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A THEOLOGY OF COMMUNITY

by

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Approved by Lawrence W. Yocum
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Authorization

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Signed Thomas Wesley Campbell

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Introduction

The modern Church faces a crisis of identity that has caused her message, in many instances, to be blunted and even regarded with hostility. This crisis has been partly brought on by the modern secular world view that regards absolute notions of reality as irrelevant. The church has frequently been seduced by this view, to the point that Christian ethicists tend to focus more on what Jesus practiced and how he behaved than on what he actually came to teach the world about the Kingdom of God. Consequently, there is very little emphasis placed on the Church's need for a "vision" (1) of the Kingdom, particularly as a state of being to be experienced in this life.

Traditionally, the most visible manifestation of the Kingdom has been the church down on the corner. Those who worship there, like it or not, represent the Kingdom to their neighbors. Consequently, the greatest good, or the greatest damage, can be done to the Gospel witness in a given neighborhood by the people who make up the faith community down in that little brick building with the white spire. This thesis is one future pastor's attempt to

develop a vision for the church down on the corner, its relationship to the Kingdom, and how that relationship is to affect its dealings with the world.

Method

The place to begin such a study is quite naturally the Scripture. Matthew offered the most readily accessible source material for this study, material which handily lent itself to three areas of concern: how is the Church to grow and prosper (propagation); how will it stay together (relationship); and what will its testimony be on the day we all go to meet the Lord (judgment)? Woven into and through each of these topics is the matter of faithful living--the sanctified life. Just as the pace of an army is set by the man with the shortest stride, the quality of Christian experience of the weakest member says a great deal about the church's effectiveness in encouraging faith in and obedience to God. Just how costly is this faith? How much does God expect from the believer, young or old? How does the experience of the set-apart life affect the church's outreach to the community? Should the effect on growth be positive?

This study is not analytical. There are no graphs or charts, nor was anyone polled concerning their understanding of what it means to be part of a kingdom community. This study focused on the teachings of Scripture and the thoughts of Wesley, Fletcher, and others of the early Holiness

movement. The views of contemporary ethicists Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder are discussed because of what they have to say regarding the nature and business of the Church. For them, the nature of the Church is that it believes in and teaches the narrative of Jesus, and because the Church believes, it is called to live in "peaceableness" and proclaim the message of the Kingdom. E. Stanley Jones serves as a bit of a foil to the other two men; yet, he too was concerned with peaceableness as the proper response of the Christian to a violent, warlike society.

Thesis Statement

The goal of this thesis is to formulate a theology of community that gives one a place to start with the neighborhood church--to teach, preach, counsel and witness them into heaven, both in the hereafter and here on earth. The purpose of this thesis is to study selected passages from the Matthean gospel regarding the Kingdom of God, and to relate them to holiness- Wesleyan thought in order to develop an awareness of the church's role in the kingdom and its responsibility to the world.

Chapter 1

The Kingdom Community in the Matthean Gospel

Of the four gospels, Matthew offers the most detailed account of the Lord's proclamation of the present and coming Kingdom. For this reason, specific chapters in Matthew have been selected for study with the aim of establishing a practical, scriptural basis for determining useful ways in which one should proceed to minister in the Kingdom community until the Lord's return. Matthew 13, 18, and 25 were selected because of the closely related themes between them. Each is concerned with the experience of Jesus' followers as a community of faith after His death and resurrection. Exegesis proceeded as an inductive study of literary structure, cultural and historical word meanings, and an analysis of metaphorical elements in Jesus' parables. Findings were compared to selected commentaries on each passage.

Three themes facing the Kingdom community emerged from this study: its propagation and growth, its relationships, and its experience of judgment. In this section, the author shall explore the biblical teaching on these themes and define basic elements of the Kingdom community.

Propagation and Growth in the Kingdom--Matthew 13

In this series of parables, Jesus instructs His disciples in the manner in which the Kingdom community--those who claim faith in Him--shall grow and mature. He draws heavily upon similes of planting and harvesting to relate spiritual truth to them in familiar terms. Each parable is an enclosed literary unit of meaning, with a single theme. The first of these, and the one most often tied in with the evangelistic concerns of the Kingdom, is the Parable of Soils. Jesus relates how a sower went out to sow seeds. He describes the soils upon which the seeds were sown, and the results of the sowing. The first of these soils is the trodden path. The word employed in the Greek--epesen, the aorist of pipto, or fall (1)-- suggests an unintentional act of falling, as though the sower carelessly dropped the seeds. This is supported by the variety of soils upon which the seeds are sown, for none but the last could logically be expected to bear a dependable yield. Certainly the hard-packed soil of the path would resist any penetration by the seed as it attempted to germinate and take root. Laying upon the surface of the soil, the seeds become an easy meal for the birds. Later, Jesus equates birds with the evil one (13:19), Satan, who snatches the word of the Kingdom from the heart of those who have heard it, but are incapable of understanding. The birds derive nourishment from the seeds, but seem to remain as unaltered by the word as those who

hear but do not understand. This suggests that the soil upon which the seed lands has as much to do with the process of germination as the seeds themselves. As Jesus explains in 13:18-23, the faith-response of the hearer determines the success or failure of the word he receives.

The seeds themselves are, Jesus tells the disciples in 13:1, ton logon ten Basilais--the word of the Kingdom (2). These seeds/words are capable of bringing forth new growth, given the proper balance of receptive soil and time for germination to occur. Jesus refers to this second element when He speaks of the evil one seizing--harpazo: to take forcibly, to snatch (3)--the word from the dull of understanding, before the seed germinates into faith, even on the hard, worn path. Again, preparation of the soil is crucial to the success of the word. Hard soil makes Satan's work easier, for the dull of understanding go away unaffected by the word sown in their hearts.

This point becomes a bit clearer when examined in light of Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 15:1-14. Here, Jesus points to the practice of nullifying the spirit of God's law for the sake of tradition, particularly in regard to providing for one's parents. God's desire is that one honor one's parents and not curse them (in verse 4, Jesus refers to Exodus 20:12 and Deut. 5:16). However, the Pharisees overturned this by declaring the provisions available for their parents' support as given to God, and therefore not available to their parents. In verses 8-9,

Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13, condemning the Pharisees' lip service to God while teaching human traditions that are at odds with the authority of God. In verse 14, he places them on a path as blind guides leading blind people: "both will fall into a ditch." Like the dull of understanding, the Pharisees are on a trodden path, gouged out by years of unquestioned tradition. They are unable to see how these traditions have blocked personal communication with God. The Messiah stands before them, proclaiming the coming kingdom, and is rejected by them because his message does not follow their traditions. Consequently, they are rejected by Him, in verse 14, when He advises His disciples to leave them. Jesus' words should not, however, be seen purely as a criticism of the Pharisees. His words actually condemn the practice of substituting personal faith with self-serving traditions. These very traditions rob the individual of the experience of the "word of the Kingdom"--the seed that, in this instance, cannot penetrate.

And what of the other soils in this parable? The seed on rocky ground germinates quickly, for the light covering of earth and the warmth of the sun allow for rapid growth. However, beneath the thin covering there are rocks which prevent roots from taking hold, and the young plant shrivels and dies in the heat. Similarly, the seeds on thorny ground grow quickly, but are choked out by surrounding weeds. Only do those seeds which are sown on good soil (presumably fertile and cultivated) ever produce a decent yield at

harvest. As Jesus explains to his disciples in 13:19-23, these soils represent the various spiritual/moral states which determine whether or not a person will accept the Gospel. The shallow, exuberant believer attracted by the Word turns away from it during times of insult or trial. The believer anxiously concerned with worldly matters does the same. Both are rootless, lacking spiritual substance. Some things are important here: 1). In all but the first example, there is an element of belief, yet the kingdom is not found with the rocky soil or thorny ground. Only the fertile soil produces a desirable yield for the kingdom. 2). In contrast, the hard path produces absolutely nothing, not even the shallow belief characterized by the other inferior soils. This suggests that traditionalism may be the greatest barrier to regeneration; yet, as the good yield of the fertile soil indicates, there is a real need for a sound spiritual heritage.

The point of the parable appears to be that those who believe and persevere attain the Kingdom, and those who fall away do not. But, if all depends on the soil where the seed falls, does this mean that some are predestined to be "fertile" for the Gospel, while others are hardened against it, or capable of only a shallow faith? Is spiritual fertility within the capacity of the individual, or not? When the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke in parables, He responded, "Because to you it has been given, to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to those it has not

been given." A selection of sorts is taking place. Jesus offers the word of the Kingdom, but only those whom God has equipped to know the message actually receive it. Why then, do the disciples need an explanation? Jesus speaks here about the matter of personal responsibility for one's spiritual condition before God. No one can save himself, but at the final judgment, the individual will have to account for the way he responded to the avenues of grace God provided for him. The parable itself blesses the crowd, for it is the Word of God. However, the disciples, who step out in faith to follow Jesus are profoundly blessed, for they sought an explanation of the teaching. Like the seed, God's Word germinates in good soil. Many in the crowd hear the word, yet only the disciples ask what it means. Had even one person from the crowd asked for an explanation, Jesus would have invited him to join the group. The need to ask for an explanation is important because that first step, to follow Jesus, must be followed by a second and a third and on and on. Like the hard soil, the crowd did not yield to the Word of the kingdom. To them no further grace was given. But to the disciples Jesus granted greater insight. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). Here lies the secret to spiritual maturity as a disciple of Christ. The soil that yields to the Word bears much fruit.

Jesus accompanies this parable with others of agrarian imagery: the tares in the wheat, the leavened dough, the

grain of mustard seed. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32), the seed-image shifts slightly in meaning from word to faith. Along with the seeds are the elements of the tree (dendron), birds of the air (peteian), a dwelling place (kataskenoun), and branches (kladous). The interaction of these elements brings several concepts of the Kingdom to light. First, the mustard seed appears to have been chosen because of its remarkably small size in relation to the large tree that grows from it. It is among the largest of the herbs indigenous to the Middle East. Jesus explains that, like the mustard, the message of the Kingdom of God reaches the hearts of a few followers. Soon, it overtakes the attention of others, until it affects the whole of society. The birds in the parable illustrate this. These birds are not part of the mustard tree, yet they benefit from it. The tree provides them with a dwelling, a place where they nest in preparation for laying eggs. In modern Palestine, the black mustard is still a favorite nesting place for birds because its limbs offer shelter and seeds for food (4). Like the birds in the parable of soils, these birds benefit physically from the seed/word/faith, yet are otherwise unaffected by it. Likewise, the Kingdom benefits the society to which it is proclaimed, even though society largely rejects the Gospel message.

The branch imagery (kladous) in this parable is historically interpreted as progeny, offspring, or children (5). In contrast to the birds, who merely perch, the branches

grow directly from the main trunk. They are part of the maturing original plant. Compare this to Jesus' use of vine imagery in John 15. He describes Himself as the vine, His disciples as branches, and His Father as the vinedresser. As the branches receive nourishment from the trunk of the tree, they grow, produce fruit, and bear leaves for shade. The followers of Christ, as they mature in their discipleship, offer greater residual benefit to secular society. Just as the seeds are a source of food, the branches are a source of shade for the birds, and kataskenoun--a nesting place (6). The birds dwell in the tree, even though they do not receive the life-supply flowing through the trunk to the branches. Here, Christ makes a point about the influence of the Kingdom on secular society: the Gospel is directed toward personal and social redemption. As the believer serves, society benefits. Birds, symbolic of Satan, actually find a home, a sanctuary, among the children of God, even though they do not enjoy the life-supply from the tree. This indicates that the kingdom community will harbor people who never accept the Christ, but will benefit from the social good brought on by the kingdom community's presence.

The tares-in-the-wheat parable (13:24-30), offers more insight on this topic. Two types of seeds are sown: those which bear fruit (like the seed-word of the soils parable) and those which are weeds. The weed sown is the darnel--zizanon--a plant barely distinguishable from the wheat that grows from good seed, yet bears grain which is, if ingested,

capable of producing sleepiness, convulsions, nausea, and death (7). Both are sown in the same field, both take advantage of the cultivation of the field. The landowner spares the life of the darnel for the sake of the wheat. Once again, the evil benefit from the kingdom, even though they are antagonistic toward it. The darnel is deceptive, easily mistaken for the wheat. Here, Jesus offers His disciples a warning that the word of the Kingdom will face competition from many counterfeits. For the sake of those who are to inherit the Kingdom, the counterfeits will be allowed to remain until the Judgment. The faithful could be harmed if those who spread heresy and distortions about the Kingdom were prematurely weeded out. Their root systems converge, and weeding becomes impractical. This suggests that some questionable beliefs among the faithful will be sorted out in the Judgment, where they can be safely separated from the truth. Satan's weapon in these parables is generally deception, and Jesus wants his followers forewarned.

The element of sorting recurs frequently in these parables. In the Parable of the Net (13:47-48), sorting is central to the message. The net is cast into the sea and ensnares all sorts of fish, some fit to keep and others not. The reign of Christ likewise shall take in all manner of people, even those who refuse to submit to His Lordship. At the Judgment, those found worthy of eternal life shall enter it, while those who reject Christ's lordship will be cast into pyros--a furnace of fire (8). This directly refers to

the final judgment of God upon the world. Hand-in-hand with sorting is reaping. Just as the net is cast out, the tares and the wheat are reaped: first the tares, then the wheat. The reaping is universal, in that all are gathered in. Everyone faces the sorting, everyone is considered for the kingdom. Jesus' message is for all humanity--those who reject, as well as those who accept. But, at the sorting, only those who sprouted from the Master's seeds go into the Master's barn (13:30). The furnace of fire incorporates two images of judgment: the furnace--kaminon (9)--used for refining and smelting, and the fire--pyros--a New Testament symbol of the Eschaton (10). Both refining and judgment take place at the final sorting, but the outcome of those sent to the furnace is not entrance into the Kingdom. They are described as wailing and gnashing their teeth--a figure of one whose remorse over a missed, vital opportunity is expressed in loud cries of grief accompanied by the chattering of teeth. The tares (13:42) and the evil ones (13:49-50) will both suffer this fate. Not all who are gathered shall enter, even though the invitation is still universal.

The Parable of the Leavened Meal underscores the universal nature of the Kingdom. A woman takes three measures of wheat, an amount roughly equal to a U. S. bushel, and mixes into it some leaven until the entire amount is leavened. Like the woman, Christ brings the kingdom message to the whole world. All God's creation is to be exposed to it. Just as the sower sows seed on a variety of soils, the woman

spares no portion from the leavening. The parable applies on two levels of meaning: socially and personally. When the message reaches the believer, the Spirit of God reforms the believer's world view. Faith now shapes the believer's response to society. In society and the individual, the leaven of the Kingdom serves as the motivating force for dealing with the dilemma of human sin and its consequences.

The remaining parables in Matthew 13 all offer singular truths regarding individual responses to the Kingdom message. In The Treasure Hidden in a Field (13:44) a person finds something so precious that he hides it to avoid detection by others and then sells all of his earthly possessions to buy the field. Four elements surface here: Encounter with the message; reflection (hiding the treasure); acceptance; and the willingness to forsake everything for the Gospel. The discoverer becomes firmly convinced the treasure is worth the price. In that discovery, one accepts the provision of God that brings eternal salvation.

In the Pearl of Great Price parable (13:45-46), a merchant seeks beautiful pearls and, on finding one of especially rare beauty, sells all he has to buy it. Just like the man buying the field, this merchant begins with a search for something beyond what he already possesses. As a merchant, he is experienced in the art of assessing the value of things. That he recognizes the pearl's worth and gives all he has for it demonstrates the extent of his conviction. He knows he has found a pearl without peer.

The seeker who likewise is convinced of the truth of the Kingdom message has before him the same choice: to surrender his whole life to the Lord of the Kingdom. Nothing else is worthy of the Christ.

The Parable of the Householder ends this series in a particularly fitting way, for it ties together the previous teaching regarding the nature of the Kingdom. Jesus asks, "Have you understood all this?" (13:51). Their response, "Yes," and his reply, "Therefore," places them in the position of the trained scribes to which he refers at the beginning of the parable. They have learned that the Kingdom in this life is that state of being characterized by full surrender of one's life and possessions to the lord of the Kingdom; that entrance depends upon one's response to the revealed word of God in Christ made available, but not plain, to all; that not everyone attracted to the fellowship of the Kingdom community will participate because of faith, but may be motivated by personal selfishness or contempt for the Kingdom; and that the progressive effect of the Word is to permeate the life of the believer until one's motivation for belief and behavior is the Gospel, and that this motivation would so affect one's life that the Body of Christ and the surrounding society would benefit as well. As trained scribes, they are to draw upon both their Hebrew heritage, with the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel of the Kingdom to comprehend God's plan for the future of His creation. Like the householder, they have a treasury which

consists of both new and old things. The faithful disciple applies both to the life and work of the people of God.

Relationships in the Kingdom Community--Matthew 18

In verses 1-10 of this chapter, Jesus responds to the disciples' question, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (18:10), by offering them the example of a small child. In the surrounding Graeco-Roman culture of the day, children were considered insignificant. Unwanted children were commonly exposed to the elements. Children were human beings in the making, and not worthy of the same consideration or attention one gave the adult. For the Hebrew, however, both child and adult are seen as participants in the image of God (11). They are a blessing to families and a gift from God (see Psalm 127:33). By using the child as an example, Jesus demonstrates by analogy the difference between these cultural viewpoints. The disciples' concern over "who is greatest"--me gas (12)--reveals they have accepted a value-system unworthy of the Chosen of God. Greatness in the Graeco-Roman world implied the ability to control one's social inferiors, but this is contrary to the Kingdom (see Matthew 20:25-28). Just as the Son of God came to serve humanity, the disciples of Christ must submit themselves in service to one another. They are to recognize the divine in every human life, especially in those whom, like children, the world considers of no account. Unless one willingly identifies with the humble and insignificant,

one cannot see God and misses the Kingdom. Aspiring to greatness by climbing over the backs of others (a pagan, self-serving, and cynical approach) is no option for those who desire greatness in the Kingdom. Only when one is ready to serve God by serving those in whom His image is found is one being Christlike--the standard for true greatness.

To realize this brings childlike trust. The child comes when called, and submits to being made an example for the disciples. This is a simple trust, for it gives no thought to consequences. The Lord calls, the child comes. According to Mark's account (see Mark 9:33-37), the disciples did not have it. Along the way, they argued with one another about this "greatness" business, but were unwilling to let on what the problem was until Jesus asked them, point-blank, "What were you discussing on the way?" (Mark 10:33). Matthew simply has them putting the greatness question to Him. Incorporate both accounts, and the scene unfolds as follows: the disciples are arguing as they walk behind Jesus along the road; He overhears them and asks what they are discussing and, after a period of uncomfortable silence (Mark 9:34), they answer by asking Him to name the greatest in the Kingdom. Their reluctance to let Jesus in on the argument suggests they were worried about His reaction when they told Him why they were arguing. Unlike the child, they were not ready to put themselves in Jesus' hands at that point. Trust in Christ and humility in regard to others are two standards for relationships in the kingdom community.

Jesus turns this analogy upside down in verses 5-7 of Matthew 18. He affirms those who accept the child, and then states that to violate a child's trust is to bring greater condemnation upon oneself. Service to God and others is fundamental in the Kingdom. This is also the unifying element throughout Matthew 18, encompassing Jesus' teaching on trust in verses 5-7, temptation (7-9), the Lost Sheep (10-14), dealing with a brother in sin (15-22), and the wicked servant (23-35). Its opposite, contempt for the Kingdom expressed by willfully encouraging a believer to stumble, is regarded more harshly than personal rejection of the Kingdom. The punishment Christ compares to the punishment for this offense, that of being cast into the sea with a millstone tied about the neck, serves as an image of the offense committed. The believer who seeks to serve God, but is led astray by another is like a man struggling for life in water over his head and a great weight about his neck. The sin which overtakes the believer is still the believer's to face, but the tempter shall receive punishment greater than the struggle through which the believer has gone.

In His concern for service, Jesus holds the community responsible for offering restoration to the believer caught in sin. The community cannot self-righteously distance itself from a fallen member, for Jesus plainly expects that a rescue attempt be made. In 18:15-20, He instructs the disciples to begin discreetly, keeping the sin between the sinner and the one sinned against. If this attempt fails,

the one sinned against makes an appeal to the offender in the presence of witnesses. If this fails, the matter is to be taken before the entire church. The goal is always to bring the erring one back into the fold. Like the shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to find one that has been lost, the church is to give themselves to this task. Even after all appeals have failed, the errant member is declared a Gentile and a tax collector--making him or her a candidate for further proclamation. Jesus' reply to Peter in 18:22, "seventy times seven", is a hyperbolic figure that alliteratively underscores the limitlessness of God's forgiveness and the disciple's need to repeatedly forgive those who trespass against him or her.

This point is illustrated in the Parable of the Wicked Servant (18:23-35). This servant owes his master 10,000 talents, a major debt. The master decides the penalty for non-payment shall be the seizure of the servant's goods. The servant and his family are to be sold into slavery. Yet, after the servant begged for mercy, the master forgave the entire debt and set the man free. The servant, however, churlishly refuses the same grace to his debtors. He accosts and physically abuses one of his fellow servants and then has him tossed into prison, because the other man owed him a day's wages. In response, the master withdrew his forgiveness from the unforgiving servant, and had him jailed until his debt could be paid. Considering the amount owed, far more than the day's wages the wicked servant refused to

forgive, the sentence would never be lifted. John Walvoord finds no proof in this passage for a belief that, once forgiven, a person can fall from grace (13). However, the circumstances in this parable point to a fully forgiven servant who, when refusing to forgive, finds himself in judgment and condemnation. This corresponds to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:14-15, where He says, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Clearly, the Christian must be ready to forgive, and forgive again and again, to live in harmony with the perfect will of the Lord of the Kingdom. Jesus' teachings regarding relationships in the kingdom community are based on His relationship with the Father and with those He came to rescue. His example is one of selfless service and forgiveness, and his disciples are expected to follow. There is no state of grace from which a person cannot fall, just as there is no state of sinfulness from which one cannot be rescued.

The Kingdom Community in Judgment--Matthew 25

This chapter focuses on increase. The wise maidens come well-stocked with oil (25:4), the wise servants know where to get the best interest (25:16-18). The earnest disciple of Christ is not satisfied with clinging to the initial experience of salvation. Once forgiven, this disciple knows that true fulfillment comes when one earnestly seeks to live

for that for which one has been created: to express God and declare His glory. The lamp that runs out of oil (25:8) due to lack of foresight, and the buried talent the servant was unwilling to venture (25:24-25), indicate there will be persons called to the Kingdom who, because they lacked vigilance, shall be cast from the Master's presence. "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour" (25:13), is a call to persevere in faith despite the length of the wait, for the hour of the Lord's return cannot be predicted. Therefore, one is to live continually prepared and vigilant--just like the maidens who kept additional oil in flasks for their lamps. Also, one must, in order to grow in faith, be willing to take the risks of faith. Whenever one engages in trade, one runs the risk of failure, of losing the sum invested. To do this with your boss's money is doubly risky, for your whole livelihood (or worse!) is at stake. Yet, the parable clearly tells us that we must risk; those who do not are rejected as unworthy of the Kingdom. In the parable of the talents, the disciple who risks the most gains the most. Ironically, the servant given only one talent chooses not to risk it at all, but to hide it until the master returns. This disciple is rejected, not for squandering the money, but for doing nothing with it.

Probably nowhere in the New Testament is the proclamation for social action offered more forcefully than in the account of the Great White Throne Judgment (Matt. 25:31:46).

In this prophecy, two types are sorted out: the sheep to

the Lord's right, and the goats to His left. The basis for sorting is whether those who claim to follow Him have actually acted upon their faith. The use of sheep and goats here is significant, for as John D. Davis points out "the closest affinity (of goats) is believed to be the sheep, and there is a series of connecting links between the two animals" (14). There are also some remarkable differences. The horns of the goat curve backwards, and the animal prefers to graze on tender leaves and twigs. The horns of the sheep curl forward, and the sheep prefers herbs and grasses to leaves and twigs. Just as with the darnel in Mt.13:25, the careless observer could easily mistake a goat for a sheep. But, as in Matt. 13, much of the attention here is on careful sorting. The right, the side of favor, is reserved for the sheep of Christ who have served Him by serving those whom they found in need. The left, or "sinister", side is reserved for the goats, who have ignored the needs of others. Both sides address Christ as Lord (see 25:37 and 44), yet only those on His right have sought to act upon their faith by demonstrating their compassion for His people. Suzanne de Dietrich (15) argues that this prophecy allows for the salvation of non-believers who have served mankind out of altruistic motives. However, it is hard to believe that such persons would be willing to refer to Jesus as Lord; furthermore, de Dietrich's position suggests a salvation by works doctrine that ignores the Lord's injunction in John 3:3, "Truly, truly, I say to you,

unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Therefore, those on the right must be seen as serving Him out of a desire to serve the least of his brethren (25:40). The goats fare much differently. Despite their protestations (25:44), they did not faithfully serve the needy as per Christ's word to the disciples as recorded in Mark 9:36. The end for both groups is clear. So is the significance of this teaching for the Kingdom community. The community will have many who claim faith in Christ, but do not accept its responsibilities. Acknowledging the Lordship of Christ is fundamental, and involves selfless devotion to Him and those whom He loves.

Judgment, Relationship, Propagation: An Integration

Throughout the passages studied, one central theme is repeated. This theme is the criterion for judgment in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus grants the inheritance of the Kingdom to those who gave him food when he hungered, drink when he thirsted, welcome when he was a stranger, clothes when he was naked, visitation when he was ill, and presence when he was in prison. Those on the left side of the throne are condemned for not having done those things. Both groups, the sheep and the goats, call Him "Lord", and both have come to the throne, expectantly. His answer to them comes as a surprise, for they both respond with a question that begins, "Lord, when did we see you...?" The righteous, as Jesus explains, saw Him in the suffering and need of

others, and sought to revere His image by serving those in need. The unrighteous goats also saw, but did not serve. This reveals that the criterion at the final Judgment will be not simply recognition (Jesus is Lord), but how one responds when one recognizes he is in the presence of the Lord. In short, the issue in Judgment is whether the follower of Christ has expressed the love of Christ by honoring the image of God wherever he finds it.

In Chapter 18, the small child exemplifies the humblest in Graeco-Roman culture. Yet, Jesus teaches His disciples that greatness is measured by one's willingness to serve the humblest, to regard the humblest as better than himself, for in the humblest is found the image of God. Likewise, the brother caught in sin (18: 15-20) is to be approached several times, and never to be simply shunned. He is in God's image! When all attempts to restore him fail, he is to be regarded as a Gentile and a tax collector--one of the unsaved in need of redemption. The wicked servant fails to learn the Master's lesson of forgiveness and the second chance, and despises the image of God in his debtor. For this he loses his second chance. The Pharisee has followed religious tradition for so long he has lost the capacity to relate to the image of God when he comes face-to-face with it. Jesus described him as a trodden path which the word of kingdom cannot penetrate.

The parable of the ten maidens (25: 1-13), and of the talents (25: 14-30) both tie the matter of recognizing and

revering the image of God directly to the matter of sanctification. All ten maidens begin with lamps filled with oil, and go out to meet the Bridegroom. Yet only the wise are prepared to wait for the duration, for they have brought extra oil. The servant with the most talents risks them all so that his master may profit, rather than sitting comfortably with his talents hoarded and unspent. The believer who knows that faith depends upon obedience and who, in love, worships and reveres the image of God in whatever form he finds it, is like the sheep who selflessly serves the naked and downtrodden for the sake of Christ. Unlike worldly notions of perfection, Christian perfection is measured by identification with the humble and the common. Like the merchant, the disciple recognizes the image of God and gives all that he has for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Our willingness to serve others because of our desire to honor Him is the standard by which we are measured. This criterion is therefore relational. We express our love for God in the manner we show our love and concern for others.

We are judged by the way we relate to God's image, for the manner in which we relate determines the success of the kingdom to propagate. The agrarian imagery in Chapter 13 points to the need for adequate preparation of the soil if one expects a successful harvest. This preparation begins in the church. The church must see the image of God and the Kingdom of God as real, or they will have nothing to witness to the world. An unbelieving church that has turned away

from serving the image of God cannot expect conversions. Proportionately, as the church's traditions grow lifeless and irrelevant over time, so does the larger society's willingness to adopt that opinion of the church. If the church caters to the larger culture by giving into materialism or other anti-Christian but culturally accepted values, it will be seen by the society as shallow, crass, and irrelevant. True, lasting propagation comes when the church, like the householder, sees the image of God present in its own spiritual heritage, and seeks to live up to that heritage. Tradition simply for tradition's sake is rejected, but heritage is cherished as part of the church's ongoing dialogue with the Master. Society benefits, for the church is countercultural, not seeking to blend into culture, but to leaven it, just as the woman leavened the three measures of meal (13:33). Cultural values, such as the struggle for power expressed by the disciples (18:1), are to be offset by the church's identification with the humble and weak. The sick, the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned--all outcasts from society, are the church's chief concern.

In summation, the world will believe when the church believes and lives according to its belief. The sanctified life of the believer and, by extension, the community of faith, is to be a life of seeking out and reverencing the image of God. That image is found in the weak, the humble, and the despised.

Chapter 2

Wesley, Fletcher, and the Community of Faith

As has been uncovered in Matthew, the sanctified life is one of serving God by serving His image in the midst of an unbelieving society. Early Methodism's great concern was with the sanctified life. The United Societies movement and Methodist views on slavery and other social issues indicate that early Methodists saw the Kingdom of God expressed in both personal and social holiness.

But what did John Wesley have to say about the Kingdom of God and its relationship to the church? What was the position of his colleague, John Fletcher, and how did these differ? What can be learned from the thought of these holiness advocates concerning the relationship of the faith community with the doctrine of holiness?

Holiness and Community

To begin with, Wesley recognized that the kingdom was as much for this world as the next. In his commentary on Matthew 3:2, Wesley wrote:

The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God, are but two phrases for the same thing. They mean, not barely a future happy state in heaven, but a state to be enjoyed on earth: the proper disposition for the glory of heaven, rather than the possession of it. Is at hand--As if he had said, God is about to erect that kingdom, spoken of by Daniel (ch ii. 44 and vii, 13, 14.) the kingdom of the God of heaven. It properly signifies her, by gospel dispensation, in which

subjects were to be gathered to God by his Son, and a society to be formed, which was to subsist first on earth, and afterward with God in glory. In some places of Scripture, the phrase more particularly denotes the state of it on earth: in others, it signifies only the state of glory: but it generally includes both. The Jews understood it of a temporal kingdom, the seat of which they supposed would be Jerusalem; and the expected sovereign of this kingdom they learned from Daniel to call the Son of Man (1).

Wesley raises an interesting point here--that the Jews regarded the Kingdom as something temporal, for this earth and imminent for their day and time. However, Christians have historically been taught to regard the Kingdom as an ethereal realm, the reward for a good life lived here on earth. Certainly, as Laurence Wood observes in his book, Pentecostal Grace, this was the attitude of Wesley's associate, John Fletcher. The major difference between Wesley and Fletcher, Wood points out, is that "for Wesley, the Kingdom of God has both corporate and personal implications. On the one hand it denotes sanctification for the believer; on the other hand, it denotes the body of Christ" (2); while Fletcher "fails to stress the corporate aspect of the Church" (3). There was, in Fletcher, an elitist posture regarding the issue of entire sanctification and the rewards available to those who strive to attain this work of grace. Compare this view of Fletcher's with that of Wesley:

Lastly, if we will attain the full power of godliness, and be peaceable as the Prince of Peace, and merciful as our heavenly Father, let us go on to the perfection and glory of Christianity; let us enter the full dispensation of the Spirit. Till we live in the pentecostal glory of the church: till we are baptized with the Holy Ghost: till the Spirit of burning and the fire of divine love have melted us down, and we have been truly cast into the softest mould of the Gospel:

till we can say with St. Paul, "We have received the Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind;" till then we shall be carnal rather than spiritual believers; we shall divide into sects like the Jews, and at best we shall be like the disciples of John and of Christ before they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost (4).

For Fletcher, there was no kingdom life until one has fully entered into the "full dispensation of the Spirit". Only when its members lived in "Pentecostal glory" and were "baptized with the Holy Ghost" was the Church truly the Church. Prior to this state, the Christian is a babe and does not know the Kingdom of Heaven. Appropriation of the Kingdom life for Fletcher is therefore progressive: one attains it by degrees of growth into greater and greater perfection until the Holy Ghost falls upon the believer in baptism. Upon attainment, the Christian is able to rise above the petty sectarianism rampant among carnal believers. True ecumenism comes by Holy Ghost baptism, where all are partakers of the same Spirit. Commenting on this passage, Wood points out that Fletcher "equated the reality of the Church in a narrow, subjectivistic manner with those made perfect in Christian love" and that those not sharing this experience do not share in "pentecostal Christianity". Indeed, Fletcher even hesitates to call them Christians, for "'perfect Christians' above are those who are established in the 'Kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost' through the baptism with the Holy Spirit" (5). Yet, when one examines the passage quoted earlier, it is evident that Wesley did not see the Kingdom as attainable only by

the "perfected in Christ". In fact, the Kingdom appears to be, for Wesley, an earthly "disposition" or state of being rather than a final reward. Fletcher saw perfection as a three-stage process: stage 1--faith in the Father; stage 2--faith in the Son; and stage 3--baptism or infilling with the Holy Ghost (6). Wesley saw the redeemed as being gathered together in an earthly society, where they received nurture and encouragement, and which would someday be glorified by God in eternity. The issue is not so much one of possession as it is with Fletcher; rather, it is the result of a personal spiritual awakening that brings one to the awareness that the Kingdom is already come and that one is to partake of it today. Perfection in Christ is its own merit, for it brings one more fully in touch with the Kingdom that has been established in one's heart through faith. The emphasis is on faith and growth in faith rather than the attainment of a desired paradise because of one's success in meeting the standards of perfectability.

The issue of sectarianism addressed in Fletcher's statement is seen differently by Wesley. Their divergence from one another principally stems from their differences concerning the Kingdom. It seems impossible for Fletcher to believe that any perfected Christian could ever have a serious quarrel with any other perfected Christian regarding the faith, for perfection brings about a unity of love, power, and a soundness of mind (i.e., agreement with one another) after the manner spoken of by the Apostle Paul in

II Tim. 1:7. But Wesley, according to Steve Harper, "was a realist" (7). Wesley went about forming his societies of persons from a variety of groups, both Anglican and dissenting, and, while holding orthodox doctrine to be essential to sound faith, argued that many beliefs held by Christians were personal matters of the heart and were to be regarded by fellow believers with toleration. What counted with Wesley was that the believer desired "to flee from the wrath to come," by living in faithful obedience to God(8). Wesley puts the issue thus:

Let us consider, First, who are properly the Church of God?" What is the true meaning of that term? "The Church at Ephesus", as the Apostle himself explains it, means, "the saints," the holy persons, "that are in Ephesus," and there assemble themselves together to worship God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; whether they did this in one or (as we may properly suppose) in several places. But it is in the Church in general, the catholic or universal church, which the Apostle here considers as one body: comprehending not only the Christians...of one congregation, of one city,, of one province, or nation; but all the persons upon the face of the earth, who answer the character here given" (9).

Wesley goes on to outline the character of those who make up the church. They are "of one Spirit", that is, animated in their faith by the Holy Spirit of God; "of one hope", that is, that in Christ they have received immortal life; "of one Lord", that is, to be led by Christ, to obey Him is their life's glory and joy; "of one faith," that is, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, "My Lord and my God"; "one baptism," that is, that all have partaken of this sacrament as the Lord has appointed; "one God and Father of all," who have the spirit of adoption and have the witness of the

Spirit that they are truly "the children of God" (10). Wesley believed that personal faith and fidelity to Christ were the marks of a Christian character, and he acknowledged these whether in a Baptist, a Methodist, or a Roman Catholic. Fletcher was willing to grant this to Protestant Calvinists, but does not seem to have had as open a mind as Wesley when it came to Roman Catholics, whom Fletcher referred to as "Papists" (11). Yet, both men recognized that, for the individual believer, the Kingdom of Christ manifests itself in the state of imparted righteousness that is possible to experience this side of eternity. Of this, Fletcher writes:

Having thus exposed the erroneous senses in which some people suppose that faith is the gift of God, I beg leave to mention in what sense it appears to me to be so. Believing is the gift of the God of grace, as breathing, moving, and eating are the gifts of the God of nature. He gives me lungs and air, that I might breathe; He gives me life and muscles, that I may move; He bestows on me food and a mouth, that I might eat; but He neither breathes, moves, nor eats for me. Nay, when I think proper, I can accelerate my breathing, motion, and eating; and, if I please, I may fast, lie down, or hang myself, and by that means, put an end to my eating, moving, and breathing. Faith is the gift of God to believers as sight is to you. The Parent of good freely gives you the light of the sun, and organs proper to receive it. Everything around you bids you use your eyes and see; nevertheless, you may not only drop your curtains, but close your eyes also. This is exactly the case with regard to faith. Free grace removes, in part, the total blindness which Adam's fall brought upon us; free grace gently sends us some beams of truth, which is the light of the sun of righteousness; it disposes the eye of our understanding to see those beams; it excites us, in various ways, to welcome them; it blesses us with many, perhaps with all the means of faith, such as opportunities to hear, read, inquire, and power to consider, assent, consent, resolve, and re-resolve to believe the truth. But, after all, believing is as much our own act as seeing. We may in general do, suspend, or omit the act of faith (12).

Faith, according to Fletcher, is that response we make

to the free grace of God, whereby we choose to believe as He has given us the power, encouragement and tools to believe. We are not driven or herded to faith, but persuaded, convinced, and drawn to it as moths to the light of the candle. The final choice is ours. Christ's imparted righteousness comes to us because of our willingness to heed the tug of the Holy Spirit on our lives. In this vein, Fletcher also wrote, in a letter to Charles Wesley:

What power of the Spirit do you find among the believers in London? What openings of the Kingdom? Is the well springing up in many hearts? Are many souls dissatisfied, and looking for the kingdom of God in power? Watchman! What of the night? What of the day? What of the dawn? (13)

A task of Christians in community, particularly of the pastor serving that community, is to watch and strive with those in one's care, encouraging greater fidelity and zeal in their Christian walk. God's free grace draws us to the place where we decide, by our own free will, whether or not to accept the faith He offers. Complementing that is the belief that the community of faith is to support one another so that together, the community is able "to flee the wrath to come." As the study of Matthew 18:15-20 revealed, the practical experience of the community is to be that of mutual support for one another. This figures in strongly with the Arminian concept of faith as Fletcher and Wesley espoused it, for in a doctrine of eternal security supportive fellowship and shepherding really doesn't make sense. After all, if one is predestined to a particular fate, then all the sheparding and discipleship in the world will not

change it. In contrast, Wesley, commenting on Acts 5:11, saw the community of faith as follows:

Here is a native specimen of a New-Testament church; which is a company of men, called by the Gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kinds of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira (14).

Righteousness comes to the believer, at least partly, by the same means it came in the early church: the nurture and counsel of community. Imparted righteousness is Christ's sanctifying act on the church, which is holy and set apart, as well as on the believer. Wesley's United Societies sought to provide this, whereas the organized church no longer saw fit to do so. Consequently, these societies functioned as "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation" (15). For Fletcher, the Church is properly made up of the perfected who are truly the inheritors of the Kingdom. For Wesley, the Kingdom is as much an earthly reality as it is a heavenly one. These views appear to diverge, yet, as Fletcher's writings indicate, he, too saw that it is imperative for the community of believers to function in a nurturing and supporting role, and that by functioning in this role, faith is manifested within the community. The level of faith manifest in a community depends to a great extent on their response to the means of grace God has granted them.

Wesley's view is far more comprehensive. He sees nurture as the work of the Church. Those in the church are encouraged to partake of the grace offered and thereby participate in the Kingdom life in this day and time. This is particularly true in regard to Wesley's position on the sacraments. Of baptism, he writes:

By baptism we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its Head. The Jews were admitted into the Church by circumcision, so are the Christians by baptism. For "as many as are baptized into Christ," in His name, "have" thereby "put on Christ", (Gal. 3:27) that is, are mystically united to Christ, and made one with Him. For "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," (1 Cor. xii. 13) namely, the Church, "the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). From which spiritual, vital union with him, proceeds the influence of his grace on those who are baptized; as from our union with the Church, as share in all its privileges, and all the promises Christ has made to it (16).

In parallel with the Jewish faith, the Christian becomes part of the larger Church, of the household of believers, because one submits himself to be baptized. The mystery here is the union of the believer with Christ and with the Universal Church, for by this act one becomes, particularly in the case of an infant, the responsibility of the entire community. Likewise, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Wesley saw that the community was to be strengthened and encouraged en masse, not just as individuals:

Let everyone, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: Four times a week always and every Saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the

faithful never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God (17).

The popular interpretation of I Corinthians 11:27-34 is that no one should go forward to participate in communion if he has some moral, spiritual, or relational problem that has not been dealt with. Wesley, in agreement with the early church, held that to turn away from communion introduced confusion into the Church. This apparently signals a rejection of unity, of community, of the very "prayers of the faithful" one has just offered to God, in unison with the saints. It is as if one has snubbed Christ, denied His grace, and spurned the opportunity to be identified with His church. This amounts to works-righteousness, a belief that one can, by intensive self-examination and correction, render oneself worthy of His grace. Yet the very fact that Jesus calls it grace tells one that one is unworthy of it, and has done nothing to merit it. Wesley would have us see that, to be "guilty of profaning the body and blood of our Lord" is actually to take the communion with an attitude that one somehow deserves it. Conversely, when one chooses not to take it, one also profanes because one says in his heart, "I've not earned the privilege to take the sacrament today, but I will another day." The only proper attitude is to take the sacraments with humility, knowing that one has not and cannot ever do anything to earn the right to do so.

One takes it in community, with others who have responded to God's gracious invitation, given in spite of their unworthiness to receive it.

The 1984 film, Places in the Heart (18), closes with a powerful scene in a rural Baptist church, where the townspeople have gathered for worship and the sacrament. As the wafer platter and the tray of communion cups are passed from hand to hand, the audience is reminded of the events preceding this scene: Several men are there who, earlier in the film, had dressed as Klansmen and beaten a black farm worker --an act of savage prejudice motivated by greed. The next pair of hands are those of the black man who received the beating at their hands. He partakes and passes the elements to Mrs. Spaulding, the lady for whom he worked. Mrs. Spaulding partakes and passes the elements to her husband, the sheriff, who earlier had been shot and killed by a drunken black youth. Sheriff Spaulding partakes and passes the elements to the black youth responsible for his death. And as the scene progresses, and others partake and pass, the adulterous husband to his victimized wife, the blind man to those who had persecuted him, one is struck with the powerful realization that this truly is communion. For in our weakness, in our fallenness, in our depravity, God meets us, draws us together, and restores us to wholeness. Communion implies community and this communion scene depicts a community, ravaged by its own sinfulness, being brought together in Jesus. Wesley sees communion in this manner,

and encourages the sacrament for its unique ability to draw people together, and for its ability to convince persons of their need for redemption.

Summary

Though there is no record of any significant disagreement between them, this study of the thought of Wesley and Fletcher shows that certain differences did exist. Fletcher seems to have seen sanctification as a process whereby one moves closer, by degrees, to the spiritual state that enables one to inherit the Kingdom of God. Wesley seems to have been a bit more tolerant and progressive, recognizing that all who believe participate in the Kingdom. Each man viewed sectarianism a bit differently. Fletcher regarded it as the result of sectarian and divided spirits--a condition that could be cured only in the glorified Church, where the sanctified would be one in the Spirit. Wesley, however, cared little about the sectarian leanings of others, and readily accepted them into the Methodist societies, providing their desire was to earnestly flee the wrath to come.

These matters, however, are secondary to what both men, but particularly Wesley, had to say concerning the role of the church as nurturing and supportive community. For them, the church was organic, made up of those who were one in the Spirit, exalting one Lord, enjoying one faith, and partaking of the sacraments together. Both saw the conscious, free-will decision of the individual for or against the testimony of Christ as central to Christian faith. The Church serves

to lead persons to make this decision and to support them as they walk in it.

Sanctification was the goal of the early Methodist societies, and to this end Wesley and Fletcher encouraged not only prayer, meditation and Scripture reading, but works of service to the community. Members were to give their life in service to Christ by supporting one another in faith and helping one another work out their salvation. Wesley went further by pointing to the sacraments as unifying and edifying for the body of believers. Communion serves to remind the body of its shortcomings and failures and need for His grace. Perfection thus becomes an acute sense of one's unworthiness in the face of His righteousness, for the sanctified realize their participation is unearned, a benefit of God's grace. The only sincere response is to worship Him and serve Him by serving those in whom His image is found. The record of Methodist personal and social holiness attests to the impact this realization has had on Christianity for the past 200 years.

Chapter 3

Three Contemporary Views of the Kingdom Community

In the twentieth century, ethical inquiry concerning Christ's relevance to conceptions of reality, of influencing moral, political, and social systems with the Gospel message has reached a nadir. Speaking at a medical ethics symposium concerned with moral issues surrounding medical technology, Joseph Fletcher stated: " Classical Christian theology is simply not equipped conceptually to cope with it. Christians can't even ask the right questions anymore! " (1). The problem, John Howard Yoder points out, is that Jesus is usually seen only as the model for moral behavior (2). To be Christian and moral we are to walk in Jesus' steps, constantly asking ourselves what He would do in specific circumstances. Yet, in His earthly ministry, Jesus never faced nuclear holocaust, organ transplantation, widespread environmental pollution, or many other of modern society's most pressing problems. Consequently, even Christian ethicists have come to regard the Jesus-model as irrelevant to twentieth-century life, and have proceeded to write ethics around secular concepts of reality. Stanley Hauerwas has observed that:

Because contemporary Christian ethicists have assumed "the ethical" primarily concerns action and decision (as in the situation ethics of Fletcher : author's note), they have found little moral significance in basic affirmations about God, Christ, grace, and

sanctification. Even if they have discussed such theological categories, this has had little effect on their understanding of the nature of Christian ethics or the form of the Christian moral life (3).

The earlier focus on the deeds of Christ rather than the words of Christ has brought about a vacuum of moral reasoning that is now being filled by secular values-- thereby leaving the Church with no solid basis for thinking ethically. Everything has become relative and the Christian is no better off ethically than the pagan. To counter this, the Church must focus on what Christ taught about reality-- namely, that reality is the Kingdom of God of which He taught. The avenue for accepting this reality is for the Christian to step forth and willingly be identified with the Christ of the Kingdom proclamation. Stanley Hauerwas writes:

The Christian is one so formed as he assumes the particular description offered him through the Church. This formation is the determination of our character through God's sanctifying work. Sanctification is thus the formation of the Christian's character that is the result of his intention to see the world as redeemed in Jesus Christ (4).

Therefore, ethical practice for the Christian is not to be defined by the self-absorbed introspective practice of measuring one's life against Christ; rather, it is the willingness of the Christian to be identified with Christ by adopting Christ's view of reality and living in harmony with this view. It is the essence of the metanoia experience to turn one's back on what one previously believed was real and see life from the perspective of divine revelation, "as redeemed in Jesus Christ." As the examination of the Matthean passages in section I reveals, this has a great

deal to do with living in the community of faith; of adopting a value-system that regards the humble and insignificant as having divine worth; of seeing each human life as sacred because of that life's participation in the image of God; of willingly serving others as though serving Christ. Such a faith calls one to personal moral integrity, yet it also affirms that the believer submit to God's Kingdom rule, even when that means refusal to conform to secular notions of reality. This sets the stage for social action, as the Christian proclaims the reality of the Kingdom to the world and to Christendom itself. Three Christian thinkers in this century, E. Stanley Jones, John Howard Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas, have been particularly intent upon calling the Church out of its acquiescence to secular ethics so that it may begin to live and proclaim the righteous Kingdom of Jesus Christ as the norm for social, moral, and economic practice.

E. Stanley Jones--Kingdom-of-God Christianity

Jones, who is best-known for his missionary work in India, left behind a profound body of writings on the relevance of the Kingdom of God to modern society. A well-travelled man, he was familiar with the social and political revolutions taking place in Russia, Germany, Italy, and India during the Thirties and Forties. He became convinced during that period that essentially four social systems lay before modern man: Communism, Fascism, Nazism, and the Kingdom of God. Western capitailistic democracies

are in serious danger of being destroyed by these systems because of the fatal flaw of capitalism: ruthless competition, which leads to the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Christianity's relationship to these systems has largely been that of being exploited by them or simply, as in Communism, cast aside as irrelevant. Interestingly enough, Christianity and Communism have the most in common. Both seek to realize a society based on cooperation rather than competition, where the evils of class and race discrimination are eradicated. The principle difference between them is that Communism rejects all religion as an opiate used in oppressive societies to control the lower classes.

Too often, church history has verified this belief. Just four years prior to the publication of Jones' book, The Choice Before Us, Pope Pius XI signed a concordat with Hitler that effectively gave Catholic sanction to the Nazis. Prior to that, this same pope and Mussolini entered into mutual agreements over the sovereignty of Vatican City and of the Italian state. Pius XI initially supported Mussolini because of Fascism's advocacy of a hierarchal society where moral standards would be enforced by authoritarian rule (5,6) Jones points to these events as proof that the Church has too often betrayed her calling in Christ: "In a Fascist State, religion must get under or get out. Christianity can only live in a Fascist or Nazi state in a dechristianized form, for Christianity is utterly totalitarian" (7).

Dechristianized Christianity has existed wherever the Church's loyalty to the God of the present-and-coming Kingdom has been supplanted by loyalty to something else. It is this Christianity which has given rise to Communist criticism and rejection in favor of dialectical materialism. Jones points out that the early church abandoned Jesus' emphasis on the Kingdom when the great creeds were drafted:

The three great creeds mention the Kingdom but once, and that marginally, beyond the borders of this life after the Resurrection - a heavenly Kingdom. It was not the organizing fact around which everything revolved, as in the (Lord's) Prayer. Hence the difference in the whole outlook of the two. The creeds begin "I believe;" the Prayer begins "Our Father" - the one, "I", the other, "our;" one is individualistic, the other is social through and through. The individual is to find himself by losing himself in a social whole. The social note is maintained throughout: "Our Father ... give us ... forgive us ... lead us ... deliver us." It is all "our" and "us". You could not present anything else if the Kingdom, God's New Society, is the spring from which everything flows. It is bound to end in "our" and not in "I" (8).

The communal aspect of the Kingdom, central to its order, has not been upheld by the Church to any significant degree. Consequently the church has emphasized a variety of doctrines, lifestyles, and positions that have too often contributed to to the problem of human alienation. The idea of a central cause, a central purpose around which Christians must rally, has been lost. The holiness doctrine of perfection, which has sent many adherents on a quest for personal sinlessness and purity has frequently produced people spiritually off-center, or "queer" (9). Perfection for the sake of the Kingdom is the preferred goal, for

it serves a cause and not an individual. The Church must avoid self-serving emphases, for they are at odds with the Kingdom and characterize the sellout of the faith to private interests. Each of the social "isms" currently on the world scene is the quest for some self-serving ideology that offers only transitory goals. Each operates under a reversed order of priorities: to fulfill material needs first and attend to the larger issues of life later. There is, therefore, no unifying focus and alienation results. This was, according to Francis Randall, the state of Europe as Marx saw it in the 1840's:

He became sure that Europe was trembling on the edge of reaction and revolution, that existing societies were dark, cruel, tense, and unstable, and that most of mankind was ground down, unhappy, disaffected from society, and cut off from its own true nature. This was the unfortunate condition Marx and his contemporaries called man's alienation (10).

Yet Marx did not accept the idea that such alienation stemmed from man's enmity with God. In a very real sense, it can be said that Marxism is symptomatic of a world in which the church has lost its true center. For the goal of Communism is the development of a truly classless society where material wealth is distributed so as to eliminate want and eradicate the rule of the powerful over the powerless. Yet, the Communist expects to realize these goals in the absence of God. Ultimately, this ideology has failed because of its emphasis on the material. No communist government has moved beyond the dictatorship of the proletariat, nor are any likely to for the foreseeable

future. As Christ taught:

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or "What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt. 6:32-33).

This is not Marxism's aim, and it is on this that Marxism falters. Wherever economic considerations are central, self-interest inevitably follows. Soon, one group is more equal than another and exploitation results. Only with the Kingdom of God as the central cause can the Church ever hope to meet the Marxist challenge.

Yet, if the Kingdom of God is to be a major social force challenging Communism and the other "isms" which man must choose between, how will it function in practice and what makes it superior? In this, Jones lists five points he finds in Christ's program for bringing in the Kingdom (11):

- 1) Good news to the poor--Jones believes the great enemy of the Kingdom in capitalist societies is the ruthless competition that drives people to collect more, control more, seek greater status, and undermine the competition--all at someone else's expense. Even in the church, there is a tendency to consider good news to the poor a matter of a spiritual conversion for the spiritually poor. This allows Christendom to remain comfortably pious and economically well off in the face of great material poverty. However, the poor in this passage are definitely the economically disadvantaged--those who have suffered exploitation at the hands of the greedy. To remedy this,

Jones points to the principle of moderation in material goods. "Every person has a right to as much of the material things as will make him mentally and spiritually and physically fit for the purposes of the Kingdom of God. The rest belongs to others." (12). The only inheritance one should pass on to one's children is a good education and sound values. Inherited material wealth leads to decay. If the world had the will to do it, Jones contends, poverty could be eradicated in one generation by simple obedience to this Kingdom principle. 2) Release to the captives--this is an extension of the problem in point 1, that of those who have been exploited for the sake of others' greed. This exploitation has generally included political and social ostracism of those of the "minority"--in terms of race, class, education, and social standing. It is no accident that those who rise to power by popular consent in Western democracies are generally wealthy, and that their major supporters are persons of wealth and status. To remedy this, the Kingdom of God calls mankind to return to the practice of life as family--to love one's neighbor as oneself, to share of one another's bounty, in accordance with the disciples' example in Acts 2:44-47, and to realize that if even one person among us is in political or social or economic bondage, we are all in bondage. For the Kingdom of God, to be realized among us, is an experience of persons who serve a God who loves no one person greater than others, but knows and loves each of His children in concert with His

love for all others. In this God's love is both personal and all-encompassing. In other words, because He loves me I must recognize He also loves you and desires your good fortune as much as He desires mine. This encourages us to greater cooperation for the mutual social, political, and economic stability of each one of us as part of the whole. 3)

"Recovery of sight for the blind"--to bring healing and release from physical infirmities. By extension, one may interpret Jones' views here to mean that the community will support those in physical infirmity through prayer, as well as physical and material assistance, to seek God's answer for the affliction; either a healing or the power to use the disease constructively for the Kingdom; and to make sense of suffering for the larger cause of the Kingdom. Such service by the community should never stoop to the mawkishness of a Job's comforter; rather, by caring and presence, the community realizes that the burden-bearing itself strengthens and binds the community as it recognizes the unique worth of the afflicted being as great as their own.; 4) To let the broken victims go free--to establish the Kingdom, among those who are captive not only to moral, social and political systems, but also those who are captives to the anti- or non-Kingdom of God world-view. The proclamation of the Word brings faith and spiritual liberty; one is indeed free when one has undergone the metanoia experience--the changed heart and mind characteristic of the born-again believer. Of this, Jones writes elsewhere: "Man needs

nothing so much as he needs some vaster conception which brings all life into integration and meaning" (13) The Kingdom grants this, particularly in communities with other believers who seek a better world by living today in the reality of the Kingdom. 5) To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor--This is the concept of Jubilee, one upon which Jones places great emphasis, for he sees in it a great levelling of economic and social conditions that is central to the economics of the Kingdom. It is "a healthy jubilee," for each individual benefits from the cancellation of debt, the redistribution of lands and wealth (to offset the practice of inheritance of material goods), and the freedom of those in economic servitude to others. Equality is the result, and everyone gets a fresh start. The social order is changed, radically changed, every fifty years to bring equal opportunity. This Kingdom-of-God social change works both inwardly and outwardly. The individual is called to a changed heart and life and the social order is periodically levelled to provide a fresh start. Rather than grappling with long-term social and financial problems, the dust is blown off, the old order crumbles, and the economic system rebuilds from scratch. Marxists view history as a series of class struggles (14), with one class gaining power over the others, beginning with the aristocracy, then to the rule of the bourgeois, and to the final struggle--the rise of the proletariat which they say will lead to a classless society, where:

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the conditions for the free development of all" (15).

The year of Jubilee is God's plan for bringing about the classless society for which the Communist yearns, but does so without the violent and bloody social struggles witnessed in this century of Marxist revolution. This is because Christianity is essentially pacifist, seeking change through longsuffering and peaceful means rather than by the forced equality of persons in subjugation to the State, as is the case with Marxism. Gradualism--the striving of the people of God to bring about peaceful change, and apocalypticism--the hope of God's completion of the ongoing work of Kingdom-building through a final, dramatic act of Judgment --are the goal and the hope of the Kingdom community. Our call is to pacifistic social spiritual and moral action; God shall bring the final vengeance and restoration. This theme of pacifism and of Jubilee for encouraging peaceful change is strong in the two remaining thinkers that are to be discussed: John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas.

John Howard Yoder--Kingdom of God in Proclamation

Like E. Stanley Jones, John Howard Yoder sees the Kingdom of God as a practical, this-world social reality. Of Jesus' life and ministry, Yoder writes:

Jesus was, in his divinely mandated (i.e.; promised, anointed, messianic) prophethood, priesthood, and Kingship, the bearer of a new possibility of human, social, and therefore political relationships. His baptism is the inauguration of and his cross is the culmination of that new regime in which his disciples

are called to share. Men may choose to consider that kingdom as not real, or not relevant, or not possible, or not inviting; but no longer may we come to this choice in the name of systematic theology or honest hermeneutics. At this one point there is no distinction between the Jesus of Historie and the Christ of Geschichte, or between Christ as God and Jesus as Man, or between the religion of Jesus and the religion about Jesus (or between the Jesus of the canon and the Jesus of history). No such slicing can avoid his call to an ethic marked by the cross, a cross identified as the punishment of a man who threatens society by creating a new kind of community leading a new kind of life (16).

Jesus' kingdom is not some ideal to be realized in some eternal realm beyond the grave. It is present reality. Christ demands of his followers that they live this reality by submitting themselves to live in his radical new community that rejects violence completely, trusts completely in the power of God to deliver, and seeks the practical realization of the righteous kingdom by developing loving relationships within the community and proclamation of Biblical justice to the surrounding world. Total pacifism and the tools of longsuffering and patience are to be employed to wear down the unrighteous and bring about New Testament justice. The community of believers, because they follow Christ, is inherently nonconformist. Rather than seeking vengeance, they wait on the Lord for deliverance. Rather than withdrawing into sectarian isolation from the world, the community proclaims its faith and its desire for divine righteousness in the face of human injustice. Nonparticipation in war, in violent overthrow or resistance, and in the support of the warmaking machinery of government characterizes, in part, the nonconformity expected of the

kingdom community. This point is particularly significant for Yoder, for he insists that the mandate of Matthew 5-7 and Romans 12-13 is for Christians to renounce what he calls an "interplay of egoisms" (17). The secular world justifies as acts of revenge or justice. God uses governments and even armies to achieve His purposes in history, but this gives no license to the Christian to take up arms against another human being. In the midst of violence, the Christian community is to act as salt and light, modeling nonviolent social and political change, even to the point of accepting defeat rather than adopting unjust or violent methods to bring about desired change.

This is somewhat in contrast to E. Stanley Jones, who holds to a limited form of pacifism, in which the Kingdom-of-God society would maintain a police force for maintaining peace, should it become necessary to restrain whatever unregenerate human nature remains in that society (18). Yoder contends that Christians who argue for restrained use of force continue to see the role of the church as that of manager of the civilized world, closely guarding the development of history to ensure that its path leads directly to Armageddon and the Final Judgment. This cannot be the Church's role, says Yoder, for the Christian believer is a minority wherever he is found, in both the institutional church and society at large. He goes on to state:

And might it be, if we could be freed from the compulsiveness of the vision of ourselves as the guardians of history, that we could receive again the gift of being able to see ourselves as participants in

the loving nature of God as revealed in Christ? Perhaps the songs of the earliest church might restore this to us if the apostolic argument cannot. A Church once freed from compulsiveness and from the urge to manage the world might then find ways and words to suggest as well to men outside her bounds the invitation to a servant stance in society (19).

The desire of those churchmen who advocate restrained violence to achieve justice is to make real that which, for them is not yet real. Yoder sees this as evidence of a lack of faith, coupled with a compulsive desire to bring the Kingdom into being by their own hands. The community of faith must realize that the Kingdom has already come, and that only those who accept that truth truly perceive reality, for this reality is based on revelation and not on temporal circumstances. Whenever secular society attempts the overthrow of this reality, such as when Christians were commanded by Rome to worship Caesar as God, the Church must stand firmly and nonviolently for the truth of Christ. This does not mean that the Church should wait to respond to society only when society threatens to undermine its basis for existence, even though pagan society always attempts to undermine that basis. Instead, the Church must realize that its foundation, Christ, is unshakable, and that its responsibility is to undermine unchristian moral, social, and political systems by steadfastly and nonviolently proclaiming and living the reality of the Kingdom. This involves both drawing individuals to the light of gospel truth and opposing exploitive systems that deprive people of their dignity and right to partake of God's provisions.

This is the cross Jesus calls the Kingdom community to bear.

Yoder describes the society thus:

A social style characterized by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from right to left. The cross of Christ is the model for Christian social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe (20).

Unlike E. Stanley Jones, who desires to see the Kingdom of God supplant man-made socio-political systems in the here and now (21), John Howard Yoder sees the Christian community as being the voice of proclamation to the corrupted society that surrounds it. Also, unlike Jones, Yoder sees the jubiliary admonishment of Christ, "Sell your possessions and give alms (Luke 12:33)", as a call to the Church to model jubiliary behavior, rather than as an injunction for an unbelieving world to follow. He does not see Jubilee as a utopian ideal, or as Christian communism, for in order to have utopia, the community would have to withdraw into monasticism. Communism requires a thoroughgoing collectivism that negates the freewill aspect of service. Instead, Yoder sees the jubiliary provision as a means of temporal redistribution of wealth in the Church that safeguards against the excesses of capitalism. It is a proclamation of God's righteousness in the presence of the onlooking world, rather than an injunction for society at large. The proper role for the Church in the area of economics is, like all other areas of human endeavor, to model God's truth for an antagonistic, unbelieving world so they may be encouraged, but not forced, to live Christianly.

Stanley Hauerwas--Narrative and Community

Yoder's emphasis on the cross taken up by the believer in Christ finds "sympathetic echo" in Stanley Hauerwas. For Hauerwas, the ethical/moral basis for the Christian cannot be Fletcherian situationism, but must focus on the Jesus narrative and one's personal identification with it.

Hauerwas states:

By virtue of the distinctive narrative that forms their community, Christians are distinct from the world. They are required to be nothing less than a sanctified people of peace who can live the life of the forgiven. Their sanctification is not meant to sustain the judgment that they are better than non-Christians, but rather that they are charged to be faithful to God's calling of them as foretaste of the Kingdom. In this sense, sanctification is a life of service and sacrifice that the world cannot account for on its own grounds (22).

For Hauerwas, conversion to Christianity means that one adopts the narrative of Jesus' life, death, and Resurrection as his concept of reality. Prior ethics has concentrated on the Incarnation of Christ, the perfection of Christ, or other questions related to Christology as the basis for ethics. This is wrong, because it ignores the man Jesus, and the message He bore to humanity about the Kingdom of peace. Yet, the Christian community cannot afford to neglect Jesus and His message for the sake of theological/doctrinal disputes, because the community's unique identification with Him is the basis for her individual and social sanctification. Hauerwas argues that, without an ethical believing community, individual sanctification is not possible for it is in community where words like service and sacrifice find

meaning. Whom does one serve when one exists as a solitary individual? For whom does one sacrifice? The church's service to Christ begins with service to one another and to the unregenerate world for whom He died. The community's self-identification comes from her awareness of the Gospel narrative, of her identification with Jesus. The tendency of modern ethics to draw upon "natural law" (a Kantian concept) to justify behavior has, where it has influenced Christian circles, led to self-absorptive, often contradictory positions concerning moral behavior.

The point of the Gospel, however, is that reality is not self-absorptive or situational, but revelational. The Creator of the Universe has granted that revelation to humanity through His dealings with Israel, and most comprehensively in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. The Church is not to join the world in seeking to find truth in natural law, which is frequently confounded by conflicting interpretations of what is indeed "natural", but is to serve the world by proclaiming the narrative of Jesus as the only true reality and proper basis for ethics. The unique function of Scripture in this proclamation is as an interacting agent for the Church, and not simply as the recorded version of the story, for "the Bible without the community, without expounders, and interpreters, and hearers, is a dead book" (23). Hauerwas further states that:

Of course Scripture stands over the community exerting a critical function, but that it does so is an aspect of the community's self-understanding. Scripture is the means the church uses to constantly test its

memory. That is why it can never be content with using just one part of Scripture, but must struggle day in and day out with the full text. For the story the church must tell as well as embody is a many-sided tale which constantly calls us from complacency and conventions. Scripture has authority in the church, not because no one knows the truth, but because the truth is a conversation for which Scripture sets the agenda and boundaries. Those with authority are those who would serve by helping the church better hear and correspond to the stories of God as we find them in Scripture (24).

This view of Scripture does not treat it as a static record that must be preserved in its most literal sense, with only one prescribed set of oughts and ought nots. Rather it is through critical interaction with the Scripture as the Holy Spirit leads and contextualizes, that the community of God constantly corrects and refines their awareness of the relevance of the stories of God for the world in which they must deal. Rather than drawing upon the "natural", the Kingdom community draws upon the revelational in a dynamic experience that brings the community to fresh insights and the abandonment of that which is not faithful to the revelation in context. In this, Hauerwas seems very close to Yoder, in that both men advocate the primacy of careful hermeneutics for shaping the ethics of the faith community.

Also, like Yoder and unlike Jones, Hauerwas does not see the building of the Kingdom of God as a nationwide social order as practical. Rather, he asserts that "the church serves the world by giving itself the means to see itself truthfully" (25). The church is to belong to no nation, or to find a permanent home in any nation. Everywhere and

anywhere the church is found, there must be the visible proclamation of peace and righteousness in the face of a violent, unjust world. This means that the church must learn patience in dealing with the world, for it is going against a tide of injustice and self-aggrandizement that, in the face of it, tempts the church to adopt violent, coercive tactics to bring about justice. Yet, one does not defeat violence and injustice by resorting to violence or manipulation to, say, bring about better conditions for the poor any more than one should attempt to stop the slaughter of unborn children by bombing and torching abortion clinics. This is the violence which brings about more violence, and God has called His people to peace. Faithfulness to the Kingdom of God counts for more than efficient programs that deal with issues of social justice. Furthermore, the church must learn to identify as a community of justice, with the victims of injustice. Protesting against the systems which oppress the disadvantaged is tinkling brass and sounding cymbal if one has not first voluntarily foregone the material comforts befitting those with advantages in the culture. For it is often our own desire for security, our own desire for material comfort, that brings about the greatest injustice. The emergency shelter is often a building so old that it is of little good for anything else; the clothes which charity-minded Christians proffer to dress the naked are those which the same charity-minded have decided are no longer fashionable or fit to wear and

therefore able to be cast off in favor of something new. Such charity is little more than an outlet for the excesses of consumerism, the fall-out of a materialistic, throw-away society in which Christians all too frequently participate. The poor, cut off by their inability to participate, are then handed the scraps left from those who do participate, and they are expected to receive such with gratitude. It is dehumanizing and degrading and not true charity at all, for it demands nothing from those who participate in it.

In contrast to this, Hauerwas argues that the Church must learn to live "out of control" (26), that is, by not building upon earthly stores of wealth that lead to a materialistic sense of security based upon money and possessions. Rather, it is to be willing to trust God for life's needs and to accept history as it unfolds, rather than as one hopes to make it come out. To live "in control" is to be enslaved to the need for security, acceptance, approval, and status. To fulfill these needs, one readily calls upon the accepted means of exploitation that will most readily bring them to fruition. This is true for nations as well as people. The desire to maintain a "free", democratic hemisphere has led this nation into several documented instances of covert activity and political repression intended to place sympathetic persons in control over Latin and South American states. As author Gore Vidal recently remarked before the National Press Club, "We hear President Reagan talk about removing the government of Panama. What

if the government of Panama wanted to remove Reagan?" (27). The desire for control itself leads to injustice. The church must not participate in this; rather, the church must realize that Christ's Kingdom rule has come and by submitting ourselves to it, we lose control so that He may be truly sovereign over us.

In the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist (28), the church is to remember the significance of Christ's life and the Church's identification with Him. In prayer, the church releases the power of God to the world, and in preaching this story is proclaimed to both friend and stranger alike, thereby encouraging all to join with the Church as she lives as the community of peace, reflecting the reality of God's peaceable Kingdom. The Church's ethic is shaped by her awareness of and participation in the reality of the Kingdom, rather than the other way around. In the history of the Church, secular ideals of "freedom" and "justice" have led ideologues to that action which was contrary to freedom and justice in order to see their own concept of it achieved. In fact, the freedom of the Kingdom, says Hauerwas, comes by first realizing that we do not know what freedom is. First we must know the reality of the Kingdom; then we are able to realize that freedom is the freedom to serve Him (29).

Synthesis

The views of Jones, Yoder, and Hauerwas regarding the kingdom life in the church all have roots in the holiness-Wesleyan tradition. Each man sees the need for the church to restore its vision and ethics according to the reality of God's kingdom. Hauerwas and Yoder tend to view this as a communal consciousness that runs counter to the self-absorptive views of reality held by the world. The other sees the Kingdom as one of four choices before humanity, and the only one compatible with Western democracies. Each desires a relevant witness for the Church in the world; yet, each tend to view differently the form this witness should take.

The role of the Kingdom community in the world is, for E. Stanley Jones, to model and to promote the Kingdom of God as a practical, this-world reality that is the only sensible option for Western democracies like the United States. Capitalism and ruthless competition have led to the rise of democracy's greatest adversary. Communism, and Western democracies will be overtaken unless they abandon the competitive free-enterprise system in favor of a cooperative system that allows for an element of competition that encourages quality goods and services, yet stops short of exploitation for personal gain (30). This is possible only when the society adopts the life of obedient faith in Christ and lives together as family in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Hauerwas and Yoder both criticize this position as being

manipulative and reflecting the desire to change the course of history to ensure a "Christian" denouement. For them, the Kingdom community must live the reality of the Kingdom today, in contrast to the self-absorptive realities that captivate the world's attention. Christians are a minority, and it is absurd to believe that a truly Christian state is possible prior to the Second Coming.

Current debate over the candidacy of Pat Robertson, and concern with the growing power of what has, unfortunately for evangelicals, been termed the "Religious Right" in politics serves to underscore the arguments of Hauerwas and Yoder. The world gets jumpy and tends to overreact when it appears someone is out to usher in the Kingdom politically. Hauerwas and Yoder both support the Christian's right to be in the political process, and the need for the Christian proclamation in the marketplace of ideas, on the Senate floor as well as in the street or the house of worship. Yet, Christians who engage in politics must do so first by being aware that it is Christ who comes again, regardless of whether or not anyone wishes to see Him, and that it is Christ who brought the Kingdom to us in the first place. We are to accept, to believe, and to live accordingly. For this reason, Yoder has criticized Robertson for resigning his ordination in order to step into the political arena (31). Why should Robertson feel he needs to distance himself from his role as a cleric in order to assume a role as a national political leader? Robertson's agenda, to bring about a more

Christian national morality by political means, reflects his desire to usher in the Kingdom of God rather than to proclaim it as already-present and yet-coming-to-be Kingdom of God. The question is one of perspective: what is the Christian reality and how is the Christian to act in relation to the unique perspective he claims as a Christian?

In this light, there are few differences between each of these men regarding what Stanley Hauerwas has termed as "peaceableness" (32)--living nonviolently in fidelity to the Gospel. Both Hauerwas and Yoder find the story of Jesus to be a call to a peaceable lifestyle, with prohibition on all forms of violence. For them, the call of faith is a call to living peaceably, together, as the community of God's peaceable people. To attempt to bring about the righteousness of God through any other means than by patient, longsuffering proclamation is to violate God's means of bringing about change. It represents a compromise with the world one is attempting to change; consequently no lasting effect takes place. It is fundamental to right living in Christ that one's means to justify a particular end often means that one must face a setback or defeat because one refused to adopt a violent or coercive tactic in order to bring about a desired condition. As Hauerwas observes: "Our freedom is that of service, and our equality is that before God, and neither can be achieved through the efforts of idealists who would transform the world in their image" (33).

Though this may seem critical of Jones' position, as well as the position of those who desire to see Christian influence in politics and, indeed, a more Christian social order, it is not. For E. Stanley Jones is one with Hauerwas and Yoder in his conception of the Christian life as necessarily being lived in adherence to the proclaimed truth of Christ's gospel. Writing in the Thirties and Forties as he did, the idea of a total pacifism may have seemed a bit naive. At heart, Jones was pacifistic, yet saw the need for limited, restrained force to protect the Kingdom society from those who were antagonistic toward it. He regards war as evil, useless, and wasteful in that it denies God's material provisions for humanity to those most in need of them, and expends them on conflicts that further alienate mankind. Hauerwas and Yoder would readily agree. Both, however, go beyond Jones to say that egoism and selfishness that bring on war and misery must be completely avoided, even for the sake of establishing a Kingdom-of-God society, for to compromise peace for the sake of the ideal of God's peaceable Kingdom is to demonstrate that the Kingdom has not come, and cannot come, without the coerciveness of the Church to make it so. True freedom in God's peaceable Kingdom is not just freedom from the injustice of the world; it is freedom to serve God in a new reality that gives no ground, no legitimization of any sort to violence and injustice.

Economically, this is also true. Jubilee comes when we

realize it must come, when we are no longer blind to the needs of our fellow human beings and see that the answer to their need lies in our willingness to let go of material security and share God's resources so that all may experience God's provision equally rather than plenty for the few and want for the many. This requires conversion of the human heart, of persuading man to see things from the light of God's truth than from the revisions of the various "isms" that currently shape human perceptions of truth. Each act of coercion calls for a corresponding act and the clash of egoisms is perpetuated. Jones, Yoder, and Hauerwas all desire to see God's justice at work in the world. While Jones counsels a social order based on the reality of the Kingdom, Hauerwas and Yoder desire that the community go the way of longsuffering, patience, and peace. All three men sincerely desire to see the church convinced of the reality of the Kingdom and actively proclaiming its good news to the violent, fallen world.

Chapter 4

A Theology of Community

Throughout this thesis, attention has focused on three areas pertinent to the life of the Kingdom community, as defined in the interpretation of Matthew 13, 18, and 25. These areas are propagation (how is the church to grow?), relationship (how are its members to live together and relate to the larger society?), and judgment (how will it be judged to be fruitful?). In each of these, the focus has been primarily on the this-world realization of the kingdom in a present-day faith community. However, that aspect of Christ's proclamation, particularly in regard to the Great White Throne Judgment in Matthew 25, that focuses on the future of the faith community in the kingdom, shall be considered. Another element that has been treated throughout is the doctrine of entire sanctification. In formulating a theology of community, this writer shall interpret and synthesize what has been gained thus far, in light of the doctrine of perfect love and what Oscar Cullmann has called the "already" and "not yet" aspects of the Kingdom of God.

Propagation

In Matthew 13, three elements of propagation surfaced. The first of these is the relationship of spiritual heritage to personal faith. In the Parable of Soils, the condition of

the soil largely determines whether or not the seed will germinate into lasting, fruitbearing faith. The message for the community, tasked with the commission to "go forth and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20)", is that lasting faith takes place only when the Church has adequately provided an environment that encourages acceptance of the Gospel. As Paul found on Mars Hill, few will accept ideas radically different from their own, unless they see evidence of these claims in practice. This is probably the modern church's greatest impediment to growth in Western societies. The term "born again", so commonly used in Evangelical circles, has largely been downplayed in the mainline church in favor of "moral" and "socially responsible" behavior. Consequently, any display of personal feelings or any discussion of a personal relationship with Jesus is regarded with suspicion and distrust. Robert Raines writes of a situation where a group of laymen in a mainline church were asked to define what it meant to be a Christian (1). Their responses were general enough to be applicable to practically any religious or moral society, Christian or not. Nihilism, humanism, and the other self-absorptive realities that bind people and keep them from faith will not be given up until the Church itself demonstrates through practical faith-in-life that the Kingdom of God is both real and present among them.

At its birth, the holiness movement in America understood this, and has left a legacy of social concern that is at the heart of abolition, temperance, women's rights, and

work among the homeless and the poor. Luther Lee, an early Wesleyan Methodist theologian, once proclaimed that "the Gospel is so radically reformatory, that to preach it fully and clearly, is to attack and condemn all wrong, and to assert and defend all righteousness." (2). For Lee and his contemporaries, social action was more than simply moral and responsible behavior. It was a demonstration of what they earnestly believed was the church's role: to serve God by bringing the reality of the Kingdom to bear on social evils so that fallen humanity would be reoriented in terms of the Gospel. This type of social action desires more than the correction of specific wrongs; its aim is to win converts to a radically different understanding of life. Phineas T. Bresee also expressed it in the statement: "Let the Church of the Nazarene be true to its commission; not great and elegant buildings; but to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and wipe away the tears of sorrowing; and gather jewels for His diadem." (3). Propagation of the Kingdom takes place when the church's compassion for the poor and disenfranchised witnesses to the world that God has promised to establish His righteous Kingdom on earth and to wipe the tears from the eyes of the suffering.

This leads to the second of the elements that surfaces in Matthew 13; that of the price to be paid to see the Kingdom propagated in the hearts of persons. As the parables of the Pearl of Great Price and of the Treasure in the Field make clear, the Kingdom is worthy of all that one has, and

is. In order for the church to offer a reorienting vision of reality to the world, the church must first reorient itself in terms of the vision. Both the individual Christian and the community of faith must commit themselves to be a living testimony that seeks the reform of the fallen order. Hauerwas and Yoder's emphasis on the church as a community that practices and proclaims the life that is shaped by the "stories of God" becomes especially relevant here, for the Church cannot be an agent for reform if it will not reform. This presents a clear call to holiness in faith and life. In 1845, Orange Scott observed:

And holiness will be our best defense. It will stop the mouths of gainsayers--it will melt their prejudices and subdue their passions. For this let us incessantly pray, casting ourselves upon God's mercy and claiming the great and precious promises. All things are possible to him that believeth. The Great Shepard standeth at the door. He bids us enter into the holy of holies. He suffered without the camp, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood. For us, He poured out strong cries and tears. To purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, was his object in coming into the world. Shall we, my brethren, be that people whose God is the Lord? Shall we come up to the stature of perfect Christians in Christ Jesus? (4)

Scott's expressed concern here is that the church would be able to answer her critics with integrity by adhering to the set-apart life to which God has called her. As has been observed in Section II, John Wesley shared the same concern. Slavery, alcohol abuse, and women's rights were examples of the first social ills to which the holiness movement addressed itself. Participation in the fight to correct these problems was as important to a balanced life of

Christian piety as was prayer, worship, and study of the Word. Indeed, Orange Scott believed that lasting reform could not take place in society unless the reformer had "deep experience in the things of God " (5). For these early holiness reformers, true piety was the willingness to see the world reformed according to the standard of the Kingdom of God, and the willingness to begin that task in one's own heart and life.

The third element in propagation is the extent to which the Kingdom community should go to encourage the world to reorient itself to the reality of God's Kingdom. The Parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Fish in the Net indicate that there is a universal element to gathering prospective saints into the Kingdom. The net captures whatever is drawn up with it. Yet, not all that is caught is kept. One could argue that the message of these parables is the advocacy of a Christian society which offers social salvation to all, but only those who are transformed by the Gospel are at the end suitable for eternity. Could such a society be feasible? Could it influence greater numbers of people into accepting Christ? Could it hasten the day of the Lord? E. Stanley Jones clearly wanted the Western nations to adopt a Christian social order within a representative democracy, for he believed this was the West's best hope of combatting communism, nazism, and fascism. Of course, to have such a society would require that the overwhelming majority of voters be Christians committed to

seeing the Kingdom of God established. Though every believer should earnestly desire to see the Kingdom (see Rev.22:20), obviously not all do. Furthermore, the unregenerate in the society would have to be willing to accede control of the nation to the very group to which they are most acutely in enmity. Neither of these is likely to happen; therefore, Jones' Christian society will probably never take place this side of the Second Coming.

However, there is no doubt that Jesus meant for the disciples to understand the Kingdom as being real in this life as well as in the next one.

The best answer to this dilemma, it appears, is to see the Kingdom in what Oscar Cullman has described as its "already" and "not yet" reality. Working with the Gospel of John, in which he finds " that the 'already' is much more strongly emphasized than the 'not yet'"(6), Cullman finds that events in John correspond to events in the Old Testament and to predictions for the future of the Church. An example of this is in Cullman's assertion that, in the Gospel of John, the Old Testament emphasis on the Temple as the center of worship is supplanted by the Christ. In John 4:20-26, the Samaritan woman raises a point with Jesus about whether it is proper to worship on the mountain where her ancestors worshipped or to worship in Jerusalem. Jesus replies that a day is coming when true worshippers will worship in neither place, for they will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. He goes on to identify himself as

the Messiah, indicating that to worship in spirit and truth is to recognize the Messiahship of Jesus. Past, present, and future are woven together in this short passage, and the reader sees the levels of reality of the Kingdom. For those who believe and worship "in spirit and truth", the Temple is a type of Christ in that it is the place where the gap between God and man was bridged prior to the Incarnation. With the Incarnation, it is Christ Himself in the person of Jesus. After the Resurrection and until the Second Coming, true worshippers shall worship the Risen Christ, who made the Holy Spirit available to all who believe. In this way, Christ's followers experience Him as present reality, yet look forward to the day of His return to establish His righteous kingdom on earth. Therefore, to believe in Jesus as the Christ is to accept His Kingdom as present reality, while looking forward to the day in which the counterfeit realities of the world are eradicated and every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

Stanley Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder define this concept in terms of the narrative of the Gospel, which compels the followers of Jesus to see reality as He saw it, and to live in a manner ethically consistent with this vision. Though possibly more pacifistic than the holiness reformers, Hauerwas and Yoder appear to be largely in agreement with the reformers' views concerning social action as a means of proclaiming the Kingdom to a world bound by unrighteousness. Theirs is a much-needed corrective, for

they speak to a church that once held a very clear position regarding practical holiness as a means of testifying to the reality of the Kingdom.

Over the years, however, the holiness movement seems to have lost its way. Donald Dayton has traced the American movement from its Nineteenth Century abolitionist roots to the present, and states that its loss of social vision resulted from two developments: the shift from the postmillennial vision of the reformers, who believed that their activism was helping to bring about a more just society--the millenium itself, prior to the return of Christ (7). The aftereffects of the Civil War caused postmillennialism to wane and society was no longer seen as worth the effort required to reorient it. Premillennialism, which sees the world as something to be rescued from rather than as being worthy of rescue, became popular throughout the movement. The other development was the rise of the "Princeton theology", which places great emphasis on right belief as over against right practice. As a result of these developments, purity of doctrine became more important than purity of intention, and the movement withdrew into itself. Greater effort was, and still is, expended in saving the lost through personal witness than through modeling Kingdom behavior for the larger society to see. Consequently, the movement is in need of a renewal of vision, to which Hauerwas and Yoder are challenging the church.

Relationship

In Matthew 18, service is treated relationally, as Jesus employs the image of a small child to demonstrate God's concern for those whom the world sees as being of no account. The Kingdom community is to pay careful attention to the physical, moral, and spiritual welfare of all its members, particularly the weakest. It is the image of God, indelibly stamped on every human being, that Christians honor by serving one another and by proclaiming God's love to the world. John Wesley's idea to establish Methodist societies was prompted by his awareness that Christianity does not thrive in isolation, but requires an environment where one is accountable to others and, in turn, willingly takes responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others. He included in these societies persons from a variety of denominations and traditions, including Roman Catholics and Dissenters (8). Yet, throughout his life, he remained loyal to the Anglican Church, allowing the Methodists to form as a separate body only after it became apparent that the American societies needed independence from the Methodist-Anglican tie in order to survive the staunch nationalism that followed the Revolutionary War (9). For Wesley, the fundamental issue was whether the individual had experienced the faith he or she claimed to have, and how that person acted on that faith.

The sacraments become, in this context, more than memorial observances of Christ's life and sacrificial death;

they are means of grace that affirm the faith and hope of the participants in community. Paul's injunction to the Corinthians reveals that they had missed this point, because their manner of partaking the love feast prior to the Eucharist was to allow some to gorge themselves while others went away with nothing, as "each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Cor. 11:21). Consequently, they disgraced themselves, profaned the sacrament, and brought stern judgment upon themselves. The bread, broken and distributed among all the members of the community, affirms each one's participation in the body of Christ, as receptors of His grace.

The concepts of Jubilee and of the "family of man", espoused by Jones, Hauerwas, and Yoder, extend the significance of the sacraments. Jubilee recognizes that God's design is that all would benefit from His provisions, and that wealth would not be perpetually hoarded by a few while others are forced to exist in perpetual poverty. Fifty-year cycles of redistribution do away with this, making it possible for all to prosper. Yet, as the parable of the talents illustrates, each person is responsible to invest wisely what he is given. Initiative for the betterment of the community is encouraged (the servants must make an account to the Lord of the Kingdom of what they did with what they were given), and no one is granted a free ride on the labor of others.

The loss of the communal aspect of the church is, E.

Stanley Jones believes, the reason for Communism's rise. Human beings are created to express God and to serve Him. Moreover, they are to serve one another out of their reverence for the image of God evident in one another. When the church lost its way on this point, the secular world sought a society based on the concept of communal benefit and comradeship. It is significant that, in a system that so closely parallels Christianity, the one clear point of departure is over the matter of faith. This suggests that Jones may be right; for instead of seeing Christianity as bringing people together, the Communists see it as one of the primary sources of human alienation and exploitation. Clearly, this is opposite of what Jesus intended for His Church.

Judgment

The matter of the Church's role as a proclaiming, redemptive community has been discussed at length throughout this section; attention must now focus on the Lord's admonition for the church concerning the coming judgment. The separation of the sheep and goats before the Throne demonstrates the freewill aspect of participation. Both the sheep and the goats refer to the Son of Man as "Lord", yet some have clearly not obeyed Him as their Lord. What John Fletcher had to say concerning God's gift of faith speaks to this point. Fletcher held that faith is a gift, like breathing. It is not something some receive while others are slighted. We are all able to breathe, but are able to

hold our breath, or even to asphyxiate ourselves, if we choose. The same is true of faith. We may live in faith, suspend our faith, or deny our faith. When we are faced with God's revelation, we may in faith obey it and seek to interpret and reinterpret it faithfully in the context of our lives. Or, we may accept only those parts of the revelation that support, and do not challenge, our perception of reality. This would permit us to be like the goats, who look similar to the sheep and claim the same Lord, yet find ourselves on the wrong side of the throne. There are none present at the throne who would claim to be unbelievers; yet the Lord's judgment upon them is that they, by their disobedience, did not believe. Their condemnation is not due to wrong doctrine. It is due to the failure to act upon what they profess to be true.

In this vein, one has to admire the pacifist stance of Hauerwas and Yoder, for these men sincerely desire to live according to the reality of the peaceable Kingdom. Though earnest Christians may struggle with the question of whether or not armed force is justified in particular situations, the Beatitudes teach that those who make peace shall be called the sons of God. The church has historically been ambivalent on this point, partly due to its ambivalence concerning how it should respond to the reality of the "already" and "not yet" Kingdom. It is for this reason that a sound theology of community must be put into practice in the church. Without the accountability of a fellowship

of believers with whom one can seek to know and live by the will of God, the church faces the danger of repeating the error of doing what is right in each person's eyes. This is the present state of Christian ethics, and only the recovery of the faith community's understanding of its role in the Kingdom can correct it.

Notes

Introduction

1. See Stanley Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 45-46, for a discussion of the relevance of this term to Christian ethics.

Chapter I

1. W. Michaelis, "pipto", in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Abridged by G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), p. 846-848. Hereafter, this reference work shall be referred to as "Kittel". English spellings of the Greek Terms used in this study are taken, unless otherwise noted, from the Greek Keywords list found on pages ix-xix of this text.

2. Alfred Marshall, trans. The NIV Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 54. Unless otherwise noted, Greek and English Biblical references have all been taken from this text.

3. W. Forester, "harpazo", Kittel, p. 80.

4. John D. Davis, "Mustard", in Davis' Dictionary of the Bible, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 545. Hereafter, this text shall be referred to as "Davis' Dictionary".

5. J. Schneider, "Klados", in Kittel, p. 436.

6. W. Michaelis, "kataskenoo", in Kittel, p. 1043.

7. W. E. Vines, "Tares", in A Comprehensive Dictionary of The Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers (Maclean, VA: McDonald Publishing), p. 1133. Hereafter, this text shall be referred to as "Vines".

8. Vines, p. 442.

9. Vines, p. 477.

10. F. Lang, "pyr", in Kittel, p. 975.

11. Oepke, "pais", in Kittel, pp. 759-63.

12. W. Grundmann, "megas", in Kittel, pp. 573-6.

13. John F. Walvoord. Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), p. 134-40.

14. "Goat", Davis' Dictionary, p. 275.

15. Suzanne De Dietrich, The Gospel According to Matthew: Layman's Bible Commentary (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1961), pp. 131-32.

Chapter II

1. Robert W. Burtner and Robert E. Chiles, A Compend of Wesley's Theology (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 216. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Compend".

2. Lawrence Wood, Pentecostal Grace (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), p. 76. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Wood".

3. Wood, p. 77.

4. John Fletcher, Zelotes and Honestus Reconciled: The Second Part of An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism: Being the First Part of the Scripture Scales. (Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, 1974), Vol. II, p. 356. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Fletcher".

5. Wood, p. 188.

6. Wood, p. 188.

7. Steve Harper, John Wesley's Message For Today (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), p. 119. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Harper".

8. Harper, p. 122-23.

9. Compend, p. 253-4.

10. Compend, p. 254-5.

11. Luke Tyerman, Wesley's Designated Successor: The Life, Letters, and Literary Labors of the Rev. John William Fletcher, Vicar of Madely, Shropshire (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), p. 308. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Tyerman".

12. Fletcher, II, p. 356.

13. Tyerman, p. 311.

14. Compend, p. 255.

15. Compend, p. 258.

16. Compend, p. 267.

17. Compend, p. 264.

18. Arlene Donovan, dir. Places in the Heart, with Sally Field and John Makalovich. Tri-Star Pictures (CBS Fox), 1984.

Chapter III

1. Joseph Fletcher, "Medicine's Scientific Development and Resulting Ethical Problems", in Dialogue in Medicine and Theology, ed. Dale M. White (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), p. 149.

2. John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), p. 15. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Yoder".

3. Stanley Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 45. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Vision".

4. Vision, p. 67.

5. Justo Gonzalez, The Story of Christianity, Vol. II (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) p. 346-7.

6. E. Stanley Jones, The Choice Before Us (New York: Abingdon Press, 1937), p. 87. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Choice".

7. Choice, p. 87.

8. E. Stanley Jones, Is the Kingdom of God Realism? (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1940), p. 71. Hereafter, this work shall be referred to as "Realism".

9. Realism, p. 68.

10. Francis Randall, "Introduction" to the Samuel Moore translation of The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (New York: Washington Square Press, 1964), p. 16. Hereafter referred to as "Manifesto".

11. E. Stanley Jones, The Unshakeable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 115-20. Hereafter, referred to as "Unshakeable".

12. Unshakeable, p. 116.

13. Realism, p. 67

14. Manifesto, pp. 57-58.
15. Manifesto, p. 95.
16. Yoder, p. 63.
17. Yoder, p. 214.
18. Choice, p. 41.
19. Yoder, p. 248.
20. Yoder, p. 250.
21. Choice, p. 218-19.
22. Stanley Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), p. 60. Hereafter referred to as "Kingdom".
23. Kingdom, p. 98.
24. Kingdom, p. 98
25. Kingdom, p. 102.
26. Kingdom, p. 87.
27. This statement was made during a broadcast of The National Press Club, aired locally on WBKY-FM at 1:00 PM, 16 March 1988.
28. see Kingdom, discussion on pages 107-109.
29. Kingdom, p. 111.
30. Choice, p. 30.
31. This criticism was aired during a lecture entitled "Social Justice From a Biblical Perspective", delivered by Yoder at Asbury Theological Seminary on March 15, 1988.
32. Kingdom, p. 147.
33. Kingdom, p. 113.

Chapter IV

1. Robert A. Raines, New Life in the Church (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), On pages 81-82 Raines tells of a group of laymen that, when asked to define "Christian principles" spoke of general principles such as honesty, fairness, etc. that, though honorable, are not specifically Christian.

2. Lee, as quoted by Donald Dayton, in Discovering an Evangelical Heritage (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 81. Hereafter, this text shall be referred to as "Dayton".

3. Dayton, p. 114.

4. Scott, as quoted by Ira McLeister and Roy S. Nicholson in Conscience and Commitment (Marion, IN: The Wesley Press, 1976), p. 48. Hereafter, this text shall be referred to as "Conscience and Commitment".

5. Dayton, p. 76.

6. Oscar Cullman, Salvation in History (London: SCM Press, Ltd, 1967), p. 269.

7. Dayton, p. 125.

8. Harper, p. 119.

9. Conscience and Commitment, p. 8.

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