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An Enlivening and Concrete Life-Together: Discovering A Fresh Rootedness in the Gospel for Local Organizations and Families in a Global Economic and Postmodern Consumerist Culture

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

AN ENLIVENING AND CONCRETE LIFE-TOGETHER:
DISCOVERING A FRESH ROOTEDNESS IN THE GOSPEL
FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND FAMILIES
IN A GLOBAL ECONOMIC
AND POSTMODERN CONSUMERIST CULTURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

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George Fox Evangelical Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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is approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 23, 2016
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Updated*. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

To my wife, Jennifer

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation claims that the transmission of the gospel falls short in postmodern rural life because the message has not meaningfully integrated with community life as a whole and asserts that the witness of the church must employ a greater connectedness to local culture to affirm a rootedness in the gospel. Section 1 describes the abstract nature and influence of the global economy and postmodern consumerism, highlighting the growing negative effects on rural communities, families, and ultimately the witness of the gospel. Section 2 surveys a range of Christian organizations in today's society analyzing how they can become polarized, absorbed, or isolated. Section 3 presents how a grounding in the gospel is foundational, offering answers to the issues left unaddressed by the other proposed methods of ministry covered in the previous section. The methodology for this ministry structure is captured through the pilgrim metaphor and is framed within an approach of sustainability. As a viable option, Section 4 and 5 outline the specifications of an integrated and local family enterprise, offering a diversified and adaptive model which contains the ingredients within itself, that is, the principles. Section 6 offers a postscript noting further areas of research and refinement yet to be explored. Sections 4 and 5 describe the artifact startup plan for the enterprise, website, and mobile office. The appendix contains many aspects and details of the artifact.

SECTION 1: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

David and his wife, Anne, have three young children. Both have university educations and have had successful careers. After college, David found himself caught by the driving force of his western culture and felt compelled to live a relentless pursuit toward financial security and success. “Depend on no one and be your own man.” This drive for independence seemed to be inborn. Even after three career changes, each change only intensified the emptiness he and his wife felt. With each new job he entered a work force with no reference to who he is or where he is from. David’s main purpose has been to fulfill the social and economic goals of a particular employer: the production, profit, efficiency, or technological progress. David’s identity and sense of self-worth has been tied to a position or job description. Anne’s frustration has primarily risen from the separateness of their family life. The discontinuity of their daily life has driven wedges in their relationship and she longs for a lifestyle where they are brought together. She is tired of the forced separation and living for the cold and empty purposes of David’s employers. More frustrating and adding to the disconnectedness they are experiencing is the cultural expectation of sending their children to school for five days a week.

David and Anne, like most families of our western culture, often feel rootless and alone. They may not even realize how disconnected they are and how much they yearn to be a *part* of a local community. Even the churches they attend seem disconnected from the local life. Like David’s employers, they are more concerned with metrics instead of

relationships, imposing and creating programs and activities that clutter their life with more deadlines and tasking. The methods are incongruent with the message of the gospel.

It is clear that David and Anne must find a different approach in order to live more integrated and relational lives. Like wayfarers, they feel thrust from place to place, disconnected and shaken. They want their next move to have a deeper regard for the place and people in that locale. They long to change their defining narrative from one that is primarily functional to one of relationship, as they both yearn to teach their children the value of living responsibly and intimately toward each other, the land, and God. They've begun to desire an enlivening way of life reflective of the gospel.

The last part of the twentieth century witnessed a substantive shift in American culture. Gradually, the face of the culture has been marked by an ever progressing loss of self-sustainable communities and a growing number of fractured families. The massive increase of global industrialization and postmodern consumerism has changed the way most people live and relate to one another. Simply put, it has caused an epidemic of *abstraction* in society. Abstraction comes from the Latin *abstractus*. It means to be drawn away from or alienated from.¹ Namely, drawing away from what is concrete, actual, or real.² The French-born American historian, Jacques Barzun (November 30, 1907 – October 25, 2012), in his *magnum opus*, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of*

¹ “from Latin *abstractus* ‘drawn away,’ past participle of *abstrahere* ‘to drag away, detach, pull away, divert;’” Harper Douglas, “Abstract (Adj.),” Online Etymology Dictionary, 2015, accessed October 3, 2015, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=abstract>.

² “Abstract thinking is a level of thinking about things that is removed from the facts of the “here and now”, and from specific examples of the things or concepts being thought about. Abstract thinkers are able to reflect on events and ideas, and on attributes and relationships separate from the objects that have those attributes or share those relationships.” Mark Ylvisaker, “Tutorial: Concrete Vs. Abstract Thinking,” LEARNet, by The Brain Injury Association of New York State, 2006, accessed December 19, 2015, http://www.projectlearn.net/tutorials/concrete_vs_abstract_thinking.html.

Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present (2000), builds upon “ABSTRACTION” as a key theme throughout the historical retrospective.³ “ABSTRACTION,” he explains, “is a calculated departure from experience, from what is seen and felt as the real, which goes by the opposite name of *concrete*.”⁴ It is “an obsessive habit of mind” in today’s society, Barzun states.⁵ Abstraction causes places, people and God to be referred to and considered in general terms and not as named place and individuals. It breaks things down by analysis to make it orderly and user-friendly and formulates systems and statistics for knowledge sake. It diffuses the essence of a message.

This section describes how the Industrial Revolution led to a global economy that damaged rural communities, families, and ultimately the witness of the gospel in order to expose the harmful impact of this cultural shift. Second, it explains postmodern consumerism’s tie to the global economy, highlighting the effects of digital technology on society and the loss of a sense of place in the lives of people. The section closes with significant questions that must be addressed related to how witness of the gospel presented in today’s postmodern society.

³ “Themes remain as desires shift. The 19C wanting self-governing parliaments sounds the dominant theme of EMANCIPATION. The ever-enlarging scope of science extends that of ANALYSIS to the other parts of life, carrying SECULARISM with it. All three tend to enlarge the great cloud of ABSTRACTION.” Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000), 522.

⁴ Ibid., 213.

⁵ Ibid., 196.

The Industrial Revolution and Global Economy

One of the definitive marks of the Modern Era⁶ was the rise of industry. Specifically, it was the rise of the Industrial Revolution that led to a shift in culture. It can be understood in general terms or as an era. David S. Landes, late professor of economics and of history, Harvard University, makes the distinction clear: “The words ‘industrial revolution’—in small letters—usually refer to that complex of technological innovations which, by substituting machines for human skill and inanimate power for human and animal force, brings about a shift from handicraft to manufacture and, so doing, gives birth to the modern economy.” The “Industrial Revolution”—in capital letters—explains Landes, began in the eighteenth century in England and subsequently spread to Continental Europe and to other areas overseas. In Landes words, it “transformed in the span of scarce two lifetimes the life of Western man, the nature of his society, and his relationship to the other peoples of the world.”⁷ On the surface the advance of the Industrial Revolution appeared rewarding and “impressive,” new technology arose, production increased, and markets expanded.⁸ Though modern technology has produced motorized ground and air transport and a span of electronic devices such as the radio, television, and computer, the advances were superficial. Landes explains, how in spite of

⁶ The historical timeframe of the Modern Era is problematic, but it is “characteristically” said to begin with the Protestant Reformation. Barzun, 3. Determining its ending is even more difficult, some contest we are still in it and that Postmodernism is simply an intensification of Modernity. Andrew R. Campbell, R. Anderson, "Realms and redescription in Ricoeur: discovering fresh metaphoric networks for spiritual formation in a postmodern consumer culture" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2013), 10.

⁷ David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

the gains, "...more wealth, more goods, prosperous cities . . . there could be no guarantee that mere quantitative gains would be consolidated."⁹ The result was that some segments of society were damaged. Landes considers the shift from agriculture to industry of particular consequence:

The fact remains that in the period of the Industrial Revolution and subsequently, industry moved ahead faster, increased its share of national wealth and product, and drained away the labor of the countryside...It was most extreme in Britain, where free trade stripped the farmer of production against overseas competition; by 1912, only 12 per cent of Britain's labour force was employed in agriculture; by 1951, the proportion had fallen to an almost irreducible 5 per cent.¹⁰

Thus, the decline of rural communities led the concentration of populations into cities where industry is prevalent. With this came the growth of centralized bureaucratic governments and educational systems designed to support the growing infrastructure.¹¹ While these developments were seen as advancements, they also destroyed the livelihood of many and widened the gap between the wealthy and poor.¹²

The effects of industry in the United States mirror how the Industrial Revolution took place in Western Europe. It is especially reflected in its' rural communities. Wendell Berry, a respected American novelist, poet, environmental activist, and farmer, has written extensively on this subject. He argues that the industrial revolution "made universal the colonialist principle that has proved to be ruinous beyond measure the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹¹ These are the developments Landes designates within *modernization* which also includes "a sharp reduction in death and birth rates..." and "the acquisition of the ability and means to use an up-to-date technology." Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 7.

assumption that it is permissible to ruin one place or culture for the sake of another.”¹³

Like Landes, Berry cites examples from England, to demonstrate that this industrial exploitation established a pattern that has endured for centuries.¹⁴ He writes,

Industrial procedures have been imposed on the countryside pretty much to the extent that country people have been seduced and forced into dependence on the industrial economy. By encouraging this dependence, corporations have increased their ability to rob the people of their property and their labor. The result is that a very small number of people now own all the usable property in the country and workers are increasingly the hostages of their employers.¹⁵

An example of such procedures was the impact of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) revisions of 1993. The real issue, warned Berry, was not international free trade but that it would “barter away” people’s ability to produce their own food. “If people lose their ability to feed themselves, how can they be said to be free.”¹⁶ The data presented in an article by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) support this argument. It is an informative article on the structural changes in the farming sector within the last 30 years. It discusses how very large and small farms are growing while the number of mid-sized farms is declining. Therefore, acreage dedicated to crop

¹³ Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1994), 128.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶ Wendell Berry, “GATT Changes Would Give Away the Farm: Proposed Revisions Would Limit Member Nations’ Ability to Protect Their Land, Farmers, Food,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1993, accessed April 26, 2015, http://articles.latimes.com/1993-07-08/local/me-10896_1_sustainable-food-supply. In 1993 the GATT was updated (1994) to include new obligations upon its signatories. One of the most significant changes was the creation of the World Trade Organization. “These changes would throw every farmer in the member nations into competition in the so-called “free market.” American farmers, who must continue to buy expensive labor-saving machines, fuels, and chemicals, will be forced to compete against the cheap labor of poor countries. And poor countries will see much-needed food vacuumed off their plates by lucrative export markets” Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 46-49.

production is mostly controlled by much larger farms.¹⁷ In a global economy it is very difficult for the mid-size family farm to survive. Gary M. Angell and his wife So own and operate Rocky Ridge Ranch, a small-diversified family farm located in the Inland Northwest near Spokane, Washington. His is one of the few family farms still operating in the community. Angell said they would not survive if not for his Army retirement pension.¹⁸ Surrounding him are large monoculture wheat operations. Monoculture is the practice of producing a single crop at a time and is widely used in modern industrial agriculture. Its implementation has allowed for increased efficiency in planting and harvest through its single-plant or single-animal production and is often managed and operated by outside corporations. Thus, the shift from farm to industry and country to city is evident. In Berry's words, "A decentralized, fairly independent local economy was absorbed and destroyed by an aggressive, monetarily powerful outside economy."¹⁹

The problems caused by the Industry Revolution in the global economy have only intensified, permeating American society at every level feeding the rootlessness and loneliness felt by countless individuals. It operates on the same flawed principle stated by Berry, that "the deficiencies or needs or wishes of one place may safely be met by the

¹⁷ James McDonald, "Usda Ers - Cropland Consolidation and the Future of Family Farms," United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, September 3, 2013, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013-september/cropland-consolidation-and-the-future-of-family-farms.aspx#.VT5PRvAj33v>.

¹⁸ They practice sustainable and organic farming methods. In addition, he is a Vietnam Veteran. <http://www.rockyridgeranchspokane.com/about.php>.

¹⁹ Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 127.

ruination of another place.”²⁰ Such a principle has economic, ecological, social, and spiritual effects. Berry explains,

To build houses here, we clear-cut the forests there. To have air-conditioning here, we strip-mine the mountains there. To drive our cars here, we sink our oil wells there. It is absentee economy. Most people aren't using or destroying what they can see...The issues of carrying capacity and population remain abstract...²¹

Basically, society has increasingly become structured in a way that causes many Americans to be dependent on recourses outside their community. Most products are mass produced and processed then shipped into cities and towns in bulk. This is especially evident in how we get our food. For most families the only affordable way to buy food is in the large chain grocery stores. Joel Salatin, author, speaker and the founder of Polyface Farm explains how our culture has become segregated, “...we've created essentially—food and economic apartheid. So that the food is in one place, the people live in another place, the factory is in another place, and we don't have the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker imbedded in the village in an integrated network.”²² Not only have people lost freedom in the ability to feed themselves', they are no-longer connecting over the table. People used to know who their butcher was and where their eggs and vegetables came from. This is significant because “the table” is a central place where relationships begin and grow. Simply put, food has become impersonal, abstract. In the 1990's Berry observed how there was “hardly a rural neighborhood or town in the

²⁰ Ibid., 37.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Joel Salatin owns and operates Polyface Farm with his family in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. It is a family owned, multi-generational, pasture-based, beyond organic, local-market farm and informational outreach in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. <http://www.polyfacefarms.com/>. Mandy McMaken, “Joel Salatin – the Pastor of the Pasture,” Columbus Underground, February 28, 2010, accessed April 26, 2015, <http://www.columbusunderground.com/joel-salatin-the-pastor-of-the-pasture>.

United States that has not suffered some version of this process.”²³ Today, if a person drives through many rural American towns they will see stagnant communities, closed business, schools, and churches alike. Yet, the problem is not only economic. The effects permeate all aspects of a community.

Many rural churches, for example, have itinerant pastors or those who see these small congregations as stepping stones in their careers. Many of these “servants” are from other places and impose unfamiliar ideas and traditions. Berry explains, “These various public servants all have tended to impose on the local place and local people programs, purposes, procedures, technologies, and values that originated elsewhere. Typically, theses “services” involve a condescension to and a contempt for local life that are implicit in all the assumptions—woven into the very fabric—of the industrial economy.”²⁴ Sadly, people that do not succumb to industrialization are regarded as backward and out-of-date by outsiders. Consequently, communities, especially rural ones, are not only under attack economically but morally and spiritually, in that a ministry position is seen as a “job.”

This brings to the surface another destructive driving force of the global economy: the emphasis on “jobs.” In a keynote address to a group of Kentuckians Berry expressed how the job market is no longer built on the skills of a local economy:

A ‘job’ exists without reference to anybody in particular or any place in particular. If a person loses a ‘job’ in eastern Kentucky and finds a ‘job’ in Alabama, then he has ceased to be ‘unemployed’ and has become ‘employed.’ It does not matter who the person is or what or where the ‘job’ is. ‘Employment’ in a ‘job’ completely satisfies the social aim of the industrial economy and its industrial government...I can tell you confidently that the many owners of small farms, shops and stores and the self-employed craftspeople who were thriving in

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 152-153.

my county in 1945 did not think of their work as ‘a job,’...Most of those people, along with most skilled employees who worked in their home county or home town, have now been replaced by a few people working in large chain stores and by a few people using large machines and other human-replacing industrial technologies...Leaders of industry, industrial politics, and industrial education decide how the land will be used, and people are moved into industrial jobs, away from local subsistence and into the economy of jobs and consumption.²⁵

The job market, basically, is designed to satisfy the industrial economy and is disconnected from local subsistence. In the wake of the “job hunt,” we find broken local communities and displaced families, as people are selected on “universalistic rather than particularistic grounds,”²⁶ in Landes’s words. Instead of valuing people for who they are, the global economy selects people on the basis of what they can do. Put simply, it treats people as commodities and dehumanizes. Adding to this abstraction of society, communities also suffer from the digitization of technology.

Digital Technology

Digital technology is now global. It has reached the furthestmost corners of the earth, to include the third world. According to the Pew Research Center, in 2013 cellphone ownership had exceeded 90% and is the fastest adopted consumer technology in the history of the world.²⁷ In America 92% of adults own a cellphone, including the

²⁵ Amy Hogg, “Wendell Berry's Vision of a Strong Local Economy,” Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, August 17, 2013, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.kftc.org/blog/wendell-berrys-vision-strong-local-economy>.

²⁶ Landes, 10.

²⁷ Lee Rainie, “Cell Phone Ownership Hits 91% of Adults,” Pew Research Center, June 6, 2013, accessed September 9, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/06/cell-phone-ownership-hits-91-of-adults/>.

67% who own a smartphone.²⁸ It has changed the culture, affecting the way people perceive and interact with the world—the way people see, hear and communicate with each other. Lee Rainie, with the Pew Research Center, captured the nature of the cellphone craze: “As cellphones and smartphones become more widely adopted and play a larger role in people’s daily communications, their owners often treat them like body appendages.”²⁹ Barzun in his historical retrospective makes keen observation regarding the effects of machinery on the spirit:

This is not imaginary, and it is rarely seen to be not a single but a double effect. The obvious part is that the machine makes us its captive servants—by its rhythm, by its convenience, by the cost of stopping it or the drawback of not using it. As captives we come to resemble it in our pace, rigidity, and uniform expectations. But there is in a mechanism a subtler influence. The machine is an agent of ABSTRACTION. It is itself an abstraction in that it does one particular task (or at most two or three) and yields identical products. There is no fringe of fancy, no happy error or sudden innovation as in the handworker’s performance. That is why machine-made things rarely draw our glance more than the few times when they are new and handy. They induce no subsequent reverie, no speculation, and no love. The robot is a repulsive caricature of Man.³⁰

The “abstraction” mentioned in the previous section, and specifically addressed by Barzun here, has only intensified with the advance of technology.

Tim Challies, a reformed pastor from Canada, noted speaker and author, describes one of technologies subtler influences in one of his latest works. Though technology is amoral, he says, it is not morally neutral because it can draw a person away from God. Challies clarifies, “Though they [technological devises] enable us to survive and thrive in

²⁸ Lee Rainie and Kathryn Zickuhr, “Americans’ Views On Mobile Etiquette,” Pew Research Center, August 26, 2015, accessed September 9, 2015, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/26/americans-views-on-mobile-etiquette/>.

²⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁰ Barzun, 554.

a fallen world, the very aid they provide can deceive us with a false sense of comfort and security, hiding our need for God and his grace.”³¹ In a subtle way, like an idol, laptops, cellphones, iPods, and Tablets, can entrap us. As Barzun noted, the more we use them the more “we come to resemble in our pace, rigidity, and uniform expectations.”³² It can become an addiction. If technology does not become the idol itself, it can become an “enabler” to other idols such as lust, pursuit of money, gambling, or consumerism.³³ It can replace the one true God in a person’s life by appearing to meet their needs. It is the opposite of a life of faith that lives in response to the call of God, in Christ.

Digital technology has blurred many lines. The effects are ecological, explains Challies, changing “the entire environment” in which it operates.³⁴ Thus, discernment is essential. Technology, in its many forms, enables medical treatment, saves lives, and expands the reach of the Gospel. Yet, technology can be abused. Unchecked, it can easily diminish a person’s life in its grasp for control of time, money, and relationships. In this sense, the digitization of society has brought more distraction, resulting in shallow thinking, and spurious living. As an agent of abstraction, unchecked, it has proven to be more damaging in its even subtler way of reducing the human aspects of life. It numbs our affections and blurs ones sense of place.

³¹ Tim Challies, *The Next Story: Life and the Faith After the Digital Explosion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 24.

³² Barzun, 554.

³³ Challies, 31.

³⁴ Ibid., 40-41.

Sense of Place

Digital technology has also introduced a new “space” that is not really a place. It is called “cyberspace.” Challies describes it as “networked individualism” explaining that, “Because our connections are ethereal and virtual rather than bound by geography, we can leave a community without any fear of consequences, without being concerned about a knock on the door from a concerned friend or pastor.”³⁵ Relationships are much less localized. There is no rooted context for relationships.³⁶ Some argue that it has enabled them to have greater connection to family and friends. Yet, these connections, explains Challies, are mostly “quick and impulsive:”

In a strange way, we now find that more communication actually leads to less communication, or at least to less real-world communication and less significant communication. Many of our new media technologies are designed for speed and urgency, not for thoughtful reflection and undistracted conversation. They are designed, not to encourage depth in existing relationships, but to widen our network and our ability to say less that is of real substance.³⁷

I find it ironic that much of the communication tools I used in combat have made their way into general society. As a communications specialist in the Army during my enlisted years, I used these devices for their designed speed and efficiency necessary in combat, not for personal use. Though the internet does serve as a way for deployed military service members or travelers to communicate with family, the impact is limited, especially with children, as it is often one-sided shallow communication.³⁸ A baby

³⁵ Ibid., 104.

³⁶ Ibid., 76.

³⁷ Ibid., 77.

³⁸ In a 14-month deployment to Iraq I communicated weekly with my firstborn son, Micah, via video, yet when I returned home he did not recognize me.

looking at a grandparent in a screen is far removed from a normal relationship. The only way to experience relationships in their truest and most genuine sense is to be in a real place in a real time. Part of who we are comes from our community, connection, and our “place.” What used to be mere communication is now considered a community. Our society is largely detached from that place.

Therefore, our relationship to the land cannot be emphasized enough. As the global economy increases there is a greater loss of a true “sense of place” among people. Those who would “save the planet” only add to the abstractness. Such thinking is often “only statistical [and] shallow,” says Berry.³⁹ It has little intention of doing anything. Thomas Edward Franks, author of *The Soul of the Congregation* asks, “How can you value other places if you do not have one of your own?” Professor and Chair of the Department of History at Wake Forest University, Franks adds,

If you are not yourself placed, then you wander the world like a sightseer, a collector of sensations, with no gauge for measuring what you see. Local knowledge is the grounding for global knowledge. By learning how to abide in a place, we can learn the qualities that make for a healthy and just community.⁴⁰

People do not really “live at home,” writes Berry. They do not live sustainable lives. According to Berry living sustainably means being in balance with “the *net* ecological income of its supporting region, paying as it goes all its ecological and human debts.”⁴¹

³⁹ “Global thinkers have been and will be dangerous people. National thinkers tend to be dangerous also: we now have national thinkers in the northern United States who look on Kentucky as a garbage dump. A landfill in my county receives daily many truckloads of garbage from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.” Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 19-20.

⁴⁰ Thomas Edward Frank, *The Soul of the Congregation: An Invitation to Congregational Reflection* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 145.

⁴¹ Berry. *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 21.

The only way for a community to live this way is to be closely connected to the land.

Berry explains,

We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place, plus the place itself: its soil, its water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the nonhuman creatures that belong to it. If the place is well preserved, its entire membership, natural and human, is present in it, and if the human economy is in practical harmony with the nature of the place, then the community is healthy...A healthy community is sustainable; it is, within reasonable limits, self-sufficient and, within reasonable limits, self-determined—that is free of tyranny.⁴²

In a global economy, the land becomes another abstraction; people are detached from it.

Few have a “local affection” for a place or the people in that locale. In effect, they know less of who they are.

If people desire the qualities that make a healthy community, they must learn to abide in a place. People must learn again to “live at home.” There is a need to return to the land. But how did this basic principle get lost? Part of a person’s identity comes from their community, connections, and their “place.” Many are detached from that place; therefore, detached from that part of who they are. The cultural impact of the global economy and the rise of digital technology within it have blurred too many lines causing a values shift.

Postmodern Consumerism

With the spread of industrialization to the United States, a new set of values came to the forefront of American culture: speed, capacity, efficiency, and productivity. In

⁴² Ibid., 14-15.

other words, faster is better, more is better, and newer is better. Gary Lyons, author, speaker, and founder of Q, writes,

The industrial age struck [the church] like lightning and resulted in an emphasis on measurable parameters like conversions, attendance, and memberships at the inevitable expense of deeper experiences. In many towns, community gave way to corporate ladder climbing. Suddenly, people had less time to spend with neighbors and civic partners... The industrial age, the technological revolution, and globalization have converged to create a world where there are more distractions and less community, more religious skepticism and less institutional trust.⁴³

This shift in values developed from the close association of the global economy to postmodern mindset. The Postmodernism mindset is commonly depicted as a reaction against the Modern emphasis on reason. Generally speaking, the postmodern view gravitates more towards the experiential, liberated, and artistic.⁴⁴ In addition, it has highly individualistic mentality resulting in skepticism and mistrust of authority. Andrew Campbell, Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at George Fox University, explains,

Postmodernity is so highly individualistic that it views with deep skepticism all organized institutions and sees them and society as a whole as potential mechanisms of oppression. High value is placed upon one's ability to differentiate oneself from one's peers. This is a way to exercise and reinforce one's postmodern liberty.⁴⁵

The rise of the Industrial Revolution, with its innovations and productivity, became an agent by which postmodernists express individuality and freedom. Campbell further asserts that, "Through exercising choice, the modern man reinforces his freedom and

⁴³ Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2010), 19-20.

⁴⁴ Heath White, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006), 188.

⁴⁵ Andrew R. Campbell, R. Anderson, "Realms and redescription in Ricoeur: discovering fresh metaphoric networks for spiritual formation in a postmodern consumer culture" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2013), 18.

autonomy, attempts to fulfill his desires, and builds his identity predicated on the goods and services he can acquire, arrange, and adapt.”⁴⁶ In a unique combination, globalization and technology provide the postmodern consumer with the means of fulfilling their desires, while the postmodern feeds the industrial economy with their unquenchable consumerism. They, in essence, feed on each other. Hence, goods are sold and consumed not on a needs-basis but on the basis of false promises, offering a better quality of life and personal fulfillment. The greed of the industrialization and popular demand are both culpable.

The price many postmoderns pay is isolation and rootlessness; in addition, they commonly mix, match, and borrow from many traditions and customs trading their roots for what they consider freedom.⁴⁷ As a result, their sense of place is very superficial, which in turn affects the quality of their relationships. They wander like “sightseers” with no gauge for measuring, believing, or knowing where and who they are. According to Heath White, a philosophy professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, the crux issue for postmoderns is that they have found nothing to replace their lost trust in reason; and despite the advances in technology and social programs, the deeper aspects of life have not improved.⁴⁸ With nothing to replace reason, postmoderns are in a blur. There is a loss of hope that a larger-than-life force, such as scientific discovery or God, is going to come to the aid of humanity.⁴⁹ The isolation, rootlessness, and loneliness

⁴⁶ Campbell, 11-12.

⁴⁷ White, 129.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 153.

associated with the rise of industry and the global economy have only intensified. All in all, abstractness reigns.

Summary

The last part of the 20th century witnessed a change in American culture. The face of the culture has been marked. To understand the harmful impact of this cultural shift, I have described how the Industrial Revolution led to a global economy and explained how it has destroyed the sustainability of many rural communities and synergy among families. While numerous advancements in industry and technology have benefited society, a lot of troubling facts have surfaced, especially within the far-reaching spread of digital technology. This massive increase of global industrialization combined with postmodern consumerism has shaped an economy where goods are no longer sold on a needs-basis but upon false premises offering a better quality of life. In short, a values shift has occurred, where more is better, faster is better, and newer is better. Moreover, people's lives have been diminished by the "job" market, displacing and commodifying them, adding to the dissolution of rootedness, reducing the human aspects of life, and blurring one's sense of place. Simply put, an epidemic of abstraction permeates American society. This raises significant challenges associated with the witness of the gospel in today's postmodern society.

Presently, it is clear that families must find a different approach in order to live more integrated and relational lives. Many feel like wayfarers, thrust from place to place, disconnected, and shaken. They long to have a defining narrative that is more relational as opposed to mere functionality. Most live separate lives, meaning there is little connection throughout a normal day. In addition, there is little relationship between what

a family does daily and their connection to the community. True interaction is more than activities. In monoculture, as an example, there is no species diversity; everything is single-plant and single-animal production. In contrast, perma-culture species live off of each other, creating a symbiotic environment in which all parts help each other. We have “monocultured” our lives. In effect, there is less communion and harmony. In the gospel, relationship is paramount. Redemption is defined in the beauty of a relationship with Christ which in turn meaningfully affects all other relationships.

How can Christians most effectively be witnesses of the gospel in today’s postmodern society? How can they best position themselves in order to communicate the gospel in its purpose, principles, and practice? Is there a better way Christians can live in a synergy that affirms a rootedness in the gospel? In order to adequately address these questions, the problems causing the loss of internally sustainable communities and the fracturing of families must be faced. This requires a response that is personal in nature and rooted in truth. In other words, participation in the kingdom of God is not an abstract idea. It is relational and grounded. It is relationally attached to Jesus Christ and grounded in the principles taught in the Scriptures.

The following section surveys a range of Christian organizations in society analyzing how many become polarized, overly absorbed into the culture, or isolated.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

The influence of the global economy and postmodern consumerism has changed the face of American society. Section 1 described how the Industrial Revolution led to a global economy and how that has disrupted or destroyed the sustainability of rural communities. This lack of sustainability within communities showed disruption in the synergy among families, thus, creating a society that values utility over meaning, efficiency over beauty, and domination over relationship—abstractness. James Hunter, an American sociologist and professor at the University of Virginia, describes today’s instrumentalization of society as having reduced “the value of people and worth of creation to mere utility, whether utility is oriented toward market efficiency, expanding power, or personal fulfillment.”⁵⁰ In sum, the loss of internally sustainable communities and the fracture of families must be addressed. There exists a need for society to return to what is concrete and abandon its current unremitting slide into abstraction.

From the late 20th century to the present, American society has witnessed a continuing struggle and internal war of ideas and values. Many in American society have labeled it the “culture war.”⁵¹ This “war” is an indication of the shift in today’s postmodern society. How Christians engage and position themselves toward the culture does matter if they wish to be an effective witness of the gospel. The core principles of

⁵⁰ James Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University press, 2010), 266.

⁵¹ For an analysis of the origin the culture war as it relates to values see APPENDIX 1: CULTURE AND VALUES.

Christian thought have been pitted against secular Humanism for centuries. Humanism, according to Barzun, is “a body of accepted authors and a method of carrying on study and debate...with the belief that the best guides to the good life are Reason and Nature.”⁵² These two are opposed primarily in what they view as the “best guide” for life. Christianity, as a whole, is not a total rejection of reason and nature in that it often uses reason as a tool for study. Yet, faith in God and the Scriptures must supersede reason and nature. If this isn’t complicated enough, postmodernism’s rejection of reason convolutes matters even more, for it is difficult to pinpoint what the postmodern considers the “best guide” for life. Therefore, at one end there are the Christians, who value the faith in God and the Scriptures as the best guide for life, and on the other there are the humanists, who value reason and nature most. The postmodern opposes both. Thus, the tension can best be characterized as the highly religious at one end and the secular at the other.⁵³

The primary concern of this section is to survey how people who call themselves Christians in America have dealt with this tension. It will look at how they have engaged the world in recent decades and examine how they have faced the abstractness of the day. The aim is to examine both their general practices and results of those practices. How the redemptive influence of various Christian groups fared in today’s culture of global economics and postmodern consumerism? Regrettably, the Christian influence has been hampered in this climate, manifesting itself in three forms. The following paragraphs will

⁵² Barzun, 46.

⁵³ Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, 1st Simon & Schuster Hardcover ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 3.

survey a range of Christian organizations, dividing them into three general categories in the subsequent order: Polarized, Absorbed, and Isolated.

Polarized

The purpose of the polarized position is to infuse change in culture through either a bottom-up or top-down approach. The underlying assumption of the bottom-up method is, when people change culture changes. In other words, if you can win the “hearts and minds” of a people you can change their culture. Its intent is to bring change, not exclusively, but primarily from within. To illustrate, the United States military employed this tactic in the global war on terrorism (GWOT). A published essay by Joseph C. McAlexander (LTC, USN) of Air University states: “A foreign or local government can only win the war of ideas and defeat global terrorist if it wins the hearts and minds of the people. Winning the hearts and minds of a populace requires influencing the behavior by offering them a better solution than the solution al-Qaeda offers.”⁵⁴ When I deployed to Iraq in 2007, the attempt to win the hearts and minds of the people was a high priority in addition to providing military security and support to economic and political reform programs. To raise cultural sensitivity and awareness, each soldier was given a pocket size field manual explaining Iraqi culture and language. Yet, after over 14 years of war US-led forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq have yet to win over the culture. Rather, the people in these countries appear more besieged, distrusting, and fearful of US-led

⁵⁴ Joseph C. McAlexander IV, “Hearts and Minds: Historical Counterinsurgency Lessons to Guide the War of Ideas in the Global War On Terrorism” (Air University, Air Command and Staff College, 2007), 1, accessed September 25, 2015, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aupress/bookinfo.asp?bid=361&type=papers>, 2.

coalition troops. Hunter cites a number of forms applying this logic within the evangelical world. For example, he explains how Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ, now known as “Cru,” stated: “Changed people, in sufficient numbers, will produce changed campuses, changed communities, changed cities, changed states and nations—yes, in a very real sense, a changed world.”⁵⁵ Focus on the Family’s, Truth Project took a similar approach. In an effort to counter the postmodern rejection of truth, they launched a curriculum called the Truth Project. Through a series of Truth Project products they invite Christian consumers to take part in this bottom-up “cultural change.”⁵⁶ In other words, real change can be willed through individuals. All these examples have one particular feature in common; they utilize the common people of a culture to communicate the change.

Top-down approaches are more aggressive and public, using the power structures of society to infuse change. Hunter refers to it as the “defensive against,” and explains how it has “long been embraced by Fundamentalist and mainstream Evangelicals, though it has also become a strategy in recent decades for many conservative Catholics.”⁵⁷ In an effort to “hold the ground against apostasy” and “win back the larger culture” he explains

⁵⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁶ “What Is Focus On the Family’s The Truth Project®?” Focus on The Family, March 30, 2010, accessed September 26, 2015, http://family.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/24059. Focus on the Family offers the Truth Project in the form of videos, guide books, devotionals ranging in prices from \$5.49 to \$144.99. “Truth Project,” Focus on The Family Parenting with Christianbook.com, accessed November 30, 2015, http://family.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/easy_find?action=Search&Ntk=multiple.series&Nso=1&Ns=product.published_date&Ntt=Truth%20Project.

⁵⁷ Hunter, 214.

how both denominations and para-church organizations have a twofold “implicit strategy:”

First, to evangelize unbelievers, calling for the nation to repent and come back to the faith; second, to launch a direct and frontal attack against the enemies of the Christian faith and worldview. One hand has been open and offering the good news of the gospel (even if only as “life insurance”), while the other hand has been tightened into a fist ready to fight—which is, of course, precisely what they have done, one issue after the other right through the century.⁵⁸

For instance, he shows how the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the 1990’s approved initiatives “to stir evangelicals more fully to meet their civil and biblical responsibilities as citizens, and thus to strengthen their influence in public life.”⁵⁹ Today, other non-profit groups such as Restore America endeavor to mobilize Christians to vote. Their vision states: “The **Restoration** and **Preservation** of America as a nation ‘Under God’.”⁶⁰ The Family Research Council is another organization aimed at changing the culture.⁶¹ Hunter argues, “The fact is that the movement and its organization walk a very fine line. Legally these groups are nonpartisan as the tax code defines it. Substantively, though, they are intensely partisan.”⁶² “The desire of all groups on the Christian Right,” in Hunter’s words, “is to ensure that public life is ordered on their terms.”⁶³ “The myth continues,” he states, “to shape the language, the logic, and the script for their

⁵⁸ Ibid., 214-215.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁶⁰ “About Us,” Restore America, accessed October 30, 2015, <http://restoreamerica.org/about/>.

⁶¹ “About,” Family Research Council, accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.frc.org/about-frc>.

⁶² Hunter, 123.

⁶³ Ibid., 124.

engagement with culture.”⁶⁴ Though these organizations have noble causes, much of the outcome has resulted in an “us against them” mindset and a greater backlash. The backlash has resulted from an underlying motive of many of the so-called “Christian Right” of mainstream evangelicalism to acquire and influence power. Their motive for engaging society, as perceived by many, has often been for control and pride.

David Kinnaman, a social scientist and administrator for the Barna research and marketing firm, with Gary Lyons published a book in 2007 entitled, *UNchristian*, which presents a compelling survey of the “outsiders” perceptions of Christianity. Specifically, the book examines how those outside the Christian faith, between the ages sixteen and twenty-nine perceive evangelicals.⁶⁵ In six “broad” and “loaded” themes it documents the skepticism and objections raised by outsiders. The book explains how outsiders view Christians as hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, anti-homosexual, sheltered, and too political, and judgmental.⁶⁶ According to Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell’s award winning publication, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, “[Americans] are increasingly concentrated at opposite ends of the religious spectrum—the highly religious at one pole, and the avowedly secular at the other.”⁶⁷ In effect, they show how there is a rapidly proliferating under-served niche for religious entrepreneurs: the “Nones.” Putman’s findings substantiates that the nones are the third

⁶⁴ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁵ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UNchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity—and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 15.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 26-28.

⁶⁷ Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, 1st Simon & Schuster Hardcover ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 3.

largest “religious” group in the United States; though, they are actually defined by the absence of religious affiliation.⁶⁸ From 1990 to 2010 their numbers sharply increased.⁶⁹ Also worth noting, a large portion of these nones are from parents who have been religiously affiliated, suggesting that their rise might be a “backlash” against the religious right’s political overtone.⁷⁰ Whether ones approach is bottom-up or top-down the results have ended in greater polarity between Christians and secularists in American society.

Related to this polarity is an argument presented by David E. Fitch’s, professor of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary, that evangelicalism has become an “empty politic.” By “politic” he is referring to a people’s “corporate disposition in society . . . i.e., our way of life together unified and formed into an organic whole by our beliefs and practices of those beliefs.”⁷¹ He explains evangelicalism’s antagonism, as being “driven” by what it is against instead of what it is for, indicating that it has lost the core of its life together. Fitches describes “how a way of life together is birthed in the fullness of Christ as opposed to one birthed out of antagonism.”⁷² Summed up in three evangelical terms, his work makes an ideological critique “the Inerrant Bible,” “the Decision for Christ,” and “the Christian Nation.” He critiques the way these terms have “evolved as so to function as political objectives within the culture of evangelicalism.”⁷³ Fitch’s aim is to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁷¹ David E. Fitch, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology (Theopolitical Visions Book 9)* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), xvi.

⁷² Ibid., xvi-xvii.

⁷³ Ibid., xxv.

show how the “doctrinal emphases were changed into de-personalized concepts that evangelicals gave their political allegiance to.”⁷⁴ He sums up his core argument by stating that Christians have “in essence emptied” their “social politic of its core in Jesus Christ for a politic buttressed by the temporary structures of modernity.”⁷⁵ Whether fundamentalists really are guilty of the charges expressed by Fitch, Hunter, and others, these are the sentiments communicated by their top-down, polarized methods.

Consequently, Americans have become more polarized. The push to “take back the culture” by many evangelical organizations has led to a certain alienation of the gospel. Like a foreign or local government that attempts to win the war of ideas by either using the power structures or by “winning the hearts and minds” of people, it has failed. Evangelicals have attempted to influence behavior by offering them a better answer than the solutions of the prevailing postmodern culture. They have also tried to take back the culture by aligning itself to the structures of power. In either case, the self-inflicted wounds of preserving the past at the expense of the future are deep. Anytime Christians try to influence society through pressure, coercion, or any other method that align with the world it makes matters worse. It adds to the abstractness rampant in today’s society of global economics and postmodern consumerism by depersonalizing and distracting from what is concrete in the message. That is, it puts issues instead of people at the forefront. For these reasons, a Christian model that seeks to change culture through bottom-up or top-down approach is not recommended. The failures of such organizations and

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 17.

institutions has not only caused polarization but has led to the rise of other ineffective models.

Absorbed

The proposed solutions of this model are formed to bring forth a healthy correction to the poor image of mainstream evangelicalism. Though this model takes serious the need to engage with culture many organizations have become irrelevant in an aim to become “relevant.” Captured and driven by polls, public opinion, and power, those who push this model have been chained by a desire to be liked and accepted. Fitch describes the movement as, “in their own way,” having “been birthed from the discontent towards evangelicalism in North America.”⁷⁶ This post-evangelical movement has often been labeled the emergent church or missional church. Lyons refers to them as “blenders” for their desire to mesh with mainstream culture while maintaining their Christian beliefs.⁷⁷ Often, it is difficult to notice any difference of lifestyle. In response, many new establishments have risen while countless existing churches and para-church organizations have rearranged their methodology. Some have completely rebranded. In addition, the theological variety within the emerging movement is broad ranging from those who are deeply committed to conservative evangelical doctrines and values, to those who question key doctrines, such as the nature of substitutionary atonement, the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁷ Lyons, 40.

reality of hell, and gender related issues.⁷⁸ Those in the latter category include Brian McLaren, a prominent pastor and writer, who became a key leader in the movement.⁷⁹

For most, the change has meant a refocusing of issues and type of programs put at the forefront of the organization. Instead of being known for “what we’re against” they want to be recognized by “what we’re for.” Instead of fighting the culture, it recognizes that God works in and through culture. Thus, in a postmodern sentiment, urban congregations are often an amalgamation of traditional religious symbolism and modern technology. Putnam describes their church services as “typically punctuated with loud contemporary music and irreverent banter more akin to a late night talk show than your typical Sunday morning sermon.”⁸⁰ I witnessed this blending of old and new in the many of churches I visited during my ten year Army career across America.⁸¹

Yet, the difference is more than style. Emerging church leaders often promote “missional living,” by which they mean an emphasis on what people do rather than the

⁷⁸ Ed Stetzer, a contributor to the North American discussion on missional church and church planting divides the emergent movement into three helpful categories: *Relevantes* (Those who are “simply trying to explain the message of Christ in a way their generation can understand.”), *Reconstructionists* (Those who “think that the current form of church is frequently irrelevant and the structure is unhelpful. Yet, they typically hold to a more orthodox view of the Gospel and Scripture. Therefore, we see an increase in models of church that reject certain organizational models, embracing what are often called “incarnational” or “house” models.”), and *Revisionists* (“They are not -- at least according to our evangelical understanding of Scripture. We significantly differ from them regarding what the Bible is, what it teaches and how we should live it in our churches.”). Ed Stetzer, “First-person: Understanding the Emerging Church,” Baptist Press, January 6, 2006, accessed October 10, 2015, <http://www.bpnews.net/22406>.

⁷⁹ Mark Driscoll wrote a helpful article in understanding the history of emergent movement. According him, the missional perspective is what ties the movement together. Mark Driscoll, “A Pastoral Perspective On the Emergent Church,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (Spring 2006): 87-93.

⁸⁰ Putnam, 178.

⁸¹ My family and I visited and attended churches in the Pacific Northwest, Colorado, and the Deep South (Georgia).

specific doctrines they believe.⁸² An objective within this movement is to attract the new “nones.” Nevertheless, a danger lies in its tendency to reinterpret and reduce Christianity to what conforms, what works, what is trendy, hip, and new. According to Hunter, there is less emphasis on “the defense of the faith than on being relevant and connected to contemporary culture.”⁸³ Put simply, there is a strong motive to “rebrand Christianity.” A good example of the shift to a missional focus is Vintage Faith Church of Santa Cruz, California where Dan Kimball, an author and a leading voice in the beginning years of the Emerging Church movement, is lead pastor. The Vintage Faith Church website makes clear their focus on community and mission on their home webpage. There, they declare the value of “‘being’ the church vs. going to church, since ‘the church’ today has become known as a place that people go to rather than a people on mission for God.”⁸⁴ In addition, their story expresses a desire to “go back to the ‘vintage’ values that Jesus spoke about, rather than being trapped by what has often become known as stagnant “organized” religion.”⁸⁵ Accordingly, the church was designed specifically to reach the emerging culture in Santa Cruz County and grew out of a burden for young people, specifically college and high school students outside the church. While visiting Vintage Faith Church, Matt Slick, President and Founder of the Christian Apologetics and

⁸² Putnam, 178.

⁸³ Hunter, 216.

⁸⁴ Vintage Faith Church, accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.vintagechurch.org/>. According to a City Data statistic in 2015 the median resident age is 28.9.

⁸⁵ “The Story of Vintage Faith Church,” Vintage Faith Church, accessed October 30, 2015, <http://www.vintagechurch.org/ourstory/>.

Research Ministry, counted roughly 200 people, mostly in their twenties.⁸⁶ Thus, there is a clear desire to break from the old ways of evangelicalism with regard to its emphasis and its methods to discover the “vintage.” Theologically, according to Slick, “Dan Kimball appeared to be within orthodoxy and was very concerned about how to communicate the truth of God's Word to the people and culture in which we dwell.”⁸⁷ This is commendable; nevertheless, has Vintage Faith Church created another version of monoculture within evangelicalism? Whether intentional or not, a conciliation to attract a certain age group exists. In addition, in their postmodern aversion to organized religion and the institution, are they in a sense distancing themselves from the historical work of the Holy Spirit in the church?⁸⁸ According to Fitch, in such a highly emphasized missiological formula there is an implicit understanding that one “can know/encounter Christ determinately apart from the ongoing forms of the church.”⁸⁹ Is this a true recovery of a life together shaped by the gospel?

Rick Warren, founder and senior pastor of Saddleback Church, an evangelical megachurch in Lake Forest, California, is an example of one leader who has changed his emphasis of signature issues and mastered the values of the day. Looking through the Saddleback Church website one will find many ways to “connect, act, watch, care or give.” One has a choice to “connect” with just about any age group desired. You can even choose to “act” locally or globally, be part of a recovery program, or participate in an

⁸⁶ Matt Slick, “Dan Kimball of Vintage Faith,” CARM, Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, accessed October 2, 2015, <https://carm.org/dan-kimball>.

⁸⁷ Slick, 1.

⁸⁸ Fitch refers to this danger as the “trap of de-ecclesilogizing the church in mission.” Fitch, 195.

⁸⁹ Fitch summarizes it as Christology, Mission, Ecclesiology. Ibid.

HIV & AIDS, Mental Health, or Orphan Care initiative. Note no mention of any politically charged issues relating to abortion, gender, or family that have defined mainstream evangelicalism over the last generation. Furthermore, if you can't attend a service, you can visit their "Online Campus" featuring their "online pastor."⁹⁰ It is fairly cumbersome to digest all the options. Is this not reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's warning to the Corinthians to not be "led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ"?⁹¹ In his first letter, Paul exhorted the Corinthian church, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."⁹² It is no doubt that many at Saddleback Church affirm a belief and devotion to Jesus. However, are they not alienating the gospel with so many initiatives? It appears they are not prioritizing the gospel. In such a large network, where can one find a sense of place and rootedness? It falls within the technological crisis endemic today. The options add to the destructive appetite of today's postmodern consumer. They appear to have mastered the speed, capacity, efficiency, and productivity of the day. In all the output of programs and activity, the urgency of the gospel is diffused. Where is the resolve to proclaim the gospel in a world of lost sinners that are going to hell? Thus, there appears to be an overcorrection to past evangelicalism's preoccupation with escaping hell. Consequently, the "not-yet" aspect of the Kingdom of God is minimized.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Online Campus," Saddleback Church, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://saddleback.com/visit/locations/onlinecampus>.

⁹¹ 2 Corinthians 11:3.

⁹² 1 Corinthians 2:3.

⁹³ In a sermon preached by Rick Warren, his justification for not preaching on prophecy was because nobody knows the time of Jesus' return. <http://saddleback.com/watch/webcast/kingdom-builders/kingdom-builders-week-1>. Fitch refers to this danger as "de-eschatologizing salvation." Fitch, 188.

Two other organizations, Q and Catalyst, have developed in a similar push for relevance. Through an exploration of many broad topics and themes, they hope to “redeem the culture.” Catalyst, for instance, “was created to meet the felt-need that existed within the church leader space; a leadership event that focused on a new generation of church leaders.”⁹⁴ “Q was birthed out of Gabe Lyons’ vision to see Christians, especially leaders, recover a vision for their historic responsibility to renew and restore cultures.”⁹⁵ Because Christians have become irrelevant and criticized in the culture, they aim to “unify, equip, and challenge leaders from varying streams, traditions, and generations of the Church.” Catalyst, therefore, brands itself as “A Community of Change Makers.”⁹⁶ Hunter explains their dynamic,

The quest is for something more authentic and “real” to the moment. Indeed, this yearning for something different is the foundation to their solidarity; it is what holds this group together. But what is that “something different” that they propose? The answer is vague by design. What is not provided is any new theological content for the simple reason that “this has been divisive in the past.” Rather, what they offer is a process that is slickly packaged and aggressively marketed for a fee, in which young Christian leaders have access to conversations and talks given by celebrity Christian and non-Christian leaders about various areas and issues in culture.⁹⁷

Hence, Q and Catalyst appear to be formed, in the words of Fitch, around a “conceptual object around which people give their allegiance...a badge which identifies us as a part of

⁹⁴ “About Us,” Catalyst Conference, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://catalystconference.com/about-us/>.

⁹⁵ “About Q,” Q, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://qideas.org/about/>.

⁹⁶ “About Us,” Catalyst Conference, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://catalystconference.com/about-us/>.

⁹⁷ Hunter, 217. The price for Q conference in Denver, 2016, is \$375.00. <http://qideas.org/splash/denver/>. Catalyst offers a live stream conference for an individual for \$129.00. <http://catalystconference.com/next/>. They both also offer books, CD’s, apparel and other memorabilia.

this political cause.” Basically, this “signifier provides enough distance between the subject and the unifying fantasy so that the signifier can bind the whole community together,” explains Fitch.⁹⁸ In effect, one can be lured into believing they can be serious about the gospel without actually doing anything. In effect, the Word of God rarely, if ever, lands on the solid ground of one’s daily life. In short, they are selling a new approach that is a furtherance of abstraction.

As an Army chaplain for 6 years, I developed and conducted many marriage and family conferences for every unit I served.⁹⁹ They were high profile events where notoriety and presentation mattered most to my superiors. Yet, I rarely noticed any significant affect upon families. At most it provided families a needed break from the daily grind and up-tempo of Army life. Largely, at the Army’s expense, it gave soldiers and their families a small window of free time together. It did not matter how dynamic a speaker or how intriguing the activities, there was rarely any new insight or resolve for struggling marriages. After looking through the Q and Catalyst websites I cannot help but notice the similarity. As Hunter states, “‘celebrity’ and ‘spectacle’ permeate these initiatives.” “In the end,” he explains, “these initiatives, while well intentioned and rooted in a deep longing, take their cue from the culture around them, and offer little clarity for the confusion of the times.”¹⁰⁰ In our current high-speed society is it even possible to change something moving so fast? With the speed of life one can hardly find enough time

⁹⁸ Fitch identifies this as a “master-signifier” and refers to this particular trap as “de-incarnationalizing the Word.” Fitch, 26-27, 183-88.

⁹⁹ I served a total of 10 years, the first four as an enlisted Army Ranger in the 2nd Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment.

¹⁰⁰ Hunter, 217.

to think, much less, institute changes. There is no time to ponder deep thoughts in the day-to-day survival mode. The Puritans spent a year or more on one passage, while today, in a daily text message; one can receive guide tips for positive thinking. In critiquing one method or program they only create another. Put simply, Q and Catalyst are mistaken to think they can change the culture. The culture will never become the kingdom regardless of how insightful and aware Christians become. The kingdom of God, explains Darrell L. Bock, scholar and research professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas, “is about the powerful, even transforming presence of God’s rule through Christ. That rule is expressed today in the community of those whom he “planted,” what became the church. But the Kingdom is bigger than the church. Its presence now is but a precursor to a more substantial presence in the future.”¹⁰¹

Over all, though this model is loosely defined, it has led many to an over accommodation to today’s culture of global economic and postmodern consumerism. Birthed primarily from a discontent to mainstream evangelicalism they formed to bring about a healthy corrective. While commended for its missiological focus to reach western culture, nevertheless, many have become irrelevant in an aim to become “relevant.” In a desire to seriously engage culture, they have become captured and driven by polls, public opinion, and power. Postmodernism’s aversion to the institution has caused a lot of these organizations to separate from the historical work of the Holy Spirit in the church. This is

¹⁰¹ Darrell L. Bock, “The Kingdom of God in New Testament Theology: The Battle, the Christ, the Spirit-Bearer, and Returning Son of Man,” *The Biblical Studies Foundation*, (2001): 13, accessed April 8, 2015, <https://bible.org/article/kingdom-god-new-testament-theology-battle-christ-spirit-bearer-and-returning-son-man>, 15.

evident in the distancing of century old practices, such as the Eucharist and the consistent exposition of the Word. In addition, the gospel has become alienated with too many options, causing a loss of urgency to proclaim the message to lost sinners that are headed for an eternity in hell. Perhaps the most damaging, though, is the comfortable distance some of these models have put between the message of the gospel and the unifying ideas that have brought so many together. The Word of God has become so distant that it rarely, if ever, lands on the solid ground of one's daily life and community. In short, it has lost the power of true repentance found in the gospel, a concrete and personal necessity in the life of a Christian.

Put simply, this proposed solution has led to an over accommodation to the culture, resulting in a dulling of Christianity's sharp edges and its counter-cultural impact. Thus, the destructive and subtle aspects of postmodern-consumerism continue, i.e. speed, capacity, efficiency, and productivity, reducing the value of humanity and one's sense of place. In opposition to both the polarized and absorbed models of engaging the culture is the isolated model.

Isolated

Some Christian groups have simply isolated themselves in response to today's culture of global economics and postmodern consumerism. In various ways they have turned off or withdrawn from secular culture. Obvious examples of such are the Quakers, Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites, descendants of Anabaptists who refused participation

in politics and military.¹⁰² The Anabaptist formed primarily in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation; however, the separation made by the main Reformers was not sufficient enough. The group originated in Southern Holland, Germany, and Zurich under the threat of banishment for their rejection of infant baptism, among other issues (hence, *Anabaptists*). The fundamental issue was not infant baptism but, according to Bruce Shelley (1927-2010), former senior professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Denver Theological Seminary, “the nature of the church and its relation to civil governments.”¹⁰³ For practical reasons they sought to form communities in other places.¹⁰⁴ According to Hunter, all branches within the movement “tended to share a radical congregationalism that rejected apostolic succession and much of the hierarchy of traditional ecclesiology.” Hunter continues, “The succession they sought to perpetuate, rather, was the succession of an authentic Christian congregation whose life, order, and practices were inspired by the witness of Christ and the gospels and the social ethics of the Christian church in the apostolic age—living in simplicity, sharing goods in common, caring for the poor and the widowed, seeking reconciliation, and making peace.”¹⁰⁵ Shelley describes them as “a voice calling the moderate reformers to strike even more deeply at the foundations of the old order.” Ahead of their time, explains Shelly, “Like the Benedictine monks of an earlier day, the Anabaptist

¹⁰² Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History: In Plain Language*, Revised by R. L. Hatchett, 4th ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008, 2013), 259.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁰⁴ “During the Reformation years, between four and five thousand Anabaptists were executed by fire, water, and sword.” *Ibid.*, 262.

¹⁰⁵ Hunter, 151.

demonstrated that those who live most devoutly for the world to come are often in the best position to change the present.”¹⁰⁶ Like the Anabaptist, today there are certain groups that are also forming their own communities.

Two associated groups are the neo-Anabaptist and new monastics. Though not necessarily rooted in the Anabaptist movement, they draw from the movement in how they wish to separate themselves from the political powers and how the church as a whole has melded with them. Their disdain for the state and the compromises of the church are expressed in their separatism. Hunter, a critic of these movements, explains the neo-Anabaptist reasoning,

The Constantinian error has been fatal in many ways. Rather than challenging the principalities and powers, the people of God become united with the powers; rather than proclaiming the peace, the church embraced an ethic of coercion, power and, thus, violence; rather than resisting the power of the state, the church provided divine legitimation for the state, which has invariably led to the hubris of empire, conquest, and persecution, rather than modeling a new kind of society, the church imitated the social structures of hierarchy and administration; rather than being a servant to the poor and the oppressed, the church has been complicit in wielding economic and political power over the poor and the oppressed.¹⁰⁷

The opposition of the neo-Anabaptist and new monasticism movements is expressed collectively more readily than individually. They consider the church to be most effective when it communally shows its true identity by not conforming to the social and political norms. Therefore, like many descendants of Anabaptism, these movements have a strong emphasis on pacifism. Their pacifism, however, is against violence as a whole, not only wartime pacifism. In Hunter's words, “The commitment to nonviolence is paramount; the

¹⁰⁶ Shelley, 259.

¹⁰⁷ Hunter, 153.

ethical mandate is always to resist coercion, whether from the state or the market.”¹⁰⁸

This leads to an opposition of support for government and societal structures, to include military service.

A current example of such an organization is The Simple Way community in Philadelphia, founded by Shane Claiborne, an activist and author. The organization identifies itself as a new monasticism and is not limited to any specific religious denomination or church. Claiborne describes it as an “alternative culture” “where it is easier to be good and where the fruits of the Spirit are cultivated.”¹⁰⁹ Essentially, they have chosen not to start churches but join other churches in their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, The Simple Way is a 501c3 non-profit organization. In Claiborne’s words, “...we have also said from the onset that we are a community first and a non-profit second, and if the non-profit organization ever gets in the way of the community we will abandon it. It is simply a tool to help us function as a community.”¹¹⁰ Among the organization’s top affirmations are simplicity, non-violence, spirituality, and relationships.¹¹¹ By and large, the movement proposes a lifestyle that rejects materialism, violence, and nationalism while emphasizing living in a loving and close community with Christians and non-Christian, caring for the poor, and sharing of economic resources. To these organizations, neo-Anabaptist or new monasticism, to have coercive rule over others is contrary to what it means to be a follower of Christ. Therefore a strong view of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁰⁹ Shane Claiborne, “Frequently Asked Questions,” The Simple Way, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.thesimpleway.org/about/faq/>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Foundation,” The Simple Way, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.thesimpleway.org/about/foundation/>.

the church stands in sharp contrast to the world in how it is corrupt and coercive in its structures and powers. “This opposition is as central to the neo-Anabaptist view of redemption history as it was to the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century,” argues Hunter, calling it a “sharp dualism” where “both the desire to be all that God called the church to be and the fear that the church will somehow be contaminated by worldliness and complicit in its corruption.”¹¹²

There is much to be commended for isolationist single-heartedness and determination. The desire to remain pure and resist the moral slide of secular culture is honorable. These groups stand in contrast to the over accommodation of the absorbed solutions attempt to become relevant, for which, at times even receiving contempt for their non-conformity. Some in this persuasion therefore, argue that in order to survive, the church must pull back and become separate. Instead of being antagonistic in approach, as the polarized position, the isolationists simply withdraw or separate. There is something to be said in their renunciation of postmodern consumerism that has consumed so many. However, this insinuates that everything about culture is godless or sinful. Are there not aspects of culture that are worth engaging, as noted in the absorbed position? Nevertheless, it is impossible to completely disengage.

As explained earlier, culture is defined by what resides in a society’s core, in its values and beliefs. All people are children of their culture, expressed in their ethos: the customs, laws, manners, language, attitudes, and habits. Therefore, it is impossible to completely disengage and escape. At most, the isolated position is creating a parallel alternative to the prevailing culture, which in a sense is a witness. However, what is the

¹¹² Hunter, 161-62.

intent? In this endeavor the isolated position, in any form, is missing a very important point in the gospel—why Christians are here!

Simply put, the isolated position ignores much of Scriptures teaching to proclaim the gospel. Christians are not told to isolate themselves and disengage from the realities of the world. Though the neo-Anabaptist and new monastics have not totally disengaged from society, there is a distinct thread of separatism in their strong opposition to the state. Throughout the scriptures there is a clear engagement of God's people with culture, sometimes critical and other times accommodating; nonetheless, witnesses. In the Old Testament, the prophet Jonah was rebuked for his disengagement. In Jeremiah, the exiles in Babylon are instructed how to engage, not disengage. In the New Testament, the mandate to reach the lost is explicit. For instance, in Acts of the Apostles the disciples are told to be witnesses starting in Jerusalem and to move out from there into the "remotest part of the earth."¹¹³ In the Gospels it is not uncommon for Jesus to be reclining at a table with "tax-gatherers and sinners."¹¹⁴ He rarely isolated himself or his followers from the realities of ministry or the pressures of the world. Moreover, there is no mandate to form an "alternative community" from the society or redefine the nature of politics and the economy. As Hunter argues, its very existence is a rebuke and judgment against society.¹¹⁵ Therefore, though different in its approach, it is much like the polarized

¹¹³ Acts 1:8.

¹¹⁴ Mark 2:13-17.

¹¹⁵ Hunter, 163.

position. As Hunter states, “the frame work of operation is still a politics of *this* world.”¹¹⁶

Summary

The primary concern of this section has been to survey how people who call themselves Christians in America have dealt with the tensions between the highly religious on one side and the secular on the other. In three categories, the polarized, absorbed, and isolated, it has examined how each has fared in today’s society of global economic and postmodern consumerism. Though each speaks uniquely to legitimate biblical concerns, they have nonetheless added to the abstractness rampant in society today. In a desire to remain distinctive, churches and organizations in the polarized category are defensive in posture and often aggressive, thereby depersonalizing and distracting from what is concrete in the message of the gospel. For instance, it puts issues instead of people at the forefront. Groups in the absorbed category do the same, only more subtly in a desire to be relevant. Such organizations have alienated the gospel with too many options, causing a loss of urgency to proclaim the message. Overall, there is an over accommodation to the culture, resulting in a dulling of Christianity’s sharp edges and its counter-cultural impact. Finally, the isolated position is the most characterized in its disengagement and withdrawal from many areas of social life. Though commendable for its single-heartedness, its alternative communities deny the impact the gospel can

¹¹⁶ “...the collective identity of the neo-Anabaptists comes through their dissent from the State and the larger political economy and culture of late modernity. Their identity *depends* on the State and other powers being corrupt and the more unambiguously corrupt they are, the clearer the identity and mission of the church. It is, as my colleague Charles Matthews has put it, a passive-aggressive ecclesiology.” Ibid., 164.

have as an active presence through the lives of Christians. Put simply, the identity of all three positions comes primarily from their opposition. The polarized identity comes primarily from their opposition to secularism while the absorbed gets its identity from its opposition to the polarized. And the isolated position gains its uniqueness from its opposition to the state and compromises within the church. As a whole, the power of the gospel is diffused through a comfortable distancing between the central message and the unifying ideas that bring many within these models together. This distancing makes the gospel more abstract. Where then does one find the true significance of an identity that is not concealed in abstraction? This question will be answered in Section 3: THE THESIS. Its focal point is on returning to the foundation, the foundation being the gospel of the kingdom of God, addressing where the other proposed solutions ultimately prove unproductive. How it is embodied will be captured with the pilgrim metaphor. Then it will be framed within an approach of sustainability, which will speak to the problems endemic in today's global economy and postmodern consumerist culture. Over all, it will explain what life birthed in the fullness of Christ can look like within a local community.

SECTION 3: THE THESIS

Introduction

From the late 20th century to the present, American society has witnessed a substantive shift, changing the way most people live and relate to one another. Section 1 described how the Industrial Revolution led to a global economy, damaging the sustainability of many rural communities, thus, disrupting synergy among families, and ultimately, the witness of the gospel. It highlighted the harmful effects of digital technology on society and the loss of a sense of place in the lives of people, explaining how, in spite of all the technological and economic advancements and benefits to society, people's lives have been diminished. Thus, a shift in values has surfaced. The influence of the global economy, combined with the postmodern consumerist mindset resulted in a frame of mind where more is better, faster is better, and newer is better. Put simply, there is an epidemic of abstraction.

The primary concern of Section 2 was to survey how various groups who call themselves Christians in America have engaged the world in recent decades. In three general categories (Polarized, Absorbed, and Isolated) it examined a range of Christian organizations. Regrettably, the survey showed how each, in their uniqueness, adds to the abstractness of society, especially in relation to the gospel. The Polarized is defensive and often antagonistic in posture, thereby depersonalizing and distracting from the concrete content in the gospel. In a desire to make a healthy correction to polarized groups and be relevant to society, the Absorbed position over-accommodates to the culture resulting in a dulling of Christianity's sharp edges and counter-cultural impact. Moreover, the power of

the gospel is diffused with “ideas” that bring many together and often only provide a comfortable distancing from the central message. The Isolated position, in its disengagement and withdrawal, diminishes the impact the gospel can have as an active presence through the lives of Christians in many areas of society. In summary, the survey showed how each position gains its identity primarily from its opposition, thus slipping from the foundation, that foundation being a life together birthed in the fullness of Christ. This section will focus on returning to that foundation and present a viable alternative that meaningfully bears witness to the gospel in its purpose, principles, and practice. In spite of the many societal problems, the perceived hope is to transform one’s defining narrative. The journey is one that requires a will that is discerning, intentional, and persistent in character. There must be a willingness to slow down and live responsibly toward one another and the land to achieve the desired fullness of life.

This section proposes an enlivening way of life rooted in and reflective of the gospel. As ground work, it begins with an explanation concerning the foundation—the gospel of the kingdom of God, addressing largely where the other proposed solutions ultimately prove unproductive. How it is embodied will be captured through the pilgrim metaphor. It will be framed within an approach of sustainability. These characteristics will provide a framework for addressing the problems endemic in today’s postmodern western culture, which is primarily abstraction.

The Foundation

The foundation is the most important part of a building. It has to be strong enough to support the weight of the building and to withstand the rigors of the climate. It determines its shape and longevity. No amount of repair on the structure will compensate

for an inadequate foundation. Once the foundation begins to shift/fail significantly, it will continue to do so, breaking up the superstructure. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus concludes with a simile of two foundations. Those who hear but do not obey resemble the person who builds on a shifting foundation.¹¹⁷ It is a picture of one who builds upon their self-righteousness. Though they hear, they justify themselves through their confession. The one who builds on “rock” is someone who builds their life upon the grace of God. This grace, attained only through the sacrifice of Christ, compels one to be a doer. However, is it possible, still, to have the appearance of a doer and not be a true disciple? The answer lies just prior, in a warning against false prophets. Jesus declares their final rejection in the words: “I never knew you.”¹¹⁸ To be *known* by Jesus, therefore, is the ultimate criterion by which a person is rejected or accepted by God. In other words, one cannot rest on an outward confession or their behavior alone. The question upon which the sermon rests is: “Has Jesus known me or not?” The emphasis is on an interpersonal relationship, implying a permanence of relationship.¹¹⁹ It echoes the beginning of the sermon where genuine faith and right confession shape a person’s life in true humility and draws persecution because they belong to Jesus. It is on account of one’s relationship to Jesus that they are persecuted. In fact, one’s relationship to Jesus is the basis upon

¹¹⁷ Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB).

¹¹⁸ Mathew 7: 22-23. “The corresponding use for knowledge on God’s part in the sense of election, which is so characteristic of the OT, is occasionally found, most clearly at 2 Tm. 2:19: ἐγνώ κύριος τοὺς ὄντας αὐτοὺς (Nu. 16:5; cf. also Mt. 7:23), but also 1 C. 8:3; 13:12; Gl. 4:9.” Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 1:706.

¹¹⁹ “γινώσκω: to learn to know a person through direct personal experience, implying a continuity of relationship... Here the emphasis must be on the interpersonal relationship which is experienced.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:327.

which all other relationships are affected and shaped. The Christian belongs to a different kingdom that is not of this world—“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”¹²⁰ This true sense of belonging begins with the authoritative and gracious call of Jesus resulting in faith and obedience that demonstrates true cooperation with the kingdom of God.

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

To gain a fuller understanding of this foundation, it is helpful to draw upon the general meaning of the kingdom of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). As one of the dominant subjects of the New Testament, the intent here is not to explain a detailed theological position on the kingdom of God. Rather, the objective is to establish the general understanding in order to delineate its implications for living. In effect, any reference to the kingdom of God in this section may be understood as the whole of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes the church and Israel. In other words, it is the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) of the kingdom of God.¹²¹ It is the “sphere” or “domain” in which God reigns, not of this world or to be confused with territory.¹²² It is correlative to the new covenant (καινὴ διαθήκη). The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* explains, “One and the same goal of fulfillment is indicated by both the thought that God

¹²⁰ Matthew 5:3-10.

¹²¹ “For → εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ in Mk. 1:14 many MSS have εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ. This summarized account corresponds to many others (cf. Mt. 4:23; 9:35 and also 24:14). Like εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελίζεσθαι, too, refers to the kingdom of God (Lk. 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Ac. 8:12).” “The name and message of Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ Himself, are thus equated with the kingdom of God.” Kittel, 1:583-589.

¹²² Ethelbert William Bullinger: *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London; New York: Eyre & Spottiswoode; E. & J. B. Young & Co, 1898), 581.

reigns and the thought that the new divine order is valid.”¹²³ The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this new covenant between God and his people in which the law would be written on their hearts rather than on stone.¹²⁴ In the Lord’s Supper, the blood of Christ is represented (metaphorically) in the cup, sealing the new covenant God has made with his people.¹²⁵ As the agent of salvation, Jesus fulfilled the will of the Father. It was the death of Christ on the cross that made effectual the purchasing of eternal redemption, paying a ransom of infinite worth and dignity. Through Christ alone is one reconciled to God making possible their participation in his Kingdom.¹²⁶

The Scope of the Kingdom

John the Baptist’s proclamation of the kingdom came like a storm warning, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”¹²⁷ He was a forerunner anticipating the coming of an event, not a mere statement of facts.¹²⁸ He shook the people of his day from their slumber to draw attention of what was to come. The basis of his summons to repent was the nearness of the kingdom of heaven. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* explains,

The reason and cause of μετάνοια is not the badness of man; it is the imminence of the βασιλεία. Man must amend himself because God is coming, because His

¹²³ Kittel, 2:134.

¹²⁴ Jeremiah 31:31-33.

¹²⁵ Luke 22:20.

¹²⁶ Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 1:18-19.

¹²⁷ Matthew 3:2.

¹²⁸ Kittel, 3:711.

rule is near. Repentance does not bring in the kingdom. It creates the possibility of participation in it... Make ready, the βασιλεία is already near.¹²⁹

Jesus, himself, spoke as the promised one. He began his ministry with the same words as John the Baptist.¹³⁰ Ultimately the kingdom is future but its formation began with the coming of Jesus and calls one to faith in Jesus.¹³¹ Today, the transforming presence of the reign of God through Jesus is expressed and embodied in the church. Yet, as Bock has explained, “the Kingdom is bigger than the church. Its presence now is but a precursor to a more substantial presence in the future.”¹³² It is critical, then, to neither overemphasize the “already” or “not-yet” aspects of the kingdom. As noted, the Polarized tendency is to overstress the “not-yet,” which can lead to preoccupation of escaping hell and disregard the restorative aspects of the gospel in today’s world; on the other hand, the Absorbed position overemphasizes on the “already,” which can lead to a loss in urgency to proclaim the gospel of salvation. Hence, balance is necessary regarding present and future aspects of the kingdom. More important still, is experiencing the overarching marvel and beauty of God’s kingdom.

¹²⁹ Kittel, 3:710-711.

¹³⁰ Matthew 4:17.

¹³¹ “The negative point that the kingdom is totally distinct from the world is the most positive thing that can be said about it. The actualization of God’s rule is future, but this future determines our present. Setting us before God and his rule, it calls for conversion. A response in faith puts us in touch with this kingdom which comes apart from us, and the gospel is thus glad tidings for us.” Kittel, S. 101

¹³² Bock, 15.

The Marvel of the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is different from the natural order of this world. In other words, it “is opposed to everything present and earthly, to everything here and now. It is thus absolutely miraculous.”¹³³ Many of Jesus’ parables drive this point home. Mark 4:26-29, for instance, shows this resemblance (Simile) in the parable of the man who sowed the seed. The seed is cast and then the miracle begins underground. After a time it is revealed “—how, he himself does not know.” The “crop grows itself” and when it “permits” the farmer gathers the harvest. Nothing about the seed or the plant can be forced or coerced. So it is in the order of God’s kingdom. It is unlike anything else in the ordinary. The question then, is not whether a person is disposed or inclined to it. Rather, it is a matter of whether one belongs to it or not.¹³⁴ For finite and sinful creatures to even begin to comprehend an infinitely powerful, holy, and glorious God, much less his kingdom, presents an immeasurable and mysterious separation. One’s only hope is in the atoning work of Jesus, where the infinite chasm of humanity’s separation from God due to sin and its effects is overcome. It is by the means of the Holy Spirit that it comes to pass. Richard B. Steele, Professor of Moral and Historical Theology and Associate Dean of the School of Theology at Seattle Pacific University, explains the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption,

But spiritual insight is an act of divine grace, not the result of human effort. It arises when the Spirit of God “unites himself with the mind of the saint, takes him for his temple, actuates and influences him as a new, supernatural principle of life

¹³³ Kittel, 1:584.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 1:585.

and action.” Put simply, to be “born again” is to see everything anew, to undergo a decisive shift in the way one experiences reality.¹³⁵

This beautiful union with the Spirit of God is the bedrock for transformation. Thus, as God, in Christ, is intimately made known by the work of the Spirit “a decisive shift” takes place, which is increasingly worked out in the fabric of the Christian life. Though even if only at a glimpse, it is where one begins to recognize who God is in his very essence—as beautiful. It is the difference between one who makes mere acknowledgement of truth and another who actually enters into and experiences truth. Many Christian organizations today lack such a wonder for the kingdom of God, indicated most by their emphasis on methods and forming well-crafted mission and vision statements. Many are simply caught up in the postmodern and global economic business model. They are missing the foundation altogether. The kingdom of God is a “seed” of divine origin resembling the seed cast by the farmer. If one does not have such wonder, they will also lack an affinity for what most characterizes the divine.

The Beauty of the Kingdom

God is beautiful. It sets him apart and makes him who he is. In the words of the American protestant theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): “God is God, distinguished from all other beings and exalted above them, chiefly by His divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty.”¹³⁶ This beauty goes far deeper than mere physical attractiveness. It is “a theological concept affirming God’s essential

¹³⁵ Richard B. Steele 2008. *Transfiguring light: the moral beauty of the Christian life according to Gregory Palamas and Jonathan Edwards* (St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 52, no. 3-4: 403-439. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*), 24.

¹³⁶ Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), 224.

glory.”¹³⁷ It is a theme carried throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament it is often applied to God.¹³⁸ In many places “beauty” (נֶעֱמַם (*nō·am*) and תִּפְאָרָה (*tip·ārâ*)) is used in parallel relationship with other terms such as, praise, glory, strength, power, holy and majesty.¹³⁹ In a reflective way, Ecclesiastes 3:11 describes everything in God’s creation as “beautiful יָפֶה (*yāpeh*) in its time.”¹⁴⁰ The New Testament expresses this beauty ultimately in Christ’s supremacy: “He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”¹⁴¹ The writer of Hebrews characterizes Christ as the Creator himself: “His word sustains creation, and he has the very character of God.”¹⁴² Put simply, there is no greater beauty expressed and made known then in the incarnation—Jesus Christ—the ultimate revelation of God’s beauty and goodness. He is the consummate expression of God’s true grace and beauty in the wonder of redemption.

The beauty of Christ cannot be over stressed. In our day, scarcely does one find a group that attributes such value or praise to Christ, indicating a lacking knowledge and affection for God’s Son. Consider Psalm 27, where David, “a man after God’s own heart,” expresses a deep longing for “one thing:” “To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to meditate in His temple.” The word for “behold” is הִזָּהֵן (*hāzâ*), which in this context

¹³⁷ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort: *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), S. 155.

¹³⁸ Psalm 135:3 uses it to describe God’s name.

¹³⁹ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, Bruce K.: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), S. 714.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, S. 392.

¹⁴¹ Hebrews 1:3.

¹⁴² Robert B. Hughes and Carl J. Laney: *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), S. 664.

means to “look on (intensely, with gratification).”¹⁴³ This is the expression of a person who knew something of the beauty of God so much that, with the “eye of faith” it was the only thing he longed to gaze at and meditate upon. The writers of the New Testament express equal and abiding affection for Christ throughout their writings. Note in particular, Paul’s deep longing to know Jesus in his letter to the Philippians: “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.”¹⁴⁴ To the Ephesians, he prays that they develop a heart for Jesus.¹⁴⁵ Much of the anxiety in organizations arises from dissatisfaction with God. People get lost in marginal issues instead of focusing on Jesus. Instead of believing and trusting in his goodness, they are opposed to him, and because of this, their heart is wrong in many ways, if not in everything. They need a new heart. A heart that takes delight in the Lord is a heart that is softened toward him. It is a heart that longs for the Risen Christ. Put simply, the desires of a person’s heart will correspond with the heart of God as they grow in their trust and delight of him.¹⁴⁶ The Welsh born minister, Matthew Henry (18 October 1662 – 22 June 1714) wrote, “Those that truly desire communion with God will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it.”¹⁴⁷ Yet, it is a desire that cannot be forced or inculcated. We all are at the mercy of God. Steele, puts it sharply saying, “no one can

¹⁴³ Harris, S. 274.

¹⁴⁴ Philippians 3:8.

¹⁴⁵ “...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Ephesians 3:14-19.

¹⁴⁶ Psalm 37:1-8.

¹⁴⁷ Matthew Henry. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), S. Ps 27:7.

‘think’ her way to the beatific vision; but she who has been granted the vision will find nothing so reasonable as the fact that God reserves to himself the right to impart it to whomsoever he chooses, and in so doing, to make them ‘participants in the divine nature’ (2 Pet 1:4).”¹⁴⁸ Hence, once a participant, the Christian possess a new and ever growing “longing for God.” Steele describes this “longing”

...as something that can never be assuaged or satisfied, for it is a longing for the Infinite, a longing which the Infinite satisfies by making the longing itself extend unto eternity. God satisfies our desires for himself, not by satiating us with his presence, but by intensifying our desire for his presence with every new manifestation of it. And those who have felt that desire long only to feel it ever more keenly.¹⁴⁹

Thus, the place to start this process is on one’s knees, being quiet before God, in order to foster a life of genuine participation in the kingdom. But ultimately, the test that one is genuinely participating is whether or not the character of Christ is being displayed.

We can then see that central to the miracle redemption is an authentic and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The overarching marvel and beauty of God’s kingdom is expressed chiefly in this relationship of humility and gratitude. In the mystery of the incarnation and Calvary one discovers a true knowledge of God and becomes a participant in his reign. The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, wrote to remind them that the gospel is central and a “foolish” message to be preached with simplicity.¹⁵⁰ Sadly, many Christian organizations today have the gospel at the periphery. Instead, they center primarily on philosophy and methods of ministry. These are only the

¹⁴⁸ Steele, 26.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 36.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:22-31.

shell. With intellect, philosophy, and methods they only move the mind. The gospel moves the heart, “the inner man.”¹⁵¹ The message alone exalts Christ and that is why it is blessed. Life in the kingdom is, therefore, a call to live in response to the breaking-in of God’s rule. As a Child of God, one is to bear witness and embody the coming of the kingdom of God, bringing the future into the present. This is impossible unless one’s gaze is upon Christ. In the words of Edwards,

The first foundations of the delight a true saint has in Christ is His own perfection; and the first foundation of the delight he has in Christ, is His own beauty; He appears in Himself the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely... They first have their hearts filled with sweetness from the view of Christ’s excellency, and the excellency of His grace and the beauty of the way of salvation by Him, and then they have a secondary joy in that so excellent a Savior and such excellent grace is theirs.¹⁵²

Such a disposition is unnaturally “oriented to the fruitfulness, wholeness, and well-being of all,” the opposite of which is elitism, domination, and celebrity.¹⁵³ It is personal in nature, demanding a total and immediate response. Participation in the kingdom is not an abstract idea. It is relationally attached to Jesus, who affects the character one’s life. It alters their existence and impacts whatever organization in which one is engaging. Herein rests the meaning of repentance, which is “to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness.”¹⁵⁴ Put simply, true adherence to the kingdom of God requires most serious consideration, a

¹⁵¹ Ephesians 3:16.

¹⁵² Edwards, 176.

¹⁵³ Hunter, 260.

¹⁵⁴ Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:509.

weeding process in which “many are called, but few *are* chosen.”¹⁵⁵ It is a call to faith in which obedience demonstrates true cooperation with the kingdom of God. Consequently, the foundation of one’s regeneration and the whole of their redemption ultimately rest on God the Father’s loving movement toward them in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. This is the substance of redemption. The whole of the Trinity is present in the great work of redemption. The Apostle John in his first epistle wrote, “We love, because He first loved us.”¹⁵⁶ In this respect, God’s love is the foundation of one’s love. In the words of Edwards, “The exercises and discoveries that God has made of His wonderful love to sinful men by Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption, is one of the chief manifestations which God has made of the glory of His moral perfection to both angels and men.”¹⁵⁷ It is upon this foundation that the superstructure of an authentic Christian’s life is built. It determines its shape and longevity. No amount of repair in ones’ life will compensate if this foundation is forsaken. The same is true of any organization that is not founded upon the gospel. Hunter looks at it as being “defined from the center out” in ones’ beliefs and practices.¹⁵⁸ In other words, there are things on the periphery that matter less. The core or bedrock must be the gospel. How one builds the superstructure can vary. In today’s global economy and postmodern society, perhaps a return to an old way of living is most viable. How it is embodied will be captured through the use of the pilgrim metaphor.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 22:14.

¹⁵⁶ 1 John 1:19.

¹⁵⁷ Edwards, 175.

¹⁵⁸ Hunter, 281.

Pilgrims

“Pilgrims” is a word commonly associated with the Puritans who settled the New English colonies of North America in the 16th century. In Shelley’s historical account, the Pilgrims landed in 1620. Then “between 1629 and 1642 some twenty-five thousand Puritans migrated to New England.”¹⁵⁹ Their primary incentive was for the promise of religious tolerance. They wanted to be far enough away so as to not be affected by the king of England. Though intolerant in many ways within their close communities, there was enough space in the land for dissenters to break away. In Shelley’s words, “Puritan devotion to the Bible, the presence of the wilderness, and the English policy of tolerance combined to undercut the intolerance of the New England Puritans.”¹⁶⁰ The aim in this section is to highlight the settling nature in which they came, while maintaining their identity. They longed to incarnate their way of life in a particular place, in other words, to put down roots. The colonies became their home. They built homes, schools, and churches and farmed the land. Even today, some three-hundred years later, they are associated with a particular context and a way of life, as opposed to a wander that has no roots.

“Ploughmen” and “wayfarers” are the metaphors used by Frank, author of *The Soul of the Congregation*, to describe locals and newcomers in a congregation. He describes “locals” as those “who have lived in that place for generations, who retain and retell the local customs and myths, and who view with distance and even suspicion those

¹⁵⁹ Shelley, 317.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 318.

who would alter their ways.”¹⁶¹ He describes the wayfarer’s as “cosmopolitans.” They are “those who have lived in other places, see the relativity of local ways, and take interest in variety and diversity.”¹⁶² Many in society today have long been wayfarers but yearn to be “pilgrims.” The pilgrim image resonates because, in Frank’s words, “[its] posture is one of dwelling, of reaching out to the land and all the particularity of incarnation in love and labor, yet with the wayfarer’s awareness that the home can find only transient instantiations on the earth.”¹⁶³ The pilgrim makes a home wherever the journey takes him or her without losing the experiences of the past or the hope of redemption. In Frank’s words, “The pilgrim both incarnates life in the particular place and expresses the freedom of life in knowing that home is not permanent.”¹⁶⁴ This abiding is significant because one gains firsthand knowledge which gives greater authority to their words and actions. Put simply, firsthand experience is powerful. Authority radiates in a people who have a concrete and personal familiarity of a place. This kind of wisdom develops over long periods of time and demands personal investment. For instance, it takes a great deal of personal sacrifice to really understand an ecosystem. It cannot be known on a whim.

Barry Lopez, an essayist, author, and short-story writer, in *The Naturalist*, explains,

It is instructive to consider how terrifying certain interlopers—rural developers, government planners, and other apostles of change—can seem to such people when, on the basis of a couple of books the interloper has read or a few (usually summer) weeks in the field with a pair of binoculars and some radio collars, he suggests a new direction for the local ecosystem and says he can’t envision any

¹⁶¹ Frank, 142.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

difficulties...Historically, tyrants have sought selectively to eliminate firsthand knowledge when its sources lay outside their control.¹⁶⁵

Today, the so-called “apostles of change” abound. They are found in just about any segment of society (i.e. the Catalyst “change makers” described in section 2), often promising that more is better, faster is better, newer is better. The pilgrim image, on the other hand, suggests an unhurried and methodical posture.

A distinct parallel may be drawn with the exiles in the time of the Prophet Jeremiah. God’s word through the Prophet to the Babylonian exiles was to “Build houses and live in them; and 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. And 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.”¹⁶⁶ This was an astounding call considering the Babylonians’ were their enemies by whom they suffered atrocities.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, they were to prepare for a long stay and seek the “welfare” of their new community. They were not told to form a resistance, become like them, or isolate. Essentially, they were to prepare for a long stay, while simultaneously not lose sight of their hope. The promise of being restored to their land still held.¹⁶⁸ It was this hope that differentiated them. Hunter calls this model of engagement a “faithful presence

¹⁶⁵ Nelson Richard, Barry Lopez, and Terry Tempest Williams, *Patriotism and the American Land*, 2nd ed. (Great Barrington, MA: The Orion Society, 2002), 30-31.

¹⁶⁶ Jeremiah 29: 4-7.

¹⁶⁷ Psalm 137 reflects the utter pain the Israelites suffered.

¹⁶⁸ Jeremiah 29:14.

within.”¹⁶⁹ In other words, as “exiles” they were to honor and glorify God with their life together, not just for their own good but for the good of society as a whole. Today, the people of God are called to do the same, enter the culture where they have been placed or “sent” and remain differentiated. They are to pray for its welfare and reflect their distinct identity in daily life. The three previously proposed solutions (Polarized, Absorbed, and Isolated) which Christians have taken have denied the basic principles found in the gospel by being too antagonistic to the culture, over-accommodating, or withdrawn. Put simply, their posture does not mirror the way God engages us in the gospel. Being a blessing to society means, reflecting the marvel and beauty of the gospel of salvation. Like the exiles in Babylon, Christians today must come to terms with their exile in this post-Christian culture without losing sight of the hope that differentiates them. In Hunter’s words, “accommodation must always be critical and resistance must always be humble.”¹⁷⁰ This goes back to the principle of living in light of the present and future aspect of the kingdom of God.

In sum, the pilgrim image is powerful because it communicates a rootedness that is connected both to an identity and a place, an aspect that is increasingly lacking in today’s Western culture. In the fast pace society of the day, people wander like “sightseers” with no gauge for measuring, believing or knowing where and who they are. For Christians, their identity primarily comes from Christ and follows them to wherever they establish their home. In addition, they express a freedom in life by living out the gospel in a particular place. In so doing, they become blessings in the *place* they are

¹⁶⁹ Hunter, 276-277.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 280, 284.

planted and bring honor and glory to God. If people desire the qualities that make a healthy community, then they must learn how to abide in a place while remaining differentiated, as a pilgrim. People must learn again to live at home; there is a need to “return to the land.” The whole of a person’s identity comes from their faith, community, connections, and their *place*. Many are detached from one or more of these components; therefore, they are detached from that part of who they are. All these components are critical pieces for building upon a strong foundation. They are the framework for living well and making good decisions. This rootedness establishes firsthand knowledge in a person, which adds greater authority to their message. One can build on the foundation of living these principles after beginning with sustainability.

Sustainable Living

Sustainability is generally understood as “the ability or capacity to maintain existence.” Basically, it is the capacity to endure. It places emphasis on “constrained growth” and “resource management,” according to the Colorado School of Mines.¹⁷¹ It means living within the constraints of a supporting region and having a balanced approach to life, which includes a social, economic, and environmental connectedness.¹⁷² A healthy sustainable community is one that lives within its reasonable limits, being self-sufficient, and self-determined. In Berry’s words, “it pays as it goes.”¹⁷³ The opposite would be a people or community dependent on unknown people and resources outside

¹⁷¹ “Sustainability,” Inside Mines: 2015 Colorado School of Mines, October 10, 2015, accessed November 17, 2015, <https://inside.mines.edu/SUS-Sustainability>.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 14-15, 21.

their control. They are not reliant on local resources or their local community. To live sustainably, means to live within ones proximity. The implications for such living directly affect how one relates to others in the community, the land, and the local economy. This is very difficult in a society where speed, capacity, efficiency, and productivity matter most. Such values are all very abstract in nature. A sustainable approach, on the other hand, sees the value in limits and is very personal and long term. Perhaps it is helpful to visualize sustainability as three equal size circles that overlap at the center, with each circle containing one of three systems: social, environment, and economic.¹⁷⁴ Each of these interacting systems is very broad and will vary depending on one's values and region. Thus, they cannot be strictly defined. What is undeniable is the connection between the three as each one is linked to the other. The aim, here, is to explain the basic principles within a Christian model, taking each of the three interacting systems into consideration.

The Social

A rural community largely consists of small venture farmers and ranchers; small business; the self-employed; schools with its teachers and students; and those who work for government, health and religious institution. Obviously, one's interaction may overlap depending on his role or place in the community. Nevertheless, how people relate to one another within each of these categories is largely determined by their connectedness.

Berry explains some dynamics of a local community,

¹⁷⁴ "Sustainability," Inside Mines: 2015 Colorado School of Mines, October 10, 2015, accessed November 17, 2015, <https://inside.mines.edu/SUS-Sustainability>.

They know from their experience that the neighborhood, the local community, is the proper place and frame of reference for responsible work. They see that no commonwealth or community of interest can be defined by greed. They know that things connect—that farming, for example, is connected to nature, and food to farming, and health to food—and they want to preserve the connections. They know that a healthy local community cannot be replaced by a market or an information highway. They know that, contrary to all the unmeaning and unmeant political talk about “job creation,” work ought not to be merely a bone thrown to the otherwise unemployed. They know that work ought to be necessary; it ought to be good; it ought to be satisfying and dignifying to the people who do it and genuinely useful and pleasing to those for whom it is done.¹⁷⁵

The health of a community, therefore, is determined by the connectedness and care within itself. In other words, there is an underlying respect for one another and a healthy dependence. The gospel provides a model for such living because the mainspring from which a Christian values life comes from a relationship with Jesus. In this relationship one learns respect for all and the value of a healthy dependence. Moreover, it gives dignity to all people and work, regardless of how menial and unrewarding it may seem. Furthermore, because the Christian knows that his righteousness comes from none other than his association with Jesus, he knows he holds no special privileges or rights. The “Golden Rule,” for example, taught in the Sermon on the Mount, teaches one to put himself in the other’s place: “Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”¹⁷⁶ It teaches a principle humility that is to govern the Christian’s attitude. Put forth in the positive instead of the negative it assumes an action of love. The moment one does this they forfeit all judgment and advantage.

¹⁷⁵ Wendell Berry, “Conserving Communities,” in *The Case Against the Global Economy: And for a Turn Toward the Local*, eds. Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996), 413.

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 7:12. The principle is essentially a summary of the Old Testament teaching of “the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 5:17 to 7:12 form an inclusion, which many consider an exposition of the Old Testament teaching of the Law.

There is no greater good for the social progress of a sustainable community than acting with humility and love.

The Environment

As to the Christians stewardship to the environment (i.e. protecting natural resources, pollution prevention, biodiversity, and waste management), the gospel beckons one to action. One good-long look at the splendor of the heavens and beauty of the natural world on planet Earth gives much to consider regarding the magnificence and beauty of God. Psalm 8 compares the splendor of the heavens to the majesty of God's name! It also beckons a person to "consider" their significance in light of this creation, speaking of creation in its current state, not a pre-fallen or redeemed state. Thus, God continues to find it worthy despite its corruption. Moreover, the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Roman Christian's, illustrates Christian suffering with a personification of creation, explaining how "the creation waits eagerly" for Christ's return and to be "set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."¹⁷⁷ In other words, redemption encompasses the whole of creation, not just humans.¹⁷⁸ Thus, instead of remaining indifferent to the rape and plunder of the environment and cultures, the gospel provokes Christians to be an active part of its restoration and management. Lyons' explains how conversion is not the only motive for Christians:

Their mission is to infuse the world with beauty, grace, justice, and love. I call them restorers because they envision the world as it was meant to be and they work toward that vision. Restorers seek to mend the earth's brokenness. They recognize that the world will not be completely healed until Christ's return, but

¹⁷⁷ Romans 8:18-22.

¹⁷⁸ "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'" Revelation 21:5.

they believe that the process begins now as we partner with God. Through sowing seeds of restoration, they believe others will see Christ through us and the Christian faith will reap a much larger harvest... They don't separate from the world *or* blend in: rather, they thoughtfully engage.¹⁷⁹

Basically, in anticipation for the return of Christ, one is moved toward that end—the world as it will become. Christians can have a key role of sustainability in a community having this kind of restorative mentality. As one who is being restored in Christ, they seek ways to bring restoration to the brokenness of the world around them. All systems within a community have an element of brokenness. The gospel carries over into these places of brokenness, bringing compassion, beauty, grace, justice, and love.

The Economy

As for the economy within a sustainable community (i.e. the consumption patterns, creativity, innovation and thrift), Christians hold equal responsibility. According to Berry, the way of taking responsibility is to “draw in our economic boundaries.”¹⁸⁰ In other words, shorten the supply lines between the producer and consumer. Berry explains, “The closer we live to the ground that we live from, the more we will know about our economic life, the more we know about our economic life, the more able we will be to take responsibility for it. The way to bring discipline into one's personal or household or community economy is to limit one's economic geography.”¹⁸¹ It takes creativity and thrift to do this, as it is often cheaper and more convenient to buy from big

¹⁷⁹ Lyons, 47.

¹⁸⁰ Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 39.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

box stores, such as Wal-Mart where most goods are sold under the false pretence of offering a better quality of life and personal fulfillment. When one draws in their economic boundaries, consumption becomes more limited, being based not only on their own needs but the necessities of others. In short, the way goods are sold and bought takes on a community focus. For instance, if one chooses to buy all the eggs on a particular week from their small local farmer, it will have a direct impact on another's needs, "my neighbor" which will in turn affect the relationship. Consequently, one's economic decisions have personal affect.

Within this sustainable model of economic living lies a profound opportunity for the gospel to flourish. It propels the Christian toward greater connectedness. In a global economy, the postmodern consumerist buys products without any thought of their community, thus, waste and excess abound. The consumer does not know the people who produce the product and there is little or no thought of "impact." Greed is what primarily drives the global economy. In contrast, a local minded economy is moderated by thoughtfulness. Henceforth, when one buys local there is greater opportunity for building relationships, which is the central means to communicating the gospel. In the gospel, relationship is paramount. Redemption is defined in the beauty of a relationship with Christ which in turn meaningfully affects all aspects of life, shaping even the economic.

Therefore, in today's global economy and postmodern shift, people are by and large detached socially, environmentally, and economically from their locale. They do not really live at home. They do not live sustainable lives. The gospel propels one to have a "local affection" for the place and the people of their locale, thus, increasing its

sustainability. Hence, to have a “local affection” is to love. Such love emanates from the gospel.

Summary

The main thrust of this section has been on returning to the foundation of the gospel of the kingdom of God. It explained how the gospel is the bedrock of a life-together birthed in the fullness of Christ. In so doing, it presented an alternative to the organizations surveyed in Section 2, which gain identity primarily from opposition, thus slipping from their foundation. It highlighted the marvel and beauty of the kingdom, expressed supremely in Christ. How it is embodied was captured with the pilgrim metaphor. Finally, it was framed within a threefold approach of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic). These characteristics provided a framework for addressing the problems endemic in today’s postmodern western culture, primarily abstraction.

As the whole, this dissertation is a reminder of how everything within a community is joined together. If one aspect is disconnected or disrupted, the whole can crumble. Though outwardly it may appear in good health, hidden within, one may find an entirely different reality. Such disintegration occurs when organizations focus on the peripheries. Life in the kingdom of God is defined from the center out. Thus, a thriving community must first establish a firm foundation. It determines the shape and longevity of the superstructure. The gospel is the foundation, determining everything about the superstructure of a Christian’s life. It is born out of a relationship with Jesus Christ. The overarching marvel and beauty of God’s kingdom is expressed chiefly in this relationship of grace, righteousness, humility, and gratitude. In the mystery of the incarnation and

Calvary one discovers a true knowledge of God and becomes a participant in his reign. This kingdom is not only distinct from the world, it is opposed to it. Thus, struggle and pain are implicit. One must come to terms with this tension and the seriousness that comes when becoming a participant. As a participant, the gospel propels a Christian to have a “local affection” for the place and the people of their locale increasing its sustainability. To have a “local affection” is to love. Such love emanates from the gospel. Yet, it must begin in the home. People must learn again to live at home which means a return to the land. The whole of a person’s identity comes from their faith, community, connections, and their “place.” Many are detached from one or more of these parts; therefore, detached from that part of who they are. All are a critical piece for building upon a strong foundation. This enlivening way of life rooted in and reflective of the gospel is learned, practiced, and transmitted from generation to generation by the family unit within the home. However, the topic of synergy within the family and its importance to a sustainable community is a topic all its own. See APPENDIX 2 for further application of this topic.

The following section will explain how an integrated and local family enterprise can meaningfully bear witness to the gospel. It is not “the solution” per se, but a viable option, offering a diversified and adaptive model containing the ingredients within it, the principles.

SECTION 4: TRACK 02 THE ARTIFACT

This dissertation has claimed that the transmission of the gospel falls short in postmodern rural life because the message has not meaningfully integrated with community life as a whole. It asserted that the witness of the church therefore must employ a greater connectedness to local culture in a way that affirms a rootedness in the gospel. Section 3 concluded with a call for a “local affection,” describing a connectedness and love for both one’s place and the people of that locale. This section, therefore, describes a viable option for employing a local affection that is rooted in the gospel.

As a direct result of my research I created an artifact. Following the unique structure of the TRACK 02 dissertation, this section and following will move beyond the academic character of the previous sections to its practical application. This application is called the Artifact, providing an embodiment of the proposed solution to the ministry problem. The purpose of this section is to describe how and why my artifact provides a practical application.

The Artifact proposed for this dissertation is an integrated and local family enterprise. It is not “the solution” per se, but a viable option, offering a diversified and adaptive model containing the principles within Section 3. The name of our enterprise is *Eleos Way*.¹⁸² It comprises a tentative startup model, website, and a mobile office. As a young family of five located in a rural community in the Colorado Western Slope, our

¹⁸² Eleos in Greek (ἔλεος) means mercy. We chose *Eleos Way* because we have experienced immeasurable amounts of God’s mercy in our own lives. It is our hope to remain focused on his mercies every morning. In addition, the natural renewal process of rural farm life and its rejuvenating truth has continued to inspire us.

desire is to impact lives and transform community through the influence and implementation of a local family enterprise. The artifact integrates with the dissertation in the following ways.

First, to avoid being caught up in the postmodern and global economic business model the gospel is the foundation and driving force of the venture. Put simply, this model is will remain grounded on the principles found in the gospel. As a family enterprise, it is crucial that we personally pursue, nurture, and sustain a longing for Christ. To know and to love him in all his wonder and beauty is our hope. Whether in pain, loss or joy, every step must be for the sake of knowing Jesus and making him known. In short, the central mission of our enterprise is to move hearts not push a philosophy, method, or product. This focus will be demonstrated and fostered through an integrated prayer life. In addition, we hope to provide an atmosphere and physical space where people feel comfortable asking for prayer.

Second, we want our enterprise to be unique and authentic. Our uniqueness will be demonstrated in how we relate to one another and the community. As opposed to being antagonistic, over-accommodating, or withdrawn, our aim is to make every effort to engage the local culture with humility and care. Basically, we want to be humble about our differences and critical in our accommodation. We hope to be known for helping the community and we would like others to understand that our motives are good and our intentions honorable. This will take time as all relationships do. Thus, neighborliness and caretaking will be prioritized over profits, efficiency, utility, and productivity. In sum, this enterprise will place the upmost value on the person.

Third, we intend to convey the posture and perspective of pilgrims. The image of the pilgrim is powerful because it communicates a rootedness that is connected both to an identity and a place, something increasingly lacking in today's Western culture. This means that our success will not come in one year or two. As a startup we prefer to begin small and simple, with a focus on longevity. We are interested in long term fruit.

Therefore, we determine to embark on this venture with the mindset of a farmer who plants a tree that delays its production of fruit for the first several years. Like a pilgrim, we must prepare ourselves with an outlook that includes years of labor and the idea that the fruit of such labor may only be realized by our children. Therefore, our progress will be determined by how well we manage our limited resources, which includes land, roles, and workmanship. Eventually, we hope to be a stable, respected, and wanted part of the community. This will come as we watch, learn, and listen to the lives of others over many years. Initially, we may see positive outcomes in the lives of those who seek our help for immediate solutions; regardless, we will continue to maintain a long-term approach to the work of healing and comforting the community. This enduring vision includes not only our own but our customer's future and we need to invest in the long-term to reap lasting results. For example, most organizations don't consider their customer's children or grandchildren in their everyday transactions. Though many organizations peddle the idea of caring for customers in the long haul (i.e., investment firms), most businesses are concerned about "your money today." As opposed to being rushed and indifferent in nature, the pilgrim image, suggests a personal, unhurried, and methodical attitude. Our hope is to be a long term blessing in our local community, giving honor and glory to God.

Forth, we aspire to be a sustainable enterprise. As a whole our startup will be vested mainly in our local community. For instance, instead of relying on outside resources, we are working toward a dependence on the local community, environment, and economy. Therefore, an effort is being made to avoid wasteful behavior and greed in our business practices. To demonstrate this we are focusing on reusing materials and making the most of our resources. Our excess is being sold or shared with others. In other words, we are not seeking to practice the newest or most fashionable trends, but making do with what we have and taking excellent care of our assets. We seek to bring restoration in unexpected ways, such as renovating a 1970 camper and transforming it into an aesthetically pleasing and functional office. This is a simple, practical, and adaptable way to begin. Moreover, we intend to keep our economic boundaries close. This will take focused creativity and thrift, for most businesses find it cheaper and more convenient to source their supplies from big box stores and overnight delivery services. So, in the interest of encouraging and cultivating local relationships we will learn to rein in our economic lines. We do not consider managing our limited resources as a negative value. To reiterate, we will be content to live at home with what we have.

Fifth, this venture provides a model for other families, giving them hope for a life together. They will recognize that we are living different in many ways and that this can be a strength, not a weakness, for our local community. People will eventually take notice that ours is a family that actually enjoys life together—eating, learning, and working as a family. It will become apparent that this enterprise operates within a family structure, and over time we hope to be known for a model of success. This is no oligarchy. There are no clicks or "local" type attitudes. People see our family as open and willing to embrace

others who have a passion to be involved. Friendships and trust build over time and for those willing to put in the time to build relationships the rewards will be great.

Finally, we want Eleos Way to express to others the element of freedom by living out the gospel in our local community in ways that relate practically. We will consider that part of our plan is to be as unencumbered as possible from such things as lengthy business plans, corporate licensing, and grand openings. This does not mean we neglect our research, careful preparation, or continuous assessment of objectives and strategies. It means our approach is out of the ordinary. It will not be “business as usual.” Too often organizations get bogged down when they attempt to conform to the “business as usual” mentality and may become discouraged with set-backs, or worse, completely lose heart and give up. If we conform, we will not be able to passionately pursue the work that has been put on our hearts. In business one may end up distracted with over-strategizing and over-planning. For example, it has been common practice for start-ups to write lengthy business plans. The motive is often to quickly gain access to financial resources.

However, Martin Zwilling, a veteran startup mentor, executive, and author, writes,

More and more professionals agree that a better strategy is to explore and fine tune your assumptions before declaring a specific plan with financial projections based only on your dream and passion. In the process, you may save yourself considerable re-work and money, or even decide that your dream needs more time to mature, before you commit your limited resources, or sign up with investors to a painful and unsatisfying plan.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Martin Zwilling, “10 Reason Not to Write a Business Plan,” Entrepreneur Magazine, March 13, 2015, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.entrepreneurmag.co.za/advice/business-plans/business-plan-advice/10-reasons-not-to-write-a-business-plan-2/>.

As a new venture, Eleos Way will mature over time. Thus, it is important to understand that our initial plan is “a means, not the end.”¹⁸⁴ In addition, the enterprise will be open-source with its vision and techniques. In a land of uncertainty and risk, we want to be rooted in both “facts and values.”¹⁸⁵ The facts will keep us grounded in what is real and our values will help shape the vision. Robert Quinn, Professor of Organizational Behavior at the University of Michigan Business School and author of numerous books, describes this process as “build[ing] a bridge as we walk on it.”¹⁸⁶ The only way to create is to begin creating. “Too much hesitation will kill any new venture, as markets move quickly and difficulties mount,”¹⁸⁷ writes Zwilling. Our venture will mature as we “explore and fine tune” our assumptions and learn how to move freely.

The following section outlines the specifications of the artifact.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Robert E. Quinn, *Building the Bridge as You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 138.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 153

¹⁸⁷ Zwilling.

SECTION 5: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

Section 4 described how and why Eleos Way, the artifact, provides a practical application to the dissertation. This section of the written statement, unique to the TRACK 02 dissertation structure, outlines the specifications of the artifact. It includes a basic description of the components, goals, location and audience, startup costs, scope, and contents. In addition, since this particular artifact will take significantly longer to complete, this section also presents an action plan for completing the foundational artifact in a timely manner. It then concludes with various post-graduate considerations.

Components:

1. Build meaningful relationships with locals.
2. Offer space and adaptability as a mode of connection.
3. Provide a unique local service as an economic engine.

Goals: The aim is to build a sustainable legacy around a set of services. To accomplish this we have three primary goals designed to satisfy each of the components above.

1. Implement a marketing strategy aimed at building a solid base of loyal patrons, which is component one.
2. Design and build a mobile office that is both visually attractive and strategically adaptable, satisfying component two.
3. Offer high quality spiritual direction and a diversified local service as an economic engine, satisfying component three.

Location and Audience: Our small family enterprise, Eleos Way, focuses on drawing visitors from both the North Fork and Surface Creek valleys, located in Colorado's rural Western Slope.¹⁸⁸ This region includes the towns of Hotchkiss, Paonia, Crawford, and Cedaredge. Hotchkiss is our first location of choice due to its central position within the region. It is a corridor for commuters and well known for its variety of small businesses. Currently, we are in the process of confirming a location on the main street of Hotchkiss which will offer high startup visibility and ease of access.

Our audience focus includes those seeking hospitable, face-to-face engagement and who hungry to discover God's presence in their life. These consist of local families, business owners, artists, and religious people. Our niche market are those who are hurting people, people in the midst of difficult life situations, people with hard questions, and those who are simply curious about God. This may involve people in transitional need, such as a person who needs longer term recovery and life style adjustment. In addition, Eleos Way seeks to draw those who have experienced little success with traditional counseling and psychotherapy and those who have left the church and are seeking a pastoral experience. We hope to attract area coffee drinkers as well. Though coffee is not our main product, we will offer the highest quality cup of locally roasted, fair trade coffee for those who visit or make appointments.

Startup Costs: At this time we lack extended expendable income and our resources are unusually limited. To provide the majority of funding for startup we will be taking small

¹⁸⁸ The North Fork Valley is named in recognition of the importance of the North Fork of the Gunnison River which runs northeast to west through the high valley. It includes the towns of eastern Delta County: Paonia, Hotchkiss and Crawford – and the surrounding mesas. Paonia is the largest of three “The North Fork Valley of Colorado,” The North Fork Valley of Colorado - Hotchkiss | Paonia | Crawford, accessed April 26, 2015, <http://northforkvalley.net/>.

jobs in our community to gain access to resources and finances for sustaining Eleos Way. While providing financial backing for our goals, this will also assist in developing relationships with our community. We will start up with an extremely lean budget, paying as we go, and refraining from debt in all cases. We will not take out a loan for this venture. APPENDIX 7 gives a break-down of the startup costs by item.

Scope and Content: Eleos Way has a number of features and functions that characterize it as a service oriented enterprise. The work required to accomplish its intent and solve its challenges involve the scope and content. Our overall intent for Eleos Way is that it becomes a place of shared value in our local community to the glory of God. As a Spiritual Direction service, we will offer a form of pastoral care and support that does not rely on psychology or new age spiritual techniques. The focus is on attending to a person's inner life by listening well and guiding one into a deeper journey of awareness and responsiveness to God. The end goal is to guide a person into living-out the consequences of a growing relationship with God. It is not a behavioral or problem solving service. In addition, it is a strictly confidential, with no record keeping.

Therefore, by serving others and building a support network, we hope to improve the quality of life in the community. Eleos Way can be a powerful source for positive change in people's lives by doing important work, doing it well, and by creating a work space that is edifying for all who participate. In addition, we want our collaboration to be ego free. This means being selfless and transparent with our vision and approach which in turn will build trust. Once people notice that our business is beyond the "bottom-line" they will be more likely to support us and be interested in participating. We want to be

known as a caring face-to-face network that is honest, respectable, responsible, and fair. Namely, we want people to feel they belong and have a vested part in our mission.

As a startup, Eleos Way is using nine building blocks to accomplish its intent and solve its challenges: Customer Segments, Local Problems to address, Unique Value Proposition, Solution, Channels, Revenue Stream, Cost Structure, Key Metrics, and Unfair Advantage. They originate from an adaptation of the “Business Model Canvas” created by Alexander Osterwalder, an entrepreneur, speaker, and business model innovator.¹⁸⁹ Ash Maurya, also a successful entrepreneur, speaker, and author, designed the adaptation specifically for startups called the “Lean Canvas.”¹⁹⁰ The nine building blocks, once put together, give an overall picture of the strengths, weaknesses and functions of a business. Each point works together and is designed to assist in the strategy for future innovation. The nine building blocks describe the work required to accomplish the intent for Eleos Way and solve some of the early challenges. APPENDIX 3 lists and describes the nine building blocks in detail and APPENDIX 4 displays the nine building blocks on a one page “Lean Canvas” format.

Action Plan:

Estimated Dates for Completion of Artifact:

1. Lean Canvas startup plan (APPENDIX 4): January 1, 2016 (Complete)
2. Launch website (APPENDIX 5): December 20, 2015 (Complete)
3. Brochure and business cards (APPENDIX 6): January 11, 2015 (Complete)

¹⁸⁹ “The Business Model Canvas,” Strategyzer Business Model Canvas, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://businessmodelgeneration.com/canvas/bmc>.

¹⁹⁰ “Lean Canvas - 1 Page Business Model,” Leanstack, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://leanstack.com/lean-canvas/>.

4. Mobile office renovation (APPENDIX 8): February 29, 2016
5. Begin scheduling Spiritual Direction service: March 01, 2016
6. Begin regular business hours on location: March 01, 2016

Final Considerations for a Post-Graduate: It is important to note that the artifact for this dissertation is only one viable option for my thesis application. It is not definitive by any means. My thesis encourages the freedom to be adaptable, innovative, and creative based on one's life circumstances, abilities, giftedness, and location. Therefore, how one desires to apply the principles vary. Prayer is a constant, necessary component, as God may lead in an unlikely direction. My artifact has many determinant factors that include my family. The following are areas to consider. The list is not exhaustive and some may overlap. (APPENDIX 10 includes other key considerations for the post graduate who may be thinking along the lines of creating a startup.)

1. Location: rural or urban, region, state, nationality, etc.
2. Life circumstances: married or single, young family, empty nesters, retired, etc.
3. Skills: building, farming, ranching, administration, culinary, finance, fitness, etc.
4. Spiritual gifts: encouragement, helps, teaching, prophecy, evangelist, faith, etc.
5. Natural giftedness: the arts, music, a trade, sports, etc.
6. Resources available: finances, land, health, time, etc.
7. Language: bilingual, Spanish, Arabic, English, etc.
8. Resourcefulness: one's own ability to be thrifty and creative.
9. Social background: (Who do you relate to most?) military, farmers, urbanites, etc.

SECTION 6: POSTSCRIPT

In June 2012 my family and I embarked on an unforeseen journey that has progressively impacted the character and content of this project. After 10 years of military service in the US Army, we drove from Fort Benning, Georgia back to the Northwest where our journey began as a family. Our desire for leaving the Army was to fundamentally change our way of life relating to family and work as priorities. Many of the frustrations we were experiencing are represented in the introductory story of David and Anne. In the two years that followed the disconnectedness and instability of our life intensified. With little knowledge of where or how we would invest our life we felt more exposed, removed, and shaken than ever. Nevertheless, the move was the start of a major shift. Our initial dream was to serve the Lord by helping combat veterans in a farming context. During this period I also explored many prospects of serving as a pastor or a Bible teacher. These options, we found, were not a good fit. In effect, I had several false starts in terms of my choice of dissertation topics, as I wanted a subject that would be applicable to my vocation. Still, a question kept surfacing: How can my family and I most effectively embody the gospel in today's world?

This question led to a historical study of the rise of and problems associated with today's global economic and postmodern consumerism (Section 1). As I sought to understand the nature and influence of this problem, I hoped to find a balanced solution. My research revealed that the mainstream approaches fall into one of three general categories: antagonistic, over accommodating, or isolated (Section 2). The common thread found to be deficient in these three was an inadequate understanding and emphasis on the centrality of the gospel. Basically, if a Christian organization wishes to be blessed

of God it must be rooted in the wonder and beauty of the gospel of his kingdom. This is the core message of Section 3.

Central to my journey, then, was the rediscovery of a deeper sense of an identity in Christ and a fresh longing to know him. Though many questions still loomed, it became apparent that the gospel must be the foundation to whatever we do and wherever the path leads. In addition, I was drawn to the pilgrim image as a balanced and sustainable way for a person to connect to a local community while holding true one's uniqueness (Section 3). With this understanding I wrote many of my academic essays in the DMin course work series of classes with an eye toward being incorporated into this project. Therefore, parts of this dissertation are redacted essays from those classes.

My desire is that others in Christian ministry and future dissertation students utilize this project as a means to bring the gospel to life in their local community. This dissertation encourages the freedom to be adaptable, innovative, and creative according to Christian leader's life circumstances, abilities, giftedness, and location. Future expansion and revision of the artifact could in effect produce more creative means for bringing Christ to people. Moreover, I pray the reader will be drawn into a deeper affection for our precious Lord Jesus Christ and that their labors never slip from the firm foundation of his gospel. For the "old gospel" testifies it is the mighty Savior who works through his saints, "visiting sinners with salvation, awakening them to faith, drawing

them in mercy to himself.”¹⁹¹ “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 22.

¹⁹² Romans 11:36.

APPENDIX 1: CULTURE AND VALUES

The English word “culture” comes from the Latin *cultura*, which is associated with the cultivation of crops. Today, it has evolved into such a broad term so that many use it to describe almost any aspect of community to include language, morals, and customs. Because of the broad use of this word it is helpful to refocus and clarify the term. David E. Fitch, professor of Evangelical Theology at Northern Seminary, makes the core assumption in his book, *The End of Evangelicalism? Discerning a New Faithfulness for Mission: Towards an Evangelical Political Theology*, “that belief plus the practice of that belief shapes a community’s disposition in the world” and also “shapes the ‘kinds of people’ we become.” In other words, “belief plus practice produce culture.”¹⁹³ Barzun refocuses the term using an anonymous quote: “Culture is what is left after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn.”¹⁹⁴ Culture, then, is what defines a community at its core, while ethos, suggests Barzun, describes the elements that shape or characterize a community, such as the customs, manners, language, attitudes and habits.¹⁹⁵ For Hunter, culture is what’s in the “hearts and minds of individuals—in what are typically called ‘values’.”¹⁹⁶ Values, according to him, “are simply, moral preferences, inclinations toward or conscious attachments to what is good and right and true.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Fitch, xv.

¹⁹⁴ Barzun, xix.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Hunter, 6.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

So if culture is the core and ethos is the outer characteristics, than values is a part of culture that, as we see above, is being defined as a preference and inclination particular to a people and not a standard that can be found across cultures. It is in this arena of values that much tension exists today in American culture. This tension has existed for centuries and is often highly religious. Barzun's historical perspective is worth noting. According to him the major change in the direction in Western culture began in the late sixteenth century Protestant Reformation with Martin Luther:

. . . Luther kept addressing the Germans on every issue of religious, moral, political, and social importance. Pamphlets, books, letters to individuals that were "given to the press" by recipients, biblical commentaries, sermons, and hymns kept streaming from his inkwell. . . Opponents retorted, confrontations were staged at universities and written up. A torrent of black-and-white wordage about the true faith and good society poured over Christian heads. It did not cease for 350 years: 1900 was the first year in which religious works (at least in England) did not outnumber all other publications.¹⁹⁸

Barzun would characterize this conflict as one of the "emphatic signposts" punctuating his narrative that spans 500 years of Western culture.¹⁹⁹ By and large, the battle continues today in American society is between Protestantism and secular Humanism, two terms which *both* involve belief and practice. Hunter describes the tension as a "pull between history and revelation; between the conditions of social life in any particular epoch and the call of God on the church."²⁰⁰ It is an unavoidable tension. The values of the world and the church will never be taken to each other's satisfaction. They both object to preferences, culture-specific values doctrines.

¹⁹⁸ Barzun, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., xii.

²⁰⁰ Hunter, 231.

APPENDIX 2: FAMILY SYNERGY

Families, of late are not only disconnected from their communities, many are detached within themselves. As the whole, there is little meaningful connection throughout a normal day or week within a home. A person's time is for the most part spent away from home. Historically, the home was the place where most families worked, slept and ate. Each part was interwoven, resulting in a highly relational and active environment. The home today is practically silent for most the day. The rise of industrialization, with its "job" creation, has pulled families apart. Today, most families only come together in the evening for meals and sleep. Some may participate in a weekly social church or community activity. Thus, there are few hours available for meaningful connection. However, there is no substitute for *being* together.

Employers understand the value of time, as it is an essential commodity to their investment. However, one must resist thinking of time in this manner, as it imposes a false and unnatural premise. It is "artificial," dating back to the beginnings of railroad history. Barzun explains:

Before the railroad and universal moving about, each town or village had its own reckoning, more or less accurately based on the overhead sun indicating noon...this pluralism was incompatible with a railroad schedule. Instead, wide territories must be made to share a single arbitrary time, false and unnatural everywhere but along one meridian. The resistance to this ABSTRACTION was unexpectedly strong.²⁰¹

Why such resistance? This "artificial time" was disruptive to their natural rhythms of life determined by creation—the daily rising and setting of the sun and the seasonal changes. People have been so conditioned by artificial means that, though unnatural to their human

²⁰¹ Barzun, 544.

spirit, it is accepted as standard in life. It has led to an instrumentalization that has reduced the value of people and worth of creation to mere utility, affecting the daily synergy of families. Most live fragmented lives. Forced separations imposed by many establishments, such as employers, schools, and even, churches, frequently drive wedges in family relationships.²⁰² A life shaped by the gospel calls for the truest of interaction with those closest to us—our family. For this to happen there must be a basic change in the way families choose to live.

As opposed to a “monoculture” existence, a “perma-culture” lifestyle is more interrelated; all parts help each other and become more dependent on each other. In essence, it is a way of life founded in the gospel and centered from the home. The transition is not easy, as we live in a society that bases its worth on utility, efficiency, and productivity. The gospel runs counter to these abstract themes, calling one into a relationship of wonder and beauty. Consequently, a reprioritization is necessary if families mean to genuinely shape their life from the gospel. Perhaps the *table* is the place to begin.

The Table

Traditionally, the centerpiece of the home has been the dinner table. It is the place where the family gathers to eat, including both adults and children. It is the place of eating, discussion, recounting, singing, arguing, questioning, crying, yelling, fighting,

²⁰² “Two-parent households with a mother who does not work outside the home have grown much less common in the U.S. since 1970. Today, both parents work full time in 46% of these households.” “Raising Kids and Running a Household: How Working Parents Share the Load,” Pew Research Center, November 4, 2015, accessed November 22, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>.

stories, and prayer; all this takes place at the table. However, good or bad, it is the setting where every emotion under the sun may arise. The potential to hold memories is boundless. Sadly, in many homes this place has been replaced by the digital world, the television and computers.

In the Scriptures, the table is often the location of human interaction and revelation. In a brief study, it doesn't take one long to discover that much of God's revelation takes place at the "breaking of bread," a Hebrew idiom used for partaking in an ordinary meal.²⁰³ Consider first, the Passover meal, instituted in Exodus 12, commemorating God's deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. It took place on the evening of the 14th Nisan in Jerusalem. When the meal had been prepared, those participating took their places at the table. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* explains the family celebration:

Representative of God's love and saving acts, it always gave the people hope in the face of physical and spiritual oppression. As a family celebration, it served as a unifying bond from generation to generation. Its strength is seen in its emergence as the most important of Jewish festivals, in its three-thousand-year continuity, and in its continuing relevance to the needs of the people, whether it be freedom from social discrimination or the acquisition of religious liberty.²⁰⁴

At this meal, all are given identity in the story, even the children. They were part of a greater narrative. As a child, you are required to question the story. Like all good stories, the account of the Passover and all other Jewish historical narratives live or die in the details. Thus, the quest is based on questioning. "You don't think Moses split the sea? Bring it on." These discussions all takes place at the table.

²⁰³ Bullinger, 627; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7.

²⁰⁴ Paul J. Achtemeier, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature: Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), s.v. "The Passover."

The Passover is the precursor to communion. Like the Passover, the Lord's Supper in the New Testament takes place at the table and where one derives their new identity. New significance is attributed to the tradition. Just as the Israelites were redeemed by blood, the blood of a lamb, from Egyptian slavery, so also, at Calvary, one is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, from the slavery of sin and death. Jesus takes an old tradition, adds new significance, and says, from now on, "Do *this* in remembrance of *me*."²⁰⁵ The food symbolically tells the story. The wine is his blood and the breaking of bread is his body. Jesus takes wine, a common drink of the day, and bread, a familiar staple, as reminders. It is a table of both physical and spiritual nourishment. It is training within a narrative: "In my house you will operate based on the Jesus story. He will be your identity." In the Old Testament, the stories centered on God's salvation from those who sought to kill God's people that are remembered at the table. In the New Testament, the stories of God's love and forgiveness take place at the table. The story of Jesus is, in large part, about him eating good food with bad people. It is a centerpiece of God's revelation. Perhaps, the table can again be the most sacred furniture in the home, where through eyes of faith the cross becomes tangible.

Renewal

Nevertheless, in this day and age the only variable option for some families may require a more drastic change. What is being suggested may entail a total restructuring, such as a career change and/or relocation. For instance, if one's employer continues to impose long and forced separations, how can one possibly expect to cultivate genuine

²⁰⁵ Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

communion within his family, especially as its head? A drastic change may be the only way to break-free from the “artificial means” imposed by the culture. This is not suggesting a break from society, as this would be isolationism. Rather, the aim is for renewal. Berry writes: “The significance—and ultimately the quality—of the work we do is determined by our understanding of the story in which we are taking part.” The Christian’s story is the gospel. Instead of being defined and driven by the times and circumstances, the Apostle Paul reminds us that there is something far greater.

Paul’s letter to the Romans calls his readers to give their entire lives to the Lord as an action that will change them. On the basis of God’s “mercy,” explained not only in the previous chapters (9-11) but throughout his letter, Paul now exhorts them to present themselves to God as living sacrifices. This is important because the attitude in which one presents oneself to God is crucial. Paul does not want them to simply obey because they were commanded. Rather, he is urging them in light of God’s deliverance from the condemnation they deserve.²⁰⁶ Simply put, God’s mercy is to be the motive for presenting oneself—the “everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.”²⁰⁷ Thus, God’s mercy needs to be the motivating factor and must never be minimized.

When Paul exhorts his readers to “present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice,” he is metaphorically speaking of the priests’ blood sacrifices. Like the priest who presented their whole offering, Paul is exhorting the Roman Christians to present

²⁰⁶ παρακαλῶ “The exhortation is distinguished from a mere moral appeal by this reference back to the work of salvation as its presupposition and basis.” Kittel, S. 5:795-796.

²⁰⁷ Romans 12:1 (The Message).

themselves in a decisive act. How ironic is this? The sacrifices of the Old Testament were dead while this sacrifice is alive! Paul then takes a step further by combining two unlikely terms to describe the sacrifice; "...which is your spiritual (*logikos*) service (*latreia*).” Charles Conniry, vice president and dean of George Fox Evangelical Seminary, explains:

We are envisioned as both the offerers and the offerings. *Logikos* describes how we offer ourselves and *latreia* identifies what of ourselves we offer – for we are in fact to be “living sacrifices.” We offer ourselves *intentionally* and *consciously* (*logikos*). What we offer to God is everything that makes up our daily lives (*latreia*). In other words, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices by *consciously appropriating everything we are and do – in the here-and-now moment of daily living – to the glory of God.*²⁰⁸

Christians are to deliberately and thoughtfully present their everyday living to God. This is the place of discernment. They are to offer themselves to God in the place where they abide and throughout their everyday activities. Conniry writes, “Rather than inviting us to experience the immediacy of Jesus’ presence, many authors equate discernment with decision-making.”²⁰⁹ Understanding the intended meaning of discernment in this context is key to understanding Paul’s instructions.

In Romans 12:2 Paul shifts the focus from the decisive act (aorist tense) in verse one to an idea of maintaining (present tense); “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed.”²¹⁰ Instead of being molded and shaped by the cultural surroundings, Paul is

²⁰⁸ Charles J. Conniry, Jr., *Souring in the Spirit, Rediscovering Mystery in the Christian Life* (Tyrone, GA: Paternoster Press, 2007), 174.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 171-174.

²¹⁰ Romans 12:2.

directing his readers to be literally “metamorphed” from the inside out.²¹¹ In other words, he is telling them to be changed or become completely different.²¹² The verb, “be conformed” can be either a middle or passive voice, suggesting that the subject is being affected by its own action or an external force. In essence, a person can be “molded” or “conformed” subconsciously or by their permissiveness.²¹³ Eugene Peterson, in the *Message* expresses this nuance; “Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking.”²¹⁴ Rather, be completely changed (metamorphed) from the “inside out.” This change occurs by the “renewal” of one’s disposition.²¹⁵ In other words, a Christian’s way of thinking must become new in order to be transformed. As a result a believer will be able to “prove” or “test” the will of God. This does not mean they will have future insight into God’s will for their life, which is what many mistake for discernment. The meaning is to understand God’s desire in any given situation within the day-to-day activities of life.²¹⁶ In effect, as a Christian’s mind is renewed, they will know how to respond when they understand God’s desires. This idea corresponds to the idea of attending; “I am paying attention! I am focused and present to God. Am I filled with the

²¹¹“συσχηματίζομαι: to form or mold one’s behavior in accordance with a particular pattern or set of standards—‘to shape one’s behavior, to conform one’s life.’” Louw, S. 1:506.

²¹²“μεταμορφόομαι^a: to change the essential form or nature of something—‘to become, to change, to be changed into, to be transformed.’” Louw, S. 1:154.

²¹³ “It is very telling that being “conformed” to the present world is viewed as a passive notion, for it may suggest that it happens, in part, subconsciously. At the same time, the passive could well be a “permissive passive,” suggesting that there may be some consciousness of the conformity taking place. Most likely, it is a combination of both.” Biblical Studies Press: *The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible*. Biblical Studies Press, 2006; 2006

²¹⁴ Romans 12:2 (The Message).

²¹⁵ “In the νοῦς of Christians, i.e., in the inner direction of their thought and will and the orientation of their moral consciousness, there should be constant renewal...” Kittel, S. 4:958.

²¹⁶ Louw, S. 1:287.

Spirit and dead to myself.” As a person recognizes and puts into practice God’s will in every situation in life they will experience his goodness.

In effect, as a person applies the wisdom and principles of Romans 12:1-2 to discernment they will experience God’s goodness, pleasure, and wholeness in their day-to-day life. This may involve some shifts in the home, such as making the table the centerpiece, or a more substantial one, like a career change or relocation. Regardless, it will take sacrifice. If there is no cost involved it denies the meaning sacrifice. A sacrifice is something that must have a cost or else it is not a sacrifice. Whatever the shift, it will affect the common everyday practice of life, which is often monotonous and can be painful. “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”²¹⁷ Jesus told this parable to convey the immense *value* of our God. For the joy set before him, this man sacrificed all that he might attain the treasure.

²¹⁷ Matthew 13:44.

APPENDIX 3: NINE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A STARTUP

These nine building blocks also draw from *The Lean Startup* business principles designed by Eric Ries, an entrepreneur and author.²¹⁸ As a startup, our goal is to put our service to market as fast and direct as possible while keeping costs down. One of the principles Ries outlines is to get the “Minimum Viable Product (MVP)” into the hands of the early adopters or customers, which means identifying when to stop developing the product and launch it.²¹⁹ Eleos Way is using this same principle but focusing on a service instead of a product. Thus, our focus is to get our “Minimum Viable *Service* (MVS)” into the lives of early adopters. An important element to this concept is knowing when to “pivot.” Pivoting, explains Ries, refers to the moment at which one needs to tailor the product to the feedback given by early adopters.²²⁰ It means suiting the product to the target market. Our “pivot” will be determined by the feedback we receive from early adopters of our service. Below are the nine building block based on the Lean Canvas format.²²¹

1. **Customer Segments:** These are the mass and niche markets we plan to reach that include both customers and users. It splits them into broad and specific categories. These markets are the ones that we most want to service, know most about and have the strongest channel to reach.

²¹⁸ “The Lean Startup Methodology,” The Lean Startup, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://theleanstartup.com/principles>.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ “Lean Canvas - 1 Page Business Model,” Leanstack, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://leanstack.com/lean-canvas/>.

Customers: contribute financially.

Users: do not pay but create value through participation.

Broad Category: Target audience includes locals seeking hospitable face to face engagement and anyone hungry to discover God's presence in their life; local families, business owners, artists, and religious people.

Specific Category: Our niche market includes hurting people, people in the midst of difficult life situations, people with hard questions, and those who are simply curious about God.

- Hurting: Those who lack a trustworthy confidant to share hidden struggles, deep wounds or sensitive personal information.
- Parents with young children: as parents ourselves we are able to identify most with this segment.
- Those who have experienced little success with traditional counseling and psychotherapy.
- Those who have left the church and are seeking a pastoral experience.

Possible Early adopters:

- Those in crisis
- Considering divorce and have sought all other options for reconciliation
- Recent loss of loved one
- Desperate emotional pain

2. **Problem:** List of local problems to address through our enterprise.

- Spiritual and emotional needs in the community are not being met
- Marriage failure increases
- Increased addiction to internet, television, pornography, prescription medication etc.
- People who lack meaningful engagement with one another in community
- People legitimately hurting and dealing with it in their own ways, reluctant to share their struggles with anyone or ask for help.

Existing Alternatives:

- Church/Pastors
- Psychology/Psychiatry
- SSRIs/Medication
- Free (insurance based) counseling/therapy
- Drug rehab/detox retreats
- Self-help books
- Clubs & other group memberships
- Mystical or New Age approaches

- Yoga, Nature Retreats

3. **Unique Value Propositions (UVP):** States what we are offering and why it is

different. In other words, the UVP is about getting noticed, making a compelling offer or promise for our service. Maurya describes it as “the finished story benefit.”

It is derived from the intersection of the problem and solution. The enterprise's main value will be to build good relationships among locals. We will take the time to listen and care. This will take precedence and be an integrated part of all interaction.

- We want to be known as the people who "really care!"
- People understand that we are part of an effort to better the community as a whole and the leadership of the community supports and encourages our efforts
- Offer people the source of true healing
 - Aesthetic mobile office offering a rare tech/wi-fi free setting
- Face to face: personal ASSET
- Confidentiality, no gossip!
- Biblical approach/not counseling or psychology
- Sincere encouragement and meeting people where they are, making sure they understand we cannot "fix" them
- Offering an alternative to medical or pharmaceutical options
- Connecting people in the community to encourage one another
- Providing classes
- This is customer service.
- Routinely available two days a week.
- People feel they are contributing to our family's way of life by contributing financially.

4. **Solution:** The minimum viable service (MVS) is the solution and what gets you paid. It is the smallest solution we can make that delivers customer value.

- Provide face to face engagement and a professional listening service
- Provide comfort and hope

5. **Channels:** How we build and test a *path* to customers. It also looks at the phases our service goes through. This is everything from awareness and distribution to after-sales service. Our initial design begins with a mobile office that is both visually

attractive to customers and strategically adaptable, offering space and functionality as a mode of connection. In addition, the enterprise will provide a simple and attractive digital website, brochure, and business card for marketing purposes.

However, relying heavily on word of mouth referrals.

- Hotchkiss location with aesthetic signage on mobile office
- Word of mouth, meeting people, gaining their trust
- Church, meeting local pastors and business owners
- Building local relationships
- Website
- Posting posters, leaving business cards and brochures.
- Connecting with those whom we already have common ground:
 - Parents who lack a deep connection with God and within their family.
 - Young families who are hurting.
 - Young families in the midst of difficult life situations

6. **Revenue Steam:** Looks at what you are charging and if you could be charging more.

How are you receiving your payments and does it contribute enough to overall revenue? We will provide Spiritual Direction as a service and rely heavily on the gift economy vs. seeking cash revenue. Any economic benefit will start by donation only. Thus, we are looking at providing other creative forms of revenue through gifting, such as local produce in season and “gospel pie.” We will attempt to first determine how this plan works for our needs and find out what doesn't work. We will be able to find out through trial what motivates and does not motivate those who interact with us. We see ourselves as tent makers who desire mainly to build into the lives of local people. Price can determine the kind of customers one attracts (Keeping this as simple as possible (cost base vs. value base - see budget)). To sustain ourselves we are willing to find side jobs, in building and other handy work etc., while maintaining a regular schedule with the mobile office. By tag-team we will man the business. I will take the mornings and my wife will take afternoons etc.

In addition, we will find ways to incorporate our three boys, so as to help them develop their own giftedness and contributions within the enterprise. Micah, my oldest, enjoys interacting with others and is gifted in building so he will help me renovate the mobile office and design our unique signage. Jedidiah and Elisha are also very relational and caring and will thrive on serving people or helping to pray with people etc. We plan on serving free "gospel pie." Perhaps calling it "Mercy Pie" or "Eleos Pie" if gospel is too strong, making one or two good pies per work day and serving anyone pie for free (gifts appreciated but not required). The pies will be homemade with natural, local ingredients when possible. The point of the free pie is to draw people in with something unique and share our vision with those who are willing to listen while explaining our services.

- Donations, gifts, barter items or offer for work
- Monthly gifts - missionary type support from Christians/businesses (\$25 support/25 people) \$625 month benchmark for first year
- Unapologetically moving towards a for-profit enterprise: a metric of sustainability
- Discovering and honing a unique product niche – books/classes/gifts/service

7. **Cost Structure:** What is the feasibility of implementation? How will we afford our creative service? How will we build enough "runway" for the service? It includes looking at fixed and variable costs so that we can see what needs improvement.

Calculate breakeven point and how many customers we would need for success.

- Typical psychological counseling runs anywhere from free (covered by insurance) to \$100+ an hour out of pocket
- Suggested donation Veteran/Widow/Low-income \$30/hour, all others \$40 hour
- Buy 4, 1 hour appointments - get one hour free
- Barter for goods and food
- Free local in season vegetable table
- Book 5 one hour appointments a week = \$200 a week/\$800 a month

8. **Key Metrics:** These are key numbers that tell how a business is doing. Identify key customer actions that drive value. What key activity do we use to measure value proposition? What do we need to achieve to make the service worthwhile?

- Glorify God in all that we do!
- Follow the Golden Rule in how we relate to others and run our enterprise.
- Key customer actions: People are stopping by regularly. Initially at least one person a day, after a few weeks/months, several people a day.
- Appointments start to book up completely within 4 months of visibility.
- We are personally appreciated and thanked by local pastors in the area and people who have been noticeably helped by our services and in turn they share what we are doing with others.
- We become a symbol in the community of care and concern. We are known for a genuine concern for others and are appreciated and supported within the community for making a tangible positive impact.
- Divorce, suicide, addiction and depression statistics are lower over time with our continued presence and impact. Presence

9. **Unfair Advantage:** Building differentiation over time. This is typically how a business will defend against competitive attacks. It is often something that cannot be easily copied or bought. An example is bringing something to market first or being a “fast follower.” Our desire is to have an unfair advantage story that becomes real over time.

- Best at caring in community
- Professionally trained biblical spiritual direction
- Spiritual Direction based on biblical principles actually lived out
- Confidential service
- Place to ask for prayer
- Time - face to face engaging in meaningful conversation
- Offering hope in a world that does not understand this concept
- We may get to know this community better than any other group/church/business and have a distinct advantage of personally knowing many people.

APPENDIX 4: LEAN CANVAS

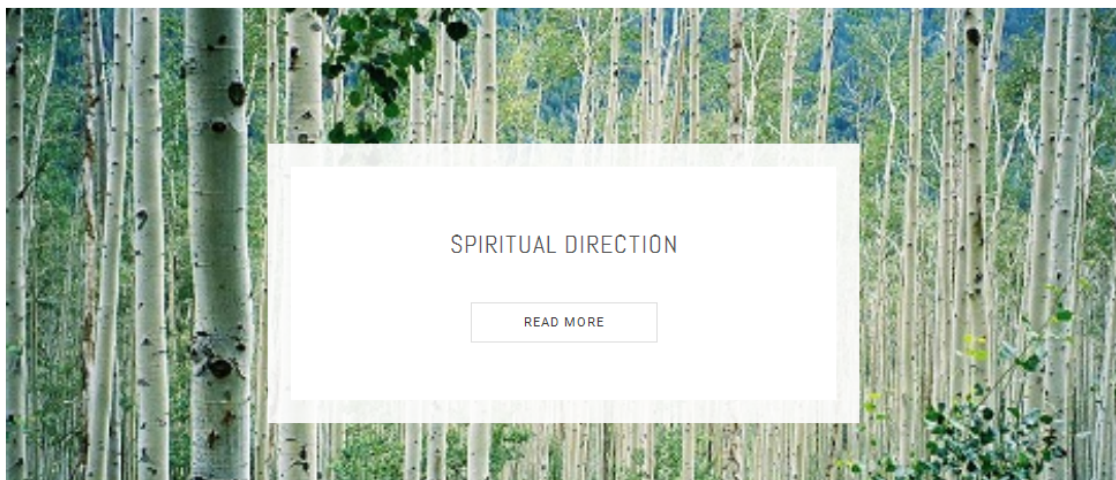
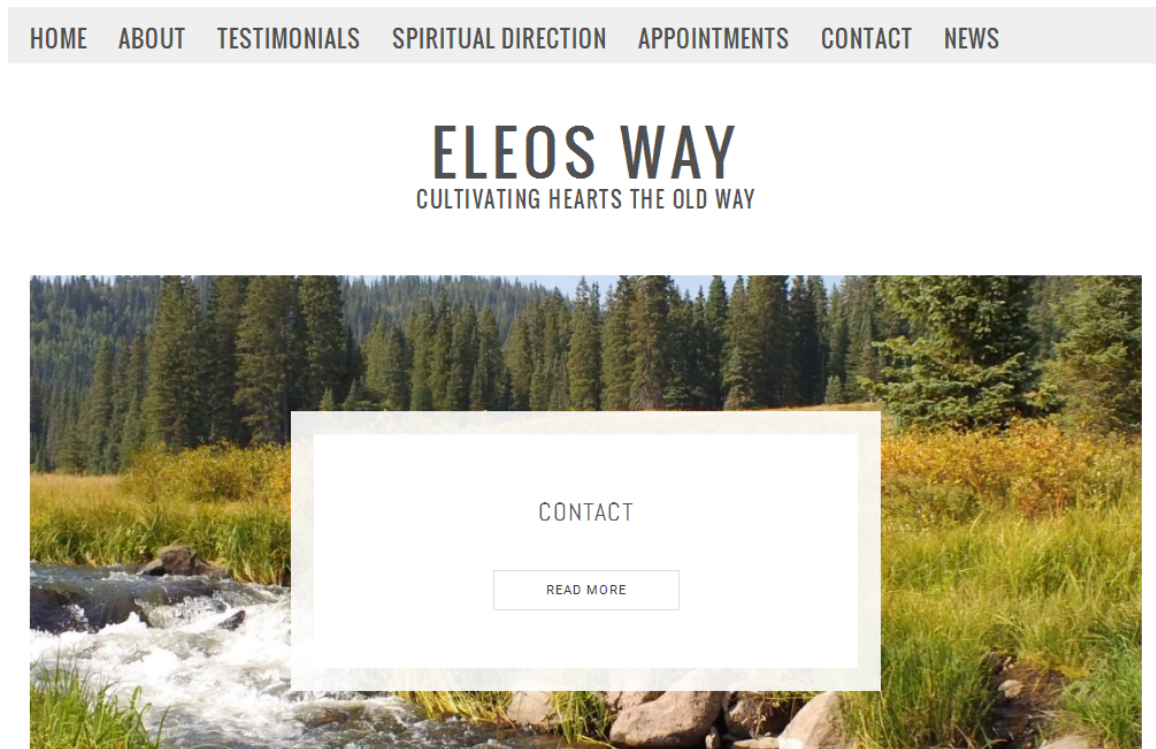
Problem: 2	Solution:4	Unique Value Proposition:3	Unfair Advantage: 9	Customer Segments: 1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spiritual and emotional needs in the community are not being met 2. Marriage failure increases 3. Increased addiction to internet, television, pornography, prescription medication etc. 4. People lack meaningful engagement with one another in community 5. People are legitimately hurting and dealing with it in their own ways, reluctant to share their struggles with anyone. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides face to face engagement 2. Provide comfort 3. Provide hope 4. Provide professional listening service 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Find the source of true healing 2. Face to face: personal- ASSET 3. Confidentiality, no gossip! 4. Biblical approach/no psych 5. Sincere encouragement meeting people where they are and making sure they understand we cannot "fix" 6. Offering an alternative to medical, pharmaceutical options. 7. Connecting people in the community to encourage one another 8. Providing different classes 9. Customer service = actually caring about people 10. We want to be known as the people who "really care!" 11. We want to be known as the people who are "routinely available two days a week you will find us there." 12. People feel they are contributing to our family's way of life. They are supporting us financially, i.e. giving us a means to provide food and shelter for our children. 13. People understand that we are part of an effort to better the community as a whole and the leadership of the community supports our efforts both financially and through encouragement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best at caring in community 2. Place to ask for prayer 3. Spiritual Direction based on biblical principles lived out 4. Time face to face engaging in meaningful conversation 5. Offering hope in a world that does not understand this concept 6. Professionally trained biblical spiritual direction 7. We may get to know this community better than any other group/church/business. We will have a distinct advantage of personally knowing many people. 	<p>Customers: pay Users: do not pay but create value through participation.</p> <p>Broad Category: Target audience includes locals seeking hospitable face to face engagement and anyone hungry to discover God's presence in their life. Local families, business owners, artists, and religious people.</p> <p>Specific Category: Our niche market includes hurting people, people in the midst of difficult life situations, people with hard questions, and those who are simply curious about God.</p>
<p>Existing Alternatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Church/Pastors 2. Psychology/Psychiatry 3. SSRIs/Medication 4. Free (insurance based) counseling/therapy 5. Drug rehab/detox retreats 6. Self-help books 7. Clubs 8. Mystical or New Age approaches 9. Yoga 10. Retreats 	<p>Key Metrics: 8</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God is glorified! 2. People are stopping by regularly initially at least one person a day, after a few weeks/months, several people a day. 3. Appointments are starting to book and book up completely two months out. 4. We are personally appreciated and thanked by Pastors in the area and people who have been helped. They in turn share what we are doing with others. 5. We become a symbol in the community of care and concern. We are known for a genuine concern for others and we are appreciated and supported within the community for making a tangible positive impact. 6. Divorce, suicide, addiction and depression statistics are lower 		<p>Channels:5</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aesthetic mobile office 2. Hotchkiss location! 3. Website 4. Word of mouth, meeting people, gaining their trust. 5. Church, meeting local pastors and business owners 6. Building local relationships 7. Paonia message board/posting posters, leaving business cards and brochures 8. Connecting with those whom we already have common ground: <p>- Parents who lack a deep connection with God and within their family. - Young families who are hurting. - Young families in the midst of difficult life situations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hurting: Those who lack a trustworthy confidant to share hidden struggles, deep wounds or sensitive personal information. 2. Parents with young children: as parents ourselves, we are able to identify most with this segment. 3. Those who have experienced little success with traditional counseling and psychotherapy. 4. Those who have left the church and are seeking a pastoral experience. <p>Possible Early adopters: - Those in crisis - Considering divorce and have sought all other options for reconciliation - Recent loss of loved one - Desperate emotional pain</p>

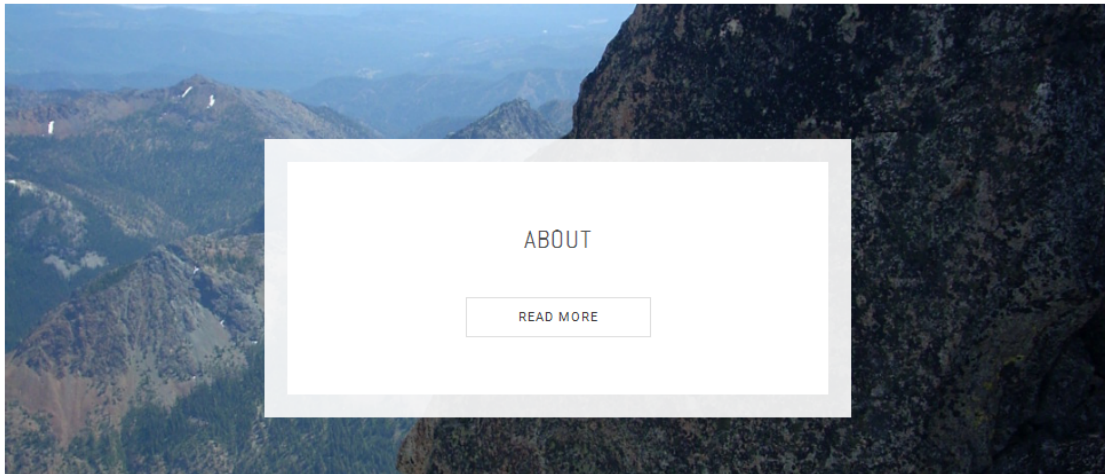
Cost Structure:7	Revenue Stream:6
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fixed Costs – see budget information 2. Typical psychological counseling runs anywhere from FREE (covered by insurance) to \$100 an hour out of pocket 3. Suggested donation Veteran/Widow \$30/hour, all others \$40 hour, buy 4 get one hour free. 4. Barter for goods/food/Vegetable table during the summer 5. 5 one hour appointments a week = \$200 a week/\$800 a month 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Donations, gifts, barter items 2. Monthly gifts - missionary type support from Christians/businesses (\$25 support/25 people) \$625 month 3. Discovering a unique product niche – books/classes/gifts/service
<p style="text-align: center;">Brainstorming Space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to meet people where they are in their daily difficulties—relating and bringing to light the power of the gospel in that context. • Ask for prayer from local people we know and our church. • Not replacing the church, but looked at by local pastors as an asset to their ministry. • Classes: Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University for couples and a father/son oriented class • Men’s coffee hour: early mornings • Monthly Veterans Gathering • Possible Local Opposition: Christian traditionalists, licensed counselors, pastors, bad rumor mill people • Aim for 5 Appointments per week to start. • Customers will not come to us, assume that progress will be slow. • Need a stable consistent story: “Have you ever been in a bad place in your life and had no one to talk to?” “Is there anything in your hidden life that you can’t share with anyone, but need someone to talk to?” This is what Eloes Way is here for. Deep conversation, deep listening, deep solutions. • Exchange of Life: work toward a common ground for making disciples where people come together. • Overcoming stigmas so people will not feel shame to come to us. (offer an anonymous option) • Self Care: Prepare for emotional toll on family. (cannot help everyone) • Offer free appointments to people in need. • 	

APPENDIX 5: ELEOS WAY WEBSITE

Below are screenshots taken from the Eleos Way website: <http://www.eleosway.com/>

Home Page: includes the three following slide pictures.





About Page:

HOME ABOUT TESTIMONIALS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION APPOINTMENTS CONTACT NEWS

ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

ABOUT

Eleos Way Spiritual Direction

**Not a licensed counseling or therapy service*

Who: Former Army Ranger Chaplain and pastor, current doctorate candidate and devoted husband and father with over 5,000 hours of face to face pastoral care experience. Specializes serving in particular:

- Men: one on one and working teams (wilderness, farming, and building projects).
- Hurting: Those who lack a trustworthy confidant to share hidden struggles, deep wounds, or sensitive personal information.
- Parents with young children.
- Those who have experienced little success with traditional counseling and psychotherapy and open to a different approach.
- Those who have left the church and are seeking a pastoral experience.

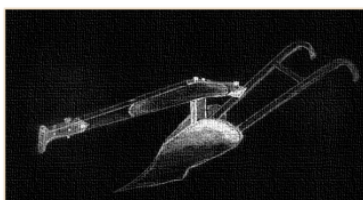
What: Spiritual Direction - a form of pastoral care and support that does not rely on psychology or new age spiritual techniques.

- A centuries-old practice of meeting with a trained guide to focus on directing one into a deeper journey of awareness and responsiveness to God.
- End goal is to live-out the consequences of a growing relationship with God.
- Not a for-profit or non-profit business. This is a local *shared value* vision, relying solely on financial gifts, creative participation and a close support network.
- Strictly confidential, no records are kept.

When: Available Wednesdays and Fridays. Fridays reserved for private 1-hour appointments only.

Where: Mobile Office, new location address to be posted late February. Appointments available for scheduling mid-January.

Why: Create shared-value in the community by building into people's lives & crafting a successful - sustainable - family legacy.



Cultivating Hearts the Old Way

Bringing the hidden to light so healing may come and rest in the soul.

*NOT A LICENSED COUNSELOR OR
PSYCHOTHERAPIST

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Testimonials Page:

HOME ABOUT TESTIMONIALS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION APPOINTMENTS CONTACT NEWS

ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

TESTIMONIALS

"...he consistently expressed an authentic care and concern for my overall well-being."

Korey - Former Chaplain Assistant in 75th Ranger Regiment

Working a typical 12 hour day in the Rangers with Charlie provided many opportunities to build a relationship. As my supervisor, he consistently expressed an authentic care and concern for my overall well-being. He was always concerned for my Spiritual life, my family life, and my work life. Not only was Charlie a superb supervisor and friend, he became a good mentor for me. He taught me many valuable lessons as his Assistant. I always remember his love and passion for Rangers and their families. I mostly miss our morning Bible studies following a good work out.

WELCOME



APPOINTMENTS WITH CHARLIE

January 2016 >>

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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Spiritual Direction Page:

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [TESTIMONIALS](#) [SPIRITUAL DIRECTION](#) [APPOINTMENTS](#) [CONTACT](#) [NEWS](#)

ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION



FOCUSES ON ATTENDING TO OUR INNER LIFE.
LISTENING WELL AND GUIDING ONE INTO A DEEPER JOURNEY OF AWARENESS AND RESPONSIVENESS.
THE END GOAL IS TO LIVE OUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.
THIS IS NOT A BEHAVIORAL OR PROBLEM SOLVING SERVICE.
NO RECORDS ARE KEPT. STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY.

Appointments Page:

HOME ABOUT TESTIMONIALS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION APPOINTMENTS CONTACT NEWS

ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

APPOINTMENTS

Feel free to [contact us](#) 970.778.9088 if you would like more information before booking.

December 2015

>>

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27	28	29	30	31		

First Name*:

Last Name:

Email*:

Appointment Times*:

Phone:

Comments or Questions:

SEND

Contact Page:

HOME ABOUT TESTIMONIALS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION APPOINTMENTS CONTACT NEWS

ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

CONTACT

Phone: 970.778.9088

Thank you for taking a moment to connect.

Your Name

Your Email (required)

Subject

Your Message

SEND

WELCOME



APPOINTMENTS WITH CHARLIE

November 2019

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Powered by WP Booking Calendar

First Name*:

Last Name:

Email*:

Appointment Times*:

7am

Phone:

Comments or Questions:

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[Spiritual Direction](#)

[About](#)

[Appointments](#)

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ELEOS WAY

CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY

NEWS

After February we will issue a quarterly newsletter.

If you are interested in receiving this over email, please [contact us](#) to let us know.



WELCOME



APPOINTMENTS WITH CHARLIE

Eleos in Greek (ἔλεος) means - MERCY.

We have experienced immeasurable amounts of God's Mercy in our own lives.

It is our hope to remain focused on His mercies every morning.

The natural renewal process of rural farm life and its rejuvenating truth has continued to inspire us. The seed is cast and the miracle begins underground. After a time it is revealed "-how, he himself does not know." The "crop grows itself" and when it "permits" the farmer gathers the harvest (Mark 4:26-29). Nothing about the seed or the plant can be forced or coerced.

Our vision has changed over the last few years and since settling into the Colorado Western Slope, we have continued towards the same hope:

Build into people's lives & create a successful - sustainable - family legacy.

December 2015

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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Powered by WP Booking Calendar

First Name*:

Last Name:

Email*:

Appointment Times*:

Phone:

Comments or Questions:

SEND

search

RECENT POSTS

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Contact

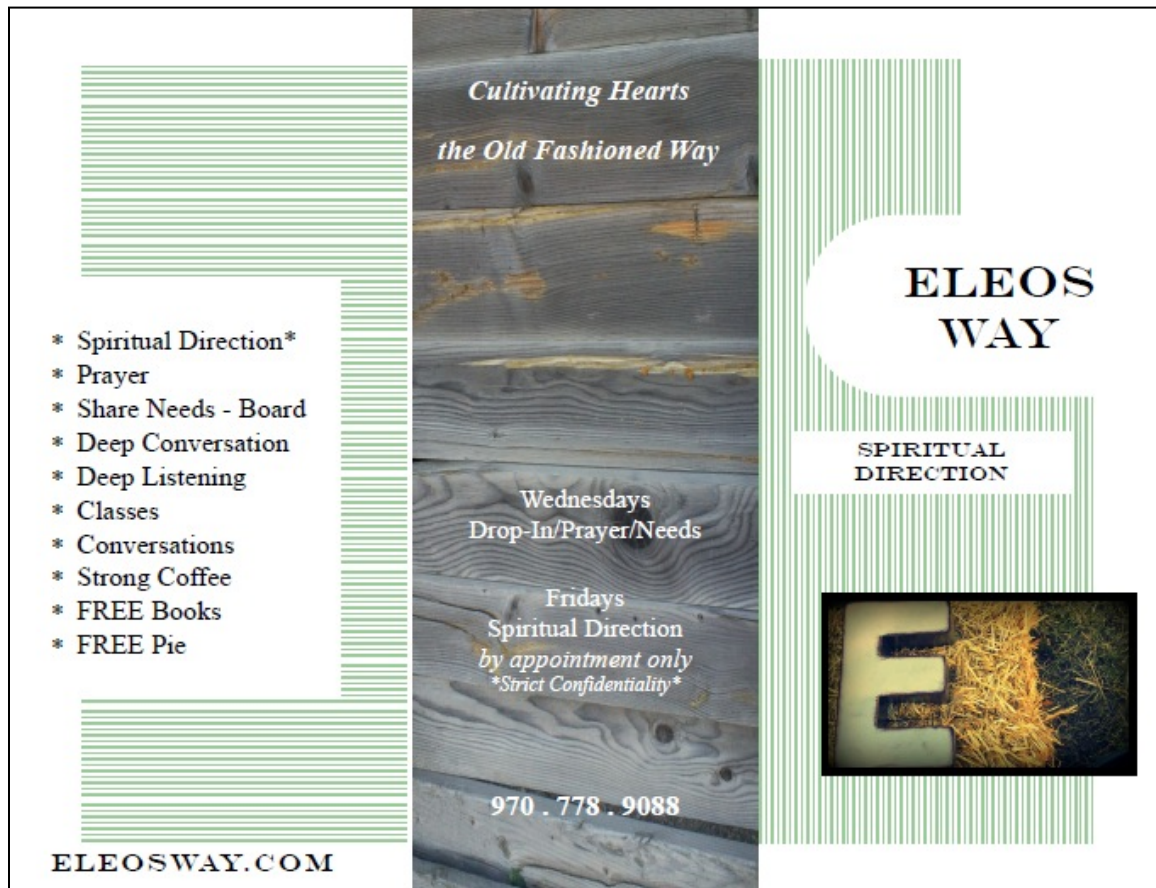
Spiritual Direction

About


Appointments

APPENDIX 6: BROCHURE AND BUSINESS CARD DESIGN


Page 1 of Tri-fold Brochure:



Page 2 of Tri-fold Brochure:

<p>ELEOS WAY</p> <p><i>Cultivating Hearts the Old Way</i></p> <p><i>Bringing the hidden to light so healing may come and rest in the soul.</i></p> <p>*NOT A LICENSED COUNSELOR or PSYCHOTHERAPIST</p> <p>ELEOSWAY.COM</p>	<p>SPIRITUAL DIRECTION*</p> <p>Focuses on attending to our inner life. Listening well and guiding one into a deeper journey of awareness and responsiveness. The end goal is to live out the consequences of our relationship with God and others in the community. This is not a behavioral or problem solving service. No records are kept. Strict confidentiality.</p> <p>CHARLIE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband and father of 3 young boys • 10 year military/combat veteran: US Army Ranger & Chaplain • Scaled Mexico's Iztaccihuatl - 17,160 ft. & Pico de Orizaba - 18,491 ft. & many peaks in the Lewis Range of Montana • Certified Wilderness Survival Guide • Over 5000 hours of face to face pastoral care and direction • Founded a small church in Mexico City (fluent in Spanish) • Experience directing marriage & family retreats, weddings & funerals • Masters in Theology, Doctorate in Ministry candidate, George Fox University (2016) 	<p>DROP - I N</p> <p>Prayer</p> <p>Conversation (face-to-face)</p> <p>Post Needs - Community Board</p> <p>FREE Pie (Wednesdays)</p> <p>FREE Books</p> <p>MOBILE OFFICE</p>  <p>Contact Charlie Estanol</p> <p>970 . 778 . 9088</p> <p>www.eleosway.com</p> <p>info@eleosway.com</p>
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Business card: Front and Back

 <p>ELEOS WAY</p> <p>CULTIVATING HEARTS THE OLD WAY</p> <p>WWW.ELEOSWAY.COM</p>	<p>CHARLIE ESTAÑOL</p> <hr/> <p>SPIRITUAL DIRECTION</p> <p>*NOT A LICENSED COUNSELOR</p> <p>INFO@ELEOSWAY.COM 970.778.9088</p>
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APPENDIX 7: STARTUP COSTS

Mobile Office

- Paid in full
- Renovation costs not to exceed \$500
- Upkeep and maintenance - in house
- Books/bibles sourced from second hand stores (monthly budget \$25)
- Pie/soup for appointments (in house labor/monthly budget \$100)
- Summer vegetable /fruit table (in house labor/ \$100 per season)
- Electric - \$0 (off-grid structure)
- Internet - \$0 (unplugged office)
- Rent - \$0 (special arrangement for space with local family business)
- Utilities - \$0 (off-grid water and sewer set up – water \$35 month)
- Fuel – transporting mobile office if necessary (monthly budget \$100)

Marketing

- Business cards/brochures/signs (\$100 startup/\$40 every six months)
- Internet (\$60 startup/ \$35 annually)
- Phone (included in personal expenses – no additional fees)

Labor

- Our time is valuable – we are budgeting for two full days a week, Wednesday and Friday to run a 7am - 4pm operation. One person will man the trailer during those hours. No salary is expected, however donations will be accepted during these days.
- Appointments will be made on Fridays from 7am - 4pm. These are a case by case basis and run 45 minutes in duration.

Donations

- Donations from visitors and those who make Spiritual Direction appointments will be deposited into the Eleos Way savings account and directed solely towards funding operating costs, emergency and development funds. This will aid in the future development of raw land for a permanent structure and location for Eleos Way.

APPENDIX 8: MOBILE OFFICE

The Eleos Way will operate out of mobile office. The design will come from a 1970 camper conversion. The outside will be resealed and painted a vintage style as illustrated below. The inside will be gutted and new paneling and floor will be installed.

Current status:



Proposed vintage design:



APPENDIX 9: KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Keep the Gospel Central:** Our plan of action will continue to mature over many years. How it evolves and matures will be based on God's direction and our sensitivity to his Spirit's leading. Therefore, our first step, as was the basis of my thesis, is to remain intimately connected to Jesus. If we lose sight of the wonder and beauty of the gospel it is all for nothing.
2. **Personal Engagement:** The face-to-face aspect of Eleos Way cannot be over emphasized. Our society in many ways is starved for human contact. Thus, we cannot compromise on this principle, even when answering the phone. We will not mechanize our contact with people.
3. **Don't Sell Your Soul:** Joel Salatin in his guiding principles writes about *Scaling up without Selling your Soul*: "Many successful entrepreneurial start-ups morph into Wall-Streetified empires that lose their distinctives. And in the process, the business chews up and spits out its workers and founders in a mad scramble to dominate something."²²² We want to make sure we do not get caught up in the postmodern and global economic model that compromises values and quality.
4. **Prioritize What is Noble:** Though business plans are helpful, it is not the driving force of Eleos Way. If we determine our actions based on sales and marketing targets we will be inclined to treat people like objects. We do not want "the sale" to be more important than the people. The message must not be overshadowed by anything such as revenue, efficiency, profit, productivity, etc. The best we have to

²²² Joel Salatin, "Polyface Guiding Principles," Polyface, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://www.polyfacefarms.com/principles/>.

offer is actually FREE. If our service is good and noble we believe customers will come and God will provide. We want to be Golden Rule oriented.

5. **Open Source:** We want to remain transparent, always. This does not mean we do not hold confidentiality with those we serve. It means we have an “open door” policy in how we conduct our enterprise. If somebody wants to copy us, we will consider it a success and honor, not a threat. Joel Salatin explains: “If you study innovation, the ones who are out in front have already gone through a learning curve. While copiers can shorten the curve or change its trajectory, they still have to go through it. This attitude keeps me lean and learning rather than bureaucratic and superficial. Imagine if everyone had to depend on their own cleverness to stay ahead of the competition. Talk about innovation immersion.”²²³ If you make yourself transparent it builds unbelievable trust—a sacred value.
6. **Limitations:** We will choose to work within the limits of our accepted natural and human context. Like an artist that embraces the limitation of a canvas, we want to be content to work within the bounds of our local community and resources. These limits must not be confused with confinement. Everything we recourse and invest in will be local. Basically, we want to be able to *name* exactly where we are resourced. If we cannot see it, feel it, or smell we will not invest in it. In the future this may include helping another local startup that is complimentary to ours.
7. **Partnerships:** Any successful enterprise invests in key suppliers and partners that contribute to their overall goals. We desire our church family to be a primary

²²³ Joel Salatin, “Scaling up Without Selling Your Soul - Part 2,” Polyface Hen House, November 7, 2008, accessed December 26, 2015, <http://polyfacehenhouse.com/2008/11/scaling-up-without-selling-your-soul-part-2/>.

partner and hope they will contribute. There are already some families in the church who have expressed interest and a willingness to help. Therefore, we want to find out how they want to contribute. It needs to be something that they are passionate and motivated to do. It needs to be something they can own. It can't be our vision for them. It has to be their unique vision that fits within the overall objective. This may include fostering apprentice families, encouraging them to do what we are doing, helping them to think outside the box and use their gifts. We need to be open to the gifts of Christians and careful about greedy wolves that want but don't have good motives.

8. **Future Employees:** When the time comes that we are able to afford an employee we want to abide by certain principles. A primary being one that is incentive based. Even with our three sons we want to provide an incentive for work. Nobody will get paid for breathing. Thus, anyone we employ will be paid on a commission; the harder they work the more they will be paid, to include bonuses.
9. **Pay as You Go:** We want to remain debt free and work within our limitations. This will promote creativity and resourcefulness, which means less waste. I am sure we will be starved for cash more often than not; nevertheless, we will resist the temptation to seek a loan. This will force us be innovative and resourceful. It is better to grow slow. There is an old saying in the military, "slow is smooth and smooth is fast." When organizations get large initial cash in-flows, the propensity for waste and fraud increase.

10. Word of Mouth Advertising: We want to grow on the recommendations of those whom we have served well. We believe this is the best advertising. We will reward those who put out a good word for us.

11. Future Growth and Education: Striving to offer a better quality service necessary in order to thrive. Thus, we have to continue growing in our understanding of how to best serve others. As such, we want to foster an environment that encourages personal transformation in order to become effective spiritual leaders.

12. Home and Rest: As a family we must make our home a neutral place where we can recover and rest, be alone together in peace without others needing us. If our home life is drained and falls apart so will Eleos Way. We must guard our home life so that it is a place of rest.

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