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Cultivating Our Conversation:
The Christian Practice of Nonviolent Discourse in the Public Square

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A.B., University of Georgia, 2009

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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Christian discourse in the public square in America today needs to be changed. This paper proposes that the practice of nonviolent discourse is necessary when Christians engage in the public square. The historical Augustinian dualism that leads to a divisive attitude of "us" vs. "them" must be rejected in favor of an inclusive manner of engagement. When speaking publicly, Christians should replace moral certitude with theological humility and allow an *agapic* ethic to inform their speech. In this way, nonviolent discourse represents a living faith that authentically reflects Jesus' commands to love one another. Jubilee Partners, an intentional Christian community, provides an example of this type of public nonviolent discourse.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On February 24, 2010, Paul Brandeis Rauschenbusch, Religion Editor of the news website Huffington Post, issued a call for "sane" religious Americans to "come out, come out wherever you are."[1] As the great-grandson of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis as well as Social Gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, he seems uniquely qualified to make such a request, somewhat embodying the intersection of secular and sacred. What Paul B. Rauschenbusch seeks is an improvement in the current climate of religious discourse in the United States. Whether or not we agree with Rauschenbusch's definition of what a "sane" religious American looks like, he, like many others, witnesses the lack of civility, in addition to outright anger and bitterness, in the speech of religious people in the public square. He raises a timely request for more "healthy and productive" discourse from people of faith.

It is not only the discourse of religious people in America that suffers from a lack of civility, though. In the wake of the recent tragic shootings in Tucson, AZ, President Obama asked all Americans to exercise more care in their conversation: "At a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized ... it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking

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[1] Paul Brandeis Rauschenbusch, "Dear Religious (And Sane) America," *Huffington Post*, February 24, 2010, under "Huffpost Religion," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-raushenbush/dear-religious-and-sane-a_b_473569.html# (accessed March 7, 2011).

with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds."[2] Every American, Obama asserts, should recognize the necessity of civility in discourse. I propose that Christians should do so even more.

In this paper, I assert that Christians *should* engage in the public square, and should do so in a specific manner. I agree with Charles Mathewes that "today we need to cultivate the public discourse of religious citizens, not further constrain it."[3] The question is, then: How do we cultivate the discourse of Christians in American today? Jesus told his disciples, "For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." (Mt.10.20, NRSV) If we truly take Jesus at his word, then it appears that something has gone terribly awry along the way. It is painfully obvious that Christians in public discourse today are not speaking in the spirit of a loving God.

Cultivating the public conversation of Christians in America presents a difficult task. To begin this project, I will examine the manner in which Christians view themselves in relation to culture and society. This requires a critical engagement of Augustinian conceptions of "the world." Once I define the relationship of Christians to society, I will make a case for the necessity of Christian engagement with society. Following that, many questions arise: What is that manner of engagement? What does it look like? What does it sound like? Where does it originate? Answering these questions leads to discussion of the

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[2] Helene Cooper and Jeff Zeleny, "In Tucson, Obama Urges Americans to New Era of Civility," *New York Times*, January 12, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/13/us/13obama.html (accessed January 13, 2011).

[3] Charles T. Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 7-8.

purpose of community in Christian identity and location, and the necessity of an *agapic* ethic in Christian discourse, which should be nonviolent discourse. To further demonstrate what I mean by "proper" Christian engagement in the public square, I will offer Jubilee Partners as an exemplar. The example of this community offers much from which the Christian church can learn. Through their work with refugees from around the world, as well as their protests of war and violence, Jubilee Partners community lives out their mission in both word and deed, and provide a positive example of engaging others, both Christian and secular, using nonviolent discourse.

In *Life Abundant*, Sallie McFague writes, "the purpose of theology is to glorify God by reflecting on how we might live better on the earth. Theology is about thinking, but it is not primarily an intellectual activity. It is a practical one."[4] This endeavor is likewise a practical pursuit, seeking the best way that we might glorify God, specifically in our public language. By glorifying God, I do not mean that my work will analyze the most efficient methods for evangelization or disciple-making. Rather, the intention here is to enhance public speech of Christians, whether speaking to other Christians, people of other faiths, or people who do not identify with any particular faith tradition. If we profess that God is a loving God and wills the best for humanity, how should we best cultivate our discourse so that it reflects these truths? As ambassadors of the risen Christ, and witnesses to the love of God, we must speak in a manner that is in accordance with our calling.

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[4] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 25.

The particular area of this study falls into the realm of theology some call "political theology." Theologians who work in this area date the usage of the term back to the age of the Stoics.[5] The work of Johann Baptiste Metz reintroduced its usage in modern theology.[6] My goal is not to posit a particular style of political theology, but to focus specifically on the issue of discourse. This work also does not intend to support a particular political system (Capitalism, Socialism, Marxism, etc.) or a particular political party (Democrat, Republican, etc.). Rather, it will present a particular manner of Christian engagement in the public square.

A work of this size and scope cannot pretend to cover all available information on this subject matter. Special attention will be given to Augustine and his modern interpreters, as well as theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and John Howard Yoder among others. Chapter 5, which presents the work of Jubilee Partners, an intentional Christian community in Northeast Georgia as an example for proper Christian discourse, will do so primarily from the writings and thoughts of Don Mosley, one of the founding members of that community. Mosley only represents one individual view of Jubilee Partners, but I believe that his perspective represents an accurate depiction of that community's core beliefs.

The primary goal of this paper is to find a way that Christians can engage in the public square that remains most true to their faith. The specific manner of

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[5] John B. Cobb Jr., *Process Theology as Political Theology*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 1. Numerous others agree with Cobb.

[6] Jürgen Moltmann et al., *Religion and Political Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

engagement addressed here is the way in which Christians speak in public, both to each other and to non-Christians. I argue that nonviolent discourse represents the proper way that Christians should engage in public speech. The chapters that follow seek to define this manner of nonviolent discourse.

Chapter 2: In the Beginning was Augustine…

The purpose of this section is to bring into light how Christians view themselves in relation to "the world," because the perceived relationship between one's self and "the world" underlies the way in which a Christian approaches public engagement. Language regarding "the world" exists throughout the books of the New Testament, but what is meant by "the world" is debated. Despite this confusion, many Christians share a common understanding of where they belong in relation to the world. A divisive "us" vs. "them" mentality pervades Christian thought, from early to modern theologians. This chapter will analyze the foundations of this thought and address the problems caused by a dualistic approach to engagement in the public square.

Augustine of Hippo, writing in the late 4th and early 5th centuries CE, continues to be the most influential historical commenter on this subject. In particular, his epic work, *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* or *The City of God against the Pagans*, laid a foundational groundwork for the Christian conceptions of the realm of God and the realm of "the world." The shadow cast by Augustine spread through the Middle Ages and still lingers today.

In addressing Augustine and *The City of God*, it must be noted that extreme difficulty exists in attempting to read Augustine into other contexts, as well as attempting to read other contexts into Augustine. The risk of an anachronistic interpretation presents itself whenever working with writings from this period. However, the continued influence of Augustinian thought, coupled by the prevalence of modern Augustinian interpreters, necessitates this task.

Examining the Two Cities

Augustine fittingly opens *The City of God against the Pagans* by proclaiming: "Most glorious is the city of God; whether in this passing age, where she dwells by faith as a pilgrim among the ungodly, or in the security of the eternal home which she now patiently awaits."[7] He thus introduces the Heavenly city as a "pilgrim" surrounded by the "ungodly" while on the path to an "eternal home" and then continues to use pilgrimage language throughout his work. This literary choice raises numerous theological questions regarding the nature of these "heavenly" pilgrims as well as questions regarding Augustine's motivation for using such language to describe the city of God. In the following pages, I analyze Augustine's reliance on the metaphorical language of pilgrimage and how that language effectively provides a method of understanding the role of a Christian in society, asking several questions regarding Augustine's pilgrimage metaphor: Who are these pilgrims? Where did they originate? Where are they going? And how do they interact with the earthly city?

The city of God does not sojourn alone in this world. Rather, it is paired with the city of this world. The two cities do not exist completely apart from each other, but "are present in this world mixed together and, in a certain sense, entangled with one another."[8] To address the question of identifying the pilgrims who belong to the heavenly city, then, we must determine how Augustine distinguishes the members of the city of God from the members of the city of this

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[7] Book I, Preface.
[8] XI, 1.

world. The perpetual intermingling of the cities adds to the difficulty of differentiating between the citizens of each. In order to provide a means for separating the two, Augustine posits that it is not necessarily the visible actions of a person, but the "quality of [one's] will" which is the defining trait that best defines the two types of citizens.[9]

In defining differences of human will, Augustine outlines the opposite natures of "flesh" and "spirit" as they pertain to human motive. Citizens of the earthly city "live according to the flesh" while the heavenly citizens "live according to the spirit."[10] In this distinction, Augustine carefully avoids connecting his metaphor with similar language from the philosophical thought attributed to Plato and his school. Augustine strongly rejects the Platonic notion of attributing evil to "flesh," which is itself a creation of God and must, therefore, be intrinsically good.[11] The "nature of 'flesh' is not evil in itself" but only becomes evil in the desire of the will.[12] The object of that desire distinguishes "good" from "evil."

Augustine portrays these desires as a dichotomy between the object of each person's love. The two cities, therefore, are "created by two loves" which stand in opposition. He defines the city of this world as possessing a "love of self extending even to contempt of God." Conversely, the city of God is identified as

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[9] XIV, 6.
[10] XIV, 1.
[11] XIV, 5.
[12] XIV, 2.

holding a "love of God extending to contempt of self."[13] One's ultimate desire, or love, is primary indicator of one's citizenship in either the heavenly city or the earthly city. The goals of the cities, then, are diametrically opposed, so much so that Augustine claims that the citizens of the earthly city find the city of God "odious" and thus bring suffering to the citizens of the city of God.[14]

The saints who suffer as pilgrims while mingled with the city of this world are not confined to one nation or ethnicity. In its pilgrimage, the heavenly city "summons citizens of all nations and every tongue" creating a godly society of pilgrims regardless of "differences in customs, laws, and institutions" dictated by their earthly homes.[15] Because the decisive characteristic of the citizens of the city of God is a proper desire for God, specifically a love of God above all other things, these citizens are found in all nations. Though physically apart, they metaphorically sojourn together during their time on Earth and are identifiable by their love.

Where does this pilgrimage begin? Augustine spends a considerable amount of time and effort outlining the origin of the two cities. He relies heavily on biblical interpretation, especially on the creation narratives found at the beginning of the book of Genesis. According to Genesis, God created heaven and earth, separated light and darkness, and created heavenly creatures as well as earthly creatures. The divergence of the two cities originates in this period,

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[13] XIV, 28.
[14] V, 16.
[15] XIX, 17.

specifically "in the difference that arose among the angels."[16] It should be noted here that these cities consist of both angels and humans, each divided according to their will. Augustine is clear to state that only two cities exist, not four, but that one city is "composed of the good angels and men together, and the other of the wicked."[17]

Tracing the historical narratives of the Hebrew Bible, Augustine expands his outline of the path taken by each city using Genesis accounts of traditional patriarchs and matriarchs. The story of Cain and Abel provides an opportunity to demarcate an ancient border between the two cities. The strife "which arose between Cain and Abel demonstrated the hostility between the two cities."[18] In this example, Cain, of course, represents the city of this world while Abel points to the city of God. Augustine notes that "Cain founded a city, whereas Abel, a pilgrim, did not found one."[19] These brothers symbolize for Augustine the divergent paths of the opposing citizens, one focused on this world and the other focused on the next.

Another Genesis example important to Augustine's argument is that of Isaac and Ishmael. These brothers offer a case study for Augustine's dichotomous explanation of "flesh" vs. "spirit." "Ishmael was born to the handmaid Hagar according to the flesh," but his younger sibling, Isaac, "was born

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[16] XI, 1.
[17] XII, 1.
[18] XV, 5.
[19] XV, 1.

to Sarah according to the promise."[20] Because of the promise realized in his birth, Isaac, for Augustine, is "rightly interpreted as signifying the children of grace, the citizens of the redeemed city, the companions in eternal peace."[21] Isaac and Ishmael, like Cain and Abel, further illustrate the division of the cities in history. But, again, it is important to remember that the cities, while on divergent paths, remain intermingled in earthly history. "Just as both cities began together, so throughout the history of the human race have they undergone the vicissitudes of time together."[22]

Where does this pilgrimage lead? After providing a detailed account of the origin and history of the cities, Augustine finally shifts his focus to his teleology. How will the cities end? At the time of final judgment, the citizens will then be forever separated, "one of which is predestined to reign in eternity with God, and the other of which will undergo eternal punishment with the devil."[23] At that time, the cities will cease to be mixed together and will reach their destinations, one of reward and one of punishment. The city of God will cease its pilgrimage then, for it shall reside "on high." Though it now has citizens on earth, they are only temporary pilgrims until then time when God's "Kingdom shall come."[24] An important distinction is visible here, that the city of God is not the Kingdom of God. For Augustine, the Kingdom is only a future possibility. The citizens of the city of God, then, have a higher aim as they sojourn through this world. Their

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[20] XV, 2.
[21] XV, 3.
[22] XVIII, 1.
[23] XV, 1.
[24] XV, 1.

goal is the "promised" eternal Kingdom of God, "where they will reign with their Prince, the king eternal, world without end."[25] Until that day, though, they must continue to live as pilgrims.

Now that the dividing line between earthly citizens and godly citizens is drawn, the pressing question becomes: how do the two interact? Some may be led to interpret Augustine's pilgrimage metaphor as justification for Christians to live completely separated from larger society. Augustine, however, disagrees. The people of the city of God make use of earthly institutions and structures as both cities "tend towards the same end of earthly peace."[26] Though the cities desire different types of "peace", or peace by different definitions, the godly citizens may actually work together with the worldly citizens to achieve peace in earthly time with the provision that these working structures "do not impede the religion by which we are taught that the one supreme and true God is to be worshipped."[27]

Both cities work for goods, or ideals, but in different ways with different motives.[28] These motives differ because of the wills of the citizens of each city, one desiring the love of God and one desiring the love of self. Each set of citizens also experience both good and evil in the world regardless of their citizenship, "but they do so with a different faith, a different hope, a different love."[29]

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[25] XV, 1.
[26] XIX, 17.
[27] Ibid.
[28] XV, 4.
[29] XVIII, 54.

Augustine's pilgrimage metaphor is important not only in showing the different faith, hope, and love of Christians, but also in providing a method by which Christians can simultaneously see themselves as *in* this world but not *of* this world. Paul's admonition in Romans 12 that Christians should not conform to this world is thus supported in full. Using metaphorical language, supported by his biblical interpretation, Augustine rhetorically constructs a proper city to which Christians may belong, but where they may also find room to work in and among the world. In his commentary on Augustine in *A Theology of Public Life*, Mathewes includes the phrase "*during* the world" with this pilgrimage, thus adding the temporal aspect to the spatial.[30]

One major problem exists in attempting to differentiate the citizens of the earthly city from the citizens of the city of God. R. A. Markus notes that this problem is not new, but has persisted from the beginning of the Christian religion. "Even in a world in which the Christian community was seen, and saw itself, as a sect, the problem of demarcating a realm of the secular from the profane – that is, between what might be acceptable and what would have to be repudiated – could not be avoided."[31] The question remains: What does it mean to be a citizen of one's earthly society while simultaneously remaining a "true citizen" of the kingdom of God. Robert Dodaro addresses this topic in his discussion of the "just society." He posits that citizenship, for Augustine, is perfected when combined with incorporation into the body of Christ. Christ's

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[30] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 16.

[31] R. A. Markus, *Christianity and the Secular* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 18-19.

communication "transfer[s] back to his members the virtues that are proper to himself."[32] Thus, members of the body of Christ, who we assume are citizens of the city of God, become more like Christ because of that participation in the "body."

Oliver O'Donovan discusses Christ's dual role as both "mediator of God's rule" as well as "representative individual."[33] The former relates to the Davidic rulers of Israel and the latter to prophetic Jeremiahs. Christ unites these functions in one persona and becomes "the *decisive* presence of God and the *decisive* presence of God's people."[34] O'Donovan cites Israel as the exemplar of God's right rule of the world. "The governing principle is the kingly rule of God, expressed in Israel's corporate existence and brought to the final effect in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus." For O'Donovan, "Israel's history must be read as a *history of redemption*." This means that readers and interpreters of that history must note "how certain principles of social and political life were vindicated by the action of God in the judgment and restoration of the people."[35]

The example of Christ's life, while useful for followers, presents an unattainable goal. Where, then, can a Christian find a human model of the proper Christian life? Dodaro writes that, for Augustine, Paul represents the

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[32] Robert Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 106.

[33] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 123.

[34] Ibid., 124.

[35] Ibid., 27.

ideal human. Paul was "aware of his own moral weakness."[36] This allows Paul to connect in sympathy with sinners in order to better love them. Additionally, this moral weakness makes Paul a good exemplar for practicing Christians who must also recognize their own weakness in humility.

Mathewes says that Augustine's "proposal of the use-paradigm was meant rhetorically, not to restrict his contemporaries' participation in the physical world, but to urge them toward such participation against their temptations at recoil from it."[37] This is not to say that Augustine only proposed his dual cities analogy as a persuasive tool. It does, in fact, reflect the way in which the saint perceived reality. However, Mathewes' point is that Augustine wrote extensively on the subject in order to exhort his fellow Christians to interact with the world and not withdraw from it. The problem is that this metaphor constitutively frames the interaction of Christians and the world as an "us" vs. "them" dichotomy.

Markus presses back against this dichotomy somewhat when he defines the secular as "that which belongs to this age and will have no part in the age to come, when Christ's kingship will hold universal sway."[38] From this perspective, the realms of secular and sacred are more of an "age" distinction than a "people" distinction. Still, a reading of Augustine's work reveals that, although the distinction may actually be between ages instead of persons, the dualism

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[36] Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine*, 213.
[37] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 90.
[38] Markus, *Christianity and the Secular*, 14.

continues to exist because people belong to one of the two ages. In Augustine's eschatological close of *The City of God*, a person either belongs to the heavenly city or they do not. In the end, there are still two types of people: the saved and the damned.

Reacting Against Augustine's Dualism

The division between good and evil is not as clear as we might think. To include oneself in the "saved" category and to relegate millions of others to be damned requires more than a little arrogance. My goal in this paper, though, is not to discuss who is "in" and who is "out," but to search for the best way for Christians to engage in society. Whether one believes in universal salvation or in eternal damnation for the wicked, entering the public square with an air of superiority based in certitude of salvation creates numerous rhetorical obstacles for one to overcome. In his forthcoming book, *Political Agape: A Defense of Prophetic Liberalism*, Timothy Jackson writes:

> I am wary of all sharp distinctions between "the world" and "the church," such that these become two separate communities or cultures governed in turn by entirely contrasting norms or narratives. Such separatism takes on an especially insidious form when it is coupled with doctrines of divine fatalism in which "the reprobate" are ineluctably damned to hell and "the elect" are equally inevitably going to heaven. Both the church and the world are, or ought to be, governed by the will of God and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Both the church and the world are called to freedom yet caught up in the contingencies of life.[39]

Both the church and world interact with each other. According to John Howard Yoder, early Christians viewed the state as "part of the world that opposes God,

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[39] Timothy P. Jackson, *Political Agape: A Defense of Prophetic Liberalism* (forthcoming), 14-15.

that is already defeated by Christ in principle, and over which the exalted Christ already rules until he has defeated his last enemy."[40] God allowed the state to temporarily exist, yet it does so as an entity against God.

The view that the church is sacred and that political systems are profane is ultimately, according to Jackson, a "Manichaean notion."[41] He argues that an Augustinian interpretation of the city of God and the city of this world represents a division of "fixed bodies" that do, in practice, interact but are fundamentally separated.[42] As discussed before, Augustine explains that the cities remain intermingled during this age, but maintains a separation, although not one that is easily identifiable. "Augustine did not identify the city of God with the visible institutional church; no one, save God, can know for sure who is a member of which city."[43] Despite our lack of knowledge regarding who is a member of each city, God knows. And that citizenship is unchanging and permanent. This reflects a problematic divide between the damned and the elect. This "hard and fast" distinction encourages a discourse of difference in which the other is seen as irreparably misguided and just plain wrong.

In *The Crucified God*, Jürgen Moltmann reflected at length on Paul's statement in the fifth chapter of Romans that Jesus died "for us." But who is included in the "us" that Jesus represents? Moltmann, here, equates the phrases

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[40] John Howard Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 20.
[41] Jackson, *Political Agape*, 15.
[42] Ibid., 18.
[43] Ibid.

"for us" and "for all."[44] The nature of Jesus' death as victim identifies him with those throughout history that have also been victimized. The atheist, the Christian, the Muslim, the Jew, the oppressors and the oppressed must all be included in "us". Jesus acts in some way as personal representative for all in order to bring about redemption and liberation. In the crucifixion and resurrection, God chose to "communicate" God's "liberating righteousness" through Christ.[45] But how does this message reach those outside of the faith tradition represented by Christ?

Moltmann implicitly addresses that issue as he cites the centurion from Mark 15 who upon witnessing the death and forsakenness of Jesus states, "Truly, this man was the son of God."[46] The centurion was a Gentile and likely oversaw the crucifixion proceedings. He stood outside of Jewish tradition and law and represented Roman oppression and cruelty, yet recognized the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with God. The centurion's role in Mark's narrative sets the foundation for the extension of salvation beyond the borders of Israel. God's message of liberation is now proclaimed "for all the world."[47]

This worldwide proclamation of the theology of the cross demands the removal of distinctions, including any division between those inside and outside of Christianity. The removal of these barriers leads to a "true Christian

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[44] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 185.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 193.
[47] Ibid.

universalism."[48] In it, all are afforded the opportunity to participate in the new creation which is offered in the resurrection of the crucified God, the God who is "the human God of all godless men and those who have been abandoned by God."[49] The universality of this message is only made possible by the resurrection of the crucified one. To illustrate, Moltmann offers a vivid mental image of Christ standing "between the slaughtered God and his apathetic, witless slaughterers."[50] In the crucifixion and resurrection God chose to take on the guilt of sin and to take on the humiliation of the cross so that all may be redeemed.

Moltmann's emphasis on the centrality of the cross event and its universal goal should encourage Christians to a discourse that rejects the "us" vs. "them" dichotomy. Ellen Ott Marshall, in *Christians in the Public Square*, argues that "the mandate to inclusive love is betrayed by a religious expression that adopts the rhetoric of division."[51] Jesus' loving act, in his incarnation, life, death and resurrection, is *for all* and thus demands that Christians engage the world in a manner which *includes all*. At the same time, Christians must remember to reserve judgment for God alone. By attempting to divide "us" from the "the world," Christians imply a level of divine insight. Mathewes recognizes this, arguing that by "naming" the world, "we define it."[52]

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[48] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 194.
[49] Ibid., 195.
[50] Ibid., 307.
[51] Ellen Ott Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square: Faith that Transforms Politics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), xix.
[52] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 15.

Engaging in the Public Square

In arguing that Christians should engage in the public square, one must define what is meant by the term itself. Marshall says that "the public square is everywhere."[53] Further, she defines the public square as "any place where people with different sources of authority meet to discuss issues that affect other people as well."[54] The term "square" paints a visual image of a prominent location in the center of a community, while "public" is, of course, the opposite of "private." For the purpose of my work, I agree with Marshall's definition, while adding the distinction that both the issues that are discussed as well as the discussion itself are public. Thus the public square can exist in virtually any physical location where two or more persons gather to publicly engage in discourse regarding issues that affect the public.

Christians cannot avoid, nor should they avoid, the public square. Metz believes that "any theology that intends to be critically responsible for the Christian faith...cannot ignore 'social' and 'practical' issues."[55] An authentic expression of Christianity must keep a close eye on the problems of society and then respond to those issues in a loving and healing manner. To follow Jesus is not to ignore the world. Tolstoy argues, "To affirm that the Christian doctrine refers only to personal salvation, and has no bearing upon state affairs, is a great error."[56] The call of Christ exhorts Christians to live *in* the world and to

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[53] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, xxi.
[54] Ibid., 73.
[55] Moltmann et al., *Religion and Political Society*, 177.
[56] Leo Tolstoy, *What I Believe* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 21.

transform the world in the image of God's love. As Mathewes writes, "This is not a matter of argument. Christianity *just is* a public religion. It is not a mystery cult, nor is it fundamentally esoteric; it lives in public."[57]

William Newton Clarke opposed an Augustinian view of only looking above and within for the Kingdom of God; one must also look without and around. Clarke proposed a "triad" composed of God, Self and Neighbor.[58] In this view, the Kingdom of God is all around us. This includes all people and the relationships that exist between all. If the public square is all around, then the Kingdom of the public often overlap. In Clarke's view, God works in society and calls people to a higher ethic of interacting with each other. Echoing Jesus' comments on the greatest commandments, Clarke believes that we serve God by serving one another.

Christian living, according to McFague, necessarily includes "working for an alternative world"[59] This is not an otherworldly supernatural alternative but working for a change in the world in which we currently live. McFague outlines her suggestion of what type of world that should be, but for our purposes the importance is that she views the "work" as a "prime directive."[60] Disengagement is not an option. In his seminal work on this subject, *Christ and Culture,* H. Richard Niebuhr writes that "we have not chosen" to be human, to be reasoning, to be social, to be here now, but we are and we must operate in this place, at this

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[57] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 25.
[58] William Newton Clarke, "God in Human Life," in *Sources of Christian Theology in America*, ed. James Duke and Mark Toulouse (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 267-273.
[59] McFague, *Life Abundant*, 11.
[60] Ibid.

time, as we are.[61] Christians are not completely free in this sense, but are constrained by our situation *in the world*.

While Christians should not withdraw from society, Christians also should not become content with the world as it is. Mathewes says it best; "a saint can be all sorts of things – sad, angry, crabby, happy, dumb, cantankerous, beatific – but she or he cannot be complacent; coming to appreciate the difference between being at peace and being complacent is one of the most basic lessons saints can teach us."[62] The status quo will not do. This is not to say that Christians should work to bring about some sort of new Christendom, in which "the world" is ruled by Christians, but that Christian individuals and Christian communities *must* engage in the public square as part of living out their calling in Christ.

Many Christians disagree on the means by which one can measure the effectiveness of this public engagement. Yoder rejects this focus on instrumental goals as a measure of success. Tom Harder quotes Yoder:

> We are not marching to Zion because we think that by our own momentum we can get there. But that is still where we are going. We are marching to Zion because when God lets down from heaven the new Jerusalem prepared for us, we want to be the kind of people and the kind of community that will not feel strange there ... Those for whom Jesus Christ is the hope of the world will for this reason not measure their contemporary social involvement by its efficacy for tomorrow nor by its success in providing work, or freedom, or food or in building new social structures, but by

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[61] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 250.
[62] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 13.

> identifying with the Lord in whom they have placed their trust. This is why it is sure to succeed.[63]

Harder clarifies that Yoder is not arguing for a complete lack of concern for effectiveness.[64] The question is not whether one should or should not be effective. The question is who shall be the judge of one's effectiveness. According to Yoder, Christians should operate in faith that the will of God will be done, and the Christian should focus on being true to one's calling, thus working towards God's will.

Numerous people, both Christian and non-Christian, raise the "question of whether Jesus was a political person at all."[65] The argument against bringing one's faith into the public square is that Jesus did not enter politics or speak about what Rome should do. For some, "*render unto Caesar what is Caesar's*" means that we should leave politics in the realm of the secular and keep faith to the church. But the vast majority of Christians in America today are already entered into both arenas simultaneously. How, then, can we wear one hat here and another there? Can I be solely a citizen in the voting booth and solely a Christian in the pew?

This line of thinking creates a dual personality form of Christianity which denies God's calling for Christians to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world." Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* claims "not only that Jesus is, according to biblical witness, a model of radical political action, but that this is now visible

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[63] Tom Harder, "The Dichotomy Between Faithfulness and Effectiveness in the Peace Theology of John Howard Yoder," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 81 (April 2007): 230.

[64] Ibid., 232.

[65] Yoder, *Discipleship As Political Responsibility*, 54.

throughout New Testament studies."[66] Yoder recognizes that Jesus is not normative for social ethics, but concludes that the example of Christ is not one that is apolitical. For the earliest followers of Jesus Christ in the first century, "the question was not whether to enter but how to *be* there."[67] Though Christians in American today live in a context vastly different from 1st century Palestine, the question remains the same.

What is the place of one's Christian faith when one is engaged in the public square? Marshall believes that faith should enter "the public square as a participant."[68] By this, she does not imply that faith deserves special treatment at the public table, only that faith deserves a place at that table. When a Christian, or any person of faith, enters the public square, leaving one's commitment to her or his faith behind amounts to a denial of that faith, as well as a denial of one's true self.

But our commitment should not be to self only, but to other (as a commitment to God). By this, I mean that a serious discussion of working for the kingdom of God comes into play. Where Augustine believed that the kingdom will never fully arrive until the eschaton, others disagree. Social Gospel theologian Walter Rauschenbusch argues that Christians should be working to bring about God's kingdom *now*. For Rauschenbusch and his theology of the social gospel, this means working for a collective salvation. If Moltmann was

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[66] John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 2.

[67] John Howard Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, 1st ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 56.

[68] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 111.

correct that Jesus offers salvation "for us," for all of us, then the social gospel makes a good point that we should seek the salvation of all. Rauschenbusch views arguments for personal salvation over collective salvation as a display of selfishness that runs against the teachings of Christ.[69]

Deep theological and ontological problems exist in a worldview which pits the relationship between Christianity and the world as "us" vs. "them." A more inclusive view of humanity reflects the love of God for each person and necessitates an active engagement in the public square. As this form of engagement is not only concerned with the individual self, it also does not originate from a location of solitude. It has both a collective concern and a collective origin. The following chapter addresses the necessity of community in the formation of Christian engagement.

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[69] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

Chapter 3: We are a Communal People

Christianity is not a religion of isolation but one of communion, both communion with God and communion with others. Luther Smith notes that intentional communities exhibit a special attractiveness because of a "fundamental awareness that Christian faith is living not only in covenantal relationship with God but with companions of the faith pilgrimage."[70] Most Christians choose not to live in intentional community but seek these relationships within the church. The problem is that we tend not to be very good at building and sustaining "covenantal" relationships. Community of this kind requires much work, much dedication and much patience. It seems to be easier to rely on one's self, attempting to forge the path of life independently. However, I argue in this chapter that community is a fundamental necessity for Christian life, and thus for the practice of Christian engagement in the public square.

It comes as no surprise that the communal aspect of Christianity so often conflicts with the Western ideology prevalent in the United States. Mathewes observes that "we seem more committed to living in the vicinity of one another than to life genuinely with one another."[71] This is highly problematic. The call to be a Christian includes the call to interact with others in a community of faith, as well as others in larger society. Not only should we rely on community for support, love and fellowship, but we need community to help us understand

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[70] Luther E. Smith Jr., *Intimacy and Mission: Intentional Community as Crucible for Radical Discipleship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007), 80.

[71] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 10.

ourselves, our world and our relationship with God. Niebuhr, again in *Christ and Culture,* writes:

> Our individual Christian decisions are not individualistic...because they cannot be made in solitariness on the basis of a truth that is 'true for me.' We do not confront an isolated Christ known to us apart from a company of witnesses who surround him, point to him, interpret this and that feature of his presence, explain to us the meaning of his words, direct our attention to his relations with the Father and the Spirit. Without direct confrontation there is not truth for me in all such testimony; but without companions, collaborators, teachers, corroborating witnesses, I am at the mercy of my imaginations.[72]

Without a connection with others in community, we lack the resources to fully interpret our life experiences. Experience is a key element as both a source and a norm of our theology, and that experience does not operate in a vacuum. Marshall writes that "we draw on experience communally as well as individually."[73] When Christians reflect on these experiences together, churches become, according to Mathewes, "communities of interpretation."[74]

As the church functions as an interpretive community, the members within that church must learn the skill of listening both to one another and to the outside community in which they reside. Smith, writing on the importance of listening in community life, observes that "although the church is to be a herald of God's good news, its speech must be informed by what it has heard. Before we speak, we must listen."[75] The practice of listening not only ingratiates oneself to

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[72] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 245.
[73] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 50.
[74] Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life*, 103.
[75] Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 66.

others but is a necessity in the understanding of others. And understanding others is a prerequisite for dialogue.

Because of the importance of the community in Christian life, one cannot presume that Christians engage in the public square solely in an individual manner. The starting point of public engagement for a Christian must be his or her community of faith. It is the Christian community which aides our interpretation of our experience and it is from that same community that we must originate our public engagement. Yoder argues that "the church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately."[76] If the world is to be like the church, then the Christian should act the same in each area. What is our model for this interaction?

Moltmann argues that we find our model in the relationships of the persons of the Trinity. Our actions toward each other and toward our world must mirror Trinitarian relationships:

> We must ask which political options are in accord with the convictions of the Christian faith. We have said that it is not the monarch or a ruler that corresponds to the triune God; it is the community of men and women, without privileges and without subjugation. The three divine Persons have everything in common, except for their personal characteristics. So the Trinity corresponds to a community in which people are defined through their relations with one another and in their significance for one another, not in opposition to one another, in terms of power and possession.[77]

How does Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, its relations and unity, affect political and/or social order? He specifically argues against Monarchianism

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[76] Yoder, *Priestly Kingdom*, 92.

[77] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 198.

within the kingdom of God or any earthly kingdom. Throughout history, nations used monotheistic thought to support a king ruling in the "place of God on earth."[78] Moltmann's language of fellowship and unity within the Trinity prohibits such hierarchical structures and "vanquishes" monotheistic monarchy.[79] Trinitarian doctrine does not support an absolute political ruler because no one divine Person within the Godhead dominates or rules any of the others.

Likewise, a Christian community must also respond in a manner supported by Trinitarian example. The commonality found in the Trinity reminds one of the "fellowship of believers" found in the book of Acts. The notion of one's self being defined in relation to others stands in stark contrast to the rampant consumerism and individualism found in modern Western society where wealth and power normally define a person's worth in society. Moltmann answers that "the divine image is not the individual" but that God's image is community.[80] One's worth does not come by accumulating possessions but by one's love and fellowship with the community.

Moltmann's argument here sounds much like *ubuntu*, an African concept which is highly influential in the theology of Archbishop Desmond Tutu as well as others. Michael Battle defines *ubuntu* as "an African concept of personhood in which the identity of self is understood to be formed interdependently through

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[78] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 196.
[79] Ibid., 197.
[80] Ibid., 199.

community."[81] This emphasis on interdependence, according to Battle, could be confused in the Western worldview with "*codependence*, a pathological condition in which people share a dependence on something that is not life-giving, such as alcohol or drugs."[82] Unlike codependence, communal interdependence *is* life-giving in that true community enriches the lives of those involved.

Ubuntu theology, as taught by Tutu, excludes competitiveness."[83] Moltmann argues that Western history, in the competitive spirit of Colonialism, normally teaches that "freedom" equals "rule."[84] This means that the party or class that holds the most power within a society also has the most freedom. In this system, people struggle with each other in order to "win" individual freedom. Moltmann exposes this as a lie that "destroys community.[85] One who lords over another not only prohibits the other's freedom but also limits their own freedom to truly know that person and to truly love that person.

To be truly free, one must demonstrate love for the other. Love is not an individual emotion. Rather, it is communal by its very nature. Moltmann defines God's unity in terms of eternally sharing divine love. That directly reflects his view that freedom in God means freedom to love one another. Participating in this loving community means becoming "free beyond the limits of individuality"

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[81] Michael Battle and Desmond Tutu, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2009), 1-2.

[82] Ibid., 2.

[83] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 41.

[84] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 214.

[85] Ibid., 216.

to experience a truly free "solidarity" in the "uniting of isolated individuals."[86] To love in this manner requires one to be vulnerable to the other. Reflecting on Tutu's theology, Battle explains that "*Ubuntu*, for Tutu, is the environment of vulnerability that builds true community."[87]

Just as Moltmann presents the persons of the Trinity being defined by their relational aspect, *ubuntu* teaches that "each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others."[88] Going a step further, Tutu argues that these relationships exist ideally in the church and as the church becomes a witness of a loving God to world.[89] In our relationships within our community of faith, we find our true selves. "Just as the Son and the Holy Spirit are defined by the Father, so is personhood defined in the other."[90] As we find our personal identity in community, the community defines itself by the way in which it functions in the world. As communities, Marshall writes, "we become what we do."[91]

Community, then, becomes a location of formation. Howard Thurman recognizes this important aspect of community and made it a priority throughout his life. In his book on Thurman, *Mystic as Prophet*, Smith observes that "the inner life's teleology is to bring the Kingdom of God into reality – to form a world

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[86] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 216.
[87] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 40.
[88] Ibid., 39.
[89] Ibid., 44.
[90] Ibid., 46.
[91] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 4.

community where personality has a free environment in which to seek its potential, and in which love gives harmony to relationships."[92]

The importance of community as a location for spiritual formation as well as a reflection of the image of God cannot be ignored by Christians. In engaging the public square, one must recognize the interrelatedness of all creation and the necessity of beginning with community. This is not to say that one's own community supersedes the importance of larger society. The particular significance of one's community must be balanced with the value of the universal community of all humanity.

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[92] Luther E. Smith Jr., *Howard Thurman: The Mystic as Prophet* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2007), 36.

Chapter 4: A Nonviolent Discourse

Thus far, I have outlined a case for *why* Christians should engage in the public square and from *where* that engagement originates. The following chapter will now discuss *what* Christian discourse in the public square should look like. Throughout this work, I mostly avoid the term "dialogue," though I do not believe it to be a negative concept. It is, in my opinion, an overused term today. I argue here that the ethic of *agape* should serve as the underlying factor influencing the way in which Christians speak in public. An agapic love ethic necessitates a commitment to nonviolent discourse. By "nonviolent discourse," I do not mean to imply that Christians must only support pacifism, but that Christians should speak in a nonviolent manner. This chapter is dedicated to supporting this point.

An ethic of nonviolence recognizes the interconnection of all life. Here, we are discussing human interaction, so we will focus on the interconnectivity of all human beings. In *Christians in the Public Square*, Marshall quotes numerous leaders in nonviolence, including Thich Nhat Hanh, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr., who all recognize this truth as a foundational basis for their nonviolence.[93] Those voices reflect leadership from a variety of religions while affirming the same sense of seeing something of the divine in other people.

Howard Thurman likewise recognized the interrelations of all people and the connection of the divine within each person. These connections allow the

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[93] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 6-10.

formation of community and love must be the foundational characteristic of relationships within that community.[94] For Christians, this love of other reflects an *agapic* ethic and the command of Jesus: "'You shall love the Lord your God will all your heart, and will all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hand all the law and prophets." (Mt 22:37-40, NRSV) Seeing God in the other means that loving neighbor is intrinsically connected to loving God.

The ability to see God in other requires spiritual practice. Marshall calls this the moral imagination, which she defines as "that faculty that enables us to perceive deep connections running beneath social, ideological, religious and political divisions."[95] It is a gift that we must continually cultivate as part of our own spiritual growth and this cultivation is best done in community. A community of like-minded individuals, though, will not be most helpful here. When we surround ourselves with only those people who agree with our political and social views, we risk losing sight of the humanity of those who disagree with us. Don Saliers and Henry Knight warn about this tendency to lose sight of the other and our inclination to apply "hard names" which identify, not the person, but a caricature of that person's ideology. Examples of "hard names" include "conservative," "liberal," "fundamentalist," etc. The problem with applying "hard names" to others is that it de-humanizes the other, reduces the other to an

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[94] Smith, *Howard Thurman*, 51.
[95] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 28.

ideology, and gives permission to devalue their relationship to God. All of this results in an increased difficulty in finding ways to love the other.[96]

These "hard names" also carry the implication that those beliefs of others that conflict with one's own beliefs are entirely wrong. Labeling someone is a form of defining that person, often times without their permission. Instead, we must retain a sense of moral ambiguity in our public discourse.[97] Drawing on Marshall's discussion, it is imperative that we realize the need to overcome the fear of admitting doubt in one's own faith, ideology or theology. Charles Schultz' comic strip *Peanuts* provides a succinct example of the problem described here. In this particular comic, the dog, Snoopy, is writing a book on Theology. His owner, Charlie Brown, suggests that Snoopy have a good title in mind for his book. Snoopy replies that he does, indeed, have the perfect title selected: "*Has It Ever Occurred to You That You Might Be Wrong*?"[98]

We cannot continue to emit an air of certitude regarding faith and morality, lest we will further alienate ourselves from everyone, and from God. A friend told me once that changing one's mind on a subject means that "you really didn't believe it in the first place." I am still baffled by this statement. The converse of this implies that if one holds a belief strongly then he or she should never entertain the possibility that their mind could be changed. At that point,

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[96] Don E. Saliers and Henry H. Knight, III, *The Conversation Matters: Why United Methodist Should Talk With One Another* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 66-67.
[97] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 36.
[98] Charles Schultz, "Peanuts," August 9, 1976.

any possibility of an actual discussion on the matter is closed and it simply becomes an attempt to convince others of your correctness.

Tolstoy describes a scene much like this in his *Confession*. He records his observation that Christians of his class "were living in a lie." The "lie" exposed by Tolstoy was that the Christian church is "in possession of the only truth possible." Anyone who believes otherwise is labeled a heretic and thus condemned to damnation. Beyond that, even other Christians who failed to "adopt the same outward symbols and expressions of faith" were deemed enemies of the church.[99] This form of theological superiority described by Tolstoy is, unfortunately, not confined to his time. We can see evidence of this today.

The tragedy that Tolstoy describes occurs when the very types of people whom "Christ denounced came to consider themselves the sole preachers and expositors of His doctrines."[100] The people of whom Tolstoy describes are those who speak as though God's will is something that is in our possession. We fall into this trap especially in our tendency to fashion our God-talk in the language of I-talk. Marshall keenly notes that "there is a difference between God's will and our discernment of it."[101] To enter the public square from a location of theological certitude is to engage others with a sense of superiority. A nonviolent discourse requires one to remain open to the beliefs of others. Not that one must

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[99] Leo Tolstoy, *Confession*, trans. David Patterson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), 85-86.

[100] Leo Tolstoy, "Nonresistance to Evil," in *Nonviolence in Theory and Practice* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1990), 49.

[101] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 76.

deny one's own convictions, but that one retains a humble sense that no one owns God's will.

Nonviolent Engagement

The lessons of Stanley Hauerwas and his ethic of Christian nonviolence provide much that is applicable to nonviolent discourse. In *Priority of Love*, Jackson argues that "an obvious implication of [Hauerwas's] pacifism is that believers must refrain from participating in the army, police forces, and probably much of electoral politics."[102] To what extent, though, should believers refrain? This is somewhat difficult to define. In *Against the Nations*, Hauerwas writes, "I have no interest in legitimating and/or recommending a withdrawal of Christians or the church from social or political affairs. I simply want them to be there as Christians and as church."[103] The trick, then, is to determine exactly what is meant by being there as Christians and as church.

How can one be a principled Hauerwasian pacifist and still participate in a political system which is supported by violent means, or at least the threat of violent means? This appears to be a bit paradoxical. If Hauerwas bases his belief in pacifism on a following of the life of Christ, then it certainly does logically follow that Christians should remain engaged with society, at least to some degree. Jesus secluded himself in the wilderness for 40 days but then spent the remainder of his ministry intermingling with the masses. Therefore, Christians

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[102] Timothy P. Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice*, illustrated edition. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 99.

[103] Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations: War and Survival in a Liberal Society* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 1.

should be involved in public life, but how? Hauerwas argues that while Christianity requires a commitment to nonviolence, it "does not require withdrawal from the world and the world's violence. Rather, it requires the Christian to be in the world with an enthusiasm that cannot be defeated."[104] What is this enthusiasm and where does it originate?

The answer, I believe, is evident in the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. While Hauerwas hesitates to connect his basis for nonviolence in *agape*, King leans heavily on the Christian love. It is from a deeply rooted investment in *agapic* love that one finds proper enthusiasm for public engagement. Hauerwas wants to base all of his pacifism on the life of Jesus and what it means to be a follower of Christ. However, others argue that being a follower of Jesus necessitates imitating the love of Christ.

Like Hauerwas, King speaks of grounding nonviolence in the life of a community. Heavily influenced by the likes of Josiah Royce and Howard Thurman, King connects nonviolence with the beloved community, rejecting the practicality of world for the hope of the Kingdom:

> My friends, we have followed the so-called practical way for too long a time now, and it has led inexorably to deeper confusion and chaos. Time is cluttered with the wreckage of communities which surrendered to hatred and violence. For the salvation of our nation and the salvation of mankind, we must follow another way. This does not mean that we abandon our righteous efforts. With every ounce of our energy we must continue to rid this nation of the incubus of segregation. But we shall not in the process relinquish our privilege and our obligation to love. While abhorring

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[104] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 424.

> segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community.[105]

In his trademark rhetorical grandeur, King eloquently builds a strong case for connecting pacifism with *agape*. The "enthusiasm that cannot be defeated" of Hauerwas seems to echo the "every ounce of our energy" of which King speaks. King points to historical example of communities being brought down by violence. While many argue that nonviolence is not always a practical means of engagement, it seems that history testifies that violence, as King says, always leads to more violence.

Many critics argue that pacifism is simply unrealistic and actually amounts to weakness. In the extreme, they say, nonviolence cannot work. Honestly, most Christians do not follow a strong form of pacifism, so it remains to be seen what would happen if they did. One community of Christians that actually does live out a completely nonviolent life is the Amish community. To draw out the extreme nature of their commitment to nonviolence, I turn to the tale of an eighteenth century Amish settler in Pennsylvania named Jacob Hochstetler. This is a well-known story that continues to be passed down in Amish life.

The setting is colonial Pennsylvania during the French and Indian War. During the middle of the night, Native Americans attacked the home of Jacob Hochstetler and his family. Christian and Joseph Hochstetler, Jacob's sons, both attempted to get their hunting guns but Jacob stopped them. Like all Amish, the

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[105] Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*, Gift ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 50.

Hochstetlers always avoided the use of violence. Jacob and his family hid in the cellar and did not fight back that night. The Native Americans killed Jacob's wife, a son and a daughter, and Jacob himself was wounded.[106]

To many, this story portrays a foolish and weak father who sacrifices his family for his principles. To the Amish, Jacob Hochstetler is a hero because he refused to sacrifice those principles, even in the face of death. Not only would Jacob forgo violent means for his own self-defense, but he refused to resist with violence to protect his wife and children.

As a husband and father of two children, I cannot imagine being in Jacob Hochstetler's shoes. I am a Christian and I do not hesitate to speak strongly and passionately about nonviolence and the example of Jesus. I readily claim to be a Christian pacifist like Hauerwas and King, but I cannot with good conscience say that I am a pacifist in the mold of Hochstetler. When faced with the immediate threat of extreme violence against my own family, I suspect that I would react differently. Would it make a difference if the threat were one of violent rhetoric only? If someone speaks harshly against my family, how should I respond?

In that situation, how can one speak out against the violent rhetoric without condemning the rhetor? King wrote, "While abhorring segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community."[107] He is, of course, following the command of Jesus to love one's

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[106] Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David L. Weaver-Zercher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 103.

[107] King, *Strength to Love*, 50.

enemy. *Agape*, Christian love, necessitates love for everyone. Whether the traditional self-denying love, or a modernized *agapic* mutuality reflecting new theological trends, this love extends to all without preference. King's intentional mark between segregation and the segregationist echoes the cliché, "love the sinner, hate the sin." This saying, though overused, contains deep truth.

In *The Kairos Document*, signed by over 150 South African theologians and church leaders during Apartheid, addressed this when pointing out the problem with the Church's common understanding of reconciliation: "'Church Theology' takes 'reconciliation' as the key to problem resolution. It talks about the need for reconciliation between white and black, or between all South Africans. 'Church Theology' often describes the Christian stance in following way: 'We must be fair. We must listen to both sides of the story. If the two sides can only meet to talk and negotiate they will sort out their differences and misunderstandings, and the conflict will be resolved.'" They then ask, is this Christian?[108] "No reconciliation is possible in South Africa *without justice*."[109] This is not to deny or diminish the importance of reconciliation, but is intended to dissuade Christians from embracing a superficial version of this important value.

The development of a nonviolent discourse is a crucial task and one that should be approached carefully. Discourse has the power to define both

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[108] Kairos Theologians, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church, A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 25-26.

[109] Ibid., 27.

individuals and communities. It expresses who we are to the world and constitutively molds us as we participate in engagement. Benjamin Valentin writes, "Discourses do have influential power, and, therefore, consequences. Hence, they must be taken seriously. Precisely for this reason we must critically examine our discourses."[110]

Far too often, Christian leaders enter the public square with little caution and speak in ways that betray their faith convictions. When this happens, Christians who are supposedly represented by that leader cringe while opponents seize these opportunities to further build their straw man mischaracterizations. Marshall observes this phenomenon: "I know that the major spokespersons for progressive Christianity do not fully represent my views and my experiences. Why, then, do I think that the major spokespersons of the religious right fully represent the views of other individuals?"[111] Participating in a representative discourse is much easier than actually engaging with persons with whom we disagree, but it leads only to more division in our society. We eventually find ourselves arguing with a caricature of the other and find that we fail to see others for who they are, and thus fail to see God in them.

Saliers and Knight explain the implications of creating these straw man caricatures in which we attribute what believe that "we know the true motives of our opponents. They say one thing, we assent, but their real concern is

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[110] Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 107.

[111] Marshall, *Christians in the Public Square*, 24.

something else."[112] In doing so, we only recognize others for instrumental value while neglecting their intrinsic value as persons and as children of God. Saliers and Knight specifically address these issues within the United Methodist church, but we find that the same problems exist wherever Christians engage in the public square in America. As a solution, they propose a list of ten guidelines for civil discourse in the Methodist church. The title of their book, *The Conversation Matters*, conveys a major theme of my argument as well. It *does* matter how we engage in discourse with others. It matters not only to the persons with whom we engage, but it also matters to ourselves and our own faith journey as Christians in modern American society. Saliers and Knight's list of ten guidelines, then, translates well to any Christian in the public square. I thus present it here as a proposal for all of us:

"Ten guidelines for civility in the United Methodist Church:[113]

1. Respect the personhood of others, while engaging their ideas.
2. Carefully represent the views of those with whom we are in disagreement.
3. Be careful in defining terms, avoiding needless use of inflammatory words.
4. Be careful in the use of generalizations; where appropriate, offer specific evidence.
5. Seek to understand the experiences out of which others have arrived at their views. Hear the stories of others, as we share our own.
6. Exercise care that expressions of personal offence at the differing opinions of others not be used as a means of inhibiting dialogue.
7. Be a patient listener before formulating responses.

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[112] Saliers and Knight, *The Conversation Matters*, 70.
[113] Ibid., 73.

8. Be open to change in your own position and patient with the process of change in the thinking and behavior of others.

9. Make use of facilitators and mediators where communication can be served by it.

10. Always remember that people are defined, ultimately, by their relationship with God – not by the flaws we discover or think we discover in their views and actions."

Chapter 5: The Community of Jubilee, an Example of Nonviolent Discourse

To illustrate what I believe to be a proper Christian engagement with society, this chapter focuses on Jubilee Partners, an intentional Christian community in Comer, GA. The first section provides a history of the community and presents ways in which they model an ethic of nonviolence. Following that, I offer one particular member of the community as an individual exemplar.

In 1980, a small Christian community in northeast Georgia found their space and their calling. Though few in number, their voices combined to speak an ethic of nonviolence to the world. This community expressed nonviolence powerfully because they based their witness on action rather than on words alone. In their work of refugee resettlement, war protests, and opposition of the death penalty, Jubilee Partners provides an enlightening example of one way in which nonviolence may be expressed. This chapter will begin by exploring the formational principles of Jubilee Partners as narrated in their history. Special attention will be paid to the reasons underlying the community's decision to work with refugee resettlement. Next, this section will analyze three active nonviolent responses of the community: in their work with refugees, in their protests of war, and in their opposition to the death penalty. These examples will provide opportunities for critical analysis of Jubilee Partners as a communal voice of nonviolence.

Foundations of Jubilee

What does it mean to live in community? Throughout American history, various intentional religious communities have identified themselves in different

ways, but the constant among these groups is that they are, for the most part, defined by their practices. How they live together, how they work together, and, most importantly, how they share their lives with each other constitute the core identity of a community. Not all communities are created equally and some are more successful than others in agreeing upon their common identity. Smith writes, "The Christian identity is not only defined in terms of who we are as individuals of faith, it is also defined by who we are as a *community* of faith."[114] The community of faith at Jubilee Partners is a community centered on a commitment to follow Jesus Christ in a very specific way. Their beliefs put into actions originate with the formation of the community.

In the rural foothills of northeast Georgia, just outside the small town of Comer, GA, lie 260 acres of rolling forest and farmland. Planted here is a community which has touched the world. Jubilee Partners is home to a group of Christians dedicated to living out their faith *together*. Depending on the season, the community consists of about 25 staff members - approximately half are Partners and half are Volunteers - and roughly the same number of refugees. They live together, work together, eat together and play together. In faith, they live in Christian community, share with refugees and work for peace.[115]

This community's story begins with three families - the Karises, Mosleys and Weirs - who in 1979 left their communal life at Koinonia Partners in Americus, GA, with the intention of founding a similar community in northeast

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[114] Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 17-18.
[115] Jubilee Partners, website header, http://jubileepartners.org/ (accessed April 8, 2010).

Georgia. Though initially unsure of their mission, the discussions persistently revolved around the biblical theme of the year of Jubilee from the book of Leviticus. Tying in the Old Testament with the New, they found themselves returning to Jesus' first proclamation of his ministry in a synagogue in Nazareth:[116]

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> because he has anointed me
> to bring good news to the poor.
> He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
> and recovery of sight to the blind,
> to let the oppressed go free,
> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
> Luke 4:18-19 (NRSV)

These themes revolving around the Gospel connection with the poor, the captives, and the oppressed deeply moved the founding members of Jubilee. In these themes, they found their mission.

The community's decision to base their work in refugee resettlement made its way to Jubilee through a story *Newsweek* about the 'boat people' of Southeast Asia. The story detailed the plight of refugees who were driven from their homes by "war, hunger and oppression."[117] After reading the article, Don said, "I was sure we had found our work – or that we had been found by it. The biblical

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[116] Don Mosley and Joyce Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1996), 23.

[117] David Butler, et al., "Agony of the Boat People," *Newsweek* (United States edition), July 2, 1979, 42.

theme of Jubilee – 'the poor...captives...oppressed' – seemed suddenly to take on new meaning."[118]

Jubilee Partners began working hard to establish connections with churches and organizations that could provide support for a refugee welcome center. At the same time community members also connected with the local community in Comer and the surrounding area, both for the practical purpose of gaining community support and the theological calling to love their neighbors. Upon mailing their first newsletter, which announced their ministry to refugees, the Partners were flooded with positive responses. They learned that "many people had been sympathetic to the refugees but unclear about how they could respond."[119] In this community, though, Christians from many areas found a place to help. In the fall of 1980, Jubilee Partners welcomed the first group of refugees to their community. Fourteen Cubans arrived at Jubilee, thus signifying a major accomplishment for the community.[120] The Partners knew that much work waited in their future, but they could scarce have dreamed that in the following three decades they would welcome over 3000 refugees, construct nineteen buildings and share work, worship, and life with over 500 volunteers.[121]

One of the many things that makes this community successful is the model of communal life learned from the founders' experience at Koinonia Partners. Don Mosley recalls that Koinonia was the "ideal place from which to launch

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[118] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 31.
[119] Ibid., 34.
[120] Ibid., 40-44.
[121] Jubilee Partners, *Jubilee Partners Report*, October 2009, 1.

Jubilee Partners. Koinonia provided dramatic evidence that a handful of Christians can overcome great odds when the hold firmly to their beliefs."[122] Theological lessons learned from Koinonia, specifically those involving active faith, gave Jubilee their most valuable foundations. The influence of Clarence Jordan's teaching on the founders of Jubilee Partners loomed large in the early days. Jordan argued that "faith is a combination of both conviction and action" which cannot be separated and that a life of faith is lived "in *scorn* of the consequences."[123] Mosley and others returned to these sayings again and again throughout their community struggles.

The most important definition of faith gained from Jordan, though, came from his *Cotton Patch* translation of Hebrews 11:1, where he said that "faith is the turning of dreams into deeds." (CPV) The Partners clung to this message and continue to feature it prominently in their newsletter today.[124] Additionally, the community at Jubilee leans heavily on their roots in liberation theology. One entire wall within the community library is dedicated solely to books on the theology of liberation. The themes embraced by the community, reaching out to the poor, the oppressed, the captive, find a strong basis here.

Refugees: A Nonviolent Response

One major way in which Jubilee Partners provides an active voice of nonviolence is in their work with refugees. This is the mission with which they

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[122] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 24.
[123] Ibid., 25.
[124] Ibid., 33.

are most readily identified by those familiar with the community. Hosting a refugee welcome center provides a means for the community to respond to violence in two major ways. First, showing hospitality to refugees is an immediate reaction against existing violence in the homelands of the people that they host. The refugees flee from violence at home and Jubilee Partners responds with Christian hospitality. Second, this is a method of responding to their perceived violence of United States' oppressive immigration policies and atrocities. The following paragraphs will analyze these two aspects of Jubilee's refugee work.

From the pulpit of Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia, home of President Jimmy Carter, Don Mosley voiced his community's nonviolent response very clearly: "If we claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we must stop spending our money on weapons designed to destroy other nations. ... We must turn our efforts instead toward welcoming victims of wars into our communities."[125] These "efforts" manifested in actions both at home and abroad. One clear example of Jubilee's work to end violence in other nations came in Nicaragua in 1984. Mosley and others from Jubilee put their nonviolent faith into action and, in doing so, put themselves in harm's way. In a field of battle between the two sides of conflict, the volunteers marched into the middle of the standoff carrying a banner of peace and offering prayers for an end to violence. Mosley recalls that he "had come to Nicaragua a committed Christian pacifist, but

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[125] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 69.

knew [he] had not yet had to pay much of a price for that belief."[126] In this and other similar ventures, the Christians at Jubilee learned much about the cost that many pay for nonviolence. Moving from words to actions is much easier in a safe setting like Comer, GA. Doing so in the midst of war in places like Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala puts one's pacifism to a true test.

The community not only traveled to Central America to work for refugees, but they also put themselves in danger here in the United States. U.S. Immigration policies, especially those passed under the Reagan administration, proved to be oppressive to the flood of Central Americans seeking political asylum in the United States. The Jubilee community began to dream up a modern "Underground Railroad" to help funnel these refugees to safety.[127] These dreams became reality in the birth of the *Año de Jubileo* program.

The partners aided the passage of immigrants across the Rio Grande into the United States and then on to settlement in Canada. Sometimes this happened under the cover of darkness. Sometimes it happened openly as they rescued detainees from INS. They "bonded hundreds of people out of detention centers and brought them to Jubilee where they were interviewed by the Canadian consul in Atlanta. Almost everyone interviewed was accepted into Canada as a political refugee. Many lives were thus saved."[128] The bus used to transport these refugees, brightly painted in reds, oranges and yellows, "became a

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[126] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 151.
[127] Ibid., 80.
[128] Jubilee Partners, *Jubilee Partners Report, September 2010*.

symbol of hope."[129] It provided a strong visual representation of the community's mission "to proclaim release for prisoners ... to let the oppressed go free."

This was more than simply a charity mission. This was the community's putting their love of neighbor into tangible action. At the same time, help did not flow one-way from the community to the refugees. The members of Jubilee Partners consistently voice how much they learn from the people that they host. Pedro from El Salvador was an exemplary figure in this way. His story reinforced the idea to the community "that a commitment to nonviolence is more than just words."[130] Like many other refugees, Pedro paid a high price for his pacifism: loss of family and home, and risk of his own life. This community when taken as a whole, then, operates as a voice of nonviolence not only because of the work of the Partners and volunteers, but also because of the example of so many refugees who have passed through. These brave souls embody their nonviolent beliefs in very real ways.

Protesting War – Another Nonviolent Response

From 1951 to 1987, the "White Train" transported nuclear weapons across the United States by rail.[131] For numerous peace activists, this train became a symbol of the Cold War and of nuclear escalation. Protestors lined the railroads as the train passed, holding peace signs and attracting media attention.

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[129] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 107.
[130] Ibid., 126.
[131] "Pantex Donates Cold War Era Train Cars to Railroad Museum," *Partners in Preservation; Cultural Resources News form the Department of Energy* 2, no. 2 (August 2006): 5-7.

Occasionally, the more daring among them stood on the tracks in a sign of defiance. This train did not go unnoticed by Jubilee Partners as it actually passed along the railway through Comer, GA, on more than one occasion.

The community responded to the White Train in a similar manner to other activists around the country. However, they enhanced the capabilities of these protests by designing intricate programs to track the progress of the train and predict its path. Though the government attempted to disguise the railroad cars by painting them in different colors, the nonviolent activists continued to greet the train's passing with peaceful demonstrations.[132] The symbolic act of voicing opposition to the transportation of nuclear arms in the United States offers an opportunity for transformation. Embodying peace in a visible manner such as this provides a strong witness.

The protest against nuclear proliferation again reflects the foundational beliefs of Jubilee Partners and their focus on the nonviolent message of Christianity. The most authentic manifestation of their faith, they believe, necessitates speaking out against all forms of war and violence. Here, they turn to their Koinonia roots and its founder Clarence Jordan who "insisted that Christians should love their enemies, not drop nuclear bombs on them."[133] While that may sound simplistic, it reflects a deeply held theological understanding of Jesus' teaching on *agape*. This love for all should permeate every aspect of

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[132] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 233-239.
[133] Ibid., 24.

Christian life, and therefore, should affect every aspect of the Christian community.

A Nonviolent Response to the Death Penalty

A small cemetery lies in a clearing of the woods at Jubilee Partners. This cemetery provides one more tangible example of the community's nonviolent ethic. It began in a simple manner when Jesus Torres, a resident refugee, died on Christmas morning in the early years of the community. Upon later reflection, the community realized that when selecting the site for the communal graveyard, they had no idea "that this little clearing in the woods would become a focal point of public resentment in the years ahead."[134]

While their efforts in protesting the White Train did not gather much local attention, their stance against death penalty surely did.[135] In addition to holding vigils on execution days in nearby Athens, GA, the community offered burial to the executed prisoners in their communal cemetery. The burial services prompted questions from many refuges, which provided an opportunity for the community to explain their belief in *agapic* love, which includes love of one's enemy. As Christ's love lives in them, the community members share this life-giving love. This cemetery, then, stands as a sanctuary honoring life, not reflecting death.

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[134] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 52.
[135] Ibid., 239.

Moved by this transformational love, many refugees came to participate in the burial services. One community member, Robbie, recalled that "the Central Americans would help us dig the grave. They insisted on doing that. They did so almost religiously."[136] Those in attendance testified that the presence of God was there in these funerals. This is another way in which the community moves beyond words of nonviolence into nonviolent actions. It is one thing to hold a vigil during a state-sanctioned execution. But actually obtaining that person's body and burying the executed goes well beyond holding candles. It demonstrates a much deeper level of commitment, one which seems to be rarely seen in contemporary American culture. While the cemetery is the most controversial space at Jubilee, it is also the brightest example of Christian love.

Critical Response

What is it that makes Jubilee Partners an effective voice of nonviolence? I believe that the consistency of their message of love and peace, in both words and deeds, is extremely powerful. Upon visiting Jubilee Partners, I sensed something very authentic about this community. Other visitors and former volunteers share this impression. Tracy Powell, reference librarian at Pitts Theology Library, is a former Jubilee volunteer. She sums up the core of the community as "living as witness."[137] The old axiom that actions speak louder than words holds quite true

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[136] Mosley and Hollyday, *With Our Own Eyes*, 242.

[137] Tracy Powell, interview by author and Peggy Jean Craig, Emory University, April 15, 2010.

here. In their work with refugees, their protests of war and their activism against the death penalty, the community lives out a witness of nonviolence.

This authentic embodied witness of a nonviolent way of living Christianity draws many to the community. Visitors and volunteers come to Jubilee because similar beliefs and similar faith. Don Mosley refers to his home community as a "Grand Central Station" that calls people of "a thousand different backgrounds" who pass through, all for the same theological reasons.[138] These theological underpinnings are the steadfast belief that faith is only real when it is lived in community. And this faith must reflect Jesus command to love each other, our neighbor and even our enemy. Their work with refugees serves as a calling for some visitors, such as long-time Partner Al Lawler, who first visited for a weekend in the early '80s, but it is their living faith that really speaks to people. Lawler said that he had never before witnessed people actually living out the ministry of Christ day-to-day. This example confirmed to him that he needed to try it for himself.[139]

The ongoing question for Jubilee Partners is this: How can this community sustain their nonviolent voice in a changing world? As the original Partners age, the community must continue to attract young members. At the same time, the community must react to continuing violence in the world. The temptation is strong for intentional communities to draw inward and insulate themselves from outside society. Thus far, Jubilee Partners has resisted this urge

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[138] Don Mosley, interview by author, Comer, GA, April 9, 2010.
[139] Al Lawler, interview by author, Comer, GA, April 9, 2010.

and worked diligently to transform the world according to their understating of the Kingdom of God. With the perseverance of a deeply rooted faith-in-action, and the grace of God, may this community continue to thrive and shine its loving light to all.

Individual Exemplar: Don Mosley

Jubilee Partners operates as a non-hierarchical community, thus they posses no single community "leader" but rely on the leadership of one another. The previous section of this chapter discussed ways in which the community engages the public in a nonviolent manner. This section, however, will focus on the example of one individual: community co-founder Don Mosley.[140]

Mosley's life continues to be one lived both in community, apart from society, and in public, enthusiastically engaging with society. Into his early 70s, Mosley's spirit does not show any signs of waning. He draws his worldview from a quote attributed to Augustine, "God is everything." For Mosley, this means that God is present in the pastoral setting of Northeast Georgia farmland as well as in the war-torn ghettos around the world. Living with the assurance that God is with you wherever you go emboldens one to engage others without fear.

The influence of Clarence Jordan and the Koinonia community on Mosley's theology cannot be understated. Jordan believed that the Sermon on the Mount represents a "condensed, concentration summary of Jesus point to his

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[140] All quotations in this section, unless otherwise noted, come from the author's interview with Don Mosley in Comer, GA, January 26, 2011.

contemporaries." It starts with beatitudes but ends with an emphasis on the disparity between merely "saying" one's beliefs and actually putting them "into action." Mosley echoes this belief that there exists a "vast difference between saying words and going out and demonstrating."

In *Faith Beyond Borders*, Mosley relates a story from his days at Koinonia Farm and the early formation of Habitat for Humanity. The Koinonia community often faced resistance on the basis of racism. In this particular example, community members were divided on the issue of what to do about racism in the local schools. One member urged patience, stating that they should not try to "push" the local community too much. Tom Boone, a fellow community member, vehemently disagreed. "People act their way into new ways of thinking far more often than they think their way into new ways of acting!"[141]

Though we must exercise caution when entering into public discourse, the overly cautious route suggested by the community member above represents a failing of Christians in the public square. The other extreme, acting and speaking to forcefully in the public square is just as troublesome. Mosley believes that too many Christians speak without thinking of consequences and enter into hostile arguments with one another and with non-Christian parties. Actions and words of this kind differ greatly from the teachings of Jesus and "undermines the goodness" done by Christianity.

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[141] Don Mosley, *Faith Beyond Borders: Doing Justice in a Dangerous World* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 6.

A Christian must speak words of love and peace and demonstrate those convictions by the way that she or he acts in all locations, from their family setting at home to a public stage on the international scene. Christianity, Mosley argues, "requires convincing action." This simply means that one's words and deeds must match. Too often, they do not, and the damage done by one can affect the reputation of many. When a group of Muslim refugees arrived at Jubilee Partners, they expressed amazement at the loving and peaceful greeting they received. All of their prior experience with Christianity involved "torture and warfare." Jubilee demonstrated a different side of the Christian faith, one of which the refugees had heard but never seen.

Christian love is, by definition, an action. We must act and speak in a way that reflects love of all human beings. In *Confession*, Tolstoy describes witnessing Christians of the upper class whose lives did not match the tenets of their faith. "No rationalization could convince me of the truth of their faith, though one thing might have: actions proving that these people held the key to a meaning of life that would eliminate in them the fear of poverty, sickness, and death that haunted me."[142] Mosley enjoys reading Tolstoy's thoughts on Christianity. Some of Tolstoy's writings echo the way in which Mosley describes learning the true meaning of faith from refugees: "The whole life of the believers from our class was in opposition to their faith, while the whole life of the believers from the working people was a confirmation of that meaning of life

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[142] Tolstoy, *Confession*, 65.

which was the substance of their faith."[143] Mosley describes witnessing a deep faith in those who have so little while those, like most Americans, who have much fail to match their lives to their professed beliefs.

As mentioned previously, Liberation Theology influences the beliefs of Jubilee Partners. Mosley calls it "a conscious part of [the community's] work with Central America" in the 1980s. Fellow Partners at Jubilee, Blake and Sue worked with Mennonite Central Committee in El Salvador during that time. Mosley relates a story that demonstrates his conviction that Christians should act for justice without fear, or as Jordan said it, "in scorn of the consequences." One of the survivors of the Jesuit massacre was the only person in El Salvador courageous enough to agree to help with Jubilee's "underground railroad," delivering Salvadorian refugees to the United States. This surviving Jesuit agreed to work with Jubilee "as bells were ringing" commemorating the one year anniversary of the massacre. This person demonstrated the type of faith that continually engages in public, working for justice.

Mosley calls himself an "absolutist" when it comes to belief in Christian public engagement, meaning that he has "zero interest" in withdrawing from society. He declines to condemn those Christians who believe that they "who are called to live alone in the wilderness," but emphatically says "not me." Both his life in community at Koinonia and Jubilee and his life of public engagement have "utterly rejected that model" of Christianity. He believes that "community is a

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[143] Tolstoy, *Confession*, 66.

base for very public Christian action – compassionate action in a world that desperately needs it." The model for Mosley is the "koinonias," or fellowships, of early Christianity in Rome. He sees as connection between the political choices of the United States and the Roman Empire, going so far as to liken the U.S. to the "Rome of today." Interestingly, while Mosley consistently avoids criticizing individuals, he does not hesitate to point out problems with institutions. This provides an excellent example of the kind of nonviolent discourse that I am proposing all Christians adopt. One may agree or disagree with Mosley's political opinions, but one cannot deny that Mosley demonstrates respect for the individuals involved (on either side). This reflects a proper Christian respect for other.

A Practical Theology of Engagement

The communities of Koinonia and Jubilee both display impressive connections in the world of theological studies. Mosley himself has a personal link to several of the theologians cited in this work. Walter Rauschenbusch was a friend of Clarence Jordan's. John Howard Yoder's daughter, Rebecca, worked with Jubilee Partners as their *año de jubileo* representative in Texas. Jürgen Moltmann's daughter visited Koinonia and his neighbors currently volunteer at Jubilee Partners. These connections, in addition to others not mentioned, undergird the influence of social engagement as well as a commitment to nonviolence.

Mosley identifies the existence of the death penalty in the United States as a symptom of society's attachment to violence, a "flamboyant flaunting" of the

Gospel command to love one's enemy. This practice, Mosley believes, creates a cyclical "culture of death" in our society, echoing the beliefs of King, Gandhi and others that violence always begets more violence. Mosley participates with other community members and death penalty abolitionists in regular protests held in nearby Athens, GA. Mosley describes these demonstrations as "meek" but humbly hopes that they "maybe affect someone."

Mosley, himself, knows what it means to face death. He relates a story that occurred during his work in Egypt where he faced down what he calls a "death squad."[144] Though staring directly into the barrel of a combatant's rifle, Mosley felt a calmness overtake him, spoke words of peace, and walked right through the squad. He does not attribute this to some form of personal bravery but believes that "God worked through" him in that moment. Mosley claims that this example demonstrates "what it means that God truly is with us" at all times. Whatever may happen to a person "doesn't matter as long as God is with you."

Mosley's "God is with me" attitude does not reflect a theological superiority complex. Rather, this displays his deep belief in a loving, personal God that values each human being. With this type of theological attitude, "peacemaking then is natural," according to Mosley. A feeling of assurance in God's personal care for one's self motives individuals to respond to the love of God with in-kind words and deeds of love.

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[144] Mosley, *Faith Beyond Borders*, 110-112.

A Barrier of Disbelief

The examples presented in the community of Jubilee as well as the individual life of Don Mosley exhibit a long-term powerful witness to authentic expressions of Christian faith. A remaining question exists regarding the surrounding community's reception, or lack of reception, of this witness. This is not a question of pragmatic effectiveness, but a necessary analysis of ways in which the message of Jubilee reaches the outside world and how others receive that message.

Despite the worldwide reputation of Jubilee Partners, many of their closest neighbors in Comer and the surrounding area either know very little about the community or continue to view Jubilee with suspicion. Don Mosley believes that this is partially due to "selective hearing." Local newspapers have covered Jubilee numerous times over their history and the community makes an intentional effort "not to discourage any visitors." Still, some fail to receive their message clearly. Bernard, a young man who grew up less than a mile from the entrance to Jubilee Partners, is a good example of the misunderstanding that exists. For most of his childhood, he thought that the people at this community were very strange and felt unsure about having them in Comer. However, through the experience of attending school with some of the children who lived a Jubilee, Bernard decided to reconsider his apprehensions and actually pay his neighbors a visit. Today, he is working with them as a volunteer.

Bernard's story demonstrates one way that the barrier of disbelief surrounding this community can be overcome. Personal interactions with others

aid in understanding those who live differently. The real measure of success for the public engagement of Mosley and Jubilee Partners, though, is not based on their reception in Comer. Jubilee stands as a positive example of nonviolent discourse, not because of their reputation, but because the way that they engage in public discourse authentically reflects their Christian faith. In the following chapter, I conclude that this manner of nonviolent discourse modeled by Jubilee Partners should be adopted by all Christians.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The manner in which Christians participate in public discourse is of great importance. When engaging with others, one's speech reflects the way that one values relationships with others, and, therefore, relationship with God. The call to improve Christian discourse in the public square, issued by Paul Brandeis Rauschenbusch, Charles Mathewes and others, requires intentional reflection on what that discourse should be. In this paper, I have addressed questions regarding the way that Christians see themselves as they relate to "the world," the communal location from which Christian engagement in the public square should originate, and the nonviolent ethic that should inform that engagement. My proposal that nonviolent discourse should be normative for Christians results directly from my investigation into these pressing questions.

In the previous chapter, I offered Jubilee Partners as an exemplar for proper Christian engagement in public discourse. The particular nature of Jubilee Partners as an intentional Christian community focused on refugee resettlement and promoting peace is not a requirement for the practice of nonviolent discourse. Jubilee Partners is *a* good example of they type of engagement Christians should model, but they are not *the* example. My primary goal in this paper is to offer a proposal that applies to all Christians, not only those that live out their faith in intentional community. Community, of course, is proper starting point for engaging in public discourse, but Christian community can be found in the local church, in peer groups, in families, and in numerous other settings where Christians establish relationships with one another.

These community settings do not mean that Christians should adhere to an Augustinian dualism that divides Christian and secular into “us” vs. “them.” That type of division only weakens one’s engagement in the public square. A proper emphasis on theological humility and the rejection of moral certitude necessitate that one approaches public discourse with an attitude of inclusiveness, not condemnation. For me to be truly myself means that I allow you to be truly yourself.

Nonviolent discourse in the public square is an authentic expression of the Christian faith. Whether one supports Just War theory or one advocates Christian Pacifism, we must speak to others in a nonviolent manner. Harsh words directed at others and harmful labels applied to others amount to a failure to follow Jesus’ commands to “love each other,” “love your neighbor,” and “love your enemy.” (Jn 15:12, Mt 22:39, Mt 5:44) Christians are called to express this love in both word and deed. Practicing nonviolent discourse in the public square is a proper response to Jesus’ call for Christians to demonstrate love above all else.

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