of this story, they are viscerally conveying the way comfortable people can't see or hear their suffering siblings. The silence speaks volumes about the rich man's epistemological bubble.[49] Far from being something wonderful, the erasure of Lazarus' voice and dignity is an egregious offense to Jesus and God.[50]

This passage offers a grim warning to those who believe salvation/security is secured by being on the "correct" side of some social division.[51] The puzzle is not to figure out who is in and who is out. Salvation is the banquet where everyone is in. Chasms and gates are forbidden. The human family – with the animals and natural world and all creation – is restored and whole. Slipping through the eye of the needle into God's realm comes through relinquishing the very concept of

social division. Letting this go proves nearly impossible. Those who can't stop constructing fences, walls, and gates, tragically separate themselves from the joy.[52] Abraham comments on the intractability of this mental habit. We have dismissed Moses and the prophets.[53] It is unlikely that we can be convinced even by one returning from the dead.[54]

Where is Power Located?

Our theology of power matters, because it is our erroneous beliefs about the location/source/structure of power in this world that creates the chasm. Middle agents, due to our location and function in the power structure, tend to be convinced that earthly powers (kinship and patronage systems) control our fate. It looks to us as if the managers of the present regime hold the power and distribute it. It feels prudent to go along with their schemes and demands, their tributary economies and wars, in return for our lives and the basic necessities of life – or at least to avoid suffering and violence. Note that the un/comfortable man cannot, even in death, relinquish his hierarchical model of power.[55] He sees Father Abraham as the one in the room with power who can meet his needs. Thus he directs all his attention to Abraham, trying to figure out how to ingratiate himself, so that Abraham will use power on his behalf.[56] The suffering man sees Lazarus as powerless and therefore irrelevant.

Jesus offers a radical counterclaim. God power – the Original Power that makes and sustains creation – is gifted broadly to all people. It flows openly through human beings who engage in healing and communities that live according to Sabbath economics.[57] Biblical economic practices such as tithing, restraint (sharing the fruits of our labor with those in need), debt release and land redistribution lead to a surprising flow of blessing and abundance.[58] Sharing in this divine power is our birthright.

This claim is confrontational. It says that Earth's imperialists, like the false one (*diabolos*) who challenged Jesus in the wilderness, are pretenders who manipulate systems, aggregating people power to their advantage by extracting millions of small acts of consent.[59] Then they carefully titrate out little bits of their stolen abundance in orchestrated displays of make-believe generosity. All of this is designed to convince us that they are the generators and rightful holders of the immense portion of the world they purport to own and control. Jesus and a stream of visionaries before and since have revealed to us that individuals and communities can wake up to this situation, withdraw consent from creation's imperialists, and plug directly into God power.

Tracing the Contours of Power in the Ministry of Jesus

In what follows, we trace how the question of power moves through the ministry of Jesus. Mark puts us most in touch with action on the ground.[60] Crowds of the seemingly powerless are collectively resisting, openly questioning rulers, refusing to be dominated, and individually and collectively operating in new ways. We experience a crowd-centric reordering of reality. Jesus offers two parables (mustard seed, yeast)[61] about the capacity of something seemingly tiny (non-violent people power fueled by God) to generate social change.[62] Jesus calls this the kingdom of God. Revelation of divine truth leaves the false powers trembling and shaking.[63] They are being cast out. The chains are falling away and captives are running free.[64] God's promised social order rooted in love, overflowing in abundance, is being instantiated. For those with eyes to see, in the escalating action, *kairos* is breaking into *chronos*. Things are happening quickly, wildly, immediately.[65]

In his effort to provide an orderly account, Luke places this revelation of divine power on the streets in broader theological context. The power that Jesus is revealing among the crowds is not mediated by imperial and cultic orders or leaders (thus not governed by patronage and kinship). In baptism, Jesus is linked directly to God.[66] In case we miss the message in the baptism, Luke then

places Jesus in a lineage that traces back through Joseph to David to Abraham to Adam to God.[67] This careful tracing of Jesus' identity back to creation explains how God's Original Power is able move in this world as it wishes – among the poor and rich, Jews and Gentiles, the clean and unclean – without the direction and permission of Roman and Jewish institutions.

As Jesus is coming into his ministry, he is offered that path of earthly privilege by the satanic regime.[68] Like the first human beings in the garden, he is tested.[69] The devil offers the path of human idolatry and error – that path of immature deployment of the gift of power – that path that separates self from God and neighbor (Abraham and Lazarus) – the path of hierarchies of domination and submission – the path that leads to chasms and suffering. The devil, like the emperor, is a faker – grabbing Original Power and pretending to be his own source.[70] Overwhelming displays of stolen wealth and force are a means by which imperial regimes gather our submission, thus increasing its own mindless momentum by our collective consent. We can choose at any time to withdraw our consent, though we feel, perhaps rightly, that we will experience consequences for this. If enough of us find the courage to do this, the regime loses its ability to take our labor and enact violence. This is a test – like the first human beings were tested, like Job was tested, like Daniel was tested. Jesus is tired and hungry. Will he keep his integrity under imperial pressure. As we've noted, the two primary forms of imperial pressure are privileges and violence. *Give up your connection to the Source of all abundance and I will give you these crumbs! Surrender to me and I will make you a dominator!* [71] He offers wealth (bread) and status (authority over others)[72] in trade for loyalty[73] – the essence of the patronage system.

Rudman explains how the devil operates inside the narrow confines of imperial patronage, and fails to recognize the true source of power.

> The devil's offer to Jesus ultimately depends for its validity on subscribing to the view in Dan 1–6 that the world is not just under the control of the forces of chaos, but that this state of affairs is approved by God. However, the devil goes beyond this text by claiming that it is he, the ultimate lord of chaos, who has right of disposal over creation and not God . . .Yet while the devil expects due recognition

> from the recipient of the authority that he gives (Jesus or, implicitly, a chaotic human world ruler [Luke 4.7]), he mistakenly assumes that he owes no recognition to the source of his authority: God. Jesus' rejoinder to Satan during their confrontation, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him' (Luke 4.8), operates not just as a statement of where Jesus' own loyalties lie, but also as a rebuke to the chaotic power that refuses to recognize God as the ultimate source of its authority over the world. The subtle irony of the diabolical middleman, who expects fealty on account of the power he gives but does not offer the same fealty to the one who has given him this power in the first place, is accentuated by reference to Daniel. Effectively, the devil appears as a Nebuchadnezzar, the chaotic king who believed his achievements to have been carried out by his own power and who failed to recognize God as the source of that power. Instead of contenting himself with this offence, however, the devil has the temerity to offer God's son this power in exchange for the traditional recognition of authority. Instead of the Creator coopting the powers of chaos in ruling the world, the powers of chaos attempt to coopt the Creator, through Jesus, as their junior partner![74]

When this doesn't work, as a trick to gain Jesus' consent for his claim to power, he demands Jesus prove his identity through magical displays. Will Jesus sell out the truth of his dignity and power (through the image of God)[75] for the shadow realm of power offered by the demonic? Will he allow the abundant Original Power pouring forth from his body to be exploited and commodified?[76] Will he succumb to fear? Aren't these the temptations for middle agents in imperial regimes? The offer of perks and the threat of violence? Both contain the claim that power is held by the managers of the system – the power to bless and to curse. Will Jesus remember the One who truly holds the power to bless and curse?

Maturing into the fullness of our birthright – to be living vessels of divine power – is an ordeal. The path of integrity is arduous.[77] Will Jesus succumb to frailty and exhaustion?

> Placed at the beginning of Jesus' activity, immediately after the baptism, the episode of the temptation represents the moment of testing or of purification before his mission. It could be placed within the literary genre 'vocation of the divine man' or 'temptation of the wise', a tradition that was known in the first century CE, and present in Ecclus 44.20-21,1 Mace. 2.51-68, and applied to characters such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Solomon, Ezra, Job, Elijah, Moses, Hananiah ben Dosa, Honi the Circle-drawer and others. The [divine man] needed to have a revelation and to overcome temptation or trial. This is in fact common in the process of initiation of a shaman, whose ecstasy or ascension is always preceded by purification.[78]

Unlike his forebears in the garden – like Job and Daniel – Jesus passes the test in the wilderness. He faces the pressures and temptations of the Domination System and models the path of faith.

Moving on from his encounter, Jesus continues to demonstrate his power and authority over unclean spirits.[79] He radiates healing power. Crowds gather. The crowds, like the imperial

pretenders, cannot help being idolatrous in the face of true power. They see his power and want to capture him,[80] but he slips away saying he must proclaim "the good news of the kingdom of God" to other cities.[81]

Jesus models for humanity how to live on an earth that is alive with divine power. He is the first fruit of the new creation – a new Adam/earth creature – mature in his embodiment of God's dangerously divine gift of power.[82] He captures his new disciples' attention by demonstrating his powers over the natural world, unlocking creation's abundance for all people, pulling up huge amounts of fish.[83] He demonstrates to them that divine power is not something to exploit. It is something to enjoy, explore, and share in community. It is uncontainable love that, when received, opens latent sources of abundance. And so he builds a community – a gathering of women and men who dedicate themselves to spiritual and practical training. Luke calls them "people of the way."

Jesus attempts to remain incognito, but the more people he heals and feeds, the more attention he gets.[84] When he heals and forgives the paralytic man, the Pharisees and leaders from Jerusalem are angered by his lack of deference to their system. They have established themselves as brokers of divine power and they do not appreciate being disintermediated. That he does so publicly further undermines their position.[85] They are stuck in an awkward position and wonder what to do, saying: "We have seen strange things today."[86]

John announces that Jesus is, indeed, the one prophesied. Word spreads throughout the countryside about his power. "[A]ll the crowds were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them."[87] Jesus' visible power intensifies when he raises the widow's son from the dead.[88] Jesus proves himself to be a worthy vessel of Original Power.

Watching him cast demons and causing a mute man to speak, the crowds want to know if Jesus' power comes from heaven or hell. He teaches them that there is no power in hell. False kingdoms feed off God power. As they get further and further from the love that is their source,

they collapse.[89] Either we are separating ourselves into illusory and idolatrous regimes (chasms) or we are connecting to the intersubjectivity of all being (self, neighbor, God). Either we are disconnected or we are plugged in and filled with true life. Jesus, by and large, pushes action over speculation. Rather than endlessly debating, he suggests we give this way a try. He says blessed is the one who hears the word and does it.[90]

The intensity of the crowds keeps growing and they keep demanding signs. Jesus laments that they do not understand. They want to be entertained by Jesus' specialness. In their mindlessness, they do not realize they are witnessing a prophet who will turn around nations – more so than Jonah or Solomon.[91] Jesus is not a calm and well behaved poor man – silent as he nobly endures his people's imperial pain and abandonment. He breaks all the rules of the civilized (colonized) classes.[92] He lets his freak flag fly. He verbally fights with the leaders and he makes scenes and he embarrasses people. He tells his followers, *wake up! Connect to the source of light and life. Let your consciousness shift and see the way the world is being reborn before your eyes. Do not remain cut off in darkness like hungry ghosts looking for a sign. Allow God's light to radiate through you and transform your body and soul to shalom. And then light the path for others.*[93]

The tension between Jesus and the religious leaders increases. He tells the disciples: "beware the yeast of the Pharisees." He teaches that everything hidden will come out in the open so lead lives of integrity. And he reminds them not to fear the ones who can kill the body. Rather be concerned with the One with authority over eternal life.[94]

Luke continues to clarify our confusion about the location of true power. For us there are many stumbling blocks.[95] We keep thinking power is located in the regime. We fail to see God power at work all around us. Jesus teaches that if we had faith the size of a mustard seed, we "could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey."[96] There is world-

altering power available to us as children of God. We relinquish this power because of our insistence on projecting our power onto unworthy authorities.

Middle Agents and the Location of Power

Unlike "people of the way" with their community-centric understanding of power, those who root their security in the imperial structure tend to see the power structure as pyramidal. There are a few at the top with a lot of power and privilege. Some of it trickles to the middle and the majorities at the bottom are out of luck. Power is sum zero. You must know the right people (or be the right people) to get what you need to survive. Via the epistemological bubble, the elite are able to use their wealth to insulate themselves from disturbing facts on the ground. To the degree that middle agents do the imperial dirty work, we can't fully insulate ourselves. We end up pressed between the imperial narrative of "peace and security" [97] and the direct evidence of violence and poverty. In order to live through the day, we develop creative ways to mentally manage the cognitive dissonance.

Leaders and systems, and the way they deploy Original Power, are part of embodied life. Immature leaders and systems need secrecy, propaganda[98] and lies to prop up their regimes.[99] And when that fails, immature powers kill. Legions of soldiers get placed in villages to suppress uprisings. Preachers of a liberating gospel are beheaded or nailed to crosses – forced to suffer for revealing the disbursed nature of power.[100]

As demonstrated by Jesus, the mature deployment of Original Power does not suppress. God power is free and meant to be shared. Mature power does not take the form of weapons. It takes the form of healings.[101] Mature leaders do not use propaganda and false images to retain control of the masses. In the presence of skilled deployers of Original Power, we see demons leaving town and persons whole and sane and in their right minds leading lives of passion for the sake of the

well-being of others. Immature leaders tell us to accept the deprivation, trauma and crisis they create, holding on for a better time down the road – a new age – a *Pax Romana*. Christ tells us to pick up our mats and walk – the kingdom is here – be healed.

Middle agents in Luke (and today) experience confusion in this debate about the location, nature and source of power. As Jesus calls us out of the regime and into allegiance with humanity at large, we tend to, like the rich young ruler, hesitate. We stare into the chasm of the unknown, contemplating all we will lose. We are ingrained with the belief that the authorities are benevolent and that they hold the power of this world. It feels wrong – on a spectrum from ungrateful to suicidal – to go against them. As with the rich young ruler, the Lukan Jesus has compassion for those of us trapped in this particular error.

We could view the Incarnation as our Creator's compassionate response to our predicament. We continue to generate catastrophes with this dangerously divine gift of Original Power. God takes on human flesh and walks the streets of Galilee – a patient, loving and intimate strategy for freeing us from the bindings of our own creation. God does not take the gift away. God comes and guides us out of our mess. Our Beloved goes before us, experiencing everything our regimes dish out, from confrontations and traps, to torture and the cross, in no way masking the pain of our situation and the consequences of revealing the distortions of imperial structures – all the while inviting us to liberate ourselves into the healing, abundance, and freedom of God and creation-wide community.

Contrary to some contemporary Christian teaching, Jesus' suffering does not finish the job. Jesus' suffering, quite evidently in today's world, does not replace ours.[102] He opens a way for us to walk on our own path of discipleship. Jesus, the saints, and all who go before us, make our journey a little easier, but they do not go on our behalf. We must actually take the journey ourselves. We must live through our own ordeal – our own test – and have our own integrity tested. A sincere young ruler[103] goes away grieving, because he is full of faith and alive to the reality of the power of the Jesus

Movement. He has eyes to see the Source flowing through Jesus and the multitudes who are moved by it. He knows what is at stake in this test and is devastated by his own tragic choice to love money more than God. Jesus is rattling the young ruler's (and our) thought patterns about power – not just our thoughts but our actions. When push comes to shove what do we trust?

Where do we think power is located? Is it centralized? Is it disbursed? Is it found in the halls of Herod? In the temple authorities? In the Pharisaic approach to life? Is it found among the gathering multitudes? As he makes his way into Jerusalem, he plays on our commitment to hierarchal models of power in a bit of imperial street theatre.[104] With a motley procession of the rural poor, he strides – more likely hilariously bucks and hobbles on a never before ridden colt – into Jerusalem, while his followers goof at the obsequious displays they are forced to provide to the emperors who impoverish them[105] and cry out "save us, son of David."[106] Jesus does not state the reality outright on this public stage. Instead he jars us into looking at the world and deciding for ourselves. He says, go ahead, give to the authorities what is theirs.[107] What did they make? What do they own? Give to God what is God's. What did God make? What does God own?

Torn Between Two Banquets

So far in this chapter, we have been tracing power through Luke's telling of the gospel. We began by showing how Luke presses middle agents to make a choice. To which story of power will we give our lives? The imperial story or the Jesus story? Which master will we choose? Imperial religion or the path of intersubjective love (God, humanity, creation)?[108] To get at this question another way, we now turn to the gospel of Mark. Here we explore two banquets that Mark presents for our consideration.[109] The first is a royal banquet held in the Herodian halls of power with Herod's courtiers, officers, and the leaders of Galilee.[110] The second happens in the most remote area Jesus and the disciples can find, in hopes of retreat and rest.[111] The guests are the stressed-out

survivors – the hungry, tired and broken-hearted – the ones on whom the parasitic Herodian regime feasts.

In this side-by-side presentation of banquets, Mark highlights two views about the source of power and prosperity. In the direct experience of villagers and farmers, the authorities hold the power to exact violence and to take the fruits of their labor. Jesus understands and affirms their painful experiences of corrupt power. At the same time, he does not see the people as powerless. Day by day, before their eyes, he deconstructs this assumption.[112] Out on a remote shoreline, curious crowds are gathering. Jesus is showing the disciples and crowds that buried in the daily reality of struggling farmers, fishers and villagers is true power. This power comes from the Source of life and is available to all life. Operating beyond the purview of corrupt human rulers is our Creator's prerogative.[113] All creation is coursing with power (for healing and for feeding). He teaches them (and us) to tap into our divine source directly.

By contrast, the power found in Herod's palace is anemic. It is constrained and rooted in deception and lies.[114] It is the disconnected power of the devil in the wilderness. It is grabbed from the Creator and maintained by an alliance of thieves. The text alludes to this destructive alliance.[115] Co-conspirators (political, military, and religious)[116] maintain this false power structure in exchange for personal security and privilege. Bound by his position, Herod must resort to violence. He is unable to make the decision to save John (his apparent preference). Rather he must submit to the protocol of the system. He must preserve his oaths, his loyalty to the elite, and his willingness to be brutal toward poor rebels in front of his guests.

John pierces the barrier between these two worlds.[117] With no apparent regard for the rigid rules of etiquette in the palace, he bursts the epistemological bubble that regular visitors maintain so fastidiously. His honesty is shocking and fascinating for Herod. Herod is attracted to him. The poor majority and middle agents are allowed into elite banquets under strict unspoken rules. As the devil

demanded of Jesus in the wilderness, interesting poor people are often called upon to entertain rich people. *Show us a sign. Do something interesting.* John also refuses this bargain. He will not follow the etiquette of the patron/client system. He will not lie and defer to pretend gods. He does not silently endure untruth. Like Daniel, he pays a price for his integrity. He is welcome only as long as he is amusing and useful. His exposure of the mechanisms of Herodian power is not amusing.[118]

Two Motivations

Jesus shows us that if we wish to come into direct contact with the vibrancy of holy power, compassion is a key.[119] The presence of compassion sparks life-giving abundance. The absence of compassion empties the space of life moving humanity toward harm and death. At first on the shoreline, Jesus is just tired. He is looking for a way to slip away and rest for bit. Then he sees the people chasing him down, desperate for life, and he is moved by compassion. In the midst of his exhaustion, his belly is stirred in that mysterious mixture of anger and empathy.[120] He is made alert by the reality of his intersubjectivity with the crowds. He allows himself to experience and share their overwhelming struggle. This upsetting of his gut fires up his motivation to remove the bindings that captivate and crush the human family. This inner emotive aliveness fuels acts of service, healing, exorcizing, teaching, and feeding. Compassion is a powerful originating catalyst for his actions.

The Marcan gospel explains why the disciples were silent, afraid and astounded later as Jesus walked on water and climbed into their boat. They were still thinking about the feeding of the crowds. "[F]or they did not understand concerning the loaves; but their hearts were hardened."[121] Henderson's "study of the second sea-crossing story (Mk 6.45-52) [proposes] that the disciples' misunderstanding here concerns their failure to exert the authority. Jesus has provided for their active participation in the inbreaking, eschatological kingdom of God that he inaugurates."[122]

> What is it the disciples ought to have grasped 'concerning the loaves'? Perhaps it is their own part in Jesus' mission, their own power over the evil spirits embodied in the sea, their own responsibility to exercise the authority Jesus has entrusted to them and recalled for them in his effort to 'pass them by.'[123]

I am in agreement with Henderson. This sequence of events is all about the disciples learning to open themselves to the mature exercise of the gift of divine power. I would note one key detail found in this short passage. The disciples fail to understand power and to act with power because their hearts are hardened. Deeply felt, gut-wrenching, bodily compassion (in contrast to abstract kindly thoughts) awakens genuine aliveness to intersubjectivity, providing the gateway for Original Power to flow through human vessels – in the forms of agency (creativity), economy (extravagance), and identity (dignity).[124]

Herod flirts with different motivations.[125] Greed is a major driver of his world – the all-consuming greed of the empire that swallows everything in its path, and his greedy ambition to find a place within it.[126] Still, he is motivated for a little while to listen to John. He is motivated to please his daughter. Ultimately, Herod is motivated by a cold intention to preserve his position at unspeakable cost.[127]

Two Models of Organization

Organization is another key theme, and a point of contrast[128] between the two banquets. Original Power gets mediated through the way we are organized. Our families, communities, governments, procedures, policies, narratives, and social and religious codes (among many other collective structures) shape the way Original Power moves in the created order. Thus organization (intentional and inadvertent, conscious and unconscious) matters.[129] Herod's party has a listless lazy feeling. It is all about self-indulgence.[130] This extravagant nothingness is made possible by a hierarchical pyramidal structure – a patronage structure held together with loyalties and allegiances.[131]

As our passage reveals, Jesus also sees organization as important. He says the people are "like a sheep without a shepherd."[132] They have no mature leadership that can help them visualize and create liberating structures to mediate Original Power. Jesus does not take this easy opportunity

to exploit and control them. He also doesn't advocate mob mentality. He takes the opportunity to teach them how to organize themselves for the sake of shared shalom. Focused on hospitality, he tells the disciples to break the crowd down into small groups. Scale matters. Operating at a massive scale invites systems of hierarchy and control. The small group invites relationship. Relationship means slowing down, becoming aware of each other's needs and encountering the unusual gifts that God has placed in each member.

Jesus is drawing upon the Sabbath economics of Torah,[133] teaching the basis of a healthy local economy. A small group of people, with their rightful land and compassion (a deep desire for justice and thriving for all people), hold the key to unlocking the capacity of God's creation. In Torah, God taught human beings how to organize community so every need can be met.[134] On the grassy shoreline Jesus enacts this teaching.

Luke and the Theme of Community Organizing

Luke understands the importance of community-organizing and develops it to a greater degree than the other gospel writers. It is Luke who pushes through the gospel into Acts, where the specificity of small egalitarian communities (embedded in the heart of imperial regimes) gets worked out. Luke sees these tiny experiments, where people of all classes gather and eat together as brothers and sisters, as yeast or mustard seeds that have impact beyond their tiny size, as vessels of God's holy power on earth.[135]

Luke's gospel can be read as the unfolding of a community organizing strategy. Jesus comes on the scene teaching and demonstrating the way God power enters creation through socially-leveled ethically-based community.[136] He gathers a core of leaders (trainees) and they shadow him while he heals the crowds. Then he pushes his little birds out of the nest. It is time for his inner core of students to try it out for themselves.[137] He sends them on a mission to heal, cast out demons, and teach the people. When they return, Jesus withdraws to debrief (training the trainers). Now we come

to our banquet. Never one to miss the teaching moment, Jesus tests his disciples by telling them to spontaneously feed thousands of people. They hesitate out on their limb in a panic, so Jesus nudges them. *Remember how I organized you into a small community of shared power, and how the abundance of creation (fish from the sea, healing for our bodies, living water) began to flow? Now go and do likewise. Organize the people into small communities. See if what I taught you is true.*[138]

Later, in Chapter 10, Jesus replicates his model even further, pushing more students out of the nest. Now seventy servant leaders are sent out "like sheep among wolves"[139] There is boot camp feeling in the text. Recruits are being trained in very practical ways about the process.[140] They are taught to use that power to heal and to liberate. They are reminded not to get caught in domination or retaliation.[141] Each person has the freedom to choose to be a vessel of divine power or to reject this offer. When the disciples are rejected, they are told to walk away and let God work it out.[142]

Their testing goes well and they experience the wonders God does through them – and Jesus rejoices with them. As Original Power opens into the world through them in life-giving ways, they witness the dissipation of the demonic. Jesus pronounces that while they were out he saw "Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning."[143] This successful embodiment of power is a significant step in the larger salvation story of humanity. Jesus thanks God for allowing the meek of the world to be the bearers of new creation. He tells the disciples: stop and attend to this moment; this is one for the ages.[144]

Later in Acts, the Spirit pours power into this socially-leveled covenantal way of life for expanding realms of humanity, generating communities throughout the empire.[145] All of this leads us to the conclusion that the ways we organize community, the ways we develop the social instruments that deploy divine power in the world, matter. In Luke, communities (and the very particular ways they are organized) are a key means through which salvation comes.[146]

Two Fruits

Before closing this section, let us return the two banquets in Mark. Biblically we are taught to judge not by words, but by fruits.[147] In the text, each of these banquets produces fruit in the form of a meal.[148] The Herodian banquet offers the head of John the Baptist on a platter. This is an intentionally terrifying image – an effort at "shock and awe."[149] Like the image of a human body nailed to a cross, this image is intended to deter others who might have the urge to meddle with the bubble. The way Rome and its Herodian clients are organized – the way the empire mediates divine power – produces the rotten fruit of violence. The head on the platter evokes the deeper reality of the elite feeding cannibalistically[150] on the poor. This rotten fruit reveals barrenness masquerading as imperial fruitfulness. The second banquet, with its organization into small egalitarian groups, offers a contrasting picture, the abundance of the land and sea (bread and fish) multiplied and shared to feed thousands. We are invited to consider the question: what are the fruits of the ways we organize and mediate divine power?

Facing the Chasm

This brings us back to chasm. The miraculous feeding – with its access to the dynamic aliveness of creation's blessings – happens because the disciples consent to cross the chasm. Tired and harried, overwhelmed and doubting, they step over a cliff into the unknown. Imagine being faced with more than ten thousand[151] hungry people, and having Jesus blithely say, "you feed them."[152] You have more power than you know.[153] There is more abundance in these struggling people and on this forgotten spot of earth than you have ever imagined. Most of us would have burst into hysterical laughter and run away as fast as possible. The disciples are initially shocked. They see crowds of people and only scarcity.[154] Yet they trust Jesus at a radical level, even in the face of all absurdity. So they take a deep breath and stay present for what is about to happen next. They keep stepping forward illogically and they make a mind-bending discovery. They encounter the

divine abundance that has always been there. Herod stands on the very same precipice when he is listening to John. He is being invited to take a leap and experience life outside his carefully curated royal bubble. He teeters on the edge for a moment. Maybe? Then he panics and reestablishes his place in the regime.

Middle Agents and the Location of Power in the Twenty-first Century

We can find present day corollaries to the two biblical banquets presented above, though we must look carefully, because the landscape has changed. Today, imperial modes of control are both more prevalent and more amorphous. The Domination System has grown increasingly complex, universal and integrated into our lives. Empire now has no center. It no longer sits on a specific territory.[155] Through a complex of global physical presence and virtual networks, imperialism and extractive economy touch every corner of the globe and invade every area of our lives. We literally carry our occupiers, with their insatiable drive for surveillance, dominance, social control, and extraction – "seeing and taking" – around in our pockets.

Similarly, the shape of the Jesus Movement, the grassroots bearer and enactor of God's creation-loving and humanity-loving vision, has changed. Until recently, movements for social transformation have also been largely geographically circumscribed. In the biblical narrative, the dynamics of human liberation from imperial oppression happen in specific geographic locations – from the Hebrew people escaping from Egypt, to the non-violent response of Hezekiah's people to Assyrian invasion, to Jesus and the crowds in Galilee. So too, campaigns and social movements have been geographically isolated in particular places around planet earth for the last 2000 years. We only have sketches of these people-powered resistance movements because their stories have been subsumed by the dominant version of history. To have a tiny minority of dominators control the story of the human family, of course, leaves us with a questionable written record.

This begins to change in the twentieth century when we see a proliferation of grassroots nonviolent social action and increasing collaboration and communication between leaders and across social movements – e.g. Latin America, Indonesia, South Africa, India, and the United States.[156] Today, facilitated by technology, organizers and movements with their rapidly evolving organizing principles are now linking up, communicating, and learning dynamically around the globe.[157] Young visionaries in Tahir Square share their experiences with occupiers on Wall Street. Activists in villages on different continents who are concerned with corporate control of the food supply, developing clean energy solutions, and responding to climate change share knowledge and strategies.[158] We find a broad sense of common vision and solidarity of purpose within the particularities of each local effort. There is an increasingly intersubjective understanding of humanity. Communities are realizing that suffering on the other side of the world is inextricably related to local suffering and that geographically distant activity toward liberation is mutually freeing.

Like empire, these gatherings, groups, projects and movements are no longer confined to territories. For instance, community leaders who are working on access to water in remote parts of Africa can connect, teach, learn and develop methods with their counterparts in remote regions of India and myriad other communities around the earth heretofore isolated in their concerns. We are witnessing a "rising of the multitudes."[159] Middle agents today, as in Jesus' time, to the extent that we are even aware of the multitudes, are pulled between the claims of these two banquets – globalized corporate imperialism and globalized social movements for universal human freedom. This may seem stark and dualistic. It is. Jesus, the agitator, continues to harangue us with this basic fact of our existence: we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve competition, self-interest, greed, economic subjugation, patronage, political exceptionalism and war – and, at the same time, serve God's project of universal human freedom and thriving. Which banquet will we choose?

With this unsettling challenge before us, we delve into the present context. As we did in our biblical study, we explore two coexisting views of reality (two banquets), one through the lens of imperial power and the other through the lens of grassroots power. We give particular attention to their contrasting models of organization and their differing fruits.

A Word about God and Community Organizing

In the Hebrew scriptures, God comments on community social practices with regularity, as do Jesus and Paul. It may seem strange that the almighty Creator of the universe gets mixed up in conversations about seemingly insignificant communal patterns and behaviors. Yet, it turns out that God is a bit of a micromanager – or as some in the business world say today, a creative optimizer.[160] God is interested in the way the macro gets shaped in the micro. Social mores matter. Shared processes for negotiating human relationships become the co-creative vehicles, the instruments that gather, distribute, and deploy the gift of Original Power. Some forms of organization build power into small minorities while destroying large parts of life. Other forms of organization share power and voice, land and resources, so that all may participate and thrive. Some create structures that are directive and authoritarian. Some create space for participants to create, express, collaborate, and discover. Some shut down creativity and vibrancy. Some unleash vision and energy. Some are more centralized. Some are more distributed. God does not simply share the dangerously divine gift of power with us and walk away, God rolls up her sleeves and works with us on shaping the vessels and instruments that channel that power into our co-creations.

Community Organization and the .01 Percent

Community organizing is a concept that is most commonly associated with the activity of the multitudes. Make no mistake; Caesar, Pilate and Herod are organized too. Elite institutions are

meticulous about their structure. The framework of imperial organizing is intentionally masked. Full disclosure of the mechanisms of extraction would invite rebellion. We have to put in some effort to get outside the epistemological bubble if we want to make the masked visible.

A twenty-first century corollary to the Herodian banquet is a globally-disbursed yet integrally-connected elite, who are highly organized and in an array of strategic relationships with one another for the sake of their common interests.[161] Mostly these interactions happen out of sight of the public. One visible place the network of individuals that owns over half the planet (and/or their representatives) gathers – to meet and greet and eat and construct and refine their mechanisms for deploying global power[162] – is at the World Economic Forum (WEF)[163] in Davos, Switzerland. The WEF is a highly efficient way for those that control the wealth of the world to see each other, make decisions, and further schemes to increase their power. Some have called it a high profile forum for "corporate speed-dating."[164] The WEF is one of the thought centers on the planet where the self-appointed shapers of our economy – who thus take upon themselves the sacred and challenging responsibility of enacting systems that sustain God's children, creatures and the earth – forsake that calling and instead demonically direct the back-breaking work of the people and the gifts of the soil and sea to a cabal of gamblers. For some, this thievery is conscious and others, unconscious. The result is the same; devastated communities around the world and a brutalized planet earth.

Doing research for *The New Yorker,* Nick Paumgarten got himself invited to WEF gathering in Davos, Switzerland in January 2012. There Paumgarten found himself plugged into a global "miniature society"[165] – exceedingly miniature, largely restricted to the world's .01 percent.

> It was a namedroppers paradise. Central bankers, industrial chiefs, hedge fund titans. Gloomy forecasters, astrophysicists, monks, rabbis, tech wizards, museum curators, university presidents, financial bloggers, virtuous heirs.[166]

As it was in Herod's palace, this banquet is organized into complex systems of hierarchy and patronage. At Davos, the system is managed via colored badges that define each participant's role and degree of access. Its founder, a German professor named Klaus Schwab, "established a setting for a perpetually subdividing game of status, a minuet of subtle distinctions."[167] There are statuses within statuses, a cascading order of importance, with people always looking above and below, and jockeying for position.[168]

> The anxiety of exclusion pervades. It is the natural complement to the euphoria of inclusion. The tension between self-celebration and self-doubt engenders a kind of social electricity.[169]

It is a closed system. You can only come if you are invited. Creating this sense of desperation to be part of the network – generating hope, desire, and anxiety – impresses upon participants (and non participants) that happiness and well-being come from proximity to the superstars of the global economy. The underlying purpose is to create and protect allegiances.[170] The .01 percent is overwhelmingly outnumbered. As described in Chapter 3 and Appendix 4, they need sophisticated systems to keep the rest of us on board. Were we to drop our "starstruckness" and see through the charade, their system of global extraction (the modern version of the ancient tributary economy) would fall apart.

The WEF is one of the most extreme epistemological bubbles in our present world. Not only is attendance tightly controlled to the elite of the elite. The vast majority of attendees are men. After forty years of meeting, the attendance of women in 2012 was at its highest level yet, seventeen percent.[171] The bubble is maintained by exclusionary policies, as well as famously aggressive security. When the global majority started showing signs of serious unrest in Seattle in 1999, security was heightened to even more extreme levels.[172] Participants must travel through "airport level screenings" to get to their meetings.[173]

The media is also strictly controlled. For the most part this is easy. Journalists are so busy angling for their own contacts and positions that they easily swallow an unspoken agreement. In

exchange for access, they will not expose and reveal things that happen in Davos that may be awkward or generate hostility. In other words, they agree not to do their job. "[A]s the journalists all say, nothing newsworthy ever happens at Davos."[174] Of course, what happens in Davos, and the networks that meet there, is of the utmost significance to the billions of people whose families and livelihoods and communities are destroyed by the schemes concocted there. What happens in Davos directly affects the fate of global society and the earth itself. But to call attention to the human reality that literally rages against the impervious bubble makes one a killjoy at the afterhours parties.

Like Herod, the 21st century global elite like to be entertained by interesting characters. So leaders from the arts and the academic world are invited to come for free. These are the culture-creators. Not only are they fascinating to watch and listen to, once coopted, they are invaluable for keeping the masses on board. According to Paumgarten, there is sometimes a special invitee – "an elusive figure more exotic and enticing than the usual array" – "a white rabbit" – such as Angelina Jolie, Bono, or Mick Jaggar.[175] Herod, in his ambivalence, was auditioning John the Baptist for this role.[176] The job of the white rabbit is to bring a bit of the creativity (and the unpredictable wildness of the outside world) into the carefully curated bubble, and to do so in an entirely unthreatening manner. You can entertain in as bizarre a way as you like, you can even raise great waves of impotent sympathy for the plight of the poor, but you cannot question the sick, cannibalistic culture of the elite. That must remain invisible at all costs. There is a skillful art to being the kind of creative outsider that gets invited to dinner.

As in Herod's world, those who inhabit this stifling space desire diversions. Bored oligarchs across the ages say: "Dance for me." And so it is that Richard Strombeck is developing a party within the party that is Davos – a "Burning Man for billionaires."[177] It is exhausting controlling the world. Here the CEOs let their hair down, numb themselves with drink (or whatever), and sing karaoke.

No doubt walking the halls of Davos, one feels a great sense of excitement – big ideas flowing everywhere. There is a buzz that comes from brushing shoulders with those deemed to be the brightest. There is a strange kind of idealism here that is rooted in the sensibilities of Schwab.[178] There is "a patina of altruism"[179] – a warped and out of touch idea that they are improving the world. Insiders dramatically say things like "Capitalism, in its current form, no longer fits the world around us. We have sinned."[180] They have earnest conversations about the "end of capitalism." Occupier David Roth calls this "staged self-criticism."[181]

One way of inoculating the overwhelming factual evidence that the elite are destroying global life on the planet is to disingenuously address the problem. So having a few social reformers present is part of the ethos. In the January 2012 gathering, Kumi Nadoo, executive director of Greenpeace, was approached by a CEO who said, "Some of my peers are eager to have you at their table so they won't be on your menu."[182] When he was part of a less influential not-for-profit they were not interested in him. Now he factors into their continuous multi-dimensional calculation of relationships and power for the sake of personal gain. For some, pretense to social good explicitly serves the goal of self-aggrandizement.[183] For more earnest ones, the bubble is so thick that any meaningful understanding of global suffering is impossible. There is no real possibility that they will surrender their position and join the majority of the world in authentic relationship.[184] According to their free-market worldview, someone is going to get eaten. The best way to ensure that it is not your head on the platter is to be utterly unthreatening to the system of privilege.

Community Organization and Globalizing Grassroots Movements

It is important to remember that alternative narratives, banquets of transformation, like the little tradition in the Bible and hidden transcripts,[185] generally happen outside the carefully protected bubble of middle agents. The elite managers of our media environment, committed to preserving

the status quo, would prefer we not catch wind of it – and when their efforts fail and we do, that we interpret movements of social change as small groups of people, potentially violent, who are fomenting anarchy and should just get jobs. We will have to inoculate ourselves against this relentless imperial narrative and stretch and strain if we want to perceive God's banquet breaking into our world.[186]

In our complex globalized world, if we are interested, we can engage a vast web of community organizing (around food security, water access, job creation, war prevention, post-petroleum energy production, forms of democratic social organization, communal methods of budgeting, urban revitalization, sustainability and earth care to name a few areas). There is powerful knowledge being generated in myriad specific locations around the world and it is getting linked up. This, I submit, is today's abundant banquet of Christ – happening on the ground, all around this beautiful suffering blue-green planet of ours, largely among the eighty percent – the marginalized majorities – and mostly out of sight of middle agents. There are grassy places (and mountainous and desert places) where the multitudes gather to share a richness of vision, teachings, healings, and food. This disbursed network is our present day corollary to the banquet of loaves and fishes. I've chosen three prominent focal points for the sake of illustration: The World Social Forum, Arab Spring, and Occupy.[187]

The World Social Forum

The hub of grassroots globalization for the last decade has been the World Social Forum (WSF). In direct response to the behavior of the WEF, the WSF began meeting in Brazil in 2001 and then in other areas of the global south.[188] In this space where the movements meet, we find practical and conceptual (constructive and reflective) efforts to embody a next stage of global democratic organization. Here leadership teams have articulated a crucial commitment: to be a space and not an agenda.[189] They've done this because they realize that to move beyond violence and

exclusion we need public spaces that facilitate the meeting and organizing of individuals and groups with diverse agendas.

Further, they rightly anticipated that as the space developed respect and influence – as the venue aggregated the commitments of grassroots leaders around the world and itself grew into a social instrument capable of deploying significant power – that there would be immense pressure to deploy that power to a specific purpose, for instance to put focused pressure on specific nations to stop war or to end poverty. Visionaries in the global south have held firm, recognizing that democratic spaces of shared power need to be protected against being commandeered by particular agendas, however noble. Similar to the way private entities are foreclosing public space (literally in our communities and metaphorically in our government structures[190]), particular agendas must not be allowed to foreclose the broader spaces we need to reflect and interact and surface "subjugated knowledges."[191] Meta-spaces are needed to support the particular groups and agendas that wish to form within them.[192] Each group is then free to work out its particular commitments and actions – according to principles of consensus and shared power. The basic directives that hold the World Social Forum together are simply – resistance of hegemony in all its forms (which could be re-phrased in the positive as creating environments of shared power) and the vision that "another world is possible."

The WSF has grown into a space where diverse global on-the-ground concerns meet.[193] In this space, grassroots leaders have been developing innovative democratic mechanisms for collective decision-making in environments of shared power, that continuously and intentionally surface silent and silenced voices. To my thinking, the World Social Forum is a significant heir of the Jesus Movement and a wide array of regional and national non-violent movements of the last 2000 years. It is a pivot point where the history of disparate campaigns of nonviolence develops global scope. This leads us into the Arab Spring[194] and Occupy.

Arab Spring and Occupy

In the midst of global social change, in every part of the world, we find the courage and vision of young people. I think of Asmaa Mahfouz in Egypt. In 2008, at 23, she began community organizing. In early 2011, as a student at the business school at the University of Cairo and a member of the Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution, she went out to Tahir Square. She and four of her friends held signs and began shouting.

> I began to shout at the top of my lungs in Tahrir Sqare: 'Egyptians, four people set themselves on fire out of humiliation and poverty. Egyptians, four people set fire to themselves because they were afraid of the security agencies, not of the fire. Four people set fire to themselves in order to tell you to awaken – we are setting ourselves on fire so that you will take action. Four people set themselves on fire in order to say to the regime: Wake up. We are fed up. We are setting ourselves on fire in order to convey a message.' [195]

On January 18, 2011, she posted a video blog on Facebook. She called on her Egyptian brothers and sisters to join her in Tahir Square on January 25th. She encouraged people to tell their friends. Shocking the world, millions came to Cairo and thousands gathered in solidarity in cities around the world, sparking the eighteen day uprising that forced the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. A brave Islamic woman with a vision taps into that well of power that God has established in creation. She follows in the footsteps of Jesus, speaking truth, gathering crowds, behaving non-violently, and receiving the wrath of the authorities.[196]

In Fall of 2011, I stood on a sidewalk here in Rochester and watched roughly 100 people (predominantly young college students) make a decision about whether to get arrested for staying in Washington Square Park past the 11:00pm curfew. The decision to be arrested is significant. There are implications for each person's life. It is also a significant decision on a broader level strategically for the Occupy Rochester movement.[197] The group is wrestling with the choice.

Procedures for decision-making – built on the intellectual and experiential foundation of Latin America and the World Social Forum[198] – evolved and took hold in Occupy movements all around the United States and the world. They were shared via online video feeds and understood by

most everyone present in the park that day. It goes roughly like this. One person facilitates the conversation. A second person keeps "the stack." This is the order of people who have indicated a desire to speak. Two other trained people walk around the crowd, observing the temperature of the crowd, and helping observe hand signals (indicating agreement, disagreement, or objections with the process) for the facilitator. The facilitator pulls speakers who wander too far afield. Based on the temperature of the crowd, speakers in a kind of rhythm come forward and recede into the crowd, formulating and reformulating proposals. Each new attempt incorporates new ideas and concerns that have been raised. With each offering, the support increases a bit. This process goes around and around until the support gets to 100% consensus. Even then the facilitator does not stop. She probes to ensure that those who had resisted portions of the motion are fully satisfied – seeking to surface the wisdom and insight that may still be buried in the group.[199]

Watching this unfold has its tedious moments, which on this day, irritates a man (himself a protester in the 1960s) standing next to me. He begins complaining that they are doing it all wrong. I am irritated by him. All I can say is: "Shhhhh, I am watching the new creation being born." In 45 minutes, these brilliant young people have brought one hundred people to consensus – a feat that thoroughly impresses me. People of passion and intense conviction have demonstrated a remarkable ability to compromise. The natural leaders and comfortable speakers in the group have visibly restrained themselves, stepping back and making space for the more hesitant, in a demonstrable commitment to share power.

In the end, they decide to get arrested. They gather one group of people who will be arrested and another group who are choosing not to be arrested and will instead circle the outside of the park all night as witnesses. Immediately the contact person for the press relations subgroup takes the floor and invites anyone who has skills and interest in writing a press release to meet at the

information/communication table. In twenty minutes a press release is written and distributed. Shortly thereafter, local TV stations and newspapers arrive.

In my direct observations of my local Rochester Occupy, and study of global Occupy, I see the Holy Spirit continuing the lineage of social change that flows from the prophets and the Jesus Movement. A gift of the Indian Independence Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Apartheid Movement, the World Social Forum, the Arab Spring, Occupy and their evolving incarnations is that they are constructive experimental projects, generating new kinds of public spaces[200] (that is why Occupiers camp out) that can hold and support a diversity of agendas (no, these larger movements should never be reduced to narrow agendas) built on a culture of nonviolence, shared power (consensus), and surfacing lost and silenced voices.[201] Continuing the example and challenge of Jesus and the early church and a lineage of struggles for justice, the World Social Forum, Arab Spring, Occupy, and those that follow in their footsteps are constructing 21st century principles, procedures, and spaces for working out our diversity and power.[202]

The WSF and Arab Spring emerge from and are centered in the eighty percent majority of the world. That is why so many in the eighteen percent have never heard of the World Social Forum and have only a sketchy sense of the Arab Spring. Occupy has its locus in the world of middle agents. In the spirit of the Lukan Jesus, Occupy self-consciously shifts the allegiance of middle agents from the elite to the majority. By saying "we are the 99%" occupiers are aligning themselves with the majority of the world, seeking a world that sustains all people, against the elite and their obscene aggregation of the world's power and resources. This simple phrase, which has caught fire, both exposes and revises our allegiance. Remember in Chapter 3 where we described middle agents as lynchpins in the imperial system. When middle agents shift our allegiance to the majority of humanity, the elite minority (1-2%) loses the glue that holds their pyramidal power in place.

There are growing linkages between social change emerging from the majority, and social change emerging from middle agents (in allegiance with the majority). On October 23, 2011, Mahfouz organized a teach-in at Liberty Plaza in Egypt,[203] in a show of support for the Occupy Wall Street movement. When asked why she would do this, she replied, "Many of U.S. residents were in solidarity with us. So, we have to keep going all over the world, because another world is possible[204] for all of us."[205] Community organizing matters.[206] This is the ethical part of our theo-ethical narrative of power – and is of profound biblical concern to God, Jesus, and Paul – those creative optimizers who think cosmologically and obsess about the local. If we are indeed the 99%, and we no longer wish to live like parasites off the majority of humanity, we need to channel Original Power into dynamic liberating vessels. We need to be co-creating nonviolent instruments, procedures and spaces for sharing power and making decisions about how to live together.

Observing the Fruits

What are the fruits of the World Economic Forum?[207] Many have observed the fruits firsthand on the border of Mexico. It is said that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was dreamed up in the bubble of Davos – a grand scheme for a boundary-less global economy.[208] In the reality of the *maquiladoras*,[209] this agreement is the literal bearer of death. Maize (corn) farmers who operated for generations were put out of existence. Families were torn apart, with nearly every person who could work migrating from the center of Mexico and flooding the border – leaving the elderly and pregnant women to fend for themselves. Having desperate former farmers flooding the border created a wealth of cheap labor to exploit. So factories were moved from cities like Rochester to the border – gutting middle America. Owners enjoyed the lack of union organization and the absence of environmental and safety regulations, while cannibalizing the people and the land. Thus we see children playing in untreated glowing green chemical waste pouring through ditches into their community of cardboard shacks. Their mothers are dying of cancer in

their 20s and 30s.[210] As with John's head on the Herod's platter, many rotten fruits are produced in the elite gatherings of the 21st century – lost civil liberties, a police state culture, the total corruption of democracy, a boiling rage among the silenced – but the personal human toll, especially on our children, is the one that touches me most deeply.

By contrast, what are the fruits of globalizing non-violent social movements?[211] Walter Wink describes the way non-violent movements have radically changed the lives of billions of people in the 20th century.

> There have been some remarkable success stories of nonviolent struggle around the world recently. In the Philippines, a nonviolent revolution led by Corazan Aquino with crucial support from the churches swept the dictator Ferdinand Marcos from office with a loss of only 121 lives. Central to the effectiveness of that struggle was a background of training in nonviolent direct action provided by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.
>
> In Poland, Solidarity irreversibly mobilized popular sentiment against the puppet Communist regime. An entire clandestine culture, literature, and spirituality came to birth there outside the authority of official society. This undercuts the oft-repeated claim that what Mohandas Gandhi did in India or Martin Luther King Jr. did in the American South would never work under a brutal, Soviet sponsored government.
>
> Nonviolent general strikes have overthrown at least seven Latin American dictators: Carlos Ibanez del Campo of Chile (1931), Gerardo Machado y Morales of Cuba (1933), Jorge Ubico of Guatemala (1944), Elie Lescot of Haiti (1948), Arnulfo Arias of Panama (1951), Paul Magliore of Haiti (1956), and Gustavo Rojas Pinilla of Colombia (1957). In 1989-90 alone, fourteen nations underwent nonviolent revolutions, all of them successful except China, and all of them nonviolent except Romania. These revolutions involved 1.7 billion people. If we total all the nonviolent movements of the twentieth century, the figure comes to 3.4 billion people, and again, most were successful. And yet there are people who still insist that nonviolence doesn't work! Gene Sharp has itemized 198 different types of nonviolent actions that are a part of the historical record, yet our history books seldom mention any of them, so preoccupied are they with power politics and war.[212]

Though it is right to be suspicious of dichotomies, it is necessary to distinguish between destructive and life-giving mechanisms for deploying the gift of power. Here we have differentiated between Herod power and Jesus power (elite power and co-creative God/human power). One happens in the palace and on the magic mountain[213] of Davos. The other happens on the street corners and rural byways of life. One is motivated by greed. The other is motivated by compassion. One is convinced we live in a world of scarcity. The other takes the leap into abundance.

Jesus power, nonviolent creative energized people power, is flowing from the spring of divine power at the center of our creation. God's banquet is bubbling up all around us. As Isaiah asks: Can we see it?[214]

Hesitating on the Brink of Downward Mobility

There is a reason that we resist this shift in consciousness – this re-centering of our lives. We feel the cost. The more comfort and attachments we have, the more embedded we are in the web of patronage, the more challenged we may feel. Perhaps that is why God first called nomads, outcasts and slaves in the ancient Near East. Perhaps that is why Jesus came to the poorest people in a marginal community in an occupied territory. To be outside the world of imperial privilege is to have a certain freedom. Strangers and outcasts are better positioned to adapt their lives to the dynamic demands of discipleship.

It is complicated for middle agents. Luke, in good John the Baptist form, wanders into our weird little tea party and starts talking truth about a new world order. He starts explaining how God's order levels all the social statuses, and how the expendable masses see truth that we cannot see, and how they are entering the great banquet of the new creation first. He skillfully dismantles our well-crafted defenses – showing us that we are blind and lost. Sitting here in our epistemological bubble with our media courtiers, we are missing it all. *Come out onto the streets where things are really happening!*

So, what if a middle agent does want to join the Jesus movement? What would this take? How do I (a middle agent outsider to this peasant movement) connect to this story? In Pauline terms, how am I adopted? Luke, in all his dualistic starkness, wants us to see that a comprehensive change in the way we understand and utilize our power is required – a *metanoia*, a *shuv*. This means

relinquishing our pyramidal model of the world, and committing our minds and our bodies to the vitality that springs from the grassroots.

To illustrate the transitory nature of dominating power, Jesus tells a parable about a rich fool, who hoards possessions to make himself feel secure when God is claiming his life that very night. He has erred in understanding the true source of security. He has tragically invested in treasures that will be eaten by moths and disappear.[215] Jesus says: therefore do not worry. God cares for every tiny element of creation. Do not be afraid. It is God's joy to give you everything in the holy kingdom. Relinquish your possessions, and let your treasure be in heaven. Let the growing quality of your soul, your integrity, be your treasure –a treasure that can never be taken.[216]

To release our attachments and center our lives in the dynamic reality of the living God is a difficult thing to do. The mystics speak of experiences like this. Paul, a mystic himself, falls into his chasm on the road to Damascus.[217] The light of God strikes him to the core, causing him to lose everything he once knew and forcing him to start over again. This may be why he so ably expresses the humility and surrender of discipleship, adapting an ancient poem in his letter to the Philippians.

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.[218]

God draws us into a terrifying and liberating process of emptying ourselves.[219] Henri Nouwen refers to this humbling dimension of the spiritual journey as "downward mobility":

> The story of our salvation stands radically over and against the philosophy of upward mobility. The great paradox which Scripture reveals to us is that real and total freedom can only be found through downward mobility. The Word of God came down to us and lived among us as a slave.
>
> In the center of our faith as Christians stands the mystery that God chose to reveal his divinity to us by submitting himself unreservedly to the downward pull. God not only chose an insignificant people to carry the Word of salvation through the centuries, not only chose a small remnant of these people to fulfill his promises, not only chose a humble girl in an unknown town in Galilee to become the temple of the Word, but God also chose to manifest the fullness of divine love in a man whose life led to a humiliating death outside the walls of the city.

> It all sounds pretty morbid, unless we come to know that following Jesus on the downward road means entering into a new life, the life of the Spirit of Jesus himself.[220]

It is not hard to understand why the comfortable of this world hesitate on the brink of the chasm. Yet somehow we know that our souls are pregnant with potential and that this is the route to our rebirth. If we are ready for this experience, we can allow ourselves to be drawn in. The veil between us and the mystery grows thinner. The intensity of our uncertainty can cause us to reach for God. In the crisis of liminal space, if we keep our heart open, we may just find what we are looking for.

These are precious points in our journey with God, our Damascus road moments when we allow God to deepen us and direct us. Jesus passes through the chasm of the wilderness ordeal, through many chasms of betrayal and misunderstanding, and ultimately through a chasm so dark that he fully experiences the abandonment of God, crying out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[221] As we navigate our chasms, we are invited to trust in God's intelligence. We are invited to allow our souls, our communities, our societies and world to be guided to greater dimensions of existence.

What Will the Un/comfortable Man Do?

In the story of the un/comfortable man and Lazarus, we get this seemingly discouraging ending. It feels hopeless. The chasm is fixed. Is there nothing he can do? Some read this as a doctrinal teaching on eternal punishment.[222] Is the God of all creation, the maker of all existence, saying, "Tough luck kid, you blew it, now suffer into eternity"?

The reality is that it is too late to fix some things. He is dead and he cannot go back and change his life. Our un/comfortable man chose to spend the gift of his time on earth in an epistemological bubble, sheltered in his estate. He fastidiously shielded his awareness from the suffering of his sisters and brothers. In death, the bubble is removed. This is a shocking process. It

is notable that Abraham is present and conversing with the man.[223] Abraham has not abandoned him. He is actively guiding him into full awareness. Far from being a closed case, the core issues of this man's soul are being addressed in the afterlife.

And the un/comfortable man starts to move a bit. Perhaps for the first time, he begins thinking of others rather than only his own pleasure. This is not enough movement, but it is a start. He widens his concern to his remaining family. Still he tries to mindlessly order Lazarus around like a servant. In God's realm, that will not do. If he wants to enter the joy of God's banquet, he will need to move some more. He will have to understand his equality with Lazarus.

Luke doesn't sew this one up and give us a happy ending.[224] The distressing message here is the persistence of blindness and hard-heartedness. The outcome is entirely in the uncomfortable man's hands. Will he surrender? Will he drop his stratified view of the world with all its suffering and barriers?[225] Will he take the journey of downward mobility, and join the fullness of eternal life?

We come to the close of our chapter on the middle agent chasm. This chasm lies at the center of our chiasm.[226] As we move past the center this of work, I remind you that each chapter in the first half of the dissertation has a partner in the second half of the structure. The pairings work in reverse order (3-5, 2-6, 1-7). Chapter 3 delved into the predicament of middle agents. Next we move to its chiastic partner, Chapter 5, where we engage the subject of salvation for middle agents.

1- Let There Be Power

    2- From Innocence to Hegemony

        3- The Predicament of Middle Agents

            4- The Chasm

        5- The Salvation of Middle Agents

    6- From Hegemony to Hospitality

7- Maturing into a World of Shared Power

CHAPTER 5

THE SALVATION OF MIDDLE AGENTS

You made the sacrifice it took
To reach me where I lay
You took the time to find me
When you could have walked away

Now I'm no longer caught in anger
Trapped within some game
You raised me from the ashes
When you called me by my name[1]

So far, in this theo-ethical project, we have explored the larger cosmological gift of Original Power. We've traced a trajectory from the immature response of humanity to the perception of scarcity to scapegoating, violence and empire. For the last two chapters, we've probed into this dynamic and globalizing imperial realm, considering the particular dilemma faced by the 18% who, often unconsciously, trade privileges for participating in a system of extraction from the 80% majority. We peered with the un/comfortable man across the chasm that divides the few who are making it from the human family and the fullness of life. It has been important for us to take the time to chart these dimensions of our situation, since so much effort goes into keeping middle agents unaware of our location and role in the world. Now, we move into the arena of biblical ethics. Staying with Luke and his particular interest in middle agents, we query the gospel, seeking ethical routes out of our entrapment. The following question shapes our search: how can middle agent followers of Jesus find salvation?

Luke's Vision

Luke is walking a fine line with his account of Jesus' ministry. He is a skillful writer who knows how to share a radical message without alienating his Greco-Roman audience. He opens by saying (in para-phrase), "Dear lover of God,[2] I would like to offer you a correct account of the Jesus movement." He presumes his reader has already been instructed in these matters.[3] The polite, almost obsequious, language could throw us off, leading us think that Luke is going to develop an argument palatable to the status quo. Not so. The language of deference opens the door. Ever so politely, Luke suggests that middle agent believers, these citizens of the empire, while studious and sincere, are missing something about the truth. He writes to correct a gap in his privileged friends' comprehension of the gospel.

As soon as the door is open, he launches into Mary's Magnificat – an ecstatic foreshadowing of the collapse of pyramidal social structures resulting in total social leveling and the liberation and thriving of all.[4] This divine revolution comes to the world through Elizabeth and Mary, poor women. The power of the Lord arrives among the lowly to scatter "the proud," "bring down the powerful from their thrones," "fill the hungry with good things" and "send the rich away empty" as the fulfillment of God's ancient promise.[5]

The Magnificat with its radical social vision becomes the blueprint for the larger gospel of Luke – a schematic that gets clarified and embodied in the ministry of Jesus.[6] We revisit the vision, with ethical specification, in the sermon on the plain. Again, the central image is one of social leveling. Blessed are the poor. Woe to the rich.[7] A key point is reinforced here; this will not be a violent upheaval. Jesus provides focused training on the personal transformation required to bring about transformation in the social order, offering concrete practices for nonviolent engagement.[8] These practices include: love your enemies (love the unlovable), turn the other cheek, lend without regard for return, be merciful, do not judge, forgive, be generous, and tend to your own failings

rather than the failings of others.[9] He shows the people how the inner state of their souls shapes their outer actions: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit."[10]

The Lukan Jesus pushes his students to do more than say something new, but to become something new. Be transformed by these teachings. Let our lives be completely remade. We can become human beings of integrity, houses with great foundations that cannot be rocked. And we will be the first fruits of the new creation.

Jesus expresses his frustration with his listeners' resistance to being transformed. "Why do you call Lord, lord? And not do what I tell you?"[11] Here again is the heart of Luke's emphasis. There is a gap in their understanding of the truth. Being a person of the way, a follower of Jesus, is not an intellectual stance, it is an ethical transformation. It means pulling the imperial ground out from under our lives. It means withdrawing our trust from the Domination System, and trusting our lives to the circulating field of God power revealed in the vibrancy of the Jesus Movement.

In terms of larger literary structure, the fulfillment of Luke's social vision presented in the Magnificat arrives on the day of the Pentecost in the Book of Acts, when people from every background and status are filled with the Spirit and proclaiming the mighty acts of God.[12] The Pentecost is a pivot point between the earthly ministry of Jesus and the early church. As the Magnificat opens and frames the ministry of the Jesus Movement, the Pentecost opens and frames the story told in the Book of Acts – the story of the struggle of "the people of the way" to ethically embody the gospel in diverse egalitarian communities scattered throughout the Roman Empire.[13] From the beginning of Luke to the end of Acts, the vision, teaching and enactment of socially-leveled community threads the story together.[14]

The Comfortable are not Saving the Poor, the Poor are Saving the Comfortable[15]

A favorite delusion of well-meaning middle agents is that with our privilege we can "save the poor." We think that the new world order is going to come about by bringing the poor "up" to "our way of life." When we think this way, we are keeping the Domination System at the center of our lives. We are hoping for a more benevolent and generous Domination System, one that crushes a few less people and destroys the earth a little less. Our scriptures indicate that the change in world order that God has promised from the foundations of the earth, and that Jesus inaugurates in the first century, is not going to work this way.

Jesus conveys the situation metaphorically. The kingdom of God, the transformation of the world, will come from the most struggling parts of humanity.[16] It will grow there unseen for a long while, and then take over. It will be like a little seed that becomes an invasive bush, filling up all the cracks in the social order.[17] It will be like a little bit of yeast (e.g. the non-violent teachings of Jesus and the great teachers) that gets mixed into the masses until the whole world is transformed.[18]

Then he says it outright. People of education and privilege, accustomed to thinking in terms of in groups and out groups, may mistakenly assume we are automatically in. We do not understand that the gate is narrow. It involves surrender and loss. And yet it is achievable. Should we be crazy enough to risk our imperial status, we may find ourselves in the company of the prophets. Tragically, many are too obstinate or afraid to do so, and will be baffled as we watch the masses from the nations, the out groups and outcasts of the world, walking in before us. Some will complain, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets."[19] This complaint betrays our mistaken adherence to systems of patronage, systems that Jesus consistently rejects. Jesus dismisses religious, political and kinship allegiances, patterns of loyalty that divide and exclude and are a refuge for middle agents who are accustomed to the privileges they bestow. So out of this unthinking habit, people ask Jesus, "aren't we in because we knew you?" Jesus responds:

> There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out.

> Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.[20]

This passage crystallizes a key theme in Luke. As followers of the gospel (lovers of God), middle agents err when we try to pull "the poor" up into the imperial model. This is missing the whole thrust of the gospel. It is moving in exactly the wrong direction. Jesus is calling privileged minorities to follow marginalized majorities out of the imperial model and into a new world order. The comfortable are not saving the poor, the poor are saving the comfortable.[21] The more trapped we are in privilege and hegemony, the more we need saving.[22]

Comprehending the meta-direction of salvation (that struggling majorities organized into nonviolent movements are the leading edge, out in front pulling the whole project) shifts us from anemic pity to authentic compassion. We are not called to "feel bad for people."[23] We are called to remember our creational intersubjectivity via compassion[24] and end our participation in harmful systems.[25] We are called to join our lives to the liberation of humanity and the earth. We are called to change our direction – "til by turning turning until we come 'round right"[26] – until we live in right relationship with all being.[27] This shift in consciousness leads to behaviors of humility, [28] dignity and equality rather than arrogance and condescension.

The Irritating Relentlessness of Human Dignity

As Jesus presses the Pharisees on the reason for the law, he emphasizes that the law does not exist to secure their social status; the law exists to protect the vulnerable.[29] He tells the story of an unjust judge[30] who, despite his lack of compassion, inadvertently follows the law because of a widow's[31] persistence.[32]

Middle agent interpreters of this story commonly distort the Lukan themes of eschatology and prayer into "not yet eschatology" and "patient persistence in prayer," thereby muting the story's immediate socio-economic implications. Here is an example:

> The Parable of the Persistent Widow, Luke 18:1-8, gives us a reason to keep on trusting and praying, 'Thy kingdom come,' even as we wait in a world where the 'already' of God's victory at the cross has not fully supplanted the 'not yet' that we see in a world of evil around us. The parable does not tell us that we must badger God; rather it shows us that, if even an evil judge will provide justice for a helpless widow, how much more will our loving Father bring in his Kingdom. The parable encourages us to tackle difficult issues with confidence; it cautions us not to expect difficult results; it assures us that God's justice will prevail in the end. In the midst of uncertain times, we must keep praying in the confidence that at the right time God will answer us suddenly, swiftly, and fully.[33]

Penny misses the central point of the parable – the widow's strength,[34] her agency,[35] and her dignity[36] in drawing the judge back toward proper human relationship to God and humanity. Despite the strength of the main character, many interpreters can only see patriarchal stereotypes, the very ones being subverted. Penny goes on:

> By contrast, the widow in the parable is totally *powerless*. She is not necessarily old, but she is, apparently, alone in the world, without a protector or an advocate who could go and plead her case for her.[37]

Interpretations that depict the vulnerable as powerless and encourage the suffering to pray in benign and non-disruptive ways and that read the theme of eschatology as an encouragement to quiet patience until some future fulfillment occurs are far off the mark. Luke is expressing the themes of "persistence in prayer" and "eschatological fulfillment" in Old Testament prophetic terms. This means that when the earthly leaders fail the vulnerable, they are to cry to God who breaks in on their behalf and levels the social order. The message is disruptive and immediate,[38] not placid and delayed.[39]

Many scholars, in taking apart the layers of this parable, think that Luke is toning down Jesus' original message.[40] While I agree that the majority of biblical interpreters have consciously or unconsciously muted the persistent widow, reinscribing patriarchal patterns of male judicial domination and female powerlessness, I do not count Luke among them. Luke does repackage this parable – a story Jesus originally told to his struggling followers to affirm them in their unrelenting

and dogged resistance. In doing so, the gospel writer makes it middle agent-centric for an audience of Gentile citizens. It is possible that in the process he adds a little sugar to help the medicine go down. This should not be confused with accommodation. As I argue throughout this work, Luke, while reframing, does not dilute the radical message of the gospel one iota. In this case, the woman remains the hero, who through her persistence "saves" the judge, by breaking though his hard-heartedness and forcing him to connect to the concerns of the people. He has built walls that are significant violations of covenantal life. His salvation can only come through a return to the law. He makes a start, though most partially and begrudgingly, in this story.[41]

Visible suffering creates tension. Through the disruption of crying out, marginalized majorities invite the lost (privileged minorities who have erroneously segregated ourselves) back to the fold. The judge (as a numbed individual in a broken judicial system[42]) is just such an intractable lost one (separated from God and human beings). Here the woman is the Lazarus figure.[43] Like Lazarus, her undeniable present suffering scrapes up against the bubble[44] of a lost middle agent. Through his irritation at the relentlessness of the woman, the judge manages a half-hearted reversal. Like the unjust steward/shrewd manager,[45] his unintentional success at following the law comes from pressure on his self-centered reality.[46]

Struggling people of the world are banging on the doors of our middle agent bubbles. We may find this annoying and frustrating. Why are they yelling? Why are they still protesting? Why must they make a scene? What if their persistence is our wakeup call? What if this is the intrusion of the chaotic waters of God's love into our lives?[47] What if the people of the world who are pressing against our epistemological bubble are saving our lives? Can we imagine that we are being called out of death and into life in this annoying manner? For many middle agents, this is a counter-intuitive means of salvation. Our well-trained imperial minds go blank when we hear it. We batten down the hatches and add some more locks to the door. The Lukan Jesus keeps knocking.

Opening Our Eyes, Ears, and Hearts

Deafness, blindness, and hard-heartedness are metaphors that the scripture uses to describe our condition when we hide in protected enclaves from our suffering sisters and brothers. With our carefully managed news media outlets and our physical obstacles (fences, walls, border guards, checkpoints), we fail to hear the voice of God calling us back to life. When cries do manage to crack the barrier, we get agitated.

The gate to life is narrow, because it involves opening our eyes, ears and heart. It means experiencing the pain of the world – a hard sell.[48] The gate is narrow because we can't walk through until we are willing to bear our share of the burden of the global predicament we live in.[49] The gate is narrow because we will have to sacrifice earthly privileges to slip through.[50]

Jesus continues preparing the disciples for the extent of sacrificial surrender that will be personally required of him and them. They remain confused. Our strategies for evading pain are elusive. The disciples are not immune. They refuse to hear Jesus, when he wants to speak about his (and their) own impending suffering.[51]

Their incapacity to receive and respond to the suffering of others continues[52] as they travel[53] with the crowds.[54] Walking along, they want to muffle the cries of a blind man.[55] Jesus stops them and shows them how to connect. He heals the man, rewarding him for his persistence in getting Jesus' attention.[56] In contrast to the grieving young ruler who walks away,[57] this man with little to lose (in the eyes of the world) is able to follow Jesus.[58] Reinforcing Luke's broader point, a socially marginalized man enters the kingdom banquet ahead of his comfortable brother.

Luke shows the reader repeatedly that the unrelenting persistence of the vulnerable is essential to awakening the comfortable. He wants his middle agent audience to risk opening our eyes, our ears, and our hearts. He does not hide his frustration about our unwillingness to do this.

After hammering this point with dozens of examples, throughout his accounts of Jesus' ministry and the origins of the early church, here is his closing message in the Book of Acts:

> They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: 'The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people and say, 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.' For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'[59]

This is a wakeup call for middle agents. We have dulled our senses to the cries of the human family and the earth, in whose solidarity lies the path to our salvation.

The Story of the Man Who Would Not Come Out

After reviewing a number of broad themes in the gospel of Luke (including socially-leveled community; the first shall be last; the persistent presence of the vulnerable calling the comfortable toward the narrow gate of salvation; and the enduring blindness, deafness, and hard-heartedness of middle agents), we now focus in on the story of a man who hunkers down in his bubble and the neighbors who invite him back to a life of hospitality and right relationship.[60] To expose our refusal to come out of our enclaves, the Lukan Jesus tells the story of a man who goes to his neighbor's house in the middle of the night, because he has been visited by a stranger and needs help preparing a meal. A stranger is a guest, not just to one villager, but to the entire village. In the intimate setting of the village, the guest's arrival is a public event that wakes the village creating shared excitement. Galilean listeners would understand immediately that the whole village will gather their resources to show hospitality to the foreigner.[61] Of course, all will join in to help with the meal. This is not a loan or a favor. It is the expectation of the village social order. To Jesus' listeners, the excuses of the sleepy neighbor are "inconceivable."[62] The man who hides in his home and refuses to add his resources to the common good would be viewed with shock and consternation. For a Galilean, this

is not a story about annoying neighbors in the middle of the night; it is a story about the selfish man's public humiliation.[63]

Again, Luke recontexualizes Jesus' gospel message.[64] He is saying to his middle agent audience, *you can't proclaim support of the kingdom of God and remain isolated hoarding your wealth*. He goes further to say, it is through the persistent presence of the most vulnerable, making their demands on those who hold economic and judicial power, that the isolation of the privileged is breeched. Through this gift of disruption, middle agents are able to break free of the regime, to join in solidarity with the people, and experience God's aliveness in the world. The Jesus layer and Luke layer are not contradictory; they are sending the gospel message to different audiences. Jesus wants the poor to knock down the doors of their overseers. Luke wants middle agents to see the poor knocking down their doors as a blessed invitation to God's banquet of life.

Many biblical interpreters, located in a culture of privilege, fail to hear either the Jesus or the Lukan layers.[65] Herzog, for example, points out Crossan's notion of the "bothersome inevitability of what must be done" and Perkins reference to "persistent inconvenience," calling them "anachronistic."[66] I wouldn't say anachronistic. The confusion does not arise from the two thousand years that have passed, but from the blind assumptions of social class. Luke likely encountered just such confusions in first century Roman circles. For the comfortable, the pressing of the masses feels inconvenient and destabilizing. Luke's response to middle agent expressions of fear and worry is not, buck up and deal with this obvious inconvenience, because painfully annoying openness to the poor is what God expects. Luke's message to the "bothered" alters the paradigm far more deeply. It is something more like: wake up, the world is changing, and if you fail to hear the knock on your door, if you fail to open your heart and your home, if you fail to loosen your grip on your possessions, if you fail to see your responsibility to community, you will be left in the dust, like Lot's wife becoming salt,[67] like the rich man gazing across the chasm at Lazarus,[68] like the older

brother standing outside the party for the prodigal son,[69] like the people with their myriad excuses who can't make it to the banquet.[70] The knock is not a bothersome inevitability; it is our invitation to salvation.

The Value of Disruption

Middle Agents Dislike Disruption

As middle agents, we don't like disruption to our fragile bubble. Our carefully reinforced walls already rock unsteadily against the pressing reality of the pain and beauty of our sisters and brothers around the world. Our flimsy narratives keep threatening to crumble, exposing the sinking sand on which we have built our homes and our fortunes. So, consciously or unconsciously, disruption is the worst thing we can imagine.[71] It makes us anxious and angry. Thus, Jesus' disruptive behaviors worry us.

> Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.[72]

> I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.[73]

Why would a nice savior like Jesus say things like this? Why would a man of healing and love stage a public procession into Jerusalem mocking the emperor?[74] And what do we make of his display of driving the money changers from the temple?[75] The well-trained middle agent mind leans toward interpreting these texts as justifications for imperial violence. *See, we knew it, Jesus is violent. He is not a pacifist after all. Thus our wars are justified.* In our quick dismissal, we miss the message that we do not want to hear. Jesus' active (even aggressive) non-violent disruptions of our way of life are exposing

the sickness of imperial systems. In Dr. King's words, Jesus is exposing the hegemonic boil to the medicines of light and air.

> Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates.[76]

Jesus is opening our bubble. He is shocking us with the truth that our exclusive power structures, our un-holy houses, which allow a few to thrive at the expense of many, are going to come crashing down.[77] This may not seem like good news to those of us who inhabit imperial houses. But for the majority who are literally cannibalized by our imperial way of life, this is good news.

Pulling Apart the Categories of Disruption and Violence

We may think that being shocked by reality sounds dangerous and hurtful. Those of us making it in the imperial system tend to unthinkingly conflate disruption and harm – that is, to assume that all disruption of systems is harmful and that non-disruption of systems is inherently non-harmful. We are inclined to fuse these two categories because for us the stability of the social order and the vitality of our lives (and the lives of the people we love) do not contradict, at least not enough to warrant instability. For the majority of the world the stability of the social order is destroying the vitality of self and loved ones. The stability of the social order is destroying animals and the earth.

Our Holy Homemaker and our Galilean community organizer are profoundly concerned with the well-being of those made vulnerable by exploitive social systems. They are showing us "the way" to liberate ourselves and participate in the liberation of creation. To comprehend the teachings, we must pull apart the categories of disruption and violence (see Figure 8).

In Figure 8, the lower axis moves from nonviolence to violence. Violence suppresses and harms the vitality of human beings, animals, and the earth. Violence can be obvious, such as a

physical attack. Or violence can be encoded in systems, such as our current system of racial profiling, arresting and imprisoning young black men.[78] The left hand axis moves from stasis to disruption. Unlike violence, disruption can support life. For example, the addiction that is destroying a human life is violent. When friends and family conduct an intervention, it is aggressive, confusing and upsetting but it is not violent. It is an active effort to release what is damaging human vitality.[79] When women and children sit on curbs in the civil rights movement, they are conducting a kind of intervention on America. They are actively confronting the hidden violence of racism and bringing it into the light.[80] Their public display is disruptive. The reaction of the police is violent. This distinction matters, especially for middle agents who are addicted to imperial power structures. If we are sincerely seeking well-being for humanity and creation, we need to watch our own mental tendencies to either erase or negatively label healing disruptions. We may just be holding off our much-needed intervention. In Luke's terms, we may be walking away from our salvation.

Mapping the Jesus Movement onto our graph in Figure 8, we see that it is highly interruptive of the social order, while remaining nonviolent.[81] It is nonviolent because it is enhancing rather than diminishing the vitality of life. Many other nonviolent social movements fall into this paradigm.[82] War, to the most extreme degree, and terrorism, to a somewhat lesser degree, maximize both social interruption and destruction of life. The encoding of oppression (e.g. racism, sexism, heterosexism, xenophobia) into systems represents the pinnacle of harm to life while preserving the status quo. The contemplative life takes up the other corner. Here embrace of the vitality of life is combined with low interruption in the social realm.[83]

Particular forms of engagement inhabit the middle. The Zapatistas operating in Chiapas view themselves as largely nonviolent. Yet they must interrupt the social order or witness the silent destruction of indigenous people. To break through the bubble, they choose to engage in "strategic acts of violence." They assert that if they do not do something dramatic and painful to the rich, the

poor will be disappeared and the world will never know.[84] The Sicarri,[85] or dagger-men, of the first century had a similar concept of strategic violence for social change. As a means of deterrence, they assassinated collaborators with the Roman regime. Rather than engage in mass rebellion, they used stealth acts of violence for the sake of disruption. Like the Zapatistas, they might argue that these acts of violence serve the larger purpose of liberating life. A comparison can be drawn to the modern movement of "Just Policing." The strategic removal of global criminals, while violent to the perpetrators of those problems, is justified by the goal of avoiding larger scale wars, and preserving the social order.[86]

I am not ethically commenting on these approaches. I am simply trying to pull apart the categories of violence and disruption and locate various activities in this framework. I wonder how we would locate something like the Earth Liberation Front, which destroys property for the purpose of disrupting our destruction of the earth. Like the Zapatistas, the Earth Liberation Front feels we are sound asleep, allowing immense destruction to life occur, and we need to be rattled. To locate them on the violence dimension, we need to ask ourselves if the destruction of property involves harming the vitality of life? What life? How do we rank our love of "stuff we own" in comparison to people we know, people we don't know, the animal kingdom, the earth?

When I consider the commitments of the people in the middle of this graph with the commitments of the people in the upper left, a quote by Mohandas K. Gandhi comes to mind: "There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no cause that I am prepared to kill for."[87] This refusal to harm is a key difference in outlook between the pacifists and the just policers. There is a streak of martyrdom in the upper left that those in the middle may see as disturbing or even wrong. Should one not preserve one's own life and the lives of innocent others with violence if necessary? Is one expected to speak truth to power in death camps or the bureaucratic halls of the SS? Are we all to be martyrs? (This is one of the angry questions hurled at Arendt.) I have no easy

resolution to these questions. My heart is closest to Dietrich Bonheoffer's as he struggled so painfully slipping from the upper left to the middle, choosing to engage in an assassination plot on Hitler.[88] I confess to understanding the Zapatistas. Should they let an invisible indigenous people disappear without a trace? Yet, as I contemplate the cross, I observe that even under the greatest pressure – both the extreme suffering of his beloveds and the profound suffering placed upon himself – Jesus refuses to harm life.

Disruption as Fact Collection, Performance Art, and Authenticity

Hannah Arendt seeks to disrupt our hypnotic internal coherence[89] with her thorough and relentless presentation of the facts. In a world of grandiose rhetoric, one would think an approach like hers would not get much play. Yet her persistent introduction of "facts on the ground" into carefully constructed ideological narratives proves intensely disruptive. The shakeup it causes is evidenced by the over-the-top outrage unleashed at her.[90] We see a similar "slog through the data" approach currently at the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) in Montgomery Alabama. The SPLC collects and publishes data on the activities of hate groups in the US. It is not splashy stuff. It is mostly facts, figures, locations, numbers of participants, etc.[91] Yet their founder receives constant death threats and the Ku Klux Klan has attempted to burn down their headquarters.[92]

Reading the gospels, we find that Jesus' favored mode of disruption is performance art[93] – publicly jousting with Pharisees, holding a mock trial for a woman caught in adultery, sharing an afternoon drink by a well with a Samaritan woman, feeding and healing crowds, inviting himself to the home of a toll-taker in a tree, asking religious leaders to pull imperial coins from their pockets, riding on the back of a donkey in a mock imperial procession, withering a fig tree to demonstrate the destruction of creation's abundance, and running the merchants from the temple courts. In death, he dramatically liberates a criminal and forgives his murderers, and in resurrection, he walks incognito chatting with friends, and allows Thomas to place his hands in his wounds.

Jesus likes to create a public spectacle. He is a master performance artist with a flair for interrupting thought patterns and helping us see the world in a new way. He uses all his capacities – dramatic, creative, intellectual, verbal, visual and kinesthetic – to crack open the awareness of his observers – to invite us to leave our story, to leave our kinship and imperial allegiances, and rejoin the human family. Jesus uses his spectacles to expose the cascading set of allegiances that make up the tributary system. He is particularly targeting Jewish participation in Roman extraction from the struggling Galilean people. He is breaking the flimsy narrative of the peoples' dependence on their "masters" for their survival and offering a more substantive and defensible narrative that says the people in relationship to God produce the abundance of society and have unmediated access to God's power. Revealing competing scripts or belief patterns (the confining pattern offered by the authorities and the liberating belief pattern offered by Jesus) through a long series of spontaneous, dynamic, responsive, and inspired public performances proves significant in eyes of the authorities. They are threatened by the potential of these performances to change the crowds' understanding of the source and nature of power. They recognize viscerally the ability of the people to withdraw their allegiance and power from the structures and leaders.

Some of our most effective social reformers today are performance artists. We have Michael Moore wrapping crime tape around the skyscrapers of major corporations.[94] We have The Yes Men posing as corporate agents publicly taking responsibility for environmental disasters.[95] We have Rev. Billy and the Church of Earthalujah and his gospel choir conducting public exorcisms where the elite meet.[96] And we have the recently imprisoned and ever morphing Pussy Riot.[97] If witnessing creative disruptions of the status quo makes us feel anxious and angry, that is normal. We are middle agents who are often afraid of being liberated from imperial structures into the larger livelier house of God.

A third form of disruption is the simplest one. It is being our true self. Authenticity can be surprisingly disruptive and, under certain conditions, dangerous and life-threatening. Telling the truth in Hitler's regime was life-threatening precisely because it is so powerfully disruptive. Simply being our honest selves, changes the world around us. Truth opens life into dead places. A single truth-teller betrays the lie that the regime holds all power and that their deathly way of life is inevitable. Perhaps this is why Jesus says: Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.[98] We are called to our truest selves. Yet in certain settings being truthful can end our careers or our lives. This was ultimately the case for Jesus. So he reminds us that no one can force us to cast our pearls before swine.[99] In prayerful relationship with our Source, we choose when and where we share who we are. At some point we may find ourselves called to make our stand and risk our lives. Remember the wedding in Cana when Jesus said, "My hour has not yet come."[100] When our time comes to share our authentic souls, we can expect our truth to disrupt the false and the dead.

Ways Middle Agents Resist, Evade, and Fail in Luke

Jesus breaks down notions of insider and outsider, of religious and heathen, leaving us to wonder: who will be saved?[101] Luke points readers to the narrow gate. Is the narrow gate the counter-intuitive call to ally our lives with the most vulnerable? Is the narrow gate the surrender of possessions? Luke's gospel does not gloss over its fundamental challenge. Many middle agents who expect to join Abraham and the ancestors in the kingdom will be detained on the journey. And there will be many surprises when they finally arrive. Many who are last will be first and the first will be last.[102]

Luke lines up a parade of middle agent examples, driving home the pitfalls of being an economically comfortable follower of Christ. We may hear the word, but that does not mean we are

fertile soil in which the word can grow. For some of us, lacking root, the word falls away under testing. For others of us, it is choked by earthly cares, riches, and pleasures.[103]

Out of love for us Luke is relentless in making his point.[104] Each story is lobbed against our epistemological bubble – our shallow understanding and lukewarm acceptance. If he keeps dropping examples on us, maybe the word will take root. Maybe our hearts will crack open allowing new light to shine into our carefully sheltered story of reality. Under the tension, maybe our souls will surrender to the birthing of a radically changed society built on the reality of shared power – the social order that Mary sang about.

Luke is not optimistic about our prospects. If we are honest, his gospel is not a comfort to middle agents. It presents our dilemma starkly and leaves our fate in doubt. Can we decolonize our minds and, in our every action, prioritize the most vulnerable? Can we remain relentlessly steadfast in this commitment, even as regimes seduce us with privileges and terrify us with threats, even to the point of enduring the cross without collapsing or retreating? Luke does not resolve these questions, though he does provide us with a rich array of cases of failure and success. In examples ranging from the centurion and Herod to the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus, these questions are not addressed theoretically; they get addressed in the embodied facts of human lives.

Clinging to Hierarchy and Order

One way we miss the boat is clinging to hierarchy and order. The Pharisees struggle with Jesus' lack of rules and boundaries. Why do you dine with sinners? Why don't you fast when you should? Jesus responds by saying that new life is pouring into the world. Wild waters are breaking in and they cannot be contained in the old structures. Like putting a new cloth patch on old clothes, like pouring new wine in old wineskins, God's world order will break the cultic and imperial structures.[105] After eating the bread of presence in the sanctuary, and inappropriately healing people

and plucking grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees become furious and start seeking actions to take against him.[106]

The Pharisees and the lawyers reject "God's purpose for them." They refuse to surrender their economic and doctrinal allegiances and be baptized with the people. Blinded by their assumptions and accumulations, their judgments and dismissals, they miss the wonder and amazement of God's actions. John expresses the tragedy of their hard-heartedness: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not weep."[107] *The world is being reborn before your eyes and you are missing it.*

Public Displays of Virtue

In a hedge against the humility and surrender of authentic discipleship, middle agents may find ourselves amping up our public displays of virtue.[108] Luke offers an example. A toll collector and Pharisee[109] are placed side by side, indicating their dual role in the larger oppressive system.[110] The toll collector is the face of Roman occupation (at the village level) with its military system backing the enforcement of layers of taxes and tolls on the people. The Pharisee is the face of the religious system (at the village level) with its spiritual justifications for extraction of wealth from the people including at least three kinds of tithes.[111] The Pharisees use their ideology to convince the people that they are breaking Torah and bringing barrenness on the land, when they fail to pay. Of course, what actually breaks Torah and brings barrenness on the land is the Pharisees' collaboration with their elite retainers.

The two figures in this parable are twins of sorts, working hand in hand to crush the people.[112] They are both insider collaborators. The Pharisee makes a public prayer, lifting up his own honorable tithing[113] and shaming the toll collector in commonly expected ways (extortionists, swindlers, and adulterers), since toll collectors were universally despised as robbers.[114] The toll collector, in his desperation to survive, is willing to do Rome's dirty work. He is an easy target for

the praying Pharisee.[115] In this context, the simple prayer of the toll collector emerges as a surprising act of dignity. Instead of hiding after his denouncement, he cries out,[116] acknowledging his hopeless position and sincerely laying his life down before God for help. Jesus responds by declaring him justified[117] and the Pharisee in debt.[118] This is strange and confusing to any listener who knows the Pharisee is exceeding the requirements of tithing and the toll collector is unable to meet them.[119] Dramatic displays of virtue are irrelevant to Jesus. Honesty about our predicament and authentic surrender, however halting or partial, opens the door to healing and transformation.

On another day, we find the Lukan Jesus exposing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who make the effort to appear virtuous while they manage a system that destroys the vulnerable.[120] In response, Jesus loudly teaches his disciples to beware the scribes who make public displays of piety and superiority while they "devour widows' houses," for they will receive "greater condemnation."[121] The speech is followed by an object lesson. Rich people are placing their money in the temple treasury. The disciples, like us, get distracted by the displays of wealth, the great stones of the temple and the large glittery "gifts to God." What does Jesus see? Jesus sees a woman who has nothing left – who has, before his eyes, been devoured by the temple elite.[122] Remember when a woman appears at dinner at Simon's house to anoint him? Simon gets angry, and Jesus asks, "Do you see this woman?"[123] Middle agents tend to see the most powerful person in the room. Jesus always sees the most vulnerable person in the room.

Looking for Loopholes

Another habit that can block middle agents from experiencing God's inbreaking into the world is looking for loopholes. In one example Jesus is speaking privately to the disciples, saying "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."[124] Through the person and ministry of Jesus, the disciples are glimpsing the revelation of God's social order, where

all are fed and all are free. Just then, a lawyer yells out to test Jesus. What must I do to inherit eternal life?[125] Jesus turns the question back on him: what does the law say? The lawyer correctly cites the love commandment, but then tries to slip out of the difficult demand of the commandment. *Ok, I know I am commanded to love my neighbor, but who is my neighbor?* Maybe he won't have to change his life if the suffering people around him are not defined as his neighbors.[126] This is something middle agents often do. We want to be good. We want to be saved. At the same time, we are daunted by giving up our dependence on the Domination System, so we craft creative ways to avoid the heart of the law. We look for loopholes.

As the Pharisees ridicule Jesus, he keeps exposing the devious ways they find loopholes in the law. They are like the shrewd manager's master who pretends to follow Torah law but pays his manager to hide usurious interest.[127] So too, they provide writs of divorce for their patrons, allowing them to leave their wives on the street to die. Through serpentine technicalities, they call these things lawful. They claim to teach the law, and yet do not comprehend its meaning. The law cannot be reduced to a set of words on a page to be manipulated by them (made into a commodity like oil and wheat) for the sake of the patronage system.[128] The law is a covenant between humanity and God, whereby God gives us life (the abundance of creation) and power (the image of God), and we commit to be stewards of the earth and co-creators of an egalitarian society that shelters all, always attending first to the most vulnerable. Some accused Jesus of being cavalier about the law. But he clarifies this point. They may be obsessed with letters on the page, but they are far from the true law. The true law rooted in human/divine covenant cannot be bypassed, and will not be abrogated.[129]

Setting Traps

If loopholes don't work, we may take things a step further and start setting traps. In Luke 20, the first trap that Jesus slips is religious. The chief priests, scribes, and elders show up and question

him. They say, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?"[130] They are trying to force Jesus to openly proclaim or reject his divine authority. Either stance will create public controversy and division. Jesus turns the tables by publicly asking them if they believe John's baptism came from heaven. Now they are in a trap. They cannot answer yes, because everyone knows they rejected John's teaching. Yet if they deny John came from heaven the people will riot and stone them.[131] Not only does this undo their strategy, it is another public revelation of the true nature of the leaders' power – how it comes from the people and can be taken away by the people.[132]

In an escalation of the religious authorities' efforts on behalf of their elite occupiers, the second trap is political. They send in spies to gather evidence of treason that would allow them to turn Jesus over to the governor.[133] The spies try to trick Jesus into either publicly supporting or rejecting Roman taxes. Again they attempt to publicly play the people against Jesus. If Jesus responds to their question directly, either he will provide the treasonous evidence they need (by saying don't pay taxes) or he will disappoint his followers and diminish his support among the crowds (by saying do pay taxes). Note how they use the obsequious language of imperialism to introduce their question.

> So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?"[134]

Jesus outsmarts them. Instead of publicly revealing his own loyalties, which his followers already know, he tricks them into publicly revealing theirs. He asks them for a coin. Unthinkingly, in that moment, they produce Roman coinage decorated with images in violation of Torah law. Their unlawful participation in the Roman economy is revealed. Jesus leaves them hanging with a question: what belongs to Rome and what belongs to God? In other words, where are your loyalties? Are you loyal to these crowds, this faith community whom you are sworn to protect or to your Roman

patrons? Roman soldiers in attendance are none the wiser. The whole conversation occurs as a hidden transcript.[135] The crowds observing – a rebellious occupied people with a counter-Roman worldview rooted in the cosmology and history of Torah – track the subtext with Jesus. In their eyes, Jesus' stature is elevated and the temple leadership loses even more respect.

The third trap in this series is intellectual. The Sadducees and scribes joust with Jesus about Torah interpretation.[136] They attempt to construct a hypothetical question that Jesus cannot answer.

> Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be?[137]

It is the Levirate marriage[138] equivalent of asking, can God make a boulder so heavy that God cannot lift it? Jesus ignores their game and responds with a teaching about the nature of eternal life, and how these debates are no longer relevant to children of the resurrection. The scribes are impressed and silenced by Jesus' command of Torah.

Jesus, in turn, constructs his own unanswerable hypothetical question. If David calls the messiah Lord, how can the messiah be David's son? And thus, he turns the conversation back to the world-altering transformation in their midst – the mystery of the incarnation – living, breathing natality – Original Power erupting into the world before their eyes. Many prophets and kings through the ages desired to see this day. Alas the middle agents of Jesus' day, wedded to their comfortable niche in the Roman regime, miss the significance of what is happening. Instead they use their energy and resources to seek loopholes, set traps, and play empty games of scriptural literalism.

Imperial Alliances and Violence

When loopholes and traps fail, middle agents may migrate to more explicit forms of resistance and rejection, including demands for silence, crackdowns on peaceful protest,

strengthened alliances among imperial overseers, humiliation, torture, and execution. As Luke's gospel unfolds, the Jesus movement is building energy, gaining momentum, and breaking messily into the carefully curated social order. On a particular day, a motley crowd traveling with Jesus to Jerusalem, mixing in with a larger mass of festival travelers, orchestrates a mock procession. Jesus is playing emperor on the back of a wild, bucking colt, mirroring Caesar astride a great stallion.[139] Disciples are throwing down their coats before him and proclaiming their praises. They are delivering a serious commentary through a hilarious theatrical scene. The Pharisees are not amused. They demand silence. The parasitic power structure must remain veiled. We are not to speak of it. Jesus responds in profound biblical fashion, reminding the teachers of Torah that justice and truth cannot be silenced. When bad leaders crush people, creation itself becomes an agent of justice. Infused with wisdom, creation serves as an official witness to God's covenant[140] and rises up to continue the struggle. You can kill the recalcitrant investor,[141] you can silence these raucous followers, but the truth will not be killed. The stones will shout out.[142]

Jesus pauses and pours out his grief for middle agent confusion. Our bubble, our epistemological blindness, is a source of great regret. If only we could see the difference between a good shepherd and a bad shepherd.[143] If only we knew the things that make for peace. It is this veil that is our problem. The truth is hidden from our eyes.[144]

The energy is escalating, and Jesus stops mincing words. He describes the horrific consequences of our imperial compliance. His behavior toward the middle agents gets more dramatic and aggressive. He drives merchants out of the temple. He spends his days teaching there, while the chief priests, scribes and leaders think up ways to kill him. In yet another nod to the true location of power, Luke notes that the leaders are prevented from harming Jesus because the people are spellbound.[145]

In the midst of this conflict, Luke shares the parable of the tenants.[146] This story is a replay of Adam and Eve and the first act of commodification in the garden.[147] It is about the errors of immature engagement with the gift of power. God has given the leaders of Israel stewardship of Israel – this beautiful microcosm of creation, this vineyard. With God's calling comes power and responsibility. But power has been abused. Adam, Eve and the Pharisees get so distracted by the urge to possess that they forget their role as caretakers. And they forget their relationship to God.

While the teachers view themselves as the preservers of God's order, Jesus presents a disturbing counter-claim. He says that the teachers of Torah have become the very purveyors of injustice that the Torah judges so harshly. In his parable, Jesus points out what they already know. There are consequences. People can be removed from the garden and from the vineyard. They can fall upon the rejected cornerstone and be undone by its truth. Jesus continually reminds them (and us) that ritual purity is no haven of salvation. In God's realm, the most secure places belong to those who follow God's law of love and justice – who feed their sisters and brothers and bind up their wounds. Having their position questioned deepens the leaders' growing anger. Again, they want to be violent toward Jesus. Again they see the grassroots people power around him and are afraid to act.

Now the temple leaders turn one of the Domination System's ugliest strategies on Jesus, torture. They blindfold him, mock him, and beat him. They say things like: if you are the messiah then tell us who just hit you. They set up a sham council with its disingenuous questioning and its guaranteed outcome. Jesus refuses to be part of their show, answering now only briefly and obscurely.[148]

At this point, the temple system commits openly to its partnership with the political system. The temple leaders bring Jesus before the Roman overseer, Pilate. The accusations against Jesus are: perverting the nation, telling people not to pay taxes, and calling himself a king. They have laid their

allegiances on the table. In this political company, they no longer even fake religious piety and adherence to Torah. Not one of these accusations is a violation of Torah law. Each one is a specific offense against Roman law and order. Not only do these false teachers carry Roman money, they police Roman law. They are an offense to the Jewish people and obvious collaborators in imperial occupation.

Pilate is wondering what this is all about, and why he should be involved in trivial peasant misdeeds.[149] The priests try to convince him, saying Jesus is whipping up the masses into rebellion.[150] Pilate wants to shuffle off this headache. When he realizes that Jesus is from Galilee, he pushes the situation down the chain to Herod. Herod, as a local ruler, has heard much about Jesus and is curious. He engages Jesus with some respect. The chief priests and scribes won't have this. They are vehement about prosecuting Jesus. Reading the situation, and his paradoxical powerlessness within it, Herod switches gears and clarifies his loyalties. He calls in his soldiers. They mock Jesus and treat him with contempt. They robe him, and send him back to Pilate. The whole incident creates a stronger bond among the religious and political elite – a tighter alliance among thieves. Herod and Pilate were once enemies. Now they become friends.

Herod remains ambivalent. He saw John's truthfulness and killed him. He doesn't want to get mixed up in that again. He tries to evade the situation by sending him back to Pilate, who is evasive too. Let's drop this whole thing. *I'll give him a beating for good measure.*[151] In the upside-down nature of Original Power and its distorted shadow (imperial power), a peasant of no status is free to ignore the religious leaders, but Herod and Pilate, bound in the requirements of their position, cannot. Their hands are tied.

The scene continues, exposing the powerlessness of the powerful. Ultimately the heads of regimes have no power over their own destinies. They are slaves to the regime. Pilate tries to slip out of it by using his amnesty policy.[152] The people expect a prisoner to be released at this time as a

public show of benevolence on the part of the Roman system. Who better than Jesus? Pilate proposes this, but by this time the chief priests, the leaders, and the people are whipped into an emotional frenzy, demanding that Jesus be crucified. They insist instead on the release of Barabbas, an insurrectionary and murderer. Pilate tries a third time. The crowds persist and their voices prevail. Pilate submits to their demand.

Middle Agents Lack Endurance

A common mode of failure for middle agents in Luke is the inability to sustain the path of discipleship. When the journey gets tough many collapse and return to their status and position in the Domination System. Various people try to follow Jesus but can't stay the course.[153] He warns us to step back and count the cost. We must not embark impulsively and burn out. If we are to endure to the end, we must pause and evaluate the whole picture – comprehend what we are gaining and what we are giving up. Luke hits this point repeatedly because middle agents are famous for getting caught up with the enthusiasm of the moment and jumping on board with the vulnerable in society. Yet later, when things get hard, we slink back to our comfortable privileges – like once flavorful salt gone flat.[154]

A parable about focus and endurance comes in the story of the ten lepers.[155] Many of us come to the Source of life, fall to our knees, and surrender our privilege when we hit bottom. Illness, death of a loved one, or some other life-shaking event leads us to drop the Domination System's hold on our lives. In our desperation we reach for God power. This, too often, is temporary. Once we regain our footing, our memory dims. We forget the experience of healing and power we gained through our surrender. We return to the oppressive system and its deceptive offer of security. So it is for nine of the lepers that Jesus healed. They go back to the very leaders who cast them out. They are glad to be socially restored to their position and they quietly return to "normal" life. Wanting to get back inside as quickly as possible, they choose not to rock the boat by questioning a social code

that depends on the categories of insider and outsider. Like the shrewd manager, middle agents are known to befriend the poor when we are desperate, and then, as soon as we are able, retreat back to our niche in the regime.[156] Only one, a Samaritan, doubly an outsider, recognizes the source of power in his life.[157] He acknowledges the location of true power by returning and thanking the Galilean peasant healer who made his body and soul whole.

Jesus wants us to know that this path will be difficult. We will be shocked as our houses of cards fall. We, most likely, will be like the nine lepers who go running back. He says, "On that day, anyone on the housetop who has belongings in the house must not come down to take them away; and likewise anyone in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it."[158] As God's realm gains strength, where will the middle agents land? Will we choose life among the masses or death in the falling Herodian halls? The Lukan Jesus is not hopeful about this: "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."[159]

Jesus is the Model of Endurance[160]

Jesus stays the course. Disciples, then and now, tend to waffle. We are so thoroughly trained to want to move up in status, that the Lukan insistence that we must move out of empire – that the poor are saving the comfortable – remains baffling. The disciples struggle to grasp the teaching of a socially-leveled world order – one where the most vulnerable are leading the way. In one example, they try to block women from bringing their babies to Jesus.[161] He takes the opportunity to help them see that the weakest, most despised ones will be first in God's plans. Over dinner, Jesus lets them know he is aware that one of them is already betraying him.[162] This sets them to wondering and suspecting and competing. Who will betray? Who will be the greatest in the end? Jesus basically says: *really? Through all of this, have you not grasped the essential point? I have been teaching you how to cast out the*

imperial regime from your consciousness. Stop thinking like imperial occupiers. Stop acting like Gentiles. Stop lording authority over others, and calling yourselves benefactors (patrons). Decolonize your mind! "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves."[163]

Jesus reminds them again that the trials and temptations will be overwhelmingly intense. Peter in his characteristic overconfidence claims he can go the distance. Jesus lovingly lets him know that this will not happen. Jesus points out that they will not be able to achieve the freedom and nonviolence that he has taught. Remember when Jesus told them not to travel without a purse and a sword? Even this proves too hard. Judas is already working on filling a purse. And, in a few moments, a disciple will draw a sword. To emphasize this repeated failure of endurance, Jesus faces extreme pain and prayer through the night, while the disciples grieve and fall asleep.[164] In his moment of aloneness, Judas pounces.[165] The sword appears. Jesus halts the violent reaction. There must be no loss of focus, even as our beloved is seized and led to his death. To demonstrate how serious he is about maintaining the gospel through the most extreme tension, he heals the soldier's cut ear. Jesus knows how the bottom and middle segments in the Domination System turn against one another in times of crisis. This infighting provides a strategic opportunity for the elite to gain control. Jesus refuses to fall into this trap. As they take him away, Peter lingers in the shadows, fulfilling the predication of his denials. Jesus looks at him and Peter weeps bitterly.[166]

Soldiers seize Simon of Cyrene**,** as he travels in from the country, to carry the cross.[167] As he is dragged along in this public procession of suffering, Jesus continues to demonstrate his endurance. He will not turn away from his path. He keeps showing compassion. He keeps attending to the most vulnerable. He talks with women who risk their lives to express their loyalty and grief. Jesus tells them not to cry for him, but for themselves – for if the elite can destroy such a vital sign

of true power and life (green wood), then how much worse will the system treat them when Jesus has passed from memory (dry wood)? While the weak disciples fall around him, Jesus embodies the gospel through the most extreme hardship. In the same way he healed the one who seized him, so too he prays for God to forgive the ones who execute him.

The Satanic regime keeps up its endurance too. Echoing the early encounter in the wilderness, the leaders and soldiers put on a show for the people. They want the people to choose their displays of power over the healing and liberating power of Jesus. They want to prove that their violent power is effective while Jesus' nonviolent power is impotent. They mockingly tell Jesus to save himself and come down from the cross.[168] They cast lots for his clothes. They give him sour wine. Jesus' endurance carries him through torture, execution and resurrection.

There are a few others who stay the course, under the most extreme pressure. Jesus' closest female disciples are Lukan models of endurance, who see the story completely through. Preparing spices and ointments for his body, they faithfully adhere to Torah law.[169] Courageously they return to the tomb at dawn, find the stone rolled away, and the body gone. Two radiant figures greet them. They comprehend that Jesus' mission is complete and that he is the first fruit of a great harvest. Our first witnesses to the resurrection – brave mediators of Original Power (now manifest as Christ Power) – are rural Galilean women.

On Being Lost and Found

In Chapter 14, Jesus tells a story about a host who invites the expected guests, people of social stature.[170] Yet the invitees respond with excuses, such as: "I have to take care of my land/possessions" and "I have just married." Jesus explains that entering God's realm means surrendering much, including the identification with possessions.[171] We must also surrender our identification with narrow groups (kinship, religious, political or otherwise). God is no respecter of

our categories of insider and outsider. Because we are not interested, our divine host will go out into the world, especially among the poor, and enact the rebirth of the whole creation without us. We are free to remain outside the gate of this salvific banquet if we so choose.

With this as prologue, Luke dives into the theme of being lost and found. Jesus is responding to grumbling religious leaders.[172] They attend to the law and their role as teachers in their villages. As such, they expect a special place in God's banquet of salvation. It bothers them deeply that Jesus disregards their "correct" position, and instead delights in the spiritual awakening of prostitutes and vagabonds. To help them understand, Jesus tells a story about a shepherd who leaves ninety-nine sheep, searching high and low, and is thrilled at the return of one lost one.[173] He describes a woman who rallies all her capacities to find a lost coin, and calls all her friends when she finds it.[174] Then, he tells a story about an obedient and "correct" son who sulks outside the door, refusing to enter a grand celebration for the return of his wandering brother.[175] Here, in microcosm, we hear the macro message of Luke. The prodigal brother has entered the banquet first, leading the way for his socially well-positioned brother. The outsiders are leading the way, and the insiders may follow if they like.

The older brother, like the religious authorities, is struggling. For those of us nestled in the regime, it is hard to comprehend the irrational excess of grace. Having been inculcated in an imperial model of the world, we think in terms of scarcity. We think that there is only enough food, enough love, enough salvation, and enough power for a few of the people. We cannot comprehend God's flagrant inclusiveness – God power flowing through everything that exists – abundance ready to overflow as soon as we learn the ropes of this fruitful creation. When God starts casting off chains and throwing open doors, we have trouble with the disturbing openness of it all. It does not conform to our understanding of right and wrong. It does not conform to our rules about how a person climbs up the ladder and gets rewarded. God's wild grace can feel unjust to middle agents. It

may take a little while for it to sink in, that the vagabonds, prostitutes, and tax collectors are moving ahead of us into the new world order. The Lukan Jesus advises us to consider our habits of mind, because if we are not careful, we will find ourselves standing resentfully outside the wide open doors of the holy banquet.

Though this is a hard message, there is a consolation here. The good news for us in these stories about being lost and found is that our Creator never gives up on us. Even when earth is transformed and 99% of humanity has moved into the great banquet of the new creation – when most of the world has achieved socially-leveled ethically-based community – Jesus will not give up. No matter how much suffering, poverty, wars and devastations the remaining 1% have created – no matter how long they resist and grumble at the gate – the good shepherd will never cease calling out to them. The question is whether they are willing to cross the chasms of their own making.

With God, Even Middle Agent (and Elite) Salvation is Possible

In one parable Jesus compares this dilemma to a camel getting "through the eye of a needle." A "certain ruler"[176] came asking Jesus about how to enter God's realm.[177] Jesus seems a little slow to notice this leader,[178] which makes sense, because his habit is to concentrate on the most vulnerable person in the room. Why waste precious time on those who have no interest in relinquishing their commitment to wealth and status? Yet this ruler demonstrates sincerity. He expresses his life long attention to Torah law. This touches Jesus and he pauses to look more closely at the man's situation. The man asks, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"[179] In the mode of a physician making a diagnosis, Jesus says, "There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money[180] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me."[181] Jesus has healed many and sent them back to live in their villages, but something about the openness of this young wealthy middle agent leads Jesus to issue an invitation to be a disciple. Tragically, the

level of surrender required proves too steep. The man sees the truth in Jesus, but he can't bring himself to radically alter his social status. And so he grieves.

Jesus makes a sweetly pastoral comment in this moment. He basically says: *Hey, you are in an extremely tough position. I asked you to do the nearly impossible. I got carried away with your earnest demeanor, thinking for a moment that you could do it. Very, very few can manage it.*

> Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" He replied, "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God."[182]

Seeing the predicament laid bare, the disciples are jolted. Is it impossible to walk this path?[183]

Zacchaeus

After a long parade of middle agent failure, and this hard example of sincerity and failure, we might lose all hope. Just when we have decided that the eye of the needle is too small for our large furry camel bodies, Zacchaeus,[184] a rich chief of toll collectors,[185] comes along and slips right through.[186] He somehow overcomes the stumbling blocks that catch the others.[187] Moved by compassion and joy, he does just what the sincere ruler found impossible. He gives away his accumulations for the benefit of the struggling majority. Unlike the shrewd manager who removes his master's interest as a trick to survive in the system, Zacchaeus open-heartedly returns four times the amount he defrauded from the poor, without consideration of his position and livelihood. Unlike the lost rich man who, even after death, can't see the humanity of Lazarus,[188] Zacchaeus, in the prime of his career, climbs a tree in his struggle to see Jesus.[189] It isn't easy for middle agents to see. Sometimes we have to work at getting perspective. Zacchaeus' effort is not lost on Jesus, who playfully reaches out, inviting himself to Zacchaeus' house[190] for dinner.[191]

At this point, Zacchaeus could have panicked and run away. He could have looked back like Lot's wife at all that he was about to lose and frozen into a pillar of salt.[192] But thankfully for those of us who need some hope that discipleship is possible for middle agents, he accepts! This causes

the crowds to grumble. It is not just the elite who have trouble with God's inclusive grace. The struggling majority gets caught complaining too[193] when God opens the door of salvation to the repentant rich. On this day, Zacchaeus travels through the narrow gate.[194] A rich man crosses the chasm and lands in the arms of Abraham.[195] At the heart of this success story is a shift in allegiance.[196] He abandons his loyalty to the Roman regime and its tributary economy that destroys life and redirects his life's purpose[197] to supporting God's movement among the people.[198]

This story brings our parade of middle agents to a close. Luke opens this section of his gospel with parables about finding a lost sheep, a lost coin, and the prodigal son. He closes with a chief toll collector who finds salvation.[199] Zacchaeus, the paradigmatic middle agent, living parasitically off a repressive regime, repents, and thus is found. For Jesus came to "seek out and find the lost."[200]

The Centurion

There is another successful middle agent exemplar in Luke's gospel. After Jesus presents his program in the sermon on the plain, we get an object lesson. This example comes from an unusual direction. A Roman centurion, a man of imperial status, miraculously demonstrates comprehension of the true nature of power – the precise gap of understanding that Luke is trying to address.[201] While being located in a comfortable place in the regime, this military leader cares about the people and uses his position to support them and improve their lives.[202] Note how alignment with the people and alignment with the power of God are inextricable.[203] When he faces tragedy in his own house, he comes bowed down before Jesus, a poor healer, and not his imperial patrons, for help. His intercessors are not the usual Roman officials as one would expect in a system of patronage. His intercessors are the regular people of the village that his military unit is occupying. It is their testimony to his character that opens the door for him. He openly names the kind of institutional power he holds (to command slaves and soldiers), and then surrenders to the kind of power Jesus

holds (I am unworthy, only say the word and he shall be healed). Deep in his being, he knows where the power to destroy resides, and where the power to heal abides. He stakes his life on it. Jesus is amazed at his faith.

When we come to the end of the gospel, the centurion reappears, as a kind of bookend.[204] Our earliest example of middle agent faithfulness miraculously endures. While so many others have gone into hiding and fallen away, the centurion is quietly present in Jesus' darkest moment. He is the first to praise God and proclaim Jesus' innocence. The crowds return home beating their breasts. His followers from Galilee, including the women, stand and witness from a distance.[205]

Closing

As middle agents, our journey of discipleship is fraught with difficulty. We live within a sophisticated and complex array of hegemonic instruments for deploying power – many of which consolidate power and consent via the establishment of chasms – dividing and conquering the human family. Jeremiah reminds us to decolonize our minds and root our lives in the goodness and wholeness of our Holy Homemaker:

> Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
> and make mere flesh their strength,
> whose hearts turn away from the Lord.
> They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
> and shall not see when relief comes.
> They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
> in an uninhabited salt land.[206]
>
> Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,
> whose trust is the Lord.
> They shall be like a tree planted by water,
> sending out its roots by the stream.
> It shall not fear when heat comes,
> and its leaves shall stay green;
> in the year of drought it is not anxious,
> and it does not cease to bear fruit.[207]

Rooted in the Source of life, we can become less fearful. We can experience this age of global disruption as our wake-up call – our invitation to salvation – to join the majority of humanity

and creation. It is the unholy house of cards falling, making space for the vitality of our living Homemaker. Not all choose to respond. Still, through the ages many do and we can join our lives to theirs. Once we accept humanity's relentless dignity – once we comprehend humanity's equality and shared destiny – we can finally begin learning to fruitfully embody the gift of Original Power.

This brings us to the next chapter where we direct our attention toward building a network of trust and healthy mutual relationships, toward healing the social fabric, toward embracing shared power, and toward co-creating with the Love that made the world. With our readiness to release atrophied structures of disproportionate power, we now move into ethical specifics. Here the Bible guides us on a path out of hegemony and into personal, relational, communal, societal, and creational well-being via the teaching of hospitality.

CHAPTER 6

FROM HEGEMONY TO HOSPITALITY

Good work finds the way between pride and despair.
It graces with health. It heals with grace. It preserves the given so that it remains a gift.
By it, we lose loneliness: we clasp the hands of those who go before us,
and the hands of those who come after us; we enter the little circle of each other's arms,
and the larger circle of lovers whose hands are joined in a dance,
and the larger circle of all creatures, passing in and out of life, who move also in a dance,
to a music so subtle and vast that no ear hears it except in fragments.[1]

Now we move into the ethical dimension of our biblical narrative of power. In the chiastic shape of this work, the two outer chapters (Chapters 1 and 7) establish the cosmological context – creation and eschatology. The three middle chapters (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) concentrate on the middle agent predicament in the context of theo-ethical power, drawing upon Luke's gospel (for middle agent orientation) and Marcan material (for grassroots perspective). What, then, is this remaining chiastic layer (Chapters 2 and 6) about? Chapter 2 is a bridge moving us from the creational origins of power to our present predicament. What goes wrong? How do we get from original innocence to the overwhelming hegemony of empire? Similarly, the present chapter (Chapter 6) is a bridge from our predicament to creational fulfillment. Here we seek to unravel the structures of hegemonic entrapment, freeing humanity into mature intersubjectivity, and pointing middle agents in daily practical ways toward the eschatological banquet. To do so, we draw upon the specific and substantial canon-wide biblical ethic of hospitality.

This chapter is also an important step in our architectural method. In the constructive task, we don't stop at painting the large picture of theological power. We roll up our sleeves and get into the details, testing to see how the narrative sketch of power that we've been developing flows into a

middle agent ethic of power. How does it look on the ground? This is the interplay one finds between the big idea and the mechanical details in well-designed buildings. Our Homemaker is the designer of designers. Finding coherence between the broader cosmology and the practical ethic outlined below indicates that we are on the trail of the divinely dynamic order. Of course, no matter how coherent and on track we may be, this whole dissertation, if I am lucky, will describe the tiniest droplet in the vast ocean of God's unfolding vision.[2]

Restraint & Maturity: Learning to Manage the Gift of Power

Once we become aware of our responsibility within creation – once we see how God has shared power with us – once we comprehend that what we bind on earth we bind in heaven and what we loose on earth we loose in heaven[3] – we begin to grasp the significance of our lives, and the immense challenge before us. This challenge arrives daily in encounters of hospitality.

The practice of biblical hospitality[4] – of ethically negotiating encounters with "the other" – shapes and transforms creational boundaries at multiple levels; inner spiritual levels, interpersonal levels, intra-community levels, inter-community levels, and larger societal levels. The central point of agency for this transformative activity is the individual soul, imbued with the gift of Original Power. We are given this creative/destructive capacity and consequent responsibility at the level of the human being, through being made in the image of God.[5] For this reason, inner spiritual formation and daily interpersonal engagement are inextricably linked to social change.

In every interchange of our lives, however small, we are managing power. The way that we manage power is determining whether we and others thrive or suffer. Further these small negotiations of power are affecting the systems of power we inhabit. Our choices impact whether we collectively are becoming more insular, xenophobic, and fearful or whether we are becoming more open, joyful in difference, and loving. Moment by moment, choice by choice, we contribute to

these creational dynamics. We cannot just wake up one day, see our imperial predicament and our innate power, and decide to act with ethical maturity. Loving responsible behavior in the face of life's pressures grows out of a lifelong commitment to daily awareness and practice.

Three Preparatory Practices

As I proceed into the realm of ethics, I find myself enmeshed in a contradiction. The ethical nature of Christianity involves more than the mind. While, writing a dissertation is largely an intellectual process, it involves engagement of mind, heart, and body (and soul and spirit too). It demands an integration of inner journey and outer journey and a healthy relation of self and other. Meaning is generated performatively as well as cognitively.[6]

Thus, the good quality or poor quality of our ethics is not simply a matter of their coherence. Their value is revealed in the fruitfulness or barrenness unleashed by our embodiment of them.[7] Here, I pause to honor this full-bodied participation that discipleship requires to offer three specific practices (curiosity, compassion, and incarnation). These practices are specifically geared to shake us loose from the middle agent predicament. They presume that practitioners are sincere, that we desire to grow in trust in God, and that we are committed to respecting others and sharing power.

The first practice (centered in the mind) is *curiosity* – a gentle and joyful openness to the new – a way of being in the world that is predicated upon humility. This is the antidote to our epistemological bubble.[8] The successful practice of curiosity depends on epistemic humility, which means fostering a healthy awareness of our inherently limited capacity to know. Jesus is intensely curious. He takes off at the age of twelve to question the teachers.[9] He drives the disciples wild with his allowance of distraction, stopping here and there to see what is happening, responding to what is emerging. When a woman touches him in the crowd, he feels the power move out of him and he halts his whole entourage. He looks out with fascination, asking "who touched me?"[10] With his

stunning flexibility of mind, he lives freely in the emergent dynamism of creation. This doesn't mean he is a pushover. He does judge what he encounters, affirming what brings life, and rejecting what destroys life.[11] He takes in all manner of new information and he shares his growing truth with clarity. All the while, he never allows his advanced state of wisdom close him off. He receives new circumstances, such as the intelligent faith-filled persistence of a Gentile woman (a passage we will explore in-depth below) which opens him to new facets of a changing world.[12] His maturity allows him to welcome eruptions of natality, to continually revise his understanding, and to freely adjust his course.

Sharon Welch suggests we live in a framework of valued interdependence, where the work of revision and self-critique are grounded in strength, not weakness. As communities, we keep critiquing our programs for political change and re-creating our social systems because we keep listening to one another and observing the consequences of our actions.[13] Welch invites us to "a dance with life, a creative response to its intrinsic limits and challenges." She says these conflicts and limitations are not the threat of nonbeing, as Tillich thought, but are, rather, "the conditions of life, the matrix of creativity, community and love."[14]

Our knowing can increase and decrease.[15] Hopefully, we are passionate about growing our knowing. Still, it remains impossible for any of us to know everything about the subject at hand. In fostering our epistemic humility, we accept that regardless of our state in life (our titles and roles, our decades of study, our experiences of marginalization, our accolades, our sufferings, etc.) no person or community in an interaction has a corner on all the available knowing. All parties have some knowing and therefore something to teach and something to learn.

Through our curiosity (rooted in epistemic humility), our innocence is restored. We have seen many things since those early days in the garden.[16] Still we stand in a state of wonder and un-knowing before our God and this wild emergent good creation.

The second practice (centered in the heart) is *compassion*. Compassion is seen by some, especially imperialists, as weakness. This is the great lesson of Christianity. Compassion is our strength. It is the power to change the world.[17] Thomas Merton saw the indestructible presence of love at the heart of humanity on March 15, 1958 on a street corner in Louisville, Kentucky.

> In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.[18]

When Jesus, on his way to rest, is faced with fifteen thousand people to heal and teach and love and feed, his human body might well have given out. But this does not happen. He stops and sees the crowds and their profound struggles. His guts churn inside him (*splagchnizomai*[19]). His heart breaks, and from this opening of compassion comes holy strength for the task.[20] St. Isaac the Syrian puts it this way:

> What is a merciful heart? It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons, and for every created thing. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart; as a result of his deep mercy his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation. This is why he constantly offers up prayer full of tears, even for the irrational animals and for enemies of truth, even for those who harm him, so that they may be protected and find mercy.[21]

With practice, compassion becomes the natural response of our hearts. We allow ourselves to grieve and to be moved. A merciful heart is a balm for the middle agent pain of knowing.[22] The heart can bear what the mind cannot.[23]

As with curiosity, compassion is a lifelong practice. God keeps placing people in our lives that are difficult to love. And so with consciousness we use these opportunities to expand our ability to love. I have found, along with my congregants and St. Isaac, that our consciousness can grow to a point where we become unable to harm. It becomes more painful to cause harm than to be harmed. It never ceases to amaze me to see this appear in a person who has not felt that way before. Before, meanness felt just fine. Now the very same person winces at the thought of it. Together, we witness a deep aversion to harming moving through our souls, an imperative that we can no longer violate.

When this non-harming awakens in us, we can no longer turn pieces of creation into commodities, or people into objects to be utilized. We now understand the ancient mistake of commodifying God's gift.[24] When we witness the way our culture desecrates the sacred we are sorrowful. Our guts are twisted. We touch the deep place where joy and sorrow meet. Here, compassion generates transformative action that is neither forced nor contrived, it simply arises.

In the third practice (centered in the body) we walk the way of Jesus, allowing divine spirit to infuse our human flesh. We allow *incarnation*. We observe our urge to escape the realities of here and now and to retreat to an imaginary then or over there.[25] We notice ourselves pushing away the pressing demands of physical existence, building our own bubble and contriving false peace. Through this practice, we learn to integrate reality, just as it is, broken and messy, into our spirituality. This is a good technique for overcoming our middle agent dislike of disruption. We move into the concrete experiences of our lives and the lives of others. We literally feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoner. When a stranger is in danger, we protect the stranger. This is not the time for an abstract policy discussion.[26] Our human body and the human body of the person before us take priority.

Through our embrace of embodied life, comes a love of beauty. We pause in awe and wonder at the physical world. We discover a love of food. We delight in the warm ripe riches that form in the earth and fall from trees. When we follow Jesus along the way of incarnation, we enjoy sensory experiences. We move out of the bubble and become alive in the body. This aliveness makes us conscious of our impacts on others and the world. We can no longer tolerate the brutal way that colossal corporations produce food, energy, clothing, housing and healthcare. We simplify. We become more relational. As we heal our body and our connection to other bodies and our connection to the body of the earth, our souls cry out in pain at the devastations around us, demanding we withdraw our power from entities that destroy. We use less packaging. We try

growing things. We make relationships with farmers. The fruit of our practice is that guilt and duty fall away and we naturally desire to be good stewards.

In the pain and the pleasure of embodiment, there is always the risk of idolatry. We may *see* how lovely a person or a thing is and have the urge to *take* (the imperial impulse). Imperialism starts in us when we decide we can own a piece creation, when we catch ourselves hoarding and consuming the gift of life in isolation, when we think that life can be grabbed and enjoyed apart from the living presence of God. So we recall the admonition of our Homemaker. We enjoy for a time what God gives us, but we do not grasp or possess. We choose not to "see and take"[27] – not to place our feet on the path of violence[28] – because we know that all our fleeting experiences are gifts of the divine. They appear from that great well of love and return to it. When we allow the holy to infuse our bodies – when we embrace and share the vibrancy of bodily life – while opening our hands and surrendering every precious thing back to wild chaotic waters of love, our Source – we start experiencing the miracle of God dwelling in the flesh.

I offer these three daily practices (curiosity, compassion and incarnation) for middle agent Christians. They invite us into a life of awareness and prayer. They remind us that there is no completion point. Each day we check in. Is my mind open and free? Is my heart connected to the love at the heart of the universe? Is my body awake and engaged? Am I surrendering my idolatries? As we use these disciplines to enrich, deepen and nourish the soil of our souls (and collectively the soil of our communities), we prepare ourselves to encounter other selves and other communities with grace and genuine hospitality – and to have these encounters bear fruit.

Enter, The Syrophoenician Woman

The following story about Jesus often causes middle agent readers to cringe, blush, and wonder why Jesus is so inappropriate and mean.

> From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go, the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.[29]

Negotiating boundaries and power is at the heart of this story.[30] First, notice that Jesus and the woman who interrupts his retreat live in different worlds of social power.[31] Biblical hospitality, if it is to be a vehicle of social restructuring for the sake of enduring justice and not just an isolated offering of charity with no structural impact, requires the disruptive leveling of the aggregated power situation between their contexts. The social instruments for deploying power that divide them (the chasm) must somehow be leveled or bridged.

Hebrew scripture[32] provides glimpses into the social situation of Tyre.[33]

> [T]he people of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of the people with all kinds of wealth.[34]

> At the end of seventy years, the Lord will visit Tyre, and she will return to her trade, and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth. Her merchandise and her wages will be dedicated to the Lord; her profits will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who live in the presence of the Lord.[35]

The woman[36] approaching Jesus[37] comes from a culture known for engaging in regional economic exploitation.[38] She is part of a merchant people that take the bread[39] out of the mouths of the children in Jesus' agrarian community, and sell it for profit.[40] The Galilean village context that Jesus calls home serves as Tyre's "breadbasket"[41] while his own people starve.[42] Further, she is a Gentile.[43] Jesus is able to converse with the Pharisees on ethical terms because they share religious/cultural teachings in common. Now he is literally in new territory. He is faced with an encounter where concern for his well-being and his people's survival is not likely present and where there is a painful history of parasitic economics. As a wandering stranger in a foreign territory,[44] he is at extreme risk.[45] In contrast to his interactions within his community, he is hesitant and cautious. Through the dance of hospitality,[46] he tests the ground before offering the gift of his true self.[47]

Given the social dynamics at play, it is possible that Jesus, with his seemingly harsh words,[48] is responding concretely to their socio-economic relationship.[49] He is exposing the boil of their shared social predicament to the light of day, by naming the suffering her people have placed upon his people.[50] "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's bread and feed it to the dogs."[51] These are strategically shocking words. I would suggest that Jesus is saying, *if you are following the cultural script between merchants and peasants and thereby think my healing power is a commodity you can buy and sell, go somewhere else. Until you and I stand on an equal playing field, until we see each other, there can be no hospitality and there can be no healing. I am not waiting around at the gate of your rich culture, invisible until you decide you want me to serve you.*

His words may seem harsh.[52] But the social location and context of the words matter. Forceful assertion of one's existence – a refusal to submit – becomes necessary when the imperial regime is violently putting you out of existence.[53] In his jarring words, Jesus is definitively rejecting the social order that puts those with worldly power and wealth first, signaling to her that the rules are different here. She may have ingrained (even unconscious) ideas about money and power. She may think she can use or exploit this wandering stranger.[54] But those ideas hold no currency here. Jesus starts out with a strong statement about the priorities that will be honored in his presence. Here the vulnerable are fed first.

We might imagine how a wealthy woman accustomed to dominating situations could respond to being put in her place by a poor rural immigrant peasant. Most of us have seen someone assert dominance over a person they perceive to be lesser in the social schema. Given her desperation to help her child, it must have been tempting to use her social advantage as leverage. Instead, she does something stunningly counterintuitive. She relinquishes her social status. She turns the other cheek, gives her inner garment, walks the extra mile.[55] Unexpectedly, this socially powerful woman says, ok, I am a dog. I am a dog under your table who gets the crumbs.[56] She surrenders her

social advantage and makes herself vulnerable to the peasant stranger standing before her. She takes Nouwen's path of downward mobility.[57] Yet, like the one who carries the Roman soldier's pack for an extra mile, her choice comes not from weakness, but strength.[58] She does not simply roll over. In the same way the victimized person generates public embarrassment for an occupying soldier by pushing past the Roman social mores, going an extra mile, this woman creates a kind of embarrassment for Jesus, by generating visible contrast with his mores and teachings. She places herself in a situation of indignity to reveal Jesus' commitment to dignity, thereby challenging him to treat her according to his own standards. In this complex and yet crystallized interchange, she artfully relinquishes the domineering power ascribed to her by the social order, while continuing to assert her own existence and identity.[59] This performance reveals a foreigner's understanding of his own teaching that leaves Jesus amazed. Jesus, who moments ago was worn down and tired, is suddenly alert and ready to engage. In contrast to his circular jousts with his religious colleagues, this distraught mother proves a worthy partner in the dance of power.

She accepts his disruption and its consequent exposure of inequities. This ground clearing opens the way for mutual engagement. They both are changed by a rough and tumble, yet skilled and attentive, experience of hospitality.[60] By it, her daughter is healed and Jesus' understanding of his own ministry is expanded.

Toward a Liberationist Anthropology

We Reside in Shifting Constellations of Communities of Power

As we attend to the balance and flow of power in human interchanges, we start to notice that people don't fall neatly into categories of oppressor and oppressed. We are not monolithic identities. Here are a few of the communities that constitute my identity: women, Baptists, former Catholics, educated people, Irish/mixed Euro-Americans, people who identify as queer, clergy,

community organizers, kooky dreamers, activists, middle-aged people, single people, people who've experienced poverty, people who've experienced financial comfort. Each of these communities holds particular ecologies of social power. For instance, when strangers find out I am a Baptist minister, they treat me differently. Some are angry. Some are reverent. (So often, amusingly, their first response is to apologize for any swear words they used moments ago!) The flow of power between us shifts.

We are vessels of Original Power, shaped over generations by the unique collection of communities (or constellations of power) to which our lives are linked. If we wish to mature in our embodiment of power for the sake of creational thriving, we need to take the time to observe this collection of communities that is us. With our awareness heightened, we come into daily contact with other human vessels of equal complexity. This is what King calls the "interrelated structure of reality."[61] The shaping and forming goes both ways. Our environment changes us and we change our environment. Our choices have the potential to reshape the communities (that we comprise and which comprise us) and thus the social systems that make up our context.

The story of Jesus encountering the Syrophoenician woman demonstrates the art of ethically engaging our constellations of power. The history of interpretation touches consistently on issues of power (Jew vs. Gentile, men vs. women[62]), yet has tended to read the power dynamic oversimplistically. Sometimes it raises the issue of strangers versus citizens, with varying views on whether the woman is a stranger or a citizen. Sometimes it raises questions of insider and outsider, clean and unclean. Sometimes it raises issues of colonizer and colonized[63] examining the ways the passage has been used to underwrite the cultural imperialism of the modern mission field.[64] Reviewing decades of interpretations, it is clear that power is at play, and worrisomely so, but where scholars land on the "lesson" of the interaction is all over the map. It is notable that middle agent commentators (despite the usual urge to give Jesus the benefit of the doubt) are often sympathetic

to the middle agent woman in this story – and (until Theissen opened the economic angle up) often blind to how her social position impedes her relationship with Jesus. I suggest that these readings fall into confusion because middle agents are trained to be blind to the constellations of social power at work in the interaction.[65]

Figure 9 sketches the communities to which Jesus and the woman are linked. Jesus, not the Gentile woman, is the wandering stranger in a foreign land, with all the vulnerability this entails. As a citizen, she holds the social power to have him violently removed. Imagine a homeless undocumented Mexican healer wandering into Texas. Yet, she is in a humbled position by her daughter's suffering. Jesus holds the power to heal her. Yet, Jesus belongs to a class of peasants that is exploited by the merchant culture of Tyre and Sidon. The bread of the children of Israel goes to the exploiting merchant dogs of her land. She eats while his people starve. Yet he is a man and she is a woman, who in this culture must always have male intermediation. And so on and so on.[66] As is so often the case, the layers of power are complex.

This complexity is worked out in words, silences, and physical gestures.[67] She bows at his feet and begs for his help.[68] Jesus chooses to remain silent. Perhaps he has decided that the social chasm between them is too large. But she presses on. She persistently asserts her humanity.[69] Jesus is intrigued by this and decides to see if she can handle the truth. He basically says, stop talking for a minute. I need to make the hidden part of our interchange visible. I need to name what your people are doing to my people. She becomes quiet and makes space for the pain of knowing. Being stung with the reality of the chasm between them, she responds with awareness and grace. Jesus is shocked, maybe even a little embarrassed by her artful extension of his demand for submission.[70] His assumptions are rattled. A Gentile woman has shown a greater understanding of Torah than his own teachers. In her he has found a person who is up to the ethical dance of hospitality – a person who sees the layers of power at work and is able to negotiate them – yielding and advancing – in

ways that bring them to a level playing field. With God's help, the chasm between them is bridged in this dance. And they both move forward changed. Her daughter is healed. And Jesus is awakened into a broader understanding of the reach of his ministry on earth.[71]

Learning to See Systems and the Pain They Inflict

Here in Rochester NY, we lament that we are two cities. I've spent much of the last decade of my life seeking ways to generate authentic relationship and solidarity across this chasm. In these encounters I've glimpsed the intense frustration of those living outside the bubble as they try to explain their lives to the (often well-meaning yet ill-informed) comfortable. I've felt the pain of distrust, without fully comprehending its depth and source. I've repeatedly been shaken by the layers of my own misunderstanding. I've been the grateful recipient of undeserved grace, the most extreme patience and persistence, as my friends have knocked on my thick head. I've felt stung and confused. I've felt shame and grief. I've talked too much and listened too little.

Those of us who are not handcuffed during traffic stops – whose faces are not pressed into the pavement because we paused too long in a convenience store parking lot or looked at a police officer the wrong way, who do not have neighbors, parents, siblings, uncles, and children who are repeatedly arrested and incarcerated – need to be quiet for a while. We need to listen. We need to feel into what it is like to be presumed guilty – what it is like to have our lives endangered by the very people we pay to protect us – what it is like to have the fabric of our relationships continually torn apart. We need to stop and feel in our bones the rage and grief of having our children devoured by the so-called justice system. In coming together as a broader community and facing our shared predicament, the comfortable need to step back while those among us who receive the brunt of the system's abuse come forward. This is hard to do if we presume we understand and know things. It becomes more natural when we realize how much data has been blocked from our awareness. If we

are proceeding arrogantly and blindly, a strong act of assertion on the part of the suppressed party can be a gift. It exposes inequities and reveals systemic problems that are veiled from the sight of middle agents. While it may sting, it serves as a necessary corrective that makes relationship and healing possible.

Being black or white is not a biological reality.[72] It is a social reality, generations in the making, that comes with particular dynamics of power. Being socially defined as a white woman means I can call 911 anytime, trump up any kind of charge, and have people with guns show up and take away a person socially defined as a black man. There are whole institutions, cultures, organizations, and weapons at my disposal socially. He cannot do the same to me. How can we ever be in a free and fair relationship with such a deep structural inequity? A lesbian friend has to live in fear of having her spouse deported because their marriage is not recognized at the national level. Married straight friends don't have to think about this. Imagine living in a shadow world, always in hiding, always terrified of having your life torn apart, working constantly as your body is poisoned by the chemicals in the fields, just to keep your family alive at a subsistence level, all because you do not have a proper piece of paper saying you are a citizen. A complex of social power lies behind our individual lives. This tends to be invisible to us when the social order is working on our behalf. We become acutely aware when the order harms us or people we love.

Once we grasp the larger issue of social power – once we begin seeing the shifting constellations of power that surround us and our engagement – we understand that racism is not a word for people saying something mean or stereotypical about someone from a different background. It is a word for the way structures have organized social power so that in millions of ways (visible and invisible) people with lighter skin are protected and those with darker skin are not. Examples include overt violence, racial profiling, or disadvantages in hiring processes. Here, we are

not concerned about a random individual making an ignorant comment; we are concerned about centuries-in-the-making entrenched systems of injustice.

As we meet one another in the dance of hospitality, we need to remember that we may not be in the best position to comprehend the systemic pain that infuses our interaction. On the other hand, we may be required to assert our humanity in order to forcefully break through the epistemological bubble of a well-meaning partner in the struggle. There is no formula here. We need to emotionally prepare ourselves for conflict, for truth-telling, for being changed by deep listening, for grief, for rage and for silence.

A Liberationist Anthropology

Asserting that we are internally and externally relational – residing in shifting constellations of communities of power – flies in the face of imperial models of human identity. Imperial models are defined by norm and deviation – e.g. straight, white, male, upper middle class, educated, etc. Where we deviate, we are called "minorities."[73] In the "constellation of communities" model of human identity, there is no norm. There are simply people who end up socially powered or de-powered along various dimensions based on their linkages to communities. In the model I am proposing, a complex person, comprised of multiple communities, cannot be reduced to a minority. We can still talk about majorities and minorities. It is just that we must use accurate mathematics. One of our community linkages may put us in the majority or minority. For instance, the majority of people are women. Men are a minority. The majority of people earn less than ten dollars a day. People who earn more than ten dollars a day are a minority. Aspects of our identity will place us in the minority and aspects will place us in the majority.[74]

This model contradicts imperial models of identity in a few other key ways. Empires gravitate to a pyramidal model. Here we find something more akin to *a multi-dimensional web*. Each of us is linked to a variety of groupings. Imperialists prefer sameness. Thus, they created the concept of

commodity. The goal is to take a piece of creation, say corn, which is wildly diverse, and convert it into something uniform, controllable, and tradable. It is easier to manage the system for the benefit of a few if corn and people stay neatly inside the categories.[75] Our model suggests *a persistent pluralism*, an eradicable diversity[76] – a messy fruitful dynamism set in motion in God's act of creation that evades such attempts at control.[77]

In imperial regimes, people are assigned identities through the mechanism of patronage.[78] At birth, we are assigned a location in the scheme of the empire. There are careful rules that may enable us to move up a bit, or to fall down and lose everything. Our identity is determined by the rules of status and position. Our position and value in the empire defines our value as a human being. In our biblical model, our fundamental identity is created by God. We are made in the image of God to be children of God. *Our value is intrinsic.* There is nothing we or anyone else can do to erase it.

Adopting this multi-centered view of self and society presents us with a paradox for reflection. Our being is established alongside the foundations of the earth by our Creator. And yet we go through our lives becoming who we are. We are so deeply integrated into webs of embodied relationships that there is no us without the other. Indeed it is through our contact with others, especially a very different others that we discover and embody who we are. Thus, *hospitality precedes identity*.[79] Without contact with the other, who we are fails to take shape, fails to come into existence.[80] The Syrophoenician woman and Jesus,[81] through the risky dance of hospitality, call forth each other's identity.[82]

Anthropology is Hospitality

Anthropology and hospitality are inextricable externally because, in our engagement with the world, who we are (and who others are) is always actualizing. Hospitality and anthropology are

inextricable internally because we are internally plural.[83] Arendt talks about this as the "two-in-one."[84] When we are in our right minds there is space within for inner relationships, the capacity to hold multiple internal views and perspectives and put them in dialogue.[85] This leads to an "enlarged mentality"[86] that bridges inner pluralism and outer pluralism, enabling us to see the world as others do.

Jennifer Nedelsky follows Arendt's notion of an "enlarged mentality" yet makes it clear that what we are working toward is not the "universal standpoint of humanity" but rather "one's own general standpoint developed through attention to the particulars of the different standpoints that one considers."[87] Our judgment, however much work we've done on enlarging our mentality, is always a testimony and never a statement of universal truth.[88] Our activity of judgment is formed in community as the result of hearing persuasive testimony of others, and is brought back to the community in an effort to persuade others of our standpoint. The impossibility of absolute universality and objectivity in no way diminishes our responsibility to engage in the project of judgment. We are always choosing what is more or less true for us.

Nedelsky (referring to her colleague Ronald Beiner) points out that judging puts one's identity as risk, because one is forced to judge one's own community, thereby separating oneself from a community that is essential to one's identity.[89] She wrestles with negotiating loyalties to various competing communities. I too run into these struggles. Should I be loyal to feminist women? Should I be loyal to my Baptist colleagues? Should I be loyal to my social activist community? These are all communities to which I belong and from which I, to some degree, derive identity. They and other communities are all part of forming me, yet they at varying points are all judged by me even as they judge me. Those of us that live across socially circumscribed boundaries understand this more clearly than those who live more comfortably inside socially circumscribed boundaries.[90] African-American women have long felt (and written about) the tensions of internal pluralism and the pain

of simultaneously defending and judging a precious community that holds and supports them.[91] Gay Christians know what this feels like too.[92]

Underneath this internally and externally relational model of human identity, we find Levinas' and Derrida's radical respect for alterity.[93] Derrida invites us to be painfully aware of the urge to colonize the other[94] by reducing the other to our frame.[95] This means we cannot know what is right for another.[96] This means we must learn to hold our own integrity and honor the integrity of the other[97] – even when our ways of being in the world appear to contradict. It helps if we can awaken our natural curiosity in the face of the other. What is God doing through my sister or my brother? How do I respond to what is arising? Who are we becoming as we relate?

Derrida calls this "the work and peril of interrogation."[98] It is an uncomfortable and risky process through which together we emerge.[99] There are times when we want to walk away. Differences feel unresolvable. For me, this is where God enters – making a way out of no way. This is also where community is essential. There are times when personally we are at the end of our capacities. If we are woven into a community, at these moments, others hold us.

Derrida's idea of negotiation or interrogation softens and connects a strong divide that he maintains in his theorizing on hospitality. On one side of the divide is the pure horizon of perfect acceptance. It is the ideal in which nothing is withheld.[100] Derrida refers to the "insoluble antinomy" between absolute/unconditional hospitality and the other side of the divide of hospitality – specific embodied "rights and duties" – as the "aporia"[101] of hospitality.

> [T]here would be an antinomy, an insoluble antinomy, a non-dialectizable antinomy between, on the one hand, the law of unlimited hospitality (to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition), and on the other hand, the laws (in the plural), those rights and duties that are always conditioned and conditional, as they are defined by the Greco-Roman tradition and even the Judeo-Christian one, by all of law and all philosophy of law up to Kant and Hegel in particular, across the family, civil society, and the State. That is definitely where this aporia is, an antinomy.[102]

Derrida's theorizing does several things that are important to our biblical ethic. First, it insists we account for our habits of colonizing, decenter ourselves,[103] and respect the alterity of others.[104] Second, it offers a spirit of interrogation and discovery of self and other.[105] Third, it accounts for the relation of the finite to the eternal.[106] Without being explicitly theological, Derrida manages to capture how the eternal moves into the finite in exchanges of hospitality. His absolute horizon accounts for the transformative "more"[107] – the "gift" or the "impossible" – that appears in the imperfect embodied encounter.[108]

Here is where I part from Derrida. When it comes to the absolute law of acceptance of the other, I want to make a careful delineation. Yes, I must accept their and our alterity and their or our freedom to be as we/they are even if we can't understand or greatly dislike it. To do otherwise is to reduce the other to the self. Yet I must claim that I do not have to engage them, merge with them, or open all my space to them. Nor must they receive me. We are free to keep boundaries against what harms us, and to choose how we respond to the emergent and the alien.[109]

In my view, theologically, the only absolute law (also often unattainable) is the law of life (creativity, love, and shalom). The dance of hospitality, the dance of differences, with its harmonies and conflicts, occurs on the backdrop of the universal law of the flow of life – the living water, the bread of life, the Living God. I don't think that Jesus is deciding whether to engage the Syrophoenician woman based on a moral demand that he accept all people, including this woman and her life-destroying culture.[110] In my view, the higher law that governs Jesus' actions is the law of life. For life to be freed from death, her context of parasitic economics and its consequences for poor Palestinians must be laid bare between them and her orientation to that situation must be made clear. With her allegiance (be it conscious or unconscious) to a system of suffering fully exposed and her commitment to life for his people (all people) established, Jesus and she are freed to proceed. So I would say that Jesus' initial withholding in this example is not caused by a tension between

particular hospitality and absolute hospitality. It is an (erroneous) calculation on Jesus' part about the possibility that engagement with this woman could further his driving purpose, to loose bonds and open ways for life to flow. He is surprised and thrilled to discover that he is wrong and that she, a foreigner to his religious community, is capable of negotiating the path of emerging life.[111]

Jesus belongs to many communities from which he derives aspects of his identity (Jews, teachers of Torah, men, the poor, land-working peasants, and single persons to name a few). The Syrophoenician woman also belongs to many communities (Gentiles, merchants and traders, women, the rich, urbanites who live off land-working peasants, and mothers responsible for children to name a few). The dialogue between them represents a complex interplay of assertions and withdrawals of power. Judgments made by each of them on the fly risk their relationships to their communities and put their identities at risk. Jesus risks his status as teacher and our woman risks her socio-economic position, to name two of many risks. In this encounter, both Jesus and the woman demonstrate themselves to be mature ethical persons who take these risks, seek an enlarged mentality, think, and make judgments. The result of their meeting is personal transformation and increased awareness for each of them, and major challenges to (judgments upon) the communities to which they are linked. We bring our linkages to our engagements. Sometimes everything aligns and the eternal horizon opens into the mundane as it did that day. We are changed, and everything we are linked to changes.

Toward a Biblical Ethic of Hospitality

After thinking with scripture and thinking with social theorists, we now turn to sketching out a biblical ethic of hospitality. In this effort, we reject versions of hospitality that mask suffering and maintain pre-existing power differentials (e.g. victim/helper identities). Here we view hospitality as a risky undertaking that demands an awareness of dignity and equality, speaks truth openly,

undermines the status quo, and when successful, leads practitioners to personal, communal and societal healing. Central to this ethic is the exposure of structural realities of disproportionate power and the invitation to realignment for the sake of mutual well-being.

In Chapter 5, we discussed the value of disruption, exploring why destabilizing sick power structures is necessary. To this end, prophets, ancient and modern, like Jeremiah, Jesus and Malcolm X say things that shock our thought patterns. They offer surgical words that decolonize our minds. They present a parabolic style of teaching that challenges our comfortable reliance on life-destroying systems.

Such disruptive knowledge, often arriving from the margins of the social order, serves as an invitation to those who are comfortably ensconced, calling us out of the bubble and into life-giving relationship with humanity and creation. Middle agents show faith when we allow our thought patterns to get rattled. We let our egos loosen their grip so a Love larger than our small selves can move in us. This unraveling of old knowing is the loosing of chains. It makes room for the wild waters of love.[112] It provides an opening for the flow of Original Power.[113] Dr. King and the prophet Amos express this dynamism when they proclaim that justice rolls down like mighty waters[114] – washing away life-deadening social structures and setting the captives free. Recognizing that we live in a dynamic and complexifying creation,[115] in close covenant with our loving Homemaker,[116] we can choose to lend ourselves to this divine project of ending systems that bring suffering and shaping systems that support life.

While disruption may be needed to clear away sick structures, it is not the whole story. It serves as prelude and preparation on the way to abundant life.[117] Once our limiting thought patterns have been dismantled – once the bubble is penetrated – work begins. Intertwined with fiery prophetic proclamations in the canon, we find an enduring constructive and relational message – a restorative and healing task. This ongoing dance of shaking up oppressive structures and nurturing

the emergence of new and liberating forms of social relatedness – this collapsing and creation, de-construction and construction – threads through the biblical story. We are offered guidance for joining this divine dance through the teachings of hospitality.

Biblical Hospitality is the Art of Living in a World of Shared Power

I present the interchange between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman as a prototypical example of biblical hospitality. If you were trained in an imperial environment to be a middle agent like I was, and thus taught to wipe out your awareness of the operation of power, this may take you aback. How could this impolite dialogue be a model of hospitality? As servants of the hierarchy, we intuitively neuter the society-altering nature of biblical hospitality, reducing it to a dinner party[118] or the offering of a meal to a person in need. (These both are lovely things, but in their reduced form, they fail to engage the deeper personal and social change that full-bodied hospitality can generate.) When invited into the power-leveling function of biblical hospitality, our social location may cause us to be resistant, offended, and quick to retreat into a kind of noblesse oblige[119] that keeps the hierarchy neatly intact.[120]

In what follows, with the broad sweep of the canon and the particular story of Jesus and the Gentile woman in mind, I seek to re-enflesh our understanding of biblical hospitality. I seek to restore its suppressed potency for restoring human beings, social structures, and creation to a state of justice and shalom.

So, if hospitality is something more than charity (in the conventional sense), then what specifically is it? *Hospitality is the method God gives us to negotiate boundaries and power.* In Chapter 1, in our creation theology, we discussed how God makes our creation home with dynamic boundaries. Our bodies change as we grow. Our institutions and societies change. Our churches and our theologies change as our souls deepen. We need boundaries that are flexible, healthy and alive – responsive to

the evolving conditions around us. So too, Jesus and the Syrophoenician are negotiating the complex boundaries of Jew/Gentile, male/female, exploiter/exploited, healer/sick, and more.[121] Hospitality is the art of participating in the growth and transformation of those boundaries with our Creator.[122]

Hospitality is risky. Because hospitality is relational, we are sharing control.[123] We are opening ourselves up to new territory.[124] We are advised not to engage in hospitality prematurely or over-optimistically. Efforts at hospitality have painful outcomes when human beings exist in extreme states of imbalance – where God's children are degraded and exploited, where hubris blinds, or where aggregations of power destroy the possibility of mutual recognition and respect.[125] No matter how good our intentions, no matter how much effort, consciousness, and prayer we put into it, the outcomes of our efforts are risky and may fail. I would suggest that Jesus' initial reticence to enter into dialogue with this foreigner stems from his risk analysis. He evaluates the societal chasms between them and decides her location makes the success of the interchange unlikely. She surprises him by overcoming the pitfalls of her social status, including epistemological blindness to the suffering her community inflicts on his. She acknowledges their predicament, and expresses a willingness to restrain the power her social affiliations ascribe to her in the desire for an open and just relationship. She proves herself worthy of the risk.[126] Jesus, surprised to see this necessary foundation in place in this privileged stranger, changes direction and decides to proceed.

Because hospitality is so risky, the results of our choice to engage can be positive, negative or mixed. The scale of our successes and failures can vary widely as well – from small offenses and experiences of forgiveness to major violence and large-scale reconciliation. Two figures explore possible outcomes of interchanges of hospitality. Figure 10 addresses failures. Figure 11 addresses successes.

Hospitality takes evil seriously. Because hospitality is disruptive and transformative, it is also dangerous. Some people we encounter are cruel and do not care about us. Some forms of

engagement violate our boundaries. Some patterns of power have grown so sick that they demonically destroy whole peoples. For this reason, we have a choice. We are always free to choose not to engage. It is advisable that we check out a few basic questions before we make ourselves vulnerable. Is the person (or persons) involved trustworthy? Do they care about my well-being? Are they willing to respect me and my situation? Am I trustworthy? Do I care about their well-being? Am I willing to respect them and their situation? Are they committed to sharing power? Am I committed to sharing power? Are they willing to be changed? Am I willing to be changed? Even when these foundational conditions are met, hospitality is risky. When they are not met, a violent result becomes likely. In this latter case, it is perfectly reasonable to refuse to engage. Remember that Jesus chooses silence during his sham questioning by Pilate.[127] On the other hand, knowing that God's eternal love is stronger than death, there are times when we may choose to (or be forced to) continue an interchange in an unbalanced situation. When called forth, proceeding in full awareness of the danger to self is a heroic act of love for enemy and for humanity.[128] The families that sat on the curbs during the Civil Rights Movement chose to proceed despite the demonic hatred of their white sisters and brothers. So too, through the Incarnation, for the love of humanity, God chose to proceed, and endure the cross.[129]

Hospitality opens us to the Holy. Jesus said, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."[130] When we engage one another in a spirit of curiosity and openness, when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and engage the dance of shared power – the Spirit may join us. Sometimes, the space between us fills with vibrant life, as it did the day the Syrophoenician woman's daughter was healed. This is a tender possibility. We cannot make it happen. But, time after time, we see that there is something about genuine hospitality that awakens our senses to God's gracious participation in the unfolding of the moment.

Hospitality, when it goes well, leads to inner and outer transformation.[131] Hospitality operates at personal and corporate levels. All of our relationships of power (all our interdependencies)[132] are involved. The destructive patterns of power that harm us and harm others – and harm our societies – are disrupted.[133] Our imperial predicament begins unraveling. In the presence of grace, and for the sake of love, our souls are mutually unshackled and Original Power flows freely again.[134]

Hospitality taps us into Original Power. Original Power flows into our lives daily at a grass-roots level, especially in our encounters with one another.[135] Even though we've allowed "dominant agents" and institutional "instruments" to manage power for us, God power is still "dynamic," "swarming," and "circulates."[136] Through being receptive to the disruptive presence of Original Power, we become channels of life into deadened and deadening structures. We become vehicles for the Spirit – infusing our cultures and institutions with holy dynamism and God's healing presence.[137] Jesus shows us what it looks like to live in this flow.

Hospitality opens abundance. Perhaps this is because human engagement through the dangerous and delightful dance of mutually honest interchange – receiving the other, asserting self, allowing disruption, eschewing violence, and opening to new life[138] – is the way we set free the overflowing abundance of creation.[139] Isn't this what Jesus is demonstrating over and over again?[140] Engage like Jesus with the world around us, and the delicious goodness of creation starts waking up.[141] Life pours through the cracks of crumbling regimes. Things start flowing.[142] The nets can't hold all the fish. Fifteen thousand some odd people on a grassy shoreline are filled to satisfaction. Impose an imperial model on the world, extract obscene wealth out of the bodies of the poor, and things get stuck. Fig trees wither up and die. Creation becomes barren.[143]

There is a discernable structure to the practice of biblical hospitality. Through consideration of a wide range of examples of hospitality throughout the canon[144] and specifically analyzing the story of

Syrophoenician woman (because the power dynamics are so rich), I have proposed the parameters outlined above. In Figure 12, I distill these down into a working model.

Hospitality is the underlying and enduring theo-ethical teaching of the biblical story. Most forms of biblical ethical teaching are modified as our consciousness grows. For instance, we move from an eye for an eye, to love of neighbor, to love of enemies.[145] Though the particular expressions of hospitality vary, hospitality itself, with its basic principles and risks, is present from the outset, and continues unabated through the entire canon. The biblical story on a macro level is a story of God's hospitality[146] – God's dance of sharing power with us. Specific practices of hospitality are highly valued in ancient Hebrew culture[147], among peasants in Galilee,[148] and in the early church.[149] The emergent demands of hospitality challenge paupers and kings in every age. They even challenge Jesus.

Communal Boundaries and Net Effects

Linger by any water-cooler, stand in any lunch line, sit in any town square or restaurant dining room, drop into any church coffee hour, or listen to talk radio for a few minutes and you will hear constant jockeying for position. Who has power over us? Who are we overpowering? There is an undercurrent of emotional intensity running through the power ecosystem that we live and breathe. This jockeying for position is normal for us. All the way back to Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, we find an immature competitive humanity that rejects hospitality and employs God's gift of power in tragically destructive ways. Daily, we feel the damage. We relate in ways that leave portions of humanity suppressed and unable to thrive.

God actively invites us to a more gracious creational perspective. In our discipleship, we are learning to grow aware of each other and of all life. We are learning to seek the well-being of neighbors, strangers and enemies, as well as ourselves.[150] As we mature, we no longer delight in the

suppression of others. We begin struggling for creative ways to accomplish shared thriving. This is the art of mutual well-being.

Boundaries and Well-Being

In our creation theology, we claimed that the only thing that is real in an ontological sense is love. Within unbounded annihilating chaotic love – the wild waters of love – emerges a dynamic boundaried incarnate world. Made in the image of our Creator, we have been granted the power to make, sustain, and change life's boundaries. These living boundaries operate within our internal pluralism, around and between the multiple communities that comprise us, and through the complex structures of aggregated power that make up our human social environment.[151] The boundaries of creation and all life – the boundaries of our bodies, communities and societies – contain within them a dynamic and complexifying intelligence (manifesting God's enduring presence) that guides us to the experience of joy and shalom, if we tune our senses to their wisdom. As we proceed ethically, God's relationship to us becomes the model for healthy human relationships built on the principles of covenant and biblical hospitality (healthy negotiated boundaries[152]) – rooted in the key principle of shared power. Always, we are dancing between self and other – familiarity and foreignness.

Boundary problems cause much of our suffering. I'll touch on two kinds of boundary problems. The first is trespass. Rape the paradigmatic example. The presence of spirits where they do not belong – that, for instance, Jesus removes in exorcism, is a form of trespass. Invading other nations is a form of trespass. In the scriptures being occupied by a foreign nation and being occupied by an unclean spirit are related.[153] Other earthly aspects of creation have problems with trespassing as well. Waters trespass upon the earth creating tsunamis. Cells trespass their limits, causing cancer. Trespass into the space, the dignity and the autonomy of another person or group – not respecting dynamic and evolving God-given boundaries – the failure to negotiate and share

power – the failure to behave covenantally – is a source of trespass and violence.[154] This is a way that humanity experiences evil.[155]

A second kind of boundary problem that causes suffering is idolatry.[156] Idolatry leads us to place our trust in a created structure over and against the unbounded Love that created us. Having a relationship with unbounded love is difficult. It is unpredictable. It tosses us about and constantly disrupts our well-ordered lives. It scares us to actually put the daily realities of our lives in the hands of this love. This kind of trust is our greatest challenge and calling. It is much easier to imagine that our security comes from a hunk of gold formed into the image of a calf, from a perfect relationship or job, from family structure, from an economic theory, from a workplace, from a government, or from an organized religion to name only a few possibilities. Idolatry causes us to build increasingly extravagant weapons to defend our structure, or to think that the suffering of the majority of the world is acceptable to uphold a global economic system, or to think that our national identity is so important that the deportation and ultimate extermination of an entire class of human being is a reasonable plan.

Healthy boundaries help us avoid the errors of idolatry and trespass.[157] They offer vital protection, and yet do not become hard and fixed. Like cell walls they let information pass through. They grow and change. Hebrew religion, from a priestly perspective[158] evolved around the understanding and maintenance of these human/divine boundaries – a noble task, even when our forebears were understandably short-sighted about exactly how prolific, dynamic, and egalitarian these boundaries actually are. God has granted to humanity, in the form of the image of God, divine power. This is our gift and our calling. It is our task to tend to the boundaries and structures that, in Arendt's words, make for a habitable world.[159]

Human Homemaking

Wendell Berry is concerned that our culture has pushed us to a state of impermanence in all our relationships. He sees disintegration underneath our destructive ways of life. "Neither marriage, nor kinship, nor friendship, nor neighborhood can exist with a life expectancy that is merely convenient."[160] Amidst this fragmentation and our short attentions spans, Berry entreats us to see that we are not solitary authors of our own beings, but rather enmeshed in a web of relationships that define us spiritually, socially, and biologically. He calls us to locate ourselves specifically in our communities, and "enact our union with the universe"[161] in our practical acts, such as work and homemaking. This commitment gets established and sustained in our covenants with one another, and through a reinvigorated sense of fidelity.[162] In caring for life's boundaries, we become home-makers, reflecting the concerns and activities of our Holy Homemaker.

Beloved Community

In our daily life, we can take time to create alliances, covenantal relationships, and networks. Through community-building we gather together persons who share our values (as Jesus did with his followers). This community forms an alternative to the status quo. It is a base for organizing against forces of violence and injustice. It is also ground for creativity and natality, offering soil to plant the seeds of a culture of hope, including alternative economics and politics that heal and liberate.

Within our communities of biblical hospitality we are constantly teaching one another. We are telling our story. We are constantly reminding ourselves that we reject certain dominant discourses, such as competition for scarcity, the Babylonian myth of creation against chaos, and the notion that human beings are disposable consumers instead of children of God. We teach one another to be mature responsible ethical persons who think critically about the world around us. We work in community to articulate and revise and refine our commitments over and over again.

A key issue in community is how we structure our economy. This may seem profane, yet it lies at the heart of Torah and is of constant concern to God. God invites us to a relational economy – one where we know one another and support one another, and where we free each other from burden through debt forgiveness. Berry exhorts us to get back in direct contact with those with whom we share economic relationships.[163] In *The Idea of a Local Economy*, Berry says that we in the developed world have "given our proxies to corporations to produce and provide all of [our] food, clothing, and shelter."[164] We have given our proxies to corporations "to provide entertainment, education, child care, care of the sick and the elderly"[165] and many other needs we once met inside our communities. We no longer pay any attention to how our basic needs are getting met. We don't think about who grows our food. Are they treated well? Are their practices good or bad for the environment? Our lives have become so complicated that we can't worry about all that, so we trust corporations to worry about it. In this act of abdication, this obliteration of covenantal life, we've been drawn into the same abstract means of relating to the world as the corporations that run our lives.

Berry teaches us that we need to withdraw our dependence from this corporate complex that does not care at all for us, and invest in local businesses and local economic systems that are run by our fellow community members. We need to break our addiction to corporate rule. Berry says: "Without prosperous local economies, the people have no power and the land no voice."[166] According to feminist ethicist, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, our abstract corporate economy has the effect of "disabling our moral agency." She puts the problem in Christian terms:

> The foundation is neighbor-love, manifest in economic life and empowered by Christ's indwelling presence. Economic activity is, ontologically, an act in relationship to neighbor, and all activity in relationship to neighbor is normed and empowered by one principle; true Christians, having received God's love through grace alone, are "filled with" God and grow to actively embody God's love for themselves and others, and to receive it from others. For this reason, widely accepted economic practices that undermine the widespread good or the well-being of the poor are to be subverted – that is, theologically denounced, defied, and replaced with radical alternatives – by the power of Christ's indwelling love. Christians are called to be "lovers" in their everyday economic lives.[167]

In a thoroughly corporate economic system that places us de facto in promiscuous, unconscious, and profoundly exploitive relationships with thousands, perhaps millions, of human beings around the globe every time we purchase something at Walmart, gas up the car, or eat dinner at our favorite restaurant, this is an extremely difficult challenge. We need long term commitment, focused spiritual discipline and patience with our limitations,[168] as we give up trying to fulfill our desires in a greedy individualistic way, and learn to fulfill our desires in connected, relational way. Through our maturing personally and collectively – through our shared homemaking – we have the hope of discovering enduring satisfaction and mutual well-being.

Net Effects

As stated earlier, the teaching of hospitality intersects many levels (perhaps all levels) of our existence – intrapersonal (befriending the many exiled parts of our own inner being, facing our own inner uncontrollable otherness), interpersonal (kin, friends, strangers, enemies), communal, organizational, societal, creational (our relationship to the earth and all created life), and theological (our relationship to God). In this section, I am addressing the communal, societal, and creational levels by proposing the following ethical stance: *a commitment to positive net effects*.

Corporations, on the whole, relentlessly seek ways to move value (profits, good employees, better technology) into their system, and move waste out. For example, in the 1990s, Dell innovatively designed their supply system so that computer components sitting in their own factory storerooms were contractually owned by their suppliers until a Dell employee pulled them off the shelves.[169] This way if circumstances changed and the parts became obsolete, the suppliers, rather than Dell, took the loss. This artful conceptual shifting of "cost" and "waste" to others, even as it sits inside their own building, is the way businesses think, resulting in wildly irrational ways of operating. For instance, I buy a head of lettuce from California because it costs less than one grown

hydroponically a few miles from my house. It costs less because the enormous California company has pushed all the cost out of its system. For example, the roads on which the trucks travel thousands of miles are paid for by the public sector. Many other costs, including pollution, pesticide impacts on health, and wars to safeguard oil supply are also offloaded. This systematic offloading of waste is happening at every level of operation on a global scale. Visualize this massive industrial system, relentlessly pulling in value anywhere it can, and pushing waste out onto other entities, the public sector, and the general environment. It becomes a voracious global living beast, eating the whole planet, and excreting poison all over the place. The words of Ezekiel come to mind:

> Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?[170]

When it comes to a biblical ethics of community, God calls us to reverse the industrial logic. It is good that we live in our unique collection of boundaried communities[171] – our homes, our churches, our workplaces, our clubs, our nations, etc. At the same time, we must be concerned about (be a blessing to) all that lies outside our boundaries. This means we must evaluate the "net effect" of our communities actions. As an ethical community we seek to have a neutral or positive effect on other boundaried communities and the environment around us. Rather than dumping the bad stuff outside our boundaries, we creatively rework our processes so we take responsibility for our waste and poisons.[172] Instead of voracious trampling beasts, our organizations and communities can become engines of goodness or grace. Is this not what it means for Israel – the paradigmatic faith community – to be a blessing to the nations?[173] Our communities, organizations, and nations are called to be blessings to the larger world that we inhabit.

Now imagine, that, little by little, boundaried communities begin accounting for net effects, intentionally shifting the current trend. Imagine that the current global flow (value in, waste out) is reversing itself (waste in, value out). Can you visualize the shift in the global situation, as our vast

web of communities (families, neighborhoods, businesses, churches, schools, nations) commits to share power[174] and at every scale seeks to generate positive net effects?[175] As God promises in the Hebrew scriptures, the world repents (*shuv)*, changing direction like a school of fish.

We close this chapter, having articulated a biblical ethic of hospitality that links personal healing and social change. This ethic calls us toward maturity and skill in the art of negotiating power for the sake of mutual thriving. Our ethic includes a liberationist anthropology that takes our systemic environment (and the pain it inflicts) into consideration, as well as the shifting constellation of communities that comprise up our identity. We examined how these communities shape who we are and how our actions affect and "judge" the communities to which we are connected. We drew connections to our creation theology, considering how this risky dance of hospitality engages us in an eternally co-creative project with God, that of allowing our boundaries to grow and change dynamically in response to new encounters in our lives. From here we moved to the ethical relationship of boundaried communities (e.g. families, churches, corporations and others) to one another and to the larger environment, proposing an ethic of "positive net effects." We visualized a world where ethical communities, rather than pulling value in and sending waste out, challenge themselves to reverse the flow, and thereby serve as a blessing to all that lies outside their domain.

In sketching this ethics of power, we've proposed a direction (personally, communally and societally) out of our middle agent predicament and toward the fulfillment of God's plan for creation. This brings us back to the big picture. Tracing the trajectory of our story of power, what does creational fulfillment look like? Where are we headed? What is God's (and our) dream for the world? Eschatology is the focus of our next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 7

MATURING INTO A WORLD OF SHARED POWER

Now there's a loss that can never be replaced
a destination that can never be reached
a light you'll never find in another's face
a sea whose distance cannot be breached

...well Jesus kissed his mother's hands
...whispered, "Mother, still your tears,
for remember the soul of the universe
willed a world and it appeared."[1]

As our biblical theo-ethical narrative of power comes to a close, we turn to the subject of last things. Toward what are we oriented? Where is creation headed? What might the fullness of creation look like? More specifically, what shape, dimensions, and qualities does Original Power take in a liberated and fulfilled creation? And what implications does this sketched trajectory of Original Power into eschatological fulfillment have for middle agents?[2]

A key claim of biblical faith is that there is a cosmological framing of our historical existence[3] – that is, what we see is tiny compared to the unseen realms that hold our world. Through faith we engage in a relationship between finite and infinite, temporal and eternal. In this dissertation, I have addressed the relationship between the cosmological and the historical chiastically.[4] The cosmological (creation and eschatology) frames the historical (our lived experience of faith, our predicament and ethics). We began in primordial creation. Then we moved into humanity's effort to deploy the gift of divine power and the painful results of our immature choices and imperial actions. From there we explored a path out of our predicament through an ethic of hospitality. In this

chapter, we return to the unseen realm that surrounds and infuses embodied life. The subject of eschatology brings us full circle in our story of power.

As is the case throughout this work, theology and ethics are inseparable. The way we orient our lives theologically (consciously or unconsciously) shapes our ethical decisions. For this reason, imperial regimes actively distort, construct, and inculcate eschatological narratives (as they do creation narratives[5]) to serve the interests of domination, greed, and control. In this chapter, we reject distorted apocalyptic readings that underwrite the imperial exploitation of the earth and humanity.[6] Reading apocalyptic literature in its Hebraic context and with the Lukan Jesus, we "embrace apocalypse" as a humanity-affirming and creation-supporting literary strategy that envisions the continuity and ultimate victory of a covenantal God over imperial powers in partnership with a faithful and maturing human race – a living loving God who ultimately dwells inside a healed and redeemed earth. We remember that this highly symbolic and sometimes frighteningly disruptive literature is produced by authors who are experiencing the worst suffering that empire can deliver.

Reading with ancient authors who come from the world of marginalized majorities, we keep in mind that middle agents come from a different social location, one that involves an epistemological bubble.[7] As the lynchpins in hegemonic power structures,[8] we are particular targets of eschatological propaganda developed to keep the machinery of the Domination System undisrupted.[9] This confession challenges middle agents to question the way narratives are framed for us and to strongly resist and counter the barrage of eschatological imperial assumptions that flood our lives.

After embracing disruptive apocalyptic visions, we begin developing a biblical eschatological theology for our present time. While acknowledging the powers collapsing around us (and their increasing spectacles of corruption and violence), we set our attention on the tender signs of a new

earth being born. We consider what it means to be midwives of this new creation, deploying our power in particular local ways that support a holy emergence in our midst. With the disciples, we shift our focus from distractingly large and impressive displays (what large stones and lavish offerings![10]), and notice how communities of eschatological witness are God's chosen space for seeding the new. We remember how these communities were God's great concern among the ancient Hebrews, how from a small spiritual community of disciples thousands were healed in Galilee, and how in the interstices of Roman Empire Paul nurtured embassies of God's kingdom on earthly soil.[11]

Then we consider how this same holy strategy may be operating today. We acknowledge a growing web of witnessing communities that are forming an intricate counter-imperial web of salvation around our blue/green planet – holding space for God to be born in ever new ways. Drawing on the theology of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. among others, we focus on the task of witnessing to an alternative divine reality in the flesh of our lives, setting our bodies on the path of love in community and then in and among our communities and societies. We close this eschatological chapter in our narrative of power with the images of our most far reaching biblical dreamers – expressing in their words, God's dream for our world.

Eschatology Matters[12]

There are personal, social, and global consequences of allowing the Domination System to shape our eschatology. Here is an example. I was presiding over a meeting of our region of Baptist churches in western New York. We were receiving requests from new churches to join our regional association. We had received an application from a small house church for Burmese refugees of the Lisu ethnic group. Our region had extensive experience resettling refugees from other ethnic groups from Burma, including Karen, Karenni, Chin, and Kachin. Though most of these new members of

our church communities speak no English, they are Baptists, like us, who have much in common, including basic values around freedom, improvement of the social order, and hymns. It is a Pentecostal experience to be in an English/Burmese congregation and hear people who cannot talk with one another sing hymns together in multiple languages. The unexpected ability of our congregations to merge in the midst of current political tragedy is the fruit of the Baptist mission field in Burma 200 years ago.[13]

When the pastor of the Lisu congregation stood to speak to our regional delegates, he explained that the history of evangelism among Lisu was different than that of the other ethnic groups we'd encountered to date. While other Burmese ethnic groups became Baptist through their contact with American Baptist Missionary Union (also known as American Baptist Foreign Mission Society) and their "this worldly" eschatology (including commitment to caring for the vulnerable and for the earth), the Lisu were evangelized by Christians who believed passionately that the world was about to end.[14] This belief permeated Lisu culture. Thus the Lisu (and their mission partners) rejected work on social institutions like hospitals and schools. Why invest in what is about to pass away? The pastor described the historical suffering, destitution, and poverty of culture (over hundreds of years) that his people experienced as the result of holding one form of eschatology over another. Hearing this story, I was struck by the potential of teaching to heal or harm, not just in the scope of a single life, but in the scope of generations. Cosmological teachings, such as creation and eschatological teachings, have particularly significant impacts because they undergird and inform, often unconsciously, everything we do.

Liberating Eschatology[15]

In Chapter 1, with help from theologians and social theorists, we worked through a liberating creation theology for middle agents. Theologian Letty Russell helps us "think from the

other end."[16] Whereas Christian theologians commonly go to the book of Genesis for norms, Russell looks toward the new creation for her norms.[17] She argues that, while there are clues in our origins, humanity has never yet experienced the norms we are seeking. So she sets her gaze forward.[18]

> The vision of total liberation, or the New Creation, is something none of us has experienced. It has never existed in history, either in the early church or in some ideal time at the beginning of creation. Nor have any modern revolutions produced it, although many have worked out its hopes and some have made some advances for human well-being. Thus the norm of the New Creation by which we must judge the Bible, Christian theology, and social struggles is one that is constantly rising out of an unquenchable hope for a better world, a refusal of humans to settle for oppression as the last word of human life and history.[19]

She calls these fleeting inbreakings "memories of the future."[20] Our most profound taste of creation fulfilled is found in the person of Jesus Christ.[21]

A primary norm that Russell derives from her study of the future is "the norm of total liberation" or a "revolution in which everyone wins."[22] While there is significant struggle involved in Russell's understanding, it is not a struggle against people, it is a struggle against systems.[23] "One overcomes systems of evil while reclaiming the persons captive in those systems, the oppressed and the oppressors, for a new, liberated humanity on a redeemed earth."[24]

For Russell "thinking theologically from the 'other end' is always complemented by thinking socially from the 'bottom' by concrete listening and being taught by women and men of oppressed classes and races."[25] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz shares Russell's commitment to seeking suppressed narratives, particularly the suppressed narratives of Latina women, in her *mujerista theology*.[26] She argues that we need to surface narratives from the grassroots.[27] She notices the epistemological advantage and enhanced capacity for vision that one gains at the margins of society.[28] "[S]ince they do not profit from the present situation, they are capable of imagining a radically different future."[29]

A Kingdom Coming on Earth

Central to Latin American liberation theology is a "this-worldly" eschatological conviction that supports human and divine transformation of the social order. The current creation and especially the most suffering populations within the human family are the location of God's saving and redeeming activity, expressed as "God's preferential option for the poor."[30] For Gutiérrez, "Eschatology is thus not just one more element of Christianity, but the very key to understanding the Christian faith."[31] Salvation (closely aligned with liberation) is a continuous process that starts at the beginning in creation. "The human work, the transformation of nature, continues creation, only if it is a human act, that is, if it is not alienated by unjust socio-economic structures."[32] "The kingdom comes to suppress injustice[.]"[33]

Isasi-Diaz's communally shaped theology includes personal responsibility and a refusal to accept one's "reward in the next world." For her, a theology of future reward is an imperial tactic to forestall rebellion.[34] Russell, Ruether, Copeland, and Isasi-diaz refuse to accept an other-worldly eschatology that leads us to abandon the struggle and cost of discipleship. Still, their liberating eschatology cannot be reduced to a theology of works, with its overestimation of human capacity to bring about the kingdom.[35] They wind a counter-imperial path through this false dichotomy. In Ruether's reading of Russell, she says: We

> cannot give up, not because we know 'we can do it if we try' but because we know we are part of God's struggle on our behalf. The assurance for our hope, the ground of our undefeated persistence, lies in our faith that we are joining God in a struggle for the redemption of creation, and God will never give up on us.[36]

J. Richard Middleton, Sylvia Keesmaat, and Brian Walsh have provided scholarly leadership on this subject in evangelical circles. Middleton makes "the exegetical case for a consistent understanding of redemption as the restoration of God's creational intent, such that the appropriate hope of the redeemed is life in a renewed intra-mundane, earthly creation."[37] This perspective stands against eschatological theologies that envision a break between the present creation and the new creation, or a different location for the new creation.[38]

Likewise, the Social Gospel tradition insists that the kingdom of God occurs in the earthly context. Our earthly reality is the locus of God's transforming eschatological activity, which demands our participation. Here the theological entry point is the transformation of human suffering in the social order, including its systemic causes. In the words of Walter Rauschenbusch, "To the first generation of disciples the hope of the Lord's return meant the hope of a Christian social order on earth under the personal rule of Jesus Christ, and they would have been amazed if they had learned that this hope was to be motioned out of theology and other ideas substituted."[39] For Rauschenbusch, God's purpose is fulfilled through a healing of the broken social order. "The essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God."[40]

Cone, a pioneer in the academic discipline of Black Theology, also centers his theology in the kingdom of God which "is like a ray of light" that usurps "the powers that enslave human lives."[41] Cone sees the kingdom of God occurring directly in the experiences of organizing and confrontation with white oppression.[42]

All of these different streams (as well those found in myriad other contextual liberation theologies) recognize that while we are active participants, it is God who ultimately brings about the conquering of sin and suffering and who fulfills the kingdom on earth. "The Kingdom of God stood unquestionably at the center of liberation theology and the social gospel because Gutiérrez and Rauschenbusch placed the Kingdom at the center of Christ's teaching and at the heart of the gospel. Everything was subordinated to the concept of the Kingdom. This was precisely the reason for the development of their doctrines and social concerns."[43]

Constructive Eschatology

As we continue to shape a theo-ethical narrative of the gift of Original Power, I look to my sisters and their good work on a liberating eschatology. I particularly rely on my Latina and African-American sisters, who are skilled at "juggl[ing] two cultural-ideological frameworks."[44] To survive inside an oppressive culture, socially marginalized groups must hone their critical capacities and smoothly shift between worlds of meaning on a daily basis. This ability is particularly beneficial to theological thinkers, because the work of theology (including eschatology) demands that we shift between present circumstances and the larger cosmological framework that orients our lives.

In our study of creation and eschatology, we are consciously discerning which metanarratives crush out life, and which metanarratives heal and open the life of humanity and creation. Those of us in all locations in the world's social fabric share in the responsibility to dismantle hegemonic eschatological stories and build up life-supporting eschatological stories. To shift frameworks – to move between and weave relationship between the see-able to the un-seeable – we must engage our theological imaginations. Our tools are metaphorical and our expression is impressionistic. We don't need to give up coherence, but we do need to give up the hypnotic quality of internal coherence.[45] We need to practice a flexible kind of coherence that is loose, open, curious, and radically open to what is outside present communal boundaries. This effort looks less like debating doctrines, and more like communal mural painting, collaborative poetry writing, or neighborhood charrettes.[46] Our ongoing play of deconstruction and construction is intentionally informed by emergent concrete details of life, always seeking suppressed information, and constantly evolving.

Little by little, we learn to embody our mature capacities, actively navigating the wonders of Original Power. This is no simple Protestant work ethic. We are awe-stricken as our humble offerings are met with an infinite flow of unearned grace.[47] With Derrida we notice that the gift of power causes the universe to be tipped, alive, moving, dynamic.[48] We co-creatively make our home

in these wild waters,[49] with our compass set to the future-derived norm articulated by Letty Russell, total liberation for humanity, animals, the earth, and all creation seen and unseen.[50]

Embracing Apocalypse

If we are going to talk about where creation is headed, we have to address the concept of apocalypse.[51] How did we get from rhapsodizing about the beauty and wonder of our holy home:

> How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
> My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;
> my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.
> Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
> where she may lay her young at your altars[.][52]

to theologies that call for its annihilation? In this section, I explore the idea, put forth by numerous scholars, that apocalyptic literature is the work of occupied communities who are experiencing human and creational devastation. So the violence that it expresses is, at least in part, descriptive rather than prescriptive.[53] Further, as a creative narrative art form generated out of suffering, apocalyptic literature dramatically reframes the experience of imperial chaos,[54] subsuming it into the larger story of a faithful and all powerful God.[55]

A Rebellious Reframing of Imperial Chaos

If apocalyptic literature in the Bible is not about the cataclysmic destruction of the world, what is it about? The Greek word for apocalypse (*apokalupsis*) means revelation,[56] the disclosure of things previously unknown or unseen.[57] Apocalyptic literature emerges under Seleucid imperial rule, specifically around 167BCE when the edict of Antiochus initiates a "program of terror" causing extreme persecution to Judean faith communities.[58] While experiencing the violent destruction of the fabric of life by an overwhelming foreign military presence, suffering believers create a new art form. In herculean acts of rebellious creativity, they reject the imperial narrative of domination that is crushing their lives and build new narratives describing a divine power that surrounds, infuses, and

ultimately breaks the back of imperial power. In doing so they create a "counterdiscourse"[59] – "an alternative epistemology and cosmology"[60] – that insists on the "transience and finitude of temporal powers."[61] This discourse, far from being nihilistic, "envisioned, advocated, and empowered resistant action,"[62] providing "tools and frameworks for thinking beyond hegemonic constructions of reality."[63] Speaking of the Enochic texts, Portier-Young says:

> As resistant discourse, each apocalypse countered the totalizing narrative of the Seleucid empire with an even grander total vision of history, cosmos, and the reign of God. But their vision did not stop at the level of discourse or belief. Vision and praxis shaped one another. From each apocalyptic discourse emerges a program of radical, embodied resistance rooted in covenant theology and shaped by models from Israel's scriptures as well as new revelatory paradigms.[64]

These storytellers re-imagined the cosmos out of their faith, staking their lives on God's ultimate sovereign power,[65] and proclaiming their confidence in God's vindication of their convictions.

Ancient apocalyptic visions, with their fantastic imagery, appear discontinuous with historical reality.[66] At the same time, they reflect the extremity of suffering that their creators are experiencing.[67] A total breakdown of the social order – the destruction of the goodness of covenantal life – causes believers to struggle with the question, where is God? Finding it difficult to connect their lives with the steadfast love and ultimate power of God, communities narrate their way into connection with their Source. Rather than allow their faith to collapse under imperial pain, grassroots faith communities[68] deconstruct the "shock and awe" behavior of foreign earthly powers and they construct a new version of reality big enough to include and subsume their broken social predicament. In the midst of imperial chaos,[69] believers claim their own power to shape and tell the story of their lives. They resolve the unresolvable by envisioning a radical and holy inbreaking into the evil of their present reality. They create continuity by enveloping the overwhelmingness of empire into a greater overwhelmingness of God. By this they "reconnect . . . past, present and future in a continuous narrative of God's providential care."[70]

> The writers of the apocalypses resisted the unmaking of world and identity by offering new sight, naming terror and hope, insisting on the integrity of reality, and denying the ultimacy of pain Antiochus inflicted and the power he claimed. In its place they asserted the totality of heavenly rule,

> divine creation, sacred knowledge, and life in covenant with God [including the] providential ordering of historical time, place and community.[71]

In this rebellious version of reality, God breaks through, heals the people, dramatically judges the evil powers, and ends their warring insanity.[72]

Should We Rain Fire Down on Them?[73]

Divine judgment is a central feature of apocalyptic narratives, and it comes in both violent (e.g. Books of Enoch) and non-violent (e.g. Daniel[74]) forms. The tradition of Enoch explicitly calls for the execution of the wicked.[75] The Enochic Book of Dreams calls the faith community to resist Antiochus' persecution with "resistance through armed revolt"[76] and through "prayer, preaching and warfare."[77] The author of Daniel, by comparison, calls "his readers to outspoken nonviolent resistance[78] to the edict of Antiochus,[79] the lies of empire, and the terror of Seleucid rule," including "willingness to give over their bodies to death in times of persecution."[80] In Daniel, the suffering faithful are strengthened by the divine promise[81] that after a succession of terrible empires will come an age of "eternal just rule of one like a human being,"[82] what we call the child of humanity (or the son of man).[83]

With Jesus as our hermeneutical guide, we enter the violence of apocalyptic images carefully. Jesus identifies with apocalyptic thought, speaks apocalyptically, and consistently affirms the relevant truth offered by apocalypses[84] – God's power will triumph over the oppressors and the last shall be first. All that oppresses the thriving of creation and humanity will be judged as sin and burned away. Death will be conquered and life will remain.[85] At the same time, Jesus corrects the mistaken idea that this will happen through military triumph. While these stories provide an encouragement to radical faith in the worst of circumstances, we are cautioned not to take images of God's violent triumphalism literally.[86] Jesus mocks this very idea when he and his followers act out a military imperial procession into Jerusalem on the back of an ass. God will triumph. Human suffering will be

vindicated. But people of the way are not to engage in violence. We are called to a counterintuitive path of struggle, healing, abundance and love. Jesus sends this message to John in prison. How will you know the Messiah is here? How will we know that judgment day has come? "[T]he blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."[87]

As Christians, it helps to examine the particular way Jesus navigates Torah. Looking at this question, we find that Jesus brings forth traditional lines of thought, while applying a particular interpretive lens, one that transforms violent stories into calls for service, sacrifice and nonviolence. We see this hermeneutical move in both the Matthean story of the Canaanite woman[88] and the Marcan story of the Syrophoenician woman.[89] In both cases, Jesus takes up an entrenched enemy relationship from the scripture (the Canaanites in the former and the merchants of Tyre and Sidon in the latter),[90] wrestles honestly with the key points of historical social tension disruptively and nonviolently, and opens the way for a redeemed and healed situation. Jesus does not leave scripture alone. He engages Torah with a spirit of deconstruction and construction for the sake of exposing histories of pain, healing fractured relationships and bringing about social liberation.[91] This is upsetting to those who think scripture is something fixed and should remain undisturbed. There are other examples. He shames religious leaders out of their ancient scriptural practice of stoning women.[92] In several places, he encourages poor Galileans to break down the walls with their historical enemies, Samaritans.[93]

One Samaritan example specifically addresses divine judgment. In Luke, Jesus is turning his attention to Jerusalem and to the Passover celebration.[94] He sends messengers ahead to scout out a place to stay in a Samaritan village along the way. His faithful followers, who have abandoned everything they know for the love of Jesus, bravely forge the way into enemy territory. They openly share their joy in the gospel in a Samaritan town along the way and are rejected. They get angry.

What is the source of their anger? Perhaps they are angry at the villagers' blindness to the truth and goodness of Jesus and their unwillingness to shelter him. Perhaps they are angry for long past acts of violence against their kindred, old grudges long engraved in their culture. Perhaps they are angry about the risks that they are facing and for the lack of safety they can anticipate on the journey. Regardless of the source of their anger, they return to Jesus and ask: "Do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"[95] To me, this is a touching moment, like toddlers attempting to bravely defend their strong and able parent. They are protective of a tender indestructible power[96] that they love yet do not understand. Their concept of defense is sincere and immature.

There is scriptural information embedded in their question. In asking, they evoke images of the prophet Elijah. In the ancient story of vindication that is being echoed, the king of Samaria sends a captain and fifty men to ask about a prophecy Elijah has made about him. Elijah claims to be a man of God. To prove it, he successfully calls upon God to rain fire from heaven.[97] Many of Jesus' followers thought that Jesus was the reincarnation of Elijah. So their question about raining fire on their detractors is an expression of faith in Jesus' divine power and a call to show them a classic sign. *If you are Elijah, the Messiah, the son of God, then vindicate yourself the way Elijah did. Show us God is behind you through an act of dramatic violence.* Perhaps, they are also a little embarrassed by their nonaggressive teacher and Lord. They would like to see a little less of God's steadfast love and a little more of God's strong arm. We can imagine their frustration. *These Samaritans don't get it. Let's get old school on them, and rain down some holy fire to prove our point.* In this context, knowing that everyone around him would hear echoes of Elijah, Jesus' refusal of violence is all the more remarkable.

We also hear echoes of another Hebrew Bible story here, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.[98] In this story, two angels of God appear as strangers. Abraham, the model of faith, in spite of the great risk of welcoming nomadic strangers in his culture, offers them extravagant

hospitality.[99] The angels then travel to the city of Sodom where they encounter inhabitants who are violent toward them. In response to the rejection of God's emissaries, God rains fire. The failure of hospitality results in violence.

When the disciples ask about raining fire down, they are evoking a multi-layered history of Hebrew cultural teachings about failed hospitality and vindication. Jesus, himself imbedded in this faith community and culture, simultaneously accepts enduring aspects of these shared teachings while deconstructing and reconstructing them. In his signature hermeneutical move, he transforms traditional violent imagery of God to an embodiment of God who suffers with us in the body and teaches us to live non-violently. This is the risky path of divine hospitality.

The gospel story comes to a close with the Lukan Jesus telling his disciples to focus forward on following God and not to look back at their old ways. "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."[100] In Chapter 17, after telling them that they will look for him and not see him,[101] he returns to this theme. In yet another Hebrew scriptural echo, he evokes the strange image of Lot's wife, looking back and turning into a pillar of salt.[102] This is a difficult path, even for Jesus. He has set his mind to Jerusalem, to walk a path of nonviolence, to receive humanity's worst acts of injustice, and through this journey to show humanity the way of redemption. Once he has set his course, he needs complete focus. Peter struggles with this counterintuitive nonviolent unsatisfying unvindictive *way* of redemption, a *way* of relinquishment rather than "seeing and taking,"[103] a *way* where the meek inherit the new earth. When Peter tries to argue Jesus out of this, Jesus says: "Get behind me Satan."[104] Jesus visibly struggles in the garden and asks God to "remove this cup from me." He surrenders saying: "yet, not my will but yours be done."[105] An endless array of temptations could cause one to look back, so many comforts, so many easier ways to live a life. Once he sets his course, a course of nonviolence with all its beauty and all it consequences, Jesus insists on complete focus.

The Day of Judgment: Clearing Away Unfruitful Deployments of Original Power

On the journey toward the passion, the Lukan Jesus begins to speak directly about divine judgment.[106] He launches into a long discussion about what is temporary and what is permanent, about what will fall away and what will travel into eternity.[107] He reiterates the devastating consequences of immature and abusive ways of deploying power. We are not to be deceived by flashy displays. We are to keep following Jesus along the path of nonviolence. In the process we will witness horrors and we will experience suffering. The managers of death-dealing systems will not relinquish their hold easily. But they will be exorcized.[108] All these great buildings, all these stunningly extravagant gifts of the rich, all these distractingly large empires will pass away into oblivion. And those who are persecuted yet remain loyal to the most vulnerable will endure through all time. "[N]ot a hair on your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."[109] Jesus adds that these trials will provide the opportunity for us to stand, like the recalcitrant investor,[110] and speak the truth.

Middle agents struggle to comprehend what gives death and what gives life because of our unique position in imperial regimes. We get enough from sick systems that we can be fooled into judging them fruitful, casually dismissing the unspeakable costs that others bear. From our carefully curated epistemological bubble[111] we are shielded from the massive suffering our system is visiting upon the majority of our sisters and brothers. Our erroneous assessments lead us to cling to collapsing structures. The Lukan Jesus tries to get the message through thick middle agent heads that we are clinging to what is passing away, and we are missing the emergent truth that will endure. We are like our ancient ancestors who were mesmerized by the great cedars of Lebanon and the Assyrian war machine, and were shocked by prophecies that they would fall.[112] We are like our first century forebears who thought the temple was too big to fail. Today too we cling to our political, corporate, and religious institutions, and fail to graft our lives to the living body of Christ. Because

of our attachment to imperial comforts, it has to get really bad for us to wake up. We are like the late figs in the book of Revelation, committed to fruitless pursuits, refusing to be shaken loose by the cries of humanity, animals and the earth. We must be blown into our salvation by a winter gale.[113]

Luke wants protected middle agents to grasp how uncomfortable and distressing this time will be for us. After laying the situation out plainly, he goes on for another six verses describing the horrors.[114] He knows we will not make it through with a superficial commitment. We need to be prepared. We need to have the kind of total life conversion that establishes our loyalty in the deepest part of our being, because every effort will be made to dissuade us. The Domination System will offer us shiny things, it will shake us hard, it may even threaten our lives, in order to convince us to leave the path of the gospel and return to its imperial fold.[115] Like director Sofia Coppola, Luke lets the camera linger at the scene of devastation. We sit there a painfully long time, letting the reality sink in, witnessing as our thoughts drop through layer after layer of depth.[116]

When he is done allowing the extremity of suffering to penetrate our resistant consciousness, Luke lifts our eyes, guiding us toward divine redemption on the other side of struggle. The signs of collapse[117] are like the early leaves sprouting on a fig tree. They signal that summer is drawing near.[118] Jesus pleads with us to be careful not to cling to the things that are collapsing, and instead to place our lives on a path that will endure. The Lukan Jesus also reminds middle agents not to numb out. We are not to get drunk, worry, engage in crazed consumerism or indulge other distractions from the hard path of redemption.[119]

God's judgment may arrive in the large and dramatic way that is expressed in the Book of Revelation, including reconciliation with our good shepherd, the human one who taught us the way of nonviolence, the lamb who was sacrificed to the Domination System, resurrected, ascended and returns to our earth made new. If this is to happen, no one among us knows the full reality that these metaphors point toward, and no one knows the time of their fulfillment.[120] In the meantime,

God's judgment comes to us in smaller ways. Theologian Ivonne Gebara talks about "successive salvations."[121] I would suggest that we also have successive apocalypses. Dimensions of our personal lives, our communities, and our society become so disconnected from the heart of Original Power that they collapse and fall away. Jesus says "I am the vine and you are the branches."[122] In these times of judgment, whole branches of our existence, rotten and dead due to their separation from God's love, are washed away.[123]

Sometimes this judgment is shockingly fast. Other times it is too slow for our tastes. Unfruitful deployments of divine power are allowed to grow to terrifying scales, causing extreme suffering. Jesus knows that if our soul is at all alive, we are witnessing and experiencing the tragedy of the human condition and that sometimes we get into a rage and want to do something about it.[124] So he tells a story. He tells us to think of evil, the sickness and destructive systems that invade our lives, as weeds that the enemy planted in the fruitful field of creation. Then he says, don't try to figure out what is good or bad. Rather allow the good and evil to grow up together. Evil, i.e. instruments for deploying power that have lost contact with their loving Source, will be judged and removed by God in God's time.[125]

In seeming contradiction, Jesus displays artful precision at plucking weeds without destroying the good growth. He walks the earth as a physician, who can see the sickness lurking in a child of God and separate the two perfectly, banishing the sickness and rescuing the precious human life.[126] So too he knows how to take the scalpel to his religious tradition, removing the rot and rescuing its soul. More often than not, we have failed to comprehend such nuances. We have not been able to distinguish between wheat and tares, between children of God and the unproductive instruments for deploying power which we create and in which we find ourselves trapped. In our often sincere efforts to eradicate evil, we have caused great harm, tearing up the good with the bad.

So should we try to pluck out evil? Perhaps, it is like brain surgery. It is possible for a human being to do it, but not advised that we all jump in and give it a go. While we may study Jesus and modern masters who demonstrate the fruit of healing, and hone our own sensitivity, maturity and skills over the course of our lifetimes, we are advised to proceed with caution and humility. There are times when we must make judgments in our lives. As grownup Christians, we have a responsibility to read the culture and make difficult, often counter-cultural, choices. Still, we are encouraged to live with a light hand, knowing our understanding is partial, saving the ultimate separation of truth and falsehood for God who alone is able.[127] In the meantime, we focus on the task we have been given, rooting our lives in the Source of life and proclaiming the good news of God's liberation. By this we lend our lives to feeding the good growth.

Jesus describes the day of judgment as one in which sheep will be separated from goats.[128] He suggests that the ones that he will recognize – the ones deemed to be in his flock – are the ones who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit people in prison. The ones who are saved do not belong to one ethnic group, one religious system, or one social class. Members of this flock can be found in every part of the social fabric of human existence. Some express Christ-like commitment directly on the streets. Others express Christ-like commitment in institutions by advocacy and shaping policy that prioritize the concerns of the most vulnerable in our world. Wherever we find ourselves, salvation comes through a life orientation to the concerns of the most vulnerable. In this teaching, Jesus invites us to open ourselves to the intersubjectivity of all life and respond to our growing awareness by relating lovingly and justly with everyone we encounter.

While following this way, struggling people of faith have encountered such immense opposition that trusting in God's providence can be extremely difficult. In these times, we have been encouraged by the larger apocalyptic story of a just, covenantal, and grace-filled God whose purposes will not be thwarted. While living out a gospel ethic, we wait for God's judgment to run its

course, knowing that creatures and co-creations that are linked to the living God can never be eradicated and structures that have grown disconnected from God cannot stand.[129] The walled off kingdoms of our lives and our world and all their defended accumulations will be burned up in the furnace of Love like dry grass.[130] Great human institutions, artistic works, and creations of all scales and times, co-created in love, infused with the Holy Spirit, and humbly directed toward the project of total liberation will last into eternity.[131] All will be judged by its fruits.

God Emergent

As our biblical theology of power reaches its conclusion, we have one remaining task. The rest of this chapter articulates a world-affirming apocalyptic eschatology for our present context. This eschatological narration seeks both heft (that is, to seriously address the evil that is steeped into our persons and our social realities) and breadth (to include the diversity and range of holy newness that is emerging globally). Here we find a tender natality[132] that is often unseen, especially by those exposing themselves largely to the narrations of the falling powers. Still, an unstoppable always-being-born encompasses the story of death.[133] Through grace, the world continues to be tipped in favor of the undeserved gift.[134] Once we have eyes to see God's "plan for creation"[135] and our power (and thus responsibility) within this loving project of creational thriving,[136] we are invited to participate. Thus comes the call[137] to serve as witnesses through our thinking and our bodies – through the shape of our lives, communities, and societies – to the realm of God's love fulfilled on earth.[138]

All Creation is Being Born

Like the first disciples, we are living through the collapse associated with our parasitic age – a no longer sustainable situation where a tiny minority lives freely off the many. Although the dynamics of inequality have persisted for millennia on smaller scales, they are now approaching a

global crescendo. Even as the Domination System threatens to overtake us, it is breaking apart at the seams. Within this failure of corrupt structures comes the enduring opportunity for transformation.[139]

Jesus is aware that it is stressful for his followers to witness the collapse of the authorities they once trusted. In first century Galilee, the collapsing social system, which was violently flailing about in an effort to regain control, was centered in the temple.[140] Today it is centered in the banking and oil industries, in global political and religious structures, and in the economies and militaries of the developed world. Then and now, unfruitful deployments of power are failing.

The human soul, individually and collectively, can only be suppressed for so long. Christ, enfleshed in marginalized majorities around the world, is the Marcan strong man who can be bound no longer.[141] Our innate image of God – our intrinsic dignity – will come out with force if that is the only route available.[142] So too, God's creation will not be reduced to a controllable commodity, a resource to be consumed and wasted. Through climate disruption, the earth itself is breaking free of the shackles and abuse of the industrialized world. Its true nature will pour over our boundaries, crash through our barriers and rattle humanity from the core of Being itself, demanding to be recognized. Paul teaches that the principalities and powers are subject to God's dominion, and that they will only be allowed temporary reign, and that this messy creational emergence[143] is a sign of God's plan of liberation coming to fruition:

> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.[144]

Scripture assures us that in personal and collective times of falling apart, God is particularly present. God loves to bring life into the barren places that we have deemed hopeless. Consider God promising Sarah a child in her nineties,[145] Isaiah's springs miraculously appearing in the desert,[146]

Ezekiel's dry bones coming to life,[147] or a young struggling peasant teenage girl trying to survive in a violent empire being visited by the angel Gabriel.[148] God has a special love for the utterly abandoned. In death there is life. In loss there is gain. In the ending of old structures, new structures are emerging. In the collapse of old creations, come the signs of new creations, sometimes arriving dramatically, sometimes slipping in quietly and almost unnoticed.

The love of God that is birthing the world and shaping our lives has earth-shaking power. The ancients described it this way.

> The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.
> The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
> The voice of the LORD causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, "Glory!"[149]

Jesus talks about a Spirit that blows through the world. We don't know where it comes from. We don't know where it goes.[150] Yet it is the source of all life.

None of us is exempt from the experience of unsettling rebirth with its loss and change. Those of us with resources to manage our environment are able to implement strategies to numb the collective discomfort of transformation, to assign our share of the pain to others, or to hold our comprehension of the shifts happening around us at bay for a short while.[151] This avoidance means we risk missing the new little shoots that are growing up. When we try to escape difficult truths, experiences and feelings, we risk missing new opportunities God is opening up for us. We risk missing God's creative work in the details of our lives. We also risk being unprepared for the changes which will inevitably come to our lives.

God's spirit has been birthing us since long before our memory starts, is birthing us right now – taking our hands and leading us from where we were to where we are going – and will birth all of us across the great mystery of death as we continue our eternal lives.[152] On this journey of embodying Original Power we are born again and again and again. Perhaps we think we are too old.

Nicodemus tried to get away with that.[153] Communities and societies are also being born again and again.

Living in a constant state of birthing can be disorienting. At varying points, we may lose sight of our identity and purpose.[154] This is where we turn to our faith, which promises us that our lives have integrity and coherence. We are not changing randomly. Through engagement with the changing circumstances of our lives, we are becoming more and more fully who God created us to be. Our faith, especially in times of disintegration, makes us whole.

At all scales, creation is moving forward.[155] There is a momentum that pries us from what is dying and washes us up into the wave of what is living. In the midst of intense personal, social and environmental change, Jesus invites us to embrace the change. Do not cling to what is passing away.[156] He loves us and does not want us to increase our suffering by holding onto things that will not last.[157] While being birthed, we suffer less when we look toward where we are going, noticing and even delighting in the newness that is emerging. Opening ourselves to Love's journey, we can become more at ease, allowing God to lead us into greater states of being. Could we have imagined our current life while gestating in the womb? No more can we imagine where we are going now.

We are Midwives of the New Creation

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks about how God's plan since the beginning of creation is getting revealed to tiny Christian communities – little house churches.[158] This must have sounded as crazy to his contemporaries as it does to us. How could these messy little communities, full of human struggles, making mistakes all the time, be the places that the almighty God chooses to reveal the divine master plan? Paul loves to point out that God chooses to work with smallness and weakness in the world. God doesn't go directly to the emperor. God would rather live in an animal stall. So, God calls upon our little communities to show the earthly powers the truth of love. God

pours divine light into ordinary people and allows us to participate in transformation of the world. Can we accept this? Can we set our assumptions aside, and let God show us something new? Can we allow ourselves to be drawn into the wonder of the unfolding plan of the universe?

Embodied Witness

So far, we have leaned on Letty Russell, along with other theologians and biblical scholars, to help us develop a liberationist eschatology of power for middle agents. Claiming that God's plan is coming to fruition through the body of creation, we now integrate the practice of eschatology. What does it mean to live eschatologically? What does it mean to embody the kingdom of God on earth? What effect does our embodied witness have on communities and societies?

Here we turn to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We do so for several reasons: 1) His thought (theology and ethics) and action (at communal and societal levels) are profoundly integrated;[159] 2) Like the scholars cited above, he centers his liberative practice in the eschatology of the kingdom (which he most often calls "The Beloved Community"); and 3) The theological robustness that underlies his equally robust social action offers full-bodied guidance for socially-engaged Christian middle agents (and a helpful counterpoint to secular forms of thought/social action).

Dr. King[160] does not stay confined to working out his theological orientation to the kingdom of God.[161] As a midwife of new creation, he seeks with all his life's energy to bring forth a healed and transformed humanity.

> Let us be dissatisfied until rat-infested, vermin-filled slums will be a thing of a dark past and every family will have a decent sanitary house in which to live. Let us be dissatisfied until the empty stomachs of Mississippi are filled and the idle industries of Appalachia are revitalized. . . . Let us be dissatisfied until our [sisters and] brothers of the Third World of Asia, Africa and Latin America will no longer be the victims of imperialist exploitation, but will be lifted from the long night of poverty, illiteracy and disease.[162]

He gets down in the trenches and specifies a variety of economic programs, including "the creation of jobs by government and the institution of a guaranteed annual minimal income."[163] For King, a new consciousness is not enough. Personal and social struggle flow from our epiphanies.

Looking through the eyes of King and Rauschenbusch, we see the society-altering spirit of evangelism greatly diminished. Imperial amnesia leads some evangelicals to forget the world-altering nature of the good news of Jesus Christ. A message about the collapse of oppressive systems[164] and the release of marginalized majorities and creation itself from captivity to the Domination System gets reduced to approaching strangers and pressuring them to conform. At the same time, in Orwellian fashion, the good news gets expertly reversed, providing an ideological basis for powerful political lobbying groups to enrich themselves and place us in a permanent state of war.[165]

Witnessing is a struggle. And it is dangerous.[166] There are major forces in the world that are not happy with the good news.[167] Remember when the magi from the East observed the good news in the stars they were led on risky journey that led directly into the lair of Herod. Realizing they had invoked a destructive power, an imperialist willing to murder a generation of baby boys, they slipped away by another road.[168] So too, the baby Jesus grown into a man, slips away from the authorities many times before he stands his trial.

As witnesses, midwives watching and supporting the emergence a new creation into being, we are misfits. John wanders out of the wilderness, an odd character on the fringes of society. Dr. King knew that his take on the world chaffed against the status quo. And so too the status quo caused him pain. The restrictions and divisions that most took for granted were unbearable to him. This "maladjustment"[169] to the injustices of society led him to his comprehensive and compassionate vision – a "vision of total relatedness."[170] Our great teachers, the ones who saw the new creation and struggled to embody it personally and socially, were naturally frustrated. And yet they managed to transform their frustration, like the ancient prophets, into creativity, humor, and mind altering public displays. When Bull Connor violently turned fire hoses on peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. King interpreted it this way:

> Bull Connor next would say, "Turn the fire hoses on." And as I said to you the other night, Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the transphysics

> that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out. And we went before the fire hoses; we had known water. If we were Baptist or some other denominations, we had been immersed. If we were Methodist, and some others, we had been sprinkled, but we knew water. That couldn't stop us.
>
> And we just went on before the dogs and we would look at them; and we'd go on before the water hoses and we would look at it, and we'd just go on singing "Over my head I see freedom in the air." And then we would be thrown in the paddy wagons, and sometimes we were stacked in there like sardines in a can. And they would throw us in, and old Bull would say, "Take 'em off," and they did; and we would just go in the paddy wagon singing, "We Shall Overcome." And every now and then we'd get in jail, and we'd see the jailers looking through the windows being moved by our prayers, and being moved by our words and our songs. And there was a power there which Bull Connor couldn't adjust to; and so we ended up transforming Bull into a steer, and we won our struggle in Birmingham. Now we've got to go on in Memphis just like that.[171]

Lauren Winner says that with these words, King "converted an attack on the reign of God into a sacrament."[172]

Humble Witnesses to the Miracle of Living Power Being Born

As we struggle and disrupt the Domination System together, embodying the principles of nonviolence, we encounter the holy power that Jesus revealed and King discovered. Touching the tender indestructible power that generates our universe, a power that is so much greater than our fragile human egos, leads us to genuine humility.[173]

Remember when the seventy disciples came back to Jesus all fired up? *Jesus, you won't believe it! People listened, demons were cast out, and we witnessed God's healing power! I wish you were there! You should have seen it!*[174]

> He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.[175] See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."[176]

Jesus expresses the links between witness, struggle, humility, healing, exorcism, and the birthing of new life. So when the seventy come back so excited to Jesus, he says, be careful. Do not get arrogant. It is a wonderful feeling to experience healing power. But don't lose sight of the source of that power. Walk carefully, remembering always our gracious loving God and God's love for

every human being, and you will not get lost. With this he pushes them back out into the world. Go all over the countryside and keep on spreading the good news. And when you witness acts of God's power, simply rejoice that you are living in the freedom and joy of your Creator, and that you are a citizen of heaven.

Authentic witness increases our channeling of divine power. As a human being, John the Baptist faces the temptation to grasp, idolize or "own" this holy gift. Yet he proves himself incorruptible. Everyone recognizes John's innate power. He is growing a devoted grassroots following – enough to draw the attention of the political powers. Even Herod worries that he has stumbled across something real – more real than his own ill-gotten power and privilege.[177] John could easily drift along with this tide of public opinion and its benefits. He could grab the power being offered to him. Yet, he does not give in to delusions of grandeur. He doesn't pose as being all knowing or all-powerful. He never pretends to be more than he actually is. He takes the scope of power and calling that are genuinely his. He proclaims the special truth he has been given and prepares the way for the one to follow. He knows who he is and who Jesus is.

King too faces the temptations of human power that come with being at the center of a movement. He knows he needs a spiritual discipline of nurturing humility, so that he will not become lost. Early on in his ministry, he can glimpse the burgeoning movement and his role in it, leading him to pray these words:

> O God, help me to see myself in my true perspective. Help me, O God, to see that I'm just a symbol of a movement. Help me to see that I'm the victim of what the Germans call a Zeitgeist and that something was getting ready to happen in history; history was ready for it. And that a boycott would have taken place in Montgomery, Alabama, if I had never come to Alabama. Help me to realize that I'm where I am because of the forces of history and because of the fifty thousand Negroes of Alabama who will never get their names in the papers and in the headline. O God, help me to see that where I stand today, I stand because others helped me to stand there and because the forces of history projected me there. And this moment would have come in history even if M. L. King had never been born.[178]

So, as we support the distractingly wondrous emergence of new creation, we acknowledge that suffering, change, and humility are integral to our witness. As we struggle, we remember that we are embraced in graceful forces immeasurably larger than our capacity to comprehend.

Proclaiming the New Creation

First we come and see. Then we go and tell. Like Ezekiel preaching flesh onto dry dead bones,[179] there is a creative power in the spoken word. Words open our imaginations and invoke whole new realities. We crack apart the imperial narratives of competition and scarcity and speak new worlds of global abundance and thriving into being. Portier-Young points out how words reframe circumstances and "enable[e] others to see."[180] There is an effect when we name and describe the social order that God is bringing about – when we express that another world is possible. We both invoke the presence of the living God and open a path.[181]

King is an evangelist – an evangelical – in the truest biblical sense of the word. He has seen something beautiful and powerful and liberating about God's truth and he can't keep quiet about it. He has to share the dream he has seen, good news for all people. He has seen new realities God is bringing into view and he is standing out in front acting as an announcer, preparing the way. As he approaches the end of his too short life, Dr. King is granted a particular vision. Like Moses, he is taken to the mountaintop. He looks over into the promised land.[182] Like John the Baptist, he invites us to come and see what he sees. When we understand the Realm of God – the Beloved Community – in the depths of our bones, we are to go out and testify to its truth.

Each person has a special view of the truth, a perspective that is unique to our time, to our place, to our body, to our life circumstances – unique to the unseen trajectory of our soul. We do not have the whole truth, just some part of it, a piece of the puzzle. That is what it means for us to be evangelists – to speak from our location and share the good news. Not out of obligation. Not

because we are strong-armed. We do this because our hearts are overflowing – because our hearts and minds and bodies are transformed by liberating truth and we can no longer hold it in.

Evangelists as Midwives

In the drama of the falling powers, we can miss that eschatology is a tender emergent thing. We miss that new creation comes in a quiet touch in the struggling crowds.[183] We miss that the new creation comes in a smile, or a hug and a meal for a hungry child, or in a song or a joke. We imagine grand triumph and get peaceful transformation. We imagine judgment and criticism and we get unexpected kindness. There is something gentle about this emerging reality, this realm of God. A quiet sweetness is poking its head through our raging fears. Gandhi noticed this:

> If you want to feel the aroma of Christianity, you must copy the rose. The rose irresistibly draws people to itself, and the scent remains with them. Even so, the aroma of Christianity is subtler even than that of the rose and should, therefore, be imparted in an even quieter and more imperceptible manner, if possible.[184]

Through our baptism, we commit to serving as caretakers of this tender holy emergence. We say yes. We want to join Christ and participate in God's eternal re-creation of the world. We start dancing with others who are changing, growing, and engaging. We become midwives, seeing love being born into the people, communities, neighborhoods and organizations around us. We assist with the birthing process in every way we can, witnessing the fresh wonders of our Creator, and nurturing life in its many and varied forms.

Eschatological Community as Space for Divine Emergence

We have discussed the way that imperial structures actively control and squeeze out imaginative, creative, collaborative, and potentially rebellious spaces in the individual minds and practical lives of the people they wish to dominate.[185] The Domination System wants us to be the human equivalent of commodified corn with all our differences erased. This way, like heavily processed corn, we become measurable and interchangeable. The goal is to make us into reliable and

predictable workers, tax-payers, and (in modern society) consumers. To resist this overwhelming pressure to conform, and serve as witnesses and midwives, we need the support of eschatological communities. Eschatological communities "challeng[e] the dominant group in which [they] are embedded"[186] by carving out "safe space for differences."[187] They provide an environment[188] where we can resist "regimes of thought" and "dominant discourses"[189] and find our own personal and collective identities.[190]

Scripture, from Leviticus to the gospels to the Acts and the Pauline letters,[191] guides us in creating eschatological communities – collective spaces through which the newness of God can emerge. Jesus, Paul, and early Christians carefully shape and sustain alternative spaces in the interstices of occupation, spaces where liberating theological narratives[192] and practical experiments in hospitality can grow and thrive.[193] These communities shake off the stratified systems of domination and submission and replace them with a commitment to equality, justice, love and shared responsibility, regardless of social status.[194] In these spaces, those at the bottom of hegemonic social systems can be "self-defining, even at a reduced capacity" and "agents of their own history" who are "capable of imagining and working toward an alternative system."[195]

These communities are eschatological because: 1) they are practicing the healed relationships of a redeemed and fulfilled creation,[196] and 2) they are committed to allowing the newness of God to emerge in their presence. That is, they are prepared to receive the unexpected.[197] So they are both a glimpse of the new creation, and the vehicle through which divine redemption manifests. Such eschatological communities – environments that struggle to generate an environment of shared power and positive net effects[198] – are instrumental in God's project of bringing about an end to this parasitic age. They seek to be instruments that fruitfully deploy Original Power. They also provide us with a grassroots safety net, providing needed support, including local economy, as our broken institutions fail.

Eschatological community requires constant effort toward the ethics of biblical hospitality (as outlined in the previous chapter) and thus is active, engaged, hard work. Where there is community, there is drama. There are conflicts. There are seemingly irreconcilable differences. There is constant negotiation. There are suppressed insights and feelings to be surfaced. There is compromise. There is the winding road of making meaningful shared life together. This is the calling of church.[199]

If we accept the magnitude of the role of our community-making in God's divine plan, then it becomes critical that we invest time in relationships, in how our communities are functioning, on hearing and understanding each other, and working carefully through difficulties. Through this shared struggle and collective witness,[200] we are becoming fit to fulfill our destiny, shaping our gathered communities into divine vessels of healing power in the world, sweet marginal spaces where God's creatures find safety and shelter.

Embodied Eschatology: Growing a Rich, Vital, and Global Web of Communities

New life emerges out of death. This is the essence of creation's story. New habitats grow in the underbrush of a forest fire. As we see our systems collapsing, where can we find these signs of the new? If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, we find signs everywhere, though not on the evening broadcast or Google news. The corporate media machine exists to dull our senses to the freely emergent nature of life. It drones on. All the while, a new social and economic infrastructure is growing in the underbrush. More and more we are catching glimpses of an emergent global grassroots network of love – tastes of God's salvation project, in which we get to share. This is the revelation of what Martin Luther King calls "the interrelated structure of reality" and "the beloved community."[201] The beloved community[202] is not something in another place and time. It is here and now, and it is made visible to us – the kingdom is here – when we shift our consciousness in the

present. It is this altered view that caused Jesus to relate to the world not as a bunch of problems, but as a great harvest short on laborers.[203]

All around me here in the City of Rochester, and in other post-industrial middle American cities, people are planting community gardens. People are organizing neighbors. People are redirecting previously wasted food back into food deserts. People are building new economic relationships through cooperatives, community-supported agriculture, local currencies, and timebanking.[204] These kindred cities, abandoned by their industrial base, are finding signs of new life. We are seeing unique opportunities in our urban cores, where a glut of boarded up homes and vacant lots are being repurposed into a new vision of garden city. There is a coalescing vision surfacing in marginal urban churches, surfacing in vibrant little churches in El Salvador, surfacing in women's groups in Kenya, surfacing wherever creative passionate people are creating new socio-economic infrastructure that supports and sustains loving community.[205] The more we catch this flow of the Spirit, the more we encounter friends who are being guided on the same journey of love, in our backyard and across the globe.

These emergent communities are deeply grounded in place, and relationally connected in meaningful ways with other grassroots communities who are deeply grounded in their places. We are witnessing a proliferation of small scale entities, rooted in human connection. Through these marginal churches and fertile communities, we are creating spaces to experiment, spaces where we are known, where we feel free to bring our gifts, talents, and new ideas. This is no return to the old days. It is a moving forward into an interdependent, meaningful global reality. I offer two key principles: 1) we focus locally and relationally,[206] prioritizing trust-building; and 2) we open our local communities to grassroots relationships globally, through one-to-one and community-to-community connections.

Through this emergence and convergence, we become the Pauline body of Christ.[207] We become a locally-rooted and globally-woven social fabric that transforms empires. This is not a works theology. We are humbled in the knowledge that bringing about the new creation belongs to the living God, which explains the robust support we feel when we lend our lives to this effort. We discover a network more powerful and mysterious than the internet – an internetwork of love – activated by our openness, our compassion, our joyful willingness to engage. We discover the Holy Spirit pouring life into our struggle and multiplying our humble efforts. Like swords turning into plowshares,[208] we find instruments that deployed power in destructive ways transformed into creative liberating, life sustaining structures and institutions. We rediscover Original Power, this embrace of light surrounding the world, surrounding, infusing, and animating everything we do.[209]

In this time, we are called to step into our God-given creative power and consciously shape our individual and collective patterns into life-giving communal and institutional forms.[210] God is inviting us to evolve our capacity to actively and nonviolently[211] embody the dangerously divine gift of power. We are being invited to come alive, to share, to create and to develop social instruments that unlock human potential and liberate creation.

Humanity cannot remain in an immature relationship to power indefinitely. We must grow out of our hierarchical, disconnected techniques for deploying power which exhaust, destroy, and bind. We must relinquish our selfish attraction to mechanisms of power that operate for the benefit of a few at the expense of most. It is time to practice mature, connected, relational, and distributed modes of deploying power. It is time to learn how live in creation in ways that enliven, build, create, and liberate. Interestingly, outside the purview of the elite of the world, struggling people have been evolving such mature mechanisms.[212] Globalization is bringing these innovations into view. As the world shifts, middle agents are faced with serious choices about where to place our trust and allegiance. Will we throw our lives in with the elite as they continue to consolidate power and

generate hegemony or will we throw our lives in with the people of the earth who are learning to share power, and engage in hospitality and mutuality?[213]

As our lives catch fire with the Spirit, our patterns change. We experience surrender, repentance, conversion. We are no longer willing to harm. We ally ourselves with others who are coming alive. We live with a light hand, enjoying, creating, not grasping, ever aware of the deep "annihilating"[214] mystery. We observe false powers falling away again and again. And we encounter people, places and, yes, institutions, on this blue-green earth that are light-filled, resonating, vibrating, alive with God. We find our lives enmeshed in a community of communities,[215] broken vessels filled with light, rooted in the oneness of all being, flowing from a holy mystery that we can never apprehend. We simply honor our Source through our love and concern for the well-being of all that God loves, which is all. In this emergent new creation, we find many overlapping banquets, banquets within banquets, all occurring within the all-inclusive banquet of banquets, the cosmic celebration of our Creator.

God's Dream for the World

We now close this chapter on eschatology, with an exploration of God's dream for our world.[216] We know that God's thoughts are not our thoughts.[217] And yet we also know that God has thoughts only for our well-being.[218] And so, as absurd and impossible as it may be, we stretch ourselves to imagine the world from God's divine heart. With Letty Russell, we "think from the other end"[219] considering the cosmological frame that shapes our ethics and our lives. What are God's hopes for our world?

We have recently learned that the universe is expanding at an accelerating pace rather than a decelerating pace.[220] Everything is moving on a trajectory from density to spaciousness between all things at all scales. This discovery resonates with the insights of process theologians who see life as

an endless unfolding. As we close our theo-ethical sketch of power, we affirm this view. Original Power is not a finite commodity. It is an endless flow of energy pouring into the created order, fueling ever new co-creations. Original Power is the unmatchable gift,[221] temporarily bound up in harmful and unproductive imperial instruments (due to the erroneous endeavors of a small immature and overpowered slice of the human race), yet irrepressibly bubbling up from the grassroots and tipping the creation toward newness and life.

Though biblically we find no end point to creation, we do find movement from one state of being (old creation) to a new state of being (new creation). This transfiguration is experienced through the maturing of Original Power in humanity as manifest in Jesus Christ. We are born again, beginning life again with Christ as mature sisters and brothers. This is the point where we stop destroying each other and start having fun. Once we get past our toddler-level management of power, and become new creations in Christ, we can get rolling creatively with God.[222] We've not yet begun to engage the depth, beauty, potential, and abundance of the world around us. We are still gestating and struggling – rejecting and rebelling. We have merely glimpsed paths that would allow us to embody and employ divine power in community-positive and creation-positive ways.

Central to God's dream of a healed, whole, and mature creation is a diversity of creatures, cohabitating, with an end to all predation.

> The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.[223]

There is no bullying. The nations study war no more. We live in an embodied world of hospitality and shared power. All express their wildly varied natures in safety. There is no more harm in all of God's holy domain – which is all that is.

It can be hard to carry this dream in our war-sick world, as we face the hopelessness of poverty and navigate urban streets and suburban schools, malls and theatres terrorized by armed children. The scriptures describe how this change occurs. It does not come through master plans. It comes through changes of heart. There is not good power and bad power. There is one power, freely deployed, which has God intelligence in it, and so even when deployed badly it responds to truth, beauty, and life. Plant a garden on a vacant lot in a struggling part of the city, and you will believe this. A tiny patch of sweetness draws crowds, especially children. As life and joy open into our places of despair, we are transformed. The implements of war are converted into the means of tilling soil and making food.

The Hebrew word for conversion or repentance is *shuv*. It conveys the sense of a school of fish changing direction. Imagine the whole systems, in the blink of an eye, waking up and changing direction. Imagine the energy and power of our military-industrial complex being redirected to life and peace – to repairing homes and roads, to cleaning our industrial disasters, to designing and implementing sustainable technologies, to addressing the emergencies of child hunger and medical needs in the world. *Shuv*. Imagine gangs here in Rochester, NY opening their hearts and changing course, dropping their weapons and creatively using their power, their entrepreneurial and organizing skills, and prodigious energies to visualize and build an array of local economies that include all our communities and neighborhoods, embodying a grassroots Rochester reality where every person and living thing can thrive. Imagine our teenagers linking hundreds and hundreds of vacant lots, filling them with food and art and fun, building wind and solar facilities, and turning mid-American cities into overflowing garden paradises. *Shuv. Why not?* asks God. *Is there anything too wonderful for me?*[224]

Joanna Macy calls this shift in consciousness "The Great Turning":

> Although it doesn't feature in the day's headlines or evening news, a silent revolution is occurring, bringing unparalleled changes in the ways we see and think and relate. I imagine that future

> generations will look back on this period and call it the time of the 'Great Turning.' It is the epochal shift from a self-destructive industrial growth society to a life-sustaining society.[225]

According to Macy, there are three things needed as we engage the Great Turning: 1) Holding actions in defense of life on earth. That is, we need to protect creation. 2) Understanding current structures (how they liberate and oppress us) and creating alternative structures. 3) A shift in consciousness that awakens our inner mystic, allowing us to see and know the truth of our interconnectedness and interdependence. In Christian language, this means awakening our perception until we know that the kingdom of God truly is here. What Macy calls the "Great Turning" Christians call the passing away of the old earth and the birthing of the new earth.[226]

In her concept of "Great Turning" Macy is on to something, that, in our biblical faith, we might modify a bit. We would say that this great change is not confined to our time. We are part of a millennias long history. This is the story of Genesis. This is the story of the Exodus and the exile. This is the story of the manger, and the crowds in Galilee, and the cross. This is the story of the Pauline communities, and small communities through the ages. This is the journey of our own eternal souls and the journey of creation itself.

Living always in the midst of this transformation, we align our lives with what God is creating for and with us. We redirect our power to shape a world where animals are loved and cared for, the earth is respected, and children are safe. We co-create environments to grow our gifts, manifest our potential, and enjoy the fruits of creation. We become vessels of light pouring into the small places. Little by little every atom of everything gets plugged into a larger frame of unity that holds all duality. Isn't this the meaning of liberation? to be healed of the experience of separation from the abundant source of life?

And so, in God's dream, we struggle, learn, grow and mature into master gardeners of power. A force of wholeness presses through us until it wears down all hardness, connects all disconnectedness, evaporates all destructive deployments of power, and brings justice.[227] The

Domination System, with its concepts of patronage and property, falls away. The dividing wall of hostility is gone.[228] All chasms are bridged.[229] Hospitality replaces hegemony.[230] None are hungry.[231] All have what they need.[232] Everything is shared in common.[233]

Amidst the ever unfolding newness, we experience restoration. Hurts are healed, relationships are repaired, and meaning is made of our lives.[234] Through Sabbath we live in right relationship with the land, animals, each other, and ourselves.[235] Fertility returns.[236] We learn that nothing was lost in our journey of separation.[237]

The shadowy veil over our existence that Paul describes[238] is riddled with light, shimmering with luminosity. We live in a world of creativity, energy,[239] aliveness, authenticity and freedom[240] where mature souls negotiate, dance and create with one another and God, always mindful of the well-being of our many-layered existence. We comprehend and care for the living boundaries which protect us as they allow life to move, flow, change, and thrive within them.

We find ourselves at the promised banquet among all the nations,[241] in the golden city of angels and saints, healed by the leaves of the tree of life,[242] all in all.[243] The gift of Original Power flows freely.[244] Wild primordial waters of annihilating love flow like a river through life, disrupting, refreshing, and enlivening everything they touch.[245] Jesus returns to us. God dwells fully in this blue-green earth world.[246] The Homemaker[247] comes home.

Imaginative, visionary God,

Help us to dream.

Dream a world of truth.

Weave a world of love.

Dream a world of joyful play.

Weave a world of curiosity and wonder.

Dream a world of healing and reconciliation.

Weave a world of quiet meditation and noisy celebration.

Dream a world of reverent dignity.

Weave a world of shouts and praise.

Dream a world where no one, no one lives outside the gate.

Where every last human being is in.

Weave a world of hope for every living thing.

Amen.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have sketched a theo-ethical narrative of power that is committed to liberation, rooted in the biblical text, and embodied in the social context. Biblical hospitality bridges the theological and ethical aspects of this study. The broad sweep of the story goes like this. Creation comes into being through God's lavish hospitality. God makes a home for human beings and shares power with us (Original Power). As humanity struggles with the challenge of living fruitfully with the gift of power, God specifies the broad norm of hospitality into specific laws and practices. Within the larger rubric of hospitality (and the even larger reality of love) an unfolding body of teachings develops, all for the sake of creational thriving.

After contemplating the nature of Creator and creation, we explored the question: how could a world of war and poverty – a world where a tiny majority lives in extreme hoarding while the majority lives in extreme deprivation – arise out of this good gift? We noticed that the seeds of our suffering were planted in the first act of commodification where, in our freedom, we tried to separate the gift from the Giver. In our original innocence and freedom, we stepped outside of our relationship with God and acted independently on our urge to possess. This led us down the road toward violence. With our teachings discarded and covenantal boundaries violated, we kept going. We created structures and institutions and formed alliances apart from God, aggregating the gift of power, and deploying it toward increasingly sophisticated acts of idolatry. We used our God-granted agency and freedom to contort creation (the earth, animals, human beings) into an endless array of commodities to be bought and sold, reducing the majority of the human race into objects who either labor on behalf of the rich or are expendable. We lost our way in the labyrinthine path of empires.

Our collective fears grew to demonic proportion. Consumption and war become our rulers. Soulless corporations gained protected status over children of God made in the image of God. We, psychologically and institutionally, become the helpless servants of our own imperial creations.

This long-evolving globally entangled web of broken relationships creates an ethical predicament for middle agents. What ethical guidance does scripture offer to those of us who are not among the eighty percent who earn less than ten dollars a day, and are not among the elite two percent who own more than half the world? What does the gospel say to those of us who (consciously or unconsciously) participate in moving the wealth of the world from the eighty percent to the two percent? How do we respond when we realize that our small lives are so inextricably dependent on systems of suffering? As we grow spiritually, and our capacity for love grows, how do we respond to our cultures' impacts on the lives of others we have not met yet still love, and on the life of the earth itself?

Entering this predicament, we wrestled with our epistemological bubble – the ways we are trained not to know. We explored the role of deceptive language in shaping the false worldviews of middle agents. And we felt the pain of knowing truth about the world. We looked into our reticence to disrupt the status quo, and how, in an effort to preserve our place in the present order, we may mistake God's life-giving inbreakings for violence.

In this work, I tested my theory that Luke has a particular interest in the middle agent slice of the power structure. Showing knowledge of middle agent habits of thought, Luke directly counters the idea that society can save the poor by pulling them "up" into the house of empire. In story after story, Jesus (in the face of widows and laborers) bangs persistently on the well-fortified doors of middle agents (in the face of judges and managers), calling them out of the house of empire and into the larger more vibrant banquet of God. The Lukan Jesus insists that the comfortable are not saving the poor, the poor are saving the comfortable.

After exploring the contours of the middle agent predicament and Jesus' response to middle agents, we turned to a story in the gospel of Mark. Exploring Jesus' encounter with the Syrophoenician woman as a quintessential example of biblical hospitality, we examined the personal and social power dynamics at work in their encounter. We mapped the way the woman and Jesus take turns, asserting and withdrawing their complex identities, skillfully bridging the chasm that divides them, and opening the way for healing. To Jesus' amazement, his partner is mature enough to negotiate broken societal relationships artfully, and to engage him with alert attention to the risk of violence and the potential for transformation.

With this in mind, we considered how biblical practices of hospitality offer practical methods to expose and renegotiate fixed patterns of power in relationships and social structures. When encounters of hospitality go well, aggregated power structures that are blocking the vitality of life are cleared away. New structures that support thriving emerge. Original Power flows freely into our lives, bringing healing and shalom.

In closing we turned from the ethical back to the theological. A narrative of power that originated in creation now finds its fulfillment in eschatology. We contemplated where this dynamic, complexifying creation is headed, seeking insight into the trajectory of the maturing of Original Power in humanity. Here we found a new creation ever being born – a banquet of creativity, a dance of shared power, where all is reconciled.

There are two primary offerings in this work. First, I have constructed a metanarrative of power. This is not THE metanarrative. It is a metanarrative. It is meant to generate thought and questioning about the life-destroying and life-enhancing theological stories that are shaping our lives. With it comes an invitation to consider its key elements – Original Power, living in a fruitful world, living in an intersubjective world, the first act of commodification/the imperial impulse,

scapegoating and spiraling violence, unleashing a morphing and dynamic demonic, increasing globalization/totalization of empire, the middle agent predicament, the epistemological bubble, the chasm, the stark choice before us between imperial allegiance and God allegiance (which master will we choose?), the poor saving the comfortable by calling us out of our separate enclaves, the complex identity of individuals/we are a collection of communities, risky hospitality as a method of negotiating constellations of power, grassroots communities as the key sites of God's inbreaking, an ethic of net effects as a generator of societal transformation, apocalypse as the story the suffering tell about the falling imperial powers, the calling to be mid-wives of new creation, and God's dream for a co-creative thriving world of shared power. My hope is that you will wrestle with these ideas, and, in so doing, surface and question the stories of power that are operating in your life.

Some questions have guided my work. Are my theology and ethics of power true to the arc of scripture? Are they true to Jesus' teaching and his particular hermeneutic? Are they accurate to our present situation? Does the larger theological story of God, creation, and eschatology I am proposing lend cohesion and support to my ethical proposals for managing power in our daily lives? In other words, does it work at different scales? Does this work leave us with concrete ways of bringing life to ourselves, our communities, our sisters and brothers around the world, and the earth as it sustains our existence? Lastly, and most significantly, does the work at all its levels honor the loving purposes of our God – our Beloved – the Giver of the gift of life?

Second, I have designed this theo-ethical narrative of power specifically for middle agents. I hope this opens new threads of dialogue in the fields of biblical and contextual theology about the unique role of middle agents in imperial structures, and the particular task of shaping liberation theology and ethics from this social location.

I hope this work serves to awaken middle agent people of faith (who often lean toward passivity) from the hypnotic dream of inevitability and powerlessness. For those middle agents with

self-sacrificial activist sensibilities, I hope this story of power encourages and strengthens you, reminding you that you are a small (and significant) part of a great trajectory of goodness, justice, and joy. What we see is tiny compared to the unseen realms supporting us. For all of us, I hope this work nudges us to more deeply commit our lives to the ancient and eternal promise of liberation for all.

Every morning, Jesus sends us out into the imperial world like sheep in the midst of wolves.[1] His first century advice still rings true. Be wise as serpents. Have some healthy suspicion. Analyze the operation of power around you. Does it kill? Does it bring life? Try to understand the imperial air that you live and breathe. Be alert to its insidious methods of control. Contend with your own colonized mind.

And be innocent as doves. Dance across chasms with your innocence and your compassion. Allow your heart to be affected by the pain and joy of knowing your sisters and brothers. Allow your form of engagement to be utterly yours. Allow it to be soulful – and beautiful – and fun. Be alert to the holy newness that is pouring forth. Be ready to be surprised by Original Power.

Even Jesus, worn weary in his struggle for liberation, found himself surprised when an interloping Gentile woman knocked on his door and wisely conceded her status – losing her life to gain it – trading in her class privilege for a greater power – the power of justice, truth and compassion that governs all creation, even empires.

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FIGURES

Figure 1: Interpretive Approach: Multiple Contextual Referents

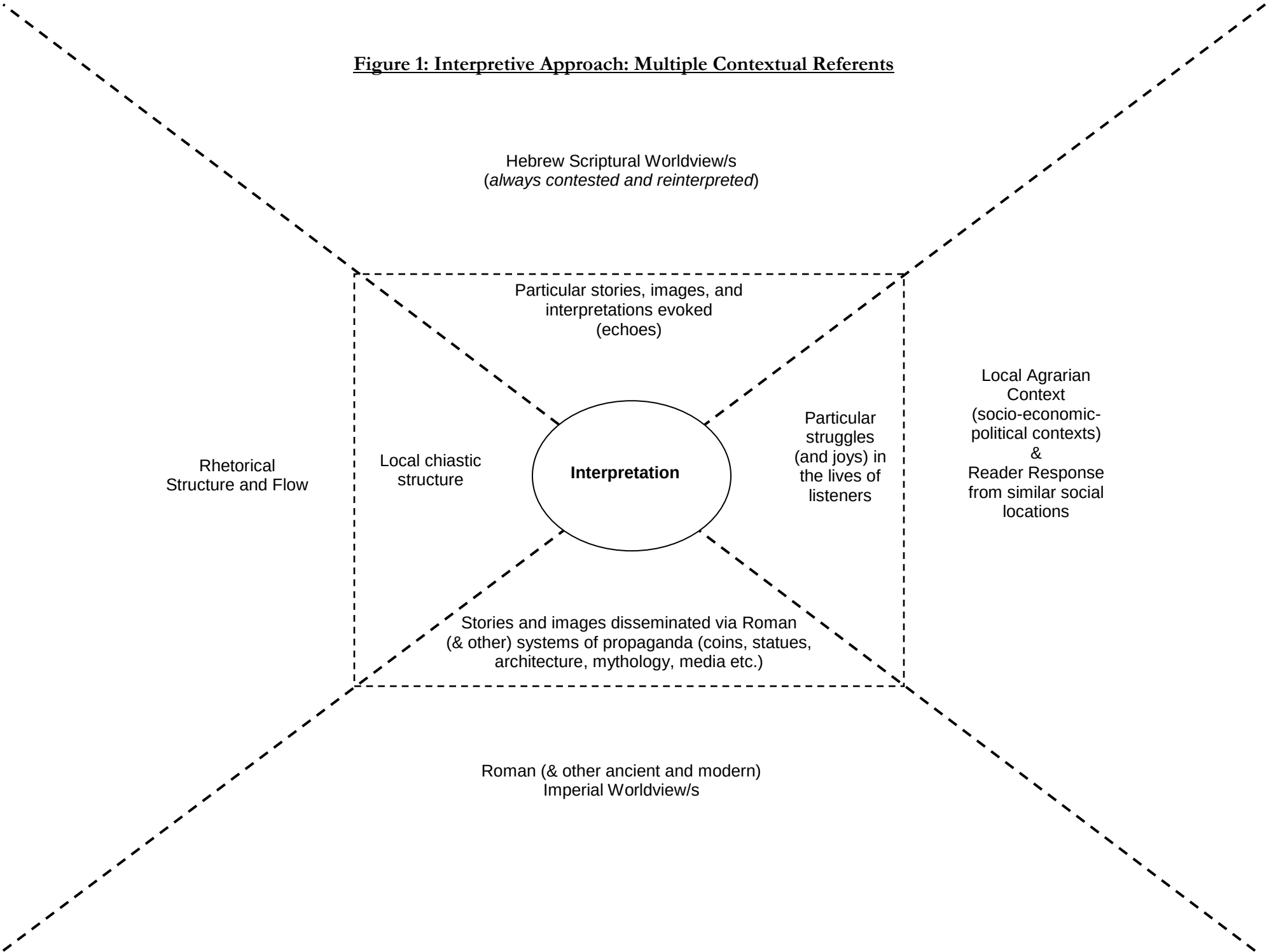

Figure 2: God's Gracious Gift of Power Animates Creation

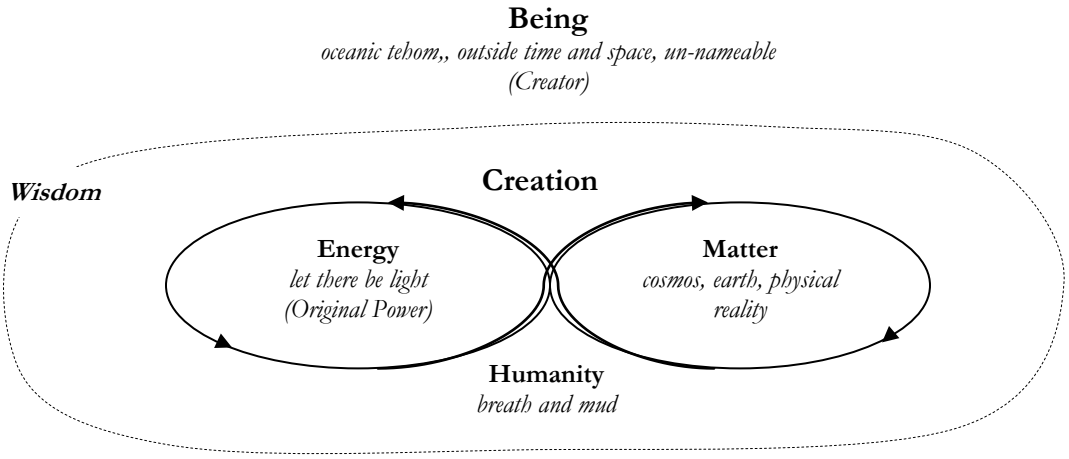

Figure 3: God's Gift of Boundary Protects the Integrity of Creation[1] and Mediates Relationship

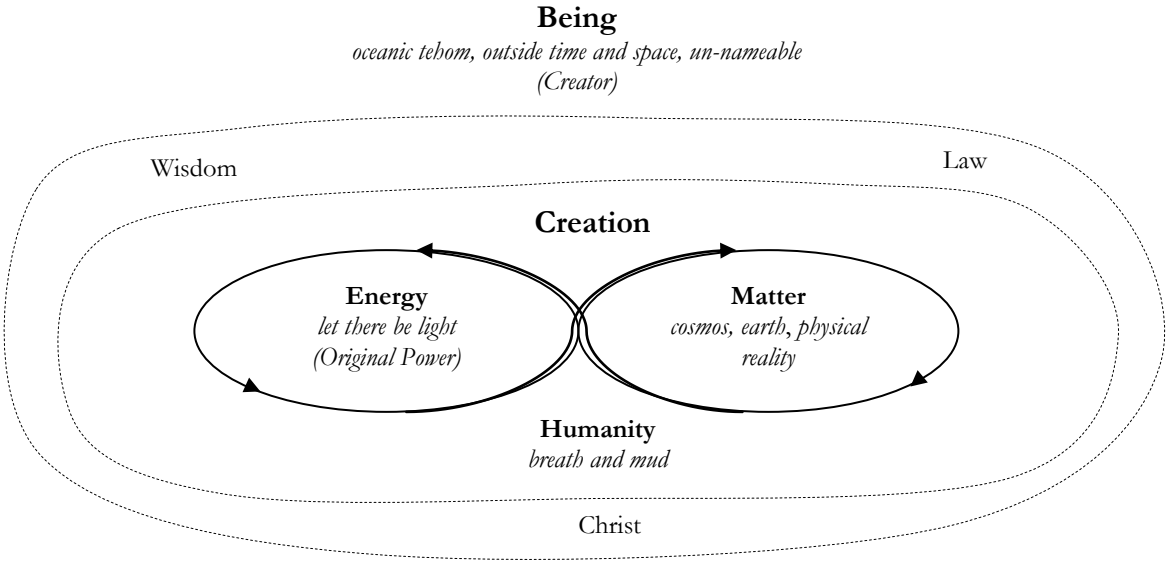

Figure 4: A Biblical Model of Fruitfulness and Power

Creation/Eschaton	Dignity	Creativity	Extravagance	Fruitfulness
Fall/Separation	Domination/ Submission	Violence/ Destruction	Commodification	Barrenness (masquerading as fruitfulness)
Redemption/ Incarnation	Intersubjectivity	Co-Creativity	Shared Abundance	First Fruits
	Identity	**Agency**	**Economy**	

Figure 5: A Trajectory of Separation from Original Power

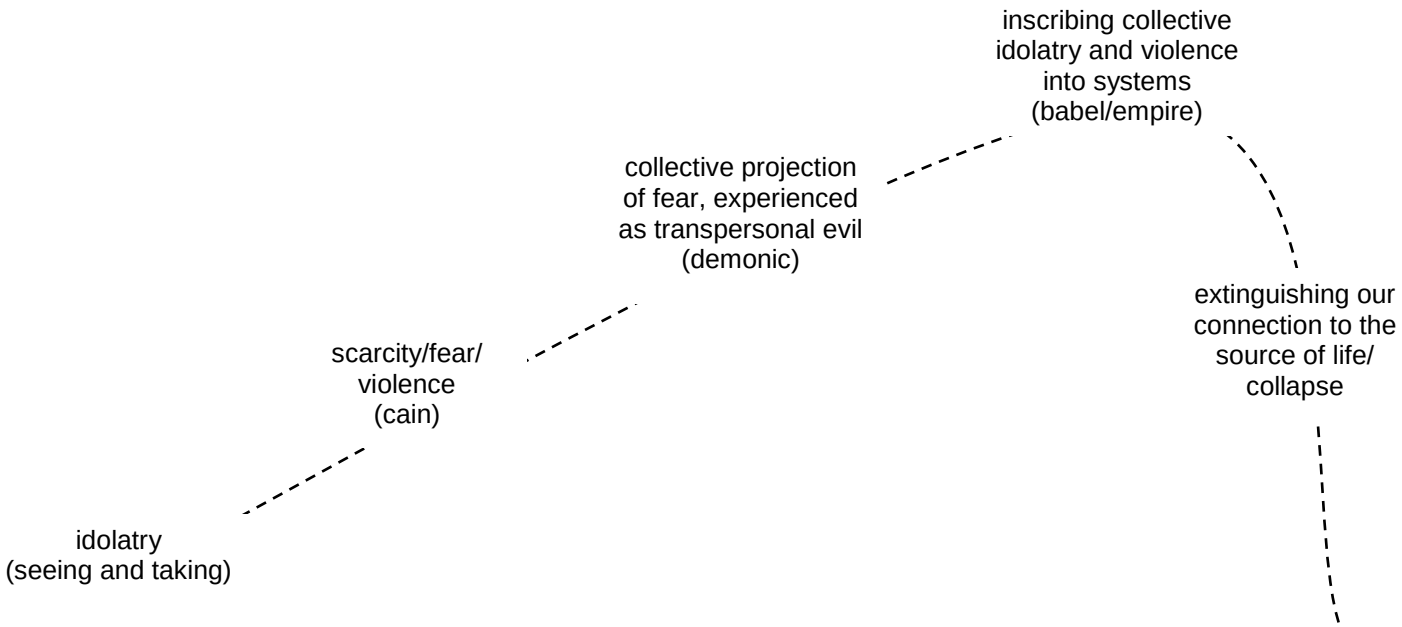

Figure 6: Middle Agents in First Century Galilee

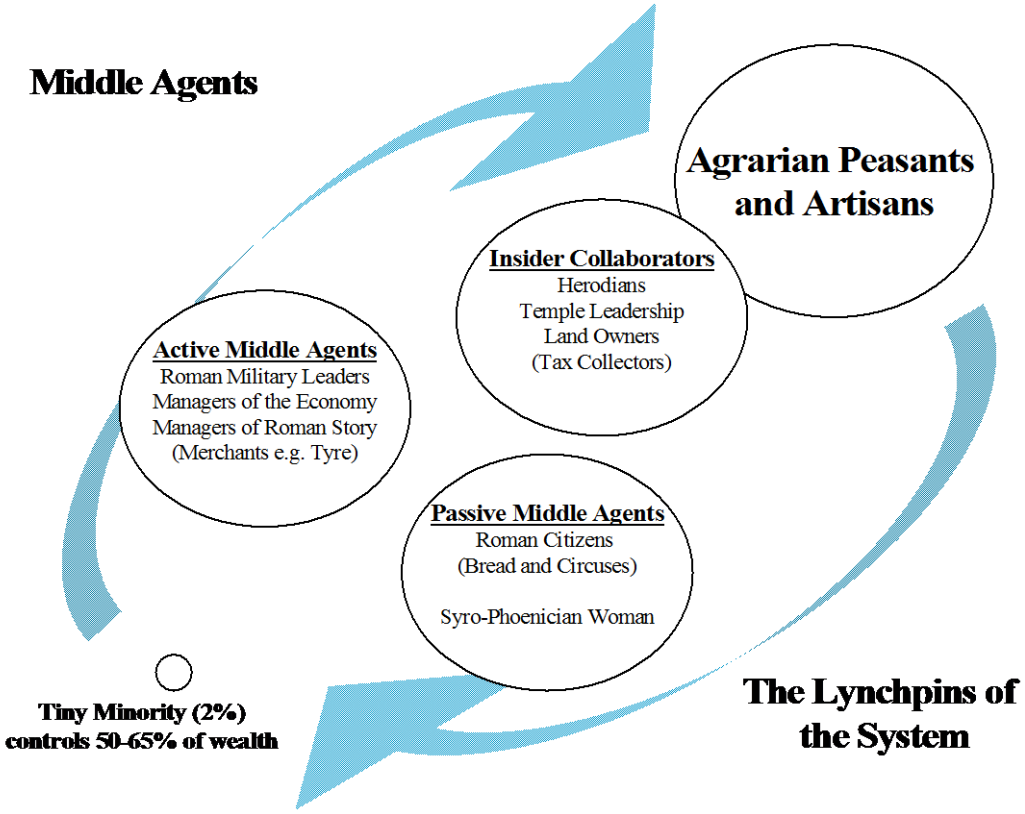

Figure 7: Middle Agents in the Imperial Relationship between the U.S. and Mexico

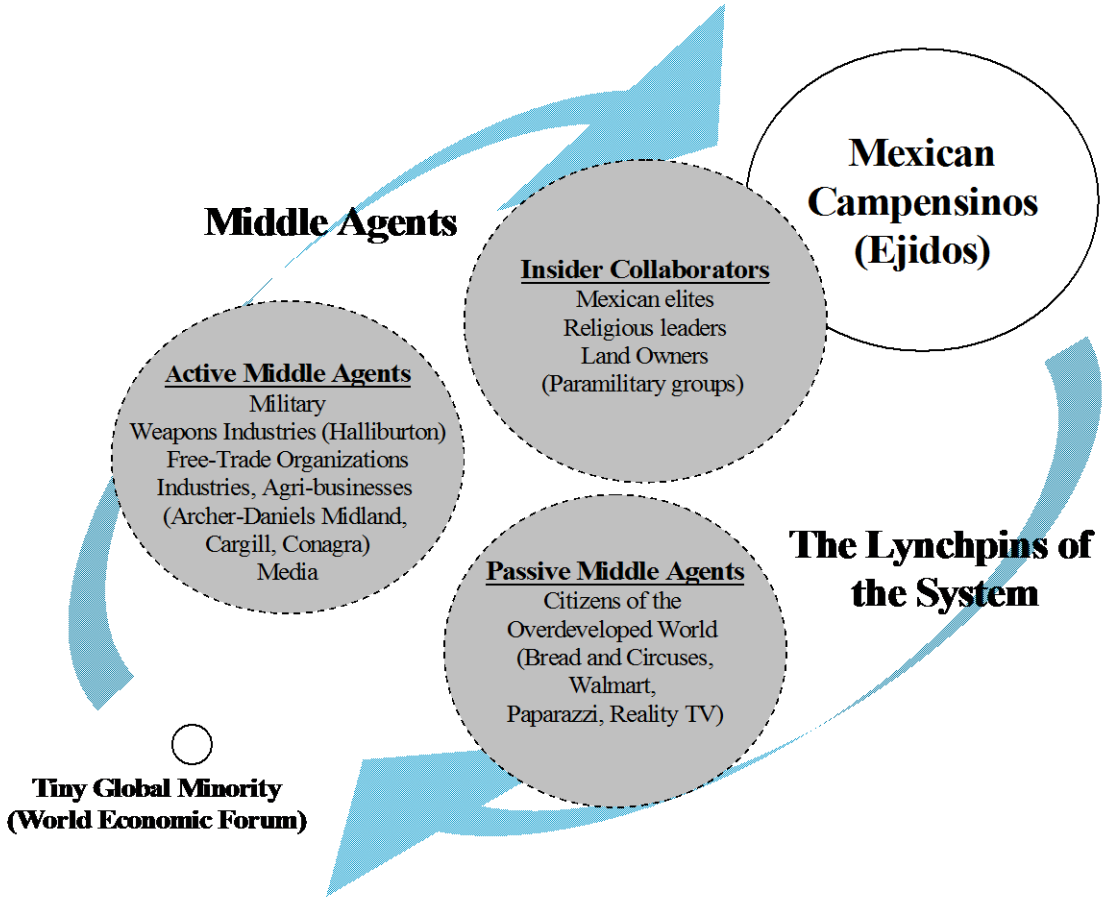

Figure 8: Pulling Apart the Categories of Violence and Disruption

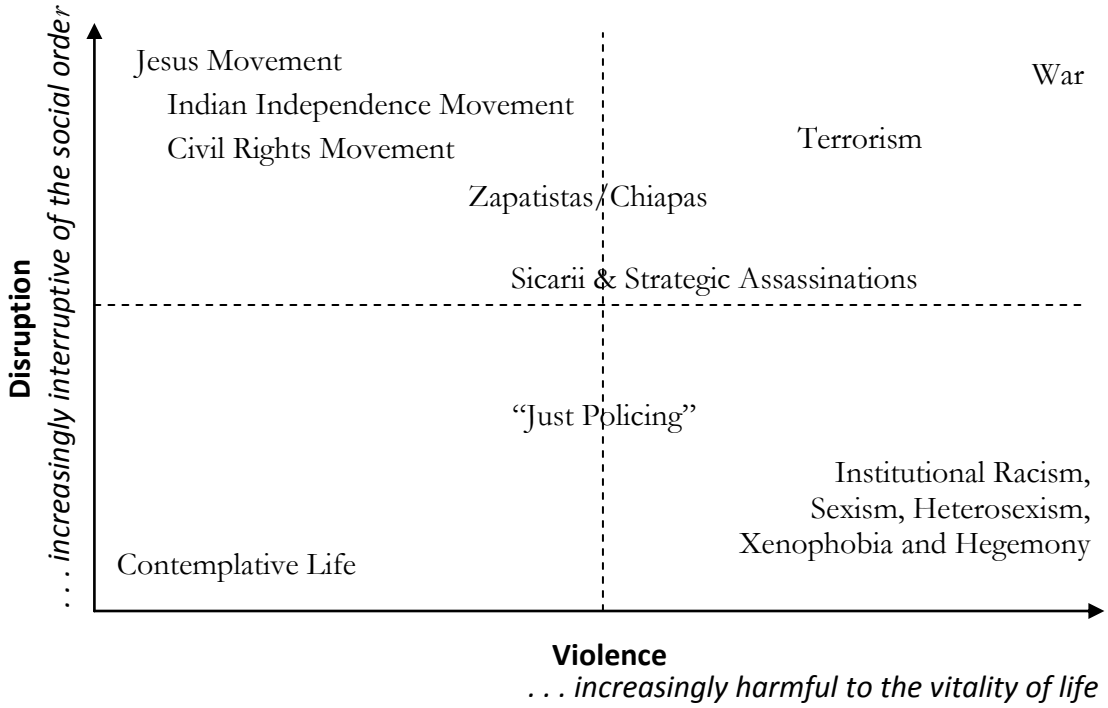

Figure 9: Jesus, the Syrophoenician Woman, and Constellations of Power

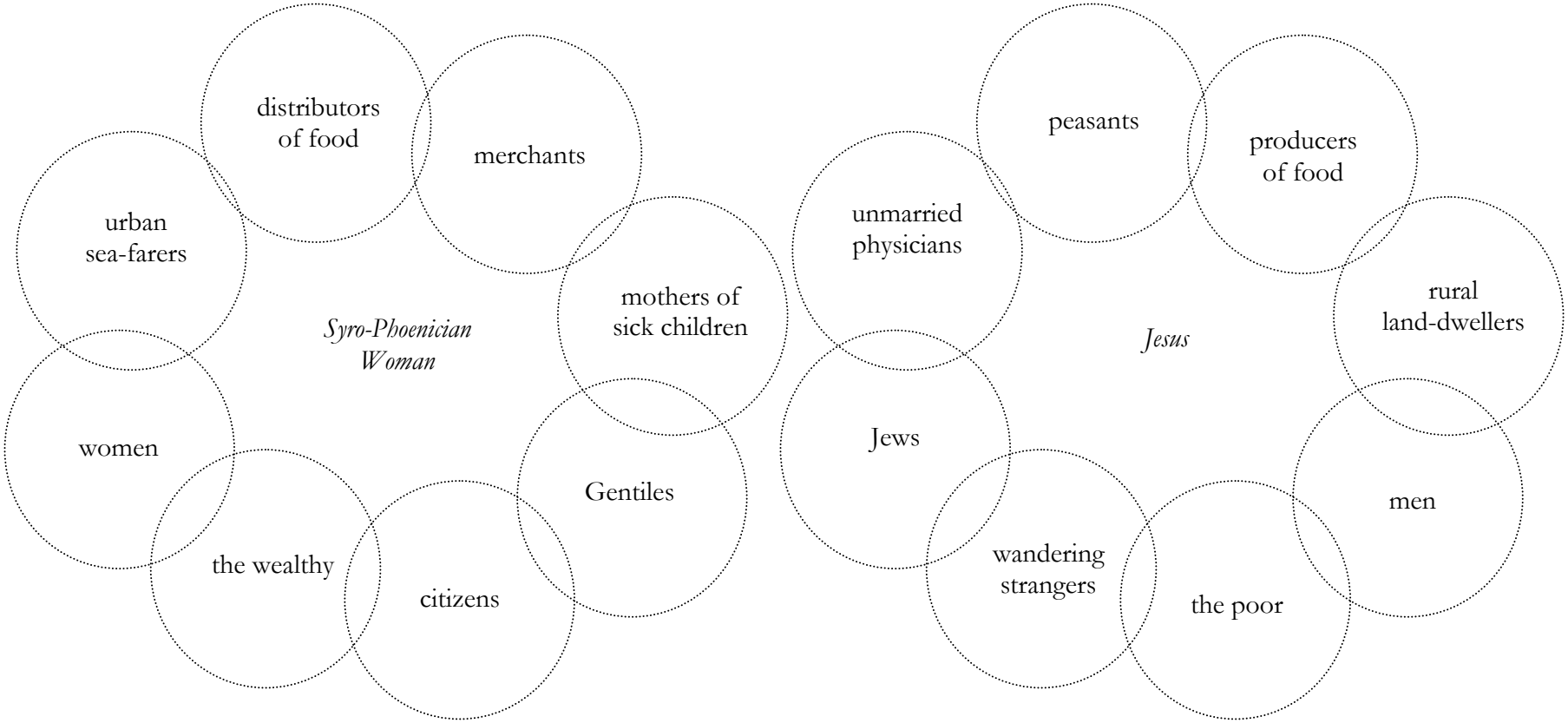

Figure 10: Marks of an Unsuccessful Encounter of Hospitality

Some marks of an unsuccessful interchange include:

- coercion, domination, and submission;
- hiding gifts, refusing to express, hiding difficult truths;
- untrustworthiness/willing to harm the other/lack of concern for the other's interests;
- no investment of trust;
- unwillingness to risk or be changed;
- breakdown of communication and relationship;
- violation/violence;
- unyeildingness;
- sense of hierarchy;
- placing blame and suffering on the other/scapegoating/racism/heterosexism/xenophobia;
- imbalance of giving and receiving;
- fear; and
- lack of respect for the sacred mystery of the other.

Resulting Situation: Physical, emotional, economic, cultural, political and/or spiritual violence

Figure 11: Marks of a Successful Encounter of Hospitality

Some marks of a successful interchange include:

- mutual trustworthiness;
- compassion;
- concern for one another's interests and well-being;
- shared power, absence of domination or subordination;
- investment of trust;
- capacity to receive differences;
- willingness to be changed by the other;
- mutual openness to speak difficult truths;
- mutual openness to express self, feelings, experiences, commitments, beliefs, hopes, dreams;
- willingness to share sacrifice/suffering/responsibility;
- willingness to yield;
- sense of equality;
- kindness;
- spontaneity;
- balance of giving and receiving;
- particular attention/support for what is most vulnerable in one another, the situation; and
- respect for the sacred mystery of one another.

Resulting Situation: A safe and level field for relating, personal and social healing, mutual liberation, transformation

Figure 12: A Working Model of Biblical Hospitality

1. Encountering Another(s)
2. Seeing our Situation (including power relationships, persons, contexts, communities, and their complexities)
3. Assessing the Foundation (Is this a good idea? Is God calling us to stretch our boundaries? Do we have a mutual concern for each other's well-being? Are we willing to share power? Can we establish trust? Are we trustworthy? What are the risks?)
4. Making the Choice Whether or not to Engage
5. Entering the Unknown
6. Prayer, Opening Ourselves to God's Presence
7. The Dance of Receiving and Asserting (having curiosity, allowing holy disruption, alert to well-being of other and self, continual reassessment of the foundational questions)
8. Closure/Noticing the new state of our boundaries. (What is our new situation? Where are we personally and socially? Are we aware of healing? Have we experienced or caused any violence (physical, emotional, spiritual)?)
9. Offering and Receiving Blessing for Our Journey

ENDNOTES

Notes – Introduction & Methodology

[1] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 39. While I have been widely influenced by Latin American, Asian, African, Caribbean, Native American, LGBT, and feminist liberation theologians, the most prominent influence on my thought comes from the field of Black Theology, including theologians such as Katie Canon, James Cone, Kelly Brown Douglass, James Evans, Emilie Townes, Delores Williams, Gayraud Wilmore and countless others. One reason this work shapes me so deeply is our shared concern about the structural realities of power in the context of the United States. I am grateful for the work all liberationist scholars have done to make the case to the academy for prioritizing pressing problems in our social context, while drawing deeply from liberationist themes in scripture.

[2] Rufus Burrow, Jr., *James H. Cone and Black Liberation Theology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Inc. Publishers, 1994), 32. Burrow goes on to define other principles of a liberationist approach, including socio-economic analysis. "[C]ritical analysis of the sociopolitical and economic situation . . . helps unmask the institutionalized nature of violence and other forms of oppression." Burrow, 38. Here are further descriptions of liberationist commitment. "Liberation theology presupposes an energetic protest" at situations that mean: "on the social level: collective oppression, exclusion, and marginalization; on the individual level: injustice and denial of human rights;[and] on the religious level: social sinfulness[.]" "Without a minimum of 'suffering with' this suffering that affects the great majority of the human race, liberation theology can neither exist nor be understood. Underlying liberation theology is a prophetic and comradely commitment to the life, cause, and struggle of these millions of debased and marginalized human beings, a commitment to ending this historical-social iniquity." Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 3. "Liberation theology has redirected theological reflection to the burning issues posed by the society in which it is developed. That has led to the focus on oppression and the structures that sustain it. The liberation theologian does not first work out questions of the nature of God and Christ and the church in one context, such as that of the academic community, and then apply these answers to the social situation. On the contrary, the theologian thinks about God, Christ, and the church as these topics arise in the analysis of the social situation and in action aimed at justice. Doctrines are tested in practice and reformulated in the light of their effects and their illuminating and motivating power." John Cobb Jr., "Points of Contact Between Process Theology and Liberation Theology in Matters of Faith and Justice," *Process Studies* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 124-141.

[3] "Did you ever stop to think that you can't leave for your job in the morning without being dependent on most of the world? You get up in the morning and go to the bathroom and reach over for the sponge, and that's handed to you by a Pacific islander. You reach for a bar of soap, and that's given to you at the hands of a Frenchman. And then you go into the kitchen to drink your coffee for the morning, and that's poured into your cup by a South American. And maybe you want tea: that's poured into your cup by a Chinese. Or maybe you're desirous of having cocoa for breakfast, and that's poured into your cup by a West African. And then you reach over for your toast, and that's given to you at the hands of an English-speaking farmer, not to mention the baker. And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world." Martin Luther King, Jr., Christmas Sermon on Peace (1967).

[4] ½ % of the world owns 35% of wealth. 1% of the world owns 40% of the wealth. 2% owns over half the wealth of the world. For this statistic wealth is defined as "household wealth – by which we mean net worth or more precisely, the values of physical and financial assets minus liabilities." James B. Davies, Susanna Sandstrom, Anthony Shorrocks, and Edward N. Wolff, "The World Distribution of Household Wealth," (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Global, International and Regional Studies, UC Santa Cruz, July 2007). Income inequality is growing so fast that these numbers are now overly conservative. See the recent study by Oxfam that shows that 85 individuals now own the same amount as half of the world's population (3.5 billion human beings). Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva and Nicholas Galasso, "Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality," *Oxfam Briefing Paper* 178 (January 20, 2014).

[5] Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion, "The Developing World is Poorer Than We Thought, But No Less Successful in the Fight Against Poverty," World Bank, August 2008. According to World Bank Development Indicators in 2008, over 50% of humanity earns less than $2.50 a day.

[6] When I use the word historical in contrast to cosmological, I do not mean it in the post-enlightenment sense of a sequence of well-ordered facts. I mean it in the Judeo-Christian sense of a God who acts in history. God participates in the physicality of the world. By cosmological I am referring to theological speculation into the dynamics and forces beyond our perception that shape the world of perception.

[7] There are numerous useful and interesting ways to break down power into distinct categories. For one effort at this see Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1970), 45ff. Carving out distinctions in the expression of power is not my goal here. It is the reverse – to trace these myriad expressions back to the divine oneness of power from which varied dimensions, refractions, and aspects emerge.

[8] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

[9] Foucault's understanding stands in direct opposition to a common assumption that hegemonic forces like the "free market" are "natural" and thus, something beyond human control. While our institutions have grown overwhelmingly large and complex, Foucault patiently demonstrates that they are precisely something we have created and for which we bear responsibility. This causes many to get angry with Foucault, because the problem feels too large to be our responsibility. People get mad at Arendt for similar reasons as she traces the "facts" – the concrete choices and actions – that accumulate into overwhelming systems of oppression. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1963). Dr. Bob Sweetman, in mentoring conversation, points out to me that Foucault's early work lacked "a robust normativity" – the positing of an essential character of or direction to the world – that is strong and positive enough to help us overcome the seeming unstoppableness of our soul-crushing systems. I would propose that Foucault's statement on the ultimate inability to commodify power, Derrida's unmatchable gift, Arendt's natality, the Christian notion of grace, and my own proposal of Original Power contained herein offer ways of articulating a life-giving norm of generativity that is stronger than our demonic empires. I draw these connections acknowledging that I am a theologian, appropriating and theologically contextualizing the work of social theorists. I jokingly refer to them at times as "hostile witnesses" because they explicitly do not share my fundamental religious convictions. In truth, I seek to treat their work with the utmost respect. I am convinced that the scriptures are not simply ancient artifacts, but also full-bodied relevant descriptions of present reality – a way of conceptualizing existence strong enough to counter the relentless imposition of imperial ideology. This leads me to want to test my interpretations against the world, as Paul suggested we do (1 Thessalonians 5: 19-21). Foucault, Derrida, and Arendt are astute observers of the nature and structures of reality, and in particular, the dynamics and structures of power. I appreciate their attentive and skillful observations, and notice ways they affirm, challenge, and are challenged by biblical claims. In developing a biblically-grounded narrative of power, these social theorists are my valued conversation partners. In the end, since this work is my effort at theo-ethical narrative, I do appropriate their work into a larger cosmological story to which, if they could respond, they would not likely offer their consent.

[10] Here is an example where Foucault's observations evoke, for me as a theologian, biblical teachings. "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned." (John 15: 4-6) and "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Corinthians 4: 6-7). All scripture references are in the New Revised Standard Edition translation unless otherwise noted.

[11] Here I confess I am stretching Derrida a bit. Derrida describes gift as "the impossible" because our giving is inextricably tied to some form of exchange. The exchange can come out of duty, as in, it is your birthday so I must give you a gift. Or it can come out of desire, as in, I enjoy the feeling of giving, it is so delightful to me, I think I'll buy you a bunch of roses. For Derrida, the involvement in exchange makes the gift not a gift – it destroys its gift-ness. Gift is an offering without exchange, which is "impossible," because we are always getting something in return. By pursuing this logic, Derrida hits on the need for (and as a theologian, I would suggest the reality of) a source beyond the self that is always giving. This is what allows for the "more than" or the "excess" that moves into the self-contained world of

exchange. It causes the tipped-ness that Caputo notes. For the purposes of this work, I am drawing on this insight about gift as "excess." Here is where I stretch beyond Derrida's frame. For me, duty can be constricted to the realm of exchange, or it can venture in a small way into the realm of gift, in cases where one sacrifices self for other. Desire, on the other hand, offers a far broader scope than Derrida allows. Desire that is restricted to the ego, a small self-interestedness, as Derrida suggests, stays in the realm of exchange. But desire that expands beyond ego, that can imagine an expansive joy that includes both other and self, and grows with consciousness into greater circles of inclusion – family, community, country, globe, creation – to me, becomes the vehicle of gift. Expansive desire brings the excess into embodied reality. It is the means of incarnation. Perhaps the difference between me and Derrida on this point stems from the following: that he sees gift and exchange in opposition, and I see exchange as a smaller category that can be subsumed in and infused by gift. For more, see: Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell, A Conversation with Jack Derrida* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1997), 145.

[12] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 266.

[13] See Jeremiah 1:10: "See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." and Jeremiah 31:28: "And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord."

[14] See Matthew 16: 18-19: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." and Matthew 18: 18-19: "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven." Both Matthean texts refer to an *ekklesia* the holds this binding and loosing power. *Ekklesia* is translated in the NRSV as church. The translation evokes our 21st century notion of a patriarchal, global institution. A more accurate meaning is a gathering, an assembly, a community, or a deliberative body.

[15] Derrida explores this riskiness at length. For example: "To put it in different terms, absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner, but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names." Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 25.

[16] Fanny Dolansky, "Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life" in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds,* ed. Beryl Rawson (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[17] Jacques Derrida approaches the knotty dilemma of hospitality in ways that simultaneously confirm and deny my approach. He asserts the "inconceivability" of an absolute or pure hospitality that throws the gates open for the enjoyment of all being. Imagine the poor of the world running freely around the mansions of the rich – or more disturbingly, your house or my house. In our boundaried world, our finite human attempt at hospitality is built on the foundation of the denial of hospitality. That is, in order to offer something (our home, our table), we begin with the premise of possessing something separate to share. Further our motives in sharing are generally self-serving. We get some sort of "exchange" even if it is just feeling good that we helped someone. Derrida demonstrates how the essential structure of this social order – one that demands hospitality because of its fundamental denial of hospitality – cannot coexist with pure hospitality, which demands complete foreclosure of one's domain. I am suggesting that our Biblical teaching, somewhat contra Derrida though resonant with what he sees, draws us toward pure hospitality through our imperfect attempts. In the historical/incarnational journey of the scriptures, pure and enacted hospitality are not hopeless opposites. The faith community moves on a messy path of loss and surrender – through which we relinquish our accumulations of possessions and power, through which we participate in an ever morphing negotiation with others' – that leads us to an embodied reality approaching pure hospitality, a strange dynamic mixture of separation and unity, self and other, wide openness and domain, something the scriptures call incarnation, the divine come to dwell, or all in all. Given such a scriptural view, the distinction I wish to make here is between sincere, conscious attempts to share power, which move us in the direction of pure hospitality, however imperfectly, and disingenuous or unconscious efforts erroneously called "hospitality" which reinforce the aggregated deployments of power that suppress human beings, animals, and the earth, moving us away from pure hospitality. For more see: Jacques Derrida, *Adieu*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Micheal Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, trans. Gil

Anidjar (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002); Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Willis (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question*, trans. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005).

[18] Wes Jackson notices this problem too. In reflecting on how rain forests "regulate the hydrological cycle of the planet" he says: "This helped me think about the problem of agriculture at the system level, which runs counter to the old Western philosophies of Francis Bacon and René Descartes, who thought that the way to deal with nature is to break it down. Now, there's nothing wrong with reductive thinking, as long as it does not lead us to believe that the world resembles the method. That's where we got into trouble." Fred Bahnson, "Farmed Out: Wes Jackson On The Need To Reinvent Agriculture: The Sun Interview" *The Sun Magazine* 418 (October 2010).

[19] "Human experience is far from being self-explanatory and is far too rich for any a priori scheme to interpret it fully. The meaning of your life always has to be built on the spot. You may find some reusable planks from earlier buildings. Some existing plans may suit your needs. You may even find some prefabricated materials useful in the project. But meaning will still have to be built on the spot." L. William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 14.

[20] Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda" *The Christian Century* (January 2-9, 1991): 12-15.

[21] See William R. Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); William R.Herzog II, *Parables As Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); and William R.Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

[22] See: Sylvia C. Keesmaat. *Paul's Use of the Exodus Tradition in Romans and Galatians* (PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 1994), 2-11; Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004); and Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986).

[23] For example, Ellen Davis looks at the scripture through the lens of "agrarianism" which she describes "the way of thinking predominant among the biblical writers, who very often do not represent the interests of the powerful." She also uses agrarianism as a means to draw connections between ancient and present contexts. Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle Locations 119-120.

[24] Matthew 23: 24.

[25] See Chapter 8 "The View From the Village: The Great Tradition and the Little Tradition in the Conflict Over Tribute" in William Herzog 2005. Speaking of first century Palestine, Herzog says: "The great tradition contained the interpretation of the world as seen by the rulers, history seen from above . . .The great tradition while propagating a 'social ideology of patronage' would usually legitimize 'inequalities in material and cultural resources as foreordained' and celebrate 'the positive value of stratification.'" Ibid, 175. (internal quotes are from James C. Scott "Protest and Profanation" *Theory and Society* 7 (1977): 14.) The further one is from the top of a system of social stratification, the more space there is for little tradition/s to flourish. The debates between Jesus and the Pharisees about the relative importance of purity codes vs. debt codes are debates between great tradition and little tradition. Great tradition/s are usually transmitted directly in writing, whereas little tradition/s are transmitted through hidden transcripts (discussed below) and reading between the lines.

[26] Hidden transcripts are a multi-layered coded form of speech (words, art, music, etc.) shared among a subgroup in the public arena in the presence of the dominant group, with the dominant group perceiving only the portion of the message designed for them, and missing the often subversive layers of meaning designed for the subgroup. For more on this see: James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990) and Richard A. Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott, to Jesus and Paul* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

[27] Traditional African-American Spiritual, "Wade in the Water" first published in *New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers* by John Wesley Work II and Frederick J. Work (1901).

[28] A current example of this way of speaking (interestingly directed to middle agents) is the comedy fake news television show, The Colbert Report. An academic study of the perception of the audience of this show indicated that those who

self-identified as conservative thought that Stephen Colbert was indeed conservative in his true commitments. Those who self-identified as liberal thought that Colbert is liberal in his true commitments and that the show is a satire. Both enjoyed the show and thought it was funny. This is a current example of how one message on the public stage can communicate on different levels to different audiences. See: Heather L. LaMarre, Kristen D. Landreville, and Michael A. Beam, "The Irony of Satire: Political Ideology and the Motivation to See What You Want to See in The Colbert Report," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 14, no.2 (April 2009): 212-231.

[29] Arendt "notes the thread of tradition was also the chain fettering each successive generation to a predetermined aspect of the past. It could be that only now will the past open up to us with unexpected freshness and tell us things no one has yet had ears to hear." Ronald A. Kuipers, "Amor Mundi in a (Post) Liberal Era, The Relevance of an Arendtian Theme for Christian Self Understanding Today" in *Crossroad Discourse Between Christianity and Culture* , eds. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen and Wessel Stoker (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 96-97 referring to Hannah Arendt "The Concept of History Ancient and Modern" in *Between Past and Future* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2006), 94.

[30] The Jesus Seminar, founded by Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan, has focused on the effort to reconstruct "the historical Jesus." In the first and second "quests" for the historical Jesus, they attempted to develop scientifically-based criterion for determining the factual authenticity of stories and sayings in the gospels as well as extracanonical sources. See: John Dominic Crossan, James K. Beilby, et al, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views. Jesus and the Challenge of Collaborative Eschatology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009) and Paul Copan, ed., *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?: A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998). In recent years, Crossan has become concerned with the ethical side of interpretation, including the application of what they've learned about the Roman imperial context to our present imperial context. See: John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007). Most recently, he has applied his view that the stories in the gospels are mythological, to the gospels at large, calling them "megaparables" that serve the purpose of provocation. John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus became fiction about Jesus* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012).

[31] Luke is often thought to be writing a Christian apologia to Roman authorities. N.T. Wright finds "too much extraneous material" for this explanation. Nor is Wright convinced that Luke is trying to convince Christian readers to conform to Roman authority. Wright thinks Luke may be arguing to Rome for Christians to have the same status as Jews, that is, to be a permitted religion in the empire. More so, he claims that Luke is arguing that Christianity is the "continuation of the true Israel" against other claims and the fulfillment of the Jewish story in the Gentile world. Luke is telling the highly Jewish story of Jesus to a non-Jewish Greco-Roman audience. N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 376-381. Howard-Brook shows that Luke is not more moderate than the other gospels, as some suggest. "[H]is gospel is as explicitly anti-imperial as any other." "Luke expects the gospel to draw people from all social classes to form a new community in which hierarchies are leveled." He sees the Lukan audience as Roman citizens who are elite members of urban society. They belong to *paideia*, a cultural system of elite brotherhood that connects to the patronage system and holds the social structure of Roman city life together. He says, "Luke's goal was to convince them that the Way of Jesus would actually provide what the empire promised but could not deliver: peace, justice, and abundance for all." He notes that "[t]he fulfillment of jubilee flows through Luke-Acts from beginning to end." Wes Howard-Brook, *"Come Out My People!": God's Call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 418-434. I agree that Luke is bridging Jewish and Roman worlds, and that Luke is strongly anti-imperial. For the purpose of this work, I am most interested in examining location within the power structure. Thus, I would push what Wright and Howard-Brook argue further, saying that Luke has a specific concern with targeting middle agents and convincing them to shift their allegiance from the elite members of their patronage system to Jesus and the Way. He is systematically going after middle agents in his culture and persistently knocking (see Chapter 5) on their epistemological bubbles (see Chapter 3) and showing them that the path of the salvation for themselves and the world moves toward (rather than away from) the "least of these" aka marginalized majorities. See Appendix 5 for my study of middle agents in the gospel of Luke.

[32] N.T. Wright argues that Mark has written a Christian apocalypse in the style of a Hellenistic biography. N.T. Wright 1992, 391-6. Howard-Brook builds on Ched Myers claim that the origin of Mark's gospel is not Rome, but rather Jerusalem during the fall the temple in 66-70CE. According the Howard-Brook, Mark's gospel is directed to Jesus' disciples, providing guidance for them in their terror, as Rome is on the verge of taking over Jerusalem. The basic message is not to defend Jerusalem, where a stone will not be left on stone, but to "head for the hills." "This [scene] comes after twelve previous chapters in which Jesus systematically confronts the agents of empire while simultaneously trying to form an alternative community that can see, hear, and understand." Wes Howard-Brook 2010, 399-406. See

also: Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988). Again, for the purpose of this work, I am most interested in examining the location within the power structure. Whereas Luke emphasizes the location and concerns of middle agents, Mark tells the gospel story from the perspective of marginalized majorities, that is, those that the architects of empire view as both exploitable and dispensable.

[33] I suggest that the value we gain from a gospel is not confined by discernable factual realities or authorial intent. Meaning oozes out of the whole mixture – the whole complex enterprise. And while we put in our due diligence to gather information and perspectives, to unearth aspects that may be hidden to us at first blush, the meaning we derive is ultimately something we integrate and create.

[34] See Matthew 17: 14-20: "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits." See also Isaiah 55 and Galatians 5: 22ff.

[35] "For me as a biblical scholar, engaging questions of contemporary social analysis means consciously working as an amateur, going outside my area of professional expertise for the sake of love." Ellen Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 152-153.

[36] Caputo, in conversation with Derrida, informs this understanding. Deconstruction loosens limiting strictures and opens complexities and in so doing preserves the vitality of tradition. "If you have a tradition, you have to take responsibility for its multiplicity." which "is the only way to conserve a tradition." John D. Caputo 1997, 37.

[37] I follow Jesus who modeled our responsibility for discernment and passionate engagement with tradition, as he sifted and debated, choosing life-giving strands and discarding dearly held doctrines as "human precepts" (Mark 15:9). I've chosen interlocuters – biblical scholars (e.g. Keesmaat, Herzog, Howard-Brook, and Horsley), theologians (e.g. Keller and Cone), and social theorists (e.g. Derrida, Foucault, and Arendt) – who share in this interrogative and constructive view of tradition.

[38] Keesmaat explores the "dynamics of tradition" including the way identity and tradition are related, and how traditions get reformulated over time in light of new circumstances, in a chapter titled, "Tradition, Exodus and Intertextuality." Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and his Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 15-53. Her study looks at the how Paul replicates, contends with and transforms the exodus tradition. She pays special attention to intertextuality and echoes, drawing from the techniques of Richard Hays. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986). This work on the history of reinterpreting texts and the process of transmitting tradition, also builds on the scholarship of Michael Fishbane and his work on "inner-biblical exegesis." Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985). For more on recontextualization and the "the exegetical imagination" see: Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[39] We have "a responsibility to read, to interpret, to sift and select responsibly, among many competing strands of tradition and interpretations of tradition." This article responds to the question "What is deconstruction in a nutshell?" by saying deconstruction cracks nutshells. John D. Caputo 1997, 37.

[40] Sugirtharajah takes a postcolonial approach to the scriptures, challenging readers to see how the Bible has been used differently by colonizers and the colonized. The author defines postcolonialism as an "interventionist instrument that refuses to take the dominant reading as an uncomplicated representation of the past" and puts forth "an alternate reading" that lifts silenced and marginalized voices. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

[41] "Derrida was trying to persuade us that deconstruction is on our side, that it means to be good news, and that it does not leave behind a path of destructions and smoldering embers." John D. Caputo 1997, 37.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] A "hermeneutic of suspicion" comes from the fields of liberation theology, particularly black theology. As we engage scripture and tradition, we are always asking: who gains power and who loses power by shaping the narrative this way? or by interpreting the text this way? "From a strictly pragmatic and survival standpoint it behooves the victims of massive and systematic oppression to retain a healthy sense of suspicion regarding the dominant group. There are those (especially among the privileged) who object to this, claiming that such a stance is not theologically sound, and that it militates against dialogue and reconciliation among groups that have been alienated. This may be true, but the desire to survive in order to ultimately attain liberation dictates the necessity of suspicion. Any group forced to the periphery of society would be well advised to be suspicious of those who are denying them the right to live to the fullest as human beings." Rufus Burrow, Jr. *James H. Cone and Black Liberation Theology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Inc. Publishers, 1994), 48.

[45] "[I]f I refuse to remember, I am actually ready to do anything—just as my courage would be absolutely reckless if pain, for instance, were an experience immediately forgotten" Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003), 94. Ron Kuipers directed me to this point in Arendt. Ron Kuipers 2010, 94.

[46] Ron Kuipers 2010, 95. citing Paul Ricoeur, Kathleen Blamey, David Pellauer *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 129.

[47] In contemplating the three simultaneous layers of liberationist narratives, I note three areas of concern – interior, other, and whole (self, neighbor, God). The survival layer is focused on the interior of self and community. Think of the exiled Hebrews refusing to sing songs of Zion for their captors (Psalm 137), or Jesus' silence in the face of Pilate's disingenuous toying with truth (Mark 15: 1-15; Matthew 27: 12-14; Luke 23: 1-15; John 9: 1-11). There are times of extreme indignity when we are left with only one option – to retreat within and preserve our truth. A friend, after returning from visiting churches in China, shared that a woman described to him how her family kept their traditions alive through the cultural revolution (when Bibles were banned), by turning scriptures into songs, and out of the hearing of the authorities, sang them to one another. The resistance layer of the liberation narrative is "other" focused. It confronts the communities and systems that are holding them down. The transformation aspect of the liberation narrative is "whole" focused. Releasing dualism, this layer seeks healing and freedom that is inclusive of the enemy. In liberation theology, it is said that God has a preferential option for the poor. This is true, as indicated by the survival and resistance aspects of liberation which scripture consistently embraces. At the same time, God's preferential option for the poor is part of the larger concern of God's, which is the thriving and well-being of the whole of humanity and creation. These layers cannot be taken apart or superseded. They are applied together. The ancient scriptures teach us that the route to achieving society's and creation's potential is institutionalizing a continuous and active pursuit of noticing and attending to the ones who struggle most (e.g. the widow, orphan, and stranger in the land), and revising our institutions (instruments for deploying power) to make them more and more universally liberative.

[48] "'In the last years of their lives, they were starting to move toward one another,' says David Howard-Pitney, who recounted the Capitol Hill meeting in his book 'Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.'" "'While Malcolm is moderating from his earlier position, King is becoming more militant,' Pitney says." "'King was a political revolutionary. Malcolm was a cultural revolutionary,' Cone says. 'Malcolm changed how black people thought about themselves. Before Malcolm came along, we were all Negroes. After Malcolm, he helped us become black." "During the last three years of his life, King became more radical. He talked about eliminating poverty and providing a guaranteed annual income for all U.S. citizens. He came out against the Vietnam War, and said American society would have to be restructured.' [Andrew] Young, King's close aide, says King had become more militant near the end of his life. 'It was more radical to deal with poverty than to deal with segregation so, in that sense, it's true,' Young says. 'But Dr. King never wavered in his commitment to nonviolence. In fact, he was getting stronger in his commitment to nonviolence. It was a more militant nonviolence.'" John Blake, "Malcolm and Martin, closer than we ever thought," CNN (May 18, 2010). See also: David Howard-Pitney, *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History with Documents* (New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004) and James H. Cone, *Malcolm and Martin in America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

[49] Dr. King attempted repeatedly to communicate this differing sense of urgency to his white allies. For example, see: Martin Luther King Jr. Letter from the Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963. (This letter was written in response to a statement made by eight white Alabama clergymen on April 12, 1963 titled "A Call For Unity" which agreed to the presence of racial injustice but advocated a judicial approach rather than direct action in the streets. Middle agent fear and retreat is often camouflaged in the language of "unity" and the allegedly "more enlightened" transformative narrative.); and Martin Luther King Jr. *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1964).

[50] Scott Rudin, prod., *The Truman Show* (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1998). In the plot, Truman Burbank realizes that his entire life has been lived in a fabricated dome. His family, neighbors, and business associates are actors. His false reality was created by television executives to be filmed as a 24 hour a day reality show to the outside world.

[51] As current economic decline (in the form of home foreclosures and lack of jobs) removes this luxury from more and more middle agents, many who were formerly comfortable are becoming more radicalized.

[52] This concept is developed in Chapter 3.

[53] In addition to the "unity superceding resistance and survival" storyline, there is a middle agent storyline about hopelessness and inevitability that we often employ as we slip back to our comfortable world.

[54] Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 27. See also: Letty M. Russell, ed. *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1985). For a helpful and succinct summary of her methodological approach see: M. Shawn Copeland, "Journeying to the Household of God: The Eschatological Implications of Method in the Theology of Letty Mandeville Russell" in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell*, Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

[55] Letty M. Russell 1993, 30-31.

[56] "The method of spiral action-reflection doesn't separate feminist theology from scripture and tradition; rather it returns to the tradition but not to the same point as previously. It goes back to the tradition with new clues that enable readers to come up with new interpretations." Zohreh Abdekhodaie, *Letty M. Russell: Insights and Challenges of Christian Feminism* (Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo Thesis, 2008), 51. (Interestingly, Abdekhodaie is a Muslim scholar studying Christian feminism, and Letty Russell in particular, to deepen her reading of her own tradition and scriptures.)

[57] Dr. Bob Sweetman, in his mentoring discussion with me about this method, says: "The act of dialectical juxtaposition of contemporary and biblical worlds with all the creative or productive tension implicit within such dialectic (post-Hegelian rather than ancient and medieval dialectic) opens up the ethical space – the space perhaps of natality . . . an imaginative clearing for something new."

[58] "This book comes out my experience in the search for liberation. Its very shape represents the process of action-reflection which has led me on a journey with others, for others, toward God's future." Letty M. Russell, *Human Liberation in Feminist Perspective – A Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 21.

[59] "The evidence for a biblical message of liberation for women, as for other marginalized groups, is not found just in particular stories about women or particular female images of God. It is found in God's intention for the mending of all creation." Letty M. Russell 1985, 138.

[60] "[T]he Bible is not only prototype, it is also 'a memory of the future' that constantly opens up the possibility of new life through the small glimpses and anticipations of God's partnership at work in the biblical story and in our own lives." Ibid, 139.

[61] Russell describes Christian theology as unfinished. "Women add their small piece of experience about the way God is known to them to all the other pieces, so that theology becomes more holistic and comprehensive." Letty M. Russell 1974, 53.

[62] This subject is discussed in Chapter 3.

[63] I am not seeking an ethic that liberates a particular group from the oppression of another particular group. I am seeking an ethic that liberates a complex human being, and the whole of complex humanity, from the predicament of the institutionalization and enculturation of disproportionate power (much of these structures unconscious) that causes so much suffering. In this sense I am fully with Letty Russell, as we struggle toward the fullness of God's dream for the world.

[64] For more information on the Domination System see: Walter Wink, "Chapter 2: The Domination System," in *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 37ff.

[65] For more on the complexification of identity and power see "We Are a Collection of Communities" in Chapter 6.

[66] See the discussion on "The Epistemological Bubble" and the epistemological privilege of marginalized majorities in Chapter 3.

[67] I should note that the theorists I've chosen do not share my faith commitments. I do not experience a conflict here. The scriptures shape my understanding of the world I am presently living in. My philosophical interlocuters have studied this world with great passion and precision. The fruits of their study of life (or of what people of Judeo-Christian faith call creation) are a gift. It does not surprise me that there are meaningful and revelatory insights to be gained in putting social theories about power in dialogue with biblical witness. In fact, in doing so, I find great joy in glimpsing the coherence and connections that are possible in the created universe.

[68] A typical western literary method for organizing a story follows a trajectory from the opening, to the buildup, to a climax and then a denouement. The Hebrew and Greek biblical texts tend to be chiastic in structure, using an "arrow" approach whereby sections build upon each other moving toward the center of the chiasm, and then in a kind of reverse mirror work their way back to the end. For instance: (A B C D C1 B1 A1). In this case, A and A1 mirror each other, relating in a way that clarifies each others' meaning – same with B and B1, C and C1 etc. D serves as the "point of the arrow," presenting the key to the meaning of the whole assembly. While commenting on each other, the outer layers also clarify and nuance the meaning of the central theme. There can be many more layers than we find in this example in a biblical chiasm, and sometimes we find chiasms imbedded within chiasms. This may seem very complicated to the modern western mind, something we have to dissect, but the original authors and listeners did not have to work so hard since they were trained by their culture to process meaning this way. For more see: David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999).

[69] Psalm 16: 6.

[70] Luke 16: 1-13.

[71] Luke 19: 11-27. This is the parable we usually call "The Parable of the Talents."

[72] Leonard Cohen, "Sisters of Mercy," *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, Album Side 1, Track 5, Columbia Records, 1967.

[73] Sometimes known as "the rich man" or "Dives" (the translation from the Latin Vulgate).

[74] Luke 16: 19-31.

[75] Mark 6: 14-44.

[76] Luke 18: 1-8. "'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" Luke 18: 4b-5.

[77] Luke 11: 5-8. "'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' [Jesus comments:] I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs." Luke 11: 7b-8.

[78] Luke 19: 1-10.

[79] Mark 7: 24-30.

[80] Isaiah 11: 6-10; Isaiah 65: 17-25.

[81] Mark 8: 1-10; Matthew 15: 29-29.

[82] Revelation 22.

[83] 1 Corinthians 15: 28.

[84] A developed example of God's dominion over empires and emperors is found in God's interactions with Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel.

[85] During a keynote address at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY on January 23, 2011, Dr. Cornel West referred to racism in America as a "catastrophe."

[86] Walter Wink 1999, 37ff.

Notes – Chapter 1: Let There Be Power

[1] It can be difficult to talk about the importance of the cosmological in today's world. Examining our culture, Norman Wirzba finds "a profound shift from a cosmological to a historical understanding." "By 'historical understanding' I mean a sensibility that views life primarily in terms of a human rather than a divine drama. Rather than mimicking or taking our cue from the divine founding of reality, we establish ourselves as the source and goal of our action. Human existence, in other words, becomes profane existence." Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5. Wirzba continues this line of thought describing the different orientations to space that cosmological cultures have compared to predominantly historical cultures. He gives the example of a Hindu Vedic ritual whereby participants first erect a temple before entering a new territory. The purpose is not simply to bring divine presence. In the act of producing all the specific details and performing specific rituals, the cosmic order is recreated. This architectural act has "the effect of turning the territory into a sacred cosmos, and ordered whole" that unites "land, people, and their god." Without weaving soul, land, and divinity together, the new land remains chaos. Wirzba contrasts this cosmological approach to a historical one, such as that in the European settling of the Americas, where land is "simply the foil to work out human ambition."

[2] An example of how Judeo-Christian scripture relates the cosmological and historical is developed in Chapter 7. There we examine the creative narrative-making of Hebrews in the Persian period of occupation (circa 167BCE) who were crushed by imperial violence. With Herculean acts of creativity, they shaped apocalyptic literature. Through faith and through their experiences of God's power in their lives, they managed to reframe their trauma, generating a redemptive cosmology that subsumes the overwhelming facts of their unjust suffering (the historical) into a vibrant drama of a faithful and powerful God who breaks into creation and enacts divine justice.

[3] Ibid, 16.

[4] For more on moving between construction and deconstruction (with its hermeneutic of suspicion about the power dynamics that are inscribed in texts and their interpretation), and on my orientation toward active engagement with a living tradition, see the introductory chapter.

[5] I am approaching Genesis 1 in the way Wirzba does, as a teaching about the dynamics of all life, not just the beginning. "If we understand creation to be about the ordering of the world-an accounting of the character of reality-and not simply its origin, then it becomes clear that the doctrine of creation is of great cultural and practical significance." Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 310-311.

[6] Proverbs 8: 30-31.

[7] Gen 1: 1-2.

[8] Theodor Schwenk, *Sensitive Chaos: The Creation of Flowing Forms in Water and Air* (Forest Row, East Sussex: Rudolph Steiner Press, 1996), 80.

[9] Ibid, 69-70. More comments on water linking the macro and micro rhythms of creation: "These fish live in such close connection with the cosmic movements of the water – for that is what the tides are – that they know with astronomical exactitude to the second when the tide has reached its highest point . . . Only for one moment in the year are the relative positions of sun, moon, and earth suitable for them." Ibid, 9. "So the world of moving water absorbs the constellations of the stars in the heavens and passes them onto earth and its creatures. Cosmic events, the world of water and the living creatures in it form a totality. The latter, as water creatures, simply make visible the cosmic events that live and move in their element. Creatures living on dry land also have part in these events through the circulation of liquids in them." Ibid, 70.

[10] Isaiah 41: 18. The following section was adapted from an article that was previously published in the Institute for Christian Studies newsletter. Rachel McGuire, "Wade in the Water, Children" *Perspective* 44, no. 1 (February 2010).

[11] Genesis 6: 13ff.

[12] Psalm 77: 16-20.

[13] Exodus 14: 13ff.

[14] Amos 5: 24, and quoted frequently by Martin Luther King, Jr. including his address to the first Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) Mass Meeting, at Holt Street Baptist Church (December 5, 1955).

[15] With the ears of missionaries, do we hear the docile devotion of the newly converted? Or do we hear with the ears of organizers the call to the long journey toward freedom, with all its emotional and technical preparation? Wade in the water, children. When you hear the hounds come after you, get into the water so they lose the scent.

[16] Ezekiel 47.

[17] Ezekiel 47: 12.

[18] Matthew 3: 13-17; Mark 1: 9-11; Luke 3: 21-22.

[19] Matthew 4: 18-22; Mark 1:16-20.

[20] Luke 5: 1-5; John 21: 1-10.

[21] For example, Matthew 8: 18; Mark 4: 35; Luke 8:22.

[22] John 5: 2-9.

[23] John 4: 7-15.

[24] Mark 4: 37-41; Psalm 65: 7.

[25] "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." John 7: 38.

[26] Psalm 114.

[27] Revelation 22: 1-2.

[28] Isaiah 40: 22; Proverbs 8: 27.

[29] Leviathan, a sea creature, is closely associated with chaos and the deep. Most notably, one finds an extended biblical treatment of Leviathan in Job 41: 4-34. Here we learn about the qualities of Leviathan/chaos. 1) Chaos is included in God's realm and is easily handled by God ("Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, or press down its tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in its nose, or pierce its jaw with a hook? Will it make many supplications to you? Will it speak soft words to you? Will it make a covenant with you to be taken as your servant forever?"); 2) Chaos can never be fully apprehended or domesticated by humanity ("Any hope of capturing it will be disappointed"); 3) Chaos paradoxically appears as destructive empire and is a check against human hubris and imperial tendencies ("It surveys everything that is lofty; it is king over all that are proud."); and 4) Chaos is a divinely ordained power with which humanity can increasingly find a mature and constructive relationship (Jesus taming the storm). I would suggest that the names Leviathan and Rahab get associated with evil because this undomesticated force within God threatens the good boundaries of creation. At the same time, it is the precisely this same undomesticated dimension of life, these chaotic waters, that are the living waters, that in balance, pour into creation and bring new life – the gracious refreshing source and gift, without which creation would be a closed and dead system of exchange. J. Richard Middleton draws a distinction between Leviathan/Rahab and the waters of creation, as a way to show that divine combat occurs intra-historically in the text but does not go all the way back into creation. I draw strongly on his scholarship and insight in my own narrative theology of power in creation, though I would draw a continuity rather than a strict distinction, suggesting that large forces of destruction, such as empires, which Leviathan and Rahab at times represent, are destructive forms of aggregate power, created by an immature humanity through the dangerously divine gift of Original Power, which can be tamed and healed by a mature humanity, as modeled in Jesus. In other words, Leviathan is closely connected to the divine gift of power and its range of expression in creation – personal and aggregate, life-giving and life-destroying. See: J. Richard Middleton "Created in the Image of a Violent God? The Ethical Problem of the Conquest of Chaos in the Biblical Creation Texts" *Interpretation* 58:4 (October 2004): 341-355.

[30] There are many scriptural discussions of God's command of the deeps, e.g. Psalm 33: 6-7; Psalm 77: 16-20; Psalm 104: 6-13; Job 38: 1-11.

[31] Psalm 104: 25-26.

[32] "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?" Job 38: 8-11. Thanks to my friend Rev. Deborah Hughes for pointing out the beauty of this image of the deeps swaddling the earth.

[33] See Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003) and Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008). The Hebrew word *tehom* is translated as "deep, depths, deep places, abyss, the deep, sea, deep (of subterranean waters), abysses (of sea), primeval ocean, deep (of river), abyss, the grave." Francis Brown, R. Driver, and Charles Briggs*, The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Christian Copyrights, 1983).

[34] Keller 2008, 45-48.

[35] Ibid, 50. "[T]ehomic theology" says "the very materialization of the universe from the deep can be read as the birth of a cosmic body from the womb of the infinite." Ibid, 64.

[36] Ibid, 58.

[37] This particular distinction serves this project, by linking tehomophobia (i.e. fear of chaos, fear of the feminine, fear of the divine primordial energy of creation) with immature embodiments of Original Power that take the form of domination. It is not to make the case that all of Christianity is tehomophobic. No doubt, many theologies have evolved over the centuries that explore and nuance the meaning and function of *tehom* and/or chaos in the Hebrew scriptures.

[38] United Church of Christ minister Karen Kittredge seeks to open the dividing wall between human beings, animals, and the earth. Her strongest experiences have come through swimming with humpback whales. Here are her words: "The initial experience of swimming gently at the surface, looking down through my mask at the fifty foot long creatures below, is one of utter speechlessness. Haloed by the sun's rays, white pectoral fins glowing in the deep, I am aware that I have encountered the angels of the sea. There is a mind-blowing, gut-wrenching shift from head to heart, unexpected yet undeniable. Suddenly, there is only love everywhere – all at once – inside, outside, connecting, defining, challenging. Love – Love – Love. Sobbing into my snorkel, I rise above the surface to gasp for air, to get my emotional bearings. For that moment, suspended in turquoise Caribbean waters, floating outside of time, I am absolutely convinced that the Power of Love is alive and well in our world. I know that we are not alone. I know that the pain we bear is a pain of transformation, not the pain of The End. When I connect with them, I know, once again, that we are All One, that we are All Love, that we are going to make it, and that it is going to be a glorious ride." Karen Kittredge, The Butterfly Effect, [http://www.karenkittredge.com/Swimming-with-Humpback-Whales.html, accessed March 13, 2012].

[39] There may be a connection between spiritual maturity, and willingness to be in relationship with chaos. For a time on our journey, we may feel drawn to the simplicity of black and white interpretations. It takes time to become a vessel that can receive the complexity of the deep. "I have a secret feeling that the chaos is more important, in the long run, than the laws and the order. It prevents us from becoming 'mass man,' the faceless acceptors of totalitarian rule. . ." Caulfield points out that people who like order feel quite sure they know what kind of people we should be . . . "But we are not machines. Chaos holds out the possibility that we may become people unimaginably greater than anything others could have planned or anticipated." He adds: "[O]ut of the chaos comes growth, change and maturity." Sean Caulfield, *In Praise of Chaos* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981), 2.

[40] There is a certain irony in any effort to "categorize chaos" but heck I'll give it a go!

[41] For more discussion on surrender see "Hesitating on the Brink of Downward Mobility" in Chapter 4.

[42] Here I want to emphasize a distinction between disruption and violence. For more on this distinction, and the particular discomfort middle agents have with disruption, see "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5. Holy chaos is high on the scale of disruption and low on the scale of violence.

[43] John Bell and Graham Maule, "Enemy of Apathy," *Enemy of Apathy: Wild Goose Songs, Vol.2, Iona Community Hymns, Chants, and Responses* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 1988).

[44] For more on intersubjectivity see "Learning to Live in an Interrelated World" in Chapter 2.

[45] The ethic of hospitality developed in Chapter 6 – with its negotiation of power, risk of violence, and potential of healing – applies not only to human and communal relationships, but to the relationship between humanity and the earth.

[46] David J, Hawkin "The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology" *Ecotheology* 8.2 (2003): 170, referencing J. Donald Hughes, *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), 121-127.

[47] See "Like Creation, the Demonic is Dynamic" in Chapter 2.

[48] "As I dug deeper into the history of how this market model had swept the globe, however, I discovered that the idea of exploiting crisis and disaster has been the modus operandi of Milton Friedman's movement from the very beginning— this fundamentalist form of capitalism has always needed disasters to advance. It was certainly the case that the facilitating disasters were getting bigger and more shocking, but what was happening in Iraq and New Orleans was not a new, post-September 11 invention. Rather, these bold experiments in crisis exploitation were the culmination of three decades of strict adherence to the shock doctrine." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 11.

[49] "This desire for godlike powers of total creation is precisely why free-market ideologues are so drawn to crises and disasters. Nonapocalyptic reality is simply not hospitable to their ambitions. For thirty-five years, what has animated Friedman's counterrevolution is an attraction to a kind of freedom and possibility available only in times of cataclysmic change— when people, with their stubborn habits and insistent demands, are blasted out of the way— moments when democracy seems a practical impossibility. Believers in the shock doctrine are convinced that only a great rupture— a flood, a war, a terrorist attack— can generate the kind of vast, clean canvases they crave. It is in these malleable moments, when we are psychologically unmoored and physically uprooted, that these artists of the real plunge in their hands and begin their work of remaking the world." Ibid, 26. Here Klein is using the term apocalyptic in its popular sense, and doing so effectively to describe the role of disaster in creating blank slates for imperial ambitions. This should be distinguished from biblical apocalyptic writing which is not a blank check for imperial aggression. The popular usage of the literary form is an exact reversal of its original function, which was to proclaim faith in the continuity of God's covenant of salvation and well-being in the face of the devastating discontinuity of imperial violence. Apocalyptic stories present a radical cosmological liberationist vision – a holy disruption of the imperial way of ordering reality – emerging from occupied people for occupied people. For more, see "Embracing Apocalypse" in Chapter 7.

[50] Ibid, 20.

[51] Our pillaged post-industrial mid-American communities (including Rochester, NY where I live and which was just named the 5th poorest city in the U.S.) continue to receive imperial assaults. Detroit is the quintessential example. After being utterly gutted, the next round of imperialists show up and accuse their democratically elected leaders of being incompetent. These self-styled saviors write policy that allows them to override the election process and appoint "emergency financial managers." This ensures that the exhausted remnant does not regroup and build a healthy communal way of life, but rather that the perpetuators of "free market" ideology can legally continue their predatory feeding frenzy until the bones are licked clean. Once that is accomplished they can impose their abstract Freidman-esque vision on an imagined blank slate. (More on the blank slate below.) We can observe the philosophy of opportunistic crisis playing out before our eyes, as speculators arrive and grab large parcels of land for close to free. Bill Laitner, "When Detroit emergency manager Kevyn Orr leaves, state may use new form of control," *Detroit Free Press* (December 15, 2013).

[52] Ezekiel 31: 2-3.

[53] Ezekiel 31: 12-13. See also "By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, 'With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. I dug wells and drank waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.' Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded; they have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown. I know your rising up and your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back on the way by which you came." (Isaiah 37: 24-29) God allows humanity to use the gift of power to create and destroy. Yet God remains engaged, taming those that do damage. With the "hook in your nose," we note a connection to the Book of Job, and God taming natural and imperial chaos. See also God's taming of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in Daniel 4, humbling him by making him live with the wild animals in the ruins of his giant fallen tree (empire).

[54] Jeremiah 29: 5-7. Amidst relentless imperial assault, in the spirit of Jeremiah 29, there is a tender social fabric forming on the ground in Detroit that includes urban food production, creative public spaces, renewable energy, and art. Erica Yoon grew interested in documenting life on the ground: "The idea of urban farms popping up amid the chaos in Detroit seemed to be a great way to visualize how people were attempting to weather the economic storm there." From her blog: "'I like to believe that we [are] holding this place together,' says Kadiri Sennefer, Detroit resident and a farm manager at D-Town Farm. 'We the people that are the visionaries, the dreamers, the people that's holding on to the faith that things aren't as bad as they seem… we don't have it easy. Yet we continue to push forward… in the midst of what everything that they're saying about Detroit,' he says, 'there's prosperity and abundance and a great deal of it flowing through Detroit.'" Erica Yoon, "Photographs from Detroit: Survival, renewal and urban farming," (Photo Blogs from the Denver Post, October 24, 2013), [http://blogs.denverpost.com/captured/2013/10/24/detroit-photos-urban-farming-community-renewal/6451/, accessed December 18, 2013]. The Greening of Detroit, a local not-for-profit, estimates that there are between 1500 and 2000 gardens in the city of Detroit. Jane C. Tim, "Urban farming takes hold in blighted Motor City," *MSNBC*, September 10, 2013, [http://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/urban-farming-takes-hold-blighted-motor, accessed December 18, 2013] See also: Samantha Simmons, "Detroit: Signs of Life, A photo compilation of the people, landscapes, and buildings reviving the Motor City" *Green Building & Design* (September/October 2013), [http://gbdmagazine.com/2013/23-detroit-simmons/, accessed December 18, 2013].

[55] We see the impact of imperial aggression in the breakdown of the social fabric – in gentrification and foreclosure patterns that tear apart generations of neighborhood relationships – or in youth violence and riots. Effective nonviolent social movements, like Occupy, have a deliberate focus on tending to relationships of trust, communication, and shared power. (In the case of the Civil Rights Movement, we saw an explicit and fearless commitment to love and social healing.) For more see "Community Organization and Globalizing Grassroots Movements" in Chapter 4.

[56] For more on God and creational boundaries, see "Holy Homemaking" and "Love Song to the Law" below.

[57] Middle agents are defined in the introductory chapter.

[58] For more see Chapter 3, The Predicament of Middle Agents.

[59] See "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[60] Psalm 127.

[61] Luke 6: 47-49.

[62] Genesis 2: 6.

[63] Genesis 2: 10-14. To continue exploring the theme of paradise, see Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of this World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2008). She points out that the location of Eden is intentionally mysterious. This great source of life is elusive. It is not a place that can be conquered, occupied or owned. She also notes that our canon opens and closes in paradise constituted by trees and streams of water. Ibid, 25.

[64] "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." Revelation 21: 1. This passage describes a new Jerusalem, where there will be no more death, crying and pain. Our hermeneutical approach (multiple contextual referents) would suggest a simultaneous canonical meaning and socio-historical meaning. In other words, the mythological and political are being evoked in tandem. In a fulfilled creation, holy chaos (divine power) flows through earth maturely and nonviolently. Destruction via natural and imperial chaos (the sea) is replaced by healing (a fountain and river of living water). Rossing and Hawkin trace the political implications of the sea through the Book of Revelation. "[I]n Revelation the sea is a political symbol: it is the sea which facilitates Roman economic activity. In Aristides' words, the sea lay 'as a belt through the middle of the inhabited world.' The sea was 'the place where everything had been channeled'" David J. Hawkin, "The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology" *Ecotheology* 8.2 (2003),167 referencing Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future" in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of the Earth and Humans*, Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary R. Ruether, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 208. "Babylon thrives on exploitative trade, facilitated by the sea. In the new earth there is no sea, and the new Jerusalem does not derive her fabulous wealth from trade or exploitation. Unlike the rivers and springs which are polluted and turned to blood in Rev. 16.4, the new Jerusalem has water which is 'bright as crystal' (22.1) and which is a gift from God, free for all to drink (22.17). The new Jerusalem is an inviting city. It is beautiful (21.11), open to all (21.25) and provides food and water as a 'gift' (22.17). Its wealth is provided by God and therefore it does not have to rely on military

conquest, exploitation and oppression to become rich." Hawkin 2003, 168 referencing Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Ecological Vision for Earth's Future" *Mission Studies* XVI-1, 31 (1999), 147-155.

[65] Physicists too wonder about this great before-ness – a realm without space and time. "[P]hysics predicts that time was indeed bounded in the past as Augustine claimed [when he said that the world was made "not in time, but simultaneously with time"]. It did not stretch back for all eternity. If the big bang was the beginning of time itself, then any discussion about what happened before the big bang, or what caused it-in the usual sense of physical causation-is simply meaningless. The essence of the Hartle-Hawking idea [referring to James Hartle and Stephen Hawking] is that the big bang was not the abrupt switching on of time at some singular first moment, but the emergence of time from space in an ultrarapid but nevertheless continuous manner. On a human time scale, the big bang was very much a sudden, explosive origin of space, time, and matter. But look very, very closely at that first tiny fraction of a second and you find that there was no precise and sudden beginning at all . . . What happened before the big bang? The answer is: Nothing." Paul Davies. What Happened Before the Big Bang?, http://www.fortunecity.com/emachines/e11/86/big-bang.html (April 18, 2011).

[66] James H. Olthuis, "Crossing the Threshold: Sojourning Together in the Wild Spaces of Love," in *Knowing other-wise: philosophy at the threshold of spirituality,* James H. Olthuis. ed. (New York: NY: Fordham University Press, 1997), 235–257. For more on Olthuis' concept of "creation ex amore" see: James K. A. Smith and Henry Isaac Venema, eds., *The Hermeneutics of Charity: Interpretation, Selfhood, and Postmodern Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004).

[67] Genesis 1: 3.

[68] I recently listened to Nobel laureate Saul Perlmutter talk about the big bang. He said it was not a bang at all. In fact, the universe is expanding at a continuously accelerating rate. That is, the universe is moving from greater density to lesser density. Space is opening up between everything at every scale (from atoms to galaxies). What we call the big bang is just the furthest point back in terms of density that we can measure with our scientific tools. At the point that we call the big bang, the expansion reaches a point where our tools can see it, giving the impression of a sudden appearance. Terry Gross, "Interview with Saul Perlmutter" *Fresh Air* (NPR, November 14, 2011).

[69] My concept of Original Power is a play on Matthew Fox's concept of Original Blessing. Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, Inc., 1983).

[70] John Bawden, Program Notes on The Creation - Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), [http://www.choirs.org.uk/prognotes/Creation.htm, accessed March 13, 2012].

[71] Ibid.

[72] 2 Sam 22: 29.

[73] 1 John 1: 5.

[74] Psalm 27: 1.

[75] 2 Corinthians 4: 6-7.

[76] Daniel 2: 20-22.

[77] Jeremiah 23: 24.

[78] Psalm 139: 11-12.

[79] Mark 4: 21-22.

[80] 1 Corinthians 4: 5.

[81] Exodus 34: 29-30.

[82] Matthew 17: 2.

[83] Proverbs 4: 18-19.

[84] Daniel 12: 3.

[85] Matthew 5: 14-16.

[86] John 8: 12.

[87] Ephesians 5: 8.

[88] Psalm 119: 105.

[89] Isaiah 9: 2-7, quoted in Matthew 4: 16 by Jesus to announce a change to the social order.

[90] Isaiah 42: 5-9.

[91] Isaiah 49: 5-12. Isaiah 42 and 49 "are the basis for the [New Testament] texts on being a light in the Gospels and Revelation." Email communication with Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat. February 25, 2013.

[92] Luke 2: 27-35.

[93] Mark 5: 27-30.

[94] Acts 13: 47.

[95] John 1: 3-5.

[96] Revelation 21: 23-25.

[97] In the text, we are witnessing a great initiating of life, but I must emphasize that we are not talking about deism. We are not talking about a God scientist making a creation machine and setting it off on its own to see what happens. It is true that something is set in motion – a great unleashing of power and energy, a massive field of creative possibility. Yet unlike a deistic conception of God, the biblical Creator is passionately engaged – intellectually, emotionally, and physically – in everything that unfolds. There is no objective distance. We are encountering something more like an artistic God – shaping, sculpting, being surprised by what emerges, later breaking down with sorrow, stepping back with awe and wonder – exclaiming, "this is really good!"

[98] Derrida explores the question of the impossibility of gift in: Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.). I set my theological orientation to this philosophical concept in the introductory chapter. In this chapter, I rely heavily on John Caputo's interaction with Derrida in: John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell, A Conversation with Jack Derrida* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1997). I want to thank my friend Dr. Mark Brummitt, professor of Old Testament at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, NY, for naming this "asymmetry" and for pointing me to Derrida's writings on the gift. Through this conversation, Mark and I found ourselves re-articulating "original sin" as "original indebtedness."

[99] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 266.

[100] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 82. Arendt says that natality is what allows us to act. "It is the faculty of action that interferes with this law [mortality] because it interrupts the inexorable automatic course of daily life[.] . . . [A]ction, seen from the viewpoint of the automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world, looks like a miracle." Arendt 1958, 266.

[101] John D. Caputo, 145.

[102] Ibid, 145

[103] Ibid, 146.

[104] Ibid, 147.

[105] Derrida's gift might be compared to the "divine lure" in process theology. "An amazing fact is that the cosmos has created familiar order at times billions of years in the past and to the edges of the known universe. Physical laws seem to be the same even under these extreme conditions of space and time. Why is this so? The answer of process theology is that the divine lure guides the universe to maximum enjoyment and creativity for all its entities: hence the evolution of the universe to more complexity and organization. Without lawfulness and order this would have been impossible." John A. Jungerman, *World in Process: Creativity and Interconnection in the New Physics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 193.

[106] Caputo 1997, 151.

[107] Manolopoulos, Mark, "About gifts: Derrida, scripture, earth" *The Bible and Critical Theory* 1, no. 4 (2005), 38.1–38.12.

[108] Psalm 8 offers a lovely mediation on humanity's place in the scheme of things.

[109] Derrida, 1992, 7. For more on Derrida and aporia, see: Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, translated by Thomas Dutoit (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993). Theologically, I understand the divine as the ultimate aporia (impassible crossing) – a border, a limit, a place we get stuck, where certainty is not possible, where one is puzzled, and the mind goes blank. This place of paralysis is where Derrida's mind gets rolling, interrogating self/other and impossible/possible. Perhaps this same aporia is the precipice where Christians surrender to divine love. In both Derridian and Christian approaches, death serves as a pivot point. For Christians, the impassable is made passable through Christ. Death (both physical and spiritual) becomes a doorway to expanding states of experience of the eternal (resurrection). Aporia becomes an experience to trust and move through.

[110] "If we understand God's creative act to be the expression of a supreme generosity and availability for another or if we understand God's 'being' as always 'being-for-another,' then it makes sense to say that our lives become authentic insofar as they imitate such generosity. The divine pattern, in other words, becomes the pattern for our own lives." Wirzba 2003, 13.

[111] Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.

[112] Another way to say this: We are the waves; God is the ocean.

[113] Robert Robinson, "Come Thou Font of Every Blessing" in *A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel Alley* (Bishopgate, 1759).

[114] Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 19.

[115] "The creation narrative is a statement about the blessing God has ordained into the processes of human life." Walter Brueggemann, "A Theology of Blessing" in *Interpretation: Genesis* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 36.

[116] Ibid, 36.

[117] Ibid, 37.

[118] Gary Gutting, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault: 2nd Edition.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102.

[119] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Colin Gordon, ed. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

[120] For more on Foucault's dynamic concept of power, see Part 4, Chapter 2 (Method) in Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol 1, An Introduction,* trans. by Robert Hurley. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 92ff. Note his concept of "shifting matrices." Ibid, 99. Foucault refers to "a swarming of disciplinary mechanisms." In his description, there is an operation of power below the particular mechanisms themselves. He describes a disciplinary modality of power that can overtake other modalities of power, leading to a "disciplinary society." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1977), 211-215.

[121] Scriptures that evoke this understanding include: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15: 5) and "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." (2 Corinthians 4: 7).

[122] Rabbi Michael Lerner invites us "to understand God as the force of healing and transformation in the universe, the aspect of the universe that is the source of love, kindness, generosity, social justice, peace and evolving consciousness, and that this aspect of the universe permeates every ounce of being, every cell, and unifies all being." Rabbi Michael Lerner, "A God of Disaster and Compassion" *The Philadephia Inquir*er (January 9, 2005).

[123] Keller 2008, 90.

[124] John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr: Nonviolent Strategies and Tactics for Social Change* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 1-2. Nietzsche expresses contempt for what he calls the Judeo-Christian "slave ethic" and its glorification of the weak. King's stance on this debate about the nature of power was clarified by his exposure to Gandhi, and his increasing awareness of the social transformative potential of aligning with the poor.

[125] Martin Luther King Jr., "A Time to Break Silence" in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, James Melvin Washington, ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1986), 252. Dr. Cornel West is fond of saying: "Justice is what love looks like in public."

[126] Isaiah 2: 4; Micah 4: 3.

[127] Psalm 104: 27-30.

[128] One could see this boundary between infinity and finitude – or transcendent and immanent – as wisdom, law or creation order. Here I am speaking of the dynamic structure that governs the time/space arena of creation within the immeasurable depths. I explore the subject of wisdom/law in depth in the closing section of this chapter.

[129] Proverbs 8: 22ff.

[130] Psalm 19: 5.

[131] Psalm 104: 26.

[132] My playful reenactment of God as homemaker.

[133] For more on God as a homemaker/householder see Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2001). "This God – the creator, liberator, and sustainer of everything – is a down-to-earth householder." Ibid, 146. For more on the theology of homemaking (and home-breaking) see: Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

[134] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1963), 233.

[135] Genesis 1: 4b, 7, 9, 14, 18.

[136] "When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth . . ." Proverbs 8: 27-31.

[137] Brueggemann explains that this declaration of goodness is not a moral declaration, but an aesthetic one. God steps back and sees that this creative effort is lovely, pleasing, coming to various completion points. This is a description of an artist in a creative process, not a judge. Brueggemann 1982, 37.

[138] Davis sees creation, specifically the earth, as a central locus of life second only to God, and a living subject with the capacity to act. "Rereading the whole Priestly poem of creation . . . one sees that the Bible begins with a picture of life flowing from a twofold center- or, as the psalmist puts it, a fountain that is with God. Genesis 1 represents the earth as the primary acting subject, second only to God[.]" Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle Locations 908-910.

[139] My emphasis on the dynamism, vastness, and inapprehensible complexity of creation order in no way diminishes my agreement with Ellen F. Davis, Sylvia C. Keesmaat, and several of my other interlocutors that creation order exists. "Life created in God's image is meant to conform, with other forms of life, into a single harmonious order." Davis 2009, Kindle Location 917.

[140] Psalm 104: 10-12.

[141] Sallie McFague 2001, 145.

[142] Ibid.

[143] For an extended exegetical study of God's intimacy with humanity see: Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984).

[144] Genesis 2: 7-9.

[145] Genesis 1: 29-30.

[146] Psalm 104: 13-22.

[147] "[Samuel reporting God's words] said, 'These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day.'" 1 Samuel 8: 11-18. J. Richard Middleton points out that Samuel, in an effort to punctuate the point, goes beyond God's intent by saying that God will abandon humanity and not redeem us. (Email communication with Dr. J. Richard Middleton, May 9, 2015).

[148] "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice." Ezekiel 34: 15-16.

[149] Ezekiel 31: 10-13.

[150] Mark 4: 30-34; Matthew 13: 31-33 referencing the interpretation of Ched Myers 1988, 177.

[151] Brueggemann affirms that God is at work to bring creation to its purpose. "God will neither abandon [creation] nor withdraw its permit of freedom." Brueggemann 1982, 37-38.

[152] While simplistic and rigid formulations of norms flood the culture, I must note that there are more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of creational norms in the Christian Reformational tradition and elsewhere, ones that open rather than foreclose the underlying dynamism of the created order. Dr. Bob Sweetman reminds me that norms are something like Amos' plumb line (Amos 7: 7-9), guidelines that lead us to consider how we have parted from God's life-giving intentions for creation. As such, they are not intrinsically oppressive, though they may be employed in oppressive ways. Rather than discard norms altogether, through engaging in dialogue, we may discover resources for our liberative task. Richard Middleton puts it this way: "If the notion of 'creation order' has become, in our articulations, oppressively static, legalistic and heteronomous, then let the reformation continue!" J. Richard Middleton "Parables of Compassion and Judgement: Opening Meditations for a Creation-Order Tradition" in *An Ethos of Compassion and the Integrity of Creation*, Brian J. Walsh, Hendrik Hart, Robert E. VanderVennen, eds. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), 12.

[153] This is appropriate suspicion as described in our hermeneutic of suspicion in the introductory chapter.

[154] "So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'" Mark 7: 5-8.

[155] "A Theology of Blessing, 36-38. "a theology of blessing . . . refers to the generative power of life, fertility, and well-being that God ordained within the normal flow and mystery of life." Brueggemann 1982, 37 (summarizing Claus Westermann, *Blessing: In the Bible and the Life of the Church*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978.)

[156] Genesis 1: 11; Psalm 104: 14.

[157] Ellen Davis contextualizes this descriptive fruitfulness within the ancient Near Eastern agrarian reality of the writers/poets: "[P]ermanent settlement allowed the domestication and improvement of the native fruits that grew in variety and abundance within the microclimates afforded by the region's hilly terrain: grapes, figs, olives, dates, pomegranates – 'fruit trees making fruit ... with their seed in them.' In view of this natural and cultural history, it is evident that the seemingly otiose repetitions of the [Hebrew root for 'seed'] in Genesis 1 are purposeful: They bespeak a poet's alertness to the world. Far from abstract analysis, this is liturgical celebration of the familiar yet inexhaustible

mystery of fruitfulness as it was experienced by the Israelites and other agrarian peoples of the Near Eastern uplands." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 809-813.

[158] Psalm 104 : 24-5.

[159] Genesis 1: 20.

[160] Genesis 2: 1.

[161] Genesis 1: 22, 28.

[162] Keller 2008, 59. "Genesis involves generations of forth-coming, multiplying creatures. The gathering cooperation unfolds as a rhythm, a cosmic liturgy: divine lure, creaturely improvisation, and divine reception – ooh, good!" Ibid, 62. Keller also speaks of Creative Wisdom that "does not impose order but calls forth self-organizing complexity." Ibid. I think this is descriptively useful to an extent. Though I find it to be too abstract – for me, God is not only a process – God, however infinite and transcendent, has the quality of being and presence. In this sense God can be a companion.

[163] McFague 2001, 232, footnote 23.

[164] Genesis 1: 20.

[165] Genesis 1: 21.

[166] Genesis 1: 24-5.

[167] Genesis 1: 26, 28.

[168] Psalm 104: 6.

[169] Psalm 104: 32.

[170] Hendrik Hart. "Introduction" in an unpublished manuscript on *Change*, 10.

[171] See endnote 109 above.

[172] Psalm 104: 16.

[173] Luke 5: 1-5; John 21: 1-10.

[174] Matthew 14: 13-21, Mark 6: 31-44, Luke 9: 10-17 and John 6: 5-15; and Mark 8: 1-9; Matthew 15: 32-39.

[175] Genesis 2: 2-3.

[176] "After the giftedness of a good creation, for humankind to steward and to nurture, there is the giftedness of rest." *Sylvia* C. *Keesmaat,* "Sabbath and Jubilee: Radical Alternatives for Being Human" in *Making a New Beginning: Biblical Reflections on Jubilee.* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, 1998), 15.

[177] "Sabbath is meant to enable Israel to see the world as God's creation - in the vision of the Priestly tradition (Genesis 1), a complex harmony orchestrated by God, where every creature, including humans, can rest in the goodness of the whole." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 1226-1227. "Accordingly, there is no place in the land that ordinary Israelites are not obliged to revere. Only by constant mindfulness of the holy in its varying intensities can this people live fittingly on the land with which it is entrusted." Ibid, Kindle Locations 1335-1337.

[178] "The model or pattern for our practices of delight, of course, is God, who, throughout the divine creative work but also at its end, took immense pleasure in what was made." Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), Kindle Locations 880-881.

[179] Keller 2008, 59.

[180] Psalm 104: 13

[181] Sabbath "models a radical egalitarianism" and a "lavish giftedness" that is "fundamentally counter to the fearful hoarding of our culture[.]" Keesmaat 1998, 17-18.

[182] "The Sabbath defines or specifies the character of creation, just as it defines, or has the potential to define, the culture of God's people. The world becomes 'creation' on the seventh day. In like manner, the nation of Israel testifies to its religious identity and consecration to God as it keeps holy the day of rest, the 'feast of creation.' Humanity and earth become most fully what they are to be in the celebration of the Sabbath." Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 646-648.

[183] Wirzba 2006, Kindle Locations 113-114.

[184] Ellen Davis references J. Richard Middleton, highlighting his argument "that what is sanctified through God's rest is not one particular day of the week, 'the Sabbath' per se, but rather 'the entirety of human history.'" In her words: "Middleton asserts that . . . now humans come 'into their true power as makers of history, as representatives and emissaries of God, called to shape the world in imitation of the creator's own primordial activity on the first six days of creation.'" She finds Middleton's claim to be "excessive." Biblically, she does not see what follows the narrative in Genesis 1 as "eligible for sanctification" and thus prefers to confine this moment of "divine pleasure" to the seventh day of creation. Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 1015-1016. Referencing J. Richard Middleton *The Liberating Image: Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. 2005), 212. This is not to say that Davis eschews all continuity. She sees the story of creation as "a liturgical poem." "Genesis 1 is giving form to a certain way of seeing the world, and accurate perception provides an entree to active participation in the order of creation." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 704-705. This dissertation, being focused on the story of power, stands with Middleton, drawing an unbreakable continuity between God's actions in creation with the unfolding of history and with visions of eschatology. In my view, the original process of creation is more than a divine example to human beings who then model grace in our creating. It is a continuous process of the unfolding of divine power in the hands of humanity under divine guidance and with the shared participation of our Creator.

[185] J. Richard Middleton picks up on NT Wright's view that the world, in biblical terms, is "an unfinished drama." "Once we are so immersed, once we discern the direction of the plot, it becomes our task to plot our lives in terms of the biblical story. We are called to discern where that story is leading us *today*, to see what improvisation is appropriate, even required by us *now*, based on God's overarching desire for the healing of the world." Middleton 1995, 12.

[186] "Creation is not a once-and-for-all completed event. It is open to the creator's continuing involvement, just as it is open to our own influence. We have within our ability the freedom and the power to alter the character and order of creation. That we do participate in the work of creation is clear, since many scriptural texts speak directly to the roles that humans play in restoring or desecrating the creation." Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 289-291. "Sabbath is a teaching that has the potential to redirect and transform all our existence, bringing it into more faithful alignment with God's life-building and life-strengthening ways." Wirzba 2006, Kindle Locations 196-197.

[187] An ancient and contemporary example is the way that control of land shifts, via debt instruments, from a broad spectrum of human families to a small minority. The "seventh year simply clarifies what the land always is: God's domain." Davis, 2009, Kindle Location 1682.

[188] "This growing discrepancy between rich and poor, and the exploitation that often enables it, are a direct affront to the generosity and care of God, which is why the prophetic literature and the Psalms frequently rail against those who continually seek to amass greater and greater fortunes. What the vision of Jubilee asks (whether it was satisfactorily answered in historical reality is hard to know), when it demands that land lost to poverty and misfortune be returned, is that the vision of God's care for the poor become an economic reality and not simply a theological platitude." Wirzba 2006, Kindle Locations 615-619. For information on Sabbath economics see: Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward and Economy of Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) and Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*. Printed as part of Tell the Word, a project of Church of the Savior. (Washington, DC. 2001).); and Anthony J. Ricciuti, *The Economics of the Way: Jubilee Practice Among the Early Christians According to the Acts of the Apostles.* Unpublished MPhil Thesis (Toronto, ON: Institute for Christian Studies, 2001).

[189] Sabbath is "one of our most honest and practical indicators of authentic religious faith." Wirzba 2006, Kindle Location 116.

[190] Ibid, Kindle Location 602.

[191] Keesmaat 1998, 15.

[192] "Salvation, we might say, is nothing less than our enjoyment of God, the enjoyment of God's life and love as reflected in the grace of creation (and the delight of the Sabbath) that finally overcomes suffering and death." Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 398-399.

[193] Ibid, 23.

[194] "[T]he processes of nature are dynamic, open to whatever possibility presents itself. Rather than being a fixed creation in which the species of life are forever and firmly determined, God has built into creation itself the evolutionary, adaptive freedom to become itself." Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 838-839.

[195] Davis argues that, in its original context, the creation narrative – "this poem about a world of self-perpetuating fruitfulness" – "must have served to counter the religious ideologies of lsrael's pagan neighbors." She specifies two stories that it counters: 1) fertility gods who inseminate the earth; and 2) people being made to work the earth for food for the gods. "The Genesis account claims the reverse: the Creator of heaven and earth is the generous One who provides food for every living creature." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 824-825.

[196] "If Sabbath is about more than rest, but is also about trust and delight, then violations would also include failure to delight or rejoice in creation and anxiety, or lack of trust, in God's provision." Email communication with Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat. February 25, 2013. "When we forsake the Sabbath, what we are finally doing is closing ourselves off from God's life-giving and life-sustaining grace (see Ps. 104: 27– 30), demonstrating that we think we can live by ourselves and from our own might." Wirzba 2006, Kindle Locations 637-639.

[197] Sonya Kitchell, "Someday" *Cold Day*, Track 6, Velour Records, 2005.

[198] Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 37ff.

[199] The Domination System is "a bewilderingly complex network" that spans the globe, touching all areas of our lives, "like a massive family system" that "does not permit deviations from its values." Ibid, 36.

[200] We will explore the ways Original Power gets employed for the purposes of exploitation in systemic power structures in greater detail in the following chapters.

[201] For more on the way scriptural language is manipulated to gain our assent for violent imperial endeavors, see "The Lure of Deceptive Language" in Chapter 3.

[202] The way logic is used to lull us into accepting domination worldviews is explored in "The Hypnotic Quality of Internal Coherence" in Chapter 3.

[203] The history of theology presents a range of variations on the subject of the *tehom*, including chaos as God's raw material, and chaos as preexisting divine being. I am presenting *ex nihilo* in stark relief to emphasize how domination takes root in theologies that imagine God as a humanoid master who directs the universe in direct, hierarchical ways.

[204] Klein, at length, discusses modern-day imperialists' longing for the blank slate. She documents how present-day social engineers wax poetic about a "clean sheet" on which to inscribe their visions, and how they intentionally use cataclysm to, in their imaginations, clear away the old and make room for the new. Of course, in reality, the complexity of human life and relationships is not so easily swept away. "The shock doctrine mimics [the process of torture] precisely, attempting to achieve on a mass scale what torture does one on one in the interrogation cell. The clearest example was the shock of September 11, which, for millions of people, exploded 'the world that is familiar' and opened up a period of deep disorientation and regression that the Bush administration expertly exploited. Suddenly we found ourselves living in a kind of Year Zero, in which everything we knew of the world before could now be dismissed as 'pre-9/ 11 thinking.' Never strong in our knowledge of history, North Americans had become a blank slate—' a clean sheet of paper' on which 'the newest and most beautiful words can be written,' as Mao said of his people. A new army of experts instantly materialized to write new and beautiful words on the receptive canvas of our posttrauma consciousness: 'clash of civilizations,' they inscribed. 'Axis of evil,' 'Islamo-fascism,' 'homeland security.'" Klein 2007, 20. "[T]he Chicago School strain of capitalism does indeed have something in common with other dangerous ideologies: the signature desire for unattainable purity, for a clean slate on which to build a reengineered model society." Ibid, 26. "The ideologies that long for that impossible clean slate, which can be reached only through some kind of cataclysm, are the dangerous ones." Klein 2007, 23. "Most people who survive

a devastating disaster want the opposite of a clean slate: they want to salvage whatever they can and begin repairing what was not destroyed; they want to reaffirm their relatedness to the places that formed them." Ibid, 10.

[205] We mirror the intrapsychic relationality of our Creator. Arendt says this capacity for interior conversation is inherent to morality. In order to behave in a moral manner we need to have a space within where we can hold ourselves to account. She calls this "two-in-one." Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: The Groundbreaking Investigation on How We Think*, Mary McCarthy, ed. (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 179ff.

[206] "God suffers because the people have rejected him, have broken the relationship[.]" Fretheim 1984, Kindle Locations 1502-1503. "God is revealed not as one who remains coolly unaffected by the rejection of the people, but as one who is deeply wounded by the broken relationship. The interaction between God and people thus takes place not simply at the intellectual level as it were, nor in a law court; the exchange occurs also at the emotional level. God shares feelings, not just thoughts. The people know not only what God thinks, but what God feels. Thus, a holistic picture of God emerges. God relates at every level with the whole person of each individual." Ibid, Kindle Locations 1685-1688.

[207] Here Derrida might note that we've again stepped up to the precipice of impossibility. Pure wildness (diversity/liberation), like pure hospitality, undoes the very premises upon which it is possible. Theologically chaos undoes creation. Still, I want to suggest, as I did with hospitality, that we approach this wildness rather than withdraw from it. As we take responsibility for our creative capacities, and shape structures of power, we can sincerely seek ways for our structures to serve diversity and liberation, rather than conformity and control. A *tehom*-embracing cosmology supports this effort.

[208] David Ray Griffin has a variation on the theme that involves a good guy and neutral stuff that holds power. He takes the argument in the opposite direction of the blank slate. He recognizes that the opening lines of Genesis indicate the existence of chaotic material being present at the beginning of creation. From there he sets up a dualism, arguing that this material carries its own power and that through this power the material resists God. And thus, Griffin determines that creatures have a power that is not fully controllable by divine power. His conclusion about the nature of God is the opposite of the patriarchal one above. For Griffin, God can be impotent in tragedy because of the existence of "non-God" power. I appreciate Griffin's willingness to abandon a patriarchal God, but find it unfortunate that he cannot imagine any other form of power. For him the only thing left when patriarchal power is taken away is impotence. What if the biblical narrative is showing us that God holds a potent form of relational power? David Ray Griffin, "Creation out of Nothing, Creation out of Chaos and the Problem of Evil" in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, Stephen T. Davis, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 108ff.

[209] Keller points out that "tehomophobia" can take two forms, effortless omniscience and chaoskampf. Keller 2003, xix.

[210] Keller calls the Babylon creation story – "the Enuma Elish, in which the Lord Marduk slaughters his grandmother Tiamet, the oceanic chaos." – "creation by matricide." Ibid, 26.

[211] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. 2005), 252.

[212] Ibid, 235. This leads Middleton to a deeper study of Genesis 1. He approaches the text with some questions: What kind of power God is delegating? Does this power include violence? Is violence part of the heart of God? He asks in his final chapter, "Are we created in the image of a violent God?"

[213] Ibid, 255. Middleton is referencing Pedro Trigo, *Creation and History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

[214] Wink 1999, 42ff.

[215] Rita Nakashima Brock argues that early Christianity did not focus on the cross. Instead, the central image of Christian faith was paradise. She doggedly gathers information, visits sacred sites, and studies early Christian art, where she consistently finds images of doves, pools, and deer longing for flowing streams. She finds palms and peacocks as signs of immortality. She finds image after image of a renewed earth, often including healing trees growing by the sides of the flowing waters as described in the book of Revelation. She sees luminous images of earthly landscapes as if they were lit from within (let there be power!) and finds many images of baptism. She was shocked to find no early crosses at all, the ever pervasive and central image of Christianity today. For the early Christians, the saving power of Jesus comes not on the cross, but through Christ's power to re-open paradise and restore our garden earth. Brock 2008, xi-xviii. Our hermeneutic of suspicion, calls us to ask, who does the shift from paradise to cross serve?

[216] Arendt finds efforts to see violence as an extension of creativity – and to define this creativity/violence in biological terms (or ontological terms) – to be profoundly dangerous. In her estimation this line of thought can only lead to violence: "Thus the debate between those who propose violent means to restore 'law and order' and those who propose nonviolent reforms begins to sound ominously like a discussion between two physicians who debate the relative advantages of surgical as opposed to medical treatment of their patient. The sicker the patient is supposed to be, the more likely the surgeon will have the last word." Arendt 1970, 75.

[217] Middleton 2005, 254.

[218] Middleton 2005, 263. Referencing Trigo 1991, 84.

[219] Ibid, 263.

[220] This longing can lead to our forcefully taking what we believe God has promised to us. We are not able to wait for God to bring true transformative restoration, so we make it happen, often violently, using scriptural promises as our justification. In Chapter 2, we explore how this "seeing and taking" breaks our relationship with God, with each other (humanity), and the earth.

[221] Mark 10: 29-30.

[222] In his classroom teaching, Dr. Nik Ansell speaks about creation is moving forward to states of greater and greater incarnation, spiraling from glory unto glory.

[223] Sallie McFague delves into the differences between biblical and deistic views of God in her book *Life Abundant*. She shows how much of contemporary Christianity adheres to deism rather than the "householder theology" of the biblical God. McFague 2001, especially Chapters 6 and 7.

[224] In McFague's terms, a deistic God is the "super individual" who creates and takes no responsibility for the effects of the creation. In contrast, a "householder God" is interdependent with the creation and in inescapable relationship. A householder God respects the will of humanity, yet does not walk away from the devastations that we cause. In deistic theology God is a disembodied spirit and creation is "malevolent or indifferent." Ibid, 134-141.

[225] In a deistic view, power is control. God is "a supernatural being who wields power in unilateral and oppressive ways." Ibid, 141.

[226] Fretheim emphasizes God's intimacy and presence. "Word of God and presence of God must always remain together. Word depends finally on presence. If the word is to accomplish God's intended aim, God must continually be at work in the world to see it through. God cannot leave a word and go." Fretheim 1984, Kindle Locations 1359-1361.

[227] Wirzba emphasizes God's delight in creation. "We find it difficult to imagine that God delights in creation because we have gotten used to the deistic idea that God is distant from earth and for the most part uninvolved, that God is not near, not on close, familiar terms with us, because creation runs entirely according to its own laws and in terms of its own energy. But as the biblical witness makes abundantly clear, there is an intensity of intimacy between God and creation that overwhelms our attempts to keep God at bay. God wants to be with the creation, wants to see it succeed and experience joy and peace, and so again and again God enters into covenant relationship with it and with us despite our faithlessness. Wirzba 2006, Kindle Locations 888-893.

[228] "We understand creation in a proper manner when we see God's creative work as continuous and responsive. Rather than being a deistic, one-time act completed long ago, a view made popular by mechanistic science, the scriptures suggest a God who is interested enough in creation to react to it[.]" Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 331-333.

[229] In householder theology, "the world is God's body." McFague 2001, 143.

[230] See "Learning to Live in a Fruitful World" in Chapter 2 for an extended study of creational fruitfulness.

[231] Chapter 7 is dedicated to the subject of God coming to dwell.

[232] For more, see "On the Pain of Knowing" in Chapter 3.

[233] Terence E. Fretheim, "Texts in Context, Preaching Creation: Genesis 1-2" *Word & World* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2009: 75-83), 77.

[234] "Not only is God's Word vulnerable upon being spoken in the world, God's promise of presence is as well. The response of the recipients of the word can effectively push God back into less intensified and less desired forms of presence. God is thus not able to be present with his people and to see to God's Word (see 1 Sam. 3:1), in ways that God would like. God is not given ample opening into the life of the world by the way the world responds to God. This, then, brings us back to our earlier remarks about the vulnerability of the divine presence." Fretheim 1984, Kindle Locations 1366-1369.

[235] Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 827-835. Above, I claim the purpose of creation is mutual joy (between God, creation and humanity). I am not referring to the simple gratification of individual desires. So, this statement need not conflict with Wirzba's reminder that there is more to creation's purpose than our personal benefit. Mutual joy/eschatological joy is tasted and glimpsed, yet not entirely fulfilled, in present human experience. In our walk with God we approach it, and we approach it in complex relationality with each other and all existence. In the same sense that no one is free, when others are oppressed, no person's joy can be complete until the whole creation comes alive. In the meantime, life is a careful negotiation. We increase our own joy in ways that simultaneously increase the joy of all we are connected to – which is everything. In Chapter 6, we will explore a biblical process for negotiating relationships of disproportionate power (hospitality), leading us on a path (a way) to relational joy and well-being.

[236] "Finally, God's appearance in human form reveals God's vulnerability. Appearance only associated with storm phenomena could give a quite different impression. It could suggest that God is totally in control of the situation; the only possible responses before God would be fear and dread. But appearance in human form, even in the midst of such phenomena, reveals another perspective. It suggests an entering into the life of the world that is more vulnerable, where the response can be derision (see Gen. 18:12-13) or incredulity (Judg. 6:13-17). It is to put oneself concretely into the hands of the world to do with as it will. It is revealing of the ways of God that the word is enfleshed in bodies of weakness within the framework of commonplace, everyday affairs, and not in overwhelming power. For, even in those instances where the vestments of God's appearance are threaded with lineaments of power, they clothe a vulnerable form. There is no such thing for Israel as a nonincarnate God." Fretheim 1984, Kindle Locations 1463-1469.

[237] Ezekiel 34.

[238] John 1: 47.

[239] For more on Jesus and authority, see "Tracing the Contours of Power in the Ministry of Jesus" in Chapter 4.

[240] For more, see "Luke and the Theme of Community Organizing" in Chapter 4.

[241] For more, see "God's Dream for the World" in Chapter 7.

[242] Richard Rohr, "River of Love" Richard's Daily Meditations, Center for Action and Contemplation, [http://cacradicalgrace.org, accessed March 28, 2011].

[243] For more on scapegoating, see "Descent into Poverty, Violence and Empire" in Chapter 2.

[244] On scriptural references to exploiters of the vulnerable as cannibals, see Chapter 4, endnote 151.

[245] For more, see "Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification" in Chapter 2

[246] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York, NY: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 2002).

[247] This is the ground-breaking point articulated by Matthew Fox – for which he was investigated and censured by the now retired Pope Benedict – then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. On a personal note, at the age of 30, I had left Catholicism for about a decade. I felt called to return to Christianity, but my soul was struggling with so much that felt narrow and wrong about it. It was reading Fox's *Original Blessing* that opened me to a theology that rests on the essential goodness of life and convinced me to recommit my life to following Christ. Fox 1983.

[248] "The last thing [a domination] worldview needs is a 'sacred universe.'" McFague 2001, 140.

[249] See Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).

[250] Luke 19: 40.

[251] John 12: 1-7.

[252] Matthew 11: 19.

[253] Mark 7: 24-30. For an extended discussion of this passage, see Chapter 6.

[254] Mark 12: 41-44; Luke 21: 1-4.

[255] For more on Jesus and paying taxes, see Chapter 3, endnote 66.

[256] Luke 19: 1-10. For extended discussion of Zacchaeus, see "With God, Even Middle Agent (and Elite) Salvation is Possible" in Chapter 5.

[257] John 3: 16.

[258] Drawing on Patricia Bowen Moore's insights, Kuipers draws the connection between natality (emergent newness/Original Power) and love for the world (care for the vessel of the body and the earth) in the writing of Arendt: "Bowen Moore [describes] a twofold promise inherent in human natality: it is a promise to the child on behalf of the community of others that the world will be preserved as a place of appearance for the child's unique capacity to begin; it is a promise to the world on behalf of the child that successive generations will be granted it and that beginnings will be made for the sake of the world. Bowen Moore connects this twofold promise to the theme of love: the love of the world for the child and the love of the child for the world: [T]he promise inherent in natality is rooted in that experience of love which takes into account the world of human experience. Natality's full expression of this type of love—a love open to the world and its promises—is *amor mundi*: Love for the world." Kuipers 2010, 101. Referencing Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London,UK: MacMillan, 1989) 18-19.

[259] See "We Are Midwives of the New Creation" in Chapter 7.

[260] For more, see "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[261] Smith and Venema, eds., 2004 and Olthuis 1977.

[262] "When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.'" Exodus 20: 18-19.

[263] Sylvia C. Keesmaat, "In Defence of Hermeneutics and Compassion" in Walsh et al 1995, 160.

[264] Psalm 16: 6.

[265] Proverbs 3: 17-26.

[266] "We have the strange feeling down in Montgomery . . . that in our struggle we have cosmic companionship." Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* volume III, Clayborne Carson, ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 306. Dr. King used this same term (cosmic companion, cosmic companionship) in a number of other contexts.

[267] I think of Jerry Wells, architecture professor at Cornell University, teaching us that you must have a datum in order to have freedom. He frequently scribbled diagrams of his favorite examples on the chalkboard including: "the fried egg" – a steady point in the center (the yoke) allows for freedom around the edges, or a square on the outside with craziness contained in it, or a straight wall that anchors the creative play along either side, or in the style of Le Corbusier, a grid of columns which hold up the roof allowing the walls in the floor plan to be free. Another example is jazz, with its structure upon which musicians can improvise.

[268] The question of evolving dynamic self-organizing structures won't let me go. At church, we keep playing with what kinds of community structures are the most natural and freeing – allowing creative people to organize and reorganize according to talents, passions and calling – while helping us to communicate well, share power, and steward this ever-morphing organization. In this experiment, we occasionally do teeter a bit close to chaos! Joanna Macy, a Buddhist

speaker and author, has thought extensively about power and evolving self-organizing/life-sustaining structures. For example, see Joanna Macy & Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1998).

[269] A "significant misinterpretation concerns the so-called Ten Commandments (or Decalogue), which most people automatically regard as divine imperatives (God says 'Thou shalt not do X, Y, and Z'). Not only has this obscured their original nature and purpose, but it has also justified countless attempts to use the Bible coercively to legislate morality, usually doing more harm than good. In fact, the Decalogue simply described patterns of ethical behavior that freely flow out of a relationship with God ('Because you have entered this sacred covenant, you will not do X, Y, and Z'). They are actually ten basic commitments voluntarily undertaken by individuals rather than imposed by force. An underlying theme of the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – is that true faith does not result from the use of force." George E. Mendenhall, *Ancient Israel's Faith and History: An Introduction to the Bible in Context*, Gary A. Herion ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xviii-xix.

[270] A. J. Jacobs*, The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible.* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007).

[271] Anna Almandrala, "The Year of Living Biblically: Interview with Author A. J. Jacobs," Gods Politics: A Blog by Jim Wallis and Friends, [http://sojo.net/blogs/2008/04/14/year-living-biblically-interview-author-aj-jacobs, accessed March 14, 2012].

[272] Psalm 19: 7-10.

[273] Psalm 1: 1-3.

Notes – Chapter 2: From Innocence to Hegemony

[1] Ross Falzone, "The True Story of Adam and Eve," *Life Here on Earth*, CD Track 1, Give Music, 2007.

[2] "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Genesis 1: 27.

[3] Genesis 1: 28.

[4] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 27.

[5] "Somewhat like artists, novelists, and even social and physical scientists, ethicists should function, at least in part, as investigators and disrupters of accepted wisdom, imaginers of provocative new moral possibilities, transformers of shared social and cultural worlds, and contributors toward creating more inclusive human meaning. They should do this in creative and fruitful conversation and tension with other disciplines, transforming and being transformed in relation to them." John Wall, "Imitatio Creatoris: The Hermeneutical Primordiality of Creativity in Moral Life" *The Journal of Religion* 87:1 (January 2007): 42. This dissertation operates in this spirit. It is a constructive theo-ethical narration, shaping a story of power, immersed in ancient and evolving Biblical and Judeo-Christian worlds of meaning, that seeks to bring liberation and life in a twenty-first century globalizing context.

[6] Studying Genesis, Davis connects the exercise of creative power with appreciation and enjoyment. "Appreciation and enjoyment of the creatures are the hallmark of God's dominion and therefore the standard by which our own attempts to exercise dominion must be judged." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 1018-1020.

[7] Genesis 2: 4. This is the first use of the Hebrew word, *Towladah* – often translated, the generations. It indicates descendants, the proceedings, the results, the course of creation. Francis Brown, R. Driver, and Charles Briggs*, The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Christian Copyrights, 1983). With our emphasis on the unfolding of Original Power, I would inflect it here as what is flowing forward from prior creative action.

[8] The pauses in creativity mark stages of completion. At the same time, they open our perspective to new vistas and arenas for creative activity.

[9] Our two creation narratives don't line up in terms of the order of events, but that is ok. We are not after historical facts. We are after meaning and purpose. We are wondering how each of these stories sheds light on our lives, on God's purposes for the world, and on the nature of power.

[10] See Walter Vogels, "The Tree(s) in the Middle of the Garden (Gn 2:9; 3:3)" *Science et Esprit* 59 no. 2-3 (May-December 2007): 129-142.

[11] "[T]he primary human vocation to maintain [the earth's] fertility (Gen. aa5)." Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle Location 224.

[12] Note that for the mother, this is not a command for all time, but a temporary restriction based on the child's level of maturity. Like a mother's words, God's proclamations are contextual and not necessarily static dictums for all time. I generally agree with Ansell on this account. Ansell argues that the tree is meant to be shared at the right time in a covenant meal with God. From a power standpoint, I would say that God is withholding this gift until it can be experienced safely in human/divine relationship. Ansell uses a canonical reading to show that God "meant the restriction to be temporary." John Nicholas Ansell. "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent: A Canonical Approach to the Tree of Knowledge." *Christian Scholars Review* 31.1 (2001): 40-42. As our narrative of power unfolds in this chapter, my accounting of increasing separation from God and spiraling into collective and transpersonal evil (demonic), tracks a very similar course as Ansell's. This approach is rooted in the irreducible goodness and unity of Creation. Consistent with the opening chapter, it is grounded in original blessing. It denies the theological tradition of "spiritual warfare," Satan as a fallen angel, and entities opposing God. Ansell provides a helpful accounting of this debate. There is a key area where I depart from Ansell. He is painstakingly careful about fully circumscribing the creation of evil inside the realm of human responsibility and agency. I see this as a prophylactic strategy to protect God from having responsibility for the magnitude of creational devastation. My approach, which gets developed below in the "Living in an Interrelated World," is to view responsibility as fully shared. Since God is the one who created all of this, and is the more capable and knowing partner, I continue to hold God ultimately responsible. I view human responsibility as significant, but not ultimate. This serves as my inflection on a theodicy of protest, which refuses to let God off the hook for the enormity of human suffering. John K. Roth, "A Theodicy of Protest" in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, Stephen T. Davis, ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 7ff. Another theologian who refuses to absolve God of responsibility is Christopher Southgate. See: Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

[13] Genesis 2: 17. This passage evokes connections to the following Deuteronomy passage: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Deuteronomy 30: 19-20. These passages evoke the both the potential magnificence and potential disaster we unleash, and therefore the level of skill and responsibility we require, as we embrace the divinely dangerous gift of power.

[14] Gen 1: 11; Lev 26: 4; Joel 2: 22; Hag 2: 19.

[15] Joel 1: 12.

[16] Hosea 9: 10, 16-17; Micah 7: 1. Note that in Mark 11, the fig tree has leaves indicating that it should be fruitful. Yet there is no fruit. Are the leaders of the temple masquerading as fruitful trees? Are they making the appearance of keeping covenant while breaking the covenant in allegiance with Rome?

[17] Mark 13: 28.

[18] 1 Kings 4: 25.

[19] Micah 4: 4; Zech 3: 10.

[20] God's purpose through all of this teaching is to show us the way to abundant life. See Celia E. Deane-Drummond and Barbara R. Rossing, "The Eco-theological Significance of John 10:10: Abundant Life through the Sabbath, Trinitarian Vestiges, and the Tree of Life" *Ecumenical Review* 65, no. 1 (March 2013): 83-97.

[21] Jeremiah 29: 4-7.

[22] For more on Biblical teaching on Jubilee economics, see: Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2000) and Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*. Printed as part of Tell the Word, a project of Church of the Savior in Washington, DC. 2001.

[23] "[F]rom a biblical perspective, the sustained fertility and habitability of the earth, or more particularly of the land of Israel, is the best index of the health of the covenant relationship. When humanity, or the people Israel, is disobedient, thorns and briars abound (Gen. 3:17-19); rain is withheld (Deut. 11a1-17; 28:24); the land languishes and mourns (Isa. 16:8; 33:9; Hos. 4:3). Conversely, the most extravagant poetic images of loveliness in the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs - all show a land lush with growth, together with a people living in (or restored to) righteousness and full intimacy with God. 'Truth [or: faithfulness, 'emet] springs up from the earth ['eres,]' (Ps. 85:12 [u Eng.])." Ellen F. Davis, 2009, Kindle Locations 217-220.

[24] Allan W. Martens, "Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance": Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation (Matt 21:28-22:14, par.; Luke 13:6-9)" *Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 151-176.

[25] Psalm 105; Hosea 2: 12; Joel 1: 7.

[26] Amos 4: 9.

[27] Jeremiah 5: 17.

[28] Isaiah 34: 4.

[29] Jeremiah 8: 13.

[30] Jeremiah 8: 11.

[31] Genesis 2: 17.

[32] Leviticus 19: 23.

[33] Exodus 23: 19; 34: 22; 34: 22; Leviticus 23: 10; Numbers 28: 26; Deuteronomy 18: 4; Nehemiah 10: 35; Proverbs 3: 9.

[34] Deuteronomy 24: 21.

[35] Hosea 9: 10.

[36] Romans 8: 23, 11: 16; 1 Corinthians 15: 20; 2 Thessalonians 2: 13; James 1: 18; Rev 14: 4.

[37] Hosea 9: 10.

[38] Isaiah 28: 3.

[39] Micah 7: 3.

[40] Micah 7: 1; Jeremiah 2: 3.

[41] See J R Daniel Kirk, "Time for Figs, Temple Destruction, and Houses of Prayer in Mark 11:12-25" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (July 2012): 509-527; William R. Telford, "More Fruit from the Withered Tree : Temple and Fig-Tree in Mark from a Graeco-Roman perspective." *Templum Amicitiae* (Sheffield, England : JSOT, 1991), 264-304; Douglass E. Oakman. "Cursing the Fig Trees and Robbers' Dens: Pronouncement Stories Within the Social-Systemic Perspective: Mark 11:12-25 and Parallels." Semeia. (64, 1994), 261; Berrigan, Philip. "Barren or Fruitful: A Sign of the Times, A Commentary on the Parable of the Fig Tree." Union Seminary Quarterly Review. (44:1-2, 1990), 159-164; Cotter, Wendy J. "For it was not the season for figs." Catholic Biblical Quarterly. (48:1, January 1986), p. 62-66; and William R. Telford, *Barren Temple and the Withered Tree: a Redaction-Critical Analysis of the Cursing of the Fig-Tree Pericope in Mark's Gospel and its Relation to the Cleansing of the Temple Tradition*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 1. (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1980).

[42] Jeremiah 5: 18.

[43] See J Lyle Story, "The Parable of the Budding Fig Tree (Mark 13:28-31)" *American Theological Inquiry* (Online) 4, no. 1 (January 15 2011).

[44] Mark 13: 28-31.

[45] Revelation 6: 14, 8: 8.

[46] Rev 6: 13. Here we find exploitive economics as a backdrop for judgment. "[A]nd I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and wine!'" Revelation 6: 6.

[47] Habakkuk 3: 10-19.

[48] The first, most basic, most enduring biblical teaching is that we live in joy and abundance as long as we stay in relationship with God. When we sever the connection, we harm ourselves and others. Jesus puts it this way: "I am the vine, you are the branches." John 15: 5.

[49] For more see: "The Lure of Deceptive Language" in Chapter 3.

[50] While fruitfulness is one of the most significant biblical metaphors for this process, there are others. For instance, Paul says that in this process of re-connecting, we collectively become the body of Christ.

[51] I use commodification here to mean the breaking of the human/earth relationship by treating living natural mysteries like they are controllable objects. Here we exchange the divine call to care and tend – to bear responsibility for creation's well-being thereby supporting her joyful provision – for the erroneous presumption that we can "own" the land and animals – the water and sunlight. We fail to notice that we are blessed tenants and beloved friends, lavishly cared for in God's cosmic home. In our tragic blindness to the sacred extravagance we share, in our failure to respond to the beauty and wonder all around us, we fearfully hoard and mindlessly process everything God makes into quantifiable things to be owned, exploited, and consumed. More on commodification below.

[52] See the next section called "Learning to Live in an Interrelated World" for a discussion of intersubjectivity.

[53] "Yet, already in the first chapter of the Priestly work, one can discern that the form of human life is fundamentally ecological . . . we are enmeshed in a harmonious web of relationships, infinitely complex in their intersections, that have in God their origin and their point of cohesion." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 903-905.

[54] "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." Genesis 2: 15.

[55] Gen 2: 18. Referring to Genesis 1: 27, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them," Trible argues that "the parallelism between *ha-adam* [humankind] and 'male and female' shows, further, that sexual differentiation does not mean hierarchy but equality." Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 18.

[56] Here I am using Derrida's appropriation of Levinas. With this original intersubjectivity in view, the Genesis text points toward the ethics of humble respectful relationship, over coercion and conformity to social structures. Derrida would say we are not even called to "rights and equality." Rather, we are called to relationship which includes "hostage, infinite debt, respect." Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, eds., *Understanding Derrida* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), 40.

[57] This point could be developed more deeply from a canonical perspective. Genesis, as a foundational text, has the role of setting up the basic nature of reality upon which the story of humanity and God proceeds. There is reason to privilege interpretations of Genesis that link most deeply and consistently to themes that continue through the canon. The modern understanding of marriage (as nuclear family) does not exist in the biblical canon. On the other hand, our intersubjectivity is one of the strongest biblical themes we can find. Our mutual inter-relatedness and responsibility for one another appear as central concerns from Genesis to Revelation. We are to care for the widow, orphan, and sojourner. Sabbath economics demands we consider the impacts of our accumulations on the community and restore imbalances. Pain and suffering come when we seek our own autonomy and greed, forgetting to seek justice and shalom for our sisters and brothers. Marriage, in its myriad canonical forms (most of which deviate wildly from modern standards), becomes a subset of the broader category of human relationship and creational relationship. To bolster this claim about where the significance lies, we remember that neither of our primary New Testament figures, Jesus nor Paul, were married. Yet they both passionately teach mutual inter-relatedness and responsibility in human relationships across the social strata. Jesus said, whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me. And Paul talked about human community as a single body.

[58] Hafiz, "I Have Come Into the World to See This" in *Love Poems From God: Twelve Sacred Voices from the East and West* by Daniel Ladinsky (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002), 160.

[59] Looking through the lens of Irigary, De Vries explores the irreducible quality of intersubjectivity and its resultant wonder in Genesis 2:23. In a fruitful project, he stays focused on the sexual dimension of difference. In my reading which is very similar, I am seeking to broaden the interpretation to a wider spectrum of difference. Roland J. De Vries, "Wonder Between Two: An Irigarayan Reading of Genesis 2:23" *Modern Theology* 24, no. 1 (January 2008): 51-74.

[60] Present social structures, however, may distort our essential power into complex and varied complications and constrictions that we must surface into consciousness and navigate.

[61] Martin Luther King Jr. "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" (April 16, 1963).

[62] This section is necessary because of the corroding effect of dominating structural power in theology and the church. It has been beneficial to organized religious powers to teach that human beings are so fundamentally sinful that they require constant correction from religious authorities. This doctrine distorts the positive biblical presentation of human nature at the outset of creation, yet it has been perpetuated and successfully absorbed into popular consciousness. Our hermeneutic of suspicion invites us to constantly look for ways that negative anthropologies insinuate themselves into our assumptions, to question who benefits from these constructs, and to actively question and unravel theologies that bind rather than free us. At the same time, in the contradictions and complexity of theological discourse, the term "original innocence" is used at length by Pope John Paul II in *The Theology of the Body*. "While in every historical man this sin signifies a state of lost grace, it also carries with itself a reference to that grace, which was precisely the grace of original innocence." John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books, 1997). 14.

[63] LaCocque draws on Ricoeur's concept of first and second naivetés. LaCocque says the "first innocence" happens in the garden when human beings are genuinely ignorant of life's complexity, including good and evil. Through being expelled and suffering they learn about these matters, develop the capacity to choose righteousness, and thus make their way toward a "second innocence" that is "vastly superior to the first." André LaCocque, *The Trial of Innocence: Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2006), 241. See also: Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 350.

[64] Here I am cautious about not creating a stark dualism between original innocence and original sin. While proposing a theology of relational power between humanity and God, and taking the human capacity to create and destroy seriously, I do not want to overdramatize humanity's power to set creation off in a wrong direction. With Wayne Sibley Towner and Richard S. Hanson, I see our story as one of necessary differentiation and maturing. Towner calls the traditional fall a "story about growing up." Wayne Sibley Towner, *Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 53-4. Towner emphasizes not applying models of perfection or ideals to our "original" nature, that is, not creating an extreme contrast between our original nature and fallen nature. The first humans were human from the beginning, children on a journey. The emphasis on original innocence, in my view, is not putting forth an indelible ideal, but rather, noting the quality of innocence imbedded in our human form, that comes from our reflection of the divine (image of God), and cannot be taken away by the paths of suffering we find ourselves on. See also: Richard S. Hanson, *The Serpent Was Wiser: A New Look at Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.)

[65] The first idolatrous act – the first execution of human power apart from relationship with God – was an act of deception. "[Adam] said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' [God] said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'" Genesis 3: 10-13. This moment initiates a cycle of shame and blame. We feel ashamed and we don't want responsibility for this; it feels unfair. So we try to evade responsibility. We want to isolate responsibility elsewhere. But the errors and the suffering of the world are always deeply relational. We can keep up our separation and blame projects if we want. We can build policies and walls and segregate the suffering outside of our defended realm. But God made the world, such that we are "one flesh." When our sisters and brothers suffer, we suffer. When anyone creates a mess, however unfair this may seem, we share responsibility to heal it.

[66] This is made clear by people suffering from addictions. Addiction may seem like a simple issue of personal choice. But it is not until we realize that we are dealing with something larger than us – including family and social systems – not until we realize that we are "powerless over addiction" – that the healing can begin. Alcoholics Anonymous, *Alcoholics*

Anonymous, 4th Edition. New York, NY: A.A. World Services, 2001), 60. See also: Wayne E. Oates, "A Biblical Perspective on Addiction" *Review and Expositor* 91 (1994): 71-75.

[67] Matthew 18: 3, 19: 14; Mark 10: 15.

[68] For more on theological anthropology, see: Hans Schwarz, *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013).

[69] Genesis 2: 24.

[70] This is a relationship, perhaps, meant to grow into friendship (as sometimes occurs with our own parents). "I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father." John 15: 15.

[71] Ansell's identification of the serpent as wisdom lends coherence to a biblical theology of power that is rooted in the unity of power and the goodness of creation. Ansell is a careful reader of the biblical text and finds ample support textually and canonically for his thesis. Explicating the differing views on this subject is beyond the scope of this project. If the reader is interested, through his footnotes, Ansell interacts at some length with scholars with differing views, particularly those who believe in "spiritual warfare" at the cosmological level, those who see Satan as a fallen angel now against God and appearing as the serpent, as well as other forms of theology that identify the serpent as an entity apart from and opposing the will of God. Ansell, 2001.

[72] See below for an accounting of the evolution of evil, the demonic, and Satan in the context of Original Power.

[73] Swidler draws on John Hick and a line of theology that emphasizes human soul-making, and thus views initiating a process of maturation as the purpose of the events in the garden. "Our Western technical term for humans, Homo sapiens, gives us a clue of this development. 'Sapiens,' which in Latin means wisdom, comes from *sapere*, 'to taste.' Hence, wisdom is not theoretical knowledge but the kind of knowledge that a person gains from experience, from 'tasting' life. Thus, in the Genesis story, how do Eve and Adam become 'wise'? How do they come to know good and evil, that is, come to be human, to be Homo sapiens? By 'tasting' (sapiens) the fruit of the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil' . . . Hence, the Genesis story is not the story of the 'Fall' of humanity but of the 'Rise' of Homo sapiens, the human knowing (sapiens) of the difference between good and evil, and thus being able freely to choose to love." Leonard Swidler, "The Garden of Eden Story – Source of Often Mis-read Wisdom: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 46, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 146. See also: John Hick, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* (Oxford, UK: One World Publications, 2004); and John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love.* New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966.

[74] Note that Jesus, the prototypical mature human being, stills storms, pulls overwhelming amounts of fish from the seas, multiplies abundance, and directs healing power. The human role to subdue creation is not about raping and pillaging the earth. It is about a skillful relational dance whereby creation responds with flourishing and peace to the servant leadership of the human one who is fully plugged into the divine. We are to be "creation whisperers." Being made in the image of God, human beings have the potential to grow into this state of genuine authority. "[Human beings] are different from the animals, which operate only on instinct, whereas humans can, and should, operate by learning what is good and what is evil and then choosing, loving, the good." Swidler 2011, 146.

[75] Using "inner-biblical exegesis," Meier engages in a detailed reading of Genesis 1-3 and Job 1-2 side by side. He finds that Job is generating a "creation atmosphere" that starts in well-being and falls into chaos, calling it a "de-creation." "The fruitfulness which blossomed in Job's presence is completely reversed . . . It may not be accidental that the final blow which brings chaos into Job's world is dealt by a "great wind" *mah gëdôlâ* (i 19) . . . It is precisely such a great wind, *rùah ^elôhîm*, which marked the boundary between chaos and order when God began to create in Gen. i 2." Sam Meier, "Job 1-2: A Reflection of Genesis 1-3" *Vetus Testamentum* 39, no. 2 (April 1989): 188. From here, he finds the role of the serpent, like the role of the adversary in Job, to be "commissioned by God." "It is an essential feature of this narrative in Genesis that the writer answers fewer questions than are posed. The orchestrator of this material does not know or wish to speculate on whence the serpent, or his knowledge of God's command to humankind, or why God asks for no explanation of his behavior. The narrative lacunae are suggestive but no more . . . The text of Job i-ii . . . nicely forms itself around the lacunae of Gen. iii. From the perspective of the writer of Job's prologue, the serpent would have been sent by God himself to test humankind. The serpent's intimate knowledge of God's command would thus come from God himself. The serpent would not feel compelled to flee from God since he would have been commissioned by God. God did not interrogate the serpent for God would have already known of the serpent's role . . . 1 Kings xxii 19-23, for

example, is another narrative which wrestles with the same problems as Gen. iii and Job i-ii. Unlike Gen. iii which does not even try to resolve the tensions, both 1 Kings xxii and Job i-ii picture God deliberately at work through intermediary beings, attempting to deceive or test men." Meier 1989, 192.

[76] Genesis 3: 3. Eve adds "we cannot even touch it" to what God actually said. For more on this, see Trible 1978, 112-13.

[77] Jesus undergoes this same quiz in the wilderness (Mark 1: 12-13, Matt 4: 1-11, Luke 4: 1-13). Unlike his immature forebears, Jesus understands Wisdom's tricks, and does not fall for false claims by anyone or anything claiming to being an independent source of power. He passes the test, showing himself to be the first fully mature human being and the first ripe fruit in the new creation.

[78] This is a significant point of distinction between Genesis stories and other founding stories in the ancient Near East.

[79] Genesis 3: 5.

[80] In Genesis 34 (the rape of Dinah), Shechem "sees and takes" Dinah. The story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 runs along similar lines. David "sees and takes" Bathsheba. In both cases, as in the garden, acting on this imperial impulse unleashes violence and collective suffering.

[81] "The beautiful is meant to be gazed upon, to be delighted in, but it is not meant to be plucked and consumed. A proper response to blessing allows the beauty of another—another person, another object—to exist outside of oneself in such a way that its integrity is maintained and its gifts can be extended." Scott Bader-Saye, "Fear in the Garden: The State of Emergency and the Politics of Blessing" *Ex Auditu* 24 (2008): 4. Bader-Saye draws the concept of crossing the line from enjoying beauty to consuming beauty from Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1951), 166.

[82] Alcoholics Anonymous 2001 and Oates 1994.

[83] Ansell 2001, 41. Ansell points out the textual interplay between this text and the story of Joseph and Potiphera. Joseph follows covenant and resists her advances. Later, he marries her daughter at the right time. The issue is not about "permanent prohibitions" but "staying in alignment with the timing and purposes of God."

[84] "It is traditional to interpret Gen. 3: 8 (which introduces God's judgment) to mean that the first humans heard the sound of YHWH God walking in the garden in 'the cool of the day' (literally, in the ruaḥ of the yôm), which makes some sense since ruaḥ can mean 'wind,' and a wind brings lower temperatures, while yôm normally means 'day.' This interpretation goes back to the Septuagint, which renders the phrase 'in the evening' (to deilinon). However, there is a secondary (less common) meaning for yôm given in some lexicons (derived from an Akkadian word), 'storm' (hence the expression might mean 'the wind of the storm'). Thus, instead of describing God as taking a leisurely evening stroll in the garden, the 'sound' the first humans heard might well be the trees whipping around in a tempest, which is the physical effect of God's coming in judgment. This would fit the pattern of theophanies in the Old Testament, which are often accompanied by a storm, with great noise (for a classic storm theophany in a forest, with trees splitting and crashing, see Ps. 29)." J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2014), 164, footnote 16. Citing Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 155– 57.

[85] Fretheim explores the emotional expression of God in scripture in great detail. He describes how God "is deeply wounded by . . . broken relationship." Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), Kindle Locations 1685-1688.

[86] LaCocque sees the expulsion from the garden as a "literary broadening of the sixth century exile in Babylon to universal dimensions" expanding the redemption of Israel to humanity at large. LaCocque 2006, 258.

[87] "[A]n Edenic allusion in Luke 24:31 ought to be recognized. When Luke tells us in his Gospel that upon two dejected disciples receiving food from the risen Jesus, 'their eyes were opened, and they knew [him],' he is deliberately drawing the reader back to the ancient account in which another pair of humans receive food and, concomitantly, new sight. The first eye-opening with its attendant knowledge ushered humanity into a new moral universe of darkness, exile, sin, and death. The second eye-opening with its attendant knowledge pulled back the eschatological curtain to allow Jesus' distraught disciples to perceive that he himself had inaugurated the long-awaited new world of hope, resurrection,

restoration, and new creation." Dane Ortlund, "And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew": An Inter-Canonical Note on Luke 24:31." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 4 (December 2010): 728.

[88] In Genesis 3, we first encounter fear, "fear of death, the fear of the other, and our willingness to sacrifice the other to make ourselves safe. As the biblical story moves forward, it is disordered fear as much as anything that keeps humankind trapped in sin and curse, for insofar as self-preservation becomes the highest good, humans find themselves unwilling to risk the release of blessing to another and all the more willing to destroy even potential threats to their safety . . . Fear tempts us to withhold blessing from those who cannot repay. In this way, fear perpetuates curse." Bader-Saye 2008, 5-6. Torah teachings, including Jubilee economics, and Jesus' teachings (including debt forgiveness, sharing with those who can't repay, etc.) are designed to release us from fear and exchange, and open us again to living in the economy of gift. In contrast the first garden, we find a mature response to fear in a second garden, the garden of Gethsemane. "Here we have the only time in the Gospels when Jesus is said to be afraid (*ekthambeō*). Yet he neither hides nor offers up the other to save himself. Unlike Adam and Eve he moves toward God in his fear; he seeks relief, but his prayer is not 'save me at any cost.' He subordinates his desire for safety—'remove this cup from me' – to his desire to be faithful – 'not my will but yours be done' (Luke 22:42)." Ibid, 10-11.

[89] Humanity is repeatedly invited to try again. Meier sees Job as a second Adam. "There is one crucial distinction which motivates the entire prologue of Job and separates it from Gen. i-iii. This second Adam does not succumb to the temptation. According to the prologue, the verdict pronounced at Eden is reversible. And although Job is not Everyman, there is nevertheless an affirmation that the Fall is not the final word on the human condition." Meier 1989, 193.

[90] Keller addresses the space and support that God gives us. "In spirit and in truth, [God/the primordial mystery] will not do our swimming for us, but may guide us within a depth that even now bears and births us. There is in the process of genesis a generosity that never ceases to offer regeneration." Keller 2008, 67. Questions of theodicy – why God allows us to do so much harm to each other and the world, and whether God is indeed present with us (helping us) through our troubles – are fraught. As a pastor, I find myself accompanying people in struggle. Sometimes I see my task as gently noticing (if I can) a loving presence guiding us. At other times, while I may see signs of God's leading and support, situations are so terrible that it is abjectly insulting to even suggest trying to find and make meaning. In these cases I have found John Roth's "theodicy of protest" and the psalms most helpful. Stephen T. Davis, ed. 2001, 7ff. When a person has just experienced major betrayal or divorce or a diagnosis I cannot say, "this may be the most positive life-altering thing to happen in your life." Yet a surprising number of people do come to this conclusion on their own. I have come to believe there is something sacred and inviolable about our own struggles and our own meaning-making work. I can be present with another as they struggle, but I can't do their struggling for them – nor can they do mine.

[91] Howard-Brook defines two clear paths that he calls "the religion of creation" and "the religion of empire." "As we've seen and will continue to see, the 'religion of creation' begins with a deep listening to the Word of YHWH and a willingness to obey that Voice wherever it beckons, trusting that it will lead to blessing and abundance of life. The 'religion of empire' begins with people listening to themselves and seeking to establish their own greatness apart from intimacy with YHWH. Inevitably, this path leads to violence, domination, and death. Wes Howard-Brook, *"Come Out My People!": God's Call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), Kindle Locations 1736-1739.

[92] Genesis 4: 9.

[93] "To 'walk with God' is to live each moment in relationship with the truly holy. It is the path opposite that of Cain, who 'went away from God's presence.' This stark contrast underlies each of 'the two religions.' One builds a city on one's own initiative and names it after oneself. The other builds an 'ark' at God's command to shelter and preserve God's creation." Howard-Brook 2010, Kindle Locations 1158-1161.

[94] Genesis 4: 15.

[95] The interconnected and spiraling effect of our failure to prioritize (and thus to do violence to) the most vulnerable is apparent to God and evokes God's emotional response. "[Our] sense of injustice is a poor analogy to God's sense of injustice. The exploitation of the poor is to us a misdemeanor; to God, it is a disaster. Our reaction is disapproval; God's reaction is something no language can convey. Is it a sign of cruelty that God's anger is aroused when the rights of the poor are violated, when widows and orphans are oppressed?" Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1962), 284-285. (Quoted in Terence E. Fretheim, "God and Violence in the Old Testament" *Word & World* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 23.)

[96] Walker describes an escalating intensity of interactions of violence of the strong over the weak which is a direct violation of God's teaching that we protect the creation as a place of abundance and joy by carefully and intentionally protecting the weak over the strong. "Key to our reading of this text is the use of the term "violence" (from the root . . . *hāmas*, [Genesis] 6:11, 13). Girard locates here the escalation of communal violence. Virtually a technical term for the oppression of the weak by the strong, Girard sees this as the logical culmination of the Cain and Abel story in Gen 4:1-16 and the abusive vengeance of Lamech in Gen 4:23-24. Lamech, who not only takes his own vengeance by slaying young man (or perhaps a boy) for simply scratching him, but also in so doing he explicitly escalates the violence beyond the divine ordered boundary: If Cain is avenged sevenfold (by divine decree in 4:15), then Lamech has seriously escalated the environment of violence in the world by his seventy-sevenfold proclamation (4:24)." Graham B. Walker, "Noah and the Season of Violence: Theological Reflections on Genesis 6:5-9:17 and the Work of René Girard" *Review & Expositor* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 380. More on Girard and scapegoating below.

[97] In Genesis 6: 11-12, "we are reminded that sin for this society is seen as a 'corruption' of the original creation. Brueggemann reminds us that the wording of 6:12 'And God saw the earth was corrupt,' seems to be a clear parallel structure to Gen 1:31 where 'God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good.' The wholeness and 'shalom' of the ordered universe is now corrupted by humanity." Ibid, 380. See also: Walter Brueggemann, Genesis. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 79.

[98] I can't help asking, isn't God doing the same thing via the flood that extreme imperialists do, that is, causing an emergency that levels reality, and then exploiting the chaos of the crisis (with its imagined "blank slate") to impose an abstract new order on what and who remains? (See discussion of Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine* in "The Blank Slate" in Chapter 1. For a similar argument made from a Biblical perspective, see: Bader-Saye 2008.) To my question, Walker says: "[W]e note that God's response is radical and violent but also distinctively sacred; it is a violence justified from a divine source. At first glance this appears to be a return to the mythological veiling of violence via the sacred and an attempt to preserve the power of sacred violence for societal use at a later date. Yet, our story is remarkable revealing. For those who reap divine wrath are in fact the responsible parties." Walker suggests that the key is the reversal of scapegoating in Noah. In reversal of imperial scapegoating, the weakest is all that remains and from this remnant God rebuilds. The weak one, that is usually sacrificed for the larger corporate order, now remains while the larger corporate order is sacrificed. Walker 2006, 383-4. For more on God's acts of violence, see: Terence E. Fretheim, "Theological Reflections on the Wrath of God in the Old Testament" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 24 (2002): 14-17. For an extended bibliography on the Bible and violence see: Vic Froese, "God and Violence: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography" *Direction* 40, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 241-247.

[99] Genesis 9.

[100] Genesis 11.

[101] "One of empire's great powers is to impose a single language that 'binds' diverse people. After Babel, speaking a different language becomes a key means of resistance to empire. Part of that 'different language' is the telling of a different story, as Genesis does to Enuma Elish." Wes Howard-Brook 2010, Kindle Locations 1372-1374.

[102] I use the word "temporarily" here in its literal sense – to mean time-bound or to indicate a phase in the large-scale narrative, not to in any way reduce the catastrophic damage. For a time, in our immaturity, in the larger narrative of creation, we use the gift of power to destroy. There is a life-giving and generative side to the trajectory of the gift of power that gets explored in greater depth in Chapter 6 as humanity matures through the ethic and art of hospitality.

[103] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1970).

[104] Ibid, 45.

[105] Ibid. This understanding of authority is evident in the gospels. Growing crowds following Jesus have invested a Palestinian peasant with an authority that surpasses that of religious leaders and kings. The official leaders in turn recognize this investment as a genuine threat.

[106] Ibid, 56.

[107] Ibid, 53.

[108] Ibid, 55. Klein explains the way the obliteration of all opposition via terror serves to clear the way for cultural, political, and economic imperialism. "It's hard to believe— but then again, that was pretty much Washington's game plan for Iraq: shock and terrorize the entire country, deliberately ruin its infrastructure, do nothing while its culture and history are ransacked, then make it all okay with an unlimited supply of cheap household appliances and imported junk food. In Iraq, this cycle of culture erasing and culture replacing was not theoretical; it all unfolded in a matter of weeks." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 429.

[109] Arendt 1970, 55.

[110] Ibid, 41.

[111] Ibid, 52. This strategy is also at work in Jesus' context. Occupying Romans (who bear no ultimate authority for a follower of Torah) have strategically formed a power base within local political and religious structures (particularly the temple) in Palestine. The Herodians and temple leadership in exchange for the benefits of Roman patronage serve as a necessary power source for the dominators who would otherwise exhaust themselves with their relentless displays of violence. The Jesus movement is actively exposing this setup and thereby undermining it.

[112] Ibid, 54.

[113] It does not surprise me that Arendt doesn't think to define violence from the perspective of the recipient of violence. As liberating, egalitarian, and penetrating as her analysis of power and violence are, she is not predisposed to confessing (nor seeing the limits of) her social location. She lived in a world of people with social, intellectual, and political power. One can get a feel for her elite intellectual circles by reading volumes of her letters. See: Carol Brightman, ed. *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975.* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1995). There is no doubt she actively seeks out and frequently accomplishes an "enlarged mentality" – that is, seeing the world through the eyes of others. Still, she is a finite human being and none of us can achieve an "enlarged mentality" perfectly all the time. One obvious failing is her lack of sensitivity to the African American experience both in her analysis of race in *On Violence* and in her small essay about Little Rock, Arkansas in the volume: Hannah Arendt. *Responsibility and Judgment.* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2003).

[114] Withholding food from a starving person or a starving nation is, by my definition, violence.

[115] From a biblical perspective, violence is "an unwanted intruder in God's world." Fretheim, 2004, 18. We can see violence as active or passive involvement in distorting and oppressing the dynamic fullness of life that God gifted to humanity. Fretheim also points out that we must include less visible and larger institutionalized and socialized isms that harm the vitality of created life. "In thinking through the violence in the Bible, the need for a closer definition of violence quickly comes into view; it must be a definition that can encompass both divine and human violence. For many people, especially in these post-9/11 days, only physical violence truly qualifies as violence. But, certainly, violence is more than killing people . . . We must insist that violence also refers to that which is psychologically destructive, that which demeans, damages, or depersonalizes others . . . In view of these considerations, violence may be defined as follows: any action, verbal or nonverbal, oral or written, physical or psychical, active or passive, public or private, individual or institutional/societal, human or divine, in whatever degree of intensity, that abuses, violates, injures, or kills. Some of the most pervasive and most dangerous forms of violence are those that are often hidden from view (against women and children, especially); just beneath the surface in many of our homes, churches, and communities is abuse enough to freeze the blood. Moreover, many forms of systemic violence often slip past our attention because they are so much a part of the infrastructure of life (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism)." Ibid, 19-20.

[116] As in the garden and with the tower of Babel, God again sets a structural limit on our capacity to harm ourselves. Consequences travel for four generations, while blessings are multiplied to the thousands. Speaking of the consequences of idolatry: "'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am
a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those
who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me, and keep My commandments.'" Exodus 20: 5-6.

[117] "Fear tempts us to withhold blessing from those who cannot repay. In this way, fear perpetuates curse, and it does this, at least in part, through the logic of emergency." Bader-Saye, 2008, 6. Bader-Saye points out that Jesus actively works to undo this dynamic, though forgiveness of debts, giving to those who can't give back, and inviting us to return to an economy of gift.

[118] William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, 1954).

[119] I am not ruling out other kinds of dimensions or spirits here. I am focusing on the dynamics of human fear.

[120] This is the reason God teaches us to pay special attention to our weakest siblings (the widow, the orphan, the stranger in our land). This discipline saves us from giving into our fears and slipping into a shared abyss.

[121] René Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001),154-160. Girard also notes that, while blatant scapegoating is out of fashion, we should not lose sight of how deep scapegoating tendencies run in the human psyche. He warns against self-righteous thoughts that one is against scapegoating, encouraging us to watch for a "hunt for scapegoats to the second degree" or "a hunt for hunters of scapegoats," creating a "spectacle of secret substitutions." Regarding middle agents and power, scapegoating is a significant mechanism for redirecting righteous anger about the consequences of violent imperialism toward socially marginalized individuals and groups (aka imperialism's victims). Still, correctly assessing the structure of global violence, as Girard suggests, needs to stop short of scapegoating imperialists to "let off steam" and relieve our overwhelming frustration about our shared predicament.

[122] A friend recently told me a similar story about being in 8th grade in a school where 8th graders hazed 7th graders. When the time came, a young man in his class stood up and said: "I did not like being hazed and I don't want to do it to anybody else." The children paused, thought about it, and collectively walked away. One model ended the process.

[123] Girard argues that Jesus himself is the first step of a large-scale multi-century mimetic contagion for nonviolence.

[124] "We are left with two gardens [Eden and Gethsemane] and two choices in the face of fear. One is to hide and sacrifice the other for our own safety, making security our highest good; the other is to embrace a cruciform ethic of risk, losing our lives to find them, extending blessing in the face of curse because we trust that our true flourishing comes not from controlling or consuming the good but from extending it." Bader-Saye 2006, 13. God participates in this self-emptying risk-taking with us. Walker offers a Girardian reading of the flood narrative, proposing that God's character is being revealed as God begins the process of ending scapegoating and of "desacralizing violence." "God's grief, as a result of human corruption ([Genesis] 6:6), leads to divine mitigation against a corrupt and violent world in 6:7. This formulaic sin-judgment-mitigation pattern is replaced, however, in Gen 8:21 by a divine decision to endure a wicked world, remaining open to that world in the future as opposed to destroying it. This decision can only be understood as a decision to accept suffering within God's own self on behalf of humanity. This text illustrates further God's openness to the human condition to such a degree that God willingly changes direction and intention." Walker 2006, 373.

[125] For more information, see Appendix 2: The Demonic within the Marcan Narrative Context

[126] Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.

[127] The theology developed in this work does not subscribe to a dualistic warfare view, giving evil a source apart from God. For a warfare view see: Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan & the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). Pero comes from a political and imperial frame, while holding on to elements of the spiritual warfare model. Cheryl S. Pero, *Liberation from Empire: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark*. Studies in Biblical Literature. (New York, NY: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2013). Ansell acknowledges the political and systemic while working to fully circumscribe the creation of evil inside the realm of creation. I largely share his view, though, as stated above, cannot use a creational and human root of evil to absolve God of responsibility: "The idols or evil spirits of Militarism, Nationalism, the fertility religions of Canaan, Consumerism, and Scientism are thus born. The spirits let loose by idolatry are not 'flesh and blood' realities that can be reduced to the humans who have unleashed them or who now serve them. Such spirits are complex human and non-human phenomena that have been sinfully invested with a power that was originally entrusted to us as spirits or imagers of God. It is in this way that they have become 'spiritual' powers. In the New Testament, a common way of speaking of such idolatrous spiritual forces is as 'powers and principalities.' Paul uses such language to refer, not to 'demons' as is commonly believed, but to realities that include (or are closely associated with) the power of death, the present and the future, human offices and titles, the world atmosphere, religious rules and regulations, traditions, and even the Law – all features of creaturely life that today frequently need to be subdued and put back in their proper place." Ansell 2001, 49. "In place of 'righteous indignation' against Satanic powers, I am proposing a thoroughly anthropocentric view of the origin of evil and a creation-wide view of the nature of evil. We are called to recognize that the rest of creation (including non-human realities and cultural phenomena) has become embroiled in our sin and is thus in need of liberation." Ibid, 55. My view of the demonic and evil is closest to Walter Wink's. Wink does not restrict evil to discrete, concrete human action, recognizing larger, transpersonal forces expressed in systems and structures. Wink 1999. "Every Power tends to have a visible pole, an outer form – be it a church, a nation, and economy – and an invisible pole, an inner spirit or

driving force that animates, legitimates, and regulates its physical manifestation in the world. Neither pole is the cause of the other. Both come into existence together and cease to exist together" Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 5.

[128] "Satan claims authority to assign the "empires of the world and their splendor" (4:8). The gospel reveals Satan as the power behind the imperial throne. Rome exercises power at Satan's behest (also Luke 4:5–6; John 12:31; Rev 13). The gospel reveals the empire to be diabolical, utterly opposed to God's purposes. Jesus' mission is to assert God's rule and claim as "Lord of heaven and earth" (11:25) to order the world according to God's purposes. Jesus' exorcisms manifest the victory of God's empire over Satan's empire, evidenced in Roman rule (12:28). His resurrection and imminent return show the empire's limits and the ultimate futility of imperial power." Warren Carter, "Proclaiming (in/against) Empire: Then and Now" *Word & World* 25, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 157.

[129] For more information on the Domination System see: Walter Wink, "Chapter 2: The Domination System," in *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 37ff.

[130] Richard Horsley criticizes our modern tendency to divorce Jesus from context, and thereby domesticate and "depoliticize" his ministry. Without connection to his highly particular context, Jesus is reduced to a wandering teacher uttering interesting sayings geared to individuals. Richard A. Horsley. *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 7.

[131] For more on the political implications of exorcism in the gospels, including linguistic and canonical study, see: Richard Horsley, ed., *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as History of Faithful Resistance* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008). Horsley describes exorcism as "part of a broader program against Roman imperial domination." Ibid, 86. See also: Graham H. Twelftree, "The Politics of Possession" *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2007); Santiago Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism: Jesus' Reaction to Negative Labels in the Beelzebul Controversy." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 118-129; and Paul R. Abramson, *Politics in the Bible* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

[132] See "Disruption as Fact Collection, Performance Art, and Authenticity" in Chapter 5.

[133] In the first century context of Jesus, the tributary economy is the elaborate system through which the wealth of the land runs from the poor (imagine little creeks), to merchants, tax/toll collectors (imagine small rivers) collecting and collecting into larger pots of wealth (including the temple and local palaces, e.g. Herod) until it lands in great waterfalls of abundance in the halls of the Roman emperor. It is a carefully tended system for gathering wealth from the masses and aggregating in the hands of the elite. Hanson and Oakman note that "production and consumption benefit elites rather than peasants and artisans." They go on to say, "The extraction of goods and services was managed from the top down at the level of the Roman Empire, the Herodians, the priests, and the large estate holders. The elites viewed the territories under their control as their 'household' to use at their discretion." K.C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts Second Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 182.

[134] Mark 5: 1-20.

[135] For a political exegesis of the Gerasene passage, see: Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 190ff. In describing the systemic effect of a personal exorcism, Myers says: "The political and ideological authority of both the scribal establishment and the Roman military garrison – the two central elements within the colonial condominium – have been repudiated." Ibid, 194. See also: Garnett Roper, *Caribbean Theology as Public Theology* (Kingston, Jamaica: Jugaro Publishing House, 2013). Roper applies this passage to a discussion of structural/systemic violence in Jamaican society.

[136] Mark 5: 9.

[137] Paul W. Hollenbach. "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-historical Study." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49 (December 1981), 573.

[138] Ibid.

[139] "In conservative communities people protect [an ethos of law and order] to prevent evil and usually fail to see their ethos leading to the evil spelled Hitler." Hendrik Hart. "Creation Order in our Philosophical Tradition: Critique and Refinement," in Walsh et al. 1995, 69.

[140] Hannah Arendt wrestled with this dilemma, as she made her case for moral thinking that, if need be, could stand against distorted law. "Almost overnight and with scarcely any resistance the traditional commandment, 'thou shalt not kill' was transformed into a new imperative, 'thou shalt kill for the sake of the Fuhrer'" "Without much notice all this collapsed almost overnight and then it was as though morality suddenly stood revealed . . . as a set of *mores*, customs, and *manners* which could be exchanged for another set with hardly more trouble than it would take to change the table manners of an individual or a people." Arendt 2003, 50.

[141] Ansell describes of the increasing development of Satan ("unsubdued powers") over time. Ansell 2001, 50. Wink speaks of the demonic in dynamic terms, addressing a spiral of violence that gives the Domination System "a dynamic agency." Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 23.

[142] Wink 1999, 37ff.

[143] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 77ff.

[144] Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism and power assumes a state-based locus of domination. Along the lines of Foucault, Hardt and Negri define a stark break between state-based imperialism and today's non-geographically centered globalizing empire which more diffuse and complex. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). This claim has been controversial, especially among thinkers in nations that have experienced extreme domination and suffering from American imperialism. Writers, such as Boron see Hardt and Negri's theory as overly dismissive of the state-based power, violence, and economic extraction of the United States. Boron questions the idea of "imperialism without an address," and in the spirit of fact collecting that Arendt demands, he seeks an accurate "cartography" of power. Atilio A. Boron, *Empire and Imperialism: A Critical Reading of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri* (London, UK: Zed Books Ltd, 2005). Boron, coming from the Latin American social location, refuses to let theory blur the reality of the concrete suffering imposed on huge numbers of people by United States policy. A diffuse empire, diffuses responsibility, accountability, and the capacity for resistance. For additional discussion of Hardt and Negri's thesis by range of current scholars, see: Paul A. Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds, *The Empire's New Clothes: Reading Hardt and Negri* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004). Interestingly, like Foucault, a primary complaint is that Hardt and Negri's approach disempowers resistance. They attempt a response to this in their most recent work where they articulate an emerging form of resistance that is "decentered" and "heterogeneous." Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004). In our biblical theology of power there is not a stark break from former state-based centers of imperialism to non-geographic globalized empire. There is continuity. States and corporations continue to serve as instruments for deploying power. The question is, who is utilizing them and for what purposes? At this point, the power of the United States is being openly and dramatically utilized by a small cadre of global imperialists, while "the people" seem a bit stunned, slow to respond and reclaim control. This is not fundamentally new. The underlying demonic patterns that were launched in the garden and manifest in our history continue – cascading patronage, extraction from the majority, use of media to promote imperial worldview, violence. Yet as we track the biblically-shaped narrative of creation, we see that the demonic continues to grow and morph and innovate with increased sophistication and technologies. At this point in our history, a miniscule group of individuals (literally 85 people, less than one busload) with little to no particular allegiance to any particular state are using their overwhelming wealth to pull the strings of whatever structures serve their purposes. This includes the governments of the United States and many nations, as well as corporations around the world. Those in this elite group personally write social policy and gut regulations and remove trade barriers that increase the unfettered capacity of their chosen instruments (public and private entities) to take whatever land and labor and resources they like while masking the devastating costs to humanity and the earth with their careful management of media. See the recent study by Oxfam that shows that 85 individuals now own the same amount as half of the world's population (3.5 billion human beings). Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva and Nicholas Galasso, "Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality" *Oxfam Briefing Paper* 178 (January 20, 2014), [http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-working-for-few-political-capture-economic-inequality-200114-en.pdf, accessed February 15, 2014].

[145] Wendell Berry, "The Idea of a Local Economy." *Orion: People and Nature.* (Winter 2001). http://www.oriononline.org/pages/om/archive_om/Berry/Local_Economy.html

[146] Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2002), 65ff.

[147] Collective forms of sin, include "institutions, laws, and international bodies of market capitalism that allow some to get richer and most to get poorer," McFague 2001, 175.

[148] Berry 2001.

[149] Hardt and Negri also want to make a sharp distinction between the old "tributary economy" and the new diffuse global system. Hardt and Negri, 2000. Again, while I largely agree with their analysis that the locus of power has shifted to non-geographically aligned individuals, I think the basic patterns of extraction are continuous. Demonic forces, created and fed by human fear, in their dynamism and intersubjectivity with everything that exists, have grown and innovated in terms of instruments, mechanism, relationships, media, and policies. While geography is no longer a constraint, the larger tributary concept remains. A tiny minority separate themselves from humanity and the earth and literally cannibalize the majority. In our biblical theology of power, this stands as a direct offense against God and God's love of humanity and creation, and a rejection of God's teachings about how to live fruitfully and relationally so that all may thrive. Agreeing with intersubjectivity of power, Hardt and Negri say the following: "[P]ower is not a thing but a relation. No matter how mighty and arrogant seems that power standing above you, know that it depends on you, feeds on your fear, and survives only because of your willingness to participate in the relationship. Look for an escape door. One is always there. Desertion and disobedience are reliable weapons against voluntary servitude." Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York, NY: Argo-Navis Author Services, 2012).

[150] Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power." in Michel Foucault 1980, 156.

[151] Ibid.

[152] "You are not only the object of security but also the subject. You answer the call to be vigilant, constantly on watch for suspicious activity on the subway, devious designs of your seatmate on the airplane, malicious motives of your neighbors. Fear justifies volunteering your pair of eyes and your alert attention to a seemingly universal security machine." Hardt and Negri, 2012.

[153] The "Terrorism Information and Prevention System [TIPS] - is a scheme that Joseph Stalin would have appreciated. Plans for its pilot phase, to start in August, have Operation TIPS recruiting a million letter carriers, meter readers, cable technicians, and other workers with access to private homes as informants to report to the Justice Department any activities they think suspicious." Ashcroft vs. Americans, Editorial, *The Boston Globe*, July 17, 2002.

[154] Walsh and Keesmaat 2004, 31.

[155] In our evolving model of power, demonic power is understood as an intentional or unintentional distortion (thieving and re-purposing) of Original Power to harmful ends. L. William Countryman talks about all human beings as priests that travel the "border country" of mystery. Mystery is a dangerous place, because its powers can be profoundly destructive, when our priestly activities become distorted. "[T]he border country is a dangerous country. Not everyone who enters it emerges as a priest of TRUTH. Some of us linger long without ever paying real attention. Our impressions are jumbled and half-submerged. Others may take into that country shortcomings of character that will make us try to bend our meeting with the HOLY to our own ends. In such cases, we will return to the everyday world having not so much seen REALITY as a magnified version of our own internal untruth." L. William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 23. "TRUTH, in our grasping at it . . . falls prey to all the twists and turns that human evil can inflict." "The power of Hitler or of Jim Jones can come from their having been in the border country . . . [T]he warping of their priesthood destroyed them and many others." Ibid, 28. In conversation, J. Richard Middleton pointed me to Countryman's understanding as a "sacred demonic." The demonic is not something other than the sacred. Everything is sacred. The power of the sacred can be misshaped through human freedom and directed to harm and error. Richard Rohr says there is no such thing as sacred and profane. There is only sacred and the desecration of the sacred. "The correct distinction is never between sacred and profane, but only between sacred and *desecrated* places, people, and things. It is we alone who desecrate God's one incarnate world by our inability to see truthfully and to show reverence." Richard Rohr, "A Sacramental Universe" Richard Rohr's Daily Reflection (Center for Action and Contemplation: January 14, 2014)

[156] And in the ministry of Paul. See: Richard A Horsley, *Paul and Empire Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

[157] Mark 1: 12-13; Matthew 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-13.

[158] Mark 3: 23a-27.

[159] Myers 1988, 164-167.

[160] This interpretation was first suggested to me by my friend Rev. Deborah Hughes.

[161] See Ansell, 2001, 39-40.

[162] For more, see: Appendix 2: The Demonic in a Marcan Narrative Context.

[163] Mark 1: 7.

[164] Mark 6: 17.

[165] Mark 15: 1.

[166] In the future, I would like to further explore textual/literary connections between Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac.

[167] The Roman Empire binds religious leaders into its web of patron/client relationships; making them the Empire's emissaries. Would-be dominators often use a strategy of selectively privileging a few leaders of an oppressed group and, tragically, they, for the sake of their own short-sighted benefit or survival, manage the hierarchy. Officials and rulers within the Roman Empire had a particular interest in co-opting the temple along these lines, as a center of power and a source of leverage for controlling the food production by peasants in Palestine. See the introductory chapter for more a detailed explication of patronage and tributary economy is first century Palestine. And see Chapter 3 for an analysis of various forms of collaboration.

[168] This is why, as stated above, if you want to hold together an oppressive social order you can't kill all the truth-tellers (e.g. the Gerasense demoniac). The regime depends on the truth. If it kills all truth, it will have destroyed the source of its own power.

[169] For more on Jesus and the apocalyptic, see Chapter 7.

[170] It is central to many movements of social change to wake regular people up to the reality of their dignity and power.

[171] Here I am speaking of structures that have become so disconnected from their source that they collapse. At the same time I can't help wondering if there is another way. Could these institutions – these instruments for deploying power that we have created – be transformed? Could they change direction, deploying their overwhelming capacities for liberation and healing, rather than violence and aggregation of wealth? Could they repent? I think of the whole city of Nineveh changing course, and of swords turning into plowshares. Sometimes I imagine the Holy Spirit redirecting all the talent and raw force of gangs and drugs here in Rochester into a life-giving local economy. I wonder, what if our brilliant troubled youth were the key to our economic future in this blighted post-industrial landscape of upstate New York? This route would be preferable to the terrible suffering that comes from collapse, which is always worse for those at the bottom of the social structure, and terrible for animal and the earth. I find hope in God's cajoling words to Jonah, who really wanted to see Nineveh burn for their sins. "'Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?'" Jonah 4: 11.

[172] Countryman reminds us that we can't slip away that easily: "If it were possible to rid ourselves of the arcana and to live a human existence untroubled by such dangers, one would be more than a little tempted to do so. But it is not possible. We would have to extinguish our human drive to look around us and to seek meaning and value. We would have to lose our ability to commune with one another and with the universe. We would have to foreswear our desire to understand, our delight in beauty, and every creative impulse. We would have to cease being human, which is not, finally, within our power." Countryman 1999, 29.

[173] "More than sixteen centuries ago, St. Basil cited as already long-established fact the 'ruthless cruelty' of humans that prevented 'the voice of the earth' from rising to God in song. Sadly, the reports of these contemporary ecologists corroborate his confession of shame and indicate that our ancient style of domination continues unabated, and with accelerated effect, so that, in our time, land transformation is the chief cause of extinction for plant and animal species." Davis 2009, Kindle Locations 861-863.

[174] Robbin Marks, "Cesspools of Shame: How Factory Farm Lagoons and Sprayfields Threaten Environmental and Public Health," Natural Resources Defense Council and Clean Water Network (July 2001). http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/cesspools/cesspools.pdf

[175] For current facts on youth violence, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/index.html. This is a significant and ongoing tragedy in my own community of Rochester, NY.

[176] David Biello, "One Year After BP Oil Spill, At Least 1.1 Million Barrels Still Missing: Where in the Gulf of Mexico is the oil from the Macondo well blowout?" *Scientific American* (April 25, 2011), [http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=one-year-after-bp-oil-spill-millions-of-barrels-oil-missing, accessed March 17, 2012].

[177] Michael Muskal, "Ohio links earthquakes to wastewater from drilling, sets tough rules" *Los Angeles Times* (March 9, 2012), [http://www.latimes.com/news/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-fracking-earthquakes-ohio-20120309,0,5410696.story, accessed March 17, 2012].

[178] Sallie McFague, "An Earthly Theological Agenda" *Christian Century* 108 (1991), 15.

[179] For me, this is part of the reality of the unmatchable gift. We may think we can create our own empires, and sever our ties to the Love that made us, but this is not possible. Our connectedness to the Love that made us remains even when we, like the prodigal son, journey far from God. Regardless of how illusory and damaging our lives become, God is waiting with open arms to welcome us back and restore us to our human identity, which is dignity and innocence.

Notes – Chapter 3: The Predicament of Middle Agents

[1] Leonard Cohen, "Sisters of Mercy," *Songs of Leonard Cohen*, Album Side 1, Track 5, Columbia Records, 1967.

[2] Mohandas K. Gandhi, "Swaraj in One Year" *Young India* (September 22, 1920).

[3] This question is modeled on the numbers that say 2% of the global population owns over half the world, while 80% earns less than $10/day. See endnote 4 in the "Introduction & Methodology" for data and references. In reality, the disparity in numbers is greater. See the recent study by Oxfam that shows that 85 individuals now own the same amount as half of the world's population (3.5 billion human beings). Ricardo Fuentes-Nieva and Nicholas Galasso, "Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality" *Oxfam Briefing Paper* 178 (January 20, 2014). [http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-working-for-few-political-capture-economic-inequality-200114-en.pdf, accessed February 15, 2014]. How do 85 individuals maintain control of a globalizing society in which more than half of the seven billion human beings on planet earth live in abject poverty?

[4] Harrison calls this the "benefaction system." James R. Harrison, "The Social Setting" in *The Content and the Setting of the Gospel Tradition*, Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 105ff. For first century patronage patterns and practices, see also: Peter Garnsey and Richard P. Saller, "Patronal Power Relations" *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Richard Horsley, ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 96-103 and Richard P. Saller, "Poverty, Honor, and Obligation in Imperial Rome" *Criterion* 37 (Spring-Summer 1998): 12-20. For a careful and scholarly accounting of our present day globalized minority elite and their patronage networks, see: Janine R. Wedel, *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009).

[5] See "Middle Agents, Power, and Hospitality: Defining Key Terms" in the "Introduction & Methodology."

[6] For more in-depth discussion on the World Economic Forum, see "Community Organization and the .01 Percent" in Chapter 4.

[7] For more in-depth discussion, see: "Community Organization and Globalizing Grassroots Movements" in Chapter 4.

[8] I call this "the epistemological bubble" which is discussed below.

[9] In New York State, we are experiencing a barrage of pro-fracking propaganda (hydraulic fracturing, which is the process of extracting natural gas from shale rock layers deep within the earth). In 2012, Wikileaks began publishing over five million emails from an organization called Stratfor which has "provided 'intelligence services' to major international corporations including Dow Chemical, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon as well as government agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Marines and the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency."

This revealed that "In 2009, Stratfor investigators provided a report to the American Petroleum Institute, which spent $503,903 on lobbying and activities including educational outreach in the first half of this year, that pinpointed growing environmental activism in the state. The group also produced a report detailing the early growth of anti-fracking groups in the state for ExxonMobil, which spent $2 million to promote fracking in New York in 2012." Scott Waldman "Wikileaks: ProPublica and Albany paper started anti-fracking movement" *Capital* (December 12, 2013), [http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/albany/2013/12/8537325/wikileaks-propublica-and-albany-paper-started-anti-fracking-movement, accessed February 18, 2014].

[10] In 1983, there were 50 major media companies in the United States. Today there are 6. See chart of the current consolidations at Lutz, Ashley, "These 6 Corporations Control 90% Of The Media In America" *Business Insider* (June 14, 2012), [http://www.businessinsider.com/these-6-corporations-control-90-of-the-media-in-america-2012-6#ixzz2thNHu4eu, accessed February 18, 2014]. See also: Amy Goodman and David Goodman, "Why Media Ownership Matters" *Seattle Times* (April 3, 2005); Graham Murdock, "The New Mogul Empires: Media Concentration and Control in the Age of Convergence" *Media Development* 41, no. 4 (1994): 3-6; and Ben H. Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*, 4th ed. (Boston. MA: Beacon Press, 1992). For more information and resources see: The Media Reform Information Center (http://www.corporations.org/media/).

[11] See "The Hypnotic Quality of Internal Coherence" below.

[12] Genesis 25: 30.

[13] Bryan Sirchio sings about his experience working with nuns in a Haitian clinic. "Haiti is the poorest country in this hemisphere. I go there now and then to get my vision clear. Sometimes it gets so hazy in this land of 'I consume therefore I am' . . . 'He'd like for you to cut his hair' . . . I said, 'oh, Sister are you sure?'... His English was broken, my Creole's not too good . . . But we managed to communicate enough for him to say something I never will forget . . .You see I asked him, 'do you think I'm rich?' And this was his response to me. He said, 'well how many times a week do you eat?' Well his question took my voice away. And then he said, 'you mean you eat every day?' And I said, 'yeah,' and he just said this. 'Well if you eat each day, you're rich.'" Bryan Sirchio, "If You Eat Everyday," *J-Walking: Songs for Justice Walkers*, Track 7, Crosswinds Music, 1999.

[14] The 174th Fighter Wing flies out of the Air National Guard base in Mattydale, NY. The Air National Guard employs approximately 1500 people at the base. The Air Force currently flies unmanned drones on missions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. They are in the process of assigning a full squadron of MQ-9 Reaper drones directly to Hancock Field that will train and fly over central New York (in addition to the current fleet stationed overseas and piloted at the base). For articles on the subject: Mark Weiner, "President Obama's budget likely to spare Hancock Field from deep defense cuts" *The Post Standard* (Syracuse, NY: February 13, 2012) and Mark Weiner, "Chances of Central New York drone flights improve as new law allows six national test sites" *The Post Standard* (Syracuse, NY: January 05, 2012). In protest against the drone program, 38 activists were arrested in April 2011. One of the people arrested, Col. Ann Wright is a retired U.S. Army colonel and former U.S. diplomat. Her words: "[T]hat is the theory on which we are acting, that we see that our government is committing crimes by the use of these drones, and that we, as citizens, have the responsibility to act." Amy Goodman, "Drones on Trial: 38 Protesters Face Charges for Disrupting Syracuse Base Used in Overseas Attacks," *Democracy Now* (New York, NY: November 04, 2011).

[15] Claims that corporate power-brokers are the source of our security should raise a red flag for those who claim a biblical view of the world. A narration of existence which boldly claims, "I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121: 1-2)" is replaced with a conviction that wealthy individuals and corporations will save us. The latter is the explicit belief of those who run the county I live in as they seek out large international companies to come into our community, compete with and destroy our local businesses, and take wealth out of our borders. They lure them with incentives that require our community to build the infrastructure needed and allow them to pay little to nothing in taxes while the public sector absorbs the larger social and environmental costs of their doing business. Why? Because we believe the narrative that they are "job creators." Using data from the Office of the New York State Comptroller, a local community group here in Rochester called "Initiative for Development Accountability" created a sophisticated analytical report to demonstrate that COMIDA (The County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency) fails to produce the jobs it claims, misuses public funds, and further impoverishes our community. Initiative for Development Accountability "COMIDA Isn't Spanish for Free Lunch" (April 2006, [http://fiscalpolicy.org/ida%20reform.pdf, accessed February 18, 2014]. The tension between the narrative of market globalization and the biblical narrative is explored in the following series of essays: Michael W. Goheen and Erin Glanville, eds. *The Gospel and Globalization: Exploring the Religious Roots of a Globalized World* (Vancouver,

BC: Regent College Publishing, 2009); and in Bob Goudzwaard, *Idols Of Our Time*, trans. Mark Vander Vennen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984).

[16] Regimes depend on integrated layers of insider collaborators. Take the first century. The temple leadership and local political leaders, like Herod, collaborate directly with Roman occupiers (regional level). Local village leaders in Galilee collaborate with Herod and the temple (village level). Villagers serve as soldiers and tax collectors (family level). Judas (the paradigmatic insider collaborator as a member of a vibrant non-violent liberationist social movement led by a radiant and free villager named Jesus) collaborates with soldiers, and thus triggers the nested layers of insider collaboration up to Rome, allowing the regime to execute this disruptive charismatic leader and scatter his followers. The visceral sense of the force of the whole system and the visual spectacle of execution serve as deterrents to those who feel a pull to step outside of its logic. See: Harding and Nobbs 2010; Garnsey and Saller 1997; Saller 1998; and Wedel 2009.

[17] Longenecker argues that the scholarly idea that there was no middle class between the rich and poor in ancient Rome is incorrect. He says that "examples of technological and trade improvements are causing many to question the adequacy of radical binary modelling of the Graeco-Roman world" and that "the size of the Graeco-Roman middling groups may well have been notably underestimated." Bruce W. Longenecker, "Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Urban Christianity" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 no. 3 (March 2009): 257-8.

[18] William R. Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 107.

[19] "Even small peasants in remote villages in the provinces had their lives disrupted by the demands of a distant government for taxes, and by the demands of distant elite landlords for rents. These taxes and rents contributed to the luxury and glitter of the metropolis." Keith Hopkins, "Rome, Taxes, Rents and Trade" in *The Ancient Economy*, Walter Scheidel and Sitta von Reden, eds. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), Kindle Locations 4998-5000.

[20] "Oddly enough, debt became an issue because of the exceptional influx of wealth into Jerusalem due to the wealth that pilgrims brought to the city. In addition, Jews were required to take or send two tithes to Jerusalem each year: one for the Levites (who passed on 10 percent to the priests) and one that was to be spent in the city. In addition, there was a tithe for the poor in some years. Such tithes swelled the income of the city. The priests benefited the most from the wealth entering Jerusalem, along with others associated with the temple industry . . . Temple industry? Yes, the temple was an industry; it was surrounded by those who provided services so that the temple could function properly. There were services such as providing animals for sacrifice, providing and washing linens for the priests and Levites, providing wood for sacrificial fires and for building, currency exchange, providing food for both people and animals, cleaning the temple, providing rooms for rent for pilgrims— there were plenty of ways to make money if you could find a connection to the temple or its visitors. What does all that have to do with debt? The Jewish aristocrats had to find something to do with this excess money. They built wonderful buildings and bought what goods they could. But there was also a desire to make a profit from their money. This was accomplished in two ways: they bought land, for the income that came from rentals, thereby driving up land prices, and they made their money available by lending it out to those who needed money for seed or who needed money in order to purchase enough land to have a viable farm. In Judea the excess income from the temple industry found its way into the hands of small landowners in the form of loans. And in Galilee officials— whether tax collectors, mid-level officers or priestly families— made loans available to their needy neighbors. All of this money lending yielded a considerable gain." The pursuit of growth and profit began to conflict with the tradition of jubilee economics and commitment to debt forgiveness in the Jewish covenantal way of life. Sylvia C. Keesmaat and Brian J. Walsh, "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends: Jesus and the Justice of God" in *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright*, Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), Kindle Locations 1056-1072. For information on debt, tithes, and temple retainers in the first century context, Keesmaat and Walsh cite: Martin Goodman, "The First Jewish Revolt: Social Conflict and the Problem of Debt" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 417-27; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1992), 148-49; Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, People, Politics* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 215-17; Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 72-77; and Jonathan A. Draper "Jesus and the Renewal of Local Community in Galilee" *Journal of Theology for South Africa* 87 (1994): 29-42.

[21] See S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus.* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1990);

and Peter Garnsey, "Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor" *Journal of Theological Studies* 36, no. 2 (October 1985): 479-481.

[22] See Robert Bruce Hitchner , "Olive Production and the Roman Economy: The Case for Intensive Growth in the Roman Empire" in Sheidel and von Reden 2002.

[23] In her exegesis of the book of Revelation, Rossing points out that the "location of Roman trade was the Mediterranean Sea." This is the territory of the merchants who carry all the goods away leaving the people in poverty and the land wasted. Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Eschatological Vision for Earth's Future" in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of the Earth and Humans*, Deiter T. Hessel and Rosemary R. Ruether, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

[24] I add the Syro-Phoenician woman to this diagram as an example of a passive middle agent. Her interaction with Jesus is significant because it is an interchange between the leader of a resistance movement and a passive middle agent. Passive middle agents are famous among marginalized majorities for our blindness to the way systems of power and economic exploitation operate. As the drama between Jesus and this Roman citizen opens, he assumes she is unwilling to open her eyes to her place in a regime that destroys his people. He can't even get his own insider collaborators to see the situation. He is certain she will not step out of the Roman imperial logic. Much to his surprise, she has eyes that see. And he is amazed. Opening awareness and allegiance between marginalized majorities and passive middle agents is critical to the ethic of hospitality we develop in Chapter 6. In that context, we look at this Marcan interchange and its implications in greater detail. Mark 7: 24-30.

[25] Garnsey and Saller 1997.

[26] For more on Mark Chapter 11, see: Appendix 7: Where is the Locus of Power in Creation?

[27] For more on the economic conditions of the first century, see: See Kabiro wa Gatumu, "The Economic Arrangements of the New Testament Era in Relation to Poverty Reduction, Then and Now" *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2 (2009): 61-85; K.C. Hanson and Douglass E. Oakman. *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 19-60; Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris, and Richard P. Saller, eds. *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.); Murray J. Smith, "The Political Context" in Harding and Nobbs 2010, 79ff; and James R. Harrison, "The Social Setting" in Harding and Nobbs 2010, 105ff.

[28] Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 39-40.

[29] For more information on the discussion about NAFTA and the impact of Free Trade Agreements, see: William R. Cline, "Trade and Income Distribution: The Debate and New Evidence" *Institute of International Finance*, [http://www.econ.yale.edu/alumni/reunion99/cline.htm, accessed February 18, 2014]; Joseph Rebello, "World Bank Study Contradicts Its Free-Trade Income Theories" Dow Jones Newswires (August. 23, 2002); Nicole Hassoun, "Free Trade, Poverty, and Inequality" Carnegie Mellon University (January 13, 2011); Robert E. Scott, "The High Price of 'Free' Trade: NAFTA's failure has cost the United States jobs across the nation" *Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper* (November 17, 2003), [http://www.epi.org/publication/briefingpapers_bp147/, accessed February 18, 2014]; Amy Goodman, "NAFTA at 20: Lori Wallach on U.S. Job Losses, Record Income Inequality, Mass Displacement in Mexico" *Democracy Now* (January 3, 2014), [http://www.democracynow.org/2014/1/3/nafta_at_20_lori_wallach_on, accessed February 18, 2014]; Dave Johnson, "NAFTA at 20: 1 Million U.S. Jobs Lost, Record Income Inequality" *Alternet* (December 31, 2013), [http://www.alternet.org/nafta-20-1-million-us-jobs-lost-record-income-inequality, accessed February 18, 2014]; and Mark Weisbrot, Stephan Lefebvre, and Joseph Sammut "NAFTA's 20-Year Legacy and the Fate of the Trans-Pacific Partnership: Did NAFTA Help Mexico? An Assessment After 20 Years" (February 2014).

[30] For a thoughtful theological and practical exploration of the dynamics of globalization, see Chapter 8 in: Bob Goudzwaard and Mark Vander Vennen, *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

[31] See endnote 143 in Chapter 2 for more on the structure of global imperialism.

[32] See "Community Organization and the .01 Percent" in Chapter 4 for more on the World Economic Forum.

[33] "So, in this crucifixion economy, nations, people and the earth itself are all offered for sacrifice before the god of unlimited economic growth." Walsh and Keesmaat 2011, Kindle Locations 1019-1020.

[34] As we globalize, and the planet gets smaller and more interconnected, it gets more difficult to circumscribe the fallout from imperial greed and violence elsewhere. We saw this in the financial crisis of 2008. "Driven by an insatiable greed, our economy has no sense of enough, no sense of proper limits to affluence , no sense of justice for the poorest of the poor and the earth itself, and so it became obscenely bloated until it had to explode." Ibid, Kindle Locations 1009-1012.

[35] On the imperial orchestration of intra-community violence in Chiapas: "The paramilitaries were principally recruited among young landless men in the villages who were frustrated by their lack of stable means to support their families. Economically and socially marginalized, these men found both prestige and income as paramilitaries with the 'right' to extract both 'war-tax' from all villagers and to loot the houses and fields of those who were driven from their homes." Heidi Moksnes, "Factionalism and Counterinsurgency in Chiapas: Contextualizing the Acteal Massacre" *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 76 (Abril de 2004), 113 referencing Aubry, Andrés y Angélica Inda "¿Quienes son los 'paramilitares'?" *La Jornada* (December 23, 1997). On masking imperial agendas as "internal feuds": "The violence was condemned by governments and human rights associations, which raised questions about whether the paramilitary aggression was orchestrated by higher-level state authorities. Acteal was seen by many as the extreme result of the counterinsurgency strategy of the government. However, the government rejected all accusations of involvement, holding that the massacre was the outcome of purely internal feuds." Heidi Moksnes 2004, 115. On destroying the local social fabric: "Indigenous society in Chiapas is threatening to disintegrate. The increasing tensions and use of violence all through the state continue to generate distrust and enmity, tearing to pieces a dense social fabric." Ibid, 116.

[36] Keesmaat and Walsh suggest that middle agent allegiance with marginalized majorities (my language) must entail a new kind of crucifixion economics, "Yes, a crucifixion economics, but not the crucifixion of the poor for the sake of the rich. No, a crucifixion of our greed, of our gluttony, of our insecurity, of our consumptive way of life— a dying with Christ— so that we might be raised with him. From a crucifixion economics to a resurrection economics. Yes, an embrace of economic suffering, of economic restraint in the hope of a rebirth to an economics of radical generosity, an economics that bears the good fruit of justice and righteousness, an economics that feeds the hungry by allowing them to feed themselves and not grow cash crops for us, an economy of care that will place justice, compassion, stewardship and love over any narrowly conceived notion of economic efficiency." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1340-1346.

[37] There is much debate about the author and intended audience of Mark. Scholars have posited theories that the gospel was written before and after the temple's destruction in 70CE. Scholars have a variety of theories about the geographic location of the author and location. Often Rome is cited as a possibility. Others think Antioch. Recently, a number of scholars believe it is Syria. Key factors at issue in these debates are: 1) the gospel is written in a simple form of common Greek and uses the Septuagint when it references Hebrew texts; 2) the gospel contains some inaccuracies around Palestinian geography, yet focuses its stories around Galilee, Syria, and the Decapolis; 3) the text has Semitic character and uses Semitic narrative structures; 4) the gospel demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to ancient Hebraic themes, particularly populist and liberationist themes; 5) the text uses Aramaic terms (the language of the people of Galilee) and, yet makes the effort to explain them; 6) the text assumes understanding of Jewish culture and stories and yet explains certain Jewish terms and concepts; 7) the text uses Latinisms, which may indicate a Roman location or the influence of Roman occupation. See: Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: Anchor Bible, 1997); Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007); and Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001). Further research has shown that Mark is aggregated from a complexity of underlying sources. These include: a passion narrative, miracle stories, apocalyptic traditions, disputations and didactic sayings. Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide.* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press,1998), 24-27. Scholarly work in the 1980s and 1990s began to reveal the oral character of Mark. Richard Horsley pursues this oral character of the gospel and its implications for its development, location, and audience. Richard A. Horsley, "Oral and Written Aspects of the Emergence of the Gospel of Mark as Scripture*," Oral Tradition* 25:1 (2010), 93-114. His research uncovers second century hierarchs who "mocked the gospels for their lack of literary distinction and their composers as ignorant people." Ibid, 94. It is logical that the gospels would be rejected due to their critiques of the authorities and message of populist renewal. Horsley argues that it was only through their "repeated oral performance" among early Christian communities that they overcame these obstacles and gained authority. Ibid, 95. He argues that the scriptural quotations at question in Mark also come from oral tradition and popular story-telling, including the liberation-centered narrative of the little tradition. (For more on the "little tradition" see the Introduction.) Horsley questions the very notion of seeking individual authorship, and posits a more organic and collective development. There is a tradition present, gathered orally among people who spoke Aramaic and could read neither Hebrew nor Greek. "The people involved in the story, and evidently its audience as well, are located in the villages of Galilee and surrounding territories in Syria (villages of Tyre, Caesarea Philippi, and the Decapolis), not Jerusalem, from which scribes and Pharisees 'come down' to oppose Jesus."

Ibid, 100. The message of each easy-to-remember "chain" within the gospel mirrors the message of the whole gospel, "the renewal of Israel over against the rulers of Israel." Ibid, 107. Regarding the debate over Jewish or Gentile audience, Horsley determines that this is not the relevant question. The "division evident in the texts is between the rulers and the ruled, not between 'Jews' and 'Christians.'" "If we listen with the ears of ancient people who were poor and under heavy obligation for rents or taxes to the wealthy and powerful local magnates, perhaps we can sense how both particular episodes and the whole Gospel story would have resonated with them. Mark repeatedly represents Jesus criticizing the powerful and their representatives for their demands on and exploitation of the poor." Ibid, 109. "When we grasp Mark's complete story it becomes evident it was about and was addressed to the ancient equivalent of 'third world' peoples subjected by empire. It seems inappropriate therefore for Western Christians living comfortably in the metropolises of modern global empire to assume that Mark, like the Bible itself, was written for and to themselves." Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xii. See endnote 32 in the "Introduction & Methodology" for more information on the scholarly conversation on Mark.

[38] There is some scholarly agreement that Matthew is operating in the context of a debate in the synagogue community about the role of ritual and the teachings of Jesus. Dennis C. Duling, "The Gospel of Matthew" in *The Blackwell Companion to The New Testament*, David E. Aune, ed. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Burkett, Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Wim Weren "The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community" in *Matthew and the Didache*, Huub van de Sandt, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2005). What has been less understood about Matthew is that this religious debate is deeply political. It is imbedded in the reality of Roman occupation and concerns the challenges this poses to a Torah-believing community. Warren Carter reviews the characteristics of a presumed Matthean audience, including: "knowledge of Greek"; "knowledge about Jesus and the biblical traditions"; involved in "a dispute within the synagogue community"; and "the experience of belonging to a minority community." To this, his work adds "the role of the audience's experiences of Roman imperial power in the interpretative process." Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 4. See also: David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 2005).

[39] Herzog argues that toll collector is a more accurate translation than tax collector for the Greek word telwvnhß, William Herzog 1994, 173.

[40] See chart in the Appendix 5 for the place of the Centurion, as well as other middle agents, in the flow of the Lukan narrative.

[41] Wes Howard-Brook uses the terms "religion of empire" and "religion of creation." Wes Howard-Brook, *"Come Out My People!": God's Call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), xiv.

[42] The details of Luke's identity and setting are generally taken directly from the text of Luke and Acts. It is thought that Luke is a physician and a companion of Paul's. He is often thought to be a Gentile, explaining the gospel to a Roman audience. Vernon K. Robbins says the "location of thought" of Luke-Acts is among "Jews and Romans who have power in cities and villages." Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 194. Luke may have written in Rome or Caesarea. His writing indicates that he is educated. It is generally accepted that Luke, like Matthew, draws on the gospel of Mark as a source. While it is commonly thought that his goal is to write a history in the modern sense, Green says that he "writes as one of the 'people of the Way'" and his "concern is not so much with the ordering as it is with persuasion." He is using "history to preach." Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 36-38. Luke is full of "scriptural echoes" and thoroughly saturated with themes and references to the Hebrew scriptures. Theresa Yu Chui Siang Lau "The Gospels and the Old Testament" in Harding and Nobbs 2010, 155. Halvor Moxnes argues that the social situation of Luke's community is an urban setting in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the context is the patronage culture of Hellenism. "At the heart of the Lukan community's ethos lay its common meals. The purpose of these meals was dual: On the one hand, they forged a common identity for a socially and ethnically diverse group of Christians; on the other hand, they functioned as a criticism of urban culture." Halvor Moxnes, "The Social Context of Luke's Community" *Interpretation* 48, no. 4 (October 1994): 379-389. Also see: Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991). Though a minority disagrees due to perceived inconsistencies, most scholars agree that the gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts form a unit. The "extensive linguistic and theological agreements and cross-references between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts indicate that both works derive from the same author." Udo Schnelle, *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), 259. Taking the majority view, I suggest that Luke's narrative of the Jesus Movement offers a

particular form of continuity with Acts. Areas of concern for both books include: the ethical dilemmas of middle agents, the epistemological bubble, and a broad vision of a socially leveled society, including jubilee economics and counter-cultural cross-class participation, worked out in small community. Luke sets the historical and theological foundation in Jesus' life and ministry and Acts describes the practical outworkings in the early church by "the people of the way." For more on the scholarly conversation about Luke and my relationship to it, particularly my claim that Luke is focused on the middle agent audience, see endnote 31 in "Introduction & Methodology." Also see Appendix 5: A Study of Middle Agents in the Gospel of Luke.

[43] Many scholars have studied the economics theme in the gospel of Luke, and have come to a variety of conclusions. Grimshaw notes an urban/rural divide in the gospel and explores the way the production of food and sharing of food reverses the usual power situation, empowering the rural side of the equation. James P. Grimshaw "Luke's Market Exchange District: Decentering Luke's Rich Urban Center" *Semeia* 86 (1999): 33-51. Harrison says that the Lukan Jesus is defying the Jewish "holiness" system and the Greco-Roman "reciprocity" system and establishing a "Messianic community of the marginalized." James R. Harrison, "The Social Setting" in Harding and Nobbs 2010, 105ff. Domeris, like me, notices the efforts of Luke to communicate with people in the middle of the power structure. He sees this as a softening of the radical message, and accommodation to their complex social positioning. W R Domeris, "Cellars, Wages and Gardens: Luke's Accommodation for Middle-Class Christians" *HTS Theology Studies* 49, no. 1&2 (1993): 85-100. In my reading of Luke, I agree there is a focus on those in the middle of power structures, but I do not see any sign of accommodation. In my view, Luke is attempting to drive a radical gospel message into middle agent heads that are stubbornly resistant to hearing it. For more on Luke's persistence, see "The Comfortable Are Not Saving the Poor, The Poor Are Saving the Comfortable" in Chapter 5. Babie takes up the subject of private property in Luke and concludes the following. "If not for any rules or laws which restrict or prohibit certain socially detrimental uses, the legal-philosophical view of private property places no bounds on the exercise of such use-rights; the holder is free to act in an unfettered way in relation to those things over which use rights are enjoyed in order to satisfy personal preferences and desires. The Gospel of Luke sees this very differently: the only point of private property is the good it can do others." Paul Babie, "Private Property and the Gospel of Luke" *Australian eJournal of Theology* 3 (August 2004): 11. See also: Raymond Pickett, "You Cannot Serve God and Mammon": Economic Relations and Human Flourishing in Luke" *Dialog* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 37-46; James A. Metzger, "Jesus on Economic Justice in Luke: Accomodationist or Subversive?" *Prism* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 45-58; and John Gillman, *Possessions and the Life of Faith: A Reading of Luke-Acts* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).

[44] Luke 16: 1-13. The two popular names for this story highlight the tension between the imperial view and creational view of the middle agent role. Is he a manager, extracting resources for the landowner? Or is he a steward of the people and lands under his care for the Landowner (aka God)? What is the true allegiance of this middle agent? Being in the middle, the manager/steward feels the pressure and resolves it by saving his own skin as he plays the two sides off each other.

[45] The biblical language for this is hardening our hearts.

[46] Hannah Arendt explores this choice in detail in the Holocaust context. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1963).

[47] In our globalizing empire, our relationships are not so direct. As 21st century middle agents, we do not see and talk to the people whose lives we affect. The ones who grow our food, make our clothes, build our homes and their contents, provide our services, and die in our wars are increasingly remote from us. The globalizing economy functions to protect us from the pain to human lives and animals and the earth that results from our choices. In our social setup we find ourselves torn between "saving money" and "caring about justice."

[48] The manager is a complicated character, leading interpreters to wonder whether his is a model to be emulated or not. Goodrich comes out on the "the manager is good" side, because his behavior is consistent with the Lukan theology of remitting debts. John K. Goodrich, "Voluntary Debt Remission and the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 3 (2012): 547-566. Similarly, Schellenberg wrestles with the strange morality at the end of the parable, the affirmation of the scheme by the master, and reconciles it via the term *kurios* or master. We serve a master who teaches debt relief. He keeps the economic message of Luke intact without giving up the idea that the master is Jesus. Schellenberg, Ryan S. "Which Master? Whose Steward? Metalepsis and Lordship in the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Lk 16.1-13)" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30, no. 3 (March 2008): 263-288. See also: David Landry and Ben May, "Honor Restored: New Light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Luke 16:l-8a)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000): 287-94.

[49] Jesus has a particularly low tolerance for this strategy, as we hear in his accusations of the religious leaders. He, quite grouchily and publically, calls them out for following the law (that is, caring for the most vulnerable) only superficially, while protecting their own financial interests and creating loopholes for personal gain. "He said to them, Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition. Then he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.' But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God) — then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.'" Mark 7: 6-12. For even more colorful language, see: Matthew 23: 23-28. As an example, Keesmaat and Walsh point out that the "rabbis instituted a ruling called 'prosbul' whereby debts no longer had to be forgiven because the courts could force payment. Creditors said that this was necessary in order to make it possible to get a loan in the sixth year; the effect, however, was to keep debtors on the hook with insupportable debt. The creditor could not lose, for if the debt was not repaid, a "fine" could be charged of 20 percent, and ultimately, foreclosure brought new lands and, occasionally, slaves." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1074-1079. Citing Goodman 1982, 423-5 and Sanders 1992, 333-4.

[50] The manager is slow to see the crisis because his middle agent status provides him a modicum of protection. The system is still working for him. He is still eating. It is not until he feels some pain that he wakes up. See "The Epistemological Bubble" below. The most vulnerable feel the pain first, which gives them the earliest knowing about the brokenness of the whole system. Middle agents have varying degrees of protection and privilege. The more protected they are the less likely they will know what is happening. The less protected they are – the closer they are to the exploited majority – the sooner they will feel the pain. There is a connection between pain and knowing. See also "On the Pain of Knowing" below. (As a sidenote, this is why reading the scriptures with marginalized majorities yields such powerful insights into their meaning – often obvious meaning that more comfortably located interpreters miss.)

[51] Herzog details evidence for the social locations of the various figures. The master "belongs to the ruling elite who control the land and the lives of the 'people of the land.'" The steward is not a Roman or a Jewish slave. A slave would not be dismissed for poor performance. He is a retainer. He is a powerful representative with legal and contractual power for the estate. William Herzog 1994, 240-1.

[52] This is "a death sentence." Herzog points out that he will wind up like Lazarus. Ibid, 242.

[53] Ibid, 243. Udoh is part of a vibrant discussion in the literature about the nature of slavery in the ancient world. Were figures, such as the manager in this passage, slaves (or servants) in the sense that we understand today? The text indicates that they carry significant power and manage major estates and finances, which indicates we may be misreading their place in the social structure if we confine them to popular understandings of slavery. Fabian E. Udoh,"The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16:1-18[13])" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 311-335. Mary Ann Beavis takes this subject in a literary direction, drawing on "Greco-Roman slave ideology" to interpret the "servant parables." Beavis, Mary Ann. "Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 37-54. While her work is interesting and adds potential depth to our reading, and perhaps our understanding of how the parables were heard, I find more specifically socio-political analysis and reading with marginalized majorities more fruitful for understanding Jesus' ethical intent.

[54] Herzog 1994, 248.

[55] The reductions correspond with ancient interest rates for oil and wheat. Ibid, 255 (citing J.D.M. *Derrett*, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward" *New Testament Studies* 7 (*1961*):198-219.)

[56] Herzog notes that the same Greek word (*diaskorpizon*) used for wasting in this parable is used for the prodigal son who wastes. It indicates "conspicuous consumption." Ibid, 251.

[57] Herzog argues that the complaint comes from "offstage" as a "weapon of the weak." These weapons of the weak are creative alternatives to direct rebellion. Ibid, 252-3. These are both Scott's terms. James C. Scott 1 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

[58] Ibid, 255.

[59] Luke 16: 14.

[60] Luke 18: 1-8.

[61] Reading through articles on the shrewd manager/unjust steward, it seems to be de rigueur to open with how baffling this text is, and how its mysteries will never be solved. Some version of this statement is in the opening paragraph of nearly every article in the ATLA database on this text. The essence of the dilemma is: why would the master praise the manager for reducing his profits? Is the manager good or bad? By now, it should be pretty obvious to the reader how this particular mystery hits the blind spot of interpreters who are formed in a capitalist environment. At least three assumptions cause the confusion. 1) the overwhelming urge to associate the most powerful figure in the passage (the master) with God/Jesus and thus to see his words as God's/Jesus' words; 2) the unexamined certainty that turning profit is good; and 3) the unquestioned merging of Jesus' sense of ethical good with the sense of ethical good promoted within profit-making systems and societies (e.g. assuming that Jesus will see protecting the assets of the powerful as an ethical good). When members of marginalized majorities read these texts, they tend to be unburdened with these assumptions, and thus express little confusion about what the text means. See Upkong who reads this parable with "exploited peasant farmers in West Africa" and through the lens "the international debt burden of the Two-Thirds World." Justin S. Ukpong "The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16.1-13): An Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic" *Semeia: "Reading With": African Overture* 73 (1996): 189. "Being shaped by traditional religions and oppressive economics, particularly the behavior of middle-men, the West Africans read the parable a bit differently. They see the inequity of social positions, and the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Morally they approve of the manager who uses his power to relieve the burden of those who need it, taking from one who does not need it." Ibid, 190.

[62] "The consensus guiding the interpretation of the so-called parable of the Dishonest Steward was built around the effort to explain why the (L)lord in v. 8a should have praised the person whose actions were thought to be 'dishonest' and who, in the parable itself, is called a 'steward of unrighteousness'" Udoh 2009, 311.

[63] There is also an emphasis on eschatology. "The certainty of the judgment of the coming Kingdom plunges one into this new intention for wealth and new investment in relationships, so that when we are 'turned out of doors,' or when we 'fail/ die,' they shall welcome us into eternal dwellings. The eschatological direction of Jesus' original telling is preserved, to be sure, but it is also enfleshed in particularity. The decision to act in light of an understanding of the import of the hour is also given a specific content in new personal ambitions and social relations." DeSilva, David Arthur "The Parable of the Prudent Steward and Its Lucan Context." *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (Spring 1993): 255-268. "Jesus has utilized a parable that portrays a steward cheating his master in order to secure his future but uses it to teach a positive, even if shocking, lesson on the prudent use of wealth. Christian disciples should display just as much prudence in their use of possessions, especially in view of the more important crisis that faces them—namely, the coming eschatological kingdom. Such prudence is an effective test of their ability to handle true, heavenly riches. It is also an effective test of their allegiance to God." Mathewson, David. "The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13): A Reexamination of the Traditional View in Light of Recent Challenges" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38, no. 1 (March 1995): 29-39. "A steward has acted dishonestly in releasing debts but shrewdly in preparing for his future. Jesus uses the parable to inculcate in his disciples the need to be equally wise (not dishonest) in their use of material possessions in light of the coming eschatological kingdom." Dennis J. Ireland, *Stewardship and the Kingdom of God: An Historical, Exegetical and Contextual Study of the Parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16:1-13*. Leiden: Brill, 1992. I am not saying these passages don't have eschatology in them. No doubt that the present ethics that Jesus teaches are foretastes of eschatological fulfillment. Still, I read middle agent eschatological interpretation with a careful eye, because among the many techniques for dismissing the present struggle of middle agency and the painful consequences of genuine allegiance to the marginalized majorities is the effort to overemphasize the future dimension of eschatology. Middle agent interpreters can be drawn to imagining the yet-to-be-fulfilled to the exclusion present ethical requirements as a way to forestall the impacts on our way of life.

[64] This parable, perhaps more than any other, reveals the acrobatic nature of middle agent reality, and the difficulty of the internal pressure to protect the imperial structure we've built our lives on, and those moments when we realize it can collapse. See Schumacher's very interesting exegetical study that compares the parable of the rich fool with that of the shrewd manager, and particularly his comparison of Jesus' teachings on gathering/storing up vs. scattering. R. Daniel Schumacher, "Saving Like a Fool and Spending Like it isn't Yours: Reading the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8a) in Light of the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-20)" *Review & Expositor* 109, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 269-276. Unfortunately he ruins his insightful exegesis with his closing effort to soften the radical implications of his findings, taking pains to clarify for the reader that disbursing the wealth of the master is "unjust." "Of course, the tension comes precisely because he accomplished this through unjust means, namely, the dispersion of his master's wealth and not his

own. The distinction, however, that must be kept intact in reading the praise in this way is that the person is characterized as *unjust*, while the action is characterized as *wise*. The steward, then, can be a less than commendable figure who has, in this instance, acted in a commendable way. The action to be admired and emulated, it seems, is that of scattering (as opposed to hoarding) wealth. [emphasis in the original]" Ibid, 276. Jesus actually says that hoarding is unjust, and shows no interest in protecting the interests of hoarders. Jesus himself scatters the wealth of others in the temple. The acrobatics this middle agent interpreter needs to employ to be comfortable with his findings indicate that this parable still puts pressure on middle agents today. It forces us to question where our allegiances lie, and to seriously consider the consequences of allying with marginalized majorities in ways that are more than superficial and self-serving.

[65] Herzog 1994, 246. Speaking of John Dominic Crossan's interpretation, Herzog writes: "At times, Crossan's reading of the parable sounds like a lament, decrying how hard it is to get good help."

[66] There are several veiled and ambiguous comments by Jesus about taxes, a good indication that hidden transcripts are at work. In one instance, Jesus takes the question about the temple tax as an opportunity to point out how the kings of the world steal from other people's children to enrich their families. Then, he obtusely says, the children are free – that is, God is the true king of the earth and thus we, the children of the true king, need not pay taxes. Then he decides to have a sarcastic/playful response to get the rulers off his back. So the leaders don't take offense, go take a coin from a fish's mouth to pay for both of us – that is, I am son of the living God, with command over even the seas, but go ahead and cover us a little longer (Matthew 17: 24-27). In another episode, he embarrasses the scribes and chief priests by tricking them into revealing their participation in the Roman economy in front of the crowds – who see their involvement with Rome as an act of betrayal and a violation of Torah law. Then we get a similarly obtuse response to the question of tax paying. Give to the emperor what belongs to the emperor and give to God what belongs to God. This response makes the same core point as the prior one. If you are children of the living God, everything in creation belongs to God, and none of it belongs to the emperor (Matthew 22: 15-22; Mark 12: 13-17; Luke 20: 20-26). Salvation in Luke is most profoundly expressed in the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who returns the money to the people. And at Jesus' death, forbidding people to pay taxes was one of the key accusations made against him (Luke 23: 7). That Jesus was so veiled in his responses on this point, indicates the swift termination of his ministry that would occur if he were to be explicit. He is dancing with a wild and demonic beast. Imperialists unleash unmitigated violence when their base of support is threatened.

[67] Matthew 21: 12-13; Mark 11: 15-18; Luke 19: 45-47; John 2: 13-17.

[68] Luke 16: 9.

[69] Luke 16: 11.

[70] "This has been for many an unsettling story. It seems to promote ruthless business practices (v. 20), usury (v. 27), and the cynical view that the rich will only get richer while the poor become destitute (v. 29). Moreover, if we assume, as does the traditional reading, that the master is a figure for God, it is a severe portrait indeed: an absentee lord (v. 15) who cares only about profit maximization (v. 21), this character is hardhearted (v. 24) and ruthless (v. 30). Despite these concerns, this story still routinely occasions countless homilies (usually on stewardship Sunday) about how we Christians should gainfully employ our 'talents' for God--despite the fact that 'talent' in the Gospel text has nothing to do with our individual gifts and everything to do with economics. Might it be that we have imposed upon the parable our capitalist presumptions about the glories of a system that rewards 'venture capital,' and thus read the story exactly backwards" Eric DeBode and Ched Myers, "Towering Trees and 'Talented' Slaves" *The Other Side Magazine* (May 1999), 5. Here DeBode and Myers are speaking of the Matthew version of the story, Matt. 25:14-30.

[71] Luke 19: 11-27. Herzog again is helpful in making sense of this strange story. Herzog 1994, 150-168.

[72] The text calls the client figures *doulai*. Again Herzog points out that *doulai* (translated slaves) does not mean slaves in a modern sense. These are retainers with significant managerial responsibilities. Ibid, 158.

[73] Many interpreters point out the connection between this story and the event of Archelaus going to Rome. "In fact, as almost everyone points out, this parable begins with distinct parallels to Archelaus heading off to Rome to get royal power for himself. He is followed by a contingent of the citizens of his country, who oppose his rule. That story is recorded in Josephus, and everyone listening to Jesus would have heard the parallel. This is not a nobleman they would have equated with God." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1207-1209. Citing Josephus Jewish War 2.1-38, 80-100; Antiquities 17.219-49, 299-320; and N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 633. Weinert provides an excellent overview of the Archelaus

connection as well as other historical parallels that would be ringing in listeners' ears. He, quite confusingly, concludes from his study that Jesus is the king and that the passage is an "admonition against rebellion." Francis D. Weinert, "Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14-15a, 27) Reconsidered." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (October 1977): 505-514. "When the story is taken as an allegorical allusion to Jesus' departure, enthronement, and return as Son of Man in judgment, the royal figure becomes none other than Christ himself, and his reckoning, the *parousia*. That Luke viewed it in this latter sense is unmistakable." Ibid, 506. Guy reads the parable in light of the entry into Jerusalem, seeing eschatological and royal themes. Laurie Guy, "The Interplay of the Present and Future in the Kingdom of God (Luke 19:11-44)" *Tyndale Bulletin* 48, no. 1 (May 1997): 119-137.

[74] This parable focuses in on the distorted human relationships that lead to an economic pattern of asset transfer in the first century biblical context. Those who control the economy use debt instruments to get landowners in over their head to the point where they have to relinquish the land to the debt-holder. Herzog 1994, 161. We witnessed a similar massive transfer of assets from the poorest citizens in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. And as I write, Bank of America is proposing to solve the mortgage crisis (that they and their colleagues created by turning our housing market into a high stakes casino) by converting home owners with problem mortgages into renters. This pressure on the majority (from the aggression of the elite), slowly or quickly strips them of assets. This is the reason for the periodic redistribution of resources (and restoration of property/land) required by jubilee economics.

[75] Luke 19: 16. Herzog points out the different phrasing in Matthew and Luke. Matthew has the retainer say: "I have made ten talents more." Luke understands the obsequious careful language of the Roman court, that veils the human effort and cost, changing the language to "your money has made more money." Ibid, 163.

[76] Using "inculturation hermeneutics," Folarin reads the Matthean parable with those in his home country, Nigeria. He concludes that the "parable of the talents is an invitation to resist exploitation in a nonviolent way and to be ready to suffer for such action." George O. Folarin, "The Parable of the Talents in the African Context: An Inculturation Hermeneutics Approach" *Asia Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (April 2008): 104. See also: Justin S. Ukpong, "The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30): Commandation or Critique of Exploitation?: A Social-historical and Theological Reading" *Neotestamentica* 46, no. 1 (2012): 190-207. Storie notes that "[m]ost New Testament texts arose from subordinate communities whose well-being and survival were constantly at risk." While appreciating Bailey's efforts to read scripture through the lens of culture, she finds that he is missing the necessary simultaneous consideration of class, thus missing how communication functions in the subordinate communities such as the ones that produced and heard the gospels. Particularly he takes the "public transcript" at face value, missing the information communicated just below the surface in "hidden transcripts." (See discussion of hidden transcripts and James C. Scott's work in the "Introduction & Methodology.") Storie continues: "The four interrelated problems [in Bailey's project] are: (i) Bailey's frequent failure to distinguish between public accounts and actual realities; (ii) his predisposition to view dominant characters in parables positively, often assuming they represent Jesus or God; (iii) his tendency to overlook violence in the worlds of and behind the biblical text; and, (iv) his lack of appreciation for how profoundly poverty and power disparities constrain the lives of subordinate men and, especially, women." Deborah Storie, "Review Article: Kenneth E. Bailey, Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels" *Pacifica* 22 (February 2009): 101. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008). See also: Merrill Kitchen, "Rereading the Parable of the Pounds: A Social and Narrative Analysis of Luke 19: 11-28" in *Prophecy and Passion: Essays in Honour of Athol Gill*, David Neville, ed. (Hindmarsh, SA: Australian Theological Forum, 2002), 227ff.; Elizabeth Dowling, *Taking Away the Pound: Women, Theology and the Parable of the Pounds in the Gospel of Luke* (London, UK: T & T Clark, 2007); and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents/ Pounds: A Text of Terror?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 23, no. 1 (February 1, 1993): 32-39.

[77] "Unwilling to participate in this exploitation, this third slave took the money out of circulation, where it could no longer be used to dispossess another family farmer." DeBode and Myers 1999, 7. DeBode and Myers speak to our "capitalist lens" and the tendency to see the one who does not invest as "lazy." "It is instructive that the master does not refute the whistle-blower's [Herzog's term] analysis of his world. He simply castigates him as 'evil and lazy' (the favorite slur of the rich toward those who don't play the game)." DeBode and Myers 1999, 7-8. "Rather than laziness, Braun sees what James Scott . . . has analyzed as the 'foot-dragging practices of peasants' and their 'everyday forms of resistance.'" Adam F. Braun, "Reframing the Parable of the Pounds in Lukan Narrative and Economic Context: Luke 19:11-28" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39, no. 6 (December 2012): 448. In this reading the non-investor is the hero. "[I]f the manner of profiteering portrayed in the story would have been understood by the original audience as rapacious, is it not possible that this noncooperating third slave [in Matthew version] might in fact be the hero of this parable? Like a good three-part joke, we now come to the punch line: The third slave is about to explain his (in)action (25:24-25). That he

buried the money in the ground seems strange at first glance. But considering that many in Jesus' audience were farmers, there may be some wry peasant humor here. Those who work the land know that all true wealth comes from God, the source of rain, sunshine, seed, and soil. But this silver talent, when "sown, 'produced no fruit!'" DeBode and Myers 1999, 6-7. Braun, like Schumacher with the Shrewd Manager above, breaks with general interpretations, providing cogent economic analysis, and then mutes his conclusions. He takes pains to say that the non-investor need not be viewed as a hero. He then uses vague eschatology to soften the implications of his study: "Where Luke's narrative challenges his readers to give and share all or as much as possible for the poor, the captives, and the oppressed (4:18), the challenge of the Luke's telling of the Parable of the Pounds is one of caution. Those listening to Jesus had thought the Divine Dominion had come. But the Parable of the Pounds reminds its readers that the Divine Dominion does not come in the lording over of others nor in the profit margins of successful investments." Braun 2012, 448.

[78] Luke 19: 20-21.

[79] Ezekiel 34: 2-4.

[80] Ezekiel 34: 9-10.

[81] Luke 17: 11-19.

[82] The listener knows that this faithful one will suffer for his honesty. There is a kamikaze quality to his choice. From a financial security standpoint his choice has been suicidal. He will become homeless, perhaps a day laborer. This story follows the story of Zacchaeus, a model middle agent who succeeds at the impossible, relinquishing his possessions and being saved. (See Appendix 5: A Study of Middle Agents in the Gospel of Luke) Are we being asked now to contemplate the fate of Zacchaeus? Is this a sobering wake-up call from the joyful moment in the tree? What will happen to Zacchaeus once Jesus moves on? Will the people welcome and protect him (as the shrewd manager planned)? Keesmaat and Walsh also notice that this parable may be told with sensitivity to the consequences for what Zacchaeus has done in genuinely allying with the vulnerable. "This story is told in Zacchaeus's house for Zacchaeus's sake. You see, sometime in the near future Zacchaeus is going to have some appointments with the bureaucrats above him. He is supposed to have collected the tax amount and some extra to line the pockets of the men above him. He was probably chosen for his job because he was the best at squeezing money out of the people in the village. As a result of meeting Jesus, he won't have extra for kickbacks. He is going to be like that third slave— unable to deliver the economic goods to the harsh ruler." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1241-1244.

[83] As with the previous parable of the shrewd manager, we encounter the common interpretive confusion that leads readers to think that Jesus could in any way be promoting increasing profits that masters extract from people and the land. Ibid, Kindle Locations 1212-1215 and DeBode and Myers 1999, 6. This passage is highly relevant passage to today's discussions about banks and bankers. The Lukan Jesus is directly confronting the ethical breach of Torah involved in allowing money to make money. "How would these slaves have made their money grow? By lending to those in need and then by foreclosing when they couldn't repay. That's a quick way to make money beget money without actually benefiting anyone other than the creditor." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1224-1226. "The distance between the work of the first two slaves and covenant economics is also underlined in verse 23, where the nobleman says to the third slave that at the very least he should have been able to collect his money with interest (*tokō*). This Greek word literally means 'offspring' and hence the word that we translate as 'interest' has the overtones of money breeding money. This is the same word used throughout the Septuagint to indicate that charging interest is prohibited by those who are righteous and who follow Torah." Ibid, Kindle Locations 1229-1233. Storie and Brett point out that Parable of the Talents (Matthew version) "up until the time of Constantine was generally interpreted as a critique of the profit motive, rather than an endorsement of it." Deborah Storie and Mark Brett, "The Church in the Economy of God" *Zadok Perspectives* 102 (Autumn 2009): 6. "By taking the pound out of circulation, the third slave prevents it being used to further the slave-owner's purposes, and demonstrates how completely the exploitative system depends on the compliance of slaves. A profit cannot be turned unless retainers and slaves acquiesce to the master's avarice. Resistant citizens will not be slaughtered if no-one obeys the tyrant's command. Does anyone obey him? We are not told. Read this way, the parable exposes dynamics of exploitation and raises possibilities for resistance." Ibid, 7.

[84] Luke 16: 14.

[85] Herzog describes Luke's re-framing the Jesus layer of this parable as eschatological. He says Luke does this for the sake of his listeners who are impatient for the *parousia*. I suspect that Luke's core purposes are consistent with Jesus' purposes (freeing the captives) and that he is re-shaping that message for a different audience, middle agents. While Jesus' audience in Galilee is not living comfortably in the regime and thus has a different set of conditions, choices and

consequences, Luke is explicating the consequences on middle agents for removing their allegiance from their patrons. Herzog 1994, 151.

[86] "Jesus tells this parable in order to sober them up, in order to show them that the coming of the kingdom isn't going to mean that the rich give their money away and all will be fine. This parable demonstrates that the economics of Jesus, the radical economics just demonstrated by Zacchaeus, must live in the real world of crucifixion economics. The parable functions as a reality check in the context of an understandable kingdom enthusiasm." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1202-1205.

[87] Matthew 19: 13-26; Mark 10: 17-27; Luke 18: 18-23.

[88] DeBode and Myers on the Lukan version: "Jesus may even have been spinning a thinly-veiled autobiographical tale here – for he, too, will shortly stand before the powers, speak the truth, and take the consequences." DeBode and Myers 1999, 8.

[89] Today's global imperial architecture has been shaped in significant ways by the Chicago School and Milton Friedman. "The movement that Milton Friedman launched in the 1950s is best understood as an attempt by multinational capital to recapture the highly profitable, lawless frontier that Adam Smith , the intellectual forefather of today's neoliberals, so admired— but with a twist. Rather than journeying through Smith's 'savage and barbarous nations' where there was no Western law (no longer a practical option), this movement set out to systematically dismantle existing laws and regulations to re-create that earlier lawlessness. And where Smith's colonists earned their record profits by seizing what he described as 'waste lands' for 'but a trifle,' today's multinationals see government programs, public assets and everything that is not for sale as terrain to be conquered and seized— the post office, national parks, schools, social security, disaster relief and anything else that is publicly administered. Under Chicago School economics, the state acts as the colonial frontier, which corporate conquistadors pillage with the same ruthless determination and energy as their predecessors showed when they hauled home the gold and silver of the Andes. Where Smith saw fertile green fields turned into profitable farmlands on the pampas and the prairies, Wall Street saw 'green field opportunities' in Chile's phone system, Argentina's airline, Russia's oil fields, Bolivia's water system, the United States' public airwaves, Poland's factories— all built with public wealth, then sold for a trifle." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 304-5. Citing Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Edwin Cannan, ed. (New York, NY: Modern Library, 1937), 532 and David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[90] Klein points out how the theft of public assets by private entities was masked in the narrative of inevitability and freedom. "When Friedman died, Fortune magazine wrote that 'he had the tide of history with him'; a resolution was passed in the U.S. Congress praising him as 'one of the world's foremost champions of liberty, not just in economics but in all respects'; the California governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, declared January 29, 2007, to be a statewide Milton Friedman Day, and several cities and towns did the same. A headline in The Wall Street Journal encapsulated this tidy narrative: 'Freedom Man.'" Klein 2007, 22. Citing Justin Fox, "The Curious Capitalist ," *Fortune* (November 16, 2006); House of Representatives, 109th Congr., 2nd Sess., "H. Res. 1089: Honoring the Life of Milton Friedman" (December 6, 2006); Jon Ortiz, "State to Honor Friedman" *Sacramento Bee* (January 24, 2007); and Thomas Sowell, "Freedom Man" *Wall Street Journal* (November 18, 2006). "This book [The Shock Doctrine] is a challenge to the central and most cherished claim in the official story— that the triumph of deregulated capitalism has been born of freedom, that unfettered free markets go hand in hand with democracy. Instead, I will show that this fundamentalist form of capitalism has consistently been midwifed by the most brutal forms of coercion, inflicted on the collective body politic as well as on countless individual bodies." Ibid, 22-23.

[91] Price 1984; Zanker 1990; and Garnsey 1985.

[92] See Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[93] Mark 6: 14-29.

[94] See Craig R. Smith, ed., *Silencing the Opposition: How the U.S. Government Suppressed Freedom of Expression During Major Crises* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2011).

[95] Consider the U.S. military budget, the public relations, advertising, and media budgets of politicians and corporations, current election spending, and specialized efforts like green-washing and astro-turfing.

[96] See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988).

[97] "The anti-hierarchical structures and rhizomes of late capitalism are its successful ad campaign. Modern capitalism has to manifest itself as flexible and even eccentric. Everything is geared towards gripping the emotion of the consumer. Modern capitalism seeks to assure us that it operates according to the principles of free creativity, endless development and diversity. It glosses over its other side in order to hide the reality that millions of people are enslaved by an all-powerful and fantastically stable norm of production. We want to reveal this lie." Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, "Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot's prison letters to Slavoj Žižek" *The Guardian* (November 15, 2013), [http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/nov/15/pussy-riot-nadezhda-tolokonnikova-slavoj-zizek, accessed February 20, 2014].

[98] Zanker 1990.

[99] Bev Bell, "Haitian Farmers to Burn Donated Monsanto Seeds" *Center for Research on Globalization* (May 19, 2010), [http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=19229, accessed March 28, 2012]. Vía Campesina, the world's largest confederation of farmers with member organizations in more than sixty countries, has called Monsanto one of the "principal enemies of peasant sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty for all peoples." "10,000 Peasants March Against Monsanto in Haiti: Peasant Leader to Visit the US" *La Vía Campesina*, (June 9, 2010), [http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=929:10000-peasants-march-against-monsanto-in-haiti-peasant-leader-to-visit-us&catid=49:stop-transnational-corporations&Itemid=76, accessed March 28, 2012].

[100] Another example of the epistemological bubble: Prior to the race riots in July of 1964 in Rochester, NY African-American communities in other cities around the US were discussing how the powder keg was about to blow in Rochester, while Euro-American members of the Rochester community had no idea. In interviews of community leaders who were present at the time many described how the Euro-American leadership had their "heads in the sand." Chris Christopher, prod. *July '64* (Rochester, NY: ImageWordSound, LLC, 2004). It is also notable that the current unemployment rate in black communities in Rochester is higher than it was in 1964.

[101] For a stunning analysis of the evolution of the caste system of Jim Crow in the United States into the present prison system see: Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2010). "Dr. King ignored all those who told him to stay in his lane, just stick to talking about civil rights . . . In the years following the [March on Washington], he did not play politics to see what crumbs a fundamentally corrupt system might toss to the beggars for justice. Instead, he connected the dots and committed himself to building a movement that would shake the foundations of our economic and social order, so that the dream he preached in 1963 might one day be a reality everywhere in the country. Dr. King said that nothing less than 'a radical restructuring of society' could possibly ensure justice and dignity for all. And he was right . . . I am still committed to building a movement to end mass incarceration, but I will not do it with blinders on. If all we do is end mass incarceration, this movement will not have gone nearly far enough. A new system of racial and social control will simply be erected in its place, all because we did not do what Dr. King demanded we should: connect the dots between poverty, racism, militarism and materialism. I'm getting out of my lane. I hope you're already out of yours." Michelle Alexander, "Breaking My Silence" *The Nation* (September 4, 2013).

[102] The Howard Zinn Education Project continues Zinn's work of lifting up the missing voices of the marginalized majorities in the way we tell the history of the United States. For more see: https://zinnedproject.org/

[103] See "Distorted Creation Theology Supports the Domination System" in Chapter 1.

[104] Dr. King's analysis of the delaying tactics of well-meaning people remains as relevant today as the day it was written. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1964).

[105] "Astroturfing: 1) the act of creating a small organization and making it appear to represent something popular for the purpose of promoting a particular entity, cause, etc. (a play on grassroots in the sense of a popular movement originating among the common people, ultimately from AstroTurf, a brand of artificial grass); 2) the act of trying to boost one's image online with fake comments, paid-for reviews, made-up claims and testimonials; 3) a form of propaganda whose techniques usually consist of a few people attempting to give the impression that mass numbers of enthusiasts advocate some specific cause. This is often done by conjuring up a phony organization(s) that never existed." *Urban Dictionary* [http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=astroturfing, accessed March 28, 2012].

[106] Distancing soldiers from the pain of those they are harming and killing has been most recently attempted through the use of drones. This has been unsuccessful. "In 2011, Air Force psychologists completed a mental-health survey of 600 combat drone operators. Forty-two percent of drone crews reported moderate to high stress, and 20 percent reported emotional exhaustion or burnout. The study's authors attributed their dire results, in part, to 'existential conflict.' A later study found that drone operators suffered from the same levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD, alcohol abuse, and suicidal ideation as traditional combat aircrews. . . (Chillingly, to mitigate these effects, researchers have proposed creating a Siri-like user interface, a virtual copilot that anthropomorphizes the drone and lets crews shunt off the blame for whatever happens. Siri, have those people killed.)" Matthew Power, "Confessions of a Drone Warrior" *GQ* (October 23, 2013).

[107] See "Learning to Live in an Interrelated World" in Chapter 2.

[108] For more information see: Gary Weimberg and Catherine Ryan, prod. *Soldiers of Conscience* (San Francisco, CA: Question of Conscience LLC 2007) and Camilo Mejia, *The Road From Al Ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2007). I had the privilege of hearing Camilo Mejia speak at the summer conference of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America in July 2011.

[109] After the crisis of September 11, 2001, the president of the United States of America encouraged citizens to participate with confidence in the economy and visit destination spots. In short, we were strongly encouraged to keep pouring our labor, our creativity, and our money into the system. Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture: Tiles for America* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 32.

[110] McFague adds that exploitive enterprises are "strangely blind to the state of the physical base on which all [their] profits rest." McFague 2001, 160.

[111] See "Iraq Troops' PTSD Rate As High As 35 Percent, Analysis Finds" *Science Daily* (September 14, 2009); "PTSD Rates Rising" *Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine* (Military.com News: July 23, 2009), [http://www.military.com/news/article/ptsd-rates-rising.html , accessed March 28, 2012]; and Carrie Gann, "Suicides, Mental Health Woes Soar Since Start of Iraq War, Study Finds" *ABC News* (March 8, 2012).

[112] Call and response is found at the heart of the tradition of Reformational Philosophy. Lambert Zuidervaart, *After Dooyeweerd: Truth in Reformational Philosophy* (Toronto, ON: Institute for Christian Studies, 2008.) It is also found at the heart of the Black Church tradition. Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

[113] 2 Kings 18:13 – 2 Kings 19:36.

[114] 2 Kings 18: 27.

[115] 2 Kings 18: 31-32. This story is also told in 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 36.

[116] 2 Kings 19: 16; Isaiah 37: 17.

[117] Interestingly, in the midst of the prayer there is a reference to the cedar/cypresses in Lebanon (2 Kings 19:23) – as there is in the Daniel Chap 4, Ezekiel 17, and Mark 4 discussed above. In this case, Hezekiah is indicating fear because of Assyria's ability to fell these enormous trees.

[118] My pastoral heart can hear people asking me about all the faithful people who are dealt with violently and killed. The scripture doesn't hide the real risks from us, through the prophets and most notably in Jesus.

[119] In a recent speech in Syracuse, NY, Noam Chomsky discussed the motivations that drive US foreign policy. He talked about language we hear persistently in the media claiming that our wars are rooted in "noble, humanitarian, or democratic impulses." Chomsky points out that these claims are heard repeatedly from the British Empire to Hitler. Given this, he points out that they "contain no information." Doug Noble, "Chomsky Speaks on U.S. Foreign Policy" *Metro Justice News* (Rochester, NY: Metro Justice, June-July 2011), 7-9.

[120] Matthew 4: 1-11; Luke 4: 1-13.

[121] See "Learning to Live in a Fruitful World" in Chapter 2.

[122] Arendt 1963.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Arendt 1970, 38.

[125] "[Arendt] offers a concrete image of the totalitarian system as an onion, each layer separate and secret from the others. The outer layer of the onion gives an illusion of displaying all the aims of the complete system, but it is superficial, lacking the fuller knowledge of the next layer, and that one to the next, inward to the 'empty center' where the leadership rules, cynically indifferent to the propaganda spread in the outer layers. This image illustrates a structure of deceit and hypocrisy that made possible the murderous ignorance and delusion later detailed in histories and memoirs of the twentieth century." Dorothy Bryant, "Chapter 5: Banality, Justice and Truth: Hannah Arendt and Eichmann in Jerusalem," in *Literary Lynching*. (Self-published, 1997), 66. Citing Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951).

[126] Arendt 1970, 39.

[127] Ibid, 63.

[128] Ibid, 64. Arendt is paraphrasing a statement by Noam Chomsky here.

[129] Ibid, 7.

[130] Ibid, 26. See "Original Dualism/Original Violence," one of our distorted creation theologies in Chapter 1.

[131] Ibid, 26.

[132] "Alas, refutation of theory through reality has always been at best a lengthy and precarious business." Ibid, 28.

[133] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 266. Also see "Original Power as Gift" in Chapter 1 for further discussion of natality.

[134] See "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[135] Arendt 1970, 8.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] "For those inside the bubble of extreme wealth created by such an arrangement, there can be no more profitable way to organize a society. But because of the obvious drawbacks for the vast majority of the population left outside the bubble, other features of the corporatist state tend to include aggressive surveillance (once again, with government and large corporations trading favors and contracts), mass incarceration, shrinking civil liberties and often, though not always, torture." Klein 2007, 18-19.

[139] Matthew 5: 17.

[140] I am using God's house to describe the temple (and religious structures in general) and God's home to describe creation.

[141] Mark 11: 17.

[142] "The trick used by Himmler — who apparently was rather strongly afflicted by these instinctive reactions himself — was very simple and probably very effective; it consisted in turning these instincts around, as it were, in directing them toward the self. So that instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people!, the murderers would be able to say: What horrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders!" Arendt 1963, 106.

[143] For a more full discussion of this theology of evil, see "Descent into Poverty, Violence, and Empire" in Chapter 2.

[144] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1922).

[145] Susan Neiman, "Theodicy in Jerusalem" in *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*. Steven E. Aschheim, ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 78.

[146] "In 'Truth and Politics' [Arendt] returns again and again to the fragility of factual truth under the pressures of opinion and politics. Then she reaffirms her commitment to the 'coercive' power of facts and the obligation to search for truth,

free of self-interest or political aims. The opposite of truth, she reminds us, is not 'error, nor illusion, nor opinion . . . but the deliberate falsehood,' the 'rewriting of history.'" Bryant 1997, 79. Citing Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics" in *Between Past and Future* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1968).

[147] "Factual truth . . . is always related to other people: it concerns events and circumstances in which many are involved; it is established by witnesses and depends upon testimony; it exists only to the extent that it is spoken about, even if it occurs in the domain of privacy. It is political by nature." Arendt 1968, 231. "Unwelcome opinion can be argued with, rejected, or compromised upon, but unwelcome facts possess an infuriating stubbornness that nothing can move except plain lies. The trouble is that factual truth, like all other truth, peremptorily claims to be acknowledged and precludes debate, and debate constitutes the very essence of political life." Ibid, 241. "The chances of factual truth surviving the onslaught of power are very slim indeed; it is always in danger of being maneuvered out of the world not only for a time but, potentially, forever. Facts and events are infinitely more fragile things than axioms, discoveries, theories – even the most wildly speculative ones – produced by the human mind; they occur in the field of the ever-changing affairs of men, in whose flux there is nothing more permanent than the admittedly relative permanence of the human mind's structure. Once they are lost, no rational effort will ever bring them back." Ibid, 231. See also "Disruption as Fact Collection, Performance Art, and Authenticity" in Chapter 5.

[148] Hannah Arendt 1963.

[149] Observed in footage from: Eval Sivan, *Adolf Eichmann: The Specialist* (New York, NY: Kino International, 2000).

[150] Camilo Mejia, *The Road From Al Ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2007).

[151] "The biblical texts and traditions serve as a mirror exposing human violence and strip away the mantle of the sacred that veils sacrificial mystification. The Judeo-Christian scriptures force us to see the victim's face and hear the victim's voice . . . In other words, the Judeo-Christian scriptures reveal a slow process by which humanity is awakening to itself as the author of violence and denounces all claims that violence can be justified from a divine source." Graham B. Walker, "Noah and the Season of Violence: Theological Reflections on Genesis 6:5-9:17 and the Work of René Girard" *Review & Expositor* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 376.

[152] "Giving voice to the pain that is suppressed by injustice is at the heart of prophetic critique. The prophets name the pain that the empire denies." Keesmaat and Walsh 2011, Kindle Locations 1170-1171. "Jesus gives evocative expression to that pain [of economic injustice] in the story of the rich man and Lazarus— there it is double edged: the pain of Lazarus in this life and that of the rich man in the life to come. He gives voice to this pain in the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. He names a world of astonishing debt and torture in Matthew 18 and Luke 16, and of unscrupulous profits in Luke 19 and Matthew 25." Ibid, Kindle Locations 1173-1175.

[153] Speaking about Jeremiah's prophetic pain, Davis says, "The open distress of the prophet, or God (their two voices often being indistinguishable), contrasts sharply with the unnatural composure of the people of Judah. The whole is bound to be devastated, and yet the people are not aggrieved. The earth itself goes into mourning, and the heavens don black (Jer. 4:28), but there is no indication that the people respond to the prophetic summons to put on sackcloth and wail (4:8)." From Davis' section titled "The Pain of Seeing" in Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Kindle Locations 328-330.

[154] Erich Fromm. *Escape From Freedom.* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1941), 257-8. Ideology creates a warped conscience/sense of duty of middle agents. "In the chapter 'Duties of a Law-abiding Citizen,' Arendt deals with Eichmann's stunning testimony insisting that he was a Kantian, correctly defining Kant's 'categorical imperative' as a man's duty to behave in such a way that his acts could become a principle of general law. But Eichmann had twisted this philosophy to make Hitler's word the general law; therefore, it was the duty of an exemplary man of conscience to obey Hitler. In 1944, Himmler—worried about his own skin now that defeat was near—had ordered the suspension of the 'final solution' ('you will from now on, since I order it, take good care of Jews, act as their nursemaid!'). But Eichmann, convinced that Hitler wanted the killing to continue, clung to his 'duty,' ignored Himmler's orders, and hustled through as many transports and killings as he could. The judges of the Israeli court struggled to figure out if this man who 'always obeyed orders' disobeyed Himmler out of hatred for the Jews. Arendt concludes—in one of the ironic paradoxes she loved to pose—that the judges 'never did come to understand him . . . for the sad and very uncomfortable truth of the matter probably was that it was not his fanaticism but his very conscience that prompted Eichmann to adopt his uncompromising attitude during the last year of the war[.]'" Bryant 1997, 71-2. Citing Arendt 1963.

[155] "And what about us? If we as citizens of the industrialized world are not yet stricken to the heart, then why not? The prophetically informed answer is that we lack the healthy imagination to see and feel as we should." Davis 2009, 331-332.

[156] "Images have been reproached for being a way of watching suffering at a distance, as if there were some other way of watching. But watching up close— without the mediation of an image— is still just watching. Some of the reproaches made against images of atrocity are not different from characterizations of sight itself. Sight is effortless; sight requires spatial distance; sight can be turned off (we have lids on our eyes, we do not have doors on our ears). The very qualities that made the ancient Greek philosophers consider sight the most excellent, the noblest of the senses are now associated with a deficit. It is felt that there is something morally wrong with the abstract of reality offered by photography; that one has no right to experience the suffering of others at a distance, denuded of its raw power; that we pay too high a human (or moral) price for those hitherto admired qualities of vision— the standing back from the aggressiveness of the world which frees us for observation and for elective attention. But this is only to describe the function of the mind itself. There's nothing wrong with standing back and thinking." Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Picador, 2003), 117-118.

[157] Ibid, 101-103.

[158] "Citizens of modernity, consumers of violence as spectacle, adepts of proximity without risk, are schooled to be cynical about the possibility of sincerity. Some people will do anything to keep themselves from being moved. How much easier, from one's chair, far from danger, to claim the position of superiority." Ibid, 111-112.

[159] Speaking of Jeremiah 9:10 and 12:7, Fretheim says: "What heart-rending distress God feels over what has happened to the people! Even more, as both passages show in their larger contexts, God mourns not only because 'no flesh has peace' (12:12), but because the land is devastated and mourns (cf. 23:10; Hos. 4:2-3). While the people may be the focus for God's suffering, God is anguished over the consequences for all aspects of the created order affected by the devastation." Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), Kindle Locations 1809-1811.

[160] "The very fact that the divine suffering issues in efforts to repair the breach means that, in some sense, God's statements of suffering are in coordination with redemptive purposes and goals. While these statements do not yet imply a suffering on behalf of the people, they do indicate that God has chosen to allow the people to participate in a consideration of their future. To bear the suffering, while making continuing efforts to heal the relationship, means at least that God chooses to suffer for the sake of the future of that relationship. God does not choose to walk away; God enters fully into redemptive goals regardless of what it might mean for God's own life." Fretheim 1984, Kindle Locations 1698-1702. What would this kind of fully emotionally engaged relationship look like between marginalized majorities and middle agents? What would it mean to mutually feel and then be moved to engage and change in the context of shared love and one flesh?

[161] Matthew 11: 17; Luke 7: 32.

Notes – Chapter 4: The Chasm

[1] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (New York, NY: BookSurge Classics, 2003), 52.

[2] For Luke, we can be bound by our allegiance to the elite, and freed by our allegiance to God and God's vision for a socially-leveled world. The former subjects us to broken/barren lives; the latter opens us to living fruitful lives. This is consistent with the Biblical theology of power developed in earlier chapters of this dissertation, where humanity is gifted, through the image of God, with the dangerously divine gift of Original Power. Jesus in the gospels sometimes expresses this capacity for agency and choice, to create reality individually and collectively, to live as captives of empire or as children in the household of God, as binding and loosing. "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16: 19) The power of God can free (or "loose") us: "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." (Luke 13: 12). Through the circulating freedom of God power, the people have power to bind and loose their leaders and overseers: Pilate tries 3 times to "loose" Jesus but can't because Pilate is bound by the will of the crowds (Luke 23). Satan is known to bind, as in Luke 13:16: "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is,

whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Luke 13: 10-17.

[3] Luke 16: 13. "At the opening of the gospel in the Magnificat both divisions and reversals are anticipated (cf. 1:50-53). [W]e gain a clearer perspective of Jesus' division-causing mission. Divisions among the characters within the parables express and illustrate the underlying ideological points of view. It is clear that only two ideological points of view are possible. Those who are humiliation-oriented are contrasted with those who are exaltation-oriented, and those who are possession-oriented are set off from those who are possessionless-oriented. The imagery may change, but only two ideological points of view come to expression. The one is opposed to God's way of thinking and acting, while the other reflects God's way of thinking and acting. One is oriented to humankind's way of thinking and acting (e.g. inviting to a meal those who can repay), the other is not." James L. Resseguie, "Point of View in the Central Section of Luke (9:51-19:44)" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (March 1982): 46.

[4] Luke does not think dichotomously about everything. Luke shows nuance and balance on various subjects, just not on whether we can follow money and God. For instance on purity "[W]hile one might be inclined to see Luke as rejecting purity wholesale, his depiction of Paul in Acts suggests that he does not see purity laws as wholly defunct or irrelevant. Paul takes vows (Acts 18:18), circumcises Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), undergoes purification rituals (Acts 21:23-26), and loudly asserts that he never violated the purity of the temple (Acts 24:18). So also, the account of Peter's visions does not sweepingly discard purity, but rather shows that God can declare clean things which were previously unclean (i.e. the food [Acts 10:12-16] or Gentiles [Acts 10:28; cf. Acts 15]). Christopher M. Hays, "Beyond Mint and Rue: The Implications of Luke's Interpretive Controversies for Modern Consumerism" *Political Theology* 11, no. 3 (May 2010): 388, footnote 20.

[5] "[T]he 'love of God' which the Pharisees are said to neglect in Lk. 11:42 refers most likely not to emotive affection, but specifically to concrete actions that demonstrate piety. Since the Pharisees could hardly be accused of failing to show love of God in their observation of issues such as purity or tithing, it is likely that their neglect of 'love of God' refers to their failure to love their neighbor, particularly in the sphere of the use of wealth, as is also implied by the context of 11:39-42 enjoining almsgiving and indicting their greed." Ibid, 387. While I agree with much of Hays article, here he misunderstands the relationship of emotion and action. This relationship is expressed clearly in the loaves and fishes, Jesus' action (feeding the multitudes) flows from gut-wrenching compassion – rooted in awareness of his intersubjectivity with suffering people. The Pharisees actions precisely lack this sense of connection. We can't expunge this emotionality from the scriptures or from ethics. I am aligned with Fretheim on God's emotionality. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984. God and Jesus are highly emotional about the cruel indifference of the Pharisees to their suffering siblings who God loves as much as God loves them.

[6] There are two major streams of thought in the Lukan literature regarding Luke's relation to Rome. One says that Luke is trying to reconcile emergent Jewish Christianity with Roman occupation. The other says that Luke is trying to communicate a strong anti-accommodationist message to potential Greco-Roman believers. That is, he is trying to help middle agent converts understand that their allegiance must shift completely if they want to follow Jesus. I am in agreement with the second stream.

[7] For a definition of middle agents see the "Introduction & Methodology." See also "Chapter 3: The Predicament of Middle Agents."

[8] See "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.

[9] There is more on the subject of persistence in Luke in Chapter 5.

[10] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 36-38.

[11] See endnote 38 in Chapter 3.

[12] For more on insider collaborators, see Chapter 3.

[13] Luke 12: 22-34.

[14] "'I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against

three; they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.' He also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat'; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? Thus, when you go with your accuser before a magistrate, on the way make an effort to settle the case, or you may be dragged before the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer throw you in prison. I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny." Luke 12: 49-59.

[15] See "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[16] Luke 13: 1-9.

[17] Luke 22: 54-65.

[18] Luke 23: 38-42.

[19] The term for scoff is ἐξεμυκτήριζον which literally means "turned up their noses." Luke T. Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 141. It shows up again in Luke when the rulers scoff at Jesus on the cross. Luke 23: 25.

[20] "This passage is perfectly consonant with Luke's narrative agenda and deliberately placed in this location to develop a second line of polemic against the Pharisees." Hays 2010, 390, footnote 25. For more discussion on the Pharisees as the audience of the parable, see David B. Gowler, "'At his gate lay a poor man': A Dialogic Reading of Luke 16:19-31" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 252.

[21] The Greek word (*plousios*) used here is generally translated as rich. It means "abounding in material resources" or "abundantly supplied." Using the word "rich" in a North American context causes middle agents, such as myself, to think of others, those more wealthy than ourselves. In the context of global wealth distribution, even lower middle class North Americans are abundantly supplied. To help us see ourselves in the main character of this story I use the term comfortable. Note that *plousios* is also used to describe Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector (Luke 19: 2). Luke uses this term 11 times. In contrast, Matthew uses the term 3 times, Mark uses the term 2 times, and John uses the term 0 times.

[22] Luke 16: 19-31. Like the story of the unjust steward and the recalcitrant investor, this is another prominent middle agent case study that gets developed in rich detail in the gospel of Luke.

[23] There is a strand of scholars who read the parable as a specific teaching about the afterlife. Reading the story literally as a statement about the afterlife can serve the purpose of dismissing the actual point of the story. Delay of social justice is a common middle agent tactic – by saying, things are bad now but God will sort it out in the by and by. Given the larger economic commentary that structures Luke and leads into this passage, such a change in gears seems unlikely. Rather than moving into a discussion of the cosmological, I suggest that the Lazarus passage is yet another in a line of Lukan "middle agent" stories. (See Appendix 5: A Study of Middle Agents in the Gospel of Luke.) These middle agent case studies are designed to help clarify how by choosing security in the imperial system (mammon), middle agents sacrifice Torah teaching (and the gospel) and instead use their God-given power to help keep the oppressive economic order in place.

[24] I read the parable as what Bailey calls a "pearly gate story." By this, he means it is a stock setup (i.e. there are two guys at the pearly gates and such and such happens). The setup provides the storyteller with a familiar structure in which to make an unexpected point, most likely a political critique. Kenneth E. Bailey, "The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man" in *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), Kindle Locations 4575-4579.

[25] The Pharisees think that they are guaranteed salvation because they are children of Abraham. This parable is a direct counter to them. Ferdinand O. Regalado, "The Jewish Background of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus" *Asia Journal of Theology* 16, no. 2 (October 2002): 343. Ironically, interpreters of this parable fail to hear the challenge to their own assumptions about their salvation being assured by affiliation to a culture or a religion. "If we are listening to Moses, the prophets, and now Jesus himself, we will respond to the ethical call of a parable with compassion. After all, this is one reason Jesus saved us, so we could love our neighbor in need." Darrell L. Bock, "The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Ethics of Jesus." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 40, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 72. This interpretation fails

to see the radical message. Ethical works are not the icing on the cake of a certain salvation. The parable specifically calls our salvation into question if we are not fully allied, in our hearts and in our actions, with suffering majorities.

[26] "The name Lazarus is a Hebrew word that means 'the one whom God helps.'" Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4627-4628. In this narrative setup, Jesus may be reminding the Pharisees that God is on the side of the outcast.

[27] "The word in Greek is *bussos*, which transliterates the Hebrew word *butz*, which, in turn, refers to quality Egyptian cotton used for the best underwear. There is light humor here. This man not only had expensive outer robes, but in case anyone was interested, he also wore fine quality underwear." Ibid, Kindle Locations 4619-4621.

[28] "[T]he man feasted 'sumptuously every day.' He did not, therefore, observe the sabbath. His servants were never given a day of rest, and thereby he publicly violated the Ten Commandments every week. His self-indulgent lifestyle was more important to him than the law of God." Ibid, Kindle Locations 4621-4622.

[29] For references to gleaning see: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19: 9-10); "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field to its very border, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 23:22); and "When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow; that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. (Deuteronomy 24: 19-21)

[30] "It is a great sin in Africa to refuse help to a kinsman in need when one has the means to do so. It is regarded as a sin against the man, the community, the ancestors and even the gods of the land. In fact, among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Lazarus may not even be the one to call upon the gods to witness his neglect at the hands of the rich man; others who would be equally hurt and offended by such actions would do so on his behalf." Olubiyi Adeniyi Adewale, "An Afro-sociological Application of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)" *Black Theology* 4, no. 1 (January 2006): 33. Igboin also reads this parable from the African context. He draws directly on African Traditional Religions as a Law (parallel to the Hebrew Law) through which Christ comes into being for Africans. Benson O. Igboin, "An African Understanding of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus: Problems and Possibilities" *Asia Journal of Theology* 19, no. 2 (October 2005): 256-269. "Christian theologians mostly of African extraction, and to a lesser degree, sympathisers, have come to realise that the Bible has to be contextualised or critically inculturated through the eye of African religious cosmology. Ibid, 258.

[31] Bailey notes that the wealthy man "would naturally keep and feed vicious guard dogs to protect his property. Those dogs were fed, but Lazarus was not." Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4657-4658.

[32] "Dogs in the Middle East are not pets. Elsewhere in Scripture they are always seen in a negative light (Is 56:10; 66:3; Phil 3:2; Rev 22:15) and often mentioned in connection with pigs (Is 66:3; 2 Pet 2:22). In the early Jewish tradition dogs were considered almost as unclean as pigs." Ibid, Kindle Locations 4671-4674.

[33] Several note the 1994 discovery of a dog burial ground (more than 1300 dogs) in Ashkelon dating from 5th to 3rd centuries BCE by Lawrence Stager. See Lawrence E. Stager, "Why Were Hundreds of Dogs Buried at Ashkelon?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17, no. 3 (1991): 26-42; Lawrence E. Stager, "Ashkelon" in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* 1 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993): 103-12. Dogs were known to lick wounds and support healing. Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4661-4667.

[34] Adewale 2006, 35.

[35] Luke 19: 40.

[36] "The person who works in a bakery cannot smell the fresh bread, and the clerk in a chocolate shop cannot smell the chocolate he or she sells. Even so with the pain of others: the rich man was oblivious both to what he did to Lazarus in the past and to what he wanted to do to him in the present. He saw Lazarus with his eyes but never with his heart." Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4712-4714. Addressing the obvious fact that the rich man has seen but ignored Lazarus, Hatcher says, "the problem is not ignorance but indifference." Karen M. Hatcher, "In Gold We Trust: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)" *Review & Expositor* 109, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 281. As stated above, creational

transformation starts in compassion. Jesus feels compassion on the grassy hillside overlooking the crowds, but he does not stop there, nor does he get caught in hopelessness or guilt or paralysis about the hugeness of the problem. Rather, he sees what is happening with clarity (what Sontag calls mapping), and then acts to shift the situation to alleviate the suffering. Jesus follows the progression from feeling to mapping to acting that Sontag suggests (see "On the Pain of Knowing" at the end of Chapter 3).

[37] "The Semitic idiom says '*Abi* Abraham' (my father Abraham). All Syriac and Arabic versions add the personal pronoun, which is implied but not stated in the Greek text. The rich man is playing his 'racial card.' He has the blood of Abraham in his veins, and Abraham is the patriarch of his clan." Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4698-4702. Bailey's use of the term "racial card" is an unfortunate choice, since this is language in our present day is used frequently by middle agents to keep oppressed groups in their place (i.e. 'playing the race card' is used as an accusation against people who are legitimately unmasking institutional racism and fighting for equality). To evoke this code for keeping people in their place in commentary about a passage about radical social leveling is odd. It would be more accurate to say that the rich man plays the kinship card. There are two models of privilege that the Jesus is constantly undermining. Both mediate social power. Both create chasms that keep marginalized majorities suffering, while insiders enjoy benefits. They are Roman patronage and Jewish kinship. The Lukan (and Marcan) Jesus is rejecting both in favor of a socially-leveled society that mediates Original Power (divine power) for the benefit of all, with constant concern for the most vulnerable first. For more on this subject in Mark see Appendix 6: Three Daughters/Three Modes of Mediating Power.

[38] "The scenario recalls the great reversal prophesied by Mary—a new, inverted economy initiated through the intervention of God and God's Messiah in which rulers would be dethroned, the humble exalted, the hungry filled and the rich sent away empty-handed (1:52-53). Serving as the voice of divine authority, Abraham reminds the rich man of the beatitudes and woes pronounced earlier by Jesus: 'Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied . . . But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full' (6:21, 24)." Hatcher 2012, 279-280. "Abraham's answer contains no subtleties. 'You have enjoyed your good things; Lazarus has endured privation and indignity. The impartial God who is creator of you both, has watched while you have basked in luxury and Lazarus has suffered. It is his choice now that there be this reversal. Lazarus is comforted. You are in anguish.' That, with no further explanation! Then Abraham adds, 'But even if I personally should want to send Lazarus over to you, the decision is not mine. Rich men like you and me don't rule in this world. God does. He has made it impossible to cross between the two. There is an impassable gulf between us.'" Warden 2003, 91.

[39] Warden points out the way interpreters mute the radicality of the economic message by making the story about the moral character of individuals. "It is inherently unjust when two men of equal dignity and worth, two men created in the image of God, live beside each other, one of them luxuriously and the other in pain, robbed of all human dignity. When people use power to compel others to be their tools, it is an abomination. Whatever point the parable yields, it must begin with the observation that Jesus does not offer a picture of a wicked man and a godly man. He tells a story about a rich man and a poor man. The parable as it stands leaves us with no invitation to explore the moral character of either man. The point of the parable is that 'what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God' (Luke 16:15). The wealth, privilege, and power of the rich man were as ephemeral as his breath. Accustomed to having his words heard from the platform of his position, the rich man finds that he has no platform from which to plead his case in Hades. The God whom Jesus proclaimed was unimpressed with purple garments and fine linen. At their death the poor beggar and the man who fared sumptuously every day each discovered what it was like to fall into the hands of an impartial God." Duane Warden, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: Poverty, Wealth and Human Worth" *Stone-Campbell Journal* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 91.

[40] In Chapter 5 we look in greater detail at Luke's frustration with middle agents who cannot see and hear. For example, in Simon's house, Jesus makes the point to his male disciples who are criticizing a woman for her over-emotive and inappropriate presence and behavior by saying: "Do you see this woman?" Luke 7: 44.

[41] The text leaves the rich man hanging with no hope because it has the rhetorical purpose of bringing the stark divide into middle agent awareness. It is meant to be shocking to burst our epistemological bubble. That the parable functions this way does not mean there is actually no hope. Amidst a litany of failures, Luke does offer a couple success stories, most notably in the story of Zacchaeus. For more, see "With God Even Middle Agent (and Elite) Salvation is Possible" in Chapter 5.

[42] "For the rich man, class solidarity and kinship loyalty define the world and his area of concern." William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 124. Herzog also points out that the man is seeking a privilege for his family. He wants to negotiate for special signs that are

not available to everyone. He thinks like a privileged person. Abraham says no. We have the Torah and the prophets, equally available to all. Stop thinking like a privileged person. Get on board with the rest of humanity, repent and be saved. Ibid, 125.

[43] "[T]he rich man cannot imagine a world where social stratifications do not apply." Bailey 2008, Kindle Location 4718. Jesus stretches the imagination over and over, most notably in the feeding of the multitudes. He demonstrates, in the words of the World Social Forum, that "another world is possible."

[44] "In addition, other Lukan references to the Law and the Prophets, by that name or via citation, help fill in our picture of Luke's understanding of the essential social message of the Hebrew Scriptures. Lk. 4:16-20 (cf. 1:46-47; 7:22; Acts 10:38) invokes the Jubilee traditions via Isa. 61:l-2. In Lk. 10:25-26, 'What is written in the Law' is the double love command; the parable of the Good Samaritan interprets that command to entail becoming a neighbor to a person in need rather than neglecting him. So also Lk. 16:16 (cf. Lk. 7:26; 20:6) avers that John the Baptist stands among the Prophets, and thus his commands to share food and clothing (Lk. 3:11 J and not to exploit the poor (Lk. 3:12-14) should be considered as well. Hays 2010, 392. "Luke has already made it quite clear that those who would inherit eternal life must share their food with the poor (Lk. 3:11; 14:12-24; Acts 2:43-46), and has expressed some chagrin towards luxurious clothing (cf. Lk. 7:25; 12:27; Acts 10:21) . . .When Abraham says Dives' brothers should listen to Moses and the Prophets, he endorses a great deal more than divestiture; he demands care for the poor. Ibid, 393.

[45] Bailey 2008, Kindle Locations 4761-4767.

[46] Ibid, Kindle Locations 4738-4739.

[47] Ibid, Kindle Locations 4680-4681.

[48] See "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[49] Adewale, reading from Africa, hears the message of the silence. "One would like to comment at this point on the fact that throughout the parable Lazarus is not given a voice. In both parts of the parable, Lazarus does not speak. As a result, some scholars have concluded that this biblical text does not directly support the argument that the parable seems to highlight the concerns of the poor. This, however, may not be true as it is a literary device in which the voice of the inhuman rich was given prominence so that it could be a mirror into the myopic world-view of such people. The writing in this text uses both satire and irony together." Adewale 2006, 38.

[50] Storie, while noting Bailey's important contributions, also notices that he has significant limits to his seeing due to his social location. He tends to flat-read public transcripts and miss the nuance of hidden transcripts among marginalized majorities (women, those in poverty, etc.) within Middle Eastern cultures. Deborah Storie, "Review Article: Kenneth E. Bailey, Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels" *Pacifica* 22 (February 2009). For more, see endnote 76 in Chapter 3.

[51] There is a further lesson here directed to the scribes and religious leaders who perpetuated a first century version of the "prosperity gospel" to legitimate their exploitive way of life, conveying that material blessings are a sign of God's favor and poverty a sign of God's judgment. Herzog 1994, 129-30. The "shock value" of this parable comes through directly contradicting that teaching. It posits the opposite. Extreme consumption in the face of a suffering brother is its own indictment. There is no amount of "purity," "rule-following" and "claiming correct beliefs" that will save us under those circumstances.

[52] I interpret Abraham's statement that the chasm has been fixed and it cannot be removed to indicate God's seriousness about free will. God will not take the gift of power back from us when we use it badly. If we create walls, only we can dismantle them. If we use power to shackle and bind, we will be shackled and bound.

[53] "The actual details of the parable suggest an allusion to Isa. 58:6-7. 'Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice...to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?' This likely constitutes part of the intended referent to 'the Prophets,' since Jesus invokes the same passage in his programmatic Nazareth synagogue sermon (Lk. 4:18-20, mixed with Isa. 61:1-2). Jewish interpreters frequently used Isa. 58:6-7 in a similar fashion, engaging the passage as an impetus to charity, promising blessings (b. B. Bat. 9b; Leu. Rah. 34:11) and eschatological rewards (2 En. 9:1; ci 2 En. 63:1-2) to those who fulfilled its demands." Hays 2010, 392.

[54] Many interpreters, understandably, presume this is a foreshadowing of the risen Christ. Herzog takes the position that Abraham is referring literally to the proposal that Lazarus make a visitation. Herzog 1994, 125-6. I suspect that the Lukan Jesus enjoyed the ambiguity of the comment. Either way, the point remains the same. Privilege erects barriers and chasms that are nearly impossible to get across.

[55] Hatcher describes the scenario in spatial terms: "Vivid spatial imagery conveys the characters' drastic shift in status. Lazarus, once down and out(side), has been moved up to the inner circle, while the rich man must cede his place of honor to one of more distinguished character (14:9-10). Still intact is the boundary separating the two, represented in life by a traversable gate and in death by an impassible chasm fixed by divine order (εστηρίκται [*estëriktai*], divine passive [16:26]). In failing to pass over the threshold to offer life-saving aid to Lazarus, the rich man 'chooses death,' consigning himself to the consequences of disobeying the commands of Torah (Deut 28-30). Like those guilty of perverting justice during legal proceedings 'in the gate,' he too has afflicted the righteous and neglected the needy (Amos 5:12). Ultimately he gets what he wants—permanent separation between the lowlifes and the highbrows —although his assumptions about which is which prove tragically incorrect." Hatcher 2012, 280.

[56] Comfortable people (middle agents) have a habit of sizing up situations and picking the person in the room that they perceive has power, looking at them and speaking to them, while ignoring others in the space. In my participation in interracial dialogue I experienced this to an extreme degree. Euro-American people, unconsciously, frequently responded only to other Euro-American people. Often, they would not make eye contact with African-American people. They might pay more attention to political figures and professors and people with visible social power, though there would still be a blatant dividing of the room into important and unimportant people. Euro-Americans would also present thoughts or ideas that had just been introduced by an African-American colleague as if they just thought of the idea themselves and the original speaker was not there.

[57] For information on Sabbath economics see: Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward and Economy of Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) and Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*. Printed as part of Tell the Word, a project of Church of the Savior. (Washington, DC. 2001). In a future work, it would be interesting to pursue historical and current connections between Sabbath economic principles being employed (intentionally or not) and resulting abundance. One example is "Black Wall Street" in Tulsa OK in the 1910s in the US. This unlikely prosperous community of African-American millionaires emerged through the rigid segregation of economies. The micro economy that was developed in the segregated Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa had Sabbath qualities and it generated a mind-boggling amount of wealth. Tragically, the Ku Klux Klan burned the community to the ground in 1921. Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) and James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

[58] Middle agents tend toward charitable actions that do not disrupt systems. Members of marginalized majorities tend to see the need for systems to be disrupted and changed. Shorthand for this difference is charity vs. justice. Many middle agent interpreters see the lesson of the Lazarus parable to be increasing compassion and charity toward the poor at a personal/church scale. Adewale, reading in an African context, interprets the parable on a broader variety of scales: Global/Universal Perspective (the poor of Africa are laying at the gates of rich nations and with technology "they cannot claim ignorance"), Continental ("Either by design or in error, the church in Africa has largely distanced itself from any meaningful involvement in socio-political affairs of their countries and continent."); and Local ("The local church should have an economic or human developmental project that will show a concern not only for their members but also for the general public.") Adewale 2006, 40-42. Hatcher also sees the societal implications. "The parable presents a disturbing critique of today's global money economy, which creates an ever-widening chasm between the poor and the prosperous. With satellite television, the Internet, and news broadcasts incessantly streaming images of the indigent, the privileged can hardly claim ignorance. It is rather complacency that turns a blind eye to each Lazarus languishing on the back stoop of our gated communities or the 1.2 billion inhabitants of our global village living on less than one dollar a day. Conditioned by a consumerist culture, American Christians in particular are at risk of contracting 'affluenza' and the attendant spiritual malaise that leaves them 'wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked' (Rev 3:17)." Hatcher 2012, 281. See also Gowler: "But this parable is not merely a story about the rich man and Lazarus or a story symbolizing the Lukan Pharisees. As Herzog correctly argues, this parable is about representatives of two social classes: the wealthy urban elites who had almost everything and the desperate expendables who had almost nothing. This wealth, Herzog notes, was obtained by a systematic exploitation of the poor—the type of injustice that Amos had condemned—a wealth that could only be maintained by a redistribution of goods from the disadvantaged to the elite. There were 'Lazaruses at every gate and on every corner,' and each one was a sign displaying the oppression of the poor by the

wealthy elite. Unlike the example of Abraham—a wealthy person famed for his hospitality (e.g., Gen 13:2; 25:7-11)—the social status of the rich man was not God's reward for his piety or a sign of God's blessing. Instead it is a sign of his utter sinfulness and of sinfulness of others like him." Gowler 2005, 264. Citing Herzog 1994, 128.

[59] For a study of how this process operates in U.S. see: Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988).

[60] See endnote 32 in "Introduction & Methodology" and endnote 37 in Chapter 3.

[61] The parable of the mustard seed is found in: Mark 4: 30-32; Matthew 13: 31-32 and Luke 13: 18-19. The parable of the leaven is found in: Matthew 13: 33 and Luke 13: 20-21.

[62] I agree with Ched Myers who sees these images as invasive and subversive. The Sunday school image of a giant tree does not capture the spirit of Jesus' parable. Jesus is riffing on the well-known image of the giant cedars of Lebanon, used in Torah to denote violent Empires, while provocatively replacing a monolithic and enormous tree with a weedy mustard bush that comes up through the cracks. In this, he is "promising that the 'mustard seed' of the kingdom community would overcome the 'towering tree' of Rome." Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 194. Similarly, the yeast (small, alive, and hidden in the dough of society) transforms the whole. Of course, one must be discerning even of grassroots ideologies, as Jesus notes, when he says, "be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1)." The Pharisees have a counter-imperial agenda that fails to comprehend the graceful power of God and puts onerous burdens on the people. Jesus offers ground-up grassroots images of social transformation – God working through the struggling people – the stones that imperial builders reject (Psalm 118:22, Acts 4:11) – in contrast to monolithic, large-scale, hegemonic, and hierarchical approaches to social control.

[63] Here I am drawing a connection between demon possession and imperial occupation. This connection is developed in the Chapter 2 in the section on the demonic. You may also refer to a study of the demonic in the gospel of Mark in Appendix 2.

[64] While I tend to agree with Myers in his overall approach, I do part with him on his interpretation of the Marcan story of the binding of the strong man. I see Jesus, like Legion, as the strong man. He is the one that the religious leaders have bound so they could loot God's domain. He is the one who appears crazy to the establishment (does he have a demon?), as he is breaking the chains and setting the people free. For more on this interpretation see"Empires Collapse" in Chapter 2.

[65] Ευθυς, the Greek word for immediately, appears 41 times in the gospel of Mark, 8 times in Matthew, and 3 times each in Luke and John.

[66] Luke 3: 21-22.

[67] Luke 3: 23-38.

[68] Luke 4: 1-13.

[69] This parallel leads one to wonder if the devil in this passage is also the voice of Wisdom as Ansell argues about the serpent. John Nicholas Ansell. "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent: A Canonical Approach to the Tree of Knowledge." *Christian Scholars Review* 31.1 (2001): 31-57. For more see Chapter 2.

[70] "In Luke 4.6, the devil's precise words to Jesus are: 'To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been given to me, and I may give it to anyone I please . . . One of the most striking aspects of this claim to enjoy suzerainty over the world, and one which, hitherto, has gone unnoticed, is the extent to which it mirrors the thought of certain passages in the book of Daniel, especially those that describe the nature and extent of Nebuchadnezzar's power in relation to that of the deity (Dan 2–4), and of Daniel's power in relation to Nebuchadnezzar's successor as world ruler, Belshazzar (Dan 5). Both the Daniel and Luke texts operate against a background of a chaotic world ruler (Nebuchadnezzar/Belshazzar/the devil) whose authority ultimately derives from God. To this general connection may be added more specific parallels between the texts." Dominic Rudman, "Authority and Right of Disposal in Luke 4.6" *New Testament Studies* 50, no. 1 (January 2004): 79.

[71] There appears to be agreement concerning the power of Satan. He acts using seduction, whether by sexual desire, by hunger, by signs and wonders, or by drunkenness. All these correspond to ideological domination. Through seduction he attracts and subjugates all the kingdoms of the earth: this corresponds to military domination. In the last instance, he

declares himself to be god, placing himself at the highest point of the temple, as if he were in his own home, guaranteeing protection and demanding to be worshipped. This corresponds to religious domination. Luigi Schaivo, "The Temptation of Jesus: The Eschatological Battle and the New Ethic of the First Followers of Jesus in Q" trans. by Leslie Milton, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25, no. 2 (December 2002): 155. The metaphor of sexual seduction for economic greed and violent subjugation is used frequently in the Bible. While it is evocative, it can create interpretive confusion. This language is frequently mis-used to vilify women (and other "others") which turns the scripture on its head, using it to reinforce rather than resist demonic systems of oppression.

[72] "The demonic character of the temptations is that they highlight exactly who Jesus is—the divine son who can and does feed the world with bread, the crucified son who does not throw himself off the temple but who gives his life as a ransom for many, the glorified son to whom all power and authority in heaven and on earth are given. But the devil offers Jesus those things without the cross, and thus misunderstands both who Jesus is and what God is doing." Elizabeth Johnson, "Temptation" *Journal for Preachers* 27, no. 2 (Lent 2004): 60.

[73] For a study of the intertextualities between Hebrew scripture and the temptation narrative, see: William Richard Stegner, "The Temptation Narrative: A Study in the Use of Scripture by Early Jewish Christians" *Biblical Research* 35 (1990): 5-17.

[74] Rudman 2004, 85.

[75] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the relationship between the image of God and the gift of divine power.

[76] See "Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification" in Chapter 2.

[77] See "Middle Agents Lack Endurance" and "Jesus is the Model of Endurance" in Chapter 5.

[78] Shiavo 2002, 143.

[79] Luke 4: 31ff. Evans reads the temptation passage in light of Psalm 91 and Jewish demonology. Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and Evil Spirits in the Light of Psalm 91" *Baptistic Theologies* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 2009): 43-58. There is a theology of power and the demonic, that I sketch in Chapter 2, that carries through the details of the gospel of Luke. Working this out is beyond what I can develop in this project, and worthy of future study.

[80] This repeats the fundamental error of "seeing and taking" in the garden in Chapter 2.

[81] Luke 4: 43.

[82] "Jesus is the new Adam who defeats Satan and thereby is able to bring into being the new humanity." Shiavo 2002, 144.

[83] Luke 5: 1ff.

[84] Luke 5: 12ff.

[85] Luke 5: 17ff.

[86] Luke 5: 26b.

[87] Luke 6: 19.

[88] Luke 7: 11-17.

[89] Luke 11: 14-26. See "Empires Collapse" in Chapter 2.

[90] "'While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!' But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'" Luke 11: 27-28. I find middle agent Christians tend to read a statement like this through the lens of guilt. I am a good girl/boy if I do this irrational thing Jesus wants me to do. I am a bad girl/boy because I don't want to or can't. This way of thinking misses the teaching. Jesus' teaching is something more like this: As your big brother who knows the ropes, here is how creation works. Live like this and you will find yourself showered with blessing. See "Blame, Guilt, and Responsibility" in Chapter 3.

[91] Luke 11: 29-32. This is a reference to Jonah turning around Nineveh, and Solomon turning around the queen of the South. In other words, Jesus is reaching Gentiles.

[92] "The earlier sections of Luke portray a conflict that occurs as the good news of God encounters opposition from an often recalcitrant humanity. Signals of such conflicts reverberate throughout the narrative. The narrator intersperses the themes of reversal (e.g., 1:52-52) and Israel's salvation (1:32-33, 54-55, 68-79; 2:25, 30-32, 38) with the incorporation of Gentiles in God's plan (e.g., 2:30-32). After Simeon's prophecy explicitly foretells the conflicts ahead (2:29-35), signs of these conflicts soon appear in the narrative during the episodes prior to Jesus' public ministry (3:1-4:13)." Gowler 2005, 251.

[93] "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays." Luke 11: 33-36.

[94] Luke 12: 1-12.

[95] Luke 17: 1-4.

[96] Luke 17: 5.

[97] "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!" (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-3) Scholars who read the text through the lens of Empire see this as a Pauline comment on the predicament of people living as subjects of the Roman Empire. Subjects hear the propaganda of peace and security, just as they are about to experience imperial violence and devastation. For example see: N.T. Wright, "Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans" in *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically*, ed. C. Bartholomew (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2002), 173–193.

[98] "Whether it's a military society, a partially free society, or what we . . . would call a totalitarian state, it's the governed who have the power. And the rulers have to find ways to keep them from using their power. Force has its limits, so they have to use persuasion. They have to somehow find ways to convince people to accept authority. If they aren't able to do that, the whole thing is going to collapse. When coercion doesn't work anymore, you have to turn to persuasion. In the rich, developed societies this has become an art form. . . . We somehow have to persuade or change the attitudes of the population so they will be willing to hand power over to us. Whoever presents these views is always part of the 'intelligent minority.' And the way we do it is through propaganda." Noam Chomsky, *Power Systems: Conversations on Global Democratic Uprisings and the New Challenges to U.S. Empire*, Interviews with David Barsamian (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2013), Kindle Locations 960-972.

[99] See Chapter 3 for more discussion on this topic.

[100] "It's costly to oppose power. No matter if you're a graduate student, a child in school questioning something that's happening, a union organizer, or a political dissident, whatever you may be, it's going to carry a personal cost. Power systems, whatever they are, very rarely abdicate their power cheerfully. They usually resist. In a society like ours, they have many means at their disposal. We have a very class-conscious business class in the United States. They're always fighting a bitter one-sided class war and if they meet any opposition they will react. So yes, there's a cost. And fear is understandable. If you attempt to organize a union at some workplace, you can be easily subjected to punishment. The punishments are illegal, but when you have a criminal state, that doesn't matter. The state doesn't enforce the laws. In fact, just the very act of breaking out of discipline to begin to organize people carries a cost." Chomsky 2013, Kindle Locations 837-844.

[101] Jesus is challenged on numerous occasions to prove his power through miracles and signs. He instead chooses not to aggrandize himself, but deploy power for the benefit of others, particularly those who struggle most.

[102] One could see the theology of substitution as a middle agent theological technique for justifying the unconscious deflection of suffering away from elites and middle agents and on to "others" in the majority. Williams walks us through this. Jesus takes on the sin and punishment of humanity as a "surrogate figure." So too, people who benefit from racist sexist social structures treat oppressed populations as surrogates, allowing them to take the suffering of the system on their behalf. Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books,

1993), 161-162. See also J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).

[103] Luke 18: 18-23.

[104] Myers 1988, 294-296.

[105] This visual display is a hidden transcript that is coming out into the open as Jesus heads toward confrontation in Jerusalem. See the "Introduction & Methodology" for more on hidden transcripts.

[106] Mark 11: 7-10; Matthew 21: 4-9; Luke 19: 35-38; John 12: 12-19. Note the constant refrain in Luke about saving and salvation. Luke is pressing us to align with what saves.

[107] "Jesus said to them, 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'" (Mark 12:17) See also: Mark 12: 13-17; Matthew 22: 15-22; Luke 20: 20-26. Jesus is pushing his listeners to contemplate their assumptions and beliefs about who made and owns the world. Compare this to the devil's claims to make and own and distribute power and wealth. "The political thrust of the question about the coin of tribute is obvious. Loyalty to Rome would naturally be a concern of supporters or servants of Antipas, who held his power by Rome's favor and who ultimately lost it by Rome's disfavor." John P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Historical Herodians" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 743.

[108] Wes Howard-Brook finds this to be question of the whole canon. Will we choose the religion of empire or the religion of creation? Wes Howard-Brook, *"Come Out My People!": God's Call out of Empire in the Bible and Beyond.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

[109] "At Herod's feast, John's death is served indoors, in a prison, on a platter, to 'courtiers and officers and . . .the leaders of Galilee'. He is buried by his disciples, while Jesus' apostles return to him. The next event is Jesus' feeding 'all the people . . . in groups of hundreds and fifties' outdoors on 'the green grass' (Mk 6.39-40). In the miracle of loaves and fishes, Jesus feeds five thousand, a larger party than Herod's. The double motif of death and the life-giving feast returns in the passion and the Last Supper, through which Jesus continues to feed his faithful. Janes 2006, 448. Bailey also sees a comparison being offered between two banquets. Kenneth E. Bailey, "A Banquet of Death and a Banquet of Life: A Contextualized Study of Mark 6:1-52" *Theological Review* 29, no. 2 (November 2008): 67-82.

[110] Mark 6: 14-29.

[111] Mark 6: 30-44.

[112] Jesus reveals people power by showing people how to organize themselves as communities that are able to heal and feed and care for one another. Jesus also reveals the potency of people power by exposing the ways that demonic imperialists fear free people. "Despite their redactional tendencies, both Mark and Luke may well echo historical reality when they refer to Antipas's unhealthy interest in Jesus (Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9; 13:31-32; 23:6-12; cf. 8:3; Acts 13:1). Antipas might even have attempted to use his servants and allies to spy on, oppose, and discredit Jesus in public; spy systems were quite common in the first-century Roman Empire. At the very least, verisimilitude favors the idea of Antipas's vigilance and interference; indeed, such verisimilitude may have influenced Mark as he formulated his dramatic presentation. Thus, I see no need to deny in principle that, at times during the public ministry, 'Herodians' in the sense of supporters, officials, or servants of Antipas may have argued with or set verbal traps for Jesus." Meier 2000, 746.

[113] See Ezekiel 34 for God's judgment on the bad shepherds (the bad leaders) and God's decision to intervene directly.

[114] A comparison is being evoked between the courts of Herod and Herodias and the courts of Ahab and Jezebel. "There is eating and feasting in the death accounts of both Jezebel and John the Baptist. Herodias implements her plot against John the Baptist at Herod's banquet for his governmental officials and military officers (Mark 6:21-22). In 2 Kgs 9, Jehu goes into the palace to eat and drink after putting Jezebel to death (2 Kgs 9:34). The blood and gore surrounding Jezebel's death have no effect on Jehu's appetite, nor does the head of John dampen the festive spirit of Antipas and his guests. While Jehu eats and drinks in the palace, the dogs in the street below have their own feast with the corpse of Jezebel. In place of the skull of Jezebel, picked clean by ravenous dogs (2 Kgs 9:35-36), there is now the head of the righteous prophet on a platter (Mark 6:27-28). Instead of the glorious ascension of the prophet (ἀνελήμφθη; 2 Kgs 2:11-12), we find the disgraceful burial of the prophet (εθηκαν; Mark 6:29)." David M. Hoffeditz and Gary E. Yates, "Femme Fatale Redux: Intertextual Connection to the Elijah/Jezebel narratives in Mark 6:14-29" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15, no. 2 (2005): 220.

[115] Herod replicates the patronage system of Rome in his local regime. "[T]he most likely meanings of Ηρῳδιανοὶ [or Herodians] would include the household servants or slaves of Herod, his officials or courtiers (high officials sometimes being ex-slaves), and more generally all the supporters of Herod's regime, whether or not they belonged to an organized group or party. Since 'Herod,' in imitation of 'Caesar,' had become the name of a dynasty, which Herod is meant cannot be determined from the word itself. Meier 2000, 742. "In both cases [where the Herodians are mentioned], the Pharisees are mentioned first: 'the Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians' in 3:6; 'and they [presumably the chief priests, scribes, and elders of 11:27] send to him [Jesus] some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians' in 12:13. And in both cases, the two groups are presented as working together with deadly enmity toward Jesus. Ibid, 2000, 743.

[116] My colleague, Father Jim Callan of Spiritus Christi Church, pointed out to me that three key constituencies are specifically mentioned in this verse: the political establishment, the military, and the religious leaders. Across time, these are the three pillars that align and collude (establishing empire) for their own gain against the well-being of the people.

[117] Many scholars have noted the connection between Herodias and Jezebel, which confirms the connection between Elijah and John the Baptist. "As Walter Wink argues in his classic study (1968), Mark's Baptist is the secret Elijah to Jesus' secret Messiah. Jesus needs to be announced: it is not enough for the Lord to come suddenly, to his temple, on his own." Regina Janes, "Why the Daughter of Herodias Must Dance (Mark 6.14-29)" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 4 (June 2006): 444. Citing Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[118] Interestingly in Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar follows through on his interest in the truth.

[119] Recently leaders from a variety of world faiths have come together and developed a document "that transcends religious, ideological, and national differences" with compassion as the central point of agreement, called the Charter for Compassion, [http://charterforcompassion.org/the-charter/#charter-for-compassion, accessed May 7, 2012].

[120] Mark 6: 34. The Greek word translated as compassion *splagchnizomai*, refers to the bowels turning over. Perhaps we would describe it as an intense feeling in our gut.

[121] Mark 6:52.

[122] Suzanne Watts Henderson, "'Concerning the loaves': Comprehending Incomprehension in Mark 6.45-52" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 83 (Summer 2001): 4.

[123] Ibid, 22-23.

[124] For more, see "Learning to Live in a Fruitful World" in Chapter 2.

[125] Many scholars think Herod is made passive in this story to create the literary connection with Ahab and Jezebel. This portrayal lies in contrast to Herod as tyrant. "Erstwhile helpful historical and literary readings of Mark 6:14-29 traditionally give short shrift to the typological characterization of Herod Antipas as a tyrant in the gospel of Mark." Smith traces "the history and conventions of the tyrant typology." "Marcan characterization of Herod Antipas not only exposes him as a tyrant. It also provides the rhetorical scaffolding for a thematic critique against tyrannical postures of any kind, including those that may have entered into Jesus' own fellowship." Abraham Smith, "Tyranny Exposed: Mark's Typological Characterization of Herod Antipas (Mark 6:14-29)" *Biblical Interpretation* 14, no. 3 (2006): 259-293.

[126] Hoffeditz and Yates provide a rich intertextual study between the stories of Herodias and Jezebel. Unfortunately the study is painful for feminist ears. They elaborate endlessly on their extreme distain for these powerful women who according to them, "leave behind a legacy of evil through their domineering and manipulative personalities." Hoffeditz and Yates 2005, 221. "Instead of taking proper leadership, Ahab and Antipas capitulate to the passion and dominance of their spouses." Ibid, 210. *The problem in these texts is not failing to take authority over women, it is failing to take authority over greed.* Given their preconceptions, the authors miss the purpose of the analogy between the two texts, which, in addition to making the John/Elijah connection, is political critique. Herod Antipas and Herodias, supposed Torah followers like Ahab, are behaving in the worst way possible, like the famous enemy foreigner, Jezebel. They are forsaking the covenantal life of restraint and family-maintained land to which they are bound, in exchange for domination and the exploitive greed of the nations. The Elijah connection, which Hoffeditz and Yates get right, reinforces this critique. "In the third year of the drought, Ahab angrily greets Elijah as 'the troubler of Israel' (18:16), but Elijah shows no fear of the king and directly counters that Ahab and his family are the real troublemakers for Israel (18:18-19)." Ibid, 202. So too John has no fear of Herod and calls him out publicly as a misery maker for Israel.

[127] "The account of John's beheading also dispels any glamorous notions concerning discipleship. John joins a long line of prophetic messengers who suffer persecution for declaring the word of the Lord (cf. Matt. 23:30-32; Acts 7:52; 1 Thess 2:15), and the disciples of Jesus who proclaim the gospel will also share in this persecution. The twelve's going out and their return (6:7-13,30) bookend this pericope. The author highlights to his readers the reality that, just as the Messiah would suffer (6:4-6; 9:11-13; and 10:45) and the messianic forerunner (6:14-29), so also those who follow Jesus will undergo hardships (cf. 8:34-38). Ibid, 221. See also "The Recalcitrant Investor" and "The Cost of Discipleship" in Chapter 3. As a side note, Archelaus, Herod Antipas' brother, is the king around whom the Recalcitrant Investor story is modeled. There is a sustained critique going on here.

[128] Note, in these side by side banquets, the way that dissonance reveals meaning. For more, see "hermeneutic of multiple contextual referents" in the Introduction and Appendix 1.

[129] Luke is concerned about the imperial organizing strategy of patronage networks, and with middle agent collaboration in managing these systems of extraction from the people – and particularly with the way Jewish leaders befriend Roman leaders. As Janes points out, "Luke's Herod takes over the mockery of Jesus that the other Gospels assign to Pilate and the Romans. Herod and Pilate forge a political alliance over the condemned, gorgeously arrayed body of Jesus, making 'friends with each other' where 'before this they had been enemies' (Lk. 23.11-12)." Janes 2006, 457.

[130] "Numerous scholars have questioned the plausibility of the dance. For some, this element of the Gospel narrative is sufficient to discredit the entire story. They cite the considerable ancient evidence that 'respectable' women, elite or otherwise, did not dine with men in public. Only 'disreputable' women would have done so, and only 'disreputable' women would have danced for male consumption. By the first century CE., though, it was becoming acceptable for respectable Roman women to dine in male company." Ross S. Kraemer, "Implicating Herodias and Her Daughter in the Death of John the Baptizer: A (Christian) Theological Strategy?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 331. The point Mark may be making by including the dance is the shamelessness with which Herod's household has been corrupted by Rome and is in allied with Rome against God, Torah, and the people.

[131] "This is sometimes called the "consent theory of power." Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action Part 1: Power and Struggle* (Boston, MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

[132] Mark 6: 34. Note the echo of Ezekiel. "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice." Ezekiel 34: 15-16. For more discussion of Ezekiel 34 see "The Recalcitrant Investor" in Chapter 3.

[133] For information on Sabbath economics, see: Myers 2001; Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward and Economy of Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986); and Anthony J. Ricciuti, *The Economics of the Way: Jubilee Practice Among the Early Christians According to the Acts of the Apostles.* Thesis (Toronto, ON: Institute for Christian Studies, 2001).

[134] "Community can bring blessing and bread into the darkness." Laurel Cobb, *Mark and Empire: Feminist Reflections* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 89.

[135] For rich information about nature of community in Luke-Acts, particularly the challenges of table fellowship among Jews and Gentiles, see: Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987). I am in agreement with scholars who find Esler mistaken for arguing that Luke is trying to reconcile Christianity with Rome, rather than resist Rome. See: Jerome H. Neyrey, "Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology" Review. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (October 1990): 744-745 and Richard J. Cassidy, "Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology" Review. *Theological Studies* 50, no. 1 (March 1989): 199-200.

[136] Regarding the dance of Herodias' daughter, "Luke's motive for deleting the story seems to be its misogyny. Not only does Luke make Mark's theological point through good women, but he also erases Herodias's responsibility for John's arrest. He diminishes the role of the marriage and sexuality in bringing about John's death by attacking Herod for other crimes beyond the marriage: 'But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, *and because of all the evil things that Herod had done*, added to them all by shutting up John in prison' (Lk. 3.19-20, emphasis added)." Janes 2006, 456. This is consistent with Lukan focus on politics, economy and the creation of socially-leveled community. See also "Luke's Vision" in Chapter 5.

[137] "[T]the disciples' significance lies not only in their nearness to Jesus marked by companionship and special instruction; it lies also, and perhaps more importantly, in the way he equips them to preach and to exercise authority to cast out demons—in a word, to do the things he does. The singular focus of Jesus' message, both in word and deed, is the imminence of God's kingdom, and he deliberately scatters the seed of that message not alone but both along with and through those whom he has called." Henderson 2001, 15. In "a parallel imparting of power from Jesus to the disciples: 'He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave (εδίδου) them authority over the unclean spirits; (Mk 6.7). This use, especially because of its narrative proximity and its expression of the disciples' participation in Jesus' mission, at least preserves the possibility that the verb indicates a transmission of power which equips the disciples to play a vital role in the feeding story." Ibid 2001, 15.

[138] Luke 9: 10-17.

[139] Luke 10: 3.

[140] Reading Luke 10 brings to mind churches during the civil rights movement rigorously training members in the principles of nonviolence and sending them to the streets.

[141] "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near. I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town." Luke 10: 11-12. The underlying message is similar to "Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; because the day of their calamity is at hand, their doom comes swiftly." Deuteronomy 32: 35. In short, do not retaliate. Put your trust in God. The wicked will not stand forever. Empires and their imperialists collapse. God's truth will prevail.

[142] Luke 10: 13-16.

[143] Luke 10: 18.

[144] Luke 10: 17-22. "Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'" Luke 10: 23-24.

[145] For a discussion of the Spirit in Luke-Acts, and its role in creating a communal ethical transformation, see: Matthias Wenk, *Community-Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). See also: Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) and Robert Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, UK: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1994).

[146] I would argue that it is Jesus' community organizing, which Luke emphasizes, that motivates the violent reaction of the authorities, precisely because it is a restructuring of the flow of power. Community organizing deconstructs patterns of oppression and constructs new relationships, new allegiances, and new instruments for deploying power. For this reason, organizing is attacked by defenders of dominant regimes. A contemporary corollary comes from United States politics in the 2008 presidential campaign. Barack Obama came under significant suspicion and attack for being a "community organizer."

[147] Luke 6: 44; Matthew 7: 16.

[148] Janes sees a connection in Mark between Herodias' daughter and Jairus' daughter and food. "Linking Jairus's daughter to Jesus' empty tomb and contrasting Jairus's daughter to Herodias's, Mark argues life's overcoming death in minute narrative detail . . .Jairus's daughter is to be given something to eat. Dancing at a banquet, Herodias's daughter wants a head in a dish, as if it were something to eat." Janes 2006, 452. I agree with Janes and also add the hemorrhaging woman who Jesus calls "daughter." For more see Appendix 6: Three Daughters/Three Modes of Mediating Power.

[149] "The Pentagon's 'shock and awe' strategy of quickly overwhelming Iraq was the inspiration of a military analyst guided by the 2,500-year-old writings of Sun Tzu, the Chinese strategist; Pizarro's defeat of the Incas in the 16th century; the German blitzkrieg of World War II; and the atomic bombing of Japan. In 1996, Harlan K. Ullman, a former Navy commander, helped write 'Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance' for the National Defense University. He argued that precise, overwhelming attacks would destroy an adversary's will, prompt quick capitulation and reduce casualties." "Creator of Shock and Awe" *The New York Times* (March 23, 2003). See also Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007).

[150] See references to evildoers who eat bread while they eat God's people in Psalms 14: 4; 27: 3; and 53: 4. Also see: "And I said: Listen, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel! Should you not know justice? – you who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin off my people, and the flesh off their bones; who eat the flesh of my people, flay their skin off them, break their bones in pieces, and chop them up like meat in a kettle, like flesh in a caldron." Micah 3: 1-3. Thanks to Dr. Mark Brummitt for pointing the Micah reference out to me.

[151] Five thousand men are listed in the scripture. Here I double the figure to conservatively include women and children.

[152] Here I think of Adewale who is willing to see the Lazarus text as convicting us at global levels where so many interpreters want to restrict its meaning to something smaller and more manageable. Adewale 2006. We don't like to be overwhelmed. We don't like to see huge devastations that we don't know how to heal, and huge needs that we do not know how to meet. Jesus does not say, ok, then, think small. Jesus says, open your eyes to what is happening, let the pain and struggle of your siblings (of the whole situation) break your heart, trust, and take the next step with me.

[153] Jesus' actions express a mature relationship to power in creation, including commanding the seas, walking on water, pulling abundance from the depths, and commanding sickness and demons to leave. I am suggesting that Jesus is showing us how to grow into our God-given power. Part of this maturity is learning not to respond with helplessness to distorted and harmful manifestations/deployments of power. "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." John 14: 12. Henderson emphasizes the challenge Jesus is giving to the disciples to exercise their power. "Mark's story features vigorous banter in which Jesus draws the disciples into the drama of solving the problem at hand." Henderson 2001, 13-14. "The disciples here become actively engaged in the feeding act, ultimately fulfilling Jesus' initial command to them. Not only does Jesus marshal the disciples' *own foodstuffs* to provide, miraculously, for the need of the multitude; he enlists them in the distribution itself. Ibid 2001, 14. "[T]he disciples are expected to wield the kingdom authority that has been given to them (Mk 3.15; 6.7)." Ibid 2001, 16.

[154] As we face the chasm, we also face our own insufficiency, or more accurately the insufficiency of our ego strategies. We are "constrained by the human tendency to discount [our] own God-given power." In communion with God, we are enough. "As reflected in Mk 6.45-52, the disciples' incomprehension [about the loaves] has much less to do with Jesus' identity *in and of itself* than with his identity *in relationship with those whom he calls*. As the disciples are sent away from Jesus, and then even reminded of his presence, Mark sketches their failure at sea in stark relief against the backdrop of their empowerment as active participants in the inbreaking kingdom of God. At least in this pericope, what they 'did not understand' is their own sufficiency in the face of an apparent lack." Henderson 2001, 25. I would add, this is the grace, the "more than we can understand," that pours into our lives when we soften our hearts and open ourselves (as Jesus did) to compassion.

[155] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the transformation of imperialism from a geographically-based enterprise to a center-less and globally pervasive reality. They view the new reality as a complete break from older territorial modes. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), xii. From a biblical theological perspective, I see the dynamics of the demonic (i.e. aggregations of stolen God power deployed against the purpose of God – which is shared community-based life on the land and creational thriving) to run along a continuous trajectory from "the Fall" through communal life to monarchy to a string of imperial occupations to the regionalization and tributary economy of first century Rome to our present state of globalization with the commandeering of state-based power by a tiny elite minority for the purposes of universal extraction from the billions for a few individuals. For more extended conversation on this see endnote 143 in Chapter 2.

[156] Gene Sharp catalogues 198 movements of liberation in the twentieth century. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), 117-434.

[157] Here is one small example of the larger phenomenon that comes from a particular night with Rochester occupiers in Washington Square Park. Using a laptop, our group was connecting via live stream on the internet with occupiers like us scattered in locations around the world. This disbursed international network watched as another group in a small US city was arrested. Members of various occupation groups responded in real time with support and legal advice. In addition to sharing vision, tactics, and expertise that night, people simply joked with each other, filled times of boredom with good company, and sent pizzas to hungry people in other parts of the world. This is an example of crowd-sourcing (the power of the *ochlos*) manifesting in locally-articulated globally-linked non-violent social movements.

[158] Some examples include: Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, http://ggjalliance.org/; Grassroots International, http://www.grassrootsonline.org/; and G Roots International http://www.groots.org/. See also the writing of Vandana

Shiva, including: Vandana Shiva, *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2008); Vandana Shiva, *Manifestos on the Future of Food and Seed* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2008); and Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005).

[159] Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan explore the Occupy Movement and the role of religion, drawing upon the gospel term *ochlos* or multitudes. Joerg Reiger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitudes* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2012).

[160] This is a reference to the Basadur Profile, a tool that helps individuals see where their preferences lie on a spectrum of creative problem solving that includes 1) generating new ideas from scratch, 2) working at a conceptual level, 3) optimizing, and 4) implementation. Many people prefer to stay mainly in one stage of the process. A few people like to work in multiple arenas, from the macro initiation of the new (the blank sheet of paper), to optimizing and implementing – thus, creative optimizers. For more, see: https://www.basadurprofile.com.

[161] See Janine R. Wedel, *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009).

[162] See "Unholy Homemaking" in Chapter 3.

[163] The WEF was envisioned in 1970 by Klaus Schwab, a German academic. In 1971 it was started as the European Management Forum and began meeting as the WEF in 1987. The WEF is set up as a not-for-profit. It took in 157 million dollars last year. Corporate members are required to be in the world's top thousand companies in revenue. Membership costs $55,000 with an added $27,000 to attend Davos. Strategic partners pay over half a million a year. Nick Paumgarten, "The World of Power: Magic Mountain: What Happens at Davos?" *The New Yorker* (March 5, 2012): 47.

[164] Ibid, 47.

[165] Ibid, 44.

[166] Ibid, 44.

[167] Ibid, 48.

[168] Whereas creational identity comes from the inherent dignity of being made in the image of God and is granted to all, a positive imperial identity is a scarce commodity that comes from the signs and symbols of conspicuous consumption. "Early sociological discussions of consumerism emphasized the manner in which consumptive patterns delimit boundaries between socioeconomic classes, but in recent decades, postmodern social fragmentation and diversification have led individuals to establish identity through belonging to much smaller social sub-groups. An individual manifests group belonging by adopting the lifestyle of the group through consuming a conglomeration of goods, such as shoes, music, hairstyles, or cars . . . What one consumes signifies who one is, which is to say with which group one should be identified; thus consumption is not only a process of consuming material products, but more importantly of consuming signs and symbols." Hays 2010, 393-394, citing Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Zygmunt Baumann, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London, UK: Routledge, 1992), 22; and Steven Miles, *Consumerism: As a Way of Life* (London, UK: Sage Publications, 1998). "The appropriation of biblical ethics invariably entails a process of analogy making, in which the directness of the analogy inversely correlates to the novelty of the situation being examined. I would contend that identity construction provides a neuralgic analogy between the Pharisaic pursuit of honor and contemporary idealistic consumptive patterns. The parable of Dives and Lazarus, as well as the Woes of Luke 11, viciously indict the neglect of the poor by the Pharisees, arising from their preoccupation with status acquisition and honor maintenance. Identity fabrication through group integration, however, is a provocative analog to honor maintenance and status acquisition. Pharisees wanted greetings in the market and good seats at banquets and synagogues; people today seek belonging to group(s) through purchasing clothes, music, cars, and hairstyles . . . if the Lukan Jesus is happy to relativize the practice of purity, which has clear Old Testament grounding, then how much more would he bring woes against people who choose to construe their identity through purchasing a given look, ride, or soundtrack?" Hays 2010, 396.

[169] Paumgarten 2012, 48.

[170] Notably, with all this attention to contacts there is little authentic warmth of relationship: "I saw one hug all week and it was an ironic one." Ibid, 48.

[171] Ibid, 47.

[172] See Noah Smith, "The Dark Side of Globalization: Why Seattle's 1999 Protesters Were Right" *The Atlantic* (January 6, 2014); David Solnit, "Seattle WTO Collapsed 14 Years Ago: Lessons for Today" *Popular Resistance* (December 2, 2013), [http://www.popularresistance.org/seattle-wto-collapsed-14-years-ago-lessons-for-today/, accessed March 1, 2014]; and Paul de Armond, "Black Flag Over Seattle" *Monitor* (February 29, 2000), [http://www.monitor.net/monitor/seattlewto/, accessed March 1, 2014].

[173] Paumgarten 2012, 48.

[174] Ibid, 48.

[175] Ibid, 47.

[176] John failed that audition. So did another more recent leader, who was poorly received at Davos. In 1974, in the context of the gathering's extreme opulence, "Dom Helder Camara, the renegade Catholic archbishop from Brazil, scolded the world's elite for their 'false values' and their hoarding of the world's resources." Ibid, 49.

[177] Ibid, 49.

[178] "Schwab complains, 'Many people come to Davos to exploit the presence of so many top-level people. They organize shadow programs.'" Ibid, 49.

[179] Ibid, 46.

[180] These are Schwab's words. Ibid, 50.

[181] Ibid, 50.

[182] Ibid, 50.

[183] Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Prize winner, said recently, "These guys just want to convince people that they care about others, which they don't, and then they can get back to making money as fast as they can." Ibid, 52.

[184] "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress." Frederick Douglass, *An Address on West India Emancipation* (August 4, 1857).

[185] See the "Introduction & Methodology" for descriptions of the little tradition and hidden transcripts.

[186] As an example of the middle agent bubble, see the differences in covers for Time Magazine for the week of December 5, 2011. The majority of the world got a photo of a revolutionary in a gas mask with the title "Revolution Redux." Those of us in the United States got a cute cartoon figure with a red belly, and the title, "Why Anxiety is Good for You." *Time Magazine* 178, no. 22 (December 5, 2011).

[187] For an in-depth study of organizing in the United States, see: Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed Are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[188] "The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth." This is the first of fourteen principles approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001, by the organizations that make up the World Social Forum Organizing Committee, approved with modifications by the World Social Forum International Council on June 10, 2001. See the "World Social Forum Charter of Principles," [http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2, accessed May 7, 2012].

[189] Boaventura de Sousa Santos discusses this debate (or cleavage as he calls it) in the World Social Forum between being structured as a movement or a space. See the section called "The WSF as a space or a movement" in Boaventura de

Sousa Santos, *The World Social Forum: A User's Manuel* (Madison, 2004), 100-103, [http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/fsm_eng.pdf, accessed May 7, 2012]. Those who advocate for structuring the WSF as a movement feel that statements should be made and power deployed on behalf of the movement at large. They feel to fail to apply the power of the WSF to pressing concerns is irresponsible. I fall strongly on the space side of the question, believing that protecting the space for multiple agendas and deployments of power is of the utmost importance. "The extreme version of this conception has been expounded by Francisco Whitaker, one of the founders of the WSF and an influential member of the IS and IC [governing councils of the WSF]. According to him the nature of the WSF as an open space – he uses the metaphor of a public square – based on the power of free horizontal articulation should be preserved at all cost. After counterposing the organizational structure of a space and a movement, he lashes out against the 'so-called social movements' that want to transform the WSF into a social movement: 'those who want to transform it [the WSF] into a social movement will end up, if they succeed, by working against our common cause whether they are aware or not of what they are doing, whether they are movements or political parties, and however important, strategically urgent and legitimate their objectives might be. They will be effectively acting against themselves and all of us. They will be hindering and suffocating its own source of life – stemming from those articulations and initiatives born in the Forum – or at least destroying an enormous instrument that is available for them to expand and to enlarge their presence in the struggle we are all engaged in.' (2003)." Ibid, 100. The fifth principle in the Charter for Principles continues to protect the space of the forum. "The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society." World Social Forum Charter of Principles, [http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2, accessed May 7, 2012]. One could correlate the WSF concept of space with Arendt's "enlarged mentality" or her "two-in-one" that she believes is needed if we are truly to be able to think. In the same way we as individuals need to enlarge our thinking – to make space in our own sense of self for multiple voices – so does global society. The WSF creates such mechanisms/processes – an "enlarged mentality" – a space for engaging one another, reflecting deeply, and addressing large problems.

[190] Klein describes a "policy trinity" that involves "the elimination of the public sphere, total liberation for corporations and skeletal social spending" . . . "Friedman framed his movement as an attempt to free the market from the state, but the real-world track record of what happens when his purist vision is realized is rather different. In every country where Chicago School policies have been applied over the past three decades, what has emerged is a powerful ruling alliance between a few very large corporations and a class of mostly wealthy politicians— with hazy and ever-shifting lines between the two groups . . . A more accurate term for a system that erases the boundaries between Big Government and Big Business is not liberal, conservative or capitalist but corporatist. Its main characteristics are huge transfers of public wealth to private hands, often accompanied by exploding debt, an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor and an aggressive nationalism that justifies bottomless spending on security." Klein 2007, 18. "Every vital, living resource of the planet that maintains the fragile web of life is in the process of being privatized, commodified, and appropriated by corporations." Vandana Shiva, *India Divided: Diversity and Democracy Under Attack* (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2005), Kindle Locations 101-102. Bruehler concludes that Luke is specifically supporting the development of Christian community as "unofficial public space" that needs to be actively preserved against assaults by elites. Bart B. Bruehler, *A Public and Political Christ: The Social-Spatial Characteristics of Luke 18:35-19:43 and the Gospel as a Whole in its Ancient Context* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011).

[191] In his lectures at the College de France, Foucault says: "When I say 'subjugated knowledges' I mean two things. On the one hand, I am referring to historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systemizations. [In other words, I am referring to] blocks of historical knowledges that were present in the functional and systematic ensembles, but which were masked, and the critique was able to reveal their existence by using, obviously enough, the tools of scholarship. Second, when I say 'subjugated knowledges' I am also referring to a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as...insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowleges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity." Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France, 1975-76*. (New York, NY: Picador, 1997), 7.

[192] Creating this kind of meta-space involves the mature and conscious deployment of the gift of divine power. In contrast to our forebears in the garden, maturity allows us to manifest restraint. So when we experience the genuine power that is aggregated in our shared space, we are able to hold back from deploying to whatever we think is best. Rather we carefully sustain the open space for dialogue and empowerment – a place where movements and groups can gain wisdom and strength – forged in contact with differences – and support and momentum to work out their various callings within creation. This logic can work at many levels, including in local communities. A church can serve as a meta-space of this kind.

[193] The WSF serves as a space where groups can gather for a span of time to exert power for a defined purpose (e.g. to develop strategies for alternative energy or to work on debt relief for impoverished nations). Groups stay together for as long as they are needed. Then they reorganize into new kinds of groups for new kinds of purposes. Thinkers about the WSF have described in some detail how this phenomenon is a significant shift from the concept of a unitary social movement. It has become an open space that is multiplicitous, simultaneous, dynamic, and alive with power constantly moving and shifting to places of need.

[194] Also called Arab Awakening.

[195] Aimée Kligman, "Meet Asmaa Mahfouz: the woman who organized Egypt's historic demonstrations" *Foreign Policy Examiner* (February 2, 2011), [http://www.examiner.com/article/meet-asmaa-mahfouz-the-woman-who-organized-egypt-s-historic-demonstrations, accessed May 7, 2012]. The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia on December 17, 2010 is considered to be catalytic to the revolution in Tunisia. Richard Spencer, "Tunisia riots: Reform or be overthrown, US tells Arab states amid fresh riots" *The Telegraph*, January 13, 2011, [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/tunisia/8258077/Tunisia-riots-US-warns-Middle-East-to-reform-or-be-overthrown.html, accessed May 7, 2012]. There were numerous self-immolations across the countries involved in the Arab Spring. For more on this see: Sunny Singh, "The Self-Immolation Protests in Arab Spring: Why and Why Now?" *Sunny Singh Online*, January 22, 2012, [http://sunnysinghonline.blogspot.com/2012/01/self-immolation-protests-in-arab-spring.html, accessed May 7, 2012].

[196] Later in 2011, Mahfouz was arrested on charges of defaming the military rulers for calling them a "council of dogs." Under immense pressure from activists, they dropped the charges. Leila Fadel, "Asmaa Mahfouz, Egyptian youth activist, is charged by military prosecutor" *The Washington* Post, August 14, 2011, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/asmaa-mahfouz-egyptian-youth-activist-is-charged-by-military-prosecutor/2011/08/14/gIQAuqihFJ_story.html, accessed May 7, 2012]. On recent attempts to discredit her: "Activist Asmaa Mahfouz sentenced to one year in jail" *Ahram Online,* March 7, 2012, [http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/36232/Egypt/Politics-/Activist-Asmaa-Mahfouz-sentenced-to-one-year-in-ja.aspx, accessed May 7, 2012].

[197] For more see: Craig L. Nessan, "The Occupy (Wall Street) Movement: Theological Impulses and Liberation Praxis" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 40, no. 1 (Fall 2013), 40-57 and Gerald J. Beyer, "Solidarity and Occupy Wall Street: A Tale of Two Movements" *Political Theology* 13, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 5-13.

[198] Among many streams that flow into the thinking of the World Social Forum is the resistance to hegemonic globalization in Chiapas, Mexico. See José María Ramos, "History of the World Social Forum and the Alterglobalization Movement" in *Alternative Futures of Globalisation: A Socio-Ecological Study of the World Social Forum Process*, Dissertation (Brisbane, Australia: Queensland University of Technology, 2010).

[199] This is the opposite of a more common human impulse – to suppress dissent for the sake of group decision-making. These young leaders evidence a drive to ensure authentic participation and to unearth hidden insight and disagreement from the shyer folks, including (even especially) people who obviously oppose their way of thinking.

[200] "[A]s with any movement, you have to keep thinking through what you're doing. The Occupy tactic has been extremely successful. It was a brilliant tactic, not just for raising issues but also for creating communities— something very important in a society like ours, which is so atomized. People are alone. They sit alone in front of their TV set. You don't 'consult your neighbor,' . . . That atomization is a technique of control and marginalization. One of the real achievements of Occupy has been to bring people together to form functioning, supportive, free, democratic communities— everything from kitchens to libraries to health centers to free general assemblies, where people talk freely and debate. It's created bonds and associations that, if they last and if they expand, could make a big difference." Chomsky 2013, Kindle Locations 812-818.

[201] Of course none of these movements are able to escape violence entirely, and their efforts should not be dismissed because of violent incidents. When a small number engage in violence relative to a mass nonviolent demonstration we need to apply our hermeneutic of suspicion. Because nonviolence is so effective at dismantling abusive power structures, those interested in maintaining them are known for planting violent actors within nonviolent movements. Chris Hedges writes about the dangers of violent and chaotic actors damaging the progress and discipline of nonviolent movements. Sometimes these are plants by hegemonic interests who are aware of the power of nonviolence to capture the hearts and minds of middle agents. Sometimes they are independent group like The Black Bloc anarchists in Oakland. "The Black Bloc's thought-terminating cliché of 'diversity of tactics' in the end opens the way for hundreds or thousands of peaceful

marchers to be discredited by a handful of hooligans. The state could not be happier. It is a safe bet that among Black Bloc groups in cities such as Oakland are *agents provocateurs* spurring them on to more mayhem. But with or without police infiltration the Black Bloc is serving the interests of the 1 percent. These anarchists represent no one but themselves. Those in Oakland, although most are white and many are not from the city, arrogantly dismiss Oakland's African-American leaders, who, along with other local community organizers, should be determining the forms of resistance . . . The corporate state understands and welcomes the language of force. It can use the Black Bloc's confrontational tactics and destruction of property to justify draconian forms of control and frighten the wider population away from supporting the Occupy movement." Hedges also explains the constructive role of Occupy in organizing innovative and life-giving democratic structures and processes. Simply attacking hegemony will not give us the new structures of shared power that we need to move into. Chris Hedges, "The Cancer in Occupy" *truthdig*, (February 6, 2012), [http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_cancer_of_occupy_20120206, accessed March 1, 2012]. This distinction is critical for our theo-ethical narrative of power which is rooted in the shalom of biblical covenant. If it is to be biblical, disrupting hegemonic structures cannot an end in itself. The sole purpose of our agitation, as it was for Jesus, is to bring abundant life. It is to free humanity and creation from systemic shackles so we find a way out of the house of empire and into lives of mutuality and well-being. This means we need new life giving social structures that allow us to live in peace in our communities and in a global community of communities. Our globalizing social movements are wrestling with just such governing and decision-making processes. While many of us are sympathetic with the frustration of violent anarchists and their anger at the extreme repression, mindless destruction will not help. We need to learn to be more gentle and reverent with each other, and we need to heal our relationship with animals and the earth. We need careful collective attention to consciously developing instruments for deploying power that bring life. As Jesus taught us, we need healing and teaching and feeding and the dismissal of the demonic. And we need lots of constructive interactive experiments, Occupys galore, so we can learn and grow and see what works.

[202] This process of negotiating power for shared thriving is how I define biblical hospitality in the "Introduction & Methodology." In our theo-ethical narrative of power, biblical hospitality is the ethic. This gets developed in Chapter 6.

[203] Liberty Plaza is the new name for Tahir Square.

[204] Notice that she is echoing the motto of the World Social Forum.

[205] Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, "From Tahrir to Wall Street: Egyptian Revolutionary Asmaa Mahfouz Speaks at Occupy Wall Street" *Democracy Now,* October 25, 2011, [http://www.democracynow.org/2011/10/25/from_tahrir_to_wall_street_egyptian, accessed May 7, 2012]. Eric W. Dolan, "Egyptian activist Asmaa Mahfouz speaks at 'Occupy Wall Street' protest" *The Raw Story,* October 25, 2011, [http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2011/10/25/egyptian-activist-asmaa-mahfouz-speaks-at-occupy-wall-street-protest/, accessed May 7, 2012].

[206] Though the corporate media has largely disappeared Occupy, actions continue below the radar screen. "Occupy has organized some significant actions, including the May Day protests, the NATO protest in Chicago, an Occupy G8 summit and G-8 protests in Thurmont and Frederick, Md. There are a number of ongoing actions—Occupy Our Homes, Occupy Faith, Occupy the Criminal Justice System, Occupy University, the Occupy Caravan—that protect the embers of revolt. Last week when Jamie Dimon, the CEO of JPMorgan Chase, testified before a U.S. Senate committee, he was confronted by Occupy protesters, including Deborah Harris, who lost her home in a JPMorgan foreclosure. But you will hear little if anything about these actions on cable television or in The Washington Post. Such acts of resistance get covered almost entirely in the alternative media, such as The Occupied Wall Street Journal and the Occupy Page of The Real News." Chris Hedges, "Occupy Will Be Back" *truthdig* (June 18, 2012), [http://www.truthdig.com/report/page2/occupy_will_be_back_20120618, accessed March 1, 2014]. For more see: Chris Hedges, *The World As It Is: Dispatches on the Myth of Human Progress: A Collection of Truthdig Columns* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2011).

[207] See Chapter 2 for a biblical discussion on fruitfulness.

[208] The following quote comes from a source which is comfortable supporting elite interests. Still it reveals the historical involvement of the World Economic Forum in the establishment of NAFTA. Three years prior to NAFTAs signing and implementation, the WEF made Mexico and the wooing of Mexican elites (active middle agents/insider collaborators) the "centerpiece of discussion." "President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico . . . in February 1990 was scheduled to be the star of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, a glittering annual gathering of international bankers, businessmen, and politicians who spend part of their time at economic policy seminars and the rest socializing and

skiing. The previous year, thanks partly to a speech by Senator Bill Bradley, Davos had been abuzz with conversation about Salinas' courageous economic reforms--his sell-off of nationalized industries, his opening to foreign investment, his reduction of government spending, and his crackdowns against corrupt labor union officials, businessmen, and drug dealers. In 1990, the Davos program called for Mexico to be the centerpiece of discussion. Salinas delivered a major address. Mexican food was served at banquets and Mexican music was played at receptions." Morton Kondracke. "Mexico and the Politics of Free Trade" *The National Interest*, September 1, 1991. This author calls Salinas' "reforms" "courageous." They were courageous because he faced the tremendous opposition of the Mexican people to being exploited and destroyed for the sake of Salinas' global playmates. Kondracke, perhaps inadvertently, describes the way imperial elites strategically find insider collaborators and offer them privileges to turn against their own people and manage the system of extraction.

[209] Maquiladoras are factories along the Mexican border owned by foreign countries that export their products to those foreign countries.

[210] For data about conditions on the border, see: Maureen Casey, *Border Witness: Youth Confront NAFTA* (New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, 2001).

[211] For background and history on social movements see: Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006); Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, *Social Movements: The Key Concepts* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, eds., *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). See also: Mary Elizabeth King, "Reclaiming the Nonviolent Side of History" Waging *Nonviolence: People-Powered News and Analysis* (August 1, 2013), [http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/reclaiming-the-nonviolent-side-of-history/, accessed March 1, 2014].

[212] Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003), 1-2 citing Ronald J. Sider and Richard K. Taylor, *Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 236-87, 250-1 and Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), 117-434.

[213] This popular term for Davos comes from Thomas Mann's 1924 novel, *The Magic Mountain*.

[214] Isaiah 43: 19.

[215] Luke 12: 13-21.

[216] Luke 12: 22-33.

[217] Acts 9: 1-18.

[218] Philippians 2: 5-11.

[219] The church has a bad habit of reading the last bit of this prayer wrong. Paul is not talking about the masses of the world bowing before the empire of modern Christianity (an organized religion that mistakenly thinks it "owns" Christ). Paul is talking about the emperors of the world bowing before the poor of the world – where Christ is pleased to dwell. Now that is a transformative image.

[220] Henri J. M. Nouwen, "The Selfless Way of Christ" *Sojourners Magazine* (June 1981).

[221] Mark 15: 34; Matthew 27: 46.

[222] When God cried out "where are you?" in the garden, we recognized that it was an emotional expression not an ontological expression. Another way of saying this is that the garden proclamation is not a doctrinal teaching on omniscience, it is an expression of betrayal. Similarly this parable is about God's/Jesus' extreme frustration with the blindness and heart-heartedness of religious leaders, not a doctrinal teaching about the afterlife. "The parable is about the indignation of the God who views people impartially in the face of unbelievable disparities in the way people live. Bauckham sees the issues of the parable more clearly than most: 'If the theme of eschatological reversal were taken as a literal description of how God's justice will operate after death, it would be morally intolerable. However, if it is taken as a popular way of thinking which the parable uses to make a point, it can be seen as serving primarily to express and to highlight the intolerable injustice of the situation where one enjoys luxury and another suffers want.'" Warden 2003, 92. Citing Richard Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels," *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 233. While this may be true, we must be vigilant against attempts to relieve the pressure of our middle agent predicament with theology that dismisses the radicality of this parable. The parable does not allow us an easy way out. It claims that

our salvation is entirely intertwined with the salvation of marginalized majorities, that structures of oppression must be disrupted, and that we need to entirely reorient our allegiance away from money and security and toward humanity and God, and thus enact local, regional and global redistribution of land, food, energy, water, education and all earthly blessings. It may not be giving us a bleak picture of the afterlife; nevertheless, it is a hard teaching.

[223] Lazarus is present too, but entirely protected. The comfortable man can no longer harm him. Safe in the bosom of Abraham, Lazarus need not beg nor defend himself. "Lazarus, on the other hand, having been translated heavenward by angels à la Enoch and Elijah (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11), finds himself comfortably seated in the 'bosom of Abraham.' In its parabolic context, the unique phrase captures the multiple meanings of κόλπος (*kolpos*) as a pocket-like fold in a garment, a reclining position at a meal, a bay or inlet, and a term denoting intimacy. Like a beloved child, Lazarus, gathered up by an affectionate parent and placed among the folds of his garment . . .The one who never feasted in life enjoys an otherworldly banquet hosted by the model of hospitality himself. Unlike Abraham, who entertained three unknown visitors under the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18:1-15), the rich man has invited only his friends. Having refused 'the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind' a place at his table (Luke 14:13-14,21), the rich man is refused an invitation to the patriarchs' eschatological banquet at the resurrection of the righteous (cf. 13:26-30)." Hatcher 2012, 279.

[224] On the audiences and polyvalent messages of this parable: "Here the parable becomes even more polyvalent, and different voices speaking to different audiences intermix in complex ways. Abraham, though, serves as the authoritative voice in this story. He explains God's point of view about what had happened to the rich man and Lazarus and why. Abraham also serves as an authoritative voice for those in Jesus' audience in the Lukan narrative; it is a call to the Lukan Pharisees to repent. Yet the voice of Abraham speaks also to the readers of Luke, exhorting them not to make the same mistakes as the rich man. Those who resemble the rich man—whether the Lukan Pharisees in the narrative or the more affluent readers among Luke's intended audience (such as the 'most excellent Theophilus' of Luke 1:3)—must listen to Moses and the prophets, and therefore to Jesus as well, and operate from a mode of vertical generalized reciprocity . . . a redistribution from the advantaged to the disadvantaged with the expectation of nothing in return." Gowler 2005, 257.

[225] We are creating and maintaining all manner of chasms today. Suburban/City. Documented/Undocumented. Working Poor/Comfortable. Homeless/Housed. Addicted/Not Addicted. Mentally Ill/Not. Physically Ill/Not. Imprisoned/Free. Educated/Not Educated. Employed/Unemployed. A chasm was evident between Occupiers in Rochester and the people in the upper floors of our downtown office buildings watching us march below. There is the chasm between the families in the United States and families on the Pakistan that we are terrorizing and killing from the sky with un-manned drones. There is also a rich variety of courageous and miraculous chasm-crossing happening in every corner of the world at this very moment.

[226] See the Introduction for more on the chiastic structure of this work.

Notes – Chapter 5: The Salvation of Middle Agents

[1] Peter J. Carman and Steve Schalchlin, "Lazarus Come Out" See No Evil Music/Lil Shack O Tunes, 2004.

[2] We don't know who Theophilus is. He may be a particular person. It may also be that Luke is naming a generic reader in the middle agent social location. Here, I am reading the name literally as "lover of God." This clarifies that Luke is not writing to enemies of the faith. Luke is writing to people inside the faith, people who love God, yet are missing something important. We can see a connection between the structure of this opening and Luke's presentation of the rich young ruler. Paralleling the dilemma of Luke's middle agent audience, the young ruler is well informed, authentically loves Jesus, and, yet, finds himself blocked from giving his life to the gospel. I am proposing that exposing and exploring this gap/chasm for middle agent believers is a (if not, the) central concern of Luke.

[3] Luke 1: 1-4.

[4] "The connection between Mary's self-description and Jesus' good news to the poor is undeniable. Mary's Magnificat is filled with jubilee reversals in the past tense (Luke 1:51-53), indicating that the coming of Jesus has already begun this reversal. Mary begins the reversal motif at the inner *spiritual* level, declaring God's mercy upon those who fear him and the scattering of those who are proud in their hearts. She then moves to a *political* reversal in which rulers are brought down and the humble exalted. Finally, she speaks of a *socio-economic* reversal in which the hungry are filled and the rich are sent away empty. We are reminded of the holistic aspects of jubilee through Mary's Song. People under a variety of

oppressions are exalted while their oppressors are humbled." Paul Hertig, "The Jubilee Mission of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke: Reversals of Fortunes" *Missiology* 26, no. 2 (April 1998): 174.

[5] Luke 1: 46-55. John the Baptist echoes the message of leveling saying, "every valley shall be filled" in Luke 3: 5. Both Mary's and John's words echo Isaiah 40, in their proclamation of the arrival of the Lord. They call to mind the celebratory news of God's justice entering the world, bringing energy to the weary faithful, announcing one "who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing." Isaiah 40: 32. Note that this intentional echoing includes clarification and revision. John shifts the conventional terms of salvation. For John, salvation is not about being in the faith community, that is, children of Abraham. It is about joining God's project of social leveling. John goes straight for middle agents who manage the parasitic system, including tax collectors, soldiers, and people who are materially comfortable. "John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Luke 3: 7-13. These passages also echo the biblical theme of fruitfulness explored in Chapter 2.

[6] Hertig focuses on Luke 4:18 as the foundational mission and vision of the Lukan narrative. ("The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.") Referring the intertextuality between Luke 4 and Isaiah 61, he notes that the Lukan Jesus "was making a radical claim to messiahship while inaugurating a new era of God's favor" yet "omits the remainder of the sentence 'and the day of vengeance of our God' from Isaiah 61:2. . . Jesus also omits the remainder of the prophecy which includes references to Israel feasting upon the riches of the Gentiles and foreigners working in their fields. Therefore, Jesus has excluded all references of hostility to the Gentiles" which "provides a clue to the congregation's apparently mixed response of wonder and question." Hertig, 168-9.

[7] York explores the "bi-polar reversal" found throughout the Lukan gospel narrative. He (mistakenly, I think) mutes the socio-economic implications, seeing the reversal as happening relative to the honor/shame categories of the culture. John O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

[8] The central importance of community organizing in the Jesus Movement and its corollary in modern social movements is explored in Chapter 4. In this case of the sermon on the plain, Jesus' organizing strategy of gathering crowds and teaching them nonviolent principles calls to mind the network of churches engaged in non-violent trainings during the Civil Rights Movement.

[9] Luke 6: 27-49.

[10] Luke 6: 43. "[F]or it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks." Luke 6:45b.

[11] Luke 6: 46.

[12] Acts 2: 11.

[13] Anthony Ricciuti has written an in-depth account of the economic radicality of the Book of Acts for his master's thesis at Institute for Christian Studies. Anthony J. Ricciuti, *The Economics of the Way: Jubilee Practice Among the Early Christians According to the Acts of the Apostles* (Toronto, ON: Institute for Christian Studies, 2001). Presuming that the Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts form a literary unit, we can see an economic focus and the theme of radical social leveling moving through the whole work.

[14] Hays explores the strong role of Old Testament prophecy (generally via allusion without commentary) in Luke 18-19. He argues that Luke is expressing the eschatological fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy in Israel and among the nations. Hays sees Jesus' reading of Isaiah 61: 1-2, and 58: 6 in Luke 4:18-19 as "programmatic" for the gospel. J. Daniel Hays, "'Sell Everything You Have and Give to the Poor': the Old Testament Prophetic Theme of Justice as the Connecting Motif of Luke 18:1-19:10" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 43-63. Citing Richard B. Hays, "The Liberation of Israel in Luke-Acts," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga, eds. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009). "In conclusion, justice is a central theme in the OT Prophets. It is closely interconnected with several other subthemes: righteousness; the character of the coming Davidic king and his kingdom; care for orphans, widows, foreigners, and the poor; humility; hypocritical rituals like fasting; the healing of blindness; and judgment on Jerusalem." Hayes 2012, 48.

[15] Generally I prefer not to use the term "poor" because it evokes victim/helper roles that tend to preserve rather than disrupt disproportionate power relationships. In an effort to get out of that dichotomy and to reframe dominant

narratives that inaccurately label underrepresented groups as "minorities," I have largely chosen to use the term "marginalized majorities." Here I use the term "poor" for the literary effect of linking the narrative to scripture and tradition.

[16] "[T]he purpose of a part of Luke's central section is to present in sharp relief two conflicting ideological points of view—the view of Jesus, and the view opposed to his," thus "the reader is shown two distinct worldviews or systems of ideas." James L. Resseguie, "Point of View in the Central Section of Luke (9:51-19:44)" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (March 1982): 41. "[W]hy does the narrator draw attention to sharp divisions within the people? Luke 13:17 is a key verse (cf. also 7:28-30). 'All' *(pas)* the adversaries are set in opposition to 'all the people' *(pas ho ochlos)*. The inclusive usage of *pas* is unmistakable. No third category is offered. Either one falls into the category of adversary or into the ambiguous category of the *ochlos* who rejoice at Jesus' works." Ibid, 43.

[17] Luke 13: 18-19.

[18] Luke 13: 20-21.

[19] Luke 13: 26.

[20] Luke 13: 28-30.

[21] Here I want to clarify that I am not saying that "the poor" (or marginalized majorities) are morally superior to middle agents. Nor am I saying that they are more intelligent or that they are impervious to imperial logic. People in all social locations are prone to sell out our consciences and communities in exchange for offers of privilege, or out of fear, or out of submission to group thinking, when given the chance. (We see this when the people are "whipped into a frenzy" and call for the crucifixion of Jesus.) These are significant human temptations articulated in "the Fall" in the garden and in Jesus' time in the wilderness. (See Chapter 2 for more discussion on this topic.) I am saying there is a directionality to salvation. God is leading us on a path of liberation for all humanity and creation. Those of us who are using our lives to help perpetuate imperial stories and ways of life – paths that benefit a minority at the expense of the majority – are moving away from our salvation. Those of us who are using our lives to help perpetuate paths of universal thriving and well-being are on a more fruitful course personally and creationally. (This, of course, gets complicated because our location is a predicament and our choices are often quite mixed.) I am also saying that those who are not living comfortably in the house of empire, have certain epistemological advantages. They can, often, see the operation of power more clearly. (See "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.) Because middle agents are in a carefully curated well funded epistemological bubble and because we are "making it" in the imperial regime, we are less likely to realize how much of humanity and creation is suffering and dying as the result of our broken way of life. We are also less likely to see problems that are dramatically impacting majorities in the world (e.g. climate change, privatization, etc.) as urgent. And we are less likely to be motivated to creatively work on solutions. Marginalized majorities, under the pressure of survival, are more likely to feel the urgency of the problems, to analyze them effectively, and to be motivated to generate new directions and solutions. As we collectively awaken to the need for universally liberative mechanisms for deploying power – for processes for living together (ways of sharing resources, making decisions, solving problems, educating, creating together, etc.) – it is likely that marginalized majorities will lead the way. Middle agents will come to awareness more slowly. But we will, hopefully, wake up little by little, and renounce our imperial ways of structuring our lives and join the rest of humanity in global community. To my mind, this is what Jesus is talking about when he says the last will be first.

[22] According to the Lukan Jesus, the people who need help are the hoarders. Wealth has a "profound effect on relationships" and is a "stumbling block to participating in the in-breaking of the reign of God." Karen M. Hatcher, "In Gold We Trust: The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)" Review & Expositor 109, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 277. "Those who do act spring the trap of wealth that holds them captive, not only liberating themselves but also becoming agents of release for those caught in the trap of poverty." Ibid, 282. See also: John O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

[23] Middle agents get particularly confused about scriptural interpretation when we unconsciously apply the "guilt filter." Consider how "the last shall be first" gets read through the lens of guilt. We think we are being rightly punished for our comfort and therefore must allow the people who suffered more than us to go before us as we enter into God's presence. This implies that we are dealing with a politeness issue, such as learning to be patient and hold the door for someone who is a little slower. Now remove the "guilt filter" and read the scripture more directly. What if the meaning is literal? We are following the wrong leaders. We are following "successful" imperialists who are leading us deeper into idolatry and separation (away from God). Those who have the least materially – the masses, the majorities and their non-

violent movements – are going in a more fruitful direction, moving themselves and creation more fully into God's presence. So, if we are interested in the kingdom of God, we need to change leaders and change direction. Repentance is not about manners; it is about turning 180 degrees and going in the other direction.

[24] There are more extended discussions of compassion in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6. Intersubjectivity is discussed in Chapter 2.

[25] When well-meaning U.S. activists asked leaders in Chiapas how they could help, the Zapatistas responded, "take your boot off our necks." In other words, get out of the bubble. Learn specifically about the policies of your government, and the practices of major corporations, that are causing enormous suffering to indigenous people and use your position to fight to change them. Nettie Wild, "A Place Called Chiapas: Inside the World's First Post-Modern Revolution" (New York, NY: Zeitgeist Films, 1998).

[26] Joseph Brackett, *Simple Gifts* (Alfred, ME: Shaker Community, 1848).

[27] Karris notices this directionality to salvation in Luke's gospel. He expresses this in a section titled "Salvation is Moving from Destructive Isolation to Nurturing Community." Robert J. Karris, "Luke's Soteriology of With-ness" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 12, no. 6 (December 1985): 348. He describes "a soteriology of with-ness: 1) In Jesus' table fellowship, God is imminent to creation and in union with sinners and outcasts; 2) through Jesus, God empowers people to move from destructive isolation to communion with their fellow men and women; 3) God is with Jesus, the innocently suffering righteous one and thus with all creation, even in its darkest hour. We will see that Luke uses themes of union rather than those of separation to show how Jesus saves." Ibid, 346.

[28] "[O]ne of the problems with the leaders of Israel and Judah during the time of the Prophets was their arrogance and their lack of humility. Thus as the Prophets condemned the leaders for their lack of justice, the lack of humility was one of the connected indictments. Ironically, throughout Isaiah one of the ways in which God judges the proud and obstinate is to 'bring them low' [*tapeinos*]. In fact, the LXX in Isaiah uses the term [*tapeinos*] over twenty times in judgment contexts. Thus in Luke 18:14 when Jesus states that 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled' . . . he is probably alluding to the numerous texts in Isaiah that use this same terminology for judgment (cf Isa 2:11-12, 17; 3:8; 3:17; 3:25; 5:15; 10:33; 13:11; 25:11-12; 58:3, 5). In the Prophets, the 'bringing down' [LXX, *tapeinos*] of the arrogant leaders of Israel and Jerusalem is part of Yahweh's justice on the Day of Yahweh. Isaiah 5:15-16 states this clearly: 'Both low and high will be humbled, and the eyes of the arrogant brought low. But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.'" Hays 2012, 54.

[29] "Echoing throughout the book of Luke is the pervasive OT prophetic promise that the coming Messiah would establish justice, in contrast to the unjust rulers of Israel. Justice in the OT prophets is frequently connected to the care and support of widows and the poor. Sounding very much like the OT prophets, Jesus opens this unit [18:1-19:10] with a promise of justice: 'Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? ... I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly' (Luke 18:7-8). Within the context of this statement, it is highly suggestive to find that the interconnected stories and parables which follow deal precisely with those who would be the major players in the issue of justice at this time in Israel: a crooked judge, a widow, children, a blind beggar, the poor, a rich ruler, Pharisees, and tax collectors. Likewise, one of the interconnecting themes running throughout the passage is money and wealth." Ibid, 50.

[30] As with many parables we've discussed, this parable creates a hermeneutical problem for interpreters who habitually make the patriarchal figure into God. Perry asks: "What if God is *the widow*? What if God is the one who is persistently asking for justice, beating on the doors of the world and on the unjust systems of the world?" Julie R. Perry, **"**God as an Unjust Judge?: A Sermon on Luke 18:1-8" *Review and Expositor* 109 (Spring 2012): 297-301. "Most commentaries on this parable turn instinctively to the character of the judge as the figure who reveals something about God. But all such efforts falter, because the judge clearly does not reflect what we believe about God's response to the cries of the poor." Barbara E. Reid, "Beyond Petty Pursuits and Wearisome Widows: Three Lukan Parables" *Interpretation* 56, no. 3 (July 2002): 292-3. See also: Barbara E. Reid, "A Godly Widow Persistently Pursuing Justice: Luke 18:1-8" *Biblical Research* 45 (2000): 25-33.

[31] "The three Lukan parables that feature female characters [persistent widow, woman hiding yeast, woman and lost coin] have often been interpreted as stories about women tending to trivial tasks. Yet these figures reveal the divine work of transforming and feeding, extravagantly seeking after the lost for redemption, and persistently pursuing justice until it is achieved . . . each of these parables offers a bold portrait of the female face of God." Reid 2002, 284. "It is the widow who is cast in the image of God and who is presented to the disciples as a figure to emulate . . . If the widow is

seen as the God-like figure, what is the message of the parable? When one doggedly resists injustice, faces it, names it, and denounces it until justice is achieved, then one is acting as God does." Ibid, 293.

[32] Luke 18: 1-8.

[33] Donald Penny, "Persistence in Prayer: Luke 18:1-8" *Review and Expositor* 104 (Fall 2007): 737.

[34] We have seen a middle agent interpretive preference for non-disruption of oppressive social systems that exactly inverts the meaning of the parable. Cotter shows us that the widow is commended for breaking social norms and for aggressively insisting on immediate justice. The original text indicates that the judge finally relents because he afraid she is going to give him a black eye. Wendy Cotter, "The Parable of the Feisty Widow and the Threatened Judge (Luke 18.1–8)" *New Testament Studies* 51, no. 03 (July 2005): 328-343. Cotter draws on Reid, noting that translators of this parable have often chosen to soften the meaning, saying things such as she "annoyed the judge greatly" or "wore him out." These translations veil the more literal interpretation which would be something like "blackened his eye" or "punched his face." Ibid, 339. Citing Barbara Reid, "Luke's Mixed Message for Women" *Chicago Studies* 38, no.3 (1999): 283-297. "The real reason why scholars have sought for circumlocutions in Luke 18.5 when they are willing to translate the verb literally in 1 Cor 9.27. . . is due to its inappropriateness when used to describe the possible actions of a widow who is meek and humble." Cotter 2005, 340. We see a similar middle agent interpretive distortion (which preferences mildness and non-disruption) in Bailey's reading of Lazarus' silence in Chapter 4.

[35] "[T]he evidence of our investigation of the widow presented in the parable shows that she would not be seen as a meek and subservient sort of woman, but feisty and frustrated and unwilling to abide by the social rules that would keep her invisible and silent while this judge refuses her. So this parable is not at all about a conventional woman, but about one who is contrary to convention. Once this is clear, the translation of the judge's fears can proceed with literal accuracy. Naturally, this woman has upset his tidy, selfish and vain world. For the same reasons that explain his refusal to give justice – that is, a lack of regard for anyone but himself – he decides he had better give it now in case she finally loses her temper and gives him a black eye." Ibid, 341.

[36] "[T]he widow's personal visits to the judge and her defiant, bossy order would be outrageous and quite a surprise to the listener, to say the least. She shows that she has no regard at all for the social rules that would keep her invisible and silent. Moreover, her command is something better suited to a lazy servant than to a man of dignified social elevation like a judge." Ibid, 338. "[I]f the author of the parable had meant to correct any idea that the widow visiting the judge was actually very subservient, he had an opportunity to supply her with a pleading request with a deferential address to the judge. Instead this widow's brief command, with no title for the judge at all, only serves to reinforce the image of her as tough and unwilling to accept the judge's refusal. This judge has met his match." Ibid, 336. "As if to underline the widow's boldness, the author follows up this impression with the confirming information about her character by the speech he gives to her. It is a curt command devoid of any title of respect for the magistrate. Yet if one examines the legal papyri of the time, all communications with magistrates are polite and some are very deferential, all using some form of respectful address." Ibid, 335. In her study, Cotter offers a helpful analysis of the confinement of women in the domestic realm and their unwelcomeness in the court in context. Ibid, 333-335.

[37] Penny 2007, 739. Here is another example of interpretive muting using the paired themes of eschatology and prayer: "Despite delay, ultimate divine vindication will occur (18:8). Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that when He returns, He Himself will balance the scales of justice. Jesus' exercising ultimate vindication is seen in the contrast between the unjust judge and the just God. Jesus' disciples are to exercise 'the faith,' that is, to exercise faithfulness as they anticipate His return. The doctrinal content in the words 'the faith' includes the visible return of Jesus, the Son of Man, in all His messianic glory. The focus then of the parable is on praying without losing heart, and this praying pertains to God's certain justice, which the Son of Man will bring at His return." David A. Mappes, "What is the Meaning of 'Faith' in Luke 18:8?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (July-September 2010): 306.

[38] On the immediacy of God's concern for justice: "[T]he OT Prophets clearly identify justice as one of the leading characteristics of the Kingdom that the Messiah will inaugurate. So the OT background is not only in regard to widows and justice, but rather points to the fact that the coming Kingdom will bring justice, just as represented by the widow's story in Luke 18:1-8. In this Kingdom context, Jesus goes on to say in 18:7 that 'God will bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night' (recall the persistence in prayer motif from the introductory verse 18:1). Indeed, Jesus states that God will see that they get justice 'quickly' (or perhaps 'suddenly'). The Prophets declare over and over that the current leaders and authorities do not practice justice, but that the coming Davidic king, in stark contrast, will inaugurate a time characterized by justice. Jesus connects to this theme and gives this situation a clear

messianic twist when he connects the coming of the Son of Man (18:8) to the quick (or sudden) fulfillment of justice. Likewise, he injects the issue of faith, an important qualification." Hays 2012, 51-52. This "pericope contains several important elements: God, working through the Son of Man, will bring about justice quickly for his chosen ones who pray (cry out) to him persistently . . . and have faith." Ibid, 52. "The exclamation (v. 6: 'And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says!"') expresses shock at the judge's statement, and leaves the matter there. The first rhetorical question (v. 7a: 'And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?') introduces a contrast between this unjust judge and God to make the point of God's sure answer to those who cry to him night and day. The second (v. 7b: 'Will he delay long in helping them?') focuses on God's speed in granting justice, a question which is affirmed emphatically (v. 8a: 'I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them'). Cotter 2005, 330.

[39] "That passage prior to the Widow and the Unjust Judge in Luke 17 deals with the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the context set by this discussion (i.e. the coming Kingdom of God) no doubt carries over into 18:1-19:10. This first episode opens with an explanation-Jesus told this parable to encourage persistence in prayer (18:1). The eschatological nature of the preceding material leads many commentators to conclude that Jesus is exhorting his disciples to pray during the difficult interim time while the consummation of the Kingdom is delayed. Soon, however, the story gives a clear qualification that Jesus is not talking about casual prayer in general, but about prayer from his chosen ones requesting justice. Words related to justice and injustice . . . appear six times in this episode (18:3 [2x], 5, 6, 7, 8[)] . . . Weaver correctly notes that this is a story about justice: 'As Luke sees it, justice is the name for God's action in the world to make right what is wrong. And prayer is the name for the collaboration of humans in that act of God.' . . . [J]ustice is a dominating theme in the OT Prophets and frequently justice is specifically defined as care for widows. Thus the mention of justice within a story about a widow and an unjust judge practically insists that the reader recall the OT prophetic background." Hays 2012, 51. Citing Dorothy Jean Weaver, "Luke 18:1-8" *Interpretation* 56, no. 3 (2002): 318-19.

[40] I part with Cotter and Reid on this point. Cotter sees the Lukan layer framing of the Jesus layer as softening the strength of the widow and the "burlesque" of the court system. Cotter 2005, 342-343. In distinguishing between the Lukan and Jesus layers of the text, Reid, like Cotter, sees Luke trying to "tame this story of an unconventional woman." She says, "By adding v. 1, he recasts her in a docile and acceptable role—an example of one who prays incessantly, much like Anna in the temple (2:36-38). There is nothing threatening about a widow who prays all day long. Luke's redaction of this parable and the translations and interpretations of New Testament scholars through the ages have largely tamed and even trivialized a powerful portrait of a godly widow pursuing justice." Reid 2002, 293. I agree with Hays that the opposite is true. The Lukan frame of this story amplifies rather than mutes the message of justice. According to Hays, reading the Lukan text through the lens of the OT prophets "helps to clear up tensions in 18:1-8 that Stephen Curkpatrick has raised . . . Curkpatrick argues that in Luke's final framing of this parable he loses the parable's emphasis on justice; indeed, Luke frames it 'to less than adequate' effect . . . Curkpatrick writes, 'The issue of justice is displaced by the faithfulness of the elect until eschatological vindication. The interpretive frame has eclipsed the central issue in the parable, in which the powerless overcomes the powerful, and potential justice prevails over injustice. ... In continuity with Luke's themes of just, inclusive community as an expression of the present reign of God, the widow is central to the parable (w. 2-5), and a locale of justice. However, Luke has not allowed the parable to speak in this way and frames its impetus with less than optimum effect, given other possibilities that might exist.' . . . Curkpatrick bases his understanding of Luke's reframing on connecting Luke 18:1-8 with what precedes it rather than with what follows it. Connecting 18:1-8 with the following passages and with the call to justice regarding the poor relieves much of the tension that so bothers Curkpatrick, and places the emphasis back on justice (as well as on the Kingdom), which he thinks was the original intention of the parable." Hays 2012, 62, footnote 55. Citing Stephen Curkpatrick, "A Parable Frame-up and Its Audacious Reframing" *New Testament Studies* 49, no. 1 (January 2003): 22-38; and Stephen Curkpatrick, "Dissonance in Luke 18:1-8" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 121 (2002): 107-21. I see Luke as having a particular sensitivity the predicament of middle agents, e.g. the judge. Though I am convinced that the result of this focal audience is not a softening of the radical message of the gospel. Rather Luke sees the vulnerable as the leaders for stuck middle agents. The widow is the judge's teacher, guiding him, with her strength and persistence, however haltingly, in the direction of justice.

[41] This is a consistent pattern in the litany of Luke's middle agent scenarios. The vulnerable provoke the comfortable, inviting them to the banquet of right relationship. Most middle agents say "no thank you" or if under pressure, they manipulate and scheme to do the minimum to preserve the status quo. A few understand the significance of the offer, break their patterns, and are truly saved. For more, see Appendix 5: A Study of Middle Agents in the Gospel of Luke.

[42] Cotter concludes that the judge is a conventional example of the unjustness of the judicial system toward those who do not have connections. Cotter 2005, 332. She draws on historical study of judicial systems of the first century to reach her conclusion, including: Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). "[M]ost people tried to resolve disputes on their own by meetings between the parties, or by mediation or arbitration. But if none of these brought results, the courts were the last stage. Hobson shows that if a case was recognized, the judgment could be expected to favour the wealthiest or most influential party." Cotter 2005, 337. Citing Deborah W. Hobson, "The Impact of Law on Village Life in Roman Egypt" in *Law, Politics and Society in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson, eds. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield University, 1993), 193–219. "Since this judge represents a very common type throughout the empire, the parable is a burlesque of the whole justice system, its fakery and vanity. The courts as places where God (the gods) effect order on earth are exposed as sham. Significantly, it is the person considered least important and weakest who wins justice from this immovable magistrate who is so far above her in power and prestige, but only because she is outside the system to which he is enslaved. In a curious way, it is the widow on the ground who is free and spontaneous, and the powerfully elevated magistrate who must be constantly watchful that he does not fall." Cotter 2005, 342. Along similar lines, see the discussion in Chapter 4 on the freedom of John the Baptist and confinement of Herod.

[43] See Chapter 4 for an extended discussion of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

[44] See "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.

[45] See "The Shrewd Manager" in Chapter 3.

[46] Herzog reminds us that this is not a story about the victory of God's egalitarian order over the Domination System. Most likely, the judge capitulates to avoid the embarrassment of having the system (of backroom negotiations and bribes) revealed. His authority depends on the perception that he is faithful to Torah law (with its commandment to protect widows). From the judge's jaded perspective, this situation provides the perfect public opportunity to reinforce that perception. In a strategic maneuver, he employs momentary largesse to maintain the system that keeps him wealthy and this woman poor. William R.Herzog II, *Parables As Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 231.

[47] See "The Wild Waters of Love" in Chapter 1.

[48] See "On the Pain of Knowing" in Chapter 3.

[49] See "Blame, Guilt, and Responsibility" in Chapter 3.

[50] See "Discipleship and its Costs" in Chapter 3.

[51] Luke 18: 31-34.

[52] "This pericope . . . connects to the previous one in that Peter notes that they have left all to follow Jesus (18:28). Likewise, in this pericope Jesus reminds the disciples that humiliation and death lie at the end of the road they follow. The statement in 18:34 that Jesus' meaning was hidden from them anticipates and connects nicely to the following story about the blind beggar. Furthermore, when Jesus says that everything written about him in the Prophets will be fulfilled (18:31), in addition to the Isaianic 'suffering servant' texts, does Jesus also have prophetic passages such as Isaiah 32:1-3 in mind? 'See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. . . . Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen.'" Hayes 2012, 58.

[53] "The larger unit of Luke 9:51-19:27 is connected together by the journey to Jerusalem, and the scattered texts that remind the readers of this journey keep stressing the fact that critically important events will occur when Jesus arrives there. Thus in 18:31 Jesus refers to the fulfillment of 'everything that is written about the Son of Man in the Prophets.' What does the Lord mean by this statement? In the OT Prophets, especially in Jeremiah and also in Isaiah, the injustices practiced in Jerusalem are often underscored and cited as motivating factors in the coming judgment on the city (Jer 22:1-5; Isa 1:21-28). Indeed, in the book of Jeremiah the condemnation and judgment on Jerusalem is a prevalent theme running throughout the book. It is likely that the negative statements regarding Jerusalem spoken by Jesus and arranged by Luke have strong allusions to Jeremiah. Likewise in the Prophets it is the ruling class that is primarily responsible for failing to heed the prophetic word and for opposing and oppressing the Prophets. Following close upon the heels of the story about the ruler who refused to bring about justice and then follow Jesus, the mention of Jerusalem is ominous." Ibid, 57-58. "[I]t is important to recall that the Presence of Yahweh left the Temple in Ezekiel 8-10, with no indications in the Scripture that he ever returned. The trip by Jesus to Jerusalem suggests a return of God's presence to Zion and the

Temple, a highly significant event. Of course, on his arrival Jesus will find a corrupt, hypocritical system similar to that which the Prophets condemned. Indeed, Jesus' quote from Jer 7:11 ('den of robbers') comes from a passage in Jeremiah proclaiming judgment on Jerusalem ('I will thrust you from my presence'; Jer 7:15)." Ibid, 58, footnote 49.

[54] "As Jesus journeys to Jerusalem he heals a blind man in Jericho. A serious OT reader would suspect some symbolism as Jesus revisits the city where the conquest of Israel began." Ibid, 59. "Not only are there probable allusions in this text to the conquering of Jericho by Joshua, but there may also be allusions to 1 Sam 5:6-7. In that text, David marches toward Jerusalem to try to capture it from the Jebusites. The Jebusites taunt David by saying, 'You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off.' Nevertheless, the text explains, David did indeed capture Zion, the city of David. In Luke 18:35-43, we find a story of Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, called 'Son of David' by a blind beggar whom Jesus consequently heals. While not conclusive, the parallels are certainly suggestive. Other instances of Luke making very close allusions to texts in 1-2 Samuel are cited by Sanders[.]" Ibid 59, footnote 51. Citing James A. Sanders, "Isaiah in Luke," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds. (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1993), 17.

[55] Luke 18: 35-43. "Another interesting [Old Testament] connection, especially in Isaiah, is the close association between justice and the healing of blindness; that is, injustice and blindness go together while justice and clear sight also go together (Isa 42:1-7; 59:9-11). In Isa 32:1-8, the coming king establishes righteousness and justice (Isa 32:1), opening the eyes of the blind (Isa 32:3-4; figurative of understanding), allowing them to see clearly the hypocrisy of nobles who are really fools and scoundrels because 'the hungry he leaves empty' (Isa 32:6) and the poor he destroys with lies, 'even when the plea of the needy is just' (Isa 32:7)." Hays 2012, 48.

[56] This man is yet another Lukan figure, like Lazarus and the widow, whose persistence helps break through the bubble of the lost.

[57] "As with the other pericopes in this unit, this passage not only picks up prophetic themes from the OT, but it also interconnects closely with the surrounding episodes. The blind beggar is in stark contrast to the ruler in the previous story. Indeed, both the blind beggar and Zacchaeus (the following story) provide strong contrasts with the ruler. The beggar is told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. This is the first instance of using Nazareth to identify Jesus since Luke 4, when he began his public ministry with his proclamation from Isa 61:1-2: 'to preach good news to the poor . . . and recovery of sight for the blind.' Although the Isaiah 61 citation at the beginning of Jesus' ministry continues to echo throughout Luke even without direct allusion, the mention of Nazareth probably seals the connection." Hays 2012, 59. "Likewise, in contrast to the ruler who addresses Jesus as 'teacher,' the blind beggar clearly identifies Jesus as the 'Son of David,' even though the beggar cannot see him. As Jesus heads for Jerusalem, the title 'Son of David' is quite appropriate from the context of the OT Prophets. Also, recall that in the Prophets the removal of blindness is often an accompanying sign of the eschatological establishment of justice." Ibid, 59.

[58] "The theme of near/far appears as well for Jesus orders this man to be brought near to him (18:40-41). In addition, Jesus is acting very much as ruler or judge in that he gives orders . . . to bring the man to him[.]" The text employs "a term used primarily in the NT for the actions of high ranking human authorities such as kings, high priests, Roman officials, etc. The man requests that Jesus heal his blindness, and Jesus states, 'Your faith has healed you,' connecting to 18:8, 'when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on the earth?' Furthermore, he is healed immediately, as 18:8 states, 'he will see that they get justice and quickly.' In further contrast to the ruler, the healed blind man then follows Jesus (i.e. staying near)." Ibid, 59.

[59] Acts 28: 25-27.

[60] Luke 11: 5-13.

[61] Herzog directs us to the Jesus layer of this story, by opening the village context to us. Herzog 1994, 200-201.

[62] Ibid, 198.

[63] Ibid. Herzog argues that Luke has modified Jesus' story to make a point about "the theme of importunity or persistence in prayer." Reading Luke's gospel as a presentation of the Jesus movement and its message of radical socio-economic leveling to would-be followers who come from privilege in the Greco-Roman world (middle agents), I arrive at a different conclusion. I do not see Luke spiritualizing the parable. I see Luke focusing on the apart-ness of the sheltered man. He is insulated from the village reality. He does not comprehend how sharing resources for the common good is not only the route to personal and social healing, it is the way that God brings about the kingdom (salvation). Ibid, 196.

[64] See the "Introduction & Methodology" for my handling of the Jesus and Lukan layers in the text.

[65] Metzger goes to some interesting lengths to keep the patriarchal figure in the story as a stand-in for God. He decides it is a move by Jesus that honors a negative view of God by suffering people. He says: "Jesus does not ask them to suppress their impressions of God or to align them with more traditional representations; rather, they are encouraged to remain in conversation with the deity and not to become discouraged or be afraid, even when their speech pushes beyond socially acceptable limits and becomes accusatory, contemptuous, blasphemous, or outright hostile. Indeed, Jesus recommends impudence and audacious tenacity before God, confident that such conduct will receive a hearing and a response." James A. Metzger, "God as F(r)iend? Reading Luke 11:5-13 & 18:1-8 with a Hermeneutic of Suffering" *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 32, no. 1 (2010): 33-57. I enjoy this creative interpretation and see consonance with the Hebrew scriptures (especially the Psalms) where the faith community challenges God and calls God to account. Still, given the larger thrust and purpose of Jesus and Luke I cannot go along with the unresponsive neighbor or the unjust judge being models for God. It seems clear to me that both Jesus and Luke use these passages to demonstrate the failure of human authority figures to follow the law of God (a law of community concern and justice). For more on this parable see: Walter L. Liefeld, "Parables on Prayer (Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-14)" in *Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 240-262.

[66] Herzog 1994, 202. Herzog is referring to: John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York, NY: Harper & Row 1973), 84. and Pheme Perkins, *Hearing the Parables of Jesus* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981), 194.

[67] Luke 17: 32.

[68] Luke 16: 23.

[69] Luke 15: 28.

[70] Luke 14: 18-20.

[71] "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action;' who paternalistically feels he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season' . . . Shallow understanding from people of goodwill is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection." Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail (April 16, 1963).

[72] Matthew 10: 34-39.

[73] Luke 12: 49-53.

[74] Mark 11: 1-10; Matthew 21: 1-9; Luke 19: 29-38; John 12: 12-15.

[75] Mark 11: 15-19, 11: 27-33, Matthew 21: 12-17, 21: 23-27, Luke 19: 45-48, 20: 1-8, John 2: 13-16.

[76] King 1963.

[77] Piven discusses the ability of regular people to disrupt patterns of oppressive power in social and political systems via social actions and social movements. She says the potential power residing in the people "consists in their ability to disrupt a pattern of ongoing and institutionalized cooperation that depends on their continuing contributions." Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2006), 21.

[78] As a snapshot of the current state of incarceration and race, in mid 2008 in the United States, we had 4, 777 black inmates per 100,000 U.S population and 683 white inmates per 100,000 U.S. population. Heather C. West, Ph.D. and William J. Sabol, Ph.D. *Prison Inmates at Midyear 2008 - Statistical Tables: Bureau of Justice Statistics.* U.S. Department of Justice, March 2009, 18.

[79] Some disruptions harm and some disruptions heal. In the story of the Gerasene demoniac, Jesus heals and exorcizes Legion. The community becomes seized with fear and asks Jesus to leave town. Luke 8: 26-39. Theologically there is a

connection to the discussion of chaos in Chapter 1. Sometimes we become so committed to keeping things stable that we reject the healing and transforming power of holy chaos.

[80] There is a profound connection between personal and political exorcism in the gospels. "[I]f readers recognize the implicit assumptions in the narrative that illnesses have social consequences, then all of Jesus' healing activities actually reflect [Jesus' earlier] proclamation of release [in 4:18]. People assaulted or possessed by unclean/evil spirits, for example, can be properly described as oppressed or held prisoner by demons (note how the spirit/demon in Luke 9:38-39 'seizes' the child, 'convulses' him, 'mauls' him, and will 'scarcely leave' him)." David B. Gowler, "'At his gate lay a poor man': A Dialogic Reading of Luke 16:19-31" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 252. For more discussion of the demonic and its political implications see "Jesus and the Demonic" in Chapter 2.

[81] Jesus refuses to turn his disruptive invitation into violence. There are examples where the disciples struggle with this un-crossable line. When they are rejected in Samaria, they ask: shall we, like Elijah, draw fire down on the people to prove God is real? Luke 9:54. Jesus says: no, calm down. In another example, they get mixed up in violence, when the soldiers come to arrest Jesus. They ask: "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" And "one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him." Luke 22: 49-51. We have trouble seeing that Jesus' goal has nothing to do with winning a battle or vanquishing an enemy. His goal is to liberate.

[82] Isasi-Diaz speaks to the fabric of social structures and how they protect people. "Central to societal structures are people who vouch for one another, who help one another, who do all they can to keep the benefits of society in the hands of those who belong to 'their kind.' This helps to demythologize structures, the level at which the so-called political works, making clear that its elements and processes are not so different from those that are present at the personal level. The differences between the two are more at the level of scale and accumulation of causes and effects." Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Narratives: Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth" in *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 238. This structuring around the protection of insiders has evolved into a global societal structure that protects a minority at extreme cost to majorities. To me, the most promising disruptions to these damaging systems are non-violent and consciously invite creative experimentation with systems that move in the direction that the gospel demands, protecting the most vulnerable first, and ultimately protecting all.

[83] I am not suggesting that contemplative practice – meditation and prayer – do not affect the social realm. I am differentiating between activist and contemplative approaches to social change. From my reading of the gospels, Jesus engages in both. Here I am focused on his project of gathering and teaching crowds and building a movement.

[84] See Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, Ziga Vodovnik, Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein, *Ya Basta! Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2004) and Tom Hayden, *The Zapatista Reader* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2001).

[85] Sicarii (or Zealots) were seeking to overthrow Roman rule in Judea. (Some scholars merge the two categories and others, including Josephus, draw distinctions.) In today's terms they would be revolutionaries or terrorists. They were known for using short daggers, hidden in their cloaks, to assassinate leaders and imperial collaborators in public spaces. Jesus does have Zealots among his circle of disciples. While he critiques various religious movements (Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.), he never critiques the Zealot movement in the text. At the same time, he does consistently rebuke his disciples if they discuss or enact violence as a strategy. For more on the Sicarii see: Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilisations* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2008); Mark Andrew Brighton, *The Sicarii in Josephus's Judean War: Rhetorical Analysis and Historical Observations* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); and Mark Andrew Brighton, *The Sicarii in Josephus's Judean War: Rhetorical Analysis and Historical Observations* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

[86] For information on "just policing" see: Gerald W. Schlabach, ed. *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007) Rev. Paul Hayes of Noank Baptist Church in Rhode Island made a convincing argument against "just policing" in a speech to the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America in the June 2011. His fundamental argument was that our increasingly sophisticated capacity to stealthily remove all that irritates is a slippery slope, and something Christians must respond to ethically. As Christians and Baptists we have a calling to remain in relationship with what irritates. While I don't have the text of his speech, the rough outline can be found on a sermon he posted online called "The Endless Wars," July 31, 2011, [http://www.noankbaptistchurch.org/sermons, accessed May 9, 2012]. I take this further in this chapter, by saying that what irritates us is saving us. Just policing can

become yet another way to use our accumulated resources to maintain or curate our bubble with even less conscious awareness of what we are having removed on our behalf. Unmanned drones dropping strategic bombs on Pakistani families are just the beginning of the distance we will have from the harm we do.

[87] Gandhi used the Sanskrit term for doing no harm (or non-injury), *ahimsa*, to describe this philosophy. Is this the "weakness" of Christ that Nietzsche and Ayn Rand deplore?

[88] Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson 2010).

[89] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of "The Hypnotic Quality of Internal Coherence."

[90] See Michael Ezra, "The Eichmann Polemics: Hannah Arendt and Her Critics" *Democratiya* 9 (Summer 2007).

[91] http://www.splcenter.org/

[92] Recognizing that perfect objectivity is impossible, there is still something helpfully disruptive about the effort toward it. Another relentless fact collector is Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now*. Her simple no-nonsense presentation of facts is viewed by some as treasonous. http://www.democracynow.org/ Wikileaks uses technology to take disruption via facts to a new global and technological level. This leads people who are committed to sustaining the bubble to scream for its founder's (Julian Assange's) head on a platter. One interesting thing that happens to the "facts" people is that all the ideological structures in the spectrum get challenged and everyone gets mad. For intstance, when Asma Barlas wrote her book about unreading patriarchal readings of the Qur'an, the outrage came from anti-Islamic groups and Islamic groups. Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press 2002). In Arendtian fashion, she sought not to belong to a club, but to dig into and share factual reality as best she could.

[93] I am using the term performance art in the way that Judith Butler speaks of "performativity." Butler draws on John Searle's speech-act theory and his understanding of illocutionary speech acts that "do" something rather than simply "represent" something. Butler sees our speech, our expressions, our gestures, and "all manner of symbolic social sign" as enacting reality. "The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again." This is the case with all forms of hegemony. See: Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 272; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993); and John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969). Jesus is performing an alternative economic and social reality among the crowds. For Jesus, the counter-hegemonic world he performs, the kingdom of God, does not arrive *creatio ex nihilo*. It is a deeply contextual co-creation, a constructive involvement with his tradition, generated in community and in relationship to God. So too, we enact within our context – within the narratives into which we emerge. Our choice is whether to unconsciously (or consciously) recreate the hegemonic patterns in which we are immersed thus generating anew the reality of hegemony each day, or whether to act as free agents that creatively enact new possibilities.

[94] http://www.michaelmoore.com/

[95] http://theyesmen.org/

[96] http://www.revbilly.com/

[97] Performance artists commandeer the public stage to disrupt public thought patterns and expose repressive regimes, often at great cost to themselves. They use public settings to draw imperial operators (e.g. imperial police officers or corporate bureaucrats) along in their own logic until they look ridiculous and they and the system they serve is discredited. Here is a recent example. After being released from prison, the young women of Pussy Riot went right back to it, during the recent Winter Olympics in Socchi. About this, Ioffe writes: "The girls . . . were giving a press conference. 'At the moment this city is under occupation, under police control,' one of the artists, a girl in a blue balaclava and hot pink dress, said. Apparently, the police, having realized that they had provided more publicity for the artists formerly known as Pussy Riot than they could've ever concocted themselves, decided to pull back and lick their wounds." Julia Ioffe, "Pussy Riot's Arrest in Sochi May All Have Been a Piece of Performance Art" *The New Republic* (February 18, 2014), [http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116588/artists-formerly-known-pussy-riot-are-arrested-sochi, accessed April 8, 2014].

[98] Matthew 10: 16.

[99] Matthew 7: 6.

[100] John 2: 4.

[101] For more on Jesus breaking down the boundaries of insider and outsider, see "Which Master Will We Serve?" in Chapter 4, where we discuss Jesus' rattling of the Pharisees conceptions of who is in and who is out. There are countless examples of Jesus crossing the social and religious boundaries that are taken for granted by his community. The story of "the good Samaritan" which answers the question "who is my neighbor?" crystallizes this ongoing conflict between Jesus and the defenders of boundaries and designations. Luke 10: 25-37.

[102] Luke 13: 22-29.

[103] Luke 8: 4-11.

[104] This is why I dedicate so much of Chapters 3-5 to Luke and power. I want us to experience Luke's unique effort to press slippery middle agents to stay the course. I want us to feel how Luke stays on point – not letting up when we get bored, tired, uncomfortable; not letting us get away with crying out "enough, we've got it." I want us to stay with Luke's project as he picks apart our increasingly deceptive and subtle defenses of the status quo. Appreciating what this takes is critically important, because we need to be just as focused and relentless today as we pick apart our militaristic, market-obsessed status quo. If we give up too easily, or walk away too quickly, or put the task off until later, we miss the salvation offered in the gospel.

[105] Luke 5: 27ff

[106] Luke 6: 1ff. In the prior scene where his hometown tries to get rid of him and here with the Pharisees, the people police the cultic and imperial orders. When imperial control is established in the minds and hearts of the people on the ground, official violence is no longer required. The people police their own communities, rejecting innovation, for the benefit of the empire and against their own freedom and prosperity.

[107] Luke 6: 32b.

[108] We saw this same tendency in Chapter 4 among the .01% at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where the leaders of the exploitive global economy wax poetic about improving the world while creating and maintaining systems of global suffering.

[109] "Within the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has already expressed quite clearly his opinion of the Pharisees. In Luke 11 he delivers a series of blistering critiques. Jesus exhorts the Pharisees to give to the poor (11:41) and then declares, 'Woe to you, Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue, and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice . . . and the love of God' (1L42). Jesus then criticizes them for their arrogance and lack of humility (11:43) and lumps them together with their forefathers who killed the Prophets (11:47-51). Obviously, Jesus' polemic against the Pharisees in Luke 11 echoes into Luke 18." Hays 2012, 53.

[110] Luke 18: 9-14. "In spite of the suggestion by numerous commentators that there is a major break between Luke 18:8 and 18:9, it can be argued that 18:9-14 is in fact tied to the preceding parable. First of all, note that in the Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge (18:1-8) terms from the word group [for righteousness/justice] occur repeatedly (6 times). Then observe that the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14) opens with the related adjective *dikaios*; and closes with the related verb *dikaioo* in an apparent inclusion word play on that repetition. . . Just as justice and righteousness are closely associated in the OT, so the concept of justice in 18:1-8 is related to the concept of righteousness/justification in 18:8-14. Luke 18:1-8 speaks of justice, vindication, making things right. The connecting sentence in 18:9 could be understood along the lines of 'To some who were confidant of their own vindication, or their own rightness in the world . . . .'" Ibid, 52.

[111] Herzog 1994, 179-182.

[112] Ibid, 182. Herzog calls this "the parable of two toll collectors."

[113] "The Pharisee in this parable boasts about his fasting and his practice of giving a tenth. Recall that Jesus quotes from Isaiah 58 at the opening of his public ministry in Luke 4. Isaiah 58 is a scathing prophetic critique of hypocritical fasting. Isaiah 58:4 declares, 'You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.' Likewise . . . in the

following verses of Isaiah 58 Yahweh explains what he really wants, 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice. ... Is it not to share your food with the hungry . . . and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?' (Isa 58:6-7)." Hays 2012, 53.

[114] Herzog 1994, 186.

[115] Ibid, 188. It is important to recognize the layers of power among middle agents (active, passive, insider collaborator), as articulated in Chapter 3. There is a difference between the status and wealth of a Pharisee (an active middle agent and insider collaborator) and the desperate participation of a poor toll collector (also an active middle agent and insider collaborator). Jesus acknowledges these distinctions in power in this story – revealing that middle agents, based on our social location, have differing options available to us, and differing responsibilities before God. See Chapter 3 for more on these middle agent distinctions.

[116] Hayes notes the relationship between the cries in these passages: the cry of the widow seeking justice, the cry of the tax collector in his prayer, and the cry of the blind beggar for Jesus. Hays 2012, 59.

[117] "Although the arrogant Pharisee thinks he is righteous [*dikaios*], it is the tax collector who goes home justified [*dikaioo*] before God." Ibid, 53.

[118] Without stating it openly, Jesus gives the listening crowds permission to evade tithes for the sake of their own survival (as he may well have done with taxes) – and at the same time condemns the ones who manage this system of devastation. Regarding Jesus and taxes see endnote 66 in Chapter 3.

[119] Herzog 1994, 189.

[120] "Jesus follows quickly . . . with an assault on the Pharisees' preoccupation with status acquisition and honor maintenance, for they love 'to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces' (11:43). Not only does this prefigure Jesus' teachings against squabbling over the best seats in banquets in Lk. 14, Jesus will also level this precise charge against the scribes in Chapter 20 (w. 46-47), who 'love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets' but 'devour widows' houses.' Instead of 'loving' God, the Pharisees 'love' the best seats in the synagogues; instead of giving alms they brim with plunder. This charge explains why Pharisees, so preoccupied with religious observances like purity and tithes, could neglect the crucial biblical commands of justice and love; their meticulous religious observance arose from a desire to garner honor or prestige in their local social economy. Acquiring wealth and scrambling for good seats at banquets served the same end, and yet inexorably dulled their commitment to justice and love of neighbor." Christopher M. Hays, "Beyond Mint and Rue: The Implications of Luke's Interpretive Controversies for Modern Consumerism" *Political Theology* 11, no. 3 (May 2010), 388.

[121] Luke 20: 45-47. This is another example of the elite devouring the poor. See Biblical references to elite cannibalism in endnote 151 in Chapter 4.

[122] Luke 21: 1-4.

[123] Luke 7: 44.

[124] Luke 10: 23-24.

[125] Luke 10: 25-37.

[126] Jesus responds with the Good Samaritan story, suggesting that his listeners – the crowds that are gathering in this social movement – align with other poor "enemies" and "outsiders" like the Samaritans rather than the religious establishment (symbolized in the priest and Levite) that is selling them out.

[127] See the discussion of "The Shrewd Manager" in Chapter 3.

[128] For more discussion of the law, see "Love Song to the Law" in Chapter 1.

[129] Luke 16: 14-18.

[130] Luke 20: 2.

[131] Luke 20: 1-8.

[132] For more, see "Where is Power Located?" in Chapter 4.

[133] Luke 20: 20-26.

[134] Luke 20: 20-22.

[135] See the "Introduction & Methodology" for more on hidden transcripts.

[136] Luke 20: 27-47.

[137] Luke 20: 28-32.

[138] In the practice of Levarite marriage, if a man dies, his brother is obligated to marry his widow and his widow is obligated to marry the brother. For more see: Dvora E. Weisberg, *The Widow of Our Discontent: Levirate Marriage in the Bible and Ancient Israel* (London, UK: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004).

[139] Luke 19: 28-39.

[140] A typical form of ancient covenant would call upon gods to serve as witnesses. The ancient Hebrews could not do this, but they did call upon parts of creation to stand up for the covenant (Deuteronomy 32: 1; Isaiah 1: 2; Micah 6: 1-2). At times, piles and pillars of stones served this purpose (Genesis 31: 44-52; Josh. 22: 25-26). For more see: George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Biblical Colloquium, 1955); George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 1*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed. (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1962); and George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion "Covenant" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1,* David Noel Freedman, ed. (London, UK: Doubleday, 1992).

[141] See "The Recalcitrant Investor" in Chapter 3.

[142] Luke 19: 40.

[143] See Ezekiel 34.

[144] Luke 19: 41-44.

[145] Luke 19: 45-47.

[146] Luke 20: 9-18.

[147] See "Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification" in Chapter 2.

[148] Luke 22: 64-71.

[149] Pilate is played by the priests and scribes, in a similar way that the shrewd manager's master is played by the manager and the people. See "The Shrewd Manager" in Chapter 3.

[150] Luke 23: 1-5.

[151] Luke 23: 6-16.

[152] Luke 23: 17-25.

[153] "As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'" Luke 9: 57-62.

[154] Luke 14: 25-35.

[155] Luke 17: 11-19.

[156] On the theme of looking backward toward our enclaves on the journey to freedom: "The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.'" Exodus 16: 3. And Paul's

comment on the topic: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5: 1.

[157] Like the recalcitrant investor (from Chapter 3), he rejects the old regime. Though, perhaps as a Samaritan, the regime was not an option anyway. This may be a reason that the outcasts of regimes are more likely to risk the gospel.

[158] Luke 17: 31-33.

[159] Luke 17: 37.

[160] For the purposes of this work we have defined middle agents in broad demographic terms. 2% own over half the world. 80% earn less than 10 dollars a day. From a global societal standpoint, we've called the remaining 18% middle agents. We have said that this social stratum stands between the majority of humanity and the earth and their exploiters. Imperialists have crafted social systems for deploying power to work to their extreme advantage, reducing the majority of humanity and the earth to objects of possession and consumption. Middle agency consists of, actively or passively, supporting the transfer of wealth to imperialists in exchange for privilege and protection. This kind of service to imperial schemes is not limited to the 18%. We have identified "insider collaborators" who are members of 80% who are strategically conscripted to support imperial ambitions. Members of marginalized majorities may find a variety of creative modes of survival that include complex mixtures of accommodation and resistance. In a climate of fear, majorities may buy en masse into scapegoating, as the crowds did when they called for Jesus' crucifixion. While Luke and I are particularly interested in the 18%, because that is where we live, the Biblical theology of power and salvation proposed here can be broadly applied. The path of incarnation (awakening to our power; developing the capacity for survival, resistance and transformation; learning to live in a fruitful and interrelated world; and enduring the struggle toward universal love and liberation) is an invitation to children of God in every part of the social spectrum. Jesus is the quintessential example of the human one who endured the full measure of imperial temptation and imperial violence, never succumbing, relentlessly exposing extractive schemes, and giving his life utterly to universal well-being (the realm of God).

[161] "This short passage [Jesus and the children (Luke 18: 15-17)] connects [with the surrounding stories in Luke] along two lines. First of all, it relates to the theme of 'being far off/being close' to God. The disciples try to keep these young ones at a distance from Jesus, but Jesus orders that they be brought close. The second aspect of this passage is that children illustrate humility quite well. Thus this pericope is linked to the preceding one by the theme of humility. The kingdom of God must be received like a child, in humility. Some have suggested that when the disciples rebuke the children and prohibit them from coming close to Jesus they expose their own exaggerated sense of importance and the fact that they did not quite comprehend what Jesus meant by humility. Others note the contrast between the children and the rich ruler in the next section." Hays 2012, 54-55.

[162] Luke 22: 21-28.

[163] Luke 22: 25-26. This echoes an earlier conversation: They also fail to understand the radical equality of all human life – the very heart of Jesus' teaching all along and the essence of Luke's focus on social leveling. As they wonder who will be the greatest, Jesus provides the object lesson – whoever welcomes this child, welcomes me. Haven't we been paying attention? The least will be the greatest. Luke 9: 46-48.

[164] Luke 22: 39-46.

[165] Luke 22: 47-53.

[166] Luke 22: 62.

[167] Luke 23: 26-34.

[168] Luke 23: 26-37.

[169] Luke 23: 55 - 24: 7.

[170] Luke 14: 15-24. Luke prefaces the stories of being lost and found with stories about banquets. "Three parables are then given in rapid succession, each focusing on the theme of a banquet or a meal—well-known images for the messianic banquet. In the first parable the narrator informs us why Jesus told the parable. 'Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he marked how they chose the places of honor.' This may be an oblique reference to the Pharisees, who have a well-known reputation (in the context of this gospel) for choosing the best seats (cf. 11:39). In the

parable those who choose the places of honor run the risk of being displaced by someone more eminent who comes to the marriage feast. Therefore they are to select the lowest seats. Verse 11, however, gives the real reason why the selection of the places of honor is especially blameworthy. It represents an exaltation-oriented point of view that is diametrically opposed to the humiliation-oriented viewpoint that Jesus commends. Not only are two conflicting points of view juxtaposed in the parable, but an abrupt and unexpected reversal of positions occurs to those who hold these points of view. 'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted' (14:11)." Resseguie, 1982, 44. "Not only is a humiliation-oriented point of view commendable but also a view that seeks no repayment from others for acts performed." Ibid, 45.

[171] "The contrast of the parable is between those who are initially invited and those who are later invited, between those who are possession-oriented and those who are possessionless-oriented, between those who hesitate when an invitation is offered and those who decisively respond to an invitation. The unexpected reversal of positions is complete in this parable. Unlike the first parable in which those in the lowest seats merely displaced but did not exclude from the banquet those in the highest seats, in this parable the reversal results in total exclusion of those initially invited." Ibid, 45. The banquet passages are followed with a discussion of the cost of discipleship. "The call to discipleship is framed in terms of renunciation: 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple' (14:26). The renunciation imagery continues to dominate the call to discipleship with the concept of the cross: 'Whoever does not bear his own cross . . . cannot be my disciple' (14:27). Finally, the concluding statement of the narrative punctuates in the boldest terms the renunciation-oriented way of thinking: 'So, therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple'" (14:33). Ibid, 46-7.

[172] "And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'" Luke 15: 2.

[173] Luke 15: 3-7.

[174] Luke 15: 8-10.

[175] Luke 15: 11-32.

[176] "The connotations of [*archon*/ruler] echoing from the OT Prophets are significant. Throughout the prophetic literature, the LXX regularly uses this term for the leaders who do not practice justice and who oppose the Prophets, thus falling under God's judgment (Isa 1:10, 23; 3:14; 22:3; 28:14; 29:10; 40:23; 41:25; Jer 1:18; 2:26; 4:9; 8:1; 22:1-5; 33:10-16 [26:10-16 English]; 39:32 [32:32 English]; 44:14-15 [37:14-15 English]; Ezek 7:27; 12:10, 12; 17:12; 19:1; 22:27 [22:20 English]; Hos 5:10; 7:3, 5, 16; 9:15; 13:10). Isaiah 1:23, for example, reads: 'Your rulers are rebellious, companions of thieves, loving bribes, seeking after rewards; not pleading for orphans, and not heeding the cause of widows.' Likewise, Isa 3:14-15 declares: 'The LORD takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people. The LORD enters into judgment against the elders and rulers of his people: It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses.' In the OT Prophets, it is also precisely these rulers who are the arrogant and self-exalted ones who will be brought down (LXX *tapeinoo*) in judgment by God because of their unjust actions (especially against orphans, widows, and the poor)." Hays 2012, 56.

[177] Luke 18: 18-23.

[178] "[W]hether this man relates to the Sanhedrin, the synagogue, or the courts, he would be one of the people responsible for bringing about justice in the community, suggesting a connection back to the widow and judge parable. The connection back to 'everyone who exalts himself will be humbled' (18:14) is likely as well." Hays 2012, 55.

[179] "[K]eep in mind that the large introductory theme back in 18:1 was persistent prayer, and the driving question in 18:7 is, 'Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night?' Against this setting, the ruler's request (or prayer) is ironic and in contrast: 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' It is not directed to God, but to the 'good teacher,' and it is not a cry for justice but a request for information that would lead to eternal life." Ibid, 56.

[180] The story of the rich young ruler is dense with economic language: to possess the eternal life, inherit, come into possession of, (*kleronomeo*); these I have guarded from my youth (*phulasso*); one thing you lack, destitute, wanting (*leipo*); give up your possessions, holdings (*echo*); sell, barter (*poleo*); distribute (*diadidomai*); poor, reduced to beggary (*ptochos*); treasure in heaven (*thesaurus*); he was very rich (*plousios*); how hard it is for those with possessions, riches, a thing (*chrema*); harder for 'rich man' to get in (*plousios*); and saved, guard, keep safe, deliver (*sozo*). Francis Brown, R. Driver, and Charles

Briggs, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Christian Copyrights, 1983). The term *eisporeuomai* (to go in, enter) used in "enter the kingdom of God" can also mean "to be put into" as in put food in the mouth or put affections into the heart. Ibid.

[181] Luke 18: 22. "The prophetic context of justice, as elucidated by the widow and unjust judge parable, provides a strong background for understanding Jesus' words to the ruler. Recall Jesus' concluding statement in the Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge. As the Kingdom breaks in, God will see that his chosen ones (those with faith, humility, and prayer) get justice quickly. When this ruler in Luke 18:21 piously claims to have kept the law, Jesus sounds very much like Isaiah and cuts through the hypocrisy of cultic ritual and asks about justice, specifically in regard to the poor. As the Kingdom breaks in, Jesus, the Davidic King who will bring about justice, confronts one of Israel's rulers and tells him that if he wants to be part of the Kingdom then he must also be part of the inauguration of justice . . . starting with restitution to the poor. Furthermore, keep in mind that the entire audience for this exchange (i.e. the rest of the community) was probably part of the 'poor' section of the society. That is, when Jesus says that the ruler should sell all he has and give it to the poor, it is 'the poor' that are standing around them and listening. Jesus' demands on the ruler are far-reaching, with implications for his entire audience. But notice that this demand addresses the system of inequality where a few wealthy rulers/religious leaders are at the top while the entire rest of the community suffers and struggles in poverty at the bottom. The inauguration of justice, Jesus is announcing, involves changing the system in this community, alleviating the poverty that is all around the wealthy ruler." Hays 2012, 56-57.

[182] Luke 18: 24-27.

[183] They stop to assess their own journeys and how much they gave up to follow Jesus. Jesus affirms that their sacrificial surrender will result in great abundance. Luke 18: 18-30.

[184] Yamasaki undertakes a "point of view" study of the story of Zacchaeus which bears much exegetical fruit. Using a careful study of location of view of the storyteller (vantage point) and various participants/elements in the story, changes in the story's pacing, and shifting in verb tense, Yamasaki is able to identify swaths of background material, focus on messages of importance, and isolate intended audiences for those messages. Gary Yamasaki, "Point of View in a Gospel Story: What Difference Does it Make? Luke 19:1-10 as a Test Case" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 89-105. Yamasaki draws on the methodological work of Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973). Yamasaki discovers the narrative shifting from the more common Jesus-centric view, to a Zacchaeus-centric view, indicating that Zacchaeus is what he calls a "point of view" character (i.e. someone, we the readers, should be identifying with). The pacing slows, inviting us to get involved in this situation. And the verb tenses switch to present bringing us up close to the action. All the literary devices are saying, *pay attention, this is important!* It is fascinating to me that Yamasaki, using a technical and linear method (in comparison to my multi-contextual and intuitive method), comes to a similar conclusion about the centrality of the Zacchaeus story in conveying Luke's purpose and intention to have readers – (I'd say middle agent readers) – to identify with Zacchaeus.

[185] Tax collection "was a system largely detested by Roman subjects and viewed with suspicion, as were the agents, or tax farmers and collectors, who perpetuated the taxation system and 'were despised for their collusion with Rome.' It was particularly the practice of collecting the customs tax from economically vulnerable and traveling persons seeking to sell or acquire basic goods that was reviled. In this practice, the collecting of taxes was farmed out to the highest bidder, creating 'tax farmers' whereby 'Rome received its money in advance, and the tax collector made his living from commissions on tolls and customs.' Not only were goods excised by Rome but additional amounts, often in large sums, were added to pay the commissions of tax collectors which created a form of 'institutionalized robbery.' Tax collectors collected more for themselves than what was required by Rome. This system thrived on dishonesty, exploitation, overcharging, and abuse of those being taxed which lined the pockets of these tax collectors. It is no wonder that tax collectors were universally reviled, were viewed as the worst of all sinners, and were often characterized as unclean by religious leaders as well as were those who associated with them, such as Jesus." Wyndy Corbin-Reuschling, "Zacchaeus's Conversion: To Be or Not To Be a Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10)" *Ex Auditu* 25 (2009): 72. Citing Thomas E. Schmidt, "Taxes," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels,* Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 804-7.

[186] Luke 19: 1-10.

[187] From a literary perspective, the story of Zacchaeus ties up a number of thematic threads in the gospel of Luke (including who can be saved?; who is a child of Abraham?; being lost and found; being first and last; hardheartedness

and blindness to the suffering of humanity; choosing allegiance to God or money; socially-leveled community; and the banquet of God). There is also an ongoing theme of the predicament of tax collectors and rich/comfortable people in the imperial system and what it means for them to follow Torah and Jesus. "The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in 18:9-14 was about a hypothetical tax collector, but in the Zacchaeus story the reader encounters a real, live tax collector. Not only is Zacchaeus a tax collector, connecting him to the second of the opening parables, but he is a chief (or ruling) tax collector . . . and a wealthy man. Thus he is also in parallel with the rich ruler of 18:18-30. In that episode, Jesus had said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom. The puzzled disciples asked, 'Who then can be saved?' Zacchaeus answers that question, demonstrating that the rich can indeed be saved with dramatic results ('what is impossible with men is possible with God'; 18:27)." Hays 2012, 53. "Like the blind beggar, Zacchaeus is unable to see Jesus. Yet he shows great persistence and humility as he runs ahead and climbs a tree, something quite unusual and humiliating for a grown adult to do (keep in mind that Zacchaeus is wearing a robe, not blue jeans). Once again, the restoration of this man to Jesus (and into the Kingdom) is immediate, and part of the justice that the King brings. Jesus says, 'Come down immediately' . . . and he comes down 'immediately[.]' . . . Zacchaeus's reaction to Jesus (the invitation to dinner) is one of gladness, in contrast to the ruler of 18:18-30, who reacts to the Lord's call with sadness (18:23)." Ibid, 60-61. Hays also notes how the threads of the story of the Pharisee and Tax Collector get addressed. Unlike the Pharisee who proudly prayed about his tithing 1/10th of his income. Zacchaeus announces that he will give away half of his possessions and pay back anyone he defrauded. "In the context of the OT Prophets, this is not an act of self-piety, but an act of justice. Zacchaeus is concerned with helping the poor (an aspect of justice) and also with making restitution to those he has cheated (correcting the injustice of the past). He 'sees' the reality of Jesus' call into the Kingdom, and he recognizes that joining into the Kingdom means establishing justice, especially toward the poor." Hays points out that this kind of justice is "true fasting, according to Isaiah 58." For this, "Jesus declares him a true son of Abraham (i.e. included and brought into the family, rather than rejected)." Ibid, 61. "Finally, the concluding words of Jesus, 'For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost,' connects back to the opening Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge, where Jesus stated 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?', thus forming a strong inclusio around this unit." Ibid, 61.

[188] See Chapter 4 for a full discussion of the rich man and Lazarus.

[189] Parsons exegetically addresses the particular detail that Zacchaeus is short. Mikeal C. Parsons, "'Short in Stature': Luke's Physical Description of Zacchaeus" *New Testament Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 2001): 50-57. The author describes a "developed a widespread 'physiognomic consciousness' that permeated the Greco-Roman thought world. This 'physiognomic consciousness' is clearly inscribed in Jewish, Christian, and 'pagan' sources." "So given the pervasiveness of the physiognomic consciousness in late antiquity, Luke's audience, upon hearing that Zacchaeus was 'small in stature', would naturally infer that he was a 'small-minded' person." Ibid, 53. "Zacchaeus, the short man, 'sells himself short' in terms of living up to his name. He engages in an occupation that is anything but 'pure' or 'innocent', reduced to playing the puppet for the Romans." Ibid, 54. "Luke has spared no insulting image to paint Zacchaeus as a pathetic, even despicable, character. The image of a traitorous, small-minded, greedy, physically diminutive tax collector is derisive and mocking. But as much as Luke exploits these conventional tropes, his intention is to reverse it in the conclusion to his story. When Jesus announces that 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he is also a son of Abraham', the stranglehold of physiognomic determinacy is broken, and the ridicule is turned against itself. Just because Zacchaeus is small in stature does not mean he must be small in spirit. Just because he is pathologically short does not mean he is to be excluded from the family of God. He is, after all, a 'son of Abraham'." Ibid, 56. For social context, Parsons draws on: Elizabeth C. Evans, "Physiognomics in the Ancient World" *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 59 (1969) 5-103 and Tamsyn Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics and Medicine under the Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan,1994). A seemingly contrasting interpretation comes from Byamungu who sees the "shortness" of Zacchaeus evoking Jesus and the children, and the childlikeness of Zacchaeus opening entry into the kingdom as Jesus promised. Gosbert Byamungu,"Grace as Subversive Surprise: A Reading of Psalm 130 and Luke 19:1-10" *Ecumenical Review* 56, no. 3 (July 2004): 334-341. (I don't see these two interpretations as mutually exclusive. Given the layered way Jesus and Luke communicate, they may be simultaneously evoking cruel physiognomic assumptions and promoting childlikeness.) "It is unusual for the town dignitary (chief tax-collector) to climb trees like little children in the city where he exercises his public functions. For the sake of a 'vision of Jesus', Zacchaeus breaks the protocols. That is why he is described as being 'small in stature' - a discourse about humility and spirituality. He is the typical child of Jesus' teaching in 18:17. Jesus wants to 'stay' with little children, so he will opt to 'stay' at the 'house' of Zacchaeus." Ibid, 337. also notes the theme of crowds blocking Zacchaeus and the children from connecting with Jesus.

[190] "By putting up at Zacchaeus's place, Jesus was bridging the gap of segregation that was keeping him socially marginalized. The point is that Jesus, in this way, puts an end to the ideological marginalization of Zacchaeus. As God's

supreme agent of salvation, Jesus' presence at Zacchaeus's home 'unties' him from his bonds of imprisonment and isolation. In fact, *kataludai* has also the nuance of 'subversion of institutions and forms of government, laws, etc.' Jesus shatters the laws that imprison Zacchaeus, and annuls the stigma of social marginalization. He slept at Zacchaeus's house to reconcile him with the community that casts him out. That transforms both." Ibid, 338. Jesus' command in 19:7 that Zacchaeus should come down, because 'today, I must stay at your house' leads to crucial observations. The word 'house', *oikos,* is highly symbolic. In the first place, it may refer to the 'house' as the home and the family, the church and the cosmos, inclusive of all its belongings, its rights and duties, its 'well-being'. Protected and sustained by the household, the members assume the responsibility to take care of the household for the good of all. Ibid, 339 citing Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler, *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 66.

[191] "There is a possible word play between *makrothen* (far) in 18:13 and *makrothumei* (having patience?) in 18:7 . . . If a word play exists then the first instance . . . might carry a figurative nuance of 'put off, keep at a distance.' Several translations (NIV, NLT) reflect something similar to 'Will he keep putting them off?' This theme will echo across this unit: the tax collector stands far off (but is then justified); the little children are brought near; the rich ruler comes to Jesus but will not commit to following him; Jesus orders that the blind beggar be brought to him; and Jesus goes right into the house of Zacchaeus." Hays 2012, 53, footnote 33.

[192] Following Luke's narrative, we notice that his story of middle agents unfolds through many nuanced failures and then comes to fruition in Zacchaeus.

[193] As the story shifts from Zacchaeus to the grumbling crowds, the reader's identification with Zacchaeus remains in the forefront. "[T]he audience [i.e. reader/listener of this story] experiences a considerable amount of consternation as the crowd of which the audience is now a part immediately begins to grumble and to express disdain for Zacchaeus. After all, the audience has been led to identify with Zacchaeus, and so would take the disdain directed toward him as disdain directed toward themselves. Further, the audience is led to experience this disdain from a position in the middle of this hostile crowd. It appears that the narrator has manipulated point of view in v. 7 in order to create in the audience a sense of vulnerability, an apt state of mind for truly appreciating what follows: the vulnerability of Zacchaeus as he faces up to the misdeeds of his life." Yamasaki 2006, 103.

[194] "In fact, it is as if Zacchaeus is fulfilling the prophetic hope, realizing the jubilee hope that Jesus promised in Luke 4: 18!" Sylvia C. Keesmaat and Brian J. Walsh, "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends: Jesus and the Justice of God" in *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright*, Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), Kindle Locations 1193-1194.

[195] The Zacchaeus text directly echoes the frustrating and unbridgeable situation with Lazarus and the rich man. The hopelessness that the rich man cannot reach salvation (depicted as resting in the arms of Abraham) is qualified with the hope offered in Zacchaeus. When the people grumble about this rich exploiter repenting, Jesus says: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham." Luke 19: 9. "Supporting the declaration of salvation by the rationale 'for he also is a son of Abraham' presupposes a first premise that connects salvation with the children of Abraham. The narrator's acceptance of such a premise can be supported from parts of Luke-Acts in which authoritative interpreters emphasize God's saving purpose for Israel (see Luke 1:54-55, 68-79; Acts 2:39; 3:25-26; 13:23, 26, 32-33). These passages show how seriously Luke-Acts takes the promise to the Jewish people. This promise is not weakened by the invitation to Gentiles to share in God's salvation. Even awareness that the fulfillment of this promise will encounter rejection does not weaken the narrator's conviction that the promise rightly belongs to those who are 'sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God covenanted with our fathers' (Acts 3:25), the 'sons of the family of Abraham' (Acts 13:26; cf. 13:32-33). Robert C. Tannehill, "The Story of Zacchaeus as Rhetoric: Luke 19:1-10" *Semeia* 64 (1993): 209.

[196] Apart from the Lukan context, it could appear the Zacchaeus is saved by works – that is, that he is saved by the simple act of giving away his possessions. In context we get more information. We see Zacchaeus as Luke's pinnacle example of middle agent success, after a long string of middle agent failures. We see Zacchaeus as one who comes out of the bubble and returns to the human family (unlike the unjust judge, the neighbor at night, the un/comfortable man, the praying Pharisee, the rich young ruler, and others). Luke has been showing us how hard it is for lost middle agents to come out of their blindness and hard-heartedness and choose God over mammon. Finally, one middle agent does it. I would suggest that Zacchaeus experiences a complete inner conversion, changing his life allegiance from money to God/humanity/creation – and that this inner change comes from the joy of encountering Jesus. This inner surrender leads naturally to the outer change in his behavior. The positive behavior is the fruit of his new heart and his new sight. Corbin-Reuschling discusses the way that conversion is not a one-time event that is confined to the personal realm. It is

ongoing and social. This is a significant concern of Luke's as well, as evidenced in his working out of the gospel path in small communities in the Book of Acts. "It is the Christian community that mediates and communicates through the language of faith this new interpretive framework that reinterprets and reorients our lives. It is the community of faith which socializes us and helps us to learn the 'rules' of Christian faith through its liturgy, worship, teaching, mission, and ministries of service. It is the Christian community where we learn to live out our salvation (Phil 2:12-18), and which provides the environment and means for continual conversion to the purposes of God through its preaching and embodiment of the story of God." Corbin-Reuschling, 81. See also: Nicholas H. Taylor, "The Social Nature of Conversion in the Early Christian World" in *Modeling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, Philip F. Esler, ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 1995), 128ff and Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

[197] Even as we attempt to interpret this story, middle agents get caught up in the wrong questions (e.g. how can I inherit eternal life? Who is my neighbor? Exactly how much do I have to give away?). The questions Luke wants us to consider are: Are we ready to let go of possessing as our main occupation? Are we ready to dedicate our lives to the well-being of humanity and creation? Are we ready to give up serving mammon and start serving God as our central impetus in life?

[198] In Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to forgive our sins (amartia). This forgiveness is predicated on releasing all debts (ofeilo) owed to us. (Forgive us our sins, as we release all debts owed to us.) Luke gracefully slips this radical economic expectation of the gospel into our colonized consciousness. Debt is a way that many first century (and many 21st century) middle agents make our living. Through a simple prayer formula, we remind ourselves everyday of the cost of following Jesus. This phrase effectively says, forgive us our sins, on the basis that we have given up extracting money from the majority on behalf of an elite minority. We have stopped managing the regime for our patrons and returned everything to the people. Our discipleship is predicated on economic solidarity with the most vulnerable – a life-altering gospel requirement that can be elusive to our middle agent minds. Luke 11: 1-4.

[199] "Having Zacchaeus as the carrier of point of view here means that the audience sees the events of this passage unfold as through his eyes. This is important because this experience leads the audience into identifying with Zacchaeus and, further, empathizing with him. And because Jesus' concluding words—with their promise of salvation—are directed to Zacchaeus, the audience will experience them as if addressed directly to them . . . This being the case, the focal point of this episode—the following rebuke by Jesus against the scribes and Pharisees (w. 22b-23)—is experienced by the audience as through the eyes of Jesus. In other words, the audience experiences Jesus' words of rebuke directed away from them as they look out at the scribes and Pharisees as through the eyes of Jesus. In contrast, in the passage in ch. 19, the audience experiences Jesus' words of salvation directed toward them as they look out at Jesus as through the eyes of Zacchaeus. A difference in point of view between these two episodes yields totally different experiences for the audience." Yamasaki 2006, 105.

[200] Luke 19: 10. The Zacchaeus story is pivotal in the gospel of Luke in that it addresses (and resolves) several key Lukan themes. Zacchaeus is a middle agent who was lost and is now found. He is the one who makes it across the chasm and into the arms of Abraham. He is moved by the crowds and the masses and follows them into the banquet with Jesus. He achieves all this through sincere humble surrender of his security in the regime, releasing his accumulated possessions, and forgiving debts.

[201] Luke 7: 1-10. "I would argue, the narrator of Luke uses characters like the Roman centurion in 7:1-10 as a moral example to emulate. In contrast, characters such as the rich man in 16:19-31 serve as warnings to persuade readers that they should—if they have the economic means—behave in a fashion similar to the centurion, not the rich man. Thus the centurion is one of many models in Luke-Acts of the proper attitude and behavior that socially advantaged patrons should have—both to Jesus and to members of their local community. The rich man, in contrast, is an example of what will happen if they do not follow this exhortation." Gowler 2005, 261.

[202] There are many models for negotiating the middle agent social location. One possibility is to know in our souls that power is among the people and not in the regime that employs us, and to use our position to protect and liberate the people. Surviving a life lived between the Domination System and the realm of God requires artistry and sophistication, since the Domination System actively sniffs out and removes disloyal elements. At the end of the gospel we find the Centurion still there observing all that has transpired. I suspect that Luke falls into this paradigm – as a well-connected, well-educated Roman, who has become a new creation in the gospel, and dedicates the advantages of his position to protecting and supporting the Jesus movement. I can't help wondering if Luke places the centurion here, the middle agent exemplar of the Sermon on the Plain, as a model of himself.

[203] There is interesting reversal here. In the imperial regime, the people seek out intermediaries (patrons) to advocate for them with their overlords. Here a Roman overlord seeks out advocates among the people to speak to Jesus for him. He makes the required reversal when he understands that true power lies with the people and asks them to use their power to help him help a person in need.

[204] Note that at the end of the Book of Acts, a centurion uses his power to save Paul. "The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land." Acts 27: 42- 43.

[205] Luke 23: 43-49.

[206] Jeremiah 7: 5-6.

[207] Jeremiah 7: 7-8, echoing Psalm 1.

Notes – Chapter 6: From Hegemony to Hospitality

[1] Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?: Essays* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1990), 10.

[2] So too, the ethical shape of our personal lives and our society is deeply rooted in larger, often unexamined, stories about the nature of life. In this project, I am trying to link these scales of concern, showing that our daily ethical choices about power flow from the larger narrative that we carry around, consciously or unconsciously. Regardless of whether one accepts the broad story of power that I am proposing, I hope the reader will walk away with greater consciousness about their own metanarrative(s) of power and its/their relation to the ethical shape life has taken.

[3] Matthew 16: 19. See also: "Introduction & Methodology," endnote 14 and Chapter 4, endnote 2.

[4] For a definition of hospitality in this work, see "Middle Agents, Power, and Hospitality: Defining Key Terms" in the Introduction & Methodology.

[5] See the opening of Chapter 2.

[6] See: Robert Sweetman,"Thomas of Cantimpré and the Performative Reading of Scripture." *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. Jane MacAuliffe, Barry Walfish and Joseph Goering. eds. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 256-275; Robert Sweetman, "Thomas of Cantimpré, Performative Reading and Pastoral Care" *Performance and Transformation: New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, Mary Suydam and Joanna Ziegler, eds. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 134-163; and Patricia Dailey, *Promised Bodies: Time, Language, and Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[7] For more, see "Learning to Live in a Fruitful World" in Chapter 2.

[8] See "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.

[9] Luke 2: 40-50.

[10] Mark 5: 21-43.

[11] "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live[.]" Deuteronomy 30: 19.

[12] Mark 7: 24-30.

[13] Sharon Welch, "The Beloved Community" *Spirituality Today Supplement* 40 (Winter 1988), 10-29 citing Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952).

[14] Ibid. We have the urges to want creation to be fixed and Jesus to be all-knowing about it, but Jesus above all consistently expresses curiosity. New things keep coming into view for him. He keeps integrating new awareness from his encounters. He responds, integrates and expands. So too, for the curious, our worldview keeps getting disrupted and revised.

[15] I've experienced cases where, out of fear and a desire for certainty, later in life a person has decreased their knowing by surrendering it to some comfortable and concrete ideology. I've had to reluctantly admit that becoming more open is not inevitable.

[16] See "Pausing to Contemplate Essential Innocence" in Chapter 2.

[17] Arendt talks about the way feeling precedes thinking: "In order to respond reasonably, one first of all must be 'moved.'" She goes on to criticize a pseudo-rationality that pretends that good decisions are made when the emotions are taken out the equation. She firmly rejects this. Being moved – emotional engagement – is the beginning of thinking. "[T]he opposite of emotional is not 'rational,' whatever that may mean, but either the inability to be moved, usually a pathological phenomenon, or sentimentality, which is a perversion of feeling." Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1970), 64.

[18] He adds: "There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun." Merton first wrote of this experience in his journal on March 19, 1958. This account comes from Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 153-155.

[19] *Splagchnizomai* means the turning over of one's bowels, which were considered to be the center of one's love and pity.

[20] In three cases in the gospel of Mark, Jesus has compassion before acting: 1:41, 6:34, and 8:2. In the fourth case, the crowd asks Jesus to have compassion and expel the demon from the boy with the unclean spirit (9:22). In each case compassion is the pre-condition of and impetus for Jesus taking action.

[21] Saint Isaac the Syrian, *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, Dana Miller, trans. (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984), 344-345. Thanks to my friend Father Dr. Stelyio Mussuris for pointing this quote out to me and helping me track the citation.

[22] See "On the Pain of Knowing" in Chapter 3.

[23] The Dalai Lama gives us a practical method to grow the capacity of our hearts to love. "The goal is to cultivate in our hearts the concern a dedicated mother feels for her child, and then focus it on more and more people and living beings. This is a heartfelt, powerful love. Such feelings give us a true understanding of human rights that is not grounded just in legal terms, but rooted deeply in the heart." His Holiness the Dalai Lama's facebook status, August 22, 2011.

[24] See "Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification" in Chapter 2.

[25] "No matter how much we love the world as a whole, one can live fully in it only by living responsibly in some part of it." Wendell Berry, "The Body and the Earth" *The Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*. (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), 118.

[26] In a Marcan example, Jesus comes down from the transfiguration and finds his disciples and scribes arguing with the crowds. They are evidently debating the correct way to help a suffering epileptic boy. Jesus, indicating his frustration with their lack of comprehension, brushes aside the debate and moves directly toward contact with the young boy and his pain. Mark 9: 14-19.

[27] For more on "seeing and taking" in the scriptures, see "Wisdom Offers Up a Challenge" in Chapter 2.

[28] For more on the relationship between idolatry and violence, see "The Accumulating Effects of Pain and Separation" in Chapter 2.

[29] Mark 7: 24-30.

[30] For more on the negotiation of boundaries in this passage see: William Loader. "Challenged at the Boundaries: A Conservative Jesus in Mark's Tradition" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996): 45-61.

[31] There is conflict in the literature about whether the woman is marginalized or privileged. For the case that she is marginalized see: Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 213-15; and Daniel S. Schipani, "Transformation in the Borderlands: A Study of Matthew 15:21-28" *Vision* 2, no 2 (Winnipeg, Man: Fall 2001): 13-24. In contrast, Theissen says she is a member of the urban elite. A small bit of textual evidence is that the daughter's bed is referred to as a *klinê* rather than a peasant's *krabbatos*. Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 68. Glancy finds Theissen's argument persuasive. "To single out an individual as 'Greek' suggests the location of that person in a thoroughly

Hellenized and therefore privileged household. 'Greek' functions as a marker of cultivated and privileged ethnicity that is consistent with an identity as Syrophoenician by descent." Jennifer A. Glancy, "Jesus, The Syrophoenician Woman, and Other First Century Bodies" *Biblical Interpretation* 18, no. 4-5 (2010): 352. Hicks asks, "Was the Syrophoenician woman a person of low position seeking sustenance or an urban member of the ruling class seeking advantage?" Jane E. Hicks, "Moral Agency at the Borders: Rereading the Story of the Syrophoenecian Woman" *Word & World* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 76. She concludes, a "Syrophoenician woman from the region of Tyre, from a first-century rural-Jewish perspective, might well represent an urban member of the ruling class whose interests were in opposition to the interests of rural Jews." Ibid, 82.

[32] Many scholars view the use of Tyre in this passage as a shorthand reference for the pagan world. Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 203; Richard Horsley 2001, 212. "[The] significance of the setting in this passage lies in the mythic opposition between the Jewish homeland and foreign lands in Mark. The opposition of these two narrative spaces contrasts the familiarity of the former with the strangeness of the latter. The Sea of Galilee, which forms a natural geographical boundary between the two poles, also functions as a bridge between them. The Sea is also the location in which Jesus 'reminds his disciples that there was plenty of 'bread' for those on the eastern, Gentile side of the sea as well as for those on the western, Jewish side (8.14-21).' The crossing from the region of Galilee into the region of Tyre thus represents a crossing of the boundary between the familiar and the strange." Julien C. H. Smith, "The Construction of Identity in Mark 7:24-30: The Syrophoenician Woman and the Problem of Ethnicity" *Biblical Interpretation* 20, no. 4-5 (2012): 467.

[33] See also Ezekiel Chapters 26 and 27. Ezekiel dedicates 47 verses to an oracle about the utter judgment and removal of Tyre for its consolidation of the wealth of people of the region into the hands of the kings and princes. "I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more; though sought for, you will never be found again, says the Lord God." (Ezekiel 26: 21). We find a connection here with Matthew's version of the story where the woman is referred to as a Canaanite rather than a Syro-Phoenician (Matthew 15: 21-18). Keesmaat and LeMarquand say this is like referring to a modern-day Swede as a Viking. From this anachronistic attribution, they conclude that the encounter between Jesus and the woman offers a revision of the genocidal story about Canaanites in the Hebrew scripture. Sylvia C. Keesmaat and Rev. Grant LeMarquand, "Genocide or Healing? Reading one of the Bible's most disturbing passages" *Banner* (March 1, 2007). The sense of Jesus overcoming the violence of the past is present for Dube in her reader response work: Speaking of her African readers, she says: "There was a stern refusal to give in to racial discrimination between Israel and Canaan. Such a standpoint was even underlined by the group which acknowledged racial discrimination, but pointed out how Jesus overcame it; hence, emphasizing that we are also challenged to overcome it." Musa W. Dube, "Readings of Semoyai: Batswana Women's Interpretations of Matt 15:21-28" *Semeia* 73 (1996): 124. (Perhaps Mark's audience as poor peasants held more hatred toward the merchants of Tyre, while Matthew's more cultic audience held more hatred toward "the false Gods of Canaan," and each chose an attribution that would most effectively make the point.) Given the Ezekiel oracle prophesying the eradication of Tyre, we may see Mark heading in a similar revisionist direction. Here, Jesus is replacing the historical genocidal prophetic stance against Tyre with a "rough and tumble" interchange of hospitality that reveals the damaging social inequity (and its consequent devastation) actively (aggressively even) but non-violently. The disruption remains, but now it leads to healing instead of violence.

[34] Psalm 45: 11-12.

[35] Isaiah 23: 17-18.

[36] Mark's positioning of the woman as a Greek who is a Syrophoenician by genos/race thus offers a pithy thumbnail sketch of an intersectional ethnocultural identity. Jennifer A. Glancy 2010, 351.

[37] For character development within the Marcan narrative see: Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000). For more on questions of identity in the first century: Judith Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco- Roman World* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11-17.

[38] "Matthew's account includes not just Tyre but Sidon. 'Tyre and Sidon,' cities located on the Mediterranean coast, traditionally designated the Gentile/pagan region northwest of Jewish territory. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus characterized Tyre and Sidon as more open to the gospel than the Galilean cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida: 'If the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago' (11:20-21)." Daniel S. Schipani 2001, 15. Shipani fails to note Jesus' and Matthew's penchant for sarcasm. The statement that Galileans are worse than the people of Tyre is a hyperbolic condemnation. That Tyre is used to create the shock effect reinforces that Tyre is the

poster child for the pagan world, with their greed and exploitation, and their complete ignorance of the life-giving community economics of Torah.

[39] Smith notes the theme of broader theme of bread in the surrounding stories and how that may relate to the way bread is figured in this passage. Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 478-479.

[40] "Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minnith, millet, honey, oil, and balm." Ezekiel 27: 17. "Tyre is mentioned several other times in the New Testament. In Acts, Paul visited a Christian community in the immediate vicinity of Tyre (Acts 21:3-7); Herod supplied food to Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:20); and Paul visited by ship from the west (Acts 21:3). These references suggest that Tyre was a well-known commercial center with significant trade relations along the Mediterranean." Jane E. Hicks 2003, 82. "Tyre would have owned surrounding territories and could have claimed agricultural proceeds from these, but it would also have used its considerable clout and wealth to acquire surplus from Jewish villages, sometimes leaving less than enough for those who actually worked the land." Ibid.

[41] Gerd Theissen 1991, 74. Theissen and Ringe, among others, have shifted the discussion to the socio-economic tension between the people of Tyre and the people of Galilee and how this shapes the tension between the woman and Jesus. Gerd Theissen 1991, 68-80; Sharon H. Ringe, "A Gentile Woman's Story" in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Letty Russell, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1985), 65-72; Sharon H. Ringe, A Gentile Woman's Story, Revisited: Rereading Mark 7.24-3la," in *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff, eds. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 79-100.

[42] See Gerd Theissen 1991, 73ff; Sharon H. Ringe 2001, 79ff; and Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Reading the Bible from the Edges: The Bible and People on the Move* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 44ff. For people who grow food for others to be starving themselves is an enduring phenomenon that can be seen around the world today. One example is Kenya, where the farmable land is dedicated to exported luxury items, like coffee and chocolate, some of it under the dubious label of fair trade, while Kenyans starve. For more see: www.jitokeze.org

[43] "Syrophoenicians, at the time Mark was written, were Phoenicians residing in the Roman province of Syria, as distinct from those in Libya." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 470. Theissen says she is a Greek speaker and a Gentile. Gerd Theissen 1991, 245-47.

[44] "In the beginning of Mark, the house and the synagogue are both the locale for healing, teaching and controversy. Yet, after Jesus sends out the disciples (6:7), the house eclipses the synagogue: 'the sacred realm is inadequate to contain Jesus' 'new teaching' (1:27), and it overflows into the profane realm. . . . The setting of this pericope within a house in the region of Tyre thus represents the crossing from what is sacred and familiar into that which is profane and strange." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 468 citing Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986), 133.

[45] For biblical and theological reflection on the subject of immigration and being a stranger, see: Miguel A. De La Torre, *Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009); Mary Jo Leddy, *The Other Face of God: When the Stranger Calls Us Home* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011); Mary Jo Leddy, *At a Border called Hope: Where Refugees are Neighbours* (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997); Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell, *Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigration Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012).

[46] "One of the key Greek words for hospitality, *philoxenia*, combines the general word for love or affection for people who are connected by kinship or faith (*phileo*), and the word for stranger (*xenos*). Thus, etymologically and practically, in the New Testament, hospitality is closely connected to love. Because *philoxenia* includes the word for stranger, hospitality's orientation toward strangers is also more apparent in Greek than in English." Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), Kindle Locations 394-396.

[47] Many scholars attempt to interpret the passage within the larger narrative structure and themes of Mark. For instance Smith notes how the story is surrounded by healings in Gentile areas, and interspersed debates over purity codes with Jesus stepping regularly outside the boundaries. He sees the narrator setting the reader up with the expectation that Jesus will heal the daughter. Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 465. "The healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter is an example of a type-scene, an episode which is repeated through the narrative with variation. This type-scene . . . consists of the following elements: the suppliant comes to Jesus; a request is made; an obstacle is overcome to demonstrate faith; Jesus speaks or is touched; healing occurs; there is a reaction. The repetition of these scenes creates a sense of

expectation in the reader, and the variations within them cause the reader to re-evaluate such expectations . . . Although in each of these Marcan type-scenes the suppliant must overcome an obstacle, in no other instance is the obstacle Jesus' intransigence." Ibid, 469-470.

[48] "The combination of the proximity to Tyre and the woman's Syrophoenician ancestry recalls the story of Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah in 1 Kgs 21, where Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, was condemned to be eaten by dogs." Jane E. Hicks 2003, 82.

[49] Smith takes the view that ethnicity is a significant factor at play in this passage, saying that Jesus responds with "an apparent ethnic slur." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 460. He argues that "the text exposes two deficient norms potentially held by the reader: the notion that the gospel obliterates ethnicity as a component of social identity, and the competing notion that one's particular ethnic identity must be rejected in order to respond faithfully to the gospel." Ibid, 458-9. Some scholars argue that calling someone a dog was a familiar ethnic slur that Jews used against Gentiles in the Jesus' first century context. Others refute this, such as: Mark D. Nanos, "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?" *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 461-69. Smith sees it as an obvious ethnic slur regardless of contextual evidence. Julian C.H. Smith 2012, 460 footnote 3. Dube found that her readers had zero tendency to read Jesus' behavior through an ethnic/xenophobic lens. They saw Jesus going after "lost sheep" who are "lost believers." The lostness came from the demon. And they saw "dogs" as people without faith. Musa W. Dube 1996, 117-118.

[50] Most scholars acknowledge the presence of cultural honor-shame patterns in this interchange. "Honor and shame accrued through public and quasi-public exchanges like those typical of patronage. They were not simply attributed to a single individual, but to the pertinent social group as a whole. This is central to dyadic culture and, I think, critical for understanding the symbolic representations and interactions between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman." Jane E. Hicks 2003, 80 citing Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey, "First-Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, Jerome H. Neyrey, ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 67-96. I would suggest that, in typical Jesus fashion, he is undoing the honor-shame pattern even as he is manifesting it.

[51] See Psalm 22: 16 "For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled." Jesus, of course, refers to this same Psalm when he is on the cross. Jesus' use of the term "dogs" indicates dangerous animals or predators. One is thrown to the dogs for punishment. The woman from Tyre domesticates the image. What about "little dogs" under the table? We could see this as an admission of belonging to a predatory culture, but indicating the ability to domesticate (or restrain) this destructive way of embodying power. Destructive power holders can learn to "leash" themselves and participate in equitable relationships. "It would seem that there are two dogs in view. Jesus' comment has in view the unclean, scavenger dog. The Syrophoenician woman, on the other hand, has a broader perception of dogs. She certainly would be familiar with dogs as unclean scavengers. It is quite certain she hears the insult as intended. Yet she also has a conceptual category for dogs as pets. In this view, the Syrophoenician woman receives Jesus' insult, turns it on its head and spits it back at him." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 474. For more scholarship on dogs in scripture, see endnotes 31-33 in Chapter 4, where the focus is on the dogs in the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man. Here they are also presented ambiguously, both as the representation of a lowered and unclean state, and as the only ones willing to help Lazarus.

[52] Some scholars translate κυνάριον as puppy seemingly softening Jesus' harsh words. Others disagree, saying that it is not the diminutive term but a koine word for dog. For more on the debate, see: William Loader 1996, 45-61; Petr Pokorny, "From a Puppy to the Child: Some Problems of Contemporary Biblical Exegesis Demonstrated from Mark 7" *New Testament Studies* 41, no. 3 (1995): 321-337; David Rhoads, "Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician Woman in Mark: A Narrative-Critical Study" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62 (1994): 356. Ringe sees the term applying not to Gentiles in general but specifically to those who economically harm the poor of the faith community. Sharon Ringe 2001, 89. For more on middle agent discomfort with Jesus and his harsh words see "Middle Agents Dislike Disruption" in Chapter 5. For more on diminutives: "Particularly significant to this story is the portrayal of the Syrophoenician woman measuring up to the Marcan standard of being 'least.' Later in the story, Jesus tells the disciples that if they wish to be great they are to be 'least of all and everyone's servant.' There are eight diminutives in our episode, a signal of the narrator's development of this motif of least-ness: 'little daughter' occurs once, 'little dogs' twice, 'crumbs' once, and 'little ones' twice. In addition, the regular word for demon used twice here is itself a diminutive, thus depicting an unclean spirit as 'a little demon.' This is an extraordinary number of diminutives in such a brief episode." David Rhoads 1994, 366.

[53] See the "Introduction & Methodology" for further discussion on the necessary interrelatedness of survival, resistance, and transformation. Middle agents' "intuition" (read, colonization of our minds) often causes us to feel that transformation should replace survival and resistance. I propose all three must remain intact as we negotiate situations of disproportionate power.

[54] Among some scholars, there is an urge to cast the woman as the outsider when it seems clear in the text that it is Jesus who has left his home territory. "[H]e uses the metaphor of 'a dog' to identify her as the outsider. She is a foreigner - the impure one . . . Most feminist theologians, on reading the text in the gospels of both Mark and Matthew, are particularly unhappy, and sometimes shocked, at Jesus' attitude to the woman who comes to him to seek help and healing. Even traditional interpreters of these texts would consider Jesus' behaviour offensive. His initial silence, in spite of the woman's plea to him to heal her daughter (v. 26b), and his rather crude reference to her as a dog, are considered abhorrent." Aruna Gnanadason, "Jesus and the Asian woman: A Post-colonial Look at the Syro-Phoenician Woman/Canaanite Woman from an Indian Perspective" *Studies in World Christianity* 7, no 2 (2001): 163. "It is possible to envision the Matthean episode as having taken place on Jewish soil, with the pagan woman coming forth from her own land to meet Jesus who was travelling in the direction of Tyre and Sidon. This scenario involves translating *eis* in Matt 15:21 as 'to' or 'toward,' not 'into,' and subordinating the prepositional phrase 'from those regions' (15:22) to the participle 'came forth.'" Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 235. I'm not sure if this comes from discomfort with Jesus being placed in a vulnerable position – being decentered – or sympathy for the woman in this encounter.

[55] Matthew 5: 38-42; Luke 6: 27-30.

[56] Asking "what did the woman mean about the crumbs?" One woman "was insisting that nothing could make her a permanently undeserving child, despite her current inadequacy." Musa W. Dube 1996, 118. "[S]he pointed out that this woman was humbling herself in the face of humiliation. She found a correlation between the dogs/children, crumbs/food of the passage and the South African apartheid system . . . [T]his woman was actually saying, 'Yes, I am one of the deserving children, yet even those inferior outsiders—the dogs— deserve something.' In other words, the Canaanite woman's response endorsed and surpassed that of Jesus by holding that no one was totally undeserving." Ibid, 119.

[57] See "Hesitating on the Brink of Downward Mobility" in Chapter 4.

[58] It is common in the scholarship to see the Syrophoenician woman as a model of faith. See: Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 365, 368; Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 75-78; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 181-184; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 261-64; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002) 144-148; and Matthew L. Skinner, "'She departed to her house': Another Dimension of the Syrophoenician Mother's Faith in Mark 7:24-30" *Word & World* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 14-21. Dube, reading this passage with members of the African Independent Churches (AICs) in Botswana, found that they read the passage as an example of great faith. She asked: "Why did Jesus not respond to this woman's request?" "Six readers said Jesus was testing the faith of this woman. When we questioned this, the respondents held that the act of testing her faith does not indicate a lack of knowledge on the part of Jesus, nor was such an act unusual in matters of faith. Abraham and Job were cited as some of the examples of people who were tested because they already had faith. That the Canaanite woman's faith was tested proves that it was great faith to the AICs readers (v. 28)." Musa W. Dube 1996, 116.

[59] Walter Wink calls this "Jesus' Third Way." Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 98-111.

[60] "The story as it unfolds makes clear that both the woman and Jesus became boundary walkers and boundary breakers." Daniel S. Schipani 2001, 19. "An outsider, a multiply marginal person, challenged Jesus to relate and minister across and beyond those boundaries. She gave him an opportunity to respond in tune with God's alternative wisdom expressed in an ethic and politics of compassion and radical inclusiveness. It is fitting to conclude that Jesus faced a major conflict and temptation, indeed a temptation from within, and that eventually he chose wisely." Ibid, 19. This is a fairly common view, with which I disagree. I am arguing that this is an invitation to a complex and risky encounter of hospitality, saturated with sick ecologies of power and potential epistemological blindness by the middle agent woman, and that Jesus makes the perfectly ethical choice not to engage at first, and then, seeing the capacities of his interlocutor, changes his mind.

[61] Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Quest for Peace and Justice" Lecture given when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, December 11, 1964.

[62] Feminist interpreters tend to concentrate on the gendered dimension of the interaction. Some focus on Jesus and the worrisome misogyny in his behavior toward the woman. Some focus on the strength of the woman and her powerful effect on Jesus, besting him in an honor/shame joust, teaching him about the humanity of Gentiles, and awakening him to his expanded mission. See: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992); Sharon H. Ringe 1985, 65-72.

[63] Reading from the perspective of people who were the object of the modern mission field, Gnanadason reads the woman as the marginalized person and Jesus as the oppressor and missionary. Aruna Gnanadason 2001. While I acknowledge the imperial nature of modern mission work, I am not sure we can neatly apply modern religious imperial categories to this passage. Christianity has been allied with forms of economic and cultural imperialism, becoming an oppressive force. (Though, there are always liberating strands of Christianity that have survived in the interstices of its corrupt imperial forms.) That said, more recent alliances between economic and cultural and religious aggression were not in place in the first century in this interaction with Jesus. Whereas Jesus represents the theological and ethical voice, as well as access to holy healing power, the woman represents the regional forces of economic imperialism. Jesus is strikingly uninterested in cultural imperialism, given the way this passage underwrites Christian expansion. He has no interest in engaging. His curiosity is awakened when he encounters wisdom in the foreign woman, indicating that she has her own forms of knowledge that Jesus respects. And she returns to her context with no particular religious instructions from Jesus. While Gnanadason is right to decolonize the text, she sees the colonizing only going one way, from Jesus to the woman. She fails to see the colonization that is occurring from the woman to Jesus which is more the case in context. For more post-colonial readings of the text, see: R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000); Hisako Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Kwok Pui-Lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology: Introductions in Feminist Theology* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000); and Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-Lan, eds, *Postcolonialism, Feminism and Religious Discourse* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002)

[64] Gnanadason sees the Syro-Phoenician woman as a Dalit woman in India. Aruna Gnanadason 2001, 168. She is not alone in identifying with the woman. "To Hong Kong theologian Kwok Pui-Lan, the Syro-Phoenician woman could be an Asian woman as she represents the multifaith context of a country like India, where the missionary movement came and acted with scant regard for ancient and great religious and philosophical traditions that they encountered there." She quotes Kwon Pui Lan: "The encounter of this woman with Jesus, has been taken by the church, as a basis for mission to the Gentiles. Christian missionaries often regarded people in Asia and in other parts of the world who belonged to other faith traditions as 'pagans' and 'heathens' . . . The story of the Syro-Phoenician woman brings into sharp focus the complex issues of the relationship among different racial and ethnic groups, the interaction between men and women, cultural imperialism and colonisation." Aruna Gnanadason 2001, 166 citing Kwok Pui-Lan, "'Woman, Dogs and Crumbs,' in *Discovering the Bible in a Non-Biblical World*, R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 71-2. While, as I state above, I do not think this passage, read carefully and in context, justifies imperial forms of mission, I do agree with Gnanadason and Kwok Pui-Lan about the reception history of this passage (which should never be discounted since it is an embodied fact) and its harmful and violent effects on colonial mission fields. "[T]he image of Christ brought to India during the time of colonization was associated with domination and of a conquering hero over against other religious motifs and images." Aruna Gnanadason 2001, 172. As I acknowledge this, I hear Gnanadason saying to me: "[W]estern (white) feminist biblical scholars have read the story of the Syro-Phoenician/Canaanite without problematizing it as a text that justifies colonization. Most western feminist biblical scholars do now acknowledge in their analysis that patriarchal oppression is a complex network of factors such as gender, race, class, religion, and culture. But does their analysis go far enough?" Ibid, 174. I appreciate the way Hyunju Bae unflinchingly examines the violent colonial reception history of this passage without reducing the passage to its reception history. Her sense of dance and overflowing meaning allow room for suppressed meanings and new meanings to flow forth from the text. Hyunju Bae "Dancing Around Life: An Asian Woman's Perspective" *The Ecumenical Review* 56, no. 4 (October 2004), 61.

[65] It seems to me that the foundational Derridean setup for describing hospitality is too stark – owners encountering intruders – the powerful self encountering the powerless other – citizens encountering strangers. While some encounters are this dramatic, most actual encounters are more complex than that. They arise from messy mixtures of overpowering and underpowering by the constellation of communities by which one is internally shaped and externally defined.

[66] "I have intentionally varied the epithets by which I characterize the figure I see as its heroine: for example, as a supplicant mother, a parent, a woman from Tyre, and a Greek woman. I have done so because any brief phrase I choose foregrounds one dimension of her identity while suppressing others: her gender, her parenthood, her regional location, her ethnicity, even implicitly her situation of privilege . . . [W]hile verbal identification in the midst of storytelling demands that a character be singled out by a trait or two, in an embodied exchange all dimensions of identity are simultaneously present and mutually constitutive. Intersectional theory insists that analysis of power cannot focus single-mindedly on a single dimension of identity, for example, ethnicity or gender. Attention to corporeality allows us to appreciate the dynamics by which all dimensions of identity are simultaneously at work." Jennifer A. Glancy2010, 361-362. For more on the complexity and intersectionality involved in the negotiation of power, see: Mary J. Streufert, "An Affinity for Difference: A Theology of Power" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 28-39

[67] "In scholarly analyses, we find it difficult to juggle multiple facets of social location: gender, physical ability, linguistic competency, and race, for example. In our embodied encounters, however, we do so without breaking stride. I thus contend that attention to corporal performance of social identity is critical to the project of intersectional theory." Jennifer A. Glancy 2010, 344. Glancy draws on Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) for concepts of embodiment. Glancy explores how physical gestures in various circumstances express position and power, arguing "that social location is embodied is not an essentialist claim. Social location takes place in the body, but it is also negotiated—asserted and reinforced or contested and redefined—in the context of both verbal and nonverbal corporal exchanges." Ibid, 345. See also: Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010); Anthony Corbelli, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Erik Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2000); and Matthew B. Roller, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). Glancy applies her approach of embodied intersectionality and the negotiation of power to the present passage saying: "I am primarily interested in tracing some ways that Mark relies on corporal markers—markers about posture, gesture, and bodily disposition—to narrate negotiations over culturally complex social status." Jennifer A. Glancy 2010, 350.

[68] Falling on the ground is "an act of self-lowering that participates in a corporal vernacular expressing emotion, social location, and perception of power. Not surprisingly, in the iconography of the Roman Empire— and indeed of adjacent territories—the image of one person sunk on the ground in the presence of another person was the most common visual marker for submission to superior power and authority." Jennifer A. Glancy 2010, 353. "Mark especially favors the image of a person lowered before another person to enact deference. Mark's John the Baptist, for example, expresses his secondary status by saying, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals' (1:7). Neither Matthew nor Luke retains Mark's explicit reference to John's self-lowering. In Mark, the rich man who seeks instruction on how to inherit eternal life expresses his deference to Jesus when he runs toward him and then kneels before him (10:17). In Matthew's and Luke's versions of the story the privileged questioner does not lower himself before Jesus (Matthew 19:16; Luke 18:18). Mark pictures Roman soldiers parodying the familiar gesture of deference. After the soldiers clothe Jesus in a purple cloak, crown him with thorns, salute him and spit on him, they drop to their knees in mocking obeisance (15:19)." Ibid. Glancy notes how interpreters tend to play up the woman's submission, while brushing past the same gesture in Jairus and other men. "Dialogue prompts readers to view the woman's posture at Jesus' feet as doglike, but she is hardly the only individual characterized in that position, which is a standard element in Mark's narrative strategy." Ibid, 361.

[69] "[This] is a tale of creative disobedience and courage. Against the traditional interpretation which is preoccupied with the image of a subservient, docile and obedient woman, many feminist scholars have elucidated that this is not a story of humility, but a story of fortitude and valour. The Syrophenician woman is a gatecrasher and boundary breaker." Hyunju Bae 2004, 398. "Like Jacob after his nocturnal wrestling match near the ford of the Jabbok (Gen 32:22-32), she will not let go without a blessing. Like Jacob's mysterious opponent, Jesus accedes." Matthew L. Skinner 2006, 18. It is worth noting that Jesus rewards her persistence. "The Syrophoenician woman knocks down every obstacle in her path to making Jesus her Lord, the helper of the Gentiles. She meets his stony silence with more pleading. She drowns out the disciples' request for Jesus to send her away with her own repeated requests for Jesus to have mercy. She factually negates his exclusive mission to the Jews when she, a Gentile, calls him Lord and worships him. Finally, she cleverly turns his own maxim supporting exclusivism into an illustration of inclusivism in salvation." Judith Gundry-Volf, "Spirit, Mercy, and the Other" *Theology Today* 51 (1995): 518. For more on this topic see "The Irritating Relentlessness of Human Dignity" in Chapter 5.

[70] "[W]e can utilize different lenses. For instance, [her seeming deference] might be also explained as an example of 'clever euphemisms,' which constitutes a resource for 'the arts of political disguise,' or 'the arts of resistance,' that, as Zora Neale Hurston argued, 'were characterized by indirect, veiled, social comment and criticism, a technique appropriately described as hitting a straight lick with a crooked stick.' Seen in this connection, her remark appears charged with scintillating wit." Hyunju Bae 2004, 399 citing "High John deConquer," in *Mother Wit*, Alan Dundes, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973), 249-50. Quoted in James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990). 153.

[71] Of course the scripture, like human beings and creation, resists domestication. "Mark's story of the Syrophoenician mother remains a text that will not be tamed, one that resists fully satisfying interpretations." Matthew L. Skinner 2006, 21.

[72] See Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).

[73] In its Orwellian way, imperial language reverses reality. Thus women, while over half the population on earth, are defined as a minority. And the poor of the world, while in the majority, are considered a minority.

[74] Examining social patterns, we see a tendency for minority voices to use aggregated social power via communities (organizations, institutions) for the sake of gaining leverage. Sometimes this approach is used simply to get a silenced perspective heard. Other times this approach is used to loot the earth for the sake of the few.

[75] "For Derrida, this hierarchy itself, just like the traditional self-other dyad, must be undone: there is no fundamental, transcendent asymmetry between self and other in either direction, but a radical and universal disequilibrium, where all sameness is dissolved into a web of otherness." Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, eds., *Understanding Derrida* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), 41.

[76] See Diana Eck's "facts on the ground" work documenting religious pluralism in places that are generally deemed homogenous. Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse* Nation (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc, 2001).

[77] Dube notes how stubborn retention of culture and differences is an anti-imperial strategy: "This validation of two different traditions is both a strategy of resistance and healing from imperial cultural forces of imposition, which depends on devaluing difference and imposing a few universal standards. Their anti-imperial strategy does not subscribe to the artificial cultural dualisms and hierarchies that are constructed for the interest of domination and suppression of difference." Musa W. Dube 1996, 125.

[78] For more on patronage, see Chapter 3, endnote 4.

[79] "[B]efore there is any identity of any kind, there is an other who calls me forth." Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, 2004, 40.

[80] "Derrida's general claim is going to be that the self is nothing without an other, or others, to which it has a fundamental and fundamentally constituting relationship . . . this central kernel of the ethical." Ibid, 38.

[81] "Jesus credits this woman's λόγος (speech), and not her πίστις (faith), as the impetus for her daughter's deliverance." Matthew L. Skinner 2006, 15. "Here, christology must anticipate an irreducible hybridity of the discourse and even the 'subject' of its own good news. The introduction of a saving word 'from without' cannot simply be 'colonized' or appropriated as a form of anonymous Christianity. Neither can it be entirely differentiated as 'other.' The Syro-Phoenician pericope, I would suggest, authorizes a reading of the word of salvation as itself heterogeneous. Not only can the latter come from an other who speaks 'in the place' of Christ. But it also may be spoken 'instead of Christ'—in interruption of his word—from a subject-position not his." Jim Perkinson, "A Canaanitic Word in the Logos of Christ; Or the Difference the Syro-Phoenician Woman Makes to Jesus" *Semeia* 75 (1996): 82. Rhoads notes an odd departure in the usual type scene in this passage: "[T]he woman's persistence really goes beyond faith. We might expect Jesus to say, 'Because of your faith . . .,' but he says, 'Because of this word .. .'Jesus acknowledges, with the suggestion of surprise on his part, the insightfulness of the woman's answer. Jesus recognizes in her response the 'word,' a term which has been used throughout Mark to refer to the gospel (e.g. 2:2; 4:33). David Rhoads 1994, 360. This textual detail supports Perkinson's claim that the word/Word can come directly from a subject position other than Jesus. "The Marcan Jesus even suggests that she bears God's word to him (2:2, 4:33)." Ibid, 361.

[82] Foucault studies how our formation of institutions and, in turn, our institutions' formation of us has evolved in ways that bind us. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 110. "[L]arge scale structures of power" are the "dynamic outcome of the ways in which 'infinitesimal mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination.'" Ibid, 99.

[83] The concept of "internal pluralism" was developed by Dr. Melanie May, Professor of Theology at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. She tells me that her teaching on the subject is inspired by her reading of Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, Barbara Bray, trans. (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003).

[84] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 179ff.

[85] "The consideration of diverse factors, such as gender, class, race/ethnicity, culture, multifaith reality, nationalism, colonialism, and post-colonial situation constitutes [Kwok Pui-lan's] 'multi-axial' interpretation of the Bible. These are the lenses with which she needs to approach the text to negotiate creative meanings out of it. The interpretive self emerges as the locus for such a multiple consciousness, as the space where multiple inner dialogues take place. The self is not so much 'an isolated, and monolithic identity' as a 'centre of multiple relationships,' where constant negotiation and multi-axial interpretation take place." Hyunju Bae 2004, 395-6 citing Kwok Pui-Lan 1995, 38.

[86] Arendt is adapting a Kantian term to refer to our capacity to step outside of ourselves and see from the perspective of others. Or as she says, "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting." Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 43.

[87] Jennifer Nedelsky 2000, 258.

[88] As Christians, we are, in varying places in the biblical text, commanded not to judge one another. I submit that these admonitions refer to judgmentalism which is not the same as judgment in the Arendtian sense. For the purpose of this discussion I define judgmentalism as the error of absolutizing and/or universalizing one's judgment. We are called to maintain epistemic humility, to listen for lost and suppressed voices, and to treat people who hold differing judgments with respect. Absolute judgment belongs only to God.

[89] Jennifer Nedelsky 2000, 275-276.

[90] "The complex identity of the Syrophoenician woman, who is marginalized as a woman, despised as a Gentile, yet privileged as Greek-speaking (educated) urban upper class, turns out to be a fascinating locus for the multi-axial interpretation that Asian feminist biblical hermeneutics aims at." Hyunju Bae 2004, 397-398.

[91] See: M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005); Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1995); Emilie M. Townes, ed., *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); and Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

[92] See: Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice: Images of Power, Sexuality, and Liberation* (New York, NY: The Pilgrim Press, 1984); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984); and Malcolm Macourt, ed., *Toward a Theology of Gay Liberation* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1977).

[93] Derrida hits rightly on the problematic tendency of selves to imperialize other selves and with Levinas addresses this by emptying the self and centering the other. In his ongoing debate with Levinas, Ricoeur struggles with the removal of self from the encounter of hospitality. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another,* Kathleen Blamey, trans. (University Of Chicago Press, 1995). For an analysis of this debate, see Bonney 2012. As a theologian I want to further probe the question of self-emptying. In emptying ourselves, what are we emptying ourselves into? Into avoidance and invisibility? Into coercive imperial agendas? Into infinite love and Christ consciousness? Into a Derridean aporia? In my project of surfacing middle agent blindspots, I also want to name unproductive modes of emptying that I've witnessed in middle agents. There is a kind of abdication that I've seen in middle agents whose consciousness is growing. Upon awakening to our inextricable role in domination and suffering and abuse of power – in racism, economic exploitation, xenophobia and elaborate forms of domination – we are overcome with guilt. (For more see "Blame, Guilt and Responsibility" in Chapter 3.) This can lead to a kind of hiding or subsuming of the identity of self. At its worst this is disassociation. In

the dance of hospitality, those with structural power (who are shaped by communities that have inscribed domination into the context of the encounter) do need to leash ourselves and listen and see and experience the pain of knowing. But to respond with a hopeless guilt-ridden sense of powerlessness is escapist and unfair. The answer cannot be to roll over and stop engaging. With the spunk of the Syro-Phoenician woman, we need to keep showing up for the encounter and bringing our always emerging true selves to it (including the truth of how we are integrally shaped by histories of domination), however uncomfortable and seemingly irreconcilable this may feel.

[94] "Derrida suspects that it is here, in the attempt to universalize that characterizes the very first step in any philosophical ethics or morality, that we destroy the key characteristic of ethics, and become unethical and violent to ethics itself . . . [M]etaphysics – is itself a threat to ethics." Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, 2004, 38.

[95] For more see "Living in and Intersubjective World" in Chapter 2.

[96] Levinas and Derrida are protecting the unconquerable mystery of the other, which is greatly appreciated as a significant antidote to the habitual appropriation of the other. With this in mind, from a theological point of view, I must hold the other as both perfect incomprehensible mystery and sibling/child of God. In the same way there is a mystery that I can never apprehend in the other, there is also a familiarity, a sameness, that I can never eradicate (the image of God). For more on Derrida and the other that precedes the self, see "Learning to Live in an Interrelated World" in Chapter 2.

[97] "Empowering the other from the perspective of God's love for creation 'requires us to be transformed by the other and to resist, where we recognize it, our domestication of the other.'" Mary J. Streufert 2010, 34 citing Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 381-389.

[98] Derrida's approach to negotiation refuses to give us rules. It demands awareness of context and continual discernment. In this discernment the two horizons, the particular and the unconditional, meet. Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971-2001*, Elizabeth Rottenberg, ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 17. Bonney explores the way Derrida's ethic of negotiation mediates Derrida's seemingly "too extreme" stance on "the other" and "absolute hospitality." Nathan D. Bonney, *The Risk of Hospitality: Selfhood, Otherness, and Ethics in Deconstruction and Phenomenological Hermeneutics*, Thesis (Toronto, Ontario: Institute for Christian Studies, 2012). Bonney emphasizes that in Derrida through the process of negotiation, offers us absolute hospitality as an orientation rather than a rule. "This position does not afford the ability to know in advance how to act and, since the circumstances of negotiation between the two laws of hospitality are each time unique, 'nothing can ever assure us that this negotiation will not go terribly awry, either for the host or for the guest,' as Derrida states. Ibid 2012, 89. Citing Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 26.

[99] Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, 2004, 42.

[100] For more on Derrida and hospitality see the "Introduction & Methodology," endnote 15 and 17. See also: Kevin O'Gorman, "Theorists of Hospitality Jacques Derrida's Philosophy of Hospitality" *The Hospitality Review* 50 (October 2006): 50-57. Boersma develops a comparison between Derridean "pure hospitality" and Irenaean "eschatological hospitality." Hans Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence" *Modern Theology* 19, no. 2 (April 2003): 163-180.

[101] Where Derrida is pointing to an aporia, our biblical theo-ethical narrative stands in the faith that there is a trustworthy quality to the eternal unknown. Our story of power points beyond what we can know and measure to what Olthuis calls "the wild spaces of love." For more, see "Wild Waters of Love" in Chapter 1. For more on Derrida and aporias see Chapter 1, endnote 109.

[102] Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality, Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, Rachel Bowlby, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

[103] Smith notes the destabilizing complexity of location in our passage. "The location of the episode within a house [in a foreign territory] is significant. The house represents a middle ground for both Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman. Jesus is 'at home' since he is in a private place, yet 'not at home' since he is in foreign territory. The woman is 'at home' since she is in her homeland, yet 'not at home' since she is in a private place which is not her home." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 467. This has the Derridean effect of having one's center of power (Jesus, Israel) dislocated through the unconquerable alterity of the other, and through the alert negotiation involved in risky hospitality, discovering a healing mutuality. "[T]he image of house is not incidental, it represents a boundary crossing, as in when the woman comes into the house of Simon . . . a serious boundary crossing especially for a woman . . .(14:3- 9). By entering another's home

(presumably uninvited) in order to reach Jesus, both of these women have to cross significant social boundaries." Ibid, 468.

[104] In their unconditionality and radical centering of the other, Levinas and Derrida are responding to the limitations that Kant places on hospitality via structures of nations and citizenship that allow the host to "keep the mastery." Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida" in *Questioning Ethics: Debates in Contemporary Continental Philosophy* Mark Dooley and Richard Kearney, eds. (London, UK: Routledge Publishing, 1999), 69. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, Ted Humphrey, trans. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983). "The ideal Kantian messianic future, therefore, has a fairly strong sense of determinacy. Derrida believes that there are problems with such restrictions on hospitality and with such attempts to determine the future. As soon as we try to determine, be it ever so carefully, what the messianic future might hold, Derrida believes that we become restrictive in our hospitality toward the other and in fact undo the alterity of the other by recasting him in our own image, so that it becomes impossible to avoid the wars of religion that have plagued us in the past. Only pure hospitality, he believes, is adequate as an answer to the violence that particular belief systems introduce." Hans Boersma 2003, 165.

[105] "[T]his account [of Jesus and the Syro-Phonician woman] needs not to be read merely as a prop for androcentric authoritarianism and Christocentric triumphalism. Rather, it is a tale of creative relationship . . . [T]here is no sign that Jesus made her a Christian. Rather, Jesus emerges as a figure of relationality who does not impose himself, nor flee from the difficulty of negotiating with the other . . . [T]he greatness of Jesus is found in the very fact that he was not 'the victor,' nor 'the colonial Christ.' Jesus is cast as 'the open-minded listener' who accepts the other's criticism of his ethnocentrism and prejudice which taints his own vision, and allows himself to be transformed by the other's challenge." Hyunju Bae 2004, 401.

[106] "Derrida does not dare claim some divine hospitable transcendent signifier (as traditionally understood) that underwrites our human hospitality. The result of such a claim would be, for Derrida, a fundamentalist absolutism that cannot but lead to violence . . . Derrida, as we have seen, cannot grant the possibility of hospitality ever leading to the consummation of communion within the historical and temporal conditions of existence: for him the messianic future is ever still to come: its very realization—its determinacy— would imply the continuation of violence and injustice." Hans Boersma 2003, 167.

[107] "I would like to illustrate the ethos of the multi-axial interpretation of Asian feminist biblical hermeneutics in the gesture or image of 'dancing around life.' First, the biblical interpretation requires courage and humility enough to stay to open to the tune of life. Without the desire for and the sensitivity to the 'superabundance of life,' the 'superabundance of meanings' in the text would hardly surface. Hyunju Bae 2004, 396. Here Hyunju Bae describes something similar to what Derrida is trying to achieve with the meeting of two horizons – the law and the pure. While the pure or absolute horizon can never be achieved, its demanding presence opens a path for the "more" or "the gift" or "the impossible" to enter into and transform the embodied/actualized world.

[108] Theological hospitality operates on both Derridean horizons. It is a broad and perfect relationship with God. It is also a nitty gritty skill worked out and embodied in community. "Acts of hospitality participate in and reflect God's greater hospitality and therefore hold some connection to the divine, to holy ground." Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Location 190. "We become proficient in a skill by performing it regularly, and by learning from persons who are masters of it. Hospitality is a skill and a gift, but it is also a practice which flourishes as multiple skills are developed, as particular commitments and values are nurtured, and as certain settings are cultivated." Ibid, Kindle Locations 137-139.

[109] Now I think Derrida would say that he accounts for this by distinguishing what is possible in human terms where laws are needed. And perhaps Jesus would say that we are moving toward the acceptance and reconciliation of all things, which is much like Derrida's absolute horizon. Interestingly, even Jesus seems to get a bit baffled on the timing question. When Jesus says to let the children be fed first, this seems to imply an issue of timing rather than exclusion. He seems to have a timeframe for the full liberation and reconciliation inherent in the kingdom of God that unfolds in a sequence. It also seems that he can be surprised by the timing, as he was at the wedding in Cana, thinking it was not his time yet. The embodied circumstances seem to either hinder or accelerate his expectations. So he looks for ripe fruit in Jerusalem and finds none. Yet here, in a foreign imperial space, he finds a woman ripe for the reception of the word. Scott also notes the thread that Jesus visualizes all in the kingdom, but thinks the time has not yet come. J. Julius Scott, Jr., "Gentiles and the Ministry of Jesus: Further Observations on Matthew 10:5-6; 15:21-28" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, no.2 (June 1990): 161-169. Jesus is negotiating what unfolds in good Derridean fashion. So in the end perhaps they both acknowledge the presence of mystery when it comes to the when, where, and how the eternal floods and transforms the

finite. That said, I still find this delineation critically important. Though Derrida refuses to offer moral rules, writing in circular ways to resist anyone pinning him into a directive, many Christians are impervious to open-ended inquiry and are very accustomed to interpreting religion through the lens of rules. So I feel I need to say, total acceptance (as unlimited invasion of his personal or communal boundaries) is not a rule that Jesus follows.

[110] This gets to the heart of much confusion. If an open-ended acceptance of all people and circumstances is an immediate moral demand on Jesus, then Jesus fails shockingly.

[111] Even moreso, she has the maturity to know that she has her own source, her own subject position.

[112] See "The Wild Waters of Love" in Chapter 1.

[113] See "Power Up the Grid" in Chapter 1.

[114] "[L]et justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* (April 16, 1963) quoting Amos 5: 24.

[115] See "Dynamic, Complexifying Creativity" in Chapter 1.

[116] See "Holy Homemaking" in Chapter 1.

[117] John 10: 10.

[118] "For the most part, the term 'hospitality' has lost its moral dimension and, in the process, most Christians have lost touch with the amazingly rich and complex tradition of hospitality. Today when we think of hospitality, we don't think first of welcoming strangers. We picture having family and friends over for a pleasant meal. Or we think of the 'hospitality industry,' of hotels and restaurants which are open to strangers as long as they have money or credit cards. Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Locations 75-78.

[119] "Jesus fails the test of good manners in this story—no amount of intellectual, historical, sociological or psychological gymnastics can save us from the conclusion that he is simply rude." J. Martin C. Scott, "Matthew15:21-28: A Test-Case for Jesus' Manners" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 63 (1996): 43. The viewpoint of this dissertation is that the rules of hospitality are not the rules of politeness. Discernment is guided by mutual/creational well-being and the liberation of life – not Miss Manners. This may lead to aggression toward oppressive structures and those who protect them, which may seem harsh to middle agents who are fearful of disruption of the status quo.

[120] It is important to make a strong distinction between the biblical hospitality articulated in this project and "strategic hospitality." Biblical hospitality breaks down patronage networks and opens our perception of our true equality in the sight of God. "Strategic hospitality" firms up hierarchies and systems of patronage. "In late Middle Ages, [we see] a requirement to show lavish displays as 'strategic hospitality' to keep position. Despite the enormous expense of entertaining visiting dignitaries, it was an essential demonstration of one's status; to abandon entertaining, to lose the capacity to offer hospitality, or to be forced to depend on the hospitality of other great households, was clear evidence of a person's waning power and influence. Without much moveable wealth (a money economy as such did not yet exist), the nobility consumed its excess on its estates in the form of strategic hospitality. This forged and reinforced the complex bonds of interdependence between lord and vassal, church and nobility, which were characteristic of feudal life." Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Locations 595-598 citing Bridget Ann Henisch, *Fast and Feast: Food in Medieval Society* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 11.

[121] "We can see in this story two human beings, who were initially bound to one's own 'local' service, either nationally in Israel or domestically at home in Tyre, break away from their own secure boundaries, to create the life-giving event for the sake of the most vulnerable tiny human being. A series of processes which comprises encounter, conflict, misunderstanding, confrontation, dialogue and miracle ensues. The patient mutual interaction of two persons who are dedicated for life proves them to be qualified as bridge-builders who transgress the boundaries. This kind of inspiration is needed in our times characterized by diversity and pluralism in all areas of life, when it is an imperative to create together a kind of dialogical, challenging, collaborative, facilitating, relational and transformative leadership in both church and society." Hyunju Bae 2004, 402.

[122] "Hospitality begins at the gate, in the doorway, on the bridges between public and private space. Finding and creating threshold places is important for contemporary expressions of hospitality." Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Locations 1076-1077.

[123] "Our experience of the HOLY always turns out to be conversational – always partly beyond our control." William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 16.

[124] The discussion of hospitality in scripture and in social theory is especially fraught for middle agents, who carry particular anxiety around questions of security and risk. As it was in Galilean village life (see "The Story of the Man Who Would Not Come Out" in Chapter 5), for those who live lives outside the walls and security fences of imperial protection, security is often found in hospitality. It is a way of sharing resources for the survival of the known community and for strangers. For many middle agents who have built their security within imperial patronage structures, hospitality (in the radical and un-neutered sense) is the opposite. It is a disruption and a threat. There are countless human and environmental risks to our imperial way of life that must constantly be assessed and insured against. It is counter-intuitive to a colonized mind, to allow the unknown to break into the known. Yet, this uncomfortable inbreaking is precisely what it means to embody infinite Love in human form as Christ did. We cannot embody the unknown without risking the known. For more on this subject see: Chapter 3: The Predicament of Middle Agents and "The Value of Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[125] In working with labor, I learned that you cannot put workers and managers in a room and simply work it out. Or as a pastor, you learn you cannot put an abused spouse in a room with an abuser. Where significant inequity in aggregated power exists, authenticity, trust, mutuality (and thus hospitality) are impossible.

[126] "We must look for what shapes others (and how it is different from what shapes us), and we must allow ourselves to take painful risks in our relationships with others, empowered by God's eschatological future. This is transformation—the hoped-for result of nonviolent resistance to ideologies that devalue particular others." Mary J. Streufert 2010, 35.

[127] Mark 15: 4-5; Matthew 27: 12-14; John 19: 9-10.

[128] In situations of domination, we may also be forced into a form of relating, such as with torture.

[129] The path of the cross is a valid choice, and one that God will support and redeem. Still, I am convinced that the cross is not the highest and best route for hospitality to take. A better scenario is depicted in the interchange between Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman. Though this choice is rare, socially over-powered persons can relinquish their privileges ("leash" themselves), allow an exposure of inequities, and seek a level field with socially under-powered persons. God's plan for a socially-leveled ethically-based world can come into being through the risky non-violent practice of biblical hospitality, where the mutual desire for well-being is present. When successful we can find shared respect, deep personal and social change, and mutual growth and healing. So, there is an alternative (albeit a highly advanced and rare one) to what Walter Wink calls "the myth of redemptive violence." Humanity thus far has demonstrated this level of maturity rarely, instead creating cross upon cross.

[130] Matthew 18: 20.

[131] "The narrative presents Jesus with an understanding of God and uncleanness which is different from that of the leaders of Israel. As depicted in the narrative, the leaders of Israel believe God and God's holy people will be protected from defilement by withdrawing from what is unclean. By contrast, Jesus does not act as if God or God's people will be defiled by what is unclean. Instead of withdrawing, God is an active force which renders clean what was unclean. The Holy Spirit spreads wholeness and purity. Thus, instead of avoiding contact, Jesus makes contact and bring wholeness (Borg). So when Jesus touches the leper, instead of being rendered unclean by the contact, Jesus cleanses the leper. When Jesus is touched by the woman with the flow of blood, instead of being rendered unclean, Jesus makes the woman whole. When Jesus touches the corpse, instead of being rendered unclean, Jesus makes alive. And so on." David Rhoads 1994, 364. I would suggest that this passage pushes our understanding of salvation even further. I argue in Chapter 5, that salvation does not originate in the political or religious centers. Rather salvation is ever arriving from the margins. The saving word arrives wherever God pleases, calling us out of any exclusive way of thinking and acting that may be limiting/entrapping us. In this amazing case, even Jesus receives a saving word from beyond himself. For more on this, see "The Comfortable are not Saving the Poor, the Poor are Saving the Comfortable" in Chapter 5.

[132] The idea that hospitality transforms us at multiple levels – intrapersonally, interpersonally, communally and societally – is developed in the section titled "We Are A Collection of Communities" below. See also: "Learning to Live in an Interrelated World" in Chapter 2.

[133] Some scholars argue that this passage is about the early church and its mission, reading concerns of expansion back into Jesus' life. See: Amy Jill Levine "The Matthean Program of Salvation History: A Contextual Analysis of the

Exclusivity Logia" Ph.D. Dissertation (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1984); and Mark Shipp, "Bread to the Dogs?: Matthew 15:21-28 and Tensions in Matthew's Understanding of the Gentiles," *Koinonia* 2 (1999): 107-129. According to Rhoads that larger story world that houses this story is about "the manifestation of the Kingdom" David Rhoads, 344. "The episode of the Syrophoenician woman fits tightly into the overall story, particularly in relation to the presentation of the Kingdom of God. The establishment of God's rule over the world is the force which drives the whole plot of the narrative." Ibid, 345. Myers and Horsley, among others, claim this story is about inclusion beyond the boundaries of Israel in God's liberating social order. Ched Myers 1988; Richard A. Horsley 2001. Rhoads sees this as part of the narrative of the advancing kingdom of God. David Rhoads 1994, 343-76. There are different ways of thinking about the pivotal way that this passage furthers the arrival of the kingdom of God. It can be viewed in imperial expansionist terms, as in the conquering of the Gentiles with the gospel. It can also be viewed as a radical reorientation of power relationships and economic relationships. "Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman defy first-century conventions of power and deference, suggesting potential renewal in the form of new commitments to social and economic cooperation. At the level of social signification, to transgress boundaries and to heal bodies challenges the status quo and reworks relations of power." Jane E. Hicks 2003, 83.

[134] Martin Luther King Jr. expressed the nature of mutual liberation in a favorite maxim of Frederick Douglass' that he often shared: "This is a struggle to save black men's bodies and white men's souls." Martin Luther King Jr., "The Un-Christian Christian" *Ebony* 20, no. 10 (August 1965), 80.

[135] Foucault partially acknowledges the larger flow that transcends the specific instruments, though he would not ascribe divinity to it. "Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 96. Perhaps we can see a parallel theological understanding of Original Power being present in creation through human and creational embodiment and yet also free flowing and not fully contained by the ways we gather, embody and institutionalize the gift.

[136] Ibid, 109.

[137] Foucault gets criticized for being disruptive without offering a better truth-claim or new norm. This can feel destructive without offering hope. For me, this critique of Foucault is rooted in the error of a dualistic understanding of power. If we believe that there is bad power to be judged and good power to be encouraged, we need some basis for distinguishing. I am arguing that there is stuck power and free power, but only one power. In this understanding, Jesus heals by exposing the frozen alignments that are hurting people. He is not comparing the frozen situation to an ethical norm as a basis of correction, but rather disrupting the patterns for the sake of freeing the flow of power for the sake of personal healing and of allowing love and creativity to move again for the benefit to all. This relates to Jesus' understanding of the truth. Truth is not something that can be apprehended, held, measured, seen and taken (i.e. commodified). It is a living relationship, as in, "I am the truth."

[138] Sometimes it seems that middle agents and elite are so dependent on this imperial way of ordering reality that when we realize we must relinquish this system we can only imagine death. Thus Levinas, in his unique Peter-esque form of bravery ("I'll follow you to the cross!"), sees it as his responsibility to die for the other. Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, Bettina Bergo, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 163. Guilt and fear are natural results of a middle agent and elite worldview that sees only parasitic empire or death. Hospitality (as an ethic of life that embodies God in human/creational form) takes up immeasurably more scriptural space than the story of the cross – including in the life and activity of Jesus. Yes, hospitality is risky and can threaten life. But that is only a small part of the story. Hospitality is a broad biblical ethical method that leads to construction of new worlds of shared power – that furthers the whole purpose of creation. Through the process of mutual emptying and opening to the living reality of God (through Christ consciousness), hospitality heals sick ecosystems of power (environments that strangle life), moving liberation through dyads to communities, webs of communities and systems.

[139] "The subsequent feeding of 4,000 Gentiles in the Decapolis is the outcome of this breakthrough [with the Syro-Phoenician woman]." David Rhoads 1994, 365. I've noticed this connection too. It is as if the feeding of the 4000 is an abundant celebration of the success of the dangerous hospitality with the Gentile middle agent woman. (Note how middle agents are lynchpins in the imperial economy of scarcity. See Chapter 3 for more on this.) When middle agents start allying with the eighty percent majority and commit to God's economy of gift, then abundance starts overflowing. Here in this second feeding, this is made manifest (embodied), with an overflow of joy, a celebration of the newness

emerging, including new kinds of relationships and solidarity that free the blessing of creation from those who would hoard and control it.

[140] "This miracle story is at the centre of three healing accounts (6:53-56, 7:24-30,31-37), which are preceded and followed by two feeding narratives (6:30-44, 8:1-10). From the perspective of Mark, after the inclusion of the Gentiles to the table of the kingdom of God, the gracious event of healing and feeding never stops and continues to repeat itself." Hyunju Bae 2004, 397.

[141] In its extreme, we think I must lose everything to do justice to the other. "I cannot respond to the call, the demand, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others." Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, David Wills, trans. (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1993), 68. No doubt, through a Christian lens, sacrifice and self-emptying are part of the story. But the larger story is that done right, these are a gateway to infinite abundance and joy in the body, in life. Successful hospitality opens whole new layers of reality for self and other that were inaccessible from our controlled imperial domain.

[142] There is a biblical and experiential relationship between authentic hospitality (true sharing of power among equals) and the unleashing of God's abundance in creation. "Many stories of hospitality contain elements of mystery and surprise because God is so often present in unexpected ways. Needy strangers turn out to be angels, beggars are somehow Jesus in disguise. Resources are in short supply yet miraculously sufficient; sometimes there is even abundance when what is available is shared. Many stories have their roots in Scripture, but they are frequently contextualized and retold through the generations. Contemporary practitioners collect their own sets of hospitality stories - stories of food that stretched miraculously or appeared just when needed, people who came unexpectedly and brought exactly the skills required that day, situations of risk that turned out to be filled with blessings." Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Locations 298-303.

[143] See "Learning to Live in a Fruitful World" in Chapter 2.

[144] See Appendix 8: A Few Biblical Examples of Hospitality and Appendix 9: Evolving Biblical Practices Related to Hospitality.

[145] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous." Matthew 5: 43-45. See also: Fretheim, Terence E. "God and Violence in the Old Testament." *Word & World* 24, no. 1 (2004): 18–28; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997); and Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

[146] "Images of God as gracious and generous host pervade the biblical materials. God provides manna and quail daily in the wilderness for a hungry and often ungrateful people. God offers shelter in a hot and dry land, and refreshment through living water. Israel's covenant identity includes being a stranger, an alien, a tenant in God's land - both dependent on God for welcome and provision and answerable to God for its own treatment of aliens and strangers." Christine D. Pohl 1999, Kindle Locations 218-221.

[147] "[T]he overarching 'grand narrative' of Israel's history is crucial. Embedded within the covenant between God and Israel was Israel's identity as an alien and its related responsibility to sojourners and strangers. God had called Abraham away from family and familiar land to be a stranger in a foreign land. There Abraham received God's promises that he would have offspring as innumerable as the stars and the land for his descendants to inhabit. In the midst of these promises, however, Abraham was warned, 'Know of a surety that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years' (Gen. 15:5-21). When Israel finally inherited the promised land after its sojourn in Egypt, God reminded the people that the land belonged to the Lord and that 'you are strangers and sojourners with me' (Lev. 25:23). They were to view themselves as aliens in their own land, for God owned the land and they were to be its stewards and caretakers, living in it by God's permission and grace." Ibid, Kindle Locations 345-353.

[148] "Writers in the New Testament portray Jesus as a gracious host, welcoming children and prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners into his presence. Such welcome startled and annoyed those who generally viewed themselves as the preferred guests at gatherings. But Jesus, God incarnate, is also portrayed as a vulnerable guest and needy stranger, one who 'came to his own home' and often received no welcome (John 1:11). In his life on earth, Jesus experienced the vulnerability of the homeless infant, the child refugee, the adult with no place to lay his head, the despised convict. This

intermingling of guest and host roles in the person of Jesus is part of what makes the story of hospitality so compelling for Christians. Jesus welcomes and needs welcome; Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality. The practice of Christian hospitality is always located within the larger picture of Jesus' sacrificial welcome to all who come to him." Ibid, Kindle Locations 221-226.

[149] "The epistles provide strong evidence for the practical importance of hospitality in early Christian life. Paul instructs believers to practice or pursue hospitality (Rom. 12:13), the writer of Hebrews reminds believers not to neglect hospitality (Heb. 13:2), the author of 1 Peter challenges the community to offer hospitality ungrudgingly (1 Pet. 4:9). Hospitality, in each of these passages, is a concrete expression of love - love for sisters and brothers, love extended outward to strangers, prisoners, and exiles, love that attends to physical and social needs. Within acts of hospitality, needs are met, but hospitality is truncated if it does not go beyond physical needs. Part of hospitality includes recognizing and valuing the stranger or guest. Hospitality is not optional for Christians, nor is it limited to those who are specially gifted for it." Ibid, Kindle Locations 389-394.

[150] Over the years in my work in racial reconciliation and interfaith relations, I've gone through a paradigm shift. I used to try to hide my identity, my thoughts, my fears, my particular beliefs and commitments – to entirely privilege the other. This served to avoid conflict. It also seemed like a reasonable way to make space for other views, other ideas, other ways of being that had been suppressed. Yet I began to realize that my withholding was blocking real relationship. Feeling this disconnect, I began sharing myself honestly and specifically (in ways that make space and seek out the truth of the other and privilege the truth of the other especially if their truth has been silenced). For instance, as a Baptist pastor I now openly discuss Jesus in spaces where people of other faiths are safe to fully express their specificities. With this shift, I am finding conflicts (and dialogues) surfacing and my capacity for holding ambiguity and unresolvability being stretched. I also am finding relationships deepening significantly. The challenge of this is that we do have complex identities and constellations of power, so we have to be alert to the power ecology around us and discern continuously whether we are taking up too much or too little space. Hospitality, in my view, requires selves (conscious of power disparities, desiring to see what we are missing, and seeking equality) to keep showing up to the encounter.

[151] This intersubjectivity and complexity of boundaries and harm makes abortion such an intractable issue. We try to resolve it through our neatly ordered worldview of individualism and rights. We wrestle with the individual rights of mothers and unborn children. Is the child part of the mother's body? Is her body her sole domain? Is the child an independent being? A separate domain? Yet the mother/child relationship (like all relationships when we look closely) is thoroughly interconnected and stubbornly refuses to be reduced and neatly categorized.

[152] The story of the Syro-Phoenician woman (and Christianity overall) is sometimes taken as a demand for a world without boundaries. Smith takes a different view. "Jesus' unexpected comment forces the reader to revisit the conclusions he or she may have drawn from Jesus' teaching in the previous pericope. In effect, this exchange serves to correct what may be a misinterpretation on the part of the reader. In declaring all foods ritually clean, and by traversing geographical, social and ethnic boundaries, Jesus is not declaring that such boundaries no longer exist. The point is rather that these boundaries no longer have the power to limit the coming of God's kingdom into areas and among ethnic groups where it was previously presumed to be absent." Julien C. H. Smith 2012, 477. The theo-ethical narrative of power being developed in this work takes a similar stance. Boundaries continue. They grow and evolve in a process of continual co-creation and are continually negotiated through an ethic of hospitality for the sake of mutual thriving and shared power.

[153] See "Jesus and the Demonic" in Chapter 2.

[154] Here I am mixing traditionally separate categories of evil: moral and natural. I suspect that our resistance to putting both in the same box comes from our blame project. We want to locate blame for suffering and evil. So we separate out large natural events that cause suffering, where assigning blame is difficult or impossible. Since I've set the blame project aside, I let evils that seem to be in our control, and evils that seem to be out of our control, overlap. See "Three Kinds of Chaos" in Chapter 1 and "Blame, Guilt, and Responsibility" in Chapter 3 for more on this subject.

[155] Ansell argues that the original introduction of evil into creation is a trespass by the first human creatures across the boundaries of their relationship with God – a breaking of covenant. John Nicholas Ansell 2001, 43.

[156] For more on idolatry see: Wink, Walter 1998; Bob Goudzwaard, *Idols of Our Time* (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 1989); Walter Brueggemann, *Israel's Praise: Doxology Against Idolatry and Ideology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988); Pablo Richard, ed., *The Idols of Death and the God of Life*, B.E. Campbell and B. Shepard, trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983).

[157] Hicks offers a connection between agency and border crossing that connects nicely with our larger theological narrative of power. "My analysis of the passage emphasizes moral agency in relation to underlying historical power dynamics, particularly those historical reconstructions that highlight ways that our assumptions about first-century gender and political economy shape the verbal exchange. By agency, I mean the capacity to effect change at the bodily, interpersonal, and social-ecological levels. Moral agency incorporates a dynamic, life-giving sense of power. Agency is a matter of creative and unfinished potential. Moreover, I use the rubric of 'border crossing' to capture the sense of agency at play in the Syrophoenician woman story and to relate agency to the social and economic constraints that may well have been assumed by early Christian audiences." Jane E. Hicks 2003, 77. In the constructive task of expressing this biblical narrative of power, I want to honor the radical re-centering of the other offered by Levinas and Derrida, while being careful not to relinquish personal responsibility for our agency and its effects. I am constantly aware of our middle agent urge to avoid overwhelming responsibility by pretending powerlessless. Hospitality guides us through this challenging territory by playing at the borders. By observing and learning from the effects of our creative agency, we develop seriousness and sensitivity about our God-gifted power. We begin to notice and care about where our choices (to relate/create/expand) heal and where they harm. Hospitality (as attentive use of our agency at the borders) is both concrete and ethical (taking form in daily encounters) and broad and theological (expressing our co-creative calling with God to play with the expanding boundaries of life).

[158] In the Hebrew priestly world, the categories of temple architecture and temple practices are a microcosm of the creation itself. The priest acts on God's behalf tending to the boundaries and keeping creation intact and in order. For more see: Scott W. Hahn and David Scott, eds.,*Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart* (Steubenville, OH: St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, 2008), 56ff; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 87-99; Jon D. Levenson, "The Temple and the World" *Journal of Religion* 64, no. 3 (1984): 283-284; Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19-20.

[159] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

[160] Wendell Berry, "Men and Women in Search of Common Ground" in *The Art of the Commonplace: Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), 136.

[161] Ibid, 140.

[162] For Berry, marriage is a core work of fidelity and covenant that is linked to the fidelity and covenant of families, societies and our relationship to the earth. "[M]arriage . . . looks both to our survival as a species and to the survival of our definition as human beings – that is, as creatures who make promises and keep them, who care devotedly and faithfully for one another, who care properly for the gifts of life in this world." Ibid, 139.

[163] For more on Berry's work on economy, see: Wendell Berry, *What Matters?: Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint 2010); Wendell Berry 2002; Wendell Berry, *Another Turn of the Crank* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 1995); Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1992); and Wendell Berry 1990.

[164] Wendell Berry, "The Idea of a Local Economy" *Orion: People and Nature* (Winter 2001).

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God.*(Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2002).

[168] Richard Lowery has pointed out that our current economy is based on 1) scarce resources; and 2) unlimited need. I shared these two assumptions with my congregation one Sunday and asked how it made them feel to think of the world this way. They said things like, fearful, anxious, and it made them feel like hoarding and protecting themselves. Lowery explains that the biblical assumptions about reality are the reverse: 1) abundant resources (plenty for all); and 2) human restraint. Cited in Ched Myers "God Speed the Year of Jubilee!" *Sojourners*, May-June 1998. This reframing helps us relax and share.

[169] For more on Dell's supply chain "innovations" see: Matthew Davis, *Case Study for Supply Chain Leaders: Dell's. Transformative Journey Through Supply Segmentation* (Stamford, CT: Gartner Research, November 12, 2010). For data on the

cost to the public sector of Walmart and McDonald's and other fast food industries, see: Clare O'Connor, "Report: Walmart Workers Cost Taxpayers $6.2 Billion In Public Assistance" *Forbes* (April 15, 2014); Clare O'Connor, "Reports: Fast Food Companies Outsource $7 Billion In Annual Labor Costs To Taxpayers" *Forbes* (October 15, 2013); and Barry Ritholtz, "How McDonald's and Wal-Mart Became Welfare Queens" *Bloomberg News* (November 13, 2013).

[170] Ezekiel 34: 18-19. Biblical hospitality challenges us to reconsider this approach to meeting our needs. The globe is acceleratingly connected. Our increase in consciousness tells us there is no "out there" – no "away" – to throw our trash in – to leave our poop in – to assign our suffering and pain to.

[171] As I deconstruct sick power structures (that is, structures that bind life) I do not want to suggest that we should abdicate the gift of power and opt out of aggregating power and create instruments for collectively deploying power. Building shared structures is a good creative endeavor as long as they don't secretly (or explicitly) cannibalize and destroy other communities. We need to continually take a step back and examine the instruments we've created and either modify or abolish them if their negative net effects cannot be corrected. In this way, we work on adapting and developing instruments for deploying collective power that always have the well-being of the most vulnerable in view, that liberate humanity and creation, and have zero or positive net effects. Naomi Klein makes a similar distinction: "I am not arguing that all forms of market systems are inherently violent. It is eminently possible to have a market-based economy that requires no such brutality and demands no such ideological purity. A free market in consumer products can coexist with free public health care, with public schools, with a large segment of the economy— like a national oil company— held in state hands. It's equally possible to require corporations to pay decent wages, to respect the right of workers to form unions, and for governments to tax and redistribute wealth so that the sharp inequalities that mark the corporatist state are reduced. Markets need not be fundamentalist." Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 24-26.

[172] The "cradle to cradle" movement is an example of this. William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (New York, NY: North Point Press, 2002).

[173] This extends the Derridean conversation in Chapter 1 on gift. All life is gift from God, and in receiving this gift we are called to be a gift.

[174] Were the United States to take an ethic of hospitality seriously we would have to drop the doctrine of exceptionalism. We would become national community among many, joining the dance of shared power. We would be evaluating our effect on other communities and the larger environment, and thus applying our best talent to finding solutions to our poisonous outputs, relentlessly pursuing new approaches until our net effects were positive.

[175] "[I]t is now possible to give a preliminary formulation of how we should understand our vocation: the work of humanity consists in the hospitable gesture of welcoming and enabling the whole of creation to share in the peace and joy of the divine life. It is a vocation that demands that we be attentive to those forces that would distort or disfigure life and so doom some elements of creation to a life of loneliness and suffering. If the work of creation is itself the loving gesture that frees creatures to live life fully, then the work of redemption must entail the fostering of those just conditions that make life possible. In other words, the work of justice must move from the ground up to include the whole of creation." Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), Kindle Locations 411-415.

Notes – Chapter 7: Maturing into a World of Shared Power

[1] Bruce Springsteen, "Jesus Was an Only Son" *Devils & Dust*, Track 8, Columbia Records, 2005.

[2] See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of middle agency.

[3] See the opening of Chapter 1 for more on the relationship of the cosmological and historical. See also: Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

[4] See the "Introduction & Methodology" for more on the chiastic structuring of this work.

[5] See "Distorted Creation Theology Supports the Domination System" in Chapter 1.

[6] See "A Hopelessly Flawed Humanity" and "A Disposable Creation" in Chapter 1.

[7] See "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.

[8] See Chapter 3, for more on middle agents as lynchpins.

[9] See "The Value of Disruption" and "Middle Agents Dislike Disruption" in Chapter 5.

[10] Luke 21: 5.

[11] 2 Corinthians 5: 20; Ephesians 6: 20.

[12] For the purposes of this work, I define eschatology as the broadest category of God's fulfillment of the purpose of creation, both present and ultimate. It is the theological exploration of the new creation being born in our midst. For the purposes of this work, I define an apocalypse as a form of Biblical literature that is "deliberately symbolic." Paul L. Redditt, "The Community Behind the Book of Daniel: Challenges, Hopes, Values, and its View of God" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2009), 321. Apocalypses involve unveiling or revealing the cosmological truth which includes a judgment against (and removal of) aspects of creation (including individuals, groups, political powers) that have grown false and unjust, most notably through oppressive and violent aggregations of power.

[13] For more information see: Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987).

[14] Through the millennia, groups have interpreted the scriptures to predict the imminent end of the world. Consider different scriptural messages: "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near – at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place." (Matthew 24: 33-34); "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6: 2); "Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." (James 4: 14). How do we reconcile the present sense of urgency with other places where Jesus says that no one knows the time or place? How do we reconcile fervent belief in *parousia* with the continued challenges of nurturing and sustaining life on earth?

[15] This term is taken from the title of the following collection of essays: Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds., *Liberating Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Letty M. Russell* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

[16] Letty M. Russell, *Becoming Human* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982), 41. See also: Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Theological Vision of Letty Russell" in Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds. 1999, 16-25.

[17] Letty M. Russell, "Anticipating New Creation" in *Becoming Human* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982), 39-42. See also: M. Shawn Copeland, "Journeying to the Household of God: The Eschatological Implications of Method in the Theology of Letty Mandeville Russell" in Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds. 1999, 26-46. "In short, Russell challenges the reader, indeed the church, to think *kairotically*." Ibid, 38.

[18] "[T]he eschatological constitutes the basic horizon from which she" practices . . . "what orients Russell's theology is anticipation of God's great reversal in a world of suffering and exile. This orientation explains Russell's regular graced encounters with Spirit-filled persons and communities of courage and hope. It defines her persistent reading of scripture against the grain – even the feminist grain. It explains her . . . refusal to surrender the Tradition to oppressors." Ibid, 38.

[19] Rosemary Radford Ruether 1999, 21-22.

[20] Ibid, 21.

[21] Russell, especially later in her career, clarified her conviction that non-Christian faith communities may have their own "memories of the future." Letty M. Russell, "Children of Struggle" in Hagar, Sarah, and *Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell, eds. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 185–97.

[22] Rosemary Radford Ruether 1999, 21.

[23] Russell here is consistent with other liberation theologians in holding survival, resistance (or in her words, struggle), and transformation together. For more on this, see "A Liberationist Narrative of Power" in the "Introduction & Methodology."

[24] Rosemary Radford Ruether 1999, 21.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Narratives: Creating a New Heaven and a New Earth" in Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds. 1999, 227-244.

[27] As we "flesh out the shape of the kind of new heaven and the new earth for which justice-seeking people hunger and thirst . . . we must privilege the lived experiences and visions of the poor and the oppressed." Ibid, 229.

[28] I come to a similar conclusion, when I argue that those living outside the "epistemological bubble" have more direct access to the social, political, and environmental facts on the ground, a greater awareness of the operation of power, and less of the mentally debilitating immersion in imperial narratives that middle agents experience. For more, see "The Epistemological Bubble" in Chapter 3.

[29] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 230. Those who do profit are "tempted to protect" existing structures.

[30] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, Revised Edition, Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, eds and trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988, original in 1971).

[31] Ibid, 92.

[32] Ibid, 101.

[33] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Toward a Theology of Liberation," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History,* Alfred T. Hennelly, ed. and trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 73. See also: Luis J. Pedraja, "Eschatology," in *Handbook of Latino/a Theologies*, Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre, eds. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006); Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Kingdom is at Hand" in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, James B. Nickoloff, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, Matthew J. O'Connell, trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991); Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Paul Burns, trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, Robert R. Barr, trans. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983); Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Reflections from a Latin American Perspective." in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge of Theology*, Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983); Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Freedom and Salvation: A Political Problem." in *Liberation and Change*, Ronald H. Stone, ed. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1977); and Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976).

[34] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 229.

[35] There is a strong sense of God's active authority as the trajectory of creation and our present lives. "What is at stake in Russell's theology is understanding – cognitively, morally, practically – that we live already under the authority of the Word of God. Under that authority, theology is liberated from biased or closed options, so that it might creatively anticipate and seriously participate in the building of the household of God. To live under that authority is to live a Christian life oriented absolutely in love and service toward God's design for the future." M. Shawn Copeland 1999, 38-39.

[36] Rosemary Radford Ruether 1999, 23.

[37] J. Richard Middleton, "A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Case for a Holistic Reading of the Biblical Story of Redemption" *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006): 73-74. This project is fully developed in his new book: J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2014).

[38] For more on a theology of continuous redemption of the present creation in his tradition, Middleton points us to: Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984); Al Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985); Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision of Creation Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001); Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *A Worldly Spirituality: The Call to Redeem Life on Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984); Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You do Matters to*

God (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); John Eldridge, *The Journey of Desire: Searching for the Life We've Only Dreamed of* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2001).

[39] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1917, 24-25.

[40] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1907), xiii. See also: Christopher H. Evans, *The Kingdom is Always but Coming: A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Donovan E. Smucker, *The Origins of Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Ethics* (Buffalo. NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); William McGuire King, "'History as Revelation' in the Theology of the Social Gospel" *The Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 1 (January 1983): 109-129; Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Righteousness of the Kingdom* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1968); Robert T. Handy, ed. *The Social Gospel in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1966); Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism: 1865-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940); Anna M. Singer, *Walter Rauschenbusch and His Contributions to Social Christianity* (Boston, MA: Gorham Press, 1926); Dores R. Sharpe, *Walter Rauschenbusch* (New York, NY: MacMillan Company, 1924); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Dare We Be Christians?* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1914); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York, NY: MacMillan Company, 1912); Walter Rauschenbusch, *The Social Principles of Jesus* (New York, NY: The Women's Press, 1907); and Walter Rauschenbusch, "Our Attitude Toward Millenarianism," *The Examiner* (September 24 and October 1, 1896).

[41] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), 117.

[42] Ibid, 124. See also: James T. Murphy, Jr., *Defining Salvation in the Context of Black Theology* (Xlibris, 2012); Dwight N. Hopkins and George C. L. Cummings, eds., *Cut Loose Your Stammering Tongue: Black Theology in the Slave Narratives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003); Luther D. Ivory, *Toward a Theology of Radical Involvement: The Theological Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997); Randall C. Bailey and Jacquelyn C. Grant, eds. *The Recovery of Black Presence: An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994); James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History. Vol. 1, 1966-1979*, 2d ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History. Vol. 2, 1980-1992* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); James H. Evans, Jr., *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992); Deotis, J. Roberts, *Black Theology in Dialogue* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1987); James H. Cone, "Black Theology in American Religion" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (December 1985): 755-71; James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984); Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Belief* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975); and John S. Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter Between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Conclusions* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[43] Joseph F. Super, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: The Social Gospel as a "Theology of Liberation"* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 100. See also: T. Howland Sanks, "Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel: Variations on a Theme" *Theological Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 1980): 668-682 and Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology" in *The Emergent Gospel*, Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978).

[44] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 236.

[45] For more see "The Hypnotic Quality of Internal Coherence" in Chapter 3.

[46] A charrette is an intense collaborative design process.

[47] Our cosmological approach includes both creation and eschatology, alpha and omega. Amidst the dynamism of creation we find an eternal aspect of God that is never changing. God is the same loving power-sharing open-ended gift throughout eternity.

[48] For more see "Original Power as Gift" in Chapter 1.

[49] See "The Wild Waters of Love" in Chapter 1.

[50] Here we encounter a paradox that lies at the heart of Christianity around the continuity and discontinuity of our historical existence. On one hand, according to our biblical understanding of the world, God is partnering (covenanting) with us to work out our story in history. On the other hand, our time and space bound story with its inherent continuities is wrapped in (infused with?) a transcendent and timeless reality that discontinuously breaks in – *kairos*

breaks into *chronos*. One way to think about this paradox is this: timebound reality is temporary and passing and thus of lesser concern. In this dissertation, I take a different view. For me, time-bound reality is the site of God's creative work and thus of central concern. History is the medium of our shared creative life. This view leads me to wonder, how can we (humanity) become a better co-creators with God in the realm of history? How can we learn to employ our freedom and the gift of Original Power with maturity, capacity, and grace? How can we make choices and joyfully create in ways that bring about more abundant and liberating futures for all creation? This leads to another Christian paradox. On one hand, we have the many (perhaps infinite) possible futures that are possible through the agency of human freedom and power. On the other hand, we have the ancient promise that God has already ensured full liberation. From this paradox I take a sense of full empowerment to live with freedom and responsibility. And, at the same time, I find, in all my myriad errors, a soul comfort that is perhaps expressed best by Julian of Norwich. "And thus in my folly, before this time, often I wondred why, by the great foresaid wisdom of God, the beginning of sin was not letted, for then thought me all should have been well. This stirring was much to be forsaken; and nevertheless mourning and sorrow I made therefore, without reason and discretion; but Jesu, that in this vision informed me of all that me needed, answered by this word, and said, 'Sin is behovely, but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.'" Julienne De Norwich, *Sixteen revelations of Divine Love* (London, UK: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1902, original 1373), 68.

[51] "Apocalypse proper is the literary genre dating from ca. 200 B.C. to A.D. 200." Daniel M. Gurtner, "Interpreting Apocalyptic Symbolism in the Gospel of Matthew" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 4 (2012): 532. "[A]pocalypses exhibit some or all of the following literary characteristics: visions, exhortations, pseudonymity, symbolism and interpreting angels. Apocalypses also share stock-in-trade concepts, including a periodization of history, the impending in-break of the divine, the reversal of bad conditions, and a cataclysm perhaps accompanied by cosmic upheaval and other 'signs.' This genre of literature was well-enough known that an ancient person beginning to read (or hear) Daniel would soon recognize the genre of the book and expect these features." Paul L. Redditt 2009, 322. A. Y. Collins adds key elements to the definition of apocalypse: 1) its function as an interpretive lens for present events in light of supernatural events; and 2) the application of divine authority to influence the views and behaviors of the listener. A. Y. Collins, "Introduction: Early Christian Apocalyptism," *Semenia* 36 (1986): 7. For more on apocalyptic literature see: Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, eds., *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2003); John J. Collins, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (Newark, NJ: Continuum, 2000); John J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1989); and A. Yarbro Collins, ed., *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986).

[52] Psalm 84: 1-3a.

[53] Sousa describes the following key features of Jewish apocalyptic literature: "Of course what distinguishes certain Jewish works as 'apocalyptic' is their focus on the 'disclosure' of heavenly secrets through divinely inspired visions, with these secrets often relating to the final overthrow of oppressive nations and evil forces by the God of Israel at the end of days. As David Aune points out, these revelatory visions or dreams are normally recounted by means of a 'first-person prose recital,' and John Collins helpfully emphasizes that a consistent motif of these visions is the appearance of an 'otherworldly mediator,' usually an angel, who aids the recipient's understanding and interpretation. Collins emphasizes, further, that the world view expressed in this literature is characterized by two crucial elements: '(1) the prominence of supernatural beings, angels and demons, and their influence on human affairs and (2) the expectation of a final judgment not only of nations but of individual human beings.' These crucial aspects signify a spatial dualism between the realms of heaven and earth as well as a temporal dualism between the present age and the age to come." Mathew E. Sousa, "The 'Johannine Thunderbolt' in Luke 10:22: Toward an Appreciation of Luke's Narrative Sequence" *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 101. Citing David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1989), 230; and John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 6, 9. See also: John J. Collins, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (Newark, NJ: Continuum, 2000). The following description of the apocalyptic genre was generated by the Society of Biblical Literature's Apocalypse Group in 1979: "'Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality that is both temporal insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world." While these descriptions indicate certain outward features of the apocalyptic form, I am not convinced that apocalyptic literature is always dualistic in its sense of time and space. As we begin to see the veiled political critiques that are embedded within the fantastic symbolic imagery of apocalyptic narratives, we precisely see a collapse of time and space. The discourse is brought directly into the here and now. I would argue that Jesus intentionally opens territory in this

contradiction, shifting a story that seems to talk about then and there to the present place and moment. In different ways, he keeps saying, the kingdom is instantiated in me before your eyes. Can you see it? It can be instantiated in you right now. Are you in? Sousa does ultimately address this contradiction in the gospel of Luke, saying, "Perhaps the most intriguing conclusion that emerges from our reading, then, is Luke's emphasis on the immanence of God. In the apocalyptic tradition, let us recall, God is often conceptualized as dwelling in the highest heaven, so that God is removed and distant from the world. In Apoc. Ab. 15-17, for example, it is only after an angel takes Abraham up 'to the heaven that is fixed on the expanses' (15:4) that Abraham shall see and worship the 'Eternal One' (17:8). 42 Similarly, in Apocalypse of Sedrach the protagonist wishes to speak with God but declares to the angel, regretfully, 'I am not able, Lord, to ascend into the heavens' (2:4). Such depictions intimate that it is because of God's distance from the world that 'heavenly mediators' are necessary; they serve as instruments for God's revelation . . . Thus, for Luke, a heavenly agent is not necessary for Jesus' apocalyptic vision because, in Jesus, God himself has invaded the cosmos. In the Son, through the Spirit (cf. 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:4), God is near and present with his people." Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 111. I would argue the paradoxes of transcendence and immanence (spatial unity/duality) and of now and later (temporal unity/duality) are not new in Luke. While Jesus draws them into clearer relief, these same paradoxes can be found in earlier apocalyptic discourses, especially when their political undercurrents are surfaced.

[54] For instance, Rossing and Hawkin see the book of Revelation as "ideological critique" of exploitive economy and "'New Jerusalem' as an ecological model." David J. Hawkin, "The Critique of Ideology in the Book of Revelation and its Implications for Ecology" *Ecotheology* 8, no. 2 (2003): 161-172 and Barbara R. Rossing, "River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Ecological Vision for Earth's Future" *Mission Studies* XVI-1, 31 (1999): 136-156. "The book of Revelation poses many problems for the reader. Its bizarre images are difficult to understand, and its lurid description of the horrors of the End make its theology difficult to accept. Revelation may be perceived in a new light, however, when we see that it is not so much about revealing the End as it is about unmasking the realities of the present." David J. Hawkin 2003, 161. "We are historical beings, that is, we live within the ravages of conditioned human existence. Historical events are embodied events: they take place within a physical world and therefore our very physicality determines who and what we are. The book of Revelation sees this in a profound way: it sees how human culture and the physical world are interrelated. That is why its criticism of Rome is so far reaching. Rome cannot be reformed piecemeal. Justice requires that there be a new heaven and a new earth. That means a new beginning not just for humans, but for the earth itself." Ibid, 170-171. This is precisely the genius of Scripture. It is simultaneously a story of human history and God's salvation history (historical and cosmological). It need not be reduced to one or the other.

[55] For more on "apocalyptic eschatology," see: D. C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and John J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 11. Rowland wants to separate eschatology and apocalypse, saying that the revelation inherent in apocalypse can reveal truths about present history. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 505. Cited in Daniel M. Gurtner 2012, 531. Another way of resolving Rowland's important point is to say that the "ends" of creation can be revealed and realized in the present. Thus eschatology is not a category confined to the future. We commonly say eschatology is already and not yet.

[56] While apocalypses often involve contact with a transcendent reality Mathewson points out that "some apocalypses contain ecstatic journeys to earthly locales. In Ezekiel 8:1-3 the seer is transported by a supernatural being (described in detail in v. 2) to the present Jerusalem, and later in 40:1-2 the seer is escorted to a high mountain in the land of Israel to view a city-like structure. Enoch's visionary tour also consists of transports to earthly locations in chapters 17-36. In Apocalypse of Zephaniah 2:1; 2 Baruch 6:3 the seer is transported above the city of Jerusalem to witness certain events. And in the canonical Apocalypse of John, the visionary is taken to view the destruction of Babylon/Rome (Rev. 17:1-3) and the descent of the New Jerusalem (21:9-10)." David Mathewson, "The Apocalyptic Vision of Jesus According to the Gospel of Matthew: Reading Matthew 3:16-4:11 Intertextually" *Tyndale Bulletin* 62, no. 1 (2011): 100. "[B]eing transported by a supernatural being to different locations (e.g. heavenly) for the purpose of a visionary experience is prevalent as a topos in apocalypses (Ezek. 8:1-3; 40:18; 1 Enoch 1-36; 52:3; 71:3; 2 Enoch 3-8, 10-21; 2 Bar. 6:3; 3 Baruch, Apoc Zeph. 2:1; Apoc Abr 15:2-3; T Abr 10:1; Rev. 4:1; 17:3; 21:9; cf. T Lev. 2:7-9). Moreover, in several apocalypses the seer converses with an angelic intermediary (Ezek. 40; 3 Baruch; 4 Ezra; T Abr 10-14; Rev. 17:6-18; cf. Plutarch, Lucullus 12:1-2)." Ibid, 104.

[57] Richard Horsley argues that apocalyptic literature of Mark is a historical commentary rather than a supernaturally fantastic prediction. "Mark's focus on historical conflict, between Jesus' renewal of Israel and Jerusalem and Roman rulers, requires reexamination of the standard view of Mark as 'apocalyptic.' The latter concept, constructed

synthetically a century ago from a somewhat literalistic and fantastic reading of certain ancient Judean scribal literature, implies an alienation from history and an orientation to some sort of 'cosmic cataclysm.'" Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xiv.

[58] Anathea E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011) and Richard A. Horsley, *Revolt of the Scribes: Resistance and Apocalyptic Origins* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010).

[59] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 383.

[60] Ibid, 382. "Enoch's visions provided ancient epistemological foundations for critique of Hellenistic imperial violence and claims to knowledge and power." Ibid, 387.

[61] Ibid, 383.

[62] Ibid, 383. "Apocalyptic revelations of divine providence, will and action summon readers to answer with corresponding awareness, commitment, and praxis." Ibid, 384.

[63] Ibid, 383.

[64] Ibid, xxiii.

[65] "Its map of the divine realm countered imperial cosmology." Ibid, 388. Apocalyptic literary forms "assert a universal authority against the ideology of empire." Ibid, 388. This is an assertion of power – a refusal to allow empire to determine the shape and meaning of reality.

[66] Bultmann sought to 'demythologize' apocalyptic literature, seeking to put these images aside so as to extract the gospel. Carey argues that while Bultmann is right to be honest about the problems this literature presents, he fails to address its central importance in shaping the "early Christian imagination." Greg Carey, "Luke and the Apocalyptic: Apocalyptic Discourse as Constructive Theology" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 9-34. Citing Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). Gurtner reminds us that the literal and symbolic are not mutually exclusive and symbols can contain layers of meaning that include both. Daniel M. Gurtner 2012, 534.

[67] To counter misinterpretation, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, advocates for a "prophetic eschatology" that is historical rather than discontinuous. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 228. With Anathea E. Portier-Young, I am inclined to see reality being re-framed. We don't have to choose between the prophetic/historical and the cosmological. They can be held together. The historical is not thrown away. It is given new meaning by a more powerful cosmology surrounding and infusing it.

[68] "Composed in the last third of the first century C.E., Revelation explicitly addresses itself to seven churches in Asia, what we would now know as western Turkey. These circles of Jesus followers inhabited some of the Roman world's most prominent cities, Ephesus foremost among them. Revelation poses a hard challenge for those believers, demanding absolute purity in the midst of a culture that it characterizes as both idolatrous and exploitative (Rev 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:8, 14)." Greg Carey 2013, 29. See also: Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Viking, 2012); and Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002). "Jesus commends the churches where they are faithful, comforts them where they suffer, and admonishes them when their fidelity lies in question. Each church receives a distinctive message: both encouragement and admonition for Ephesus (2:1-7), Pergamum (2:12-17), and Thyatira (2:19-29); comfort mixed with exhortation for Smyrna (2:8-11) and Philadelphia (3:7-13); and straightforward admonition for Sardis (3:1-6) and Laodicea (3:14-22). The literary structure of an apocalypse allows John to speak directly to each circumstance through the voice of the risen Jesus." Greg Carey 2013, 30. "For example, two dominant symbols, the Lamb and the Beast, portray the conflict between faithfulness to Jesus and acquiescence to Rome." Ibid. See also: Greg Carey, "The Book of Revelation as Counter-Imperial Script," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 157-76. "Through pictures John depicts the conflict between the Lamb and the Beast as a conflict of loyalty and worship. Lamb and Beast share certain resemblances, but one devours and acquires, compelling popular worship in return for the opportunity to eat (13:16-17), while the other offers life and liberation (5:8-10). One receives worship on the grounds of its apparent invincibility (13:4), while the other receives worship by bringing salvation (7:10) and shepherding his people (7:17). The symbolic nature of apocalyptic style allows John to contrast the Lamb with the Beast without ever having to spell out the argument discursively." Ibid, 31. "Revelation's visual rhetoric relies entirely upon the standard resources of apocalyptic discourse, notably the use of animals to represent human affairs. But this

visual rhetoric also advances a keen theological argument. The Beast's arrogance and violence instantiate what it means (for John) to acquiesce to the Roman way of things, while the Lamb's fidelity and worthiness provide an alternative locus for loyalty. This is the work of constructive theology." Ibid. See also: Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[69] For more, see "Three Kinds of Chaos" in Chapter 1.

[70] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 386.

[71] Ibid, 386-387.

[72] As we discussed in Chapter 5, the way of Christ is nonviolence. It is specifically anti-Christ when the Domination System takes hold of apocalyptic images created out of the imaginations of the most crushed out – images of resistance – images of the rightful fall of the Domination System and the freeing of God's children – and twists those images to create even more fear and domination.

[73] A reference to Luke 9: 54 which we will unpack below. I am cognizant as I write this section that my nation is literally raining fire down on my sisters and brothers from unmanned drones on the border of Pakistan. Jesus' jarringly specific "no" to our high-tech acts of terror rings across the millennia.

[74] "Scholars have long argued about the origin of apocalyptic literature. Specifically they debate whether it derived from prophetic or wisdom literature and whether it was basically an inner-Jewish movement or an import from surrounding cultures. The truth seems to have been that apocalyptic thinking abounded in the ancient Mediterranean and Middle East in the last few centuries BCE and influenced Jewish apocalyptic thought." Paul L. Redditt 2009, 322, footnote 10. Citing Robert R. Wilson, "From Prophecy to Apocalyptic: Reflections on the Shape of Israelite Religion," *Semeia* 21 (1981): 79-95. Bueller argues that "[w]hile both traditions [prophetic and wisdom] are represented in the book to a certain extent, the distinct elements of apocalyptic eschatology found in Daniel 8:23-25 and 11:1-45 suggest that their closest connection is with a literary genre from the ancient Near East known as Akkadian prophecy." Paul Buehler, "Daniel and Akkadian Prophecy: Exploring the Origins of Apocalyptic Eschatology" *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 2. "The tales and the visions of the Book of Daniel display a number of striking dissimilarities regarding their form and, most notably, their eschatology. The eschatology of the visions marks the emergence of apocalyptic literature in the Old Testament." Ibid, 19. "[I]t is most likely that apocalyptic eschatology developed into its final form in Daniel as the result of an exchange between Old Testament prophecy, Old Testament wisdom, and Babylonian prophecy. The similarities between the Dynastic prophecy and Daniel's visions potentially explain the presence of unique elements in Daniel that confound biblical commentators seeking the roots of apocalyptic within the traditions of the Old Testament alone." Ibid, 16.

[75] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 388.

[76] Ibid, 389.

[77] Ibid.

[78] "[Apocalypses] typically exhort the reader to proper conduct, as defined or depicted by the book itself. In Daniel, the desired conduct is portrayed by the behavior of Daniel and his three friends." Paul L. Redditt 2009, 322 footnote 3.

[79] Redditt argues that "the book of Daniel was collected and arranged by a group of scribes employed by the Seleucid government of Israel after 198 BCE, who perceived a threat to themselves in the actions of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, and retold narratives set during the Babylonian captivity designed to encourage members of the group as well as other like-minded Jews." Ibid, 321. "One may conclude, therefore, that the historical information contained in Daniel 11 is disguised and molded for the redactor's own purposes. This editing shows that he assumed his readers were familiar enough with the details to understand them *in code* and that he was really interested in the future downfall of Antiochus, which he describes *in code*." Ibid, 326. "If, as critical scholars contend, the book was written in the second-century, it was written to Jews under severe persecution, telling them to adhere to their faith. Why should they do so? Because Antiochus IV really was not God Manifest. Despite his pretensions and his army, he had died as predicted (11:40). It is not clear how many other people in Israel had predicted his demise, but if any others had their writings did not survive. The book of Daniel predicts the victory of God at just about the darkest moment anyone in the community could imagine." Ibid, 334.

[80] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 387.

[81] Hellholm points out the pastoral function of apocalyptic literature, providing a consoling function for a people in crisis. D. Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalypse Genre and the Apocalypse of John," in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, A. Yarbro Collins, ed. (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 27. Whether an image is scary or pastoral may depend on social location. "A view of God permeates the whole book of Daniel, but is rarely articulated. One exception, however, is Dan 7:9, which depicts God as an Ancient One, whose clothing is white as snow and whose hair is like pure wool. What is more, that figure sits upon a fiery throne and dispenses judgment. At first glance, it is not necessarily an appealing vision. Still, if one is an oppressed victim, it is a comforting thought that a power higher than one's oppressor will one day hold the oppressor accountable. Thus, a judgmental God is not necessarily negative." Paul L. Redditt 2009, 339.

[82] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 387.

[83] Cook accepts the historical reading of Daniel, but says this cannot "exhaust Daniel's meaning." This would be to "lose the prophetic quality of the text as a scriptural message about the future, a future lying open before contemporary readers. All the monstrous beasts of Dan 7 and 8 would end up as creatures that have already come and gone. The contemporary reader would be off the hook[.]" Stephen L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 140-41. Cited in Paul L. Redditt 2009, 327 footnote 24.

[84] "[A]pocalyptic language and imagery are by no means out of place within the larger Lukan narrative; apocalyptic literature and eschatology appear to belong to the presupposition pool of the narrative and its model reader." Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 100. (This is true of the two other synoptics as well. N.T. Wright argues that the gospel of Mark is an apocalypse that unveils or reveals Jesus' identity. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 620. For a review of apocalyptic symbolism in the gospel of Matthew, see: Daniel M. Gurtner 2012; and David Mathewson 2011. Kuhn argues that Luke is drawing on apocalyptic themes from the start of the gospel. "Luke either directly or indirectly drew on the text now partially extant in 4Q246 when composing Gabriel's announcement to Mary of Jesus' birth (1:3 lb-35). Finally, I propose that Luke's use of this text at the very point in his Gospel at which he establishes Jesus' divine sonship (Luke 1:31b-35) suggests, in tandem with other considerations, that Jewish apocalyptic traditions about a heavenly, eschatological redeemer served as important sources for early Christian understandings and expressions of the Messiah's divinity." Karl A. Kuhn, "The 'One like a Son of Man' Becomes the 'Son of God'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (January 2007): 25. Luke, by invoking the apocalyptic at the opening of gospel, is setting the core challenge before the reader. We are invited to see the present world (first century, twenty-first century, any century, any location) refracted through an apocalyptic understanding. There is apparently invulnerable world order of corrupt and sinful power that is being judged by God and thus falling away. And there is the apparently vulnerable people of faith in peril yet ultimately triumphant in the judgment of God who is bringing about a world of well-being and justice. Luke tells the story of the pregnancy and birth through this frame forcing us to locate ourselves in it. Will we choose loyalty to the crumbling imperial world order or the new world order of marginalized minorities led by the marginalized child king? The human one?

[85] "[T]he resurrected Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels as being able to walk through walls and perhaps materialize at will. Nevertheless, the resurrected Jesus is still recognizably the same person and even eats a meal of fish with his disciples on the beach—which suggests a fundamental continuity between creation and redemption. Likewise, a careful reading of 1 Corinthians 15 reveals that the discontinuity Paul emphasizes is between the body as corrupted by the fall and the body finally freed from the bondage of sin. That is, the primary reason why eschatological redemption differs from our present life in the world is that it entails the removal of sin and death." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 76. Referring to 2 Peter 3:10, 12-13, "While the text undoubtedly speaks of judgment and destruction . . . it describes the destruction, not of creation, but of sin, thus cleansing or purifying creation." Ibid, 89.

[86] Apocalypses present a challenge around questions of authority and authoritarianism – violence and nonviolence. In their capacity to support individual and communal integrity against systems of domination, they can also underwrite forms of personal and communal authority that are distorted and destructive. Of course, this is precisely the ambiguous terrain generated the gift of power to humanity that this dissertation seeks to navigate. Carey considers the way apocalyptic discourses raise questions of authority, animating public movements ranging from distorted and dangerous forms of authoritarianism to heroic acts of liberation within oppressive contexts. "We may stipulate that apocalyptic language is especially vulnerable to authoritarianism. Some prophets proclaim their own independent revelation, as in 1987 when Oral Roberts notoriously announced that God would 'call him home' if he could not raise eight million dollars before a specific deadline. Bible prophecy teachers devote page after page to explaining the self-evident nature of their approach to the Bible. The deathly outcomes of millenarian groups such as the Peoples Temple and the Branch Davidians attest to apocalyptic rhetoric's destructive potential." Greg Carey 2013, 32. "We recognize that the

authoritarian rhetoric of Paul and Revelation has eclipsed the broader range of Christian voices within their churches. Less obviously, we also face challenges with authority in contemporary theologizing. When, if ever, is it appropriate to stand one's ground, to name some things as right and good and others as wrong and sinful? Modern heroes like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., and Aung San Suu Kyi have done so, some for Christian and others for humanitarian reasons. To some degree apocalyptic discourse challenges us with the question of our own authority in dangerous times." Ibid, 33.

[87] Matthew 11: 5-7.

[88] Matthew 15: 21-18.

[89] Mark 7: 24-30.

[90] See Chapter 6 for a detailed exegesis of the Marcan story of the Syro-Phoenician woman. For more on the Matthean version (the Canaanite woman) endnote 33 in Chapter 6.

[91] Carey sees apocalyptic as a paradigmatic form of constructive theology. It has an inherent flexibility that serves diverse purposes in diverse contexts. "In performing the work of constructive theology early Christians frequently drew upon apocalyptic discourse. Many contemporary readers associate apocalyptic literature with scare tactics: the threat of judgment either motivates repentance or kindles enthusiasm. On the contrary, early Christians applied apocalyptic argumentation to a variety of situations and to diverse ends." Greg Carey 2013, 22. Carey develops his case by looking at the way apocalyptic images are deployed in the Pauline letters. He also discusses the way the Lukan Jesus uses apocalyptic imagery constructively to discuss the falling of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C. E. Ibid 27ff. Mjaaland addresses the ongoing constructive nature of apocalyptic thinking as it takes shape in different contexts, specifically the way it takes shapes in Reformation movements. This also leads to questions of liberating and damaging forms of authority that apocalypticism seems to simultaneously underwrite. "This apocalypticism is not identical with the apocalypticism of the first or the sixteenth century, but apocalypticism has never remained identical with itself! It is apocalyptic exactly in terms of its trans- formative power and its ability to accommodate to political, religious and existential experiences under rather different circumstances. And our modest inquiry into this issue shows that such apocalypticism may have massive political consequences, for good or for bad." Marius Timmann Mjaaland, "Apocalypse and the Spirit of Revolution: The Political Legacy of the Early Reformation" *Political Theology* 14, no. 2 (April 2013): 172. This could be seen as paralleling the thesis of this dissertation. We must take our power and authority seriously because it has serious consequences. Thus we need to mature into spiritual adults who claim our God-given power and deploy it for liberation, participate in constructing the narratives that shape our lives, and to support the most vulnerable and God's emerging vision for our world. See also: Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland, eds. *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classic Themes* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2005).

[92] John 7:53 - 8:11.

[93] He drinks water with a Samaritan woman, and sends her off to evangelize her village. John 4: 4-26. In a teaching about loving one's neighbor, he uses a Samaritan as the example of good neighbor. Luke 10: 29-37.

[94] Luke 9: 52-55.

[95] Luke 9: 54.

[96] "[T]he revelation of divine power in human weakness has profound political consequences." Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 387.

[97] 2 Kings 1: 3 -14.

[98] Genesis 19: 1-29.

[99] Genesis 18: 1-16. This passage as a whole may be specifying hospitality as the way to transform violence into nonviolence.

[100] Luke 9: 62.

[101] Lang argues that Luke 17: 22 is an "*antanaclasis*, which is a form of rhetorical wordplay in which the same (or a similar) term is repeated, but in two different senses. According to this reading, Jesus introduces his discourse to the disciples (vv. 22-37) with the prediction that in the coming days they will desire to 'see' (as in witness) one of the days of

the Son of Man but they will not 'see' (as in comprehend) these days when they occur among them so long as they fail to understand that suffering is primary to the Son of Man's identity. Such a reading coheres with the larger Lukan theme of the blindness of the disciples to the necessity of Jesus' passion. T. J. Lang, "'You will desire to see and you will not see [it]': Reading Luke 17.22 as Antanaclasis" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (March 2011): 281. Lang goes on to argue that the passage is therefore not about *parousia* as normally thought, but rather about Jesus' followers not seeing the suffering that is involved in the passion and cross. While I agree that the Lukan theme of blindness is present here, I would argue that what is not being seen is the old order being thrown over and God's order coming to fruition via the meek and vulnerable and their divine leader, the human one, the Christ. While commitment to the new order (not looking back) and consequent suffering at the hands of the old order with its blind leaders is part of the picture, it is not by any stretch the larger message of Luke. Luke is not talking about a singular date in the immediate future of the world completely physically coming to an end, but about an always present (and globally evolving) revolution of consciousness and subsequent shift in allegiance and deployment of power. It is an evangelical call to participate in a whole creation utterly transformed. In this sense it is thoroughly apocalyptic.

[102] Nonetheless, I agree with Lang that there is a connection between the warnings about not turning back and the events of the passion: "On the day of the Son of Man's apocalypse, temptations to betrayal will reach demonic proportions. Jesus urges his followers to leave behind possessions and to refuse the enticement to secure their livelihood through acquisitions. In the case of Judas, such temptations lead to his undoing. Satan will seek to overtake the rest of Jesus' followers as well (22.31). Even Peter, though his faith is ensured by Jesus (22.32), will deny him and depart (22.62). Jesus' warnings here in 17.31-33, therefore, foreshadow the incidents that unfold in ch. 22, where issues of security, betrayal and departure sever the disciples from Christ and themselves from each other." Ibid, 296. This is a particular warning to middle agents who tend to gravitate to the falling powers for security, rather than God's new world order of full human inclusion, dignity, well-being, and justice (where the lofty are brought low and the poor lifted up), when life looks shaky.

[103] See "Seeing and Taking: The First Act of Commodification" in Chapter 2.

[104] Matthew 15: 23.

[105] Luke 22: 42.

[106] Luke 21:5-25.

[107] Walsh and Middleton exegete the Matthew passage commonly used to argue the rapture (24: 36-41) which recalls "the days of Noah" before saying that some will be taken and some will be left here in creation. They convincingly show that, contra rapture theology, the unfruitful are taken and the fruitful remain in creation. Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1985), 103-105. (They actually say "un-Christian" are taken, which seems a bit anachronistic to me since Christianity did not exist at the time. I have modified that to the Biblical language and imagery of fruitfulness which I think is truer to the Scripture. See Chapter 2 for more on the Biblical theme of fruitfulness.) In his more recent essay, Middleton says: "[W]hen Jesus introduces the eschatological equivalent to the days of Noah (in verses 40-41) it is clear from the analogy he draws that the ones taken are the unrighteous, to judgment . . . If we doubt this interpretation, we need only turn to Luke's version of this text, for he follows the narrative of one taken and one left (in 17:34 and 36) with a question from the disciples in verse 37. 'Where, Lord?' they ask. That is, where are they taken? Jesus replies, 'Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.' This is clearly a reference to judgment; the image is certainly not of 'heaven.'" J. Richard Middleton 2006, 95. "The image Jesus alludes to is the valley of Ben-Hinnom (gai-ben-hinnom or Gehenna), southwest of Jerusalem, which had become the city dump in the Second Temple period, used for incinerating garbage, dead animals and executed criminals. In the Old Testament the valley of Ben-Hinnom is associated with idolatry and child sacrifice (by burning) to Baal or Molech." Ibid, footnote 39. Referring to the other primary passage used to support the concept of rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), Middleton says: "Paul is here drawing on the Greco-Roman custom of apantēsis ("meeting"), indicated even by his own use of the verb *apantēsin* ("to meet") in verse 17. As Gene Green has aptly pointed out, 'this was almost a technical term that described the custom of sending a delegation outside the city to receive a dignitary who was on the way to town.' It was customary for people to vie for pride of place in meeting the dignitary, hence Paul's assurance that Christians who had already died would not be inconvenienced at this great event; rather they would rise first (and perhaps even be the first to meet the coming King). Most importantly, explains Green, the custom was that those who went out to meet the dignitary returned with him, escorting him in grand procession into their city. In this case, this means an escort to earth." Ibid, 94-95. Citing Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 226.

[108] The exorcism of the demonic and the falling of the powers are deeply integrated in the ministry of Jesus. "In the foregoing narrative [prior to Luke 10], the exorcism of demons has been an important feature of Jesus' ministry; Jesus casts out demons 'with authority and power' (ἐν εξουσία και δυνάμει; 4:36; cf. also 4:38-41; 6:18; 7:21; 8:26-39; 9:37-43). It is in fact in relation to his exorcisms that Jesus pronounces the arrival of the kingdom of God (11:20). Here, however, the demons are said to be subject even to Jesus' followers (v. 17). This is due, no doubt, to the fact that, like his commissioning of the twelve, Jesus has given to the 72 authority and power 'over all demons and to cure diseases' (9:1; cf. 10:9). Jesus has indeed given them authority 'over all the power of the enemy' (ἐπι πασαν την δύναμιν του ἐχθροῦ, ν. 19; cf. Acts 1:8). Jesus is thus the locus of the power of God (1:35; 4:14; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 11:20; Acts 2:22; 10:38). Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 104. For more, see "Jesus and the Demonic" in Chapter 2.

[109] Luke 21: 19.

[110] For more on "The Recalcitrant Investor" see Chapter 3.

[111] For more on "The Epistemological Bubble" see Chapter 3.

[112] Ezekiel 31: 1-14.

[113] "[A]nd the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale." Revelation 6: 13.

[114] Luke 20: 20-26.

[115] This is a reiteration of Luke's effort to prepare people of soft hands (and good intentions) for hard labor. This remains a highly relevant issue today. So often, here in Rochester, someone's heart is moved by the struggles of our families living in poverty. Maybe they imagine grand schemes. Maybe they just decide to get involved in a school. Over and over people get closer to the situation, realize the depth and complexity of the challenges, get overwhelmed and disappear. Living in the city we watch a parade of well-meaning helpers come, try to whip up enthusiasm, wonder why they encounter cynicism, and then disappear. I am generally a raving optimist. Yet, recently, I caught myself speaking in extreme and stern terms to a person I know with great plans for the children of our city. My bottom line was this. The closer you get, the harder the problems are. Expect to be shaken to your core. Expect to be broken down. Don't waste anyone's time if you are going swoop in with your big ideas and then walk away when the going gets tough. I was surprised to hear my hard tone. I spend my life encouraging people's creative ideas. But I do not want to see one more empty shell of a program or one more disappointed child wondering if it is their fault that someone they came to trust went back to their manageable life in the suburbs. I suspect that this is the kind of tough truth coming through these passages in Luke.

[116] "Coppola holds many of her scenes for beats longer than you may be used to, where the images remain the same but your reactions to them are allowed to run the gamut." Dayna Papaleo. "Back to Life." Movie Review of "Somewhere." Written and Directed by Sofia Coppola. City Newspaper. Rochester, NY. February 2-8, 2011.

[117] "[I]n Luke 21:25-28, the coming of the Son of Man, which will occur at 'the end' (τὸ τέλος; 21:9), is said to be preceded by a period of tribulation. During this time, a great 'distress' will befall the nations of the earth (συνοχὴ εθνών; v. 25), with people fainting from fear over 'what is coming upon the world' (v. 26). Such tribulation or 'cosmic crisis' is an essential element of apocalyptic literature and thought (cf., e.g., Dan 12:1; 1 En. 91:5-17; 2 Bar. 25:1-4; cf. also Isa 24:19 LXX; Joel 2:10). Let us recall, too, that in Rev 12:12 such a period of tribulation is the result of the fall of Satan." Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 108. "These comments highlight only a small sample of apocalyptic themes and motifs in Luke-Acts. More could be said, for example, about the cosmic battle between God and Satan that unfolds within the Lukan narrative (see, e.g., Luke 1:71,74; 4:1-13; 8:12; 11:14-26; 13:16; 22:3; Acts 5:3; 10:38; 26:18). Ibid. "This expectation of final judgment is a dominant theme in the Lukan narrative (see, e.g., 3:7-9; 6:24-26; 11:31-32; 12:4-5; 13:22-30; Acts 2:20; 24:25)." Ibid, 108, footnote 35. "The depiction of God as 'King' is also a prevalent theme in apocalyptic literature (see, e.g., Dan 7:9,13-14; 1 En. 9:4; 25:1-7; 84:2-5; Rev 11:15-17; 12:10; 15:3)" Ibid, 108, footnote 36.

[118] Luke 21: 30.

[119] Luke 21: 34-36.

[120] Matthew 24: 36; Mark 13: 32

[121] "Rather, salvation seems to be a movement toward salvation in the midst of the trials of existence, one moment of peace and tenderness in the midst of daily violence, beautiful music that calms our spirit, a novel that keeps us company,

a glass of beer or a cup of coffee shared with another. These give us the desire to keep on living." Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 124.

[122] John 15: 5.

[123] From the tower of Babel to the monarchy and empires, unproductive deployments of power pass away. Torah ethics teach us how to live amidst the drama – jubilee economics, welcoming strangers, unbinding others, welcoming new ideas and allowing our old calcified ways of thinking to get shaken up, shifted, and changed by the likes of Jesus.

[124] To the early writers of apocalyptic literature, it looked like empire would destroy the created order, covenant, and holiness itself. It looked like the evil of empire had "power over life and death." Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 389. Telling a different story allowed them to reframe and locate themselves on God's path, that is, to orient life to God's story rather than the imperial story. They "could behold a future for humankind, Jerusalem and Judea, earth and heaven, marked by justice, righteousness and joy." Ibid.

[125] Matthew 13: 24-30.

[126] Mark 9: 14-29.

[127] Deuteronomy 32: 35; Romans 12: 19.

[128] Matthew 25: 31-46.

[129] Mark 3: 25.

[130] Isaiah 7: 24.

[131] "Redemption does not reverse, but rather embraces, historical development. The transformation of the initial state of the earth into complex human societies is not part of the fall, but rather the legitimate creational mandate of humanity. Creation was never meant to be static, but was intended by God from the beginning to be developmental, moving toward a goal. Nevertheless, while there is thus a certain discontinuity between eschatological redemption and the original state of creation, it is important to emphasize that redemption in the Scriptures is the restoration of God's *creational intent* for humanity and the world, including the development of culture and society through humanity's interaction with the earth." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 76.

[132] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Hannah Arendt's concept of natality.

[133] This is, of course, epitomized in resurrection.

[134] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of Jacque Derrida's concept of gift.

[135] "Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Ephesians 3: 8-9.

[136] "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." Jeremiah 29: 11.

[137] The call to witness takes shape in each of the four gospels. In Matthew we have the great commission. Matthew 28: 19-20. In Luke, there is a progressive sending out of people, leading into the central mission of the book of Acts articulated here. In John we find Mary, the apostle to apostles, proclaiming "I have seen the Lord." John 20: 1-2, 11-18. And Mark tells us to go back to Galilee and look again. There is a sense that if we are going to do our job as witnesses, we had better get a better view and understanding of all that has occurred in the ministry of Jesus. Other biblical examples of witness include: Isaiah 6: 8 (Whom shall I send?); Acts 27: 17-18 (Sending you to open their eyes); and 2 Corinthians 5: 20 (Christ's ambassadors).

[138] For guidance on what this looks like in our modern context, we will turn to the life and thought of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

[139] See "Descent into Poverty, Violence, and Empire" in Chapter 2.

[140] For more on the corrupted role of the temple as a mechanism of extracting resources from the poor, see endnote 20 in Chapter 3. For an extended discussion of the temple, see: Appendix 4: Middle Agents and Imperial Structures in the First and Twenty-first Centuries.

[141] Mark 3: 23a-27. See "Empires Collapse" in Chapter 2 for a more on this passage.

[142] "It is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Other America" A speech delivered at Grosse Pointe South High School (Grosse Pointe, MI, March 14, 1968).

[143] Middleton challenges to see creation and its redemption holistically. "It is important to distinguish, first of all, how *creation* is understood in Scripture from its conception in the modern western worldview (beginning in the Renaissance), since this has impacted how we tend to use the term. The tradition of modernity typically limits creation to 'nature' (the non-human, plus the body), as distinct from the human realm of freedom, which is thought to transcend nature. Creation in the biblical tradition, however, includes human society and culture in all its complexity and fullness, along with our earthly environment[.] J. Richard Middleton 2006, 74. Middleton also asks us to consider the scriptural non-dualistic understanding of redemption. "In Scripture, redemption is conceived most fundamentally as the reversal of the fall and the restoration of God's good purposes from the beginning. By way of contrast, in our dualistic philosophical inheritance from Plato, redemption is conceived as transferal from a lower, inferior realm (variously understood as body, earth, matter, nature or the secular) to a higher, more valued or esteemed realm (understood as soul, heaven, spirit, the realm of grace or the sacred). This dualistic assumption is often simply superimposed over biblical texts that address redemption and so leads to a distortion of the Bible's message. Whereas a dualistic understanding of redemption typically devalues the good world God created and encourages an aspiration to transcend finitude, the biblical worldview leads to an affirmation of the goodness of creation, along with a desire to pray and work for the redemption of precisely *this world* (including human, socio-cultural institutions) that earthly life might be restored to what it was meant to be." Ibid, 74-75.

[144] Romans 8: 18-23. "Utilizing the model of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, Paul here portrays salvation first (in verse 21) as liberation or setting free from bondage, and this is applied to creation itself and also to humanity (described as the sons/children of God). It is because the human race implicitly takes the place of Pharaoh in Paul's picture (subjecting creation to frustration) that non-human creatures await human liberation." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 89.

[145] Genesis 18: 9-15.

[146] Isaiah 41: 18; 43: 19.

[147] Ezekiel 37: 1-14.

[148] Luke 1: 26-36.

[149] Psalm 29: 7-9.

[150] John 3: 8.

[151] See "The Predicament of Middle Agents" in Chapter 3.

[152] Jesus talks about eschatology in terms of birth pangs, e.g Matthew 24: 8. The Greek word *odin* can be translated sorrows or birth pangs. Other passages that express the participation of the cosmos in the birthing of the new creation include Amos 8: 9 and Matthew 24: 29.

[153] John 3: 4.

[154] There is an increasing speed and intensity in times of judgment as unfruitfulness passes away and the new creation is being born. Daniel 12: 4; Zephaniah 1: 14; The Book of Revelation.

[155] You can't change your mind and go back into the womb. There is only one direction to go when we are being born.

[156] This can be an incredibly humbling process. We may find ourselves like the creatures that try to shelter their lives in the splintered cedars of Lebanon. Ezekiel 31.

[157] One day I found myself in a conversation with a church member who was lamenting the ways our church has changed since the 1950s. As we talked, he surprised me by changing gears suddenly and saying: "I will change. We all will change. We will be forced into being more open and loving. It is a natural law, like gravity."

[158] Ephesians 3: 1-12.

[159] King stands in a tradition of biblical prophets who feel passionately called to embody what has been revealed to them. For example: Isaiah 20; Jeremiah 13, 27, and 28; Hosea 1 and Ezekeiel chapters 1-5.

[160] There is scholarly debate on the influence of various streams of thought on King's theology and actions. Several of the main streams are: 1) African American intellectual, religious, and preaching tradition in his upbringing and throughout his life; 2) Social Gospel tradition; 3) Personalism (largely encountered at Boston University); and 4) Ghandian non-violent action. "[L]ong before King was introduced to the term 'personalism' he had already developed two chief personalistic convictions: 1) that God is personal, and 2) that because persons are created by and imbued with the image of God they necessarily should be treated with dignity and respect." Rufus Burrow, Jr., "The Beloved Community: Martin Luther King, Jr and Josiah Royce" *Encounter* 73, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 39. "However, I would caution us to remember that King was more of a theological realist than some have been aware. That is, despite the strong personalist influence, that of theological liberalism, and that of social gospel ideas King had a keen awareness of the prevalence of human sin, individually and collectively; an awareness that he had long before he read Reinhold Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society, and The Nature and Destiny of Man in seminary and graduate school. He had seen racism at work when he was a youngster and knew even then that it was contrary to the best in the Jewish and Christian traditions. He knew that racist behavior was a result of human sin, and that God was not pleased. Therefore King refused to pretend otherwise. In light of his awareness in this regard we should remember King's theological realism, i.e., his understanding of the depth of human sin on every level of human achievement in the world. This sense came from the influence of his own first hand boyhood and adolescent experiences with social evils such as racism, as well as the influence of his father and maternal grandfather. He was also much influenced in this regard by his Morehouse College mentors and professors, including Mays, Kelsey, Samuel Williams, and Walter Chivers." Ibid, 45. For more on the influence of African spirituality in King's work, see: Lewis V. Baldwin, *Never to Leave Us Alone: The Prayer Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 2010); and Hak Joon Lee, *We Will Get to the Promised Land: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Communal-Political Spirituality* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006). For an analysis of King's rhetoric and a resulting exploration of King's internally and externally plural identity, see: Jonathan Rieder, *The Word of the Lord is Upon Me: The Righteous Performance of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). For more on King's theological anthropology see: Richard Wayne Wills Sr., *Martin Luther King Jr. and the Image of God* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009). For more on King's theology and practice, see: Willis Jenkins and Jennifer M. McBride, eds, *Bonhoeffer and King. Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010); Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race and American Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Rufus Burrow, Jr., *God and Human Dignity: The Personalism, Theology, and Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville, KY Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1998); Ralph Luker and Penny Russell, eds. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Called to Serve*, Volume 2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Peter Albert and Ronald Hoffman, *We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King and the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1991); James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991); James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986); John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Making of a Mind* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982); Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1982); and Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride toward Freedom* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1958).

[161] "He was impatient with phrases like 'human dignity' and 'brotherhood of man' when they did not find concrete expression in the structures of society." Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr. "Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community." Christian Century, April 3, 1974, 361-363.

[162] Ibid. Citing "Honoring Dr. Du Bois" *Freedomways,* VIII, (Spring 1968), 110-111.

[163] Ibid. Words are easy. Embodiment is not easy. To King's frustration, a number of his white clergy colleagues found it hard to move from verbal testimony to embodied testimony. They were reticent to put their bodies where their hearts

were and embody what they had seen. The risks were too great. Like Peter denying Jesus, they were unable to respond when called upon. See: Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from the Birmingham Jail* (April 16, 1963).

[164] King's eschatologically-shaped life generates similar questions of authority and authoritarianism that the original eschatological literature created. See endnote 86 on authority and authoritarianism above. For King and the movement, legitimate society-altering vision and action (that breaks current oppressive laws and norms) emerges from an eschatologically-centered praxis. "There is an interesting correlation between [King's and Bonheffer's] interpretations of the ontological shape of reality in the incarnate one, and the structure of the moral and loving universe. In both arguments, Christians are meant to obey the call of God on our lives today, pushing back against contemporary manifestations of social evil, and calling us to healthy community guided by Christ-centered claims. Those claims may require us to defy legalized injustice and contradict popular moral norms. Following Christ makes the moral arc more than an ideal. It is not a what or a how, but a who . . . When disciples observe Christ's behavior in context, law-breaking and norm-defying behavior is not sin. He who is performing the work of delivering love is the standard and the norm. He does the things that seem to the onlooker to be sin, yet he is consistently enacting delivering love. He is concomitantly the standard of judgment and the final judge. He is the lawbreaker, judging our social standards, disrupting practices of injustice and political oppression for the sake of justice, restoration, and a new relationship between God, humanity, and the 'Beloved Community.'" Reggie L. Williams, "Bonhoeffer and King: Christ the Moral Arc" *Black Theology* 9, no. 3 (November 2011): 367. Dr. King in thought and body engages in a courageous public confrontation with the demonic in our society. I think of him and members of the movement as social exorcists. Yes, he always understood love to be the basis of his confrontations and worked to spiritually form members of the his arm of the movement in the discipline of nonviolence. He went so far as to constantly teach people to love those who were violent toward them. And he sought to have all his actions serve the liberation of both oppressed and oppressor (what Letty Russell calls "a revolution where everybody wins"). At the same time, he never held back in telling the truth about structural evil and he never stopped directly challenging those who actively perpetuate it and those who passively stand by, and he got increasingly intense about this as his public life progressed.

[165] Theocracy Watch was established to document this phenomenon: http://www.theocracywatch.org/

[166] Middle agents need to be especially suspicious of a distorted evangelism that claims gospel with no cost or where "others" pay all the costs. Regarding King's statements that suffering can be redemptive: "King's Personalist teachers also articulated this view. Frequently when people cite King's oft quoted words, 'unearned suffering is redemptive,' they mistakenly conclude that for King this meant that suffering as such is redemptive. Nothing could be further from the truth. According to King unearned suffering must be made to be redemptive by sustained and determined nonviolent struggle against it. The oppressed must struggle to eliminate the causes of their suffering with the intention of moving in a more determined way toward the beloved community." Rufus Burrow, Jr. 2012, 63-64. "King was not attracted to an interpretation of love as sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice. The protests led by the Montgomery Improvement Association, and the Southern Christian Leadership Council, had deliverance as their goal. In a sermon that he delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church September 16, 1962, King echoes the argument for a Christian praxis of delivering love, in the face of Southern racist hate, by claiming that agape love is 'Christian love, it is...the love of God operating in the human heart... The greatness of it is that you love every man, not for your sake but for his sake...you love every man because God loves him, and so it becomes all inclusive.' Delivering love does not practice racial discrimination. It is an 'all-inclusive' drama that seeks the well-being of all of God's beloved." Reggie L. Williams 2011, 361-362. Citing Martin Luther King, Jr. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume VI Advocate of the Social Gospel, September 1948-March 1963*, 437.

[167] See "The Demonic is Dynamic" in Chapter 2.

[168] Matthew 2: 1-12.

[169] "[T]here are certain things in our nation and in the world which I am proud to be maladjusted and which I hope all men of good-will will be maladjusted until the good societies realize. I say very honestly that I never intend to become adjusted to segregation and discrimination. I never intend to become adjusted to religious bigotry. I never intend to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism, to self-defeating effects of physical violence . . . I'm about convinced now that there is need for a new organization in our world. The International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment – men and women who will be as maladjusted as the prophet Amos. Who in the midst of the injustices of his day could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.' As maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln who had the vision to see that this nation would not survive half-slave and half-free. As maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson who in the midst of an age amazingly adjusted to slavery

would scratch across the pages of history words lifted to cosmic proportions, 'We know these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator certain unalienable rights' that among these are 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' As maladjusted as Jesus of Nazareth who could say to the men and women of his day, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Pray for them that despitefully use you.' Through such maladjustment, I believe that we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man into the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice." Martin Luther King Jr., A speech delivered at Western Michigan University, Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections and University Libraries (December 18, 1963).

[170] Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr. 1974.

[171] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountaintop" Delivered at Mason Temple, Church of God in Christ Headquarters in Memphis, TN (April 3, 1968).

[172] Lauren F. Winner, "Divine Manifestations" *Sojourners* (January-February 2003).

[173] For a discussion of "epistemic humility" and curiosity see "Three Preparatory Practices" in Chapter 6.

[174] Luke 10: 17.

[175] Looking at Luke 10, Sousa is curious how Jesus is both invoking and revising the apocalyptic tradition. "[F]ew have given much thought to how Jesus' vision and speech both reflect and push back against the Jewish apocalyptic tradition . . . My contention is that, when vs. 17-20 are read in light of the apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism, the result is a new figuration of meaning [this refers to Hollander's concept of new meaning generated through intertextual echoes] that suggests an intimate relation between Jesus and God [this statement that seems out of place in Luke that 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' in verse 22 is called the 'Johannine Thunderbolt']." Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 99. Citing John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), ix. Sousa argues that the 'Thunderbolt' is actually the climax for the listener who is immersed in apocalyptic thinking. Here Jesus, rather than pointing to a supernatural intermediary, is claiming direct authority for himself. This is a revelation that breaks the usual model and shocks the senses. "[T]he lack of an otherworldly mediator underscores Jesus' omniscience: Jesus perceives and comprehends divine realities without divine aid. Although Jesus' disciples marvel at the power of God now operating though them in Jesus' name (10:17), Jesus knows of the triumphant and redemptive activity, hidden from all others, to which such power points, namely, the demise of Satan and his grip over creation." Mathew E. Sousa 2013, 110. Sousa draws the parallels between Luke 10 and Daniel, especially Jesus' declaration that he sees Satan fall like lightning. "[T]his intertextual echo with the book of Daniel does more than simply aid our interpretation of Satan's fall [as a visualized future event vs. an accomplished reality]. It also illumines our understanding of the type of speech that Jesus utters: the use of ἐθεώρουν suggests that Jesus' pronouncement is a 'first-person prose recital' of an apocalyptic vision, in which anticipated eschatological events (that is, Satan's fall) are disclosed . . . From this perspective, Jesus' vision of Satan's fall denotes not only eschatological salvation but also a period of tribulation, and such an outlook is reminiscent of the eschatological expectations found in the book of Daniel. In Dan 12:1 LXX, a day 'of tribulation (θλίψεως) unlike any other from [the time] when [the people] were born until that day' is said to occasion the time when 'all the people will be exalted, whoever has been found written in the book' (see also Dan 12:1 MT). The mention of those who have been 'written in the book' (εγγεγραμμένος εν τω βιβλίω) parallels Jesus' exhortation for his followers to rejoice over the fact that their names 'have been written in heaven' (ἐγγέγραπται εν τοῖς ούρανοῖς; Luke 10:20). Ibid, 105-106.

[176] Luke 10: 18-21

[177] See Chapter 4, "Torn Between Two Banquets" for more on the relationship between Herod and John.

[178] Martin Luther King Jr. "Conquering Self-Centeredness" A sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL. August 11, 1957.

[179] Ezekiel 37: 1-14. Other scriptures that call us to speak and bring the good news include: Psalm 89: 15 (blessed are those who acclaim you); Isaiah 62: 11 (behold salvation); Mark 1: 1 (proclamation); Matthew 10: 27 (proclaim from the rooftops); Acts 1:8 (be witnesses); and Romans 10: 15 (beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news).

[180] Anathea E. Portier-Young 2011, 389. This telling gets below the surface. "[W]hat could be seen on the surface told only part of the story." Enoch "empower[s] the righteous for effective testimony that would transform the current order," supports "resistance through knowledge," and encourages "preaching." Ibid, 388-389.

[181] Scriptures on preparing the way and expressing a sense of a path include: Isaiah 35: 8; Isaiah 40: 3; Isaiah 57: 14; Isaiah 62: 10; Mark 1: 2-3; Matt 3: 1-3; and John 1: 29-42 There is a pointing to something beyond us. The magi had their own religious ideas and their own ideas of kingship. Yet they were ready to stop everything in their lives and follow the star into entirely new territory. The crowds who gathered with John on the banks of the Jordan thought John was the answer, the great prophet. But John said no, I am pointing the way. Someone greater is coming.

[182] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountaintop" Delivered at Mason Temple, Church of God in Christ Headquarters in Memphis, TN (April 3, 1968).

[183] Mark 5: 25-34.

[184] Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Young India* (August 20, 1925).

[185] See "Middle Agents and the Location of Power in the 21st Century" (especially the sections on The World Social Forum, Arab Spring and Occupy) in Chapter 4 for discussion of this subject.

[186] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 234. With raised consciousness, we "can still manage to save or create small spaces where they can operate according to their own criteria."

[187] Ibid, 239.

[188] In light of the Occupy Movement (see Chapter 4), it is interesting to refer to Levinas' use of the term occupy. What is the space we occupy? What does it mean to allow the stranger to occupy our domain? To be made central? What does it mean for the people to physically occupy space in the increasingly privatized public domain? Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonso Lingis, trans. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 38-39.

[189] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 234.

[190] "In Latina culture a network of relationships is essential for any person to survive and develop fully." Ibid, 235-6. There is a need for "a moral space in which Latinas can analyze their identity, place and actions within the Latino community and society at large." Ibid.

[191] In Chapter 4 discusses the World Social Forum and the Occupy Movements as spaces that foster the emergence of suppressed voices and experiences. On one hand, the idea of being a space rather than a movement is a 21st century innovation. On the other hand, this spatial function is at the heart of Hebrew faith communities, the Jesus Movement and the Pauline churches.

[192] Liberation happens at the level of conscience. Domination-oriented narratives seep into the consciences ("the feelings and thought processes") of "grassroots people." We are tasked with "creating a 'cosmos of meaning' from which new consciousness and creativity can arise." Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 234.

[193] "Although we often think of hospitality as a tame and pleasant practice, Christian hospitality has always had a subversive, countercultural dimension. 'Hospitality is resistance,' as one person from the Catholic Worker observed. Especially when the larger society disregards or dishonors certain persons, small acts of respect and welcome are potent far beyond themselves. They point to a different system of valuing and an alternate model of relationships. Today, some of the most complex political and ethical tensions center around recognizing or treating people as equals." Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), Kindle Locations 691-694.

[194] Derrida takes a similar strategy to that of eschatological communities cropping up like invasive weeds in the interstices of empire. He similarly envisions "cities of refuge" that can employ a more ideal form of hospitality being free from the more extreme constraints of national and international law. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Michael Collins Hughes and Mark Dooley, trans. (New York, NY: Routledge Publishing, 2001), 4-8.

[195] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 234.

[196] The scholarly and practical debates on hospitality turn on questions of domain or home. What is our home? What are we protecting? This is a real sticking point for the social theorists. See: Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle*

Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond, Rachel Bowlby, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 53-55. (See Chapter 6 for more on Derrida and hospitality.) The pain of hospitality comes because of the invasion of my home. Scripturally this question is resolved. Human beings own nothing. We are tenants in God's vineyard. We are protecting the values and interests of God in the household of God. See Exodus 19: 5; Deuteronomy 10: 14; Leviticus 25: 23-28; Psalm 24: 1; Job 41: 11; Mark 12: 1-9; Luke 20: 9-16; and 1 Corinthians 10:26. From this foundational theological assumption, eschatological community is the place where the radical hospitality of God in all its messiness is modeled and ethically worked out.

[197] In these creative spaces newness can emerge. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz 1999, 234. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Matthew 18: 20.

[198] See "Net Effects" in Chapter 6.

[199] The Pauline letters get deeply involved in the dramas of early house churches, and their messy efforts to bridge social divides and model the realm of God in their midst. We are invited to this community-centric experimental life, whereby we become the true church, embassies of God's Kingdom in the midst of empires. By this effort we find our place in the always emergent network of sacrifice and love that is Christ's body on earth. The Pauline writing as a whole is centrally concerned with this project. Particular examples include: Romans 12: 3-5 ; 1 Corinthians 10: 31-33; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26; Ephesians 1: 18-23; Ephesians 5: 25-32; Colossians 1: 17-20; Colossians 3: 14-16. See also: 1 Peter 2: 9-10.

[200] For church witness as "incarnate presence" see: Jennifer M. McBride, *The Church for the World: A Theology of Public Witness* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[201] "For Augustine the paradigmatic political reality is neither the well-ordered state nor the church. Instead it is the eschatologically fulfilled City of God in which human beings shall possess eternal peace 'in [them]selves, among [them]selves, and with God.'" Bradley B. Burroughs, "Reconceiving Politics: Soulcraft, Statecraft, and the City of God " *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2013): 51. Citing Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, R. W. Dyson, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), XXII, 29. "Few in our contemporary world have more clearly exemplified what such an Augustinian politics might look like in practice than Martin Luther King Jr. Orienting and animating King's political activism was an eschatological vision of perfected political life that he referred to under numerous titles, including the 'Kingdom of God' and the 'new age.' Still, King's most distinctive and remembered way of speaking of this eschatological polity was as the 'Beloved Community.' Ibid, 56. "In his second year of seminary King wrote an essay in which he said: 'The Kingdom of God will be a society in which men and women live as children of God should live. It will be a kingdom controlled by the law of love.' He went on to say: 'God, the great architect, chose this world as a site on which to build a wonderful structure; a global union of real brothers sharing in his good gifts, and offering all achievement as a form of worship to him.'" Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Christian View of the World" in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Called to Serve*, Volume 2, Ralph Luker and Penny Russell, eds. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 283-4. Cited in Rufus Burrow, Jr. 2012, 51. As his public life progressed, the Beloved Community remained the motivation and telos of King's efforts. "For a long time scholars on King have argued — rightly in my judgment —that the concept of the beloved community is the chief regulating principle of King's theological social ethics. This is the view of Lewis Baldwin, Ira Zepp, Jr. and Kenneth Smith, for example. I share this view, and therefore I often find myself asking my students what this or that belief, idea, or action has to do with King's doctrine of the beloved community. What does it contribute toward establishing the beloved community? What place does racism, heterosexism, sexism, classism, or ableism have when we invoke the beloved community nomenclature? Do they have a place at all? Aren't these contradictions when seen in relation to the beloved community ethic?" Rufus Burrow, Jr. 2012, 44. Responding to: Dwayne Alexander Tunstall, "Royce and King on Agape and the Beloved Community" Invited presentation for Joint Group Session of the Society for the Philosophy of Creativity, the Personalist Discussion Group, and the Society for the Study of Process Philosophy at the 2005 American Philosophical Association Meeting, Chicago, IL (April 29, 2005). For more on King and Beloved Community, see: Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005); Ralph Luker, "The Kingdom of God and the Beloved Community in the Thought of Martin Luther King, Jr." in *Ideas and the Civil Rights Movement*, Ted Ownby, ed. (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 39-54; Walter E. Fluker, *They Looked for a City: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideal of Community in the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989); Lewis V Baldwin, *Toward the Beloved Community: Martin Luther King, Jr. and South Africa* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1995); John Cartwright, "The Social Eschatology of Martin Luther King, Jr.," in *Essays in Honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited John Cartwright, ed. (Evanston, IL: Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary, 1971); Greg Moses, *Revolution of Conscience: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Philosophy of*

Nonviolence (New York: Guilford Press, 1967); and Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967).

[202] "For example, pressed to clarify the goals of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in light of the rise of the Black Power Movement, near the end of June 1966 he asserted that neither political nor economic power is an end in itself but rather that both are 'ingredients in the objective that we seek in life. And I think . . . that objective is . . . the creation of the beloved community.' In King's vision, this community would unite all people in a peaceful and flourishing kinship, overcoming the scourges of hatred and violence that plague human existence." Bradley B. Burroughs 2013, 56. Citing David J. Garrow 1986, 488. "Because of his awareness of the depth of human sin, selfishness, and pride he recognized that we would not likely achieve all that the beloved community ideal requires. However, because he also saw a fundamental goodness in human beings he was convinced without doubt that through mutual cooperative endeavor persons and God could achieve infinitely higher degrees of what the beloved community ethic requires. We can be sure of King's rejection of any notion of inevitable progress toward the beloved community. Any progress, he held, will be the result of intensive, relentless effort and struggle." Rufus Burrow, Jr. 2012, 46-47.

[203] Matthew 9: 37; Luke 10: 2.

[204] On food movements, see: Will Allen, *The Good Food Revolution: Growing Healthy Food, People, and Communities* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012); Peter Ladner, *The Urban Food Revolution: Changing the Way We Feed* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers Cities, 2011); and Slow Food International, [http://www.slowfood.com, accessed November 26, 2014]. On alternative currencies, see: Hans-Martin Zademach and Sebastian Hillebrand, eds., *Alternative Economies and Spaces: New Perspectives for a Sustainable Economy* (Bielefeld, DE: Transcript Verlag, 2014); Bernard Lietaer, *The Future of Money: Creating New Wealth, Work and a Wiser World* (London, UK: Random House, 2001). On timebanking, see: Time Banks USA, [http://timebanks.org, accessed November 26, 2014].

[205] Internationally, our little Baptist church in Rochester, NY has been developing meaningful relationships with friends at Jitokeze Wamama Wafrika in West Pokot in Kenya, [http://www.jitokeze.org, accessed November 26, 2014]. and Iglesia Bautista Shekina in Santa Ana in El Salvador among a variety of other international networks that are regularly part of our lives. Through offering hospitality to one another in our homes and developing person to person relationships that run deep into our communities, our love, our understanding of grassroots history in other places, and our consciousness of our shared destiny has grown tremendously.

[206] When considering the architecture of the local, I appreciate the way Joel Salazar at Polyface Farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia thinks. He layers systems within systems, so that each one produces value and has no waste. He calls these mini-systems "holons". He soundly demonstrates what I began to see in the most successful factories I visited in my prior career, that there are techniques and "architectures" for working locally that can generate all our needs and unlock the vibrant abundant nature of creation. Literally the soil and earth can get better and healthier every year as it produces all our needs. This requires relinquishing the creation-deadening approach of mass production, mono-cultural thinking, and mega solutions, and settling into our very particular and fertile corners of creation. For more information see: [http://www.polyfacefarms.com, accessed August 10, 2012].

[207] 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27; Romans 12: 4ff.

[208] Isaiah 2: 4. The reverse occurs in Joel 3: 10.

[209] For more on Original Power, see Chapter 1.

[210] Heltzel examines the "theories of radical democracy offered by Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of the beloved community and Antonio Negri's vision of the multitude." Peter Heltzel, "Radical (Evangelical) Democracy: The Dreams and Nightmares of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Antonio Negri" *Political Theology* 10, no. 2 (April 2009): 287. See also: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004); and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). For more on Hardt and Negri, see the endnotes in "Empire" in Chapter 2. "Negri's dream of the multitude and King's dream of beloved community have been shaped by different conceptions of radical democracy." Peter Heltzel 2009, 287. "King's and Negri's dreams were the products of two very different social and theoretical contexts. While King's vision was produced in the context of the U.S. black freedom struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, Negri's vision was produced in the context of the Italian worker's struggles in the 1960s and 1970s. From the bus boycott in Montgomery to the protests of sanitation workers in Memphis, King and the black freedom movement not only fought for racial justice in the United States, but also animated global struggles against racial oppression, economic exploitation, militarism, and imperialism."

Ibid, 288-289. "Despite their similarities, the differences between Negri and King are substantial. While both King and Negri advocate a politics of love with a focused critique of imperialism and a rapacious capitalism, their democratic dreams clash. Negri advocates an atheist politics of immanence while King advances what I term an evangelical politics of transcendence . . . While Negri works out of a tradition of Italian Marxism, King works in a critical tradition of prophetic evangelicalism. With roots in the Black protestant church and radical social movements, prophetic evangelicalism espouses a Christocentric vision of social and cultural flourishing based on a critical reading of the Bible informed by an ethic of the Kingdom of God. It is this tradition of prophetic evangelicalism that provides King, and by extension religiously informed political radicals in contemporary society, with the critical resources necessary to develop a robust emancipatory politics and political vision of a truly radical democracy." Ibid, 289.

[211] "Framing the flight from empire as an 'exodus,' coupled with Gospel writers' constant reference to Jesus preaching to the 'multitudes,' unveils underlying Christian theo-logics in Hardt and Negri's a-theistic vision . . .The biblical tropes of exodus and new creation inspire Hardt and Negri to dream big. Their democratic dream is the creation of a new humanity. Their dream is to create a new global political subjectivity that is focused and powerful enough to overthrow the forces of empire. While they refer to it in many different ways, e.g., 'a new social body,' 'a new mode of life,' and 'a new community' it can be summed up in one word—multitude." Ibid, 292. While they want the largeness of biblical vision to counter the largeness of empire, "At the bottom Hardt and Negri's vision is a refusal of transcendence, a rejection of God. Without God, violence and anarchy become 'legitimate' means toward realizing the equality of all people. Yet these violent political tactics themselves contradict the egalitarian ideal that is supposed to guide the desires of the multitude." Ibid, 295. For more, see: Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx,* Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano, trans. and Jim Fleming, ed. (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1984), 173; and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri 2000, 91-2. "For King, God created all people in the divine image (imago Dei) and the universe is founded on God's justice. Thus, every person is sacred, unique, dignified, and loved by God and thus must be fully and meaningfully incorporated into the human community. Thus, King's vision of beloved community finds its fullest expression in the transcendent and immanent love of God." Peter Heltzel 2009, 297. "While Negri accepts a certain level of violence as a necessary part of revolution, King views violence as the death of the very possibility of democracy. To physically harm or kill someone is to disregard the God-given sacredness of the individual person. Theologically, to kill someone made in God's image and reflecting the image of Jesus Christ is an assault on the living God. In King's theo-politics, the beloved community can only be achieved through nonviolent love." Ibid, 299-300. "The very nature of love as King understood it, however, required sustained attention to the cultivation of character as a politically important task, something Niebuhr consistently overlooked. Chronologically, soulcraft preceded engagement in the politics of statecraft for King because he was convinced that it provided the basis for creating positive social change. Hence, he desired that civil rights protestors first be trained in the discipline of nonviolence, participating in courses that taught 'both the theoretical aspects of nonviolence as well as the practical application,' subjecting them to 'the experience of being roughed up' so that they might practice responding nonviolently in ways that contributed constructively to changing oppressive governmental policies." Bradley B. Burroughs 2013, 58. Citing King, "Kenneth B. Clark Interview" in James M. Washington, ed. 1991, 336-237.

[212] See "Community Organization and Globalizing Grassroots Movements" in Chapter 4.

[213] See "Which Master Will We Serve?" in Chapter 4.

[214] See "The Wild Waters of Love" in Chapter 1.

[215] Hak Joon Lee compares and contrasts the global ethics of King and Küng focusing on King's concept of "The Great World House." Hak Joon Lee, "Toward the Great World House: Hans Küng and Martin Luther King Jr. on Global Ethics" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 29, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2009): 97-119. Among other sources for King, she draws on: Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967). For Küng, she draws on: Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1993); Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1993); and Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. 1998). See also: Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Toward Global Ethics," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 33; and Barry K. Gills, ed., *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Publishers Ltd., 2002). "In the last years of his ministry, King applied his nonviolent method to the international realm. King proposed nonviolent action as an alternative to violence in resolving conflicts and social injustices in the global society." He acknowledges that building global communities of communities "requires the removal of structural injustices and reconciliation among different peoples including the repentance of the rich nations through the adequate compensation of their colonial pasts for the people of the third world . . . He declared that 'one of the most powerful expressions of nonviolence may come out of that

international coalition of socially aware forces, operating outside governmental frameworks.'" Hak Joon Lee 2009, 111. Citing Martin Luther King Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?* 1967, 173-186; and Martin Luther King Jr. *The Trumpet of Conscience* 1967, 63. "In many respects, it was King's devotion to the Beloved Community that inoculated him against premature satisfaction with the limited gains of the civil rights movement and ultimately inspired his larger pursuit of human rights for all people, energizing his opposition to the Vietnam War and his organization of the Poor People's Campaign." Bradley B. Burroughs 2013, 56. "King's ethics offers rich insights and resources to construct a plausible form of global ethics that integrates theory and practice. Having grown out of his actual intense political engagements in a grassroots community, King's ethics not only addresses the major problem of Küng's global ethic, the problem of volition and implementation, it also adequately explains the dynamics and interdependent relationship of global ethics and a global civil society. King's civil rights, economic justice, and peace movements were enacted in a nascent global civil society, using society's various dynamics, mechanisms, and organizations (such as global media, nongovernmental organizations, liberation movements, human rights laws, international bodies, coalitions) for political and moral change." Hak Joon Lee 2009, 103.

[216] "While Küng's ethics avoids any metaphysical explication of the ultimate end of history and humanity, King is not afraid of speaking of the great world house as the common end of humanity; he knew that humanity in a global society needs a common vision, a shared sense of the good." Ibid, 105. "As the international application of his idea of the beloved community, which King used during his struggle for civil rights in the South, the idea of the great world house consists of two dimensions: metaphysical and practical. Practically, King's idea of the great world house is a response to the reality of the increasing interdependence of the world's communities. That is, as the world shrinks into a single living place (a global village) through 'time and space compression,' the vision of the great world house offers the common vision that guides and coordinates various human activities. He declared: 'We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to live together—black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu—a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live with each other in peace.' King argued further that the world house could not be realized by one race, one religion, or one nation alone; it required mutual alliances and voluntary collaboration among different races, religions, and nationalities beyond narrow loyalties and partial interests." Ibid, 111. Citing Martin Luther King Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?* 1967, 167; and Martin Luther King Jr., *The Trumpet of Conscience* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1967), 6.

[217] Isaiah 55:8; Job 42:1-17.

[218] Jeremiah 29:11.

[219] Letty M. Russell 1982, 41.

[220] Terry Gross, "Interview with Saul Perlmutter" *Fresh Air* (NPR, November 14, 2011).

[221] For more on Jacque Derrida and his concept of gift, see Chapter 2.

[222] "Far from being the end or cessation of history, this is history's true beginning, free from the constraints of human violation either vis-à-vis God, other humans or the earth itself." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 86.

[223] Isaiah 11: 6-9; Isaiah 65: 17-25

[224] Jeremiah 32: 27.

[225] Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown, *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1998), 6.

[226] "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." Revelation 21: 1. "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." Isaiah 65: 17. "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished." Matthew 5: 18. "He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever." Psalm 78: 69 "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" 2 Corinthians 5: 17. Middleton says that his point "is certainly not to deny the existence of heaven. There is, indeed, an important role for heaven in the biblical worldview. In Scripture, the term 'heaven' (or the 'heavens') represents, first of all, part of the created universe: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). In this context, 'heaven' certainly refers to that aspect of creation understood to be more transcendent (the realm beyond ordinary human access). This is why Scripture portrays

heaven as the throne of God—with earth as God's footstool (Isaiah 66:1- 2), an image, paradoxically, not only of God's transcendence but also of God's immanence (since he has chosen to dwell within the created order)." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 41. "Heaven is also the realm—in contradistinction to earth—where God's will is perfectly accomplished prior to the eschaton. This is the assumption behind the prayer Jesus taught his disciples: 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6:10). It is the biblical eschatological hope that one day God's salvation (which is being prepared in heaven) will be manifest fully on earth. Then earth will be fully conformed to heaven." Ibid, 96. "The common assumption of the New Testament is that heaven is the place where salvation is being prepared for the faithful, until God's kingdom comes in its fullness. [Middleton references: Matthew 25:34; John 14:1:3; Acts 3:21; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5:1- 4; Philippians 3:20:21; Colossians 1:5; Hebrews 11:16; 1 Peter 1:3:5; Revelation 3:12, 21:2.] Quite consistently, the New Testament describes salvation (sometimes described as a city, a building, a kingdom or an inheritance) as being 'prepared,' 'kept' or 'reserved' for Christians in heaven (where their citizenship presently is), only to be revealed at the last day—on earth." Ibid, 93.

[227] Isaiah 42: 1-25.

[228] Ephesians 2: 14.

[229] Galatians 3: 28-9; See Chapter 4 for more on middle agents and chasms.

[230] See Chapter 6 for an extended discussion of hospitality.

[231] Exodus 23: 10-11; Isaiah 55: 1; Isaiah 58: 5-8; John 10: 10.

[232] "[T]hey shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid" Micah 4: 4.

[233] Acts 4: 32-5.

[234] Revelation 21: 4.

[235] On Sabbath rest: Leviticus 25: 1-7 (land keeps Sabbath); Matthew 11: 28 (I will give you rest). The flipside is barrenness and deadness where there is no Sabbath/divine connectivity e.g. Leviticus 26: 32-4.

[236] Fertility returning is part of eschatology. Jurgen Moltmann notes that exile happens because of failure of Sabbath for the land as expressed in 2 Chronicles 36: 19-21. Empires turn "fruitful lands into deserts." Jurgen Moltmann, "Liberating and Anticipating the Future" in Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones, eds. 1999, 201. The spirit makes the land fruitful. Isaiah 32: 15-18. The stories of Pentecost and Revelation Chapter 21 draw connections between the spirit, fertility, and God's fulfillment in creation.

[237] Scriptures on restoration are pervasive in the canon. It is important to notice that restoration is generally understood to be a new, transformed and healed reality, moving into the future, not a replica, or return, to the past. Some examples include: Psalm 103:1-5; Isaiah 65; Isaiah 61:7; Jeremiah 30: 1-24; Joel 2: 22-26; Job 42: 10; Zechariah 9: 12; Luke 18: 29-30; Acts 3: 19-21. For more, see "Creation as a Cul-de-Sac" in Chapter 1.

[238] I Corinthians 13: 12.

[239] Moltmann encourages us to "throw it open and afresh" and expect God's creative energy. Jurgen Moltmann 1999, 197.

[240] "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1.

[241] Middleton reads Revelation through the lens of the plotting of the redemptive history of Israel: "In John's eschatological vision of worshipers around God's heavenly throne, we discover a group of heavenly creatures singing praise to the Lamb who was slain and who is 'standing' in resurrection victory. The Gentile mission that was inaugurated with the call of Abraham/Israel is here portrayed as complete—the nations have received the blessing of salvation. Therefore, the worshipers sing to the Lamb: 'You are worthy because you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God members from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).' Here, once the subplot of the sending of Israel has been successful and the nations have received the blessing of salvation, the redeemed human race will once

again utilize their God-given power and agency to rule the earth as God intended—a renewal of the human cultural task, but this time without sin." J. Richard Middleton 2006, 85.

[242] Revelation 22.

[243] 1 Corinthians 15: 28.

[244] "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb." Revelation 21: 23.

[245] "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city." Revelation 22: 1-2.

[246] "The home of God, rather than being a heaven far removed from our plight, is here. God sees fit, as John's Apocalypse reminds us, to move the holy city to earth, for 'the home of God is among mortals' (Rev. 21:3). Jesus Christ is not merely God's representative. As the one through whom creation is brought about, God's presence and power have been established on the earth in the most intimate way. In the work of the Holy Spirit, that presence abides and continues in the faithful, careful work of the church." Norman Wirzba 2003, Kindle Locations 339-342. "The very description of the New Jerusalem as a bride 'prepared' for her husband should remind us of Jesus going to 'prepare' a place for the disciples [John 14: 1-3]. Indeed, both preparations take place in heaven. In Revelation 21, however, the New Jerusalem (which is both a holy city and the people of God—that is, redeemed humanity in their concrete socio-cultural, even urban, character), comes down out of heaven. Here it is very clear that the final, permanent dwelling place of God with humanity is on earth. Indeed, one chapter later we are told (in Revelation 22:3) that in the New Jerusalem—which has come down from heaven to earth—there will no longer be any curse (Genesis 3 will be finally reversed). Instead, God will be enthroned there (on earth) and God's servants (according to verse 5) will 'reign forever.'" J. Richard Middleton 2006, 91.

[247] See "Holy Homemaking" in Chapter 1.

Notes – Conclusion

[1]"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Matthew 10: 16.

Notes – Figures

[1] The term "integrity of creation" is drawn from Walsh et al 1995.

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APPENDICES

In the introduction to this dissertation, I described the process of sketching a theo-ethical narrative of power as an architectural design process. In keeping with this methodological metaphor, these appendices serve as study models. Sometimes in a design process, it helps to carve out a portion of the big problem and look at it more closely, patching together models or drawings of the particulars of the chosen area. This is an explorative technique that shifts the creative mind between scales. It calls upon the designer/builder to pause and work out an interesting part in greater detail, and then to allow discoveries that emerge from the study of that smaller scale to inform the larger picture. These appendices represent areas that I examined more closely when shaping out a larger story of biblical power.

Appendix 1: Hermeneutic/Heuristic Approach to Biblical Ethics

Figure 13: Exploring the Intersection of Multiple Contextual Referents
Test Case: Mark 11

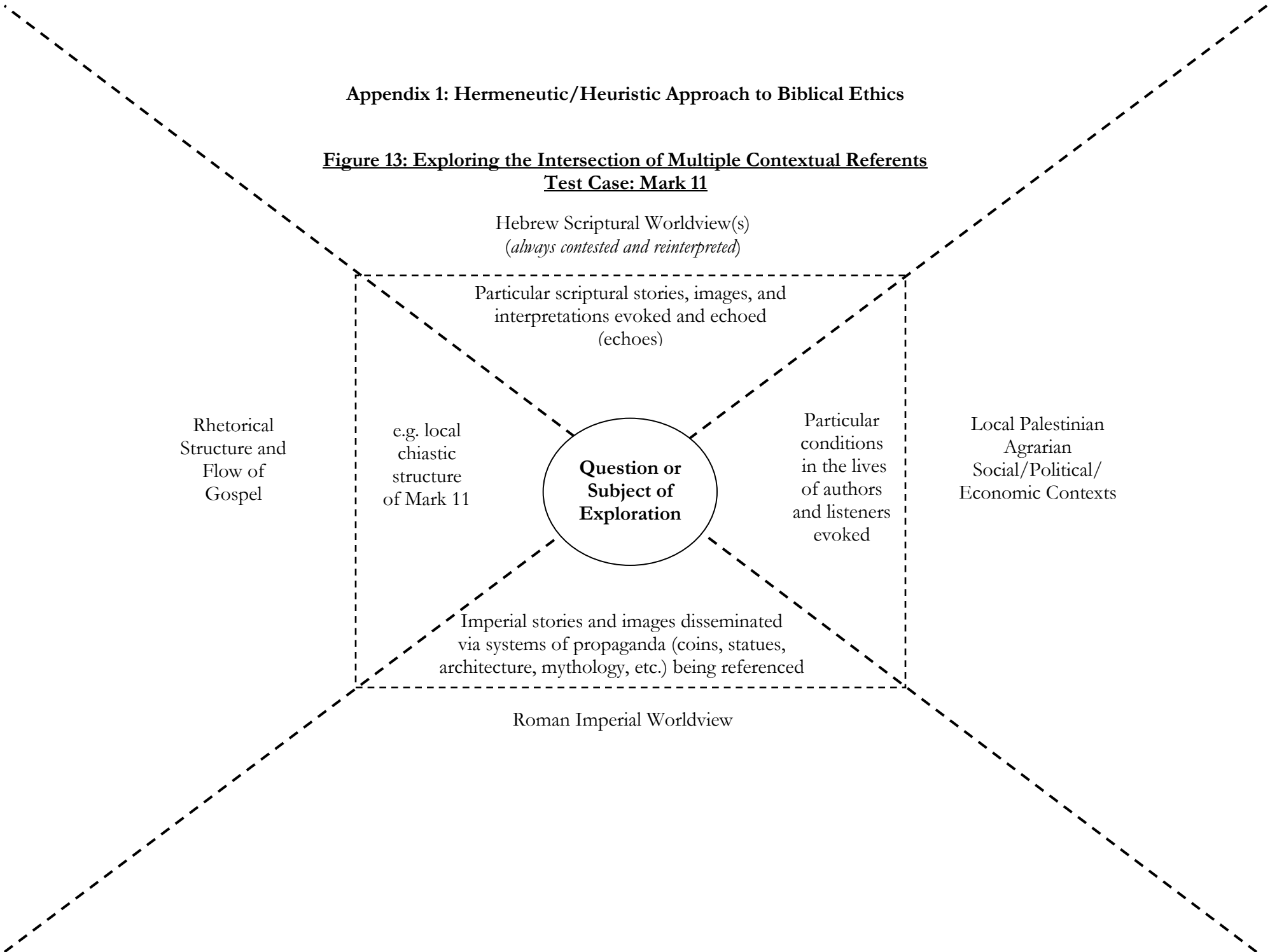


Figure 14: Generating Fields of Meaning, Inquiry #1 = Identity

Hebrew Scriptural Context
- Image of God
- Children of God, caretakers of creation
- Fig trees represent Israel or creation itself
- Appropriation and re-appropriation of "vine and fig tree" imagery
- Efforts by Nebuchadnezzar to wipe out Daniels name, eating habits, and cultural heritage
- Daniel's resistance

Rhetorical Context of Mark's Gospel
- Mystery/questions about Jesus' identity
- Larger narrative progression in the Gospel from blindness to sight
- Shocks that awaken us to our identity
- The shock of Jesus disrupting the economic and political order of the temple
- Shock at the tomb at the end of the gospel
- Who is Jesus? Who are we?

Identity

Agrarian Context
- Resistance to Roman images and values
- Family and kinship structures
- Keepers of ancestral land
- Refusal to use coins with images
- Refusal to conform to Roman Imperial Cult

Roman Imperial Context
- Images distributed on coins
- Control of clothing and hairstyles
- Roman Imperial Cult – pressure to conform to Roman mythology and worldview
- Imposition of dualistic identity – citizen or barbarian

Figure 15: Generating Fields of Meaning, Inquiry #2 = Power

Hebrew Scriptural Context
- Power given to persons at creation – potential for creative fruitfulness
- Judgment and power: prophetic speech associating lack of fruitfulness and God's judgment
- Corrupt/violent leader – Abimilech
- Faithful leaders under pressure – Hezekiah, Daniel
- Violent/repentant leader – Nebuchadnezzar

Rhetorical Context of Mark's Gospel
- Fig passage wrapped in stories about challenging authority/power
- Demonstrations geared at discrediting the hierarchical understanding of power held by the exploited peasants.
- Jesus demonstrates power over nature (the sea, the wild colt, etc.)
- Jesus demonstrates power over the demonic
- Jesus demonstrates political power executed in local encounters on the margins

Power

Agrarian Context
- Bandits, prophets, and messiahs (Horsley, 1999)
- Significant apocalyptic protests
- Local resistance (e.g. tax resistance)
- Spirit of rebellion
- Expectation of judgment on Rome and vindication of God's people

Roman Imperial Context
- Cascading patron-client networks
- Military violence
- Temple as a strategic base of Roman power

Figure 16: Generating Fields of Meaning, Inquiry #3 = Economy

Hebrew Scriptural Context
- The land belongs to God
- Debt release and Sabbath economics
- Prosperity is tied to stewardship
- Prosperity is tied to restraint – first fruits go to God
- Prosperity is tied to care for the widow, orphan, and stranger – fields must be left so the poor can glean
- Fig trees represent the presence/absence of blessing

Rhetorical Context of Mark's Gospel
- Passage wrapped around Jesus' economic protest
- Barren fig tree demonstrating a lack of prosperity/fruitfulness
- Jesus' ministry with the poor and for the poor

Economy

Agrarian Context
- Economy of ancestral land and hospitality
- Layers of taxation, tribute, tolls
- Loss of land/debt slavery
- Regionalization of the economy
- Commodification of land and labor
- 2% of the people control 50-66% of the wealth (Herzog 2000)

Roman Imperial Context
- Tributary economy from poor to rich
- The land belongs to the emperor
- Rome is the source of prosperity
- Vines and Fruit decorate objects and architecture representing Rome's prosperity

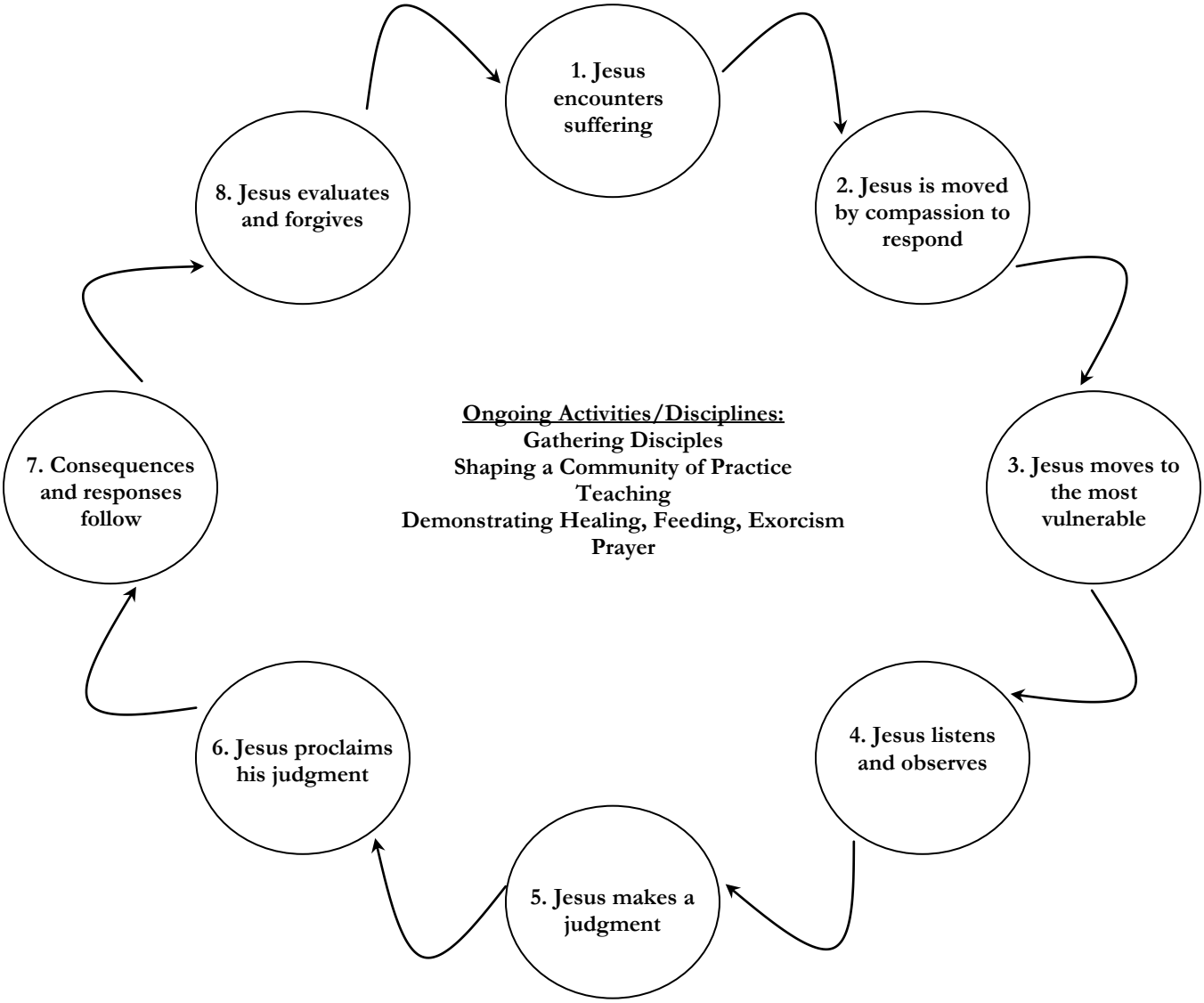
Appendix 2: The Demonic within the Marcan Narrative Context

Passage/Location/Key Greek Terms	*Immediate Context*	*Comments*
Mark 1:7 John the Baptist announces that one is coming with the power to face Satan (Judean countryside, Jordon River) (ισχυρος) (λυο)	+Opening of the gospel	+John announces one to follow who is mighty enough to cast out demons (ισχυρος or "mighty" is same term as used in the "strong" man passage below, Mark 3:28) [1] +The reference to loosing Jesus' sandals may introduce a theme of binding and loosing (λυο).
Mark 1:12-13 Jesus is tempted by Satan (wilderness) (σατανας)	+After his baptism and before his ministry begins	
Mark 1:21-28 Jesus casts an unclean spirit out of a man in the synagogue, the spirit names Jesus, recognizes him (Capernaum/home) (ἐξουσία) (πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ)	+After calling the first disciples	+Jesus' first act of ministry. +Inaugural battle with demonic order. +Unclean spirit refers to itself in the plural (us). +The demon recognizes Jesus' and reveals his identity as a Holy One of God and a threat to the demonic order. The disciples don't understand. + The observers are astonished at Jesus' authority.
Mark 1:32-34 Jesus is casting out demons and forbidding them to speak since they know him[2] (Simon's house) (δαιμονίζομαι) (δαιμονιον)	+After healing Simon's mother-in-law +Next morning disappears to pray and continues healing and casting out demons +Followed by a series of challenges by the Pharisees on Torah law and the source of his authority, culminating in the Pharisees aligning themselves with the Herodians against him	+The demons are effectively silenced by Jesus' command. This is contrasted with people who proclaim Jesus' works even after Jesus has commanded them to be silent on the subject, e.g. the leper in Mark 1:40-45 or those who "the more he ordered them to tell no one . . . the more zealously they proclaimed it (Mark 7:36).
Mark 3:19a-30 Jesus is accused of using demonic power to cast out demons, he clarifies the source of his authority, the impossibility of false authorities casting out demons, and the cause of the "plundered" temple and leadership. (*intercalated in family interaction*) (Capernaum/home) (βεελζεβουλ) (δαιμονιον) (σατανας) (ισχυρος)[3] (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον)	+Crowds growing in size and intensity +After Jesus appointed 12 who he named and gave the authority to cast out demons. +After he returns home and family tries to restrain him. +Followed by his rejection/redefinition of his kin. +Further followed by parables with a seed theme.[4]	+Jesus presents a key teaching – an explanation of the situation between the Holy Spirit, the people chosen to uphold God's principles, and Satan +Jesus alludes to the end or limit of Satan (τελος) +The strong person is called ισχυρος, the word John uses to describe Jesus above in reference to Jesus' power to cast out demons. One might surmise that it is the strong person's duty to cast demons from the house (temple), yet we learn that the strong person is bound (δεο) .
Mark 5:1-20 Gerasene Demoniac, the demon is identified as Legion, asks for mercy (not	+Following the stilling storm[5] (demonstrating Jesus' power over	+Like the strong man above, the Gerasene demoniac is bound (δεο). +The connection between personal possession and

to be ejected), people are afraid of disruption to the demonic order (Gerasa/Decapolis) (πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ) (δεο) (ισχυο) (λεγιον) (δαιμονιζομαι)	cosmic forces)[6] +Followed by healing of hemorrhaging woman and raising of Jairus' daughter +Followed by his rejection (kin conflict), commissioning of the disciples[7], and the death of John the Baptist	political, military, and economic occupation is made with reference to a Roman military unit (λεγιον). +Humanity resists Jesus' disruption, afraid of letting go of their dependence on the demonic order.
Mark 7:24-30 Syrophoenician woman asks for help for her daughter, Jesus tries to rebuff her, she engages him in an intellectual joust and finding her a worthy partner he ejects the demon from her child at a distance (Tyre) (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον) (δαιμονιον)	+After the disciples' misunderstanding over the feeding and walking on water. +After healing and a conflict with Pharisees over what defiles +Followed by a healing, another feeding, testing by the Pharisees and the fear of the disciples re: food.	+Woman takes the power that is rightfully hers, invites disruption of the demonic order – a human being takes a stand. +Here we encounter two complex identities meeting one another and negotiating the power between them.
Transition from ministry toward passion +Jesus heals blind man in two stages: He first sees partially – people look like "trees walking." (Mark 8:22-26) +Peter's confession: "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:27-30)		
Mark 9:14-29 Boy with an unclean spirit, the demon makes a stand resisting to the last and seemingly killing the child, Jesus ejects the demon, disciples wonder why they couldn't do it (At foot of the mountain) (ἔχοντα πνεῦμα) (ισχυο) (δυναμαι)[8]	+The transfiguration and this exorcism are intercalated within two passion/ resurrection predictions which confuse the disciples.[9] +Followed by the disciples arguing about status and Jesus teaching them about stumbling blocks.[10] +Followed by a collection of teachings re: status reversal (divorce, children, rich man) ending with "first shall be last." +Followed by increased fear, passion prediction and further confusion over status, winding up in "whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant."[11]	+Jesus' interest in the suffering child is contrasted with the disciples interest in a status dispute with the scribes[12] +Death and resurrection theme: it appears that the child succumbs to the battle with the demonic, Jesus lifts the child in a prefiguring of the resurrection (God's power is greater than the demonic, even in the face of apparent death) +Jesus' power to defeat the demon comes from prayer (i.e. ongoing direct communion with God as manifest in the prior transfiguration)[13] +Both the passion predictions and the disciples misunderstanding of power over the demonic order are clarified in the episode
Mark 11:12-25 Jesus curses a fruitless fig tree, then the next day enters temple, interferes with commerce, and proclaims judgment on	+After healing a blind man who recognizes him as the "descendent of	+The withering of the fig tree and the judgment on the temple can be viewed as corporate exorcisms. +The fig tree often represents fruitfulness and blessing -- God's chosen people, Israel, the land,

the economic desecration of God's house. The chief priests and scribes saw his power over the people and wished to kill him. The next day walking by the withered fig tree, he explains the relationship of faith and moving God/mountain.[14] (Bethany/Jerusalem/temple)	David" he mocks the emperor and enters Jerusalem as king on the back of a donkey amidst organized crowds participating in the protest,[15] and scopes out the temple for the next day's action.	the center of God's action in creation – those who've been chosen to be fruitful and bless the nations. The mountain often represents the place one encounters God's holiness and the temple mount, where one ought to encounter God's holiness. Jesus performs an exorcism – a judgment that separates truth and lies – that separates holiness (healing, wholeness, care for the least) and desecration (violence, dehumanization, stealing of land, hegemonic use of power, and economic exploitation) – a judgment that separates the land and God's blessing – a judgment that separates the temple and God's holiness. The temple, along with the leadership, because it has been co-opted by unholy interests can no longer claim to control/contain God's holiness. It has given itself over to the pagan economic and military practices of Rome – and thus sold its soul to the demonic order. Through faith and the power of God, Jesus enacts a judgment and witnesses to mountain moving. +We may find joy in this moment of judgment – since the grace-filled result is opening up of God's blessing – but we should do so soberly, given that many sectors of modern Christianity are in the very same state of accommodation to the very same evil – now more sophisticated, more complex, and global – that overtook the temple.
Ending of Mark's gospel (Mark 16:1-8) +"And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." +Mark leaves hearers and readers at the tomb in a state of cognitive dissonance (a parabolic ending) +Sends us back to Galilee, do we yet have eyes to see?		

Appendix 3: Modeling Jesus' Encounters with the Demonic



Appendix 4: Middle Agents and Imperial Structures in the First and Twenty-first Centuries

The following material represents my efforts to dissect the mechanisms of empire. It is a more extended version of material included in Chapter 3. To map the behavior of power in imperial structures is an absurdly broad and complex endeavor. Still, I find myself probing for connections across the centuries and making sketches. This is my attempt to discern larger patterns and to find my own place in them. These sketches are meant to be heuristic and provocative – to generate thoughts, questions and conversations about our collective power environment and how we fit in it. I am not making an argument for a particular way of conceptualizing the structure of millennia of empires. Rather, I probing the dynamics of imperial power in an effort to prod the reader to struggle to comprehend the way power (in healthy and distorted forms) operates around them.

I leap into this impossible task because I think we must. Jesus encourages us to read the signs of our times and to have eyes to see. While sending us on the non-violent path of doves, he insists we, like wise serpents, have the guts to observe our harsh reality. For how else can we gain understanding about what is entrapping our world? So here I make this effort to articulate the structure of our imperial context delving into the unique qualities of the middle agent predicament.

Walter Wink tells us that a shadow imperial order (the Domination System) morphs through the aeons (ancient Near East, Pax Romana, global market imperialism), yet "the basic structure has persisted for five thousand years, since the rise of the great conquest states of Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C.E."[16] These sketches go after the enduring power dynamics at play and our place in them. We start in the first century context of Jesus and then move to our 21st century context.

First Century Galilee

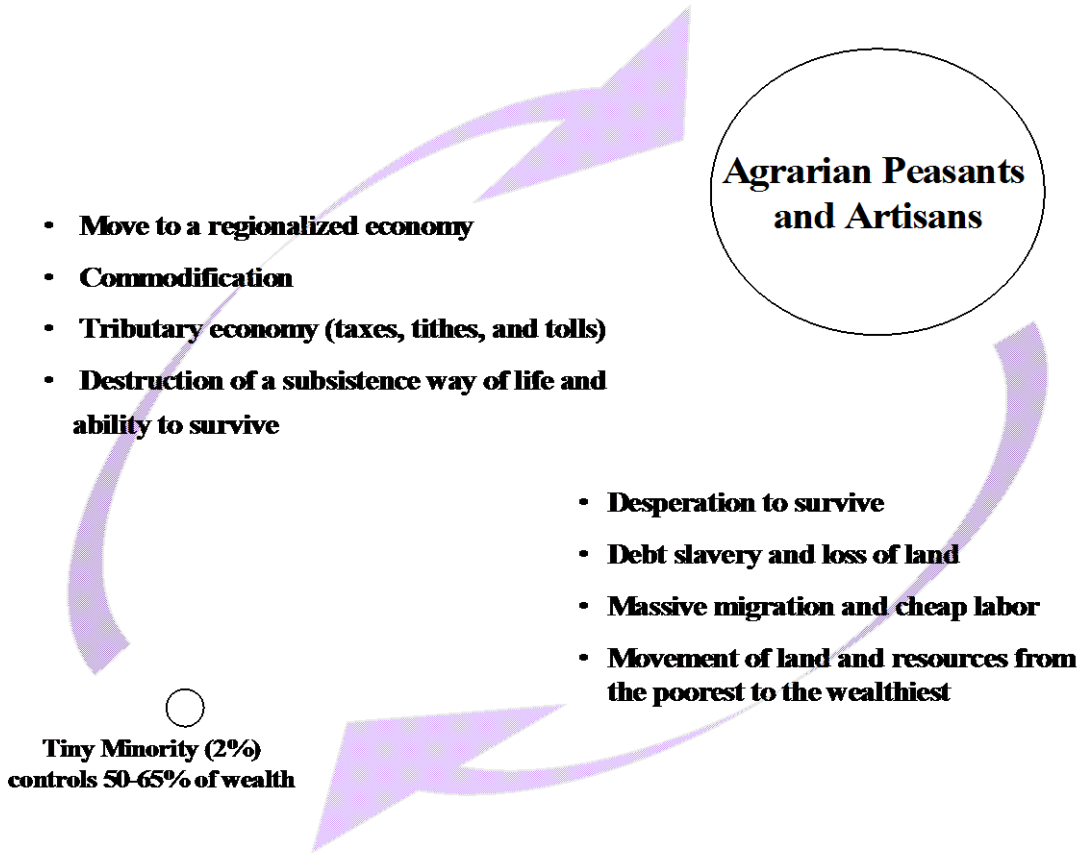
First century Galileans are experiencing the shift from a local subsistence economy to a regionalized economy. Families are enduring intense pressures to re-purpose their land for the

changing economy. This means they stop growing crops that serve the needs of the family, and start growing crops that can be commodified. Commodities must be easily stored and transported. Fig trees for instance take decades to become fruitful and can only serve a small family and a few neighbors. On the other hand, grapes can be converted to wine. Olives can be made into oil. Grains travel well. The seductive message is that by commodifying your land, you can produce and sell more, more, more. The sales pitch fails to note that the benefits of increased production do not accrue to the producers. Farmers cannot keep pace and sink into debt.

In addition to changing economic patterns, the political and economic means of control are pervasive. Local Palestinian and religious authorities served as clients to Roman patrons, receiving carefully doled out bits of privilege in exchange for policing the social order. This, in particular, means extracting tribute and taxes, on top of temple tithes, from village peasants who can scarcely keep afloat.

Under multi-layered crushing pressures, families and communities are ruined by debt and foreclosure. Land and property move from the poor to the elite via debt instruments. Loss of land creates a downward plunge where former landowners move into day labor, prostitution, and the disastrous loss of kinship connection. In this environment, 2% of the people control 50-66% of the wealth.[17]

Figure 17: First Century Galilee – Broad Dynamics



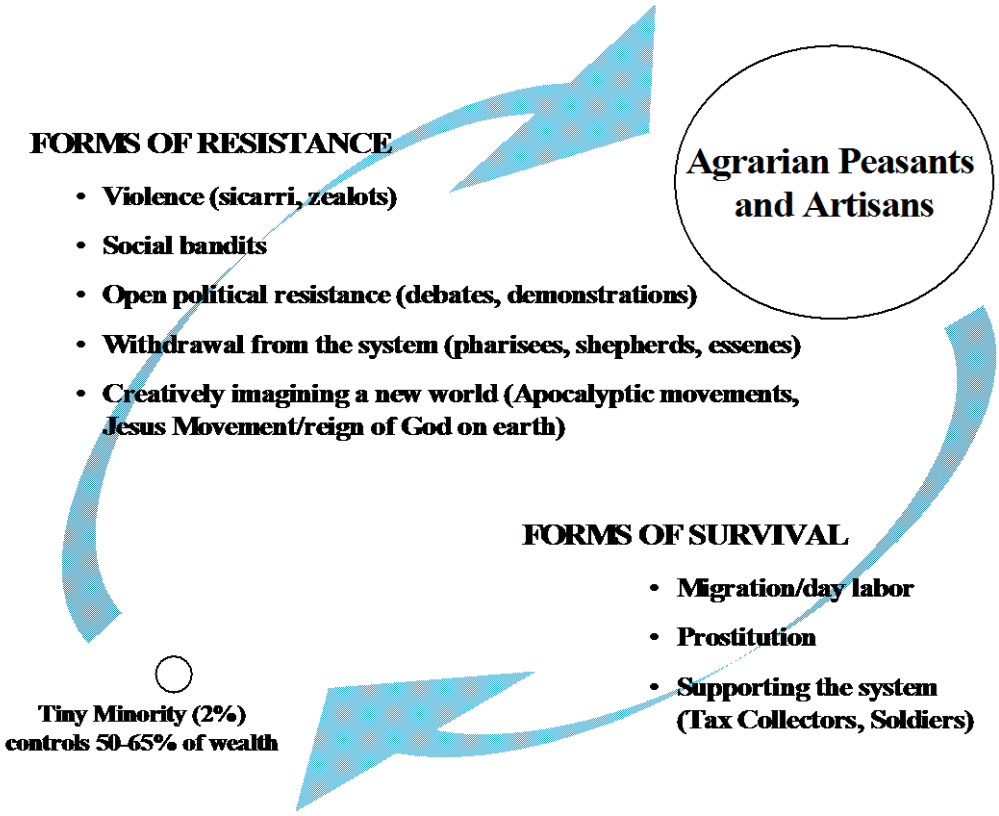
Anyone raised in the Torah tradition knows these practices to be an insult against the world's true authority and holder of property (and all creation) – Yahweh. The extreme cognitive dissonance between a theology of liberation and a state of occupation – combined with living under the constant threat of violence in a cultural context that punishes deviation – leads to a variety of responses.

Sicarri resist by becoming urban terrorists, assassinating collaborators with Rome on the streets. Would-be messiahs foment revolution.[18] Social bandits move off the grid, only emerging to steal what they and their communities need.[19] Pharisees, in an effort to resist imperial

accommodation, move from temple-centered faith to village-centered faith. They teach that God will return when the village is pure and holy. Essenes, being anti- Pharisee and anti-Roman, decide the problem is that the priestly line is corrupted. In response, some Essenes retreat to build their own symbolic world. Others, perhaps Mary, Martha and Lazarus among them, form intentional urban communities that embody an alternative way of life. Others fall through the cracks and became demoniacs, the only social status which permits an oblique form of truth-telling.[20] Yet others resist theologically, creating a narrative that makes meaning of the current suffering and imagines a discontinuous apocalyptic break in reality. The Jesus Movement is a variation on this theme. Jesus and his followers envisage a new world breaking in now (a kingdom of God in our midst). God's emerging world is experienced through Jesus as power erupting like a spring among the people – flowing with healing and abundance and revealing the false claims of the oppressive regime.

Still others don't resist at all. They merely survive. Forms of survival include: 1) migration and day labor; 2) prostitution; and 3) working for the regime in roles such as soldier or tax collector. Often the key here is to be mobile and stay under the radar screen. This is how shepherds develop a reputation as tax evaders. All of these forms of survival and resistance pop up repeatedly in the gospels.

Figure 18: Resistance and Survival



The temple is a key colluder with the imperial order. The temple is not simply a place of worship – it is a judicial, economic and religious center. According to Hanson and Oakman the temple serves as: 1) a means of purity/cleanliness (authority over the status of the person in society); 2) a place for sacrifice (the means of re-instating status, for a small fee of course); 3) a bank; 4) a marketplace (economic hub); 5) a slaughterhouse; 6) a warehouse; and 7) a political center (the Sanhedrin serves as Supreme Court and Senate).[21] Herzog explains that the temple also serves political-theological functions. "The royal hope is that the temple will capture and domesticate God as well as provide [God's] abode, or the abode of [God's] name on earth."[22] The temple is integral to the state. "A state without a temple cannot fully have come into being."[23] "The lavish decorations

and ornaments [are] meant to associate the temple with 'abundance and prosperity,' implying that it [is] also the dispenser of blessings."[24] "[The people] believed that the offering of sacrifices was the way to discharge their debt, and they believed that fulfilling their obligations to the temple, so that the temple could operate on their behalf, was essential to fruitful fields and orchards. [Thus,] the temple and land [are] inextricably entwined."[25]

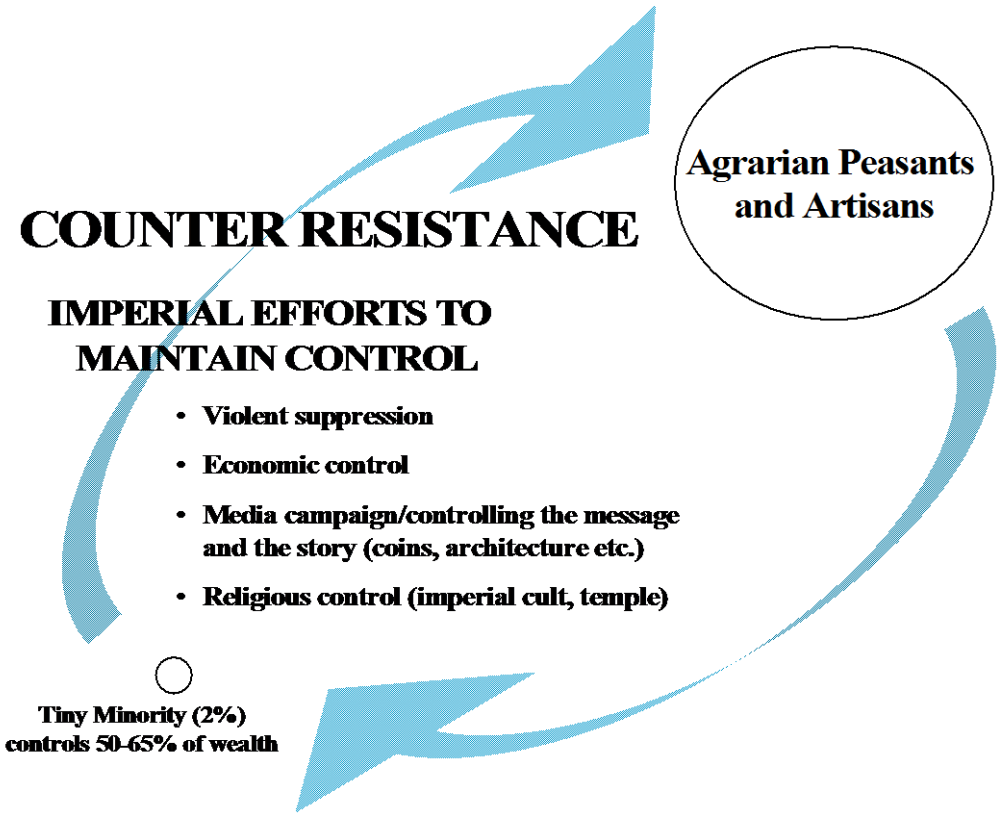
The religious convictions of the people, rooted in Torah, are distorted by temple authorities and utilized to support an economic system that is the very opposite of Torah teaching. The Torah holds the land to be sacred. According to the principles of Sabbath economics, the land is God's gift to the people. It is not to be sold in perpetuity. Debt is released every seven years and land redistributed every fifty years as part of Jubilee. Land functions as a visible manifestation of God's covenant.[26]

People feel this hypocrisy, and as the result the temple becomes a site of conflict. The people keep telling the story of how their faith is a bulwark against the pharaohs of the world. It is through this spiritual formation that they resist assimilation into the Greco-Roman world and the imperial cult. At the same time their scribes and high priests have been bought off. As evidence of their capitulation, priests begin making twice a day sacrifices to the emperor and siding with the elites in conflicts. The result is outbursts and dissent, especially during religious festivals where the hypocrisy is on full display.

The Roman Empire has an arsenal of techniques for suppressing dissent. They tighten the economic noose, causing independent landowners to become dependent and enslaved. They run eye-catching first century media campaigns – perpetuating images of themselves as bastions of civilization in a world of barbarians. This is the first century equivalent of the whole world watching the royal wedding. These pro-imperial messages are transmitted in temples and monuments – but most effectively in coins that are exchanged among the masses.[27] They spread the Roman Imperial

Cult out among all their conquered people, making the emperor an object of passionate religious faith.[28] But they are flexible. When encountering the intractable commitments of the Judean people, they switch gears. They strategically co-opt the temple and inscribe their economic exploitation into the sacrificial system. And when in the face of all these strategies the people remain unconvinced, the threat (and reality) of overwhelming violence is the constant backdrop.

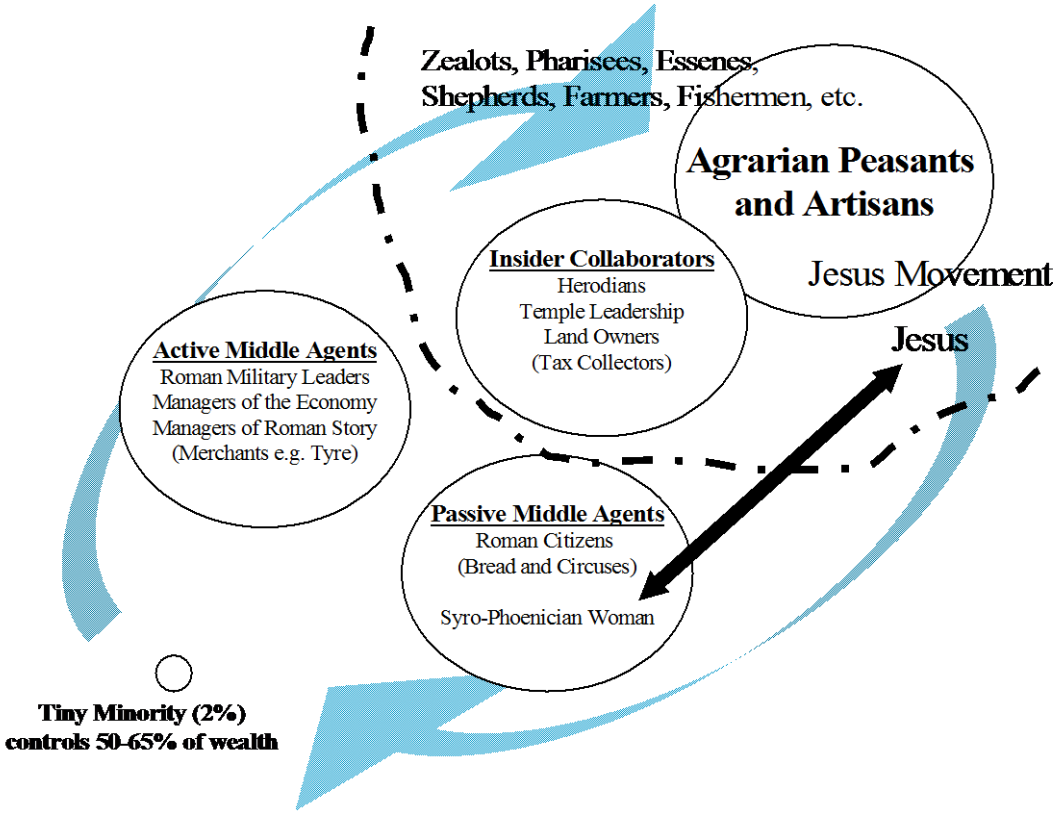
Figure 19: Imperial Efforts to Maintain Control



As outlined in Chapter 3, middle agents are the lynchpins of imperial control. Jesus engages in what I term a transforming alliance between the majority poor, insider collaborators, and passive middle agents (including those residing outside the faith community), encouraging a shift of allegiance from the elite to the poor for the sake of undermining the overall imperial system and

moving the world toward total liberation. In Figure 20 below, the dotted line represents the boundaries of the faith community.

Figure 20: First Century Galilee – A Transforming Alliance



Jesus' interaction with the Syrophoenician woman serves as a model for ethical negotiation of power between middle agents and members of the majority poor.

Twenty-first Century North America

We now live in a globalizing economy. The process of commodification is being extended to every corner of the world. As I attempt to sketch present day imperial structure, I start from the

perspective of Mexican farmers, finding meaningful parallels with the social location and pressures on first century Galileans.

Here are a few numbers to get us situated. In Mexico, agriculture is 5% of the gross domestic product, yet one quarter of Mexico's workforce lives off the land. 11.8% of land is arable, and this land is highly desired by the powerful. The gap between rich and poor is steadily increasing. Currently, the richest 10% get 42% of the income while the poorest 40% get just over 11%.

In 1994, with the stroke of a pen, the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect. This caused a significant increase of transnational agri-businesses (e.g. Birds Eye, ADM, Cargill, etc.) in the food processing sector. ADM's profits have increased three-fold since they started investing in Mexico in 1993. Conagra's profits have increased 189%. At the same time, a World Bank paper found that opening trade in the region is negatively correlated with income growth among the poorest 40% of the population. This predictably creates significant social and political unrest.

In addition to a shift of wealth from the working farmers to international corporations, there are other pressures on the people. NAFTA comes with enforcement of private property laws, removing families from land they have farmed for generations. The agreement also requires the removal of government support programs. Add to this, that communities on the border started re-directing water for their purposes. This caused longtime working farms down-stream in Mexico to be dried up and ruined. The result of this has been a massive movement of people, who can no longer survive, out of the interior of the country.[29] In Guanajuato, 20 percent of the 250,000 farm families in the state left the land between 1990 and 1999. As of 2011, over 1,000,000 small Mexican farmers have been displaced since the institution of NAFTA (some estimates are as high as 2,000,000).[30] This migration provides an endless supply of cheap labor on the border – and a flood of desperate human beings willing to risk their lives to get across the border so they can provide for

their families. They come to the border, where they are ripe for exploitation as cheap labor in an environment where there are little or no protections. Companies can poison the environment and their people, and anyone caught union organizing is blacklisted or worse.[31]

Corn is at the center of all this. Eighteen million Mexicans are dependent on corn. Corn is two-thirds of the gross value of all Mexico's agricultural production. Small-land holdings (ejidos) account for 62% of the production. In the US, farms produce 7 tons per hectare. In Mexico, small farmers produce 1.7 tons per hectare. In the north and north-central areas of Mexico, some farmers have found ways to be competitive. This involves mechanization, high use of pesticides, increased irrigation, and use of genetically modified seeds. In central and south Mexico (e.g. Chiapas, Hidalgo, Veracruz), there are a large number of small scale corn producers who work land with steep slopes, poor soil, and rain only for irrigation. This is "marginalized land" that is not suitable to large-scale US style agriculture. Subsistence farmers are not good investments for those with a "commodity" worldview. They have small plots and no storage. They have to sell right at harvest time when prices are lowest. They have no access to credit or to marketing channels.

When NAFTA went into effect, it removed corn import tariffs over the course of 30 months. This was originally supposed to happen over 15 years, because the devastating effects of this policy were obvious. Corn from the US came flooding into the Mexican market. While US agribusinesses represent 3% of the US labor force, they receive 18 billion dollars. Due to US farmers being heavily subsidized, corn imported to Mexico from the US is sold below the cost of production. Corn prices dropped by 48%, which killed the corn market for Mexican farmers.

All of the promised benefits of NAFTA have gone to transnational conglomerates, Mexican corn processors, and a few large farmers.[32] All of the pain and sacrifice have gone to subsistence farmers pushing them into deeper poverty, causing massive migration, and destruction of the environment due to panicked use of forested and difficult land, pesticides etc.

The ideological free trade mentality and its simplistic economic logic would tell us that small Mexican farmers would radically decrease their production of corn because it is not profitable. But here is where the abstract theory fails to account for the facts on the ground. Even though the economics of corn no longer worked, Mexicans began producing corn at increased rates. In desperation they began working harder, using more pesticides, and farming more marginal and difficult land, in a futile effort to make up the difference. There are intersecting practical and cultural factors that lead to this "irrational" (from the perspective of free market thinkers) response.[33] Farmers do not have the technology or credit they would need to switch to other crops. More profoundly, corn has been produced in Mexico for 5000 years. It is an integral part of the Mexican culture and identity that is not so easily shifted.[34]

Figure 21: Twenty-first Century North America – Broad Dynamics

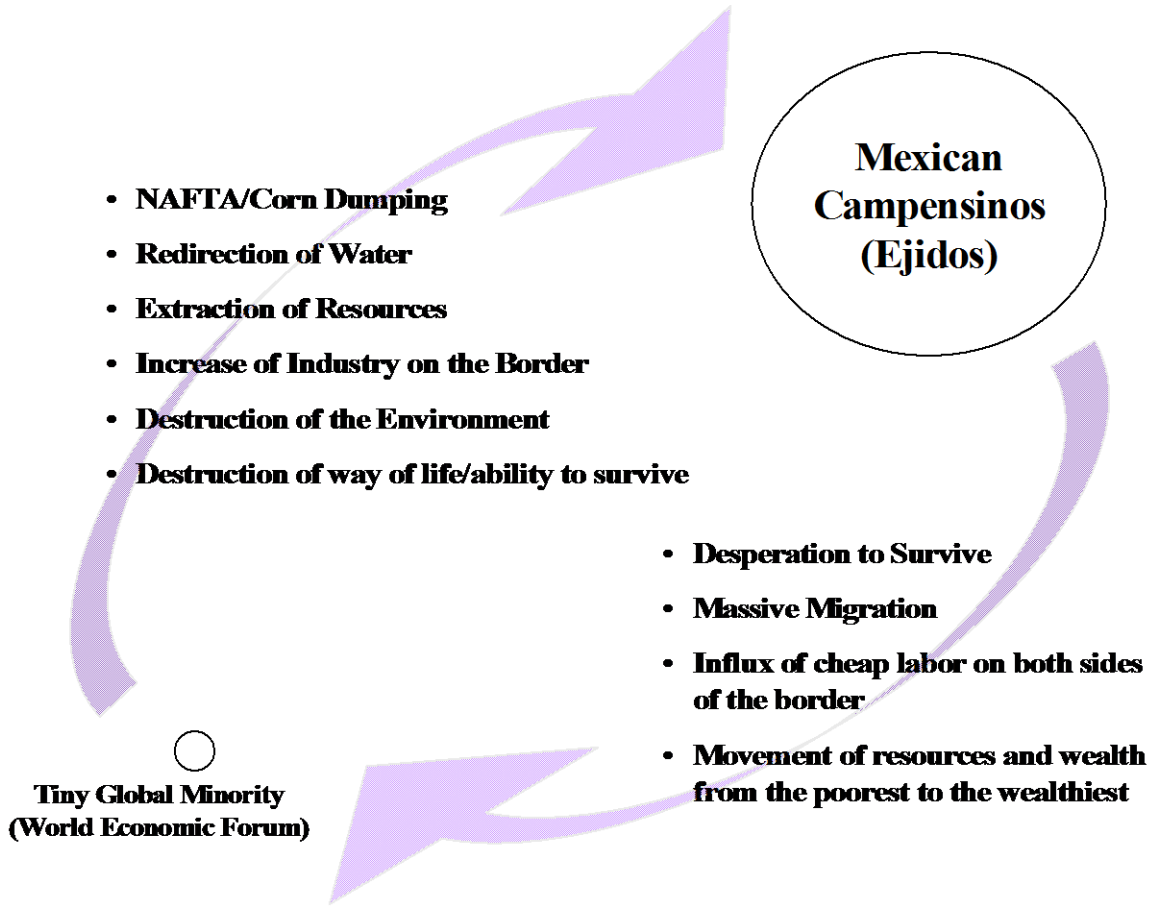
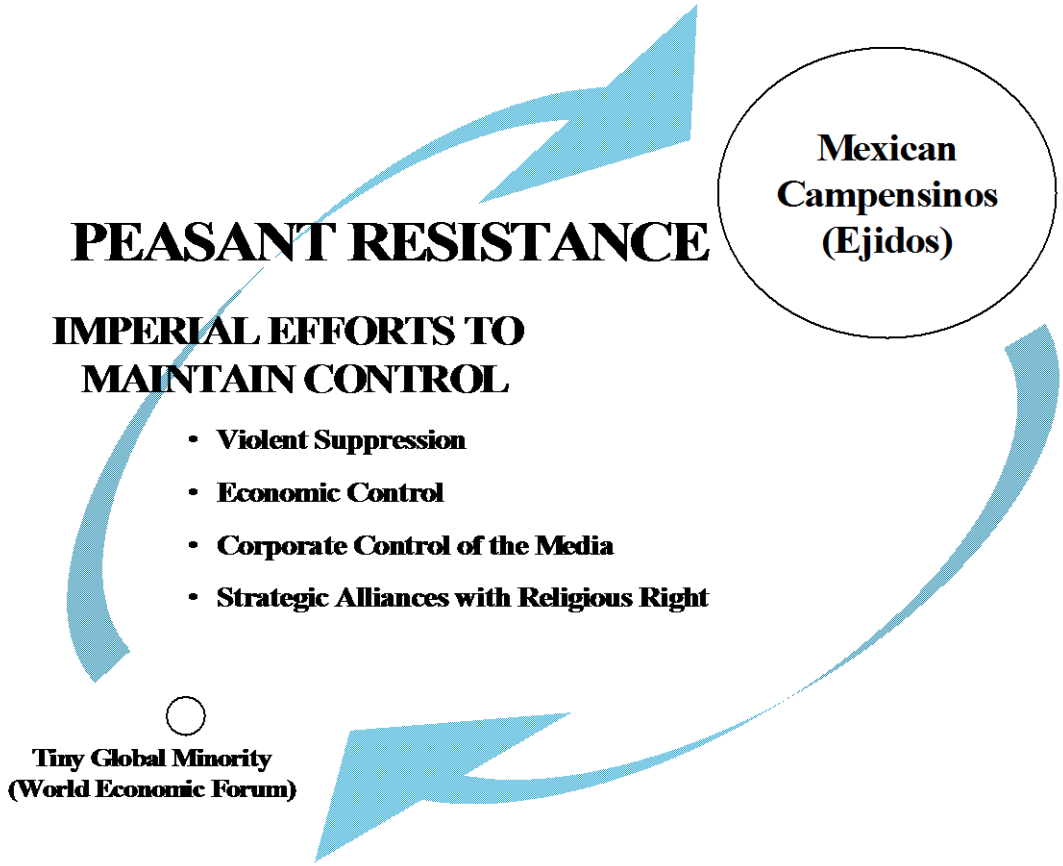


Figure 21 (above) outlines the broad dynamics of Mexican farmers trapped in the dynamics of a globalized imperial regime. Though the US plays a key role in the globalized regime, the top 2% are an international boundary-less elite. They are most clearly gathered in the World Economic Forum. In Figure 22 we see forms of survival and resistance that correlate with ones we found in the first century.

Figure 22: Resistance and Survival

As we found in the first century, the current globalized regime has its techniques for breaking down resistance. Where we saw the co-opting of the temple, now we see the co-opting of Christianity – and key strategic alliances with the religious right. Where we saw coins and monuments as a communication strategy, now we see a takeover of the media, overwhelming lobbying, and elaborate public relations campaigns, including the design of fake grassroots movements (astro-turfing). And when all else fails, wars and violent crackdowns remain the default position.

Figure 23: Imperial Efforts to Maintain Control



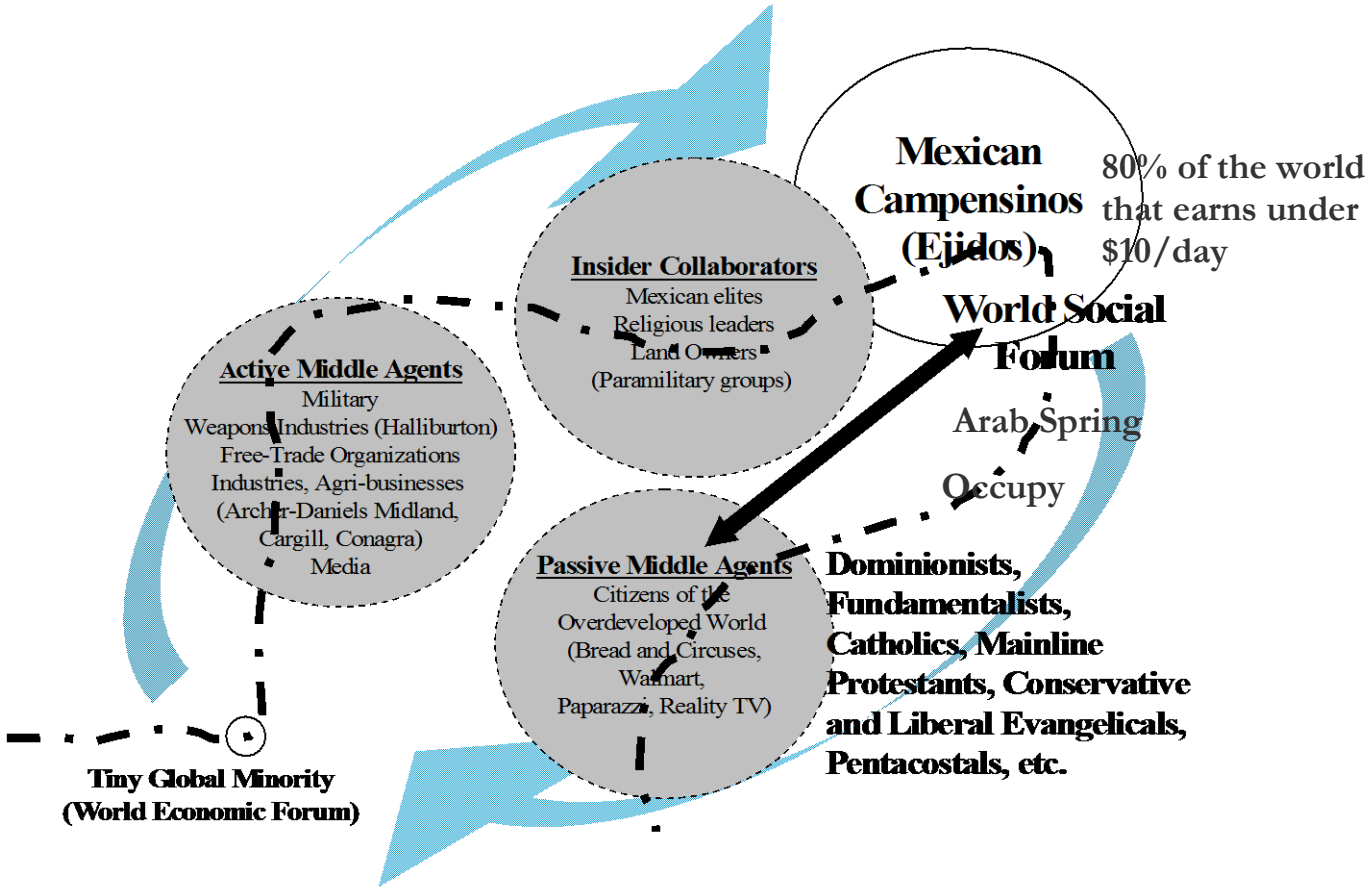
One of the challenges in the post-modern world is that our boundaries and allegiances are so fragmented and multi-layered. In the first century the faith community was in a clear geographic location. Having a definable social and physical location on the margins of empire gave the struggle some clarity. Jesus presses across well-defined boundaries when he confronts Pharisees and priests, or when he reaches out to Samaritans and Gentiles. Modern Christianity as a faith community now covers every corner of the globe, and every socio-economic stratum. In Figure 24 (below) the dotted line that indicates the way that the modern faith community touches every area of the social and imperial spectrum. This is a distinct contrast to Jesus' religious context which was more socially and

geographically circumscribed, making its counter-imperial location in the larger reality of the Roman Empire easier to comprehend. Today, the tiny minority elite and the majority poor of the world, not to mention all the middle agents all in some part participate in the organized religion called Christianity. So too elite networks and social movements are connected to one another globally.

Mapping the correlations within modern complexity, I began to realize that organized Christianity may not be the direct heir of the Jesus Movement. (Christianity may be more parallel to the temple establishment, co-opted by the Domination System.) If we want to find the modern corollary to the Jesus movement – if we want to see the upsurge of the power of the people, embodying resistance to the demonic regime that is killing them – we may need to look elsewhere, toward the World Social Forum, the 10,000 Haitians who gathered in the streets to demand the government reject the "gift" of Monsanto's genetically modified seeds after the earthquake, movements for liberation in the Middle East, or the Occupy Movement.

Movements like Occupy have hit on the strategic focus of middle agent allegiance to the elite. In my terms, they are comprehending the lynchpin role of middle agents in the Domination System. With mottos like "We are the 99%" Occupy is realigning loyalties. They are particularly rattling the cage of passive middle agents, exposing their deeply dependent relationship on parasitic elite structures, and asking them to shift their allegiance to the majority of the world.

Figure 24: Twenty-first Century Notth America – A Transforming Alliance



Appendix 5: A Study of Middle Agents in the Gospel of Luke

(+/-/~) indicates the middle agent's embrace of the gospel in a given scenario.

+ = successful middle agent embrace of the gospel
- = failed middle agent embrace of the gospel
~ = neutral/mixed middle agent embrace of the gospel

Luke and Power Act 1: Jesus Models the Way

Middle Agent(s)	**Encounter**	**Predicament**	**Outcome (+/-/~)**
Simeon and Anna (2:25ff)	Time of purification.	Respected members of the temple culture, risking status.	(+) Prophesy publicly: this child is "responsible for the rising and falling of many in Israel"; "a light to the gentiles"; "a sign that will be opposed"
Toll Collectors and Soldiers (3:7ff)	John speaking to the crowds. They get caught up in the announcement and ask what they should do.	Dependent on the suffering of others for their living.	(+) Economic teaching: John tells them to forego their opportunities to gain benefit off the suffering of the people
Herod (3:19-20)	John exposes his harmful deeds.	Herod is not used to hearing the truth, and it makes him angry. He wants to maintain his bubble.	(-) Puts John in prison.
Levi the toll collector (5: 27ff)	Hosts a dinner of toll collectors for Jesus.	Toll collectors survive by defrauding people, listening to Jesus threatens their living.	(+) Levi and friends are willing to take a chance on a new way of life.
Centurion and his Servant (7:1-10)	A supporter of the people, he humbly approaches Jesus for healing.	Manages to use his position to help others, and recognize the source of true power.	(++) An exemplar of a successful middle agent, achieves healing, and surprises Jesus with his faith.
Toll Collectors (7:30)	Offered baptism.	Risk the basis of their survival.	(+) They accept.
Pharisees and lawyers (7:30)	Offered baptism.	Risk the framework through which they view God and the world.	(-) They refuse. Blinded by their position, they miss God's purpose for them.

Simon the Pharisee (7:36-50)	Invites Jesus to dinner where Jesus embarrasses him by allowing a woman to anoint him	Risks his position as a Pharisee.	(~) Jesus asks: Do you see this woman? Simon is blinded by his position.
Women of means (8:1-3)	Choose to follow Jesus.	Risk their position and wealth.	(+) Choose to help finance the Jesus Movement
Jairus (8:41-56)	Reaches out to Jesus in desperation because his daughter is dying.	Risks revealing his trust in Jesus over the temple as a mediator of healing.	(+) His daughter is raised from the dead.

Luke and Power Act 2: Pushing the Disciples out of the Nest

Middle Agents(s)	**Encounter**	**Predicament**	**Outcome (+/-)**
Herod (9:7-9)	Hearing rumors about miraculous events surrounding Jesus.	He feels perplexed. Events are challenging his worldview about power.	(~) He wants to see Jesus.
Lawyer (10:25-37)	Asks a question in the crowd.	He is seeking an easier way to inherit eternal life – a loophole in the law.	(~) Jesus uses him as object lesson to teach his listeners to ignore their own selfish/merciless leaders and start building solidarity among the poor across ethnic and gender lines.
Pharisees, lawyers, and scribes (11:37-54)	Invite Jesus to dinner.	They are increasingly frustrated with his irreverence toward their status and rules.	(-) They get more serious about plotting against him.
The rich fool (12:16-21)	Encounters the gospel in his death.	Was deeply confused about security in life, thinking it could come from hoarding food.	(-) Wasted precious life on things that do not matter.
Watchful boss (12:35-38)	Judgment arrives like a thief in the night.	Tempted by a small measure of privilege.	(+) Utilizes a position of power to feed the servants under him. Will be given more responsibility.

Drunk boss (12:45-47)	Judgment arrives like a thief in the night.	Tempted by a small measure of privilege.	(-) Utilizes a position of power to feed himself and abuse the servants under him. Will suffer.
Leader of the synagogue and Jesus' opponents. (13:10-17)	Witness the healing of the bent over woman on the Sabbath.	Actively protecting their turf.	(-) Angry and put to shame.
Herod (13:31-35)	Witnessing the growth in Jesus' power.	Makes his decision about allegiances.	(-) Decides he wants to kill Jesus
Some Pharisees (13:31-35)	Witnessing the growth in Jesus' power.	Trying to figure out their allegiances.	(~) Try to warn Jesus that Herod wants to kill him.
More Pharisees (14:1-6)	On the way to a dinner with a leader of the Pharisees.	Under increasing pressure as Jesus keeps healing people on the Sabbath and questioning them.	(~) Twice, they remain silent.

Luke and Power Act 3: A Parade of Middle Agents

Middle Agents(s)	**Encounter**	**Predicament**	**Outcome (+/-)**
Pharisees and scribes (15:1-2)	Observing Jesus teaching.	Losing more and more control of who is in and who is out.	(-) Grumbling.
The father of the prodigal son (15:11-32)	His son's return home.	How to respond to his son's abandonment, wastefulness and return.	(+) Joyful, generous, and gracious.
The older brother of the prodigal son (15:11-32)	The banquet celebrating his brother's return.	How to respond to his brother's abandonment, wastefulness and return.	(-) Resentful, believes in a sum-zero world where his brother's gain is his loss.
Master/landowner (Luke 16: 1-13)	Pushed into crisis by the creativity of the ones he is impoverishing.	Caught in an undercover struggle between the steward and the people.	(~) Accepts lost profit/debt relief for the people, rather than be exposed as a usurer.
Shrewd manager/unjust steward (Luke 16: 1-13)	Pushed into crisis by the creativity of the ones he is helping impoverish.	Position in the system (survival) threatened.	(~) Arranges debt relief for the people as a creative way to save his hide.
Pharisees (lovers of money) (Luke 16: 14-18)	Following Jesus around, trying to entrap him.	Accused of using the law for personal gain and abandoning the people.	(-) Ridicule Jesus.

The rich man (Luke 16: 19-31)	Discovers a neighboring homeless man (Lazarus) comfortable in the arms of Abraham in the afterlife, while he suffers.	Unable to surrender his worldview of social hierarchy, he remains barred from the fullness of life. His worldview creates an unbridgeable chasm.	(-) Stuck, desperate and confused in his self-created isolation. Even in death, Lazarus is provoking him to come out of his mental empire, cross the chasm, and find salvation.
Nine lepers (Luke 17: 11-19)	Meet Jesus in their desperation.	Rejected by the social order of the temple as unclean.	(-) Take their healing and retreat back to the logic of the regime as quickly as they can.
Pharisees (17:32-18:14)	Continue to question Jesus.	Want answers from Jesus that preserve their place in the social order and are frustrated that Jesus refuses to accommodate.	(-) Refuse to surrender their view of social hierarchy.
Disciples (18:15-17)	Corrected by Jesus when they try to block women from bringing babies to him.	Blocked in seeing the radical inclusion of God's realm.	(~) Receive a lesson in God's inclusive love.
A certain ruler (Luke 18: 18-30)	Sincerely reaches out to Jesus.	Trying to follow the law, but blocked in his understanding how to participate in God's realm.	(-) Walks away grieving when Jesus explains what is missing – surrendering his possessions and reorienting his life from the regime to the people.
Disciples (18:31-43)	Walking with Jesus.	Blocked in their understanding of the gospel.	(-) Unable to hear Jesus describe his own impending suffering. Try to muffle the cries of the blind man.
Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10)	Climbs a tree to see Jesus, when he hears he is coming through.	Risks his livelihood and position as a chief toll collector in the imperial regime.	(++) Overcomes all the obstacles faced by other Lukan middle agents, surrenders his possessions, and (in contrast to the rich man) lands in the arms of Abraham.

Luke and Power Act 4: Staying the Course, to the Cross and Beyond

Middle Agents(s)	**Encounter**	**Predicament**	**Outcome (+/-)**
Nobleman (19:11-27)	In a situation of civil unrest, including rejection by his people. Finds a client in his court openly speaking truth to him about his abuses.	Has the choice to listen to the lessons of these disruptions or to respond with overwhelming violence and suppress them.	(-) enacts overwhelming violence and suppression.
Effective Investors (19:11-27)	Called upon to make money for their patron off the backs of the angry people.	Must comply if they wish to hold onto their comfortable managerial positions.	(-) rewarded with riches for their loyalty to the imperial system.
Recalcitrant Investor (19:11-27)	Called upon to make money for his patron off the backs of the angry people.	Must comply if he wishes to hold onto his comfortable managerial position.	(+) speaks out truthfully, refuses to manage the system of exploitation, and is dealt with harshly.
Pharisees (19:28-39)	Traveling with Jesus, embarrassed by the disciples' street scene mocking the emperor.	Terrified of offending their Roman overlords, and suffering the loss of privilege or worse.	(-) weakly demand silence and are rebuffed by Jesus.
Sellers (19:45-46)	Driven out of the temple by Jesus.	Trying to make a living.	(~) leave.
Chief priests, scribes, leaders (19:47-20:8)	Watching Jesus expose the whole system of exploitation.	Struggling to keep the system intact and preserve their place in it.	(-) want to kill him, keep questioning him to trap him, but get trapped themselves.
Vineyard tenants/ scribes and chief priests (20:9-18)	Decide to separate from covenant and operate under their own autonomy.	Seeking only their short-term gain and missing the bigger picture.	(-) prove themselves immature in their power (violent) and overconfident in their social status.
Messengers/ prophets/ Jesus and Jesus Movement (20:9-18)	Knock on the door and call the lost (tenants/leaders) back to covenant. (Like the widow at the judges door and the villagers who need to feed the late night guest.)	They know that their truth-telling will likely result in their own suffering and death.	(~) reach out to the lost, attempt to rebuild relationship, and are treated harshly.
Spies for the temple leadership (20:20-26)	Watching Jesus teach, trying to entrap him.	Explicitly doing the dirty work for the imperial regime.	(-) Are outsmarted.

Sadducees and scribes (20:27-47)	Joust with Jesus in an effort to win intellectual battles and trap him with literalism.	Want to keep their status as teachers of the law without having to experience the radical personal and social transformation of God. Feel the tension and want to argue their way out of it.	(-) Jesus gets more aggressive and direct, telling students loudly not to waste time with teachers like this.
Rich people (21:1-4)	Leaving gifts at the temple for God.	They are buying their salvation while making impressive public displays.	(-) Jesus dismisses them and redirects the disciples' attention to the widow and the way the temple leadership is devouring her in egregious violation of Torah law.
Judas (22:1-6,47-54)	A part of the Jesus Movement.	Unable to resist the tempting offers of money and privilege to work for the regime.	(-) Changes loyalty and becomes an internal collaborator against his own spiritual family.
Chief priests and scribes (22:1-6,47-54)	Relentless in their strategies for getting to Jesus and scattering the people.	Continue to work on removing this threat to the status quo.	(-) Finally achieve their goal of isolating Jesus and seizing him.
Mysterious dinner host (22:8-13)	Part of an underground network supporting the Jesus movement.	Risking life and limb to help where he can.	(+) Uses his wealth and real estate to support people power and the Jesus movement.
Servant(s) (22:47-54)	Poor people who violently suppress other poor people.	Trying to survive.	(-) In healing his ear, Jesus exposes his alignment with destructive power over healing power.
High priest (host) (22:54-71)	Part of an elite network that protects elite interests.	Willing to unleash any form of evil or violence to accomplish his ends.	(-) Uses his wealth and real estate to support the violent workings of the regime.
Bullies and thugs (22:63-71)	Poor people who outlet their spiritual sickness through demeaning, abusing, and killing people on behalf of the elite.	In state of extreme separation from the power of healing and life.	(-) Jesus is blindfolded, but they are utterly in the darkness.

Pilate (23:1-25)	Encounters his own paradoxical powerlessness when he cannot free Jesus.	Trapped by his role and the pressures of the regime.	(-) Consistently allies himself with the regime.
Herod (23:1-25)	Encounters his own paradoxical powerlessness when he cannot free Jesus.	Trapped by his role and the pressures of the regime.	(-) Consistently allies himself with the regime.
Simon of Cyrene (23:26)	Called out of the crowd into this imperial drama.	Experiences the randomness of the Domination System on the lives of the people.	(~) We don't see him making a choice in the text, simply going with the flow.
Soldiers (23:33-37)	Called into their violent service to the regime.	Use the opportunity to be cruel.	(-) Allow themselves to be mindless vehicles of the Domination System.
Unrepentant Criminal (23:39-43)	Meets Jesus on the cross.	Viscerally experiences the tension between life and death.	(-) Clings to the Domination System and death.
Repentant Criminal (23:39-43)	Meets Jesus on the cross.	Viscerally experiences the tension between life and death.	(+) Sees the truth in his final moments and chooses life over death.
Centurion (23:47)	Comes back into the foreground, after following Jesus for the whole gospel.	Risks everything by repeatedly revealing his loyalty.	(++) Stays faithful from the beginning until the end, openly proclaiming the truth.
Joseph of Arimathea (23:50-55)	A member of the council that demanded the death of Jesus.	In the excruciating position of dissenting against the forces of violence and domination.	(+) Risks status and life to stand by Jesus in life and death.
The Eleven (Chapter 24)	Move into a middle agent role as Jesus works through the margins to reach them.	Experience fear as Jesus is executed and resurrected. Resistant to receiving the good news.	(~) Luke leaves us joyful about the events of the gospel, yet uncertain about whether we as middle agents have what it takes to embrace the gospel.

Appendix 6: Three Daughters/Three Modes of Mediating Power

Things happen fast in the gospel of Mark. By the second chapter Jesus has been proclaimed, baptized, tempted, called disciples, teaching in synagogues, throwing out unclean spirits, healed Simon's mother-in-law and a stream of others, disappeared to pray causing everyone to search for him, gone on a preaching tour through neighboring towns, cured leprosy, cured paralysis, forgiven sins, created controversies, gathered huge crowds, and developed quite a reputation. All this told in Mark's characteristic style with liberal use of the word immediately (ευθυς). Immediately Jesus did this. And immediately Jesus did that.

With Mark, we are on the streets, among the people. We feel the gathering whirlwind. We stand in the crowd captivated by this charming controversial teacher. We hear the demons crying out. We watch broken starving people called into the center, standing up, filling with new life. We cheer as he takes on the Pharisees and the scribes and outdoes them in his command of Torah. We are on the edge of our seats, wondering what will happen next.

Living on the streets with Mark, we identify with the frustrated masses. We witness the crushing exploitation and cruel disregard of the rulers and feel the pain of it. We rejoice in seeing the bad guys fall. Through the unfolding story, our amazement and confusion is mirrored by the disciples. Like them, our simplistic triumphalism is shaken by the cross. Alongside them, we stand grief-stricken and stunned at the empty tomb. Following them, we spiral back to Galilee to keep on keeping on – exploring and embodying all that we have experienced.

Jesus' (and Mark's) view of the world is not pyramidal. During his ministry, he is dealing with a wide variety of parasitic social elements that feed on the lives of the people of his community, including exploitive merchants, temple offerings, and taxes.[35] Village life is bombarded with Roman reality – via soldiers, violence, census, taxes, etc. He experiences this from the perspective of a

Galilean peasant. For Jesus and his community, these reminders of their Roman overlords (brought by middle agents) are intrusions in a life centered on resistance and survival. These intrusions come from the fringe. Life on the ground is their center of power.

Three Daughters

In Chapter 5 of Mark's gospel, we come across a woman in a difficult situation. She has been hemorrhaging blood for twelve years. According to the norms of first century Palestine, she is unclean. She has now ventured out into a crowd of people that is gathering around Jesus. Desperate after years of physical pain and alienation, she has entered into this public forum on her own – with no male representative in a world where women are utterly forbidden to act as their own agents. This makes her doubly unclean and dangerous. She risks touching someone and destroying their status of cleanliness – an unforgivably antisocial[36] and destructive act. Everyone knows that if she touches Jesus – this popular teacher and healer, the hope of the struggling masses gathered around him – he will lose all his power and become unclean. That's how the system works. It would be disastrous.

Yet something in her cries out against a lifetime of social programming. She convinces herself of the impossible. This woman believes something extraordinary. She believes that if she can find a way to get close enough to touch Jesus, his power will heal her and make her clean – freeing her to live life fully. She tells no one of her plan, knowing she would be restrained and punished for these thoughts. And the rest is history. As we know, she is healed and Jesus praises her for her great faith. In a single moment on a Palestinian street, this courageous woman determines for herself that the religious gatekeepers cannot control her relationship with her Creator and the source of life.

Exploring Chiastically

This passage is instructive about people power when standing alone, but it is even more instructive in its chiastic context. What follows in Figure 25 is my effort to map the passage chiastically.

Figure 25: Chiastic Structure for Mark 4:35-6:29

[A] Jesus leaves gathered crowds, Jesus stills the sea (4:35-40)
    [B] Jesus exorcizes the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20)
        [C] Jesus returns, asked to heal Jairus' daughter (5:21-24a)
            [D] Jesus heals hemorrhaging woman (5:24b-34)
        [C^1] Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (5:35-43)
    [B^1] Jesus rejected in his hometown, sends forth disciples (6:1-13)
[A^1] Story of Herod and family killing John the Baptist (6:14-29)

While the [A] [A^1] pairing develops the theme of two competing arenas of power, the [B] [B^1] pairing highlights the responses of the people on the streets as Jesus confronts the demonic system that occupies their psyches. Nowhere is the imperial occupation of the human psyche more apparent than in the story of the Gerasene demoniac. The relationship to the question of empire is suggested by its encapsulation within the broader theme of two kinds of power we outlined in [A] to [A^1]. It is made literal when the demoniac identifies himself "Legion," the word for a Roman military unit. He also indicates that his suffering represents the suffering of masses of others, when he says of himself, "[F]or we are many (Mark 5:9)."

This story [B] is paired with [B^1] in which he returns to his hometown. Here the rejection is worse in that it is utter. Those in his hometown are so lacking in faith that they manage to inhibit Jesus' power. Whereas Jesus is able to perform his miraculous exorcism in the Decapolis, a foreign land, he is made impotent in his own synagogue. This is a striking affirmation of people power. Even Jesus' power is dependent on the well of power residing in the people he serves and heals. If

they reject the reality of their own power – if they buy the imperial model of power and have no faith – Jesus can do nothing for them. "He was amazed at their unbelief (Mark 6:6)." So he moves on. Then gathers his disciples, empowers them, and sends them out. He tells them not to waste their time with those who cannot or will not take a leap of trust.

In our next sub-theme [C] [C^1], we find the raising of Jairus' daughter. Here we find a synagogue leader who is desperate because his daughter is dying. He approaches Jesus as Jesus is arriving back on the shore from his journey to the Decapolis. He falls on the ground before him in the faith that Jesus can heal her. As Jesus moves toward this engagement with a powerful figure, a crowd gathers around him. And in his lingering and listening he encounters the woman who is at the center of our story. After healing her he moves on toward Jairus' daughter who is now dead [C^1]. In the face of the hopelessness and disappointment around him, Jesus raises her from the dead. In contrast to his orders to the demoniac that he proclaim what he has experienced, he tells the small elite group who witnessed this miracle to stay quiet about it. It is not safe for Jesus to reveal his power and threaten the elite structure. Doing so can and does cut short his ministry on earth.

Here we find a nuancing of the developing themes of separate arenas of power – imperial power mediated by the religious authorities and God's power mediated in Christ. The categories of the faithless elite and the faithful masses are crossed, and we find a leader (Jairus) who can see what is happening around him.

And so now we return to the center of our story [D], the courageous act of a single woman in the crowd. The sub-themes outlined above provide context for the center of the gospel message. For Mark, the gospel message does not ultimately speak to the principalities and powers. It does not speak to religious organizations and social structures. It speaks of the systems and structures and our entrapment within them, but not to them. The gospel, especially in Mark, speaks to a single human heart. And this solitary person, when she receives the gospel, must decide for herself what is true

and what is false. She must decide where she is going to place her life. Will she place it in the ironclad logic of the elite she has been taught all her life? Or will she place it in this new promise of wholeness? She had suffered much under many physicians who claimed to know how to solve her problems. But she only grew worse. She tried to follow their rules – she tried to restrict herself to their social expectations – but her health decreased. Then a new physician arrived with a new story. And she decided to walk out into the unknown with him. And she got better.

We find references to "daughter" in three layers of the chiastic structure outlined above (Herod's daughter, Jairus' daughter, and the adopted daughter[37], otherwise known as the hemorrhaging woman). This repeated reference invites comparison. The daughters specifically explicate the layers of power. Each one, like all of us, requires power to survive. We need power to bring us life and food – joy and health. Each woman can be seen as an archetype for a particular mode of mediating power with its benefits and consequences. Further, by introducing the number twelve twice (Jairus' daughter is twelve years old and the hemorrhaging women has been suffering for twelve years), Mark is inviting us to see these individual figures as representative as the whole people of Israel (twelve tribes) or perhaps, in this case, the women of Israel. The whole chiastic structure seems to ask the listener: which daughter are you?

Herod's daughter: Conforming to the power of patronage

Herod's daughter makes her life under the power of patronage. Local authorities, such as Herod, serve as clients to Roman patrons, receiving carefully titrated bits of privilege in exchange for policing the social order. Thus he extracts tribute and taxes, on top of temple tithes, from village peasants who can scarcely keep afloat – creating a tributary economy that draws wealth from the poorest and moves it to the richest.[38] As outlined in Chapter 3, the result is crippling debt and foreclosure creating a pattern of land and property moving from poor to elite via debt instruments.

Loss of land creates a downward plunge where former landowners move into day labor, prostitution, and the disastrous loss of kinship connection. In this economy, 2% of the people control 50-66% of the wealth.[39]

Power gained through patronage has its benefits. The Herodians are certainly wealthy and well connected. Yet they also must always submit to the manipulations of the social and political world that is the basis of their survival, even against their own interests and desires. In the biblical scene before us, Herod's daughter is used as entertainment by her politically powerful parents and then as a pawn in their manipulations. Tragically she participates in the death of John the Baptist. She is an instrument in this act of murder. She, like her father, must play her role to keep the system intact. She appears to have it all but she has no understanding the larger forces at play in her life, and even if she understood the forces she could never defy them.

Jairus' daughter: Conforming to the power of kinship and temple

Jairus' daughter makes her life under the power of kinship and the temple. It is nearly impossible for post-Enlightenment individualists such as ourselves to grasp the depth of group orientation and kinship bonds present in our biblical context. I can only imagine that one views the boundaries of her identity, of her actual self-hood, as radically inclusive of her kin relations. Without kinship, without family, there is no land and there is no survival.[40] Temple is also integral survival. William Herzog explains that, in addition to a range of practical functions, the temple also serves political-theological functions. "The royal hope is that the temple will capture and domesticate God as well as provide [God's] abode, or the abode of [God's] name on earth."[41] "The lavish decorations and ornaments were meant to associate the temple with 'abundance and prosperity,' implying that it was also the dispenser of blessings."[42] "[Peasants] believed that the offering of sacrifices was the way to discharge their debt, and they believed that fulfilling their obligations to the temple, so that

the temple could operate on their behalf, was essential to fruitful fields and orchards. [Thus,] the temple and land were inextricably entwined."[43]

In the biblical story of Jairus' daughter, we learn that she is deeply loved by her father, a leader of the synagogue. In his desperation, he reaches out to Jesus (thus exposing his doubt in the power of the religious system managed by his own peers) and asks for help. His daughter is raised from the dead and left in his protection. There is ambivalence at the heart of this story. Jairus, in his desperation, crosses the divide between the temple authorities and Jesus. Jesus restores the daughter and returns her to his care and the care of those with whom he's engaged in so much conflict. Despite the conflict, this is Jesus' community. Jesus is not trying to destroy his community; he is trying to restore his community. The temple system was designed to be good for the people. Torah was offered as a gift of Yahweh to the people. Kinship connection, family, land and community are essentially good. The problem is that these gifts – gifts that were meant to be vehicles of life and healing – have been co-opted by the distortions of empire and thus have lost their positive power, especially for the most vulnerable in the community. Jesus' ambivalence and lack of comfort in these elite religious circles is evidenced when he commands them to tell no one about the miracle. Tragically they are too susceptible to the exploitation and violence of the Roman imperial system. So they cannot be trusted with the good news.

The Adopted Daughter: Conforming to Christ

Until she meets Jesus, we do not know how the adopted daughter makes her life. Given that she approaches Jesus with no father or any other male representative, we can conclude that she is living on the fringes of society. We can conclude that her survival has been in question, perhaps for the whole twelve years of her suffering, likely due to her uncleanness. And in our story, she is now faced with a moment. After years of living on the edge, events have converged to a point of

opportunity. Here is Jesus walking down her street on his way to an appointment. She feels within herself the import of the moment. She must step outside of everything she has ever been taught. Like the disciples faced with feeding the thousands, she too stands on the edge of a precipice. (It is difficult for a 21st century American – although sadly less so these days – to grasp the degree to which innovation is a cause for shame in her world. For her, conformity to the social order is safe. There is a suicidal quality to going against the grain.) But she has so little to lose at this point, and the window of opportunity is tiny. If she hesitates, he will be gone. So she makes her anti-social choice. For the love of life – for the hope of redemption – she breaks through her social conditioning and touches Jesus' garment.

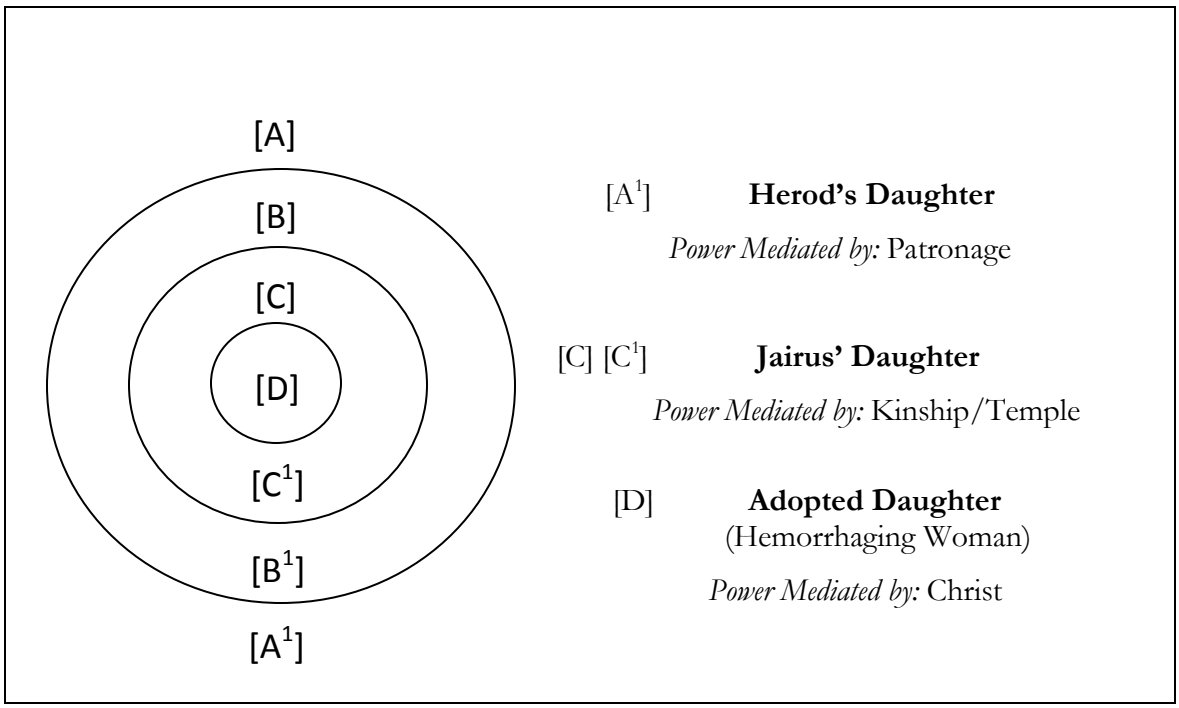
And she is redeemed. The Hebrew word for redemption, *ga'al*, can also mean "to act as kin." A redeemed person, a person who is whole, is restored to kinship relations. Jesus does just this, but not in the way we might expect. Jesus does not return her to her husband or father, as he returned Jairus' daughter. Jesus himself becomes her kin – he adopts her. He calls her "daughter."

When this woman makes her choice and steps into her unknown destiny, power is drawn from Jesus. This is a new mode of mediating of power. It is not the power filtered through patronage. It is not the power bestowed through traditional kinship or through the temple. It is the power of Christ. The power of Christ becomes the power by which our adopted daughter makes her life.[44]

Three Daughters/Three Modes of Mediating Power

Is Mark revealing to women the options that lay before them? If so, Mark offers at least three possible relationships in which women might set their hopes. They can seek privilege among the powerful with all the costs that entails, they can accept the traditional bounds of kinship and temple, or they can step outside the bounds and accept full personhood in Christ.[45]

Figure 26: Three Daughters/Three Modes of Mediating Power



Appendix 7: Where is the Locus of Power in Creation?

Chapter 11 of Mark addresses this question. In Marcan style, chiasm (or intercalation) illuminates a set of interrelated meanings. The basic structure is outlined in Figure 27. My attempt to visualize the relationship of meaning through concentric layers can be found in Figure 28 below. The concept of triple intercalation in Chapter 11 is suggested by Scott Brown, although he reads the first layer (A) as a "messianic procession" with a mysterious anti-climactic visit to the temple."[46] I read it more like Ched Myers as a motley crew of rabble-rousers conducting street theatre aimed at discrediting the current authorities.[47] This scene is followed by Jesus stopping at the temple to "case the joint" in preparation for the next day's action. Understanding the street scene is essential to drawing the thematic connection with A^1. It introduces the struggle over the very notion of authority that is a critical commentary on the other two aspects of the intercalation.

Figure 27: Chiastic Structure of Mark Chapter 11

A "king on an ass . . . political street theatre,"* casing the temple (1-11)
(*prelude*: discrediting the political/imperial authority, preparation for public action)

B Withering of the fig tree (12-14)

C Temple demonstration (15-19)

B^1 Fig tree lesson (20-26)

A^1 Confrontation with the temple authorities (27-33)
(*postlude*: attempt to re-consolidate power by the religious authorities, exposed as being powerless without the collusion of the people)

* This phrasing belongs to Ched Myers who reframes the traditional reading of "triumphal entry."

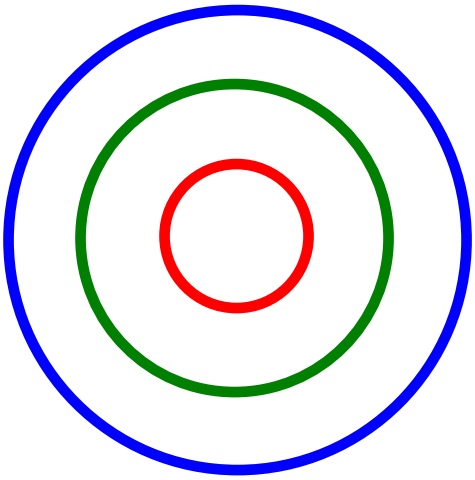
In the outer layer [A, A^1], the common theme is the discrediting of political and religious authorities. When we relate this theme to the central element in the structure, the temple

demonstration [C], we may draw the conclusion that the crowds' belief in the false authorities is what keeps the exploitive economic system intact.

The fig tree passages [B, B^1] are clearly related. When we relate the sandwiched fig tree incident to the central element in the structure, the temple demonstration [C], the destruction of God's good blessing becomes folded into issues of rage, resistance, and economic exploitation.

As we explore these three layers of texts we are called to consider how these themes are related. How are "understandings of authority" and "destruction of the sacred" connected to "rage at economic exploitation and acts of resistance"?

Figure 28: Interrelated Concentric Themes in Mark Chapter 11



C Discrediting the exploitive economic system
temple demonstration (15-19)

B The locus of prosperity in creation
fig tree (12-14, 20-26)

A The locus of power and authority in creation
street theater, confronting authorities (1-11, 27-33)

Intended audience for the series of public performances:
peasants/crowds/multitudes and disciples/students
(I argue that the audience is specifically **not** the political and religious oppressors. When they appear, they serve as foils for Jesus and the gospel writer in the teaching moment. The teaching is directed to the onlookers/listeners.)

Mark's integrated thematic purpose:
Reframing the oppressed person's fundamental belief system about the nature and locus of power and prosperity.
Power and prosperity are not located in hierarchical authorities or leveragable commodities.

Conclusion:
Jesus works to break the exploitive system by discrediting the hierarchical understanding of power held by the exploited peasants. This is a highly strategic move, because the structural integrity of the system is entirely dependent on the people's false belief in their powerlessness and dependence upon political and religious authorities to mediate their prosperity and relationship to God.

This brings us back to the authorities. We might wonder why doesn't Jesus go head-to- head with the hierarchical exploiters? Why does he stay out in the courts of the temple with the common people? For Jesus, the center of power is in the people. He stays with the people, because they are the locus of power, even if they cannot see it. The only way the rulers have power is through agreements with the people via the patronage system.

The reality of Jesus' view is exposed, because the leaders feel the threat. Through his public actions, Jesus undermines the crowds' faith in the religious authorities. He soundly demonstrates that the self-proclaimed authorities do not hold a monopoly on the interpretation of Torah, nor do

they hold a monopoly on God's power to heal and exorcize demons. That fragile religious monopoly is essential to the local rulers and their Roman patrons who depend upon it to maintain the social order. If the crowds stop believing in the religious authorities, the system begins to lose its hold. "And when the chief of priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching" (v. 18). So in his public ministry to farmers, artisans, fishers, and wanderers, Jesus begins to pull on a thread and the entire imperial system begins to unravel. Of course, the demonic system doesn't give up before retaliating violently.

Our passage ends with the temple authorities being silenced by their fear of contradicting the crowd's beliefs about John the Baptist. "[T]hey were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet" (v. 32b). This is a direct exposure of the rulers' dependence on people power.

In Jesus' revelatory street theater he takes two strategic strikes at his community's collusion with imperial exploitation. Strike one – the most essential strike – is aimed at the tragic collusion with the empire found in the hearts of struggling crowds. Their belief that economic prosperity (and relationship with God) must be mediated by political and religious authorities is the absolute center of the exploitive system. It is the glue that holds the empire's pervasive and relentless tributary economic order together. Jesus aims his strike directly at this target (the hearts and minds of the people), and in doing so seeks to undermine the foundation of the exploitive economic system, and replace it with Torah-based Sabbath economic principles. Strike two supports strike one. This strike is focused toward the temple authorities who've been thoroughly co-opted by the empire into re-reading (and deeply distorting) Torah to the empire's economic benefit (e.g. the imposition of costly sacrifices as a requirement to remain in God's graces and to receive God's blessings and prosperity). So in our inter-related sequence of public actions, strike two hits the collusion of the temple. Jesus

affirms his grounding in the temple and Torah and his hope for its restoration to its original radical economic vision.[48]

Appendix 8: A Few Biblical Examples of Hospitality

	Abraham & Strangers (Gen 18:1-15)	**Sodom (Gen 19:1-29)**	**Dinah (Gen 34)**	**Book of Ruth**	**Book of Daniel**	**Paying Taxes (Mark 11: 13-17)**	**Syrophoenician Woman (Mark 7:24-30)**
Participants	Abraham/Sarah 3 strangers	2 strangers Lot, daughters Townspeople	Dinah Jacob/brothers Shechem, Hamor	Ruth Naomi Boaz/workers	Nebuchadnezzar Daniel & friends	Pharisees/Herodians Jesus Onlookers	Syrophoenician woman, Jesus, disciples
Risks	Nomads, constant mortal danger from strangers	Culture of violence	Greed and deceit/ untrustworthiness/ abuse of women	Homelessness, poverty, famine, abuse of women	Loss of identity, torture and execution	Danger of being arrested and killed	Danger of exposure, exploitation
What went right?	Warm welcome Invitation Water, "choice" bread, calf Washing feet Rest Shared insight/knowledge (re:birth) Laughter God's presence	Abraham advocates for mercy Lot's warm greeting, offer of shelter, rest, washed feet, a feast. Lot's effort to protect strangers. Strangers' efforts to protect Lot and family. God/strangers willingness to negotiate/ revise.	Dinah goes visiting Shechem falls in love with Dinah Hamor approaches Jacob/brothers Honest outrage/ honest conversation Offer of shared agreement	Naomi sacrifices herself to save daughters-in-law Ruth dedicates self to Naomi/ adoption/protects her Ruth's bravery to glean & workers allow it Boaz is faithful, protects her, invites her to eat, leaves better food for her Naomi/Boaz arrange marriage	Negotiates with guard to maintain practices Offers wisdom Prays, saves wise men, interprets truthfully 2x King repents & converts 2x Fiery furnace (?) D refuses gifts Lion's Den (?) Darius repents Visions & Prayer	Jesus exposure of the situation: Why are you putting me to the test? Showing they are carrying idolatrous money. Challenging their worldview. What belongs to Cesar? What belongs to God?	Woman's determination to see him Crossing boundaries Honest statement of need: healing Negotiation of power, trust, and worldview (could and should not assume trust because of her context and history) Trust established Emergence as equal partners in dialogue Mutual dignity Mutual benefit
What went wrong?	Fear and denial of laughter	Attack by townspeople offers daughters as a sacrifice Breaking through the door Blinding the guests Distrust of son-in-laws Lot's self-preservation/fear God's violence	Shechem "sees and takes" Dinah Brothers' deceit and revenge Hamor's misplaced trust Murder of men/ stealing wealth/ women "made their prey" Dinah's silence – used as a pretext for violence.		King's threats of violence King demands worship King promotes own power and wealth (a mighty hand) D accepts gifts and status (?)	Untrustworthiness: Setting a Trap False deference Entrapping question: Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor?	
Resulting situation	Trust & mutuality, good news	Massive violence and destruction	"made odious to the inhabitants of the land."	New life, safety, restoration to community	Resurrection, rest, reward	Betrayal and crucifixion	Healing and expansion of mission

Appendix 9: Evolving Biblical Practices Related to Hospitality

Rituals and practices that govern risky encounters and form the basis for living in community together.

- welcoming and feeding visitors;
- helping a neighbor be a good host/giving them an animal if needed;
- not causing others to go into debt or lose land;
- releasing debts and returning land;
- behaving properly when traveling in another's land;
- practicing righteousness and justice;
- protecting the stranger;
- caring for the widow;
- caring for the orphan;
- honoring parents;
- telling the truth;
- not killing;
- offering mutual protection;
- honoring marriage vows, no adultery;
- not stealing or coveting what others have;
- taking time of rest – Sabbath, and ensuring time of rest for others, especially workers;
- caring for animals and the earth;
- sacrificing first fruits -- avoiding greed, remembering that everything we have comes from God;
- gleaning, leaving harvest in the fields for those who have lost their land;
- prayer, blessing, and giving thanks over food and God's gifts;
- role reversals of host and guest – ways of leveling power;
- service – washing feet, caring for the least, reversals of status;
- equality across social classes – early church meals removing social/imperial distinctions;
- loving neighbors; and
- loving enemies.

Notes – Appendices

[1] These are the only two usages of the word in the Gospel of Mark.

[2] See also Mark 3: 11: "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God!' But he sternly ordered them not to make him known." Jesus does not address them, they simply see him and respond.

[3] This word, generally meaning strong, is closely related to ισχυρος. ισχυρος is used twice in Mark, once to refer to Jesus' strength to remove demons and the other to refer to the strong man who is bound thus leading to the temple is plundered. ισχυο is used four times in Mark, each time referring to human failure. Jesus is said to have come not for the ισχυο but those who need a physician (Mark 2: 17). In the Gerasene passage, the people are not ισχυο enough to contain the demoniac (Mark 5: 4). In the story of boy with a demon, the disciples are not ισχυο enough to cast out the demon (Mark 9: 18). And at the end as Jesus prayed all night in the garden the disciples are not ισχυο enough to stay up with him for even an hour (Mark 14: 37).

[4] One reason seeds (the word) fail is that Satan takes them away as soon as they are sown (Mark 3: 15).

[5] Middleton and Walsh say that we continue to live in the seventh day of creation, while God rests and watches what we do with the power God has bequeathed to us. J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 123. One might draw connections with Jesus (God) sleeping in the stern of the boat while he gives the disciples a chance to respond with their own delegated powers. Like the early Israelites, they fear the responsibility of power and cry out to God to intervene. In response, God/Jesus shows compassion.

[6] The demons recognition of Jesus and his power/authority is contrasted with the disciples' confusion: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Mark 4: 41.

[7] In his commissioning, Jesus gives his disciples authority over unclean spirits (ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων) (Mark 6: 7) and they cast out many demons (Mark 6: 13).

[8] δυναμαι, a term having to do with capability and power, appears 32 times in the Gospel of Mark. Here I pull it out since it is the central term in the interchange between Jesus and the father. The father asks if Jesus "is able" to remove the demon. Jesus turns the question around at the father, asking if the father has the power/is able. All things are δυνατος for the one who has faith. It is also the term used when the disciples ask Jesus why they were "unable" to remove the demon. Jesus tells them it can (δυναται) only be done with prayer.

[9] During the first passion prediction Peter rebukes Jesus (because Jesus is coming to terms with the consequences of his ministry and accepting death). For attempting to deter him from his course (or perhaps trying to instill him with fear about his conviction that he must lose his life to save it), Jesus calls him Satan (Mark 8: 31-33). "For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?" (Mark 8: 36) At heart is a dispute about life. Satan/Peter thinks life is the preservation of one's present status at all costs. Jesus says that if one abandons truth to preserve one's current status, one loses one's life – one's soul – one's eternal life.

[10] In the midst of this conversation, they tell Jesus that someone else is casting out demons in his name. He says that anyone who does a deed of power (δυναμις) in his name, will soon not be able (δυναμαι) to speak evil of him. Mark 9: 38-41.

[11] When James and John ask for positions of honor in his glory, Jesus says: "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able (δυναμαι) to drink the cup I drink?" Mark 10: 38.

[12] Francis C. Grant and Halford E. Luccock "The Gospel According to St. Mark." *The Interpreter's Bible.* Vol. VII. (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1951), 779.

[13] Ibid., 783.

[14] This is a further explication of the power of prayer, which we also see in the healing of the boy with the unclean spirit above. The fathers prayer "I believe, help my unbelief" leads to the healing. The disciples are counseled to pray if they want to succeed in casting out demons. In the current passage he connects the success of prayer with forgiveness – a

free heart. Here Jesus has cast out the demon of Roman economic military and economics from the hearts of the people of Israel (the poor in the temple who saw the power of Jesus and the impotence of the temple leaders) through the power of prayer.

[15] Clues to the organization of the effort include the detail that they had prepared by cutting leafy branches from the fields to lay on the street.

[16] Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 39-40.

[17] William R. Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 107. Compare this to an economy driven by multi-national corporations that have wrested power from formerly sovereign nations via free trade agreements. Now they implement a strategy of extracting wealth from every possible transaction (food, housing, healthcare, childcare, water, energy, etc.) and moving the wealth out of local communities all around the globe to a tiny international business elite. Increasingly, if communities resist they are subject to enormous lawsuits claiming lost profits based on little-known provisions of free trade agreements.

[18] Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1985).

[19] K.C. Hanson and Douglass E. Oakman. *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 86-89.

[20] I gained some of this insight from Dr. William Herzog in a class lecture on "Religion and Empire" in 2004 where he outlined a myriad of personal, religious, and political responses to occupation evidenced in the gospels. In a medieval context, Newman describes the way demoniacs can be seen as truth-tellers. See: Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century" *Speculum* 73 (1998): 733-770.

[21] K.C. Hanson and Douglass E. Oakman, 124ff.

[22] William R. Herzog 2000, 115. There are significant internal critiques of this domestication of God throughout the Old and New Testaments, particularly in the prophetic tradition and the anti-monarchal strand within the Deuteronomistic tradition.

[23] Ibid, 113.

[24] Ibid, 117. Also: "[O]ne should note the power of the royal propaganda that surrounded Solomon. He taxed his people to ruination, used forced labor to build the temple, split his kingdom because of his exploitive and oppressive practices, and yet is remembered for his wisdom!" Ibid, 114.

[25] Ibid, 123. It makes financial sense that the political authorities respond with violence to a prophetic figure undermining this peasant belief system.

[26] See also: Ched Myers, *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*. Printed as part of Tell the Word, a project of Church of the Savior in Washington, DC. 2001.

[27] See Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1990).

[28] See S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[29] Alienation from the land is an enduring feature of imperial regimes: "As a healthcare missionary, I witnessed young children languish from malnourishment, children who could have flourished had their parents had access to a pedacito de tierra (small plot of land) on which to grow beans, corn, and vegetables. But the arable land was owned and used by transnational corporations that grew bananas and beef for North American tables. An attempt to organize for land reform could mean death by paramilitary forces, who were in league with wealthy landowners." Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2002), xiii.

[30] At the same time, estimates range from hundreds of thousands to 1,000,000 jobs being lost in the US as the direct result of NAFTA, as companies move across the border to exploit low wages and lack of regulation.

[31] Lawyer and activist Marta Ojeda, who led a delegation from the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition (that I joined) through Mexican border towns in 2003 was blacklisted as a young adult worker for questioning safety practices. Later, as she began successfully organizing workers, attempts were made on her life.

[32] "The corporate takeover of Mexico's food system has led to the food and health catastrophe. Transnational food corporations not only import freely into Mexican food markets, they are now the producers, exporters, and importers all in one, operating inside the country. Since NAFTA, corporations have gobbled up human and natural resources on an almost unbelievable scale. Livestock production has moved from small farms for local markets to Tyson, Smithfield, and Pilgrims Pride. The massive use and contamination of water and land has led to health and environmental disasters across the country. Millions of jobs have been lost to concentration and industrialized farming methods." Laura Carlsen, "NAFTA Is Starving Mexico" *Foreign Policy in Focus*, a project of the Institute for Policy Studies, October 20, 2011, [http://www.fpif.org/articles/nafta_is_starving_mexico, accessed August 31, 2012].

[33] "Under the theory of comparative advantage, most of Mexico was deemed unfit to produce its staple food crop, corn, since its yields were way below the average for its northern neighbor and trade partner. Therefore, Mexico should turn to corn imports and devote its land to crops where it supposedly had a comparative advantage, such as counter-seasonal and tropical fruits and vegetables. Sounds simple. Just pick up three million inefficient corn producers (and their families) and move them into manufacturing or assembly where their cheap labor constitutes a comparative advantage. The cultural and human consequences of declaring entire peasant and indigenous communities obsolete were not a concern in this equation." Ibid.

[34] Sources for NAFTA Statistics: "NAFTA's Broken Promises 2011: Outcomes of the North American Free Trade Agreement" *Public Citizen*, http://www.citizen.org/documents/NAFTAs-Broken-Promises-2011.pdf; Robert E. Scott, "Heading South: U.S.-Mexico trade and job displacement after NAFTA" *Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper 308*, May 2011, http://www.epi.org/publication/heading_south_u-s-mexico_trade_and_job_displacement_after_nafta1/; Robert E. Scott, Carlos Salas, and Bruce Campbell, "Revisiting NAFTA: Still Not Working for North America's Workers," *Economic Policy Institute Briefing Paper 171*, September 2006; "Table B-1. Employees on nonfarm payrolls by major industry sector, 1961 to date" *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 2011, ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/suppl/empsit.ceseeb1.txt; Alejandro Nadal, "The Environmental & Social Impacts of Economic Liberalization on Corn Production in Mexico" *Study Commissioned by Oxfam Great Britain and World Wildlife Fund International*, September 2000; Tim Johnson, "Free trade: As U.S. corn flows south, Mexicans stop farming" *McClatchy Newspapers*, February 1, 2011, http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/02/01/107871/free-trade-us-corn-flows-south.html#storylink=cpy; and Rick Relinger, "Explaining the Displacement of Mexico's Corn Farmers" *Prospect Journal*, April 2010, http://www.prospectjournal.ucsd.edu.

[35] These parasitic elements are just as real today. I look around the city of Rochester, NY which is riddled with poverty. There are check cashing stores and pawn shops everywhere. A friend of mine spent years getting her immigration status in order. She was living on a shoe string and barely spoke English, and a parade of lawyers played on her fears and tried to trick her into paying thousands of dollars for completing simple forms. When a neighbor's home was burned down in an arson incident in the abandoned home next door to hers, she literally had to hide from lawyers who wanted to parasitically profit from her tragedy. They followed her around in the streets. When she paused in my garden to talk with me one day, guys in suits started jumping out of cars running toward her, as she yelled "no thank you" and screeched away in her car to escape them.

[36] I use the word antisocial to describe actions that step outside the expected behavioral patterns enforced explicitly or implicitly by the predominant members of the social context within which the person resides. I do not mean it to describe acts that go against the health of a social group. In this definition, I assume that dominant social norms and expectations can work against the health of the group they are meant to support.

[37] In 5: 34, Jesus refers to the hemorrhaging woman as "daughter." In doing so, he not only heals her body, but he heals her social relations. She is no longer without a male intermediary. By adopting her, he has now taken the role.

[38] Our "adopted daughter" may be an archetypal victim of this system. The fact that she has visited many physicians indicates that she once was doing well financially. But something has changed in her social status. Has she lost her family? Has she lost her land? Was she forced onto the streets? Into prostitution?

[39] William R. Herzog 2000, 107.

[40] K.C. Hanson and Douglass E. Oakman 2003, 19-60.

[41] William R. Herzog 2000, 115. There are significant internal critiques of this domestication of God throughout the Old and New Testaments, particularly in the prophetic tradition and the anti-monarchal strand within the Deuteronomic tradition.

[42] Ibid, 117. See also: "[O]ne should note the power of the royal propaganda that surrounded Solomon. He taxed his people to ruination, used forced labor to build the temple, split his kingdom because of his exploitive and oppressive practices, and yet is remembered for his wisdom!" Ibid, 114.

[43] Ibid, 123. It makes financial sense that the political authorities respond with violence to a prophetic figure undermining this peasant belief system.

[44] See also: "King David wanted to build a temple, but God really didn't like that, because the ark allowed God to be picked up by human beings and taken on a journey. An ark would allow God to move, to be a historical God, a God who didn't want to be stuck in Jerusalem, even if it was in a building of splendor. 2 Samuel 7: 1-17. So, although he let David build the temple, God got himself a better ark later on, called Jesus, who allowed God to move all over the face of the earth again." Hendrik Hart, "Unpublished manuscript on Change"' (Introduction, 10).

[45] As we transfer this thinking to modern day dilemmas, I correlate organized Christianity with the religious/social authorities of first century Palestine. I do not correlate organized Christianity with Christ. Religion is religion and Christ is Christ.

[46] Scott G. Brown, "Mark 11:1-12:12: a triple intercalation?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (January 2002): 78-89.

[47] Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 294-296.

[48] According to William Herzog, "Jesus did not abrogate the Torah or supersede it in his own teaching. Rather, he interpreted the Torah in light of God's intent for it. The Torah was meant to be an expression of God's covenant with the people, a way of ensuring that God's land would be a haven of justice in an unjust world. This reading clashed with those who had co-opted the Torah for their own political interests." William R. Herzog 2000, 107.