

Stewardship: Re-focusing the Mission of the Church

By Erik Olaf Thone

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Introduction

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”¹ Jesus declares the mission of the Christian community nearly two thousand years ago, but this mission would have left significant questions to the faith of the apostles. What should we expect from the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be a witness? Nearly two thousand years later, the Christians continue to ask the same questions. Christians do not view the world as they did in the first century. Distinguishing us from the apostles and early Christian, most Christians today do not live with the expectation that Christ will return during our lifetime. Despite this distinct change of beliefs the question must remain the same: What is the mission of the Christian? I define mission as a calling from God to act in the world; the individual is accountable to God above all others. Christians must then ask, “What does God call us to do?”

There are distinct characteristics that distinguish various periods of Christianity from one another. Various social forces, notably Hellenistic Culture and the Roman Empire, that have influenced Christianity throughout its history. As a result, there have been multiple interpretations of the Christian’s call to follow God. I mean to show that the Christian’s concern must be “What is my mission, as a Christian, *here and now*?” Examining the manner in which Christians of the past have responded to this question may provide incite into an appropriate response in the present because Christians must

¹ Act. 1:8 NRSV

address the same concern here and now. However, while looking into history may be beneficial, it is also important to maintain a focus on our contemporary concerns. Our contemporary concerns often lead us to our past, but it is the distinctly different concerns of today that distinguish us from our past. I focus on the global mission of the church, suitable for the contemporary context and inclusive of a wide range of individual missions that I hope to define.

Relying heavily on the research and historical analysis of Douglas John Hall I begin by looking at historical trends of mission in Christianity. In much of his writing Hall analyzes historical situations within Christianity for the purpose of a statement regarding Christianity today. I hope to use Hall's analysis of specific incidents in the history of Christianity to address my primary question: What is the mission of the Christian here and now? My response to this question will come in two parts. First, Christianity has been addressing their call to mission for their entire existence. I intend to look at a few significant influences, by way of Hall's research, that led to the establishment of historical missions in Christianity. My aim is to examine influences that are still affecting Christian mission today. My historical analysis will progress with a brief survey of Christian mission from the early Christians at the time of Paul's letters until Christianity today. How are Christians, specifically those in the United States, responding to the question of mission today? Secondly, Christian mission must maintain consistency with the gospel. In the second part of the essay I will take a critical look at Christianity today and the places that it falls short. With Hall's historical analysis established I intend to apply the historical roots to concerns of today. Breaking from Hall entirely, after establishing significant concerns, based upon biblical texts, and our

contemporary world, what should Christian mission be today? I will conclude here by looking to the future of Christianity. Christianity cannot maintain its currently established mission, so what would be appropriate for the church today? I conclude by proposing an answer to the question: “What is the mission of the Christian here and now?” By taking a brief look at some of the concerns of the Mainline Protestant Church in the United States today, I propose stewardship as a new mission for contemporary Christianity to re-focus around.

I. Historical Definitions of Mission

This analysis of contemporary mission begins by looking backwards to understand the origins of our contemporary philosophies. Thus, I will briefly introduce a number of choice concepts that have influenced the range of ways with which Christian mission can and has been understood by those claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ. Although other examples could be pulled from the Old Testament, I will emphasize those after the life of Christ and the founding of the church. Because of the church’s relevance today as the primary medium to exchange religious information I will focus on *its* historical activity. To establish a distinction throughout the essay I should speak now on my definition of the *church*. When I use the word I am speaking of the body of Christian believers. I am not referring to the building itself or any manner of denominational leadership. I refer to the full body of believers, and in this first part of the essay, this is subject to change, I refer to the full body of Christians.

My Christian history and analysis comes largely from the research of Douglas John Hall. His research is especially effective because we aim to apply it toward the same goal; historical incidents are chosen toward the end of making a statement on contemporary society. I have modeled my argument after the basic progression of Hall's. Because of my extensive use of Hall as a conversation partner I pause here to present some of his credentials and extended justification for choosing him above others. Hall is emeritus Professor of Theology at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec. His work is beneficial to the issue I aim to address, insofar as his theology focuses on the problems of society today and how the church needs to adapt in order to survive.² Hall has also been criticized for focusing his criticism on the conservative faction of Christianity today and failing to address the concerns within liberal Christianity. One critic of Hall's recent publications³ wrote:

He aims almost exclusively at conservative religious groups and ignores (or only acknowledges in passing) its manifestations among liberal, mainline religious movements. Clearly, Hall disdains pietistic world-denial, quietism, fundamentalism, apocalypticism and the consumerist mentality of the megachurch movement. But is any appropriation and recommendation of the theology of the cross complete if it does not turn its critical principle inward to examine one's own religious life and theology?⁴

Hall's writing focuses on the necessity for Christianity today to adapt to the concerns of the here and now. This is exactly what I promote. It is significant, however,

² David J. Monge, "Contextuality in the Theology of Douglas John Hall," *A Journal of Theology* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002), 210.

³ Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

⁴ Roger E. Olson, review of *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World*, by Douglas John Hall, *Christian Century* 121 (July 2004):36-38.

that much of Hall's writing is from a slightly earlier time addressing different concerns. *The Steward a Biblical Symbol Come of Age* was published in 1982 and throughout the writing it is notable how Hall refers to Cold War concerns. There are certainly many similar and many of the same concerns, but writing from the era of the Cold War and from a decade defined by terrorism are distinctly different. One other notable difference is that Hall, as a Canadian, writes to a North American audience that tends to focus on Canada and the United States. This piece, in contrast, will focus specifically on the United States. Hall, however, promotes an adaptation of Christianity to the concerns of its time. With that same aim this piece will work to apply Hall's work a few decades later while acknowledging the differences of the times. Also, the paper will take a generally chronological look at responses of the church to obedience and mission.

Christianity and Hellenistic Culture

I begin my historical examination with Christianity removed from its Hebraic roots and set as a minority religion amidst the Hellenistic Culture of the Roman Empire. The Hellenistic Culture maintained the values, morals, and goals of the compiled cultures conquered by Alexander the Great.⁵ Early Christians were forced to accept the Hellenistic culture into their theology as they made evangelism a larger part of their mission. Certain aspects of Christianity's Hebraic culture had to be translated into the Hellenistic culture in order for early Christians to relate to the society they were working

⁵ Douglas John Hall, *The Steward A Biblical Symbol Come of Age* (New York: Fellowship Press, 1982), 31.

to convert.⁶ This development, as Christians gradually increased their numbers, also altered Christianity's interpretation of mission; the forces influencing Christians gradually changed through the influence of Hellenistic culture.

I provide the meaning of sin as an example. Jesus, Paul, and others defined sin in relational terms.⁷ To commit a sin was to dismiss an individual's responsibility in a relationship, acting with malice, apathy, or pride for self interest and breaking the relationship. I'll not the distinction between sin of the twenty-first century United States where secularism is prominent in eliminating the necessity of human relationship within religion. For Jesus and Paul if the end result was that you fell short in your relationship with God, a neighbor, or creation, you had sinned. There was no word for this relational definition of sin within the Greek language. The Greek word that was accepted by early Christians referred to a personal failure. Hall notes that sins had soon become legalistic and were being viewed as immoral actions that detracted from human perfection.⁸ The relational view of sin held by Jesus and Paul had deteriorated, and sin had become an individual act that removed the focus upon who one had sinned against. This is relevant to the current struggle in the United States to give any significant priority to the neighbor; I will emphasize this later as a priority of the steward. This transition of sin was from a community theology to individual emphasis within Christianity. It would seem that the redefining of sin was an early cause of the later individualism within Christianity now notably seen in secularism.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Hall argues through his research that the language of the Roman Empire had significant impact on the theology of Christianity, but in addition to language, the Hellenistic philosophy was very influential. Traditional Jewish conviction held that physical matter, the earth, the body, and the actions proceeding from them were innately good. In the Judeo-Christian tradition God created all those physical things; he created them and they were good.⁹ Hellenistic Culture, in contrast, viewed physical and earthly things with deep rooted suspicion; this prominent perspective would eventually overtake the distant Hebraic view of matter.¹⁰ Christians, with the influence of the Roman Empire, maintained a substantially altered view of the material world.

The material world, including of course the human body was regarded as inferior, the seat of evil, dangerous, and fundamentally *unreal*. To get into touch with the Real, one had to slough off so far as possible one's material attachments together with the passions associated with them.¹¹

Here again, Christianity's importation of Hellenistic culture into their theology is exemplified.

It seems apparent, from Hall's research, the positive view of the material world, as held by Jesus and others, was replaced by the negative Hellenistic perception. Christians began viewing the physical world as the root of evil. In a huge distinction, following God was converted from a good relationship with the physical self and the physical world around oneself, to an effort at removing oneself from the physical world as much as possible. Physical attachments would distract the Christian from the spiritual aim and were effectively evil. In order to effectively follow God a Christian needed to

⁹ Douglas John Hall, *The Steward*, 32.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

remove themselves from the world. I believe the truth behind this translation should be considered in our contemporary context, knowing that Christians have broken in their definition of sin from that Jesus. I also question the extent to which this sway toward the spiritual maintains its truth today. While Christianity is often very other-worldly, most Christians in the United States do not seem to emphasize any real opposition to the physical. It would almost appear that contemporary society is arriving at a hybrid between the two.

The Early Christian Minority

In addition to the Hellenistic Culture, early Christianity was being formed in the midst of, and by the Roman Empire. The relationship that Christianity developed throughout later centuries with later emperors had an immense impact on the transformation of the early faith community. The early Christian movement was entirely voluntary, which would contrast with later experiences of the Roman Empire, and also a significant minority.¹² Note here, I use early Christians to refer to church prior to significant influence of Hellenistic Culture and the Roman Empire. This application of the term will be consistently applied throughout the essay to contrast Christianity after these influences. As a minority religion, early Christians would have been knowingly placing themselves in an unpopular position relative to the majority of the population. The small populations supported each other, holding everything in common (tangible and intangible), because as minority outcasts they could not expect any support from the state

¹² Douglas John Hall, *The Steward*, 35-36.

or the society as a whole. They pooled their resources for the greater good of the Christian community.¹³ I emphasize the significant contrast in the practices of the early Christian church to those recognizable in most contemporary churches of the United States today, as well as most historical practices post-Constantine.

It would appear that this emphasis on the Christian community was a significant part of the early Christian's definition of mission. I have already mentioned the minority status of early Christians and their lack of support. It could be that this community emphasis was developed based upon social and economic necessity, but I find it clear that there is theological support for these practices. Consider the writings of Paul to the earliest Churches. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul encourages them to be generous in giving to the poor Christians of Jerusalem. Writing to Corinth, Paul even calls out the Corinthians by offering the generosity of the church in Macedonia as a comparison.

(8:1) We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; (2) for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part (9:10).¹⁴

Here we see the extent to which the churches supported each other. Note that Paul's letter is not calling Corinth to support those within their own community, but to support the larger Christian community by way of the Christian community in Jerusalem. It would seem that this manner of generosity, as Paul makes clear in verses thirteen and fourteen of Chapter eight, was not necessarily beneficial for the individual church's economic situation. "I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. 8:1-2, NRSV

you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.”¹⁵

His argument is dependent on his theological justification.

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. (11) You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us;(12) for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.¹⁶

Paul offers spiritual gifts in return for generosity in verses ten and eleven of chapter nine. He continues through verse eleven and into twelve by pointing out that this manner of generosity towards others is a form of thanksgiving towards God.

This theological argument of Paul is used to emphasize the necessity of supporting the Christian community. Using Paul’s writings as an example of the early Christian church, it can be seen how following God was defined largely in terms of the Christian community. As the church was developing, they were undoubtedly looking inward to resolve significant struggles such as those between Jew and Gentile. Paul’s letters to the various churches demonstrate a focus on the developing Christian community, and a community mission more than any individual mission.

Christianity and the Roman Empire

¹⁵ 2 Cor. 8:13-14, NRSV.

¹⁶ 2 Cor. 9:10-12 NRSV.

This community focused mission was gradually deluded and eventually replaced as the Christian community began to expand. As the Christian community established itself it was no longer forced to look entirely inward at community issues. As noted above, the community transitioned from a focus on survival to a focus on growth and began placing significant emphasis on evangelism. This was especially significant when the Roman emperor Constantine accepted Christianity and began to favor it throughout the empire. With Constantine and his successors Christianity went from a minority faith needing to support each other to the majority religion receiving significant benefits from the state.¹⁷

I use the “state” to refer to the farthest reach of government influence. This term is inclusive of the government, but not the same as the government. Rather, the state is broader than the government alone. The government issues law which citizens follow or they face consequences. The farther reaching effect of this is the changing support of the larger society. This changed larger society should also be considered part of the state. When Constantine, the head of the Roman Empire, declared his support for Christianity, much of the larger society accepted Christianity. Whether out of support of the government or fear of repercussions, the response is the same. I also use state to refer to democratic governments. Again, I refer to the connection between the government and the extended society which is influenced and influences the government. In a democracy, significant societal trends outside political policy are often important because of the ability that citizens have to influence politics. The state is thus composed largely of

¹⁷ Douglas John Hall, *The Steward*, 35-36.

majority opinion which may hold some authority or be merely following the orders of leadership.

Constantine declared his support of Christianity and much of the Roman Empire responded favorably toward Christianity. One of his successors, Theodosius, declared Christianity the only legal religion.¹⁸ I think two notable examples of the states' extension of authority can be found in the Roman Empire. Theodosius' influence by way of law made Christian communities no longer voluntary; Christianity was the only legal religion within the Roman Empire. With that, much of the Christian community had no change of heart behind their conversion to Christianity. The association of Christianity with the state pushed many of the new, and forced, converts to view participation in religion as another law of the state. Obedience was not to God, but rather to the state. Also, obedience did not mean a commitment to the Christian community but rather to the state through Christianity. Christianity and the Christian God was only a forced intermediate by way of law. The supportive Christian communities, as were found prior to the support of the state, deteriorated quickly. Christian communities that had supported each other no longer found the same degree of support necessary with the support of the state.¹⁹ The Christian community's definition of mission, instead, supported the state which supported them.

The Constantinian Church

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Douglas John Hall, *The Steward*, 35-37.

Douglas John Hall looks into this relationship that develops between Christianity and the state beginning with the Roman Empire and the rule of Constantine.

Douglas John Hall looks at the development of the church since the time of Constantine by focusing on a specific text, *The Christian Message for the World Today*, which recounts historical developments. Written in 1934 the text provides a historical summary, but also illustrates the impact earlier views still held in 1934 through the writing of the author.

[Christianity] within less than four centuries was the dominant faith of the Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire collapsed, Christianity, although by that time closely associated with it, not only survived but won to its fold the barbarians who were the immediate cause of the overthrow, spread into regions in Northern and Western Europe which had not before known it, and became the chief vehicle for the transfer of the culture of the ancient world to the Europe of medieval and modern times....

Occasionally Christianity has suffered major territorial reverses....Yet in spite of the fact that Christianity has never fully regained the ground from which it was driven in these defeats, usually it has more than made good in other regions the area lost. Never has it been so widespread as today.

In the history of mankind no other religion has been professed over so large a proportion of the globe or by so many people....While of the other two great surviving missionary religions, one Buddhism, has long been practically stationary, and the other, Islam, has made few if any major gains in the past hundred years, Christianity, in spite of the many obstacles which beset its path, is still spreading.²⁰

Within this quotation, I draw the reader's focus to three basic points. First, the roots of Christianity, and how tightly the religion was tied to the Roman Empire are briefly described in the first paragraph. Second, there is a significant emphasis upon the gain of territory. This is the idea of "conquering for Christ" which progressed from the conquering mentality of the Roman Empire. Gaining new territory meant new opportunities to convert natives to Christianity. Third, other world religions, Buddhism

²⁰ E. Stanley Jones and others, *The Christian Message for the World Today*, (New York: Round Table Press, 1934), 149-150.

and Islam, have not expanded and conquered in recent history with the same success as Christianity.

Hall acknowledges the seeming weight of Christianity's territorial aims in his analysis.

What surely strikes the contemporary reader of this paragraph most forcibly is the almost innocent manner in which both Christian failure and success are interpreted in straightforwardly territorial terms. Not only is it assumed that mission means expansion, but the expansion in question means the acquisition of more territory....This is why it is not quite sufficient to think of the Constantinian church only numerically in terms of numbers of people ("the church as majority," as I sometimes phrase it). This mentality also usually extends to the control of space as well as what the space contains by way of population and culture.²¹

As Hall notes, expanding territory was the mission of the Church. And while Christians claimed their goal to be the salvation of non-Christian souls outside of Christian states, it was merely assumed that this goal required expansion of territory. The Constantinian church, symbolizing the Emperor and his expansionist policies, extends well beyond the time of the Roman Empire. As Hall argues, when speaking of the Constantinian church, whose impact, at least, was still being felt in 1934, extended characteristics must be kept in mind. The Constantinian church was not a community of faith looking inward as the early Christians. Rather, their focus, it would seem, had altered 180 degrees to be looking outward at the salvation of others by way of territorial expansion. With this expansion the church generally imposed the cultural and social norms of their society upon varying conquered cultures. Note in *The Christian Message for the World Today* the use of the word "barbarian" to describe other cultures. The perception that non-Christian, but also their often non-Western cultures were somehow primitive or perhaps

²¹ Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 13.

even inhuman comes through in language from less than a century ago. This does provide a picture of the Constantinian definition of mission.

It would appear that it was very quantitative, related to expanding territory and “winning souls.” Christian mission could literally be defined by the Christian missions expanding into new territories and winning the “heathens” over to the Christian nation. The expanding missions were interconnected with the state. The military of the Christian state expanded for Christian mission. The continued success of their territorial expansion was viewed as the positive influence of God, especially in comparison to other religions. As Hall says of Constantinian Christianity, “Its qualitative superiority is demonstrated by its quantitative success, and its quantitative success is because of its qualitative superiority.”²² Constantinian Christians justified their Christianity by the success of their efforts at expansion. The mission mentality of Constantinian Christianity depended on the state’s continued support and success to justify their faith.

Constantinian Philosophy: Eighteenth –Nineteenth Centuries.

This Constantinian relationship, focused on conquering, was predominant throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hall cites the presence of conquering language in devotional literature, and especially Christian hymns, around the turn of the nineteenth century²³ Hymns often contained language like: “Fling out the banner! Heathen lands shall see from far the glorious sight, and nations, crowding to be born

²² Ibid., 14.

²³ Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship Of Life*, 4-6.

baptize their spirits in its light.”²⁴ This hymn by George Washington Doane from the middle of the nineteenth century demonstrates the conquering views of Constantine still prominent in the nineteenth century. Hall addresses this language and its aim, so well-thought-of in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

It is not accidental. Nor is it accidental that this sentiment gives way quite naturally to the military metaphor: Jesus is a captain; the church is an army; the mission is a battle or fight; the aim of the conquest is of course to win.²⁵

It seems apparent, when considering these writings concerning Christian mission, that very little changed in philosophy since the time of Constantine. I would say eighteenth and nineteenth century Christians continued to hold a very quantitative definition of mission. The mission was to spread God’s word to “heathen lands” and conquer souls for Christ.

This is the military metaphor that Hall references; faith and even understanding, although this was not often acknowledged, were contrary to their greater success which was measured by the vastness of their numbers. Both faith and understanding required extended time to develop in a believer. In order to develop this faith and/or understanding Christian Missions would have to spend significant time relating to and teaching “heathens.” Missions cannot, however, expand and add additional converts if they are continually working to develop the Christianity of one group of converts. The standard of mission and success was largely quantitative; Christians believed growing numbers expressed a divine support for their religion. It was thus necessary for Christianity to continue expanding their numbers. The resolution provided to this

²⁴ George Washington Doane, “Fling out the Banner,” *Songs by the Way*, 1875.

²⁵ Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 4.

conflict of Christian mission was to lower the standards of faith and understanding. If neither faith, nor understanding were necessities of being Christian, then missions could quickly convert “heathens” using a variety of means from threat to promises. This lowered emphasis shows, again, a major distinction, from the early Christian communities, which because of their voluntary nature were built around faith. To be a member of the Christian community was to have faith. With acceptance by the state and the loss of the voluntary nature of Christianity the emphasis on faith diminished too. This is seen again in global missions pushing toward conversions without any real questions of faith or even understanding, from which faith can grow.

Constantinian Christianity and Democracy

This mentality was certainly applied in mission throughout the world; it can be seen in the United States when majority Christians have tried to exert their influence. With its democratic government, the state was built through a circular relationship between general public and the government. The majority population could influence the government, which would in turn have significant ability to influence the public, which would eventually re-elect a new government, and so on. This process, however, allows previous social majorities to maintain government power for a significant period of time, especially if their opposition is a number of disorganized minorities. Consider the United States during, and following, the massive period of immigration that occurred from roughly 1860 to 1920 and tripled the population of the U.S.²⁶

²⁶ Jonathan D. Sarna *ed.*, *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 4.

Although accurate statistics are hard to come by, William R. Hutchison estimates that these denominations,²⁷ once home to the majority of American, represented by the early years of the twentieth century only “a minority of the population.”²⁸ ...Mainstream Protestants continued, nevertheless, to constitute the establishment in American religion, filling positions of power and authority and exercising enormous influence in public life.²⁹

During this period the Protestant mainstream controlled the state, but with an influx of other faiths the extended influence of the state was limited. Acknowledging both the “threat” to their majority and the protection that they still had through the state, Protestants took action to protect their majority. In these actions a less definitive view of Constantinian obedience can be seen. Within the borders of the United States the church’s mission certainly maintained the same quantified nature.

Seeing the flood of other faiths, and taking advantage of the separation of church and state, Protestants emphasized the Americanism of Protestantism. Perhaps the most common medium used to stress this was the public school. The “general” Protestantism that was taught as acceptable to all Protestants provided conflict for students of other faiths. “Prayers would be said and hymns sung that were Protestant in flavor. And not least, history and other texts contained pejorative allusions to Catholics, the chestnut among them being...purchasing indulgences.”³⁰ This references Catholics specifically,

²⁷ Here Sarna is referring to the Protestant mainstream. His use of this term includes Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists (white divisions only), and Disciples of Christ and many Lutherans. I will refer to this term in my text.

²⁸ William R. Hutchison, *Between the Times: The Trevail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4, 304.

²⁹ Jonathan D. Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 4.

³⁰ Virginia Lieson Brereton, “Education and Minority Religions,” Jonathan Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 281.

but in addition Jews and Protestant minorities often found it necessary to start their own schools to escape the influence of the Protestant faith present in public schools.

Protestants could take this aggressive action because they still held the support of the state. “In the late nineteenth century, its membership [the Supreme Court] was entirely Protestant, and its rulings tended to support mainstream Protestant Christianity against minority challenges.”³¹ Protestants took action, such as those in schools, that minority faiths often opposed, but Protestants were confident because of the state support behind.

In this period there is certainly the confident forcing of religion, because of state support, that can be associated with earlier Constantinian efforts. Similarly, these efforts were largely focused on numbers. Protestants acknowledged their dwindling majority and pushed to expand so they could maintain that majority. The philosophy that quantitative expansion assured qualitative superiority was bringing concern to the Protestants who watched the growth of other faiths. In 1888, for example, estimations put leading Protestant denominations³² at a collected membership of about 17 million. The Roman Catholic Church alone had a United States congregation estimated at eight million.³³ Protestants continued to think of themselves as the majority, and through their relationship with the state they held the authority of a majority, though in reality they were not. The growth of minority numbers, however, forced both early questions of their qualitative authority and additional movements toward quantitative expansion.

³¹ Ibid. 9.

³² Sarna cites prominent Protestant denominations of the period as Baptist, Congregational Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Reformed.

³³ Robert T. Handy, “Minority-Majority Confrontations, Church-State Patterns, and the U.S. Supreme Courts,” Jonathan D. Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 306.

Protestants continued to force both culture and religion upon others, probably raising efforts, with the assumption that Protestantism is correct. The Constantinian interpretation of mission is present; Protestants merely replaced the military with the school. At the same time, the Protestants' position amid minority religions forced them to defend many of their religious practices. Criticism of the King James Bible, from other religions who had developed their own translation, and other areas of conflict required Protestants to acknowledge their beliefs. As noted above, when the church's focus is entirely external, such as on growth and numbers, faith and understanding can be largely forgotten. These two diverging activities within Protestantism demonstrate the roots of a basic question surrounding mission: "Is *my* faith following God?" I feel Christianity has had a tendency, throughout its history, to assume this answer. It would seem at the turn of the twentieth century Protestants were still placing their emphasis on their Constantinian roots. Protestants looked into their faith and tradition but it was not so much to defend their theology, but to justify the actions extending from their support by the state. The pressure placed on Protestants and their need to, at least, acknowledge their theology and the theology of the minority religions points towards a change in the state.

Religious Freedom: Victories for Minority Faiths

This forced movement, coming from minority faiths and the liberal language of the country's founding documents, gradually granted minor and more significant political and social victories to the minority religions. Moving into the twentieth century the United States could not so nearly be considered a Protestant nation as it was in earlier

centuries. Minority religions recorded victories on the Supreme Court, with educational freedom, and in freedom of expression. Edward D. White, a Catholic justice, was elected to the Supreme Court in 1894 and would eventually become chief justice.³⁴ The Supreme Court was gradually changing as the immigrant faiths gradually established themselves and began to put pressure on the state. Eventually, the tangible results would build. In 1925 Catholics won a case guaranteeing parochial and private schools the right to exist apart from the pressure of Protestants in the public schools.³⁵ And again in 1940, *Cantwell v. Connecticut* declared a pair of Jehovah's Witnesses the right to evangelize and solicit funds in public places, overturning the state's earlier decision. This second decision weighed the unpopular minority's freedom to express their religion above the violation of the majority religion's religious freedom.³⁶ These developments demonstrate the manner in which the minority religions have gradually taken a more prominent position in the state. The other side of the story, as may be assumed, is the slowly deteriorating status of Protestants in relation to the state. Protestants were forced to accommodate for a state that is no longer accommodating for them alone, but is gradually opening up to all religions. This posed significant problems for Protestants. As noted, the constantinian mentality was dependent on the support of the state qualifying the faith.

Religious Freedom: Christians Respond to Minority Faiths

³⁴ Robert T. Handy, "Confrontations...", Jonathan D. Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 330.

³⁵ *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 1925.

³⁶ Jonathan D. Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 9.

The state has largely acknowledged the growing diversity of religion in the United States, as evident in the Supreme Court cases cited above. Christianity's response to the diversity of religion was much more tentative, although there has been significant change. Important in bringing about this change was the end of World War II and the acknowledgment by Christians throughout the world of the tragedy that was Auschwitz. Christians can not help but see the wrong that occurred in Germany. And they cannot shirk responsibility. For although Auschwitz was not conducted by organized Christianity, it was the centuries of Christian attitude prior that nurtured the tragedy. The Christian revelation coming in the aftermath of this denial was that other religions have a *right* to exist.³⁷ It thus took a terrible punch to the face, with a significant amount of blood, for Protestants to begin to open up to other religions.

Auschwitz also forced Christians to ask significant questions of themselves.³⁸ The acceptance of other religions' right to exist expanded into the truth of their theology.

...As we are creatures of time and space, all our ideas, systems of meaning, language, symbols, art, and the like reflect the particularity of our historical moment. Christianity—especially dogmatic traditions within the Christian church—resisted the implications of this modern truism longer than most other conventions of thought in the Western world. It is still being resisted, and with increasing aggressiveness, by millions of avowed Christians on this continent.³⁹

³⁷ Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life*, 5-6.

³⁸ I use Christian here over Protestant because, first, the questions extending from Auschwitz affected more than Protestants. Second, I will continue to apply Christian to refer to mainstream Protestants and Catholics. As the Protestants became more accepting of Catholics, the issues I address become more applicable to both. I also acknowledge that there are Christians not included here, but because significant differences in less traditional denominations do not allow me to analyze them with any brevity, I will not analyze them at all to avoid generalizations.

³⁹ Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life*, 6.

Hall addresses the manner in which humans cannot help but be affected by their “time and space.” Christians, in particular, cannot help but have their dogma and traditions effected by the movements of the time in which they are living. Twentieth century Christians could not help but be affected by Auschwitz and the changing climate towards minority religions.

The ultimate truth that had been the Christian world was being dismantled. For centuries Christian obedience, mission, faith, and lifestyle had been defined through the Constantinian conquering mentality. This had encompassed the Christian faith and culture and had been intertwined with the state toward the goal of expansion. Centuries of Christianity were now put into question. As the ultimate truth of Christian existence failed, many Christians became more modest in their claims of truth. Surrounded by other faiths Christians began to acknowledge the possibility that the faiths surrounding them may have truth in them as well. They also saw, in their own theology the possibility of falsehood. This left Christians with a significant lack of direction. Whether the correct direction or not, as soldiers in a conquering army Christianity always had a defined direction they were headed. Successes and failures could both be counted as fuel for further mission. If the mission of the Christian was not simply to grow and expand the church’s numbers, what was it? If God’s command to Christians is not to convert, what is it? Christians began to look again at their mission as Christians, wondering what it meant to follow God in a culture with diverse faiths.

Examining Christian Communities Today

This leads me beyond historical analysis of Christian mission to the more significant honest analysis of the Christian community today. What are the prominent definitions of mission in the Christian community today? To what extent are these views appropriate for our society today? The contemporary Christian mission needs to reset around the Gospel. Christianity today needs to maintain an understanding of mission that can be spread throughout the Christian community. So long as the Christian community is built around organized churches and denominations this will be the main medium available to instill the idea of Christian obedience and mission in congregations. The Christian mission, while acted out through individual Christians, is often represented by the church through formal institutions. The church maintains a diversity of formal institutions and congregations as well as informal communities and congregations spread throughout world. The unification of these varying congregations is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is composed of individuals and congregations who, motivated by faith in Jesus Christ, desire to respond to the Gospel's call to mission. Despite this consistent acknowledgment that there is a mission of the church, the various factions that compose the church do not agree on what that mission is. Obedience to God is interpreted in varying ways throughout the church; all of these must be judged in our most contemporary contexts by their coherence with the Gospel.

Contemporary Christianity can be divided into two distinctly different responses to God's call to obedience and mission. The first is the mainline Protestant response and comes largely as a reaction to Auschwitz. Acknowledging the freedom of religion, as affirmed by the state, and declaring, themselves, the right of other religions to exist, mainline Protestants have looked back on early periods of Christianity with a sense of

shame. Historic events, such as the Crusades, have left a heavy shadow over present Christianity. Liberals have intentionally and unintentionally pulled away from these expansive military periods. We see this presently in mainline Christians' removed relationship with other religions:

...among liberal Christians today there would be not only less enthusiasm for Christian world conquering, but a frank suspicion of the whole idea....a new liberalism that insists upon the rights of individuals to embrace whatever beliefs they choose.⁴⁰

It is apparent that Christianity has come a long ways since the nineteenth century when the King James Version was being read in schools for the Protestants despite protests from other denominations and faiths. The other faith has become the neighbor and the violent actions of our past can be applied to names and faces, rather than the generic "heathen." It would appear that mainline Christians are terrified of even approaching their past. While they will welcome service and aid, the majority retract at the mention of mission or evangelism.⁴¹ Many mainline Protestants hold this concern where the mentioning of Jesus Christ to non-Christians has been perceived as a short jump to the Crusades.

It seems that mainline Protestants have also responded by emphasizing individual action towards the state. As the church no longer has significant authority in their relationship with the state, mainline Christians have largely begun to emphasize the individual's decision making in relation to the state. Rather than looking to the church for specific direction on a concern, mainline Christians are taking their individual interpretations of what it means to be a Christian and trying to apply those to individual

⁴⁰ Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom*, 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 23.

concerns. Using this process mainline Christians can address voting concerns as well as day to day conflicts.

The more conservative response can be found in those traditionally labeled fundamentalist Christian congregations. Rather than flee from historic Christianity, as mainline Protestants have done, fundamentalists have clung to their past. It is the modern actions of this group that Hall refers to in his quotation concerning the influence of time: “It is still being resisted, and with increasing aggressiveness, by millions of avowed Christians on this continent.”⁴² The fundamentalist response has largely been to maintain efforts of evangelism, both nationally and internationally. Fundamentalists have also worked to maintain some connection with the state as a semblance of their past relationship. The fundamentalist church continues to be organized toward political efforts. It is clear, however, that the church no longer holds the significant influence that it once did. Fundamentalist Christians continue trying to justify their faith by intertwining it with the state by gaining political support. They find, however, a remnant of the support they once had. The fundamentalist effort at expressing the church through the state seems extremely limiting of their ability to influence society. Thus, in an oversimplification of the situation, the contemporary church can be divided into either fundamentalist congregations seeing limited results as they attempt to represent themselves through an outdated expression of Christianity, or mainline Protestants, defined by their fear of expressing themselves as Christians and their lack of unity.

II. Redefining Christian Mission

⁴² Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life*, 6.

As briefly discussed above, the deterioration of the church's relationship with the state has resulted in two prominent responses. Categorized as conservative fundamentalists and mainline Protestants, I have briefly outlined the two responses. From this point on my analysis will focus on the mainline Protestants. I believe that much of my analysis is applicable to denominations outside of mainline Protestantism, but because of variables in present status of denominations I will not justify the distinctions, rather I allow the similarities to speak for themselves. I am also turning my analysis entirely from historical Christianity to the contemporary Christianity of today. Hopefully, having gained some enlightenment from the examination of historical Christianity, the contemporary question: "What is the mission of the Christian here and now?" can be reasonably answered.

The Way of the Flesh

To begin moving into a proposition of contemporary mission it is important to understand some of the specific problems within mainline Protestantism today. A significant concern within mainline Protestantism in the United States can be traced back to Hellenistic culture; this is the emphasis on the individual. As noted above, the church is becoming more of a gathering space as it offers less specific direction. Presumably the gospel continues to influence the ethics of individual Christians as they go out into the community and work to be involved, but more and more often in mainline Protestantism there is not specific guidance in regards to societal issues, as is usually the case with conservative fundamentalist denominations.

This emphasis on the individual returns somewhat to Christianity's early institution of Hellenistic culture. As discussed earlier, the definition of sin was changed from a relational definition to an individual failure. Sin emphasized your actions after its translation into Greek. This contrasted the communal living and teaching of the early Christian communities who were dependent on supporting each other. Paul's letter to the Galatians emphasizes the need of those early communities who had to support those who didn't. While he does not specifically write of sin he makes clear the necessity of community. "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor...."⁴³ As Paul is encouraging the Galatians to remember the poor he is breaking down other barriers in the early Christian community. "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."⁴⁴ He emphasizes the significance of these relationships when he cites Christ's great commandment. "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"⁴⁵ Finally, in the letter to the Galatians Paul uses negative references to the flesh because it distracts from the ways of the spirit. "Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh...."⁴⁶

As stated, Paul does not specifically reference sin in writing to the Galatians, but he concludes his warning against the flesh by writing "those who do such things will not

⁴³ Gal. 2:10, NRSV.

⁴⁴ Gal. 3:28, NRSV.

⁴⁵ Gal. 5:14, NRSV.

⁴⁶ Gal. 5:16-17, NRSV.

inherit the kingdom of God.”⁴⁷ It is clear that “desires of the flesh” are selfish desires that get in the way of the larger Christian community. “Desires of the flesh” are, largely, “what you want,”⁴⁸ but they are opposed to the commandment that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”⁴⁹ which comes from the Spirit. Paul concludes by stating that those gratifying the “desires of the flesh” will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul’s statement regarding the flesh can be summarized by saying: if you place your self above the other you will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul, thus, to the point of condemnation, emphasized the relationship with the other and especially the less fortunate. This was maintained, however, only so long as Christianity was a minority separate from the Hellenistic culture. When they moved into the dominant culture and began to be associated with the state, the emphasis on relationship was dismissed. Accepting the values of the state and culture, the individual, became much more prominent.

The Church State Distinction Today

For early Christians there were social benefits to blending with dominant culture of the time. Christianity and the state were essentially one and the same; eventually everyone in the Roman Empire had to be a Christian. There was no real distinction between the Christian community and the secular community. Essentially everyone was, to some degree, a stated Christian. The degree of commitment, however, was up to the

⁴⁷ Gal. 5:21, NRSV.

⁴⁸ Gal. 5:17, NRSV.

⁴⁹ Mk. 12:31, NRSV.

individual Christian, and individual communities of committed Christians were not nearly as prominent when everyone was Christian, but many of them were so only to appease the state.

Comparisons can be seen today. Certainly there are varying levels of commitment. The mainline Protestants find themselves, while not supported by the state, accepting the secular state in order to support the state. Thus, because of mainline Protestants unwillingness to oppose the state, there is no visible distinction between Christians and those outside the church. There *is* a distinct difference, however, in the relationship with the state. As mainline Protestants act individually, rather than within Christian communities, their contemporary efforts do not go toward a Christian state. Unlike in the times of Constantine, when Constantine invoked the Council of Nicaea himself, the contemporary state is not Christian. The United States of the 21st century encourages freedom of religion for all religions and the country is growing in its diversity of religions. The United States recent wave of immigration has made the country even more of a melting pot. It now includes an estimated 1.3 million Hindus,⁵⁰ 2.5 million Buddhists,⁵¹ and another two million Muslims.⁵² These are all conservative estimates that are more than half a decade old. Although the rate of immigration has slowed since most of the data was collected, it is very likely that the actual populations are significantly higher. Considering the new diversity of religion in the United States, the

⁵⁰ Felix Hoover, "Local Hindus to Celebrate," *Columbus Dispatch*, August 17, 2001.

⁵¹ Julie Poppen, "Monument to Buddhism," *Rocky Mountain News*, August 17, 2001.

⁵² Abdul Malik Mujahid, "Muslims in America: Profile 2001," 2001, online text www.soundvision.com/info/yearinreview/2001/profile.shtml.

unification of the church is all the more necessary. As the community around the church is no longer a clearly Christian community, it is necessary for the church to maintain its own community apart from the state and secular society.

Distinguishing the Church from the State

The distinction between the church and the rest of the state needs to be made clear. What distinguishes the church from the state's YMCA? Douglas John Hall argues that many mainline Protestants are prone to see the churches' purpose as fellowship or being a "friendly church."⁵³ It is apparent, as when Hall was writing, that if fellowship is the only mission of the church there is no real distinction between the church, a coffee shop, YMCA, or any welcoming community spot. This cannot be the only purpose of the church; the Gospel calls us to much more. For now, however, the prominence of fellowship in the churches' mission has caused several negative effects.

The emphasis on fellowship can be traced to a significant historical trend referenced earlier. Going back to Constantine, Christianity has held a quantitative definition of mission throughout most of its history; the justification of Christianity's qualitative superiority was dependent on the quantitative success of the faith. Even in contemporary fellowship, the idea of the "friendly church" is to bring in new members through the open arms of the congregation. The second influence is the Twentieth Century's movement to support freedom of religions. These two have combined to be very restrictive to Christian mission, leading the church to the mission of fellowship. Afraid of driving possible members away because of their theology, while still

⁵³ Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom*, 24.

maintaining a quantitative definition of church success, the mainline church has refused to articulate a mission significantly contrary to the secular society for fear of offending possible members. Hall argues that, essentially, the mainline Protestant denominations are interpreting the gospel to allow for a lack of Christian confession, so as to avoid conflict. Fellowship, and the promotion of the “friendly church,” are interpreted within the mainline church as services of the gospel.⁵⁴ Hall addresses the problem a decade ago and I think it is fair to say that the Church still faces the same issue. It is true that the manner of fellowship offered to the community by mainline congregation upholds the theology of the gospel. At the same time, there are many parallel state and secular services that could rightfully be labeled gospel services. The church needs to distinguish itself from the state and secular society. Mainline Protestantism needs a well defined gospel mission apart from the state.

The Faith Brings Conflict

This may very well lead to some manner of conflict with the state. The true gospel message must be at the heart of the mainline Protestant mission. Perhaps the contemporary mainline church can take a historic example from minority Protestant denominations and the necessity, at times, of conflict. Immigrating to the United States in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, Mennonites and Amish, Missouri Synod Lutherans, and Christian Reformed all found themselves attacked in the Twentieth Century by mainline Protestants.

⁵⁴ Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom*, 24-25.

Mainstream they consciously decided not to be, setting themselves off from the neighbors who welcomed them for being so much like themselves....But why the determination to be separate? Why choose to be an outsider? It is because becoming insiders would have been so easy yet so costly for these groups. Their old homelands had demanded conformity at the price of religious integrity, and they had no reason to think that America's price would be any less.⁵⁵

This James D. Bratt essay points out the decision Mennonites and Amish, Missouri Synod Lutherans, and Christian Reformed made to separate themselves from society. While these groups acknowledged the benefits of conforming to secular society, they decided their religious integrity was of prime importance and could not be sacrificed for acceptance by the mainline society. They faced the consequences. During World War I their lack of involvement in American society and largely German heritage inspired mob demonstrations and vast persecution.⁵⁶ Offering lessons for mainline Protestants of today, however, these groups exemplify the necessity of protecting the faith at their own cost.

The Gospel does not teach us that following Christ is supposed to be easy. Jesus calls us to take up the cross beside him; this is no easy task.

Then Jesus told his disciples 'if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'⁵⁷

Mainline Christianity has maintained a prominent relationship with the state for so much of its existence that it would appear mainline Protestants have come to expect

⁵⁵ James D. Bratt, *Minority Faiths, Protestant Immigrants and the Protestant Mainstream*, Jonathan D. Sarna ed., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998) , 130.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁷ Matt. 16:24-25, NRSV.

Christianity to be easy. There is no conflict if the state offers tangible benefits to Christianity as well as encourages Christians to practice their faith. This was not the case for early Christians, prior to Constantine, who were surrounded by a society who offered no support of Christianity; most people of the time practiced pagan religions of the Greek civilization and didn't encourage Christianity. Comparable to the immigrant Protestants, early Christians had to protect their faith and place it above the society around them, their own possessions, and most everything else.

Most Christians, since Constantine, have not had to significantly compromise their faith because their faith has been the faith of the majority; often it has been represented, in some way, by the state. The Protestant immigrants had minority beliefs, different from the mainline, and stood by those by separating themselves. Only in the last one hundred years has the United States accepted its founding upon the Bill of Rights and freedom of religion; it can no longer be called a Christian state. Thus, while there are indeed a significant number of Christians in the United States they are separate from the state. For Christianity to truly act upon the gospel, as the early Christians did, it must be willing to act in opposition to the United States, as the immigrant Protestants did, for the country is no longer a Christian State.

The Way of the Spirit

If contemporary Christians are going to acknowledge that the days of Christianity walking along side the state can no longer go on, then they will need guidance in rebuilding the church. Paul offers that guidance in his writing: the way of the Christian is the way of the Spirit and not the way of the flesh. I have referred to the way of the flesh,

its selfish desires, and its natural opposition to God. To understand the Christian mission, however, we must understand the way of the Spirit. Paul writes to the Romans:

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.⁵⁸

This letter to the Romans acknowledges those in the Spirit within the church of Rome.

Paul also acknowledges the necessity of having the Spirit within you; he seemingly makes no distinction between these two phrases. Through the Spirit's presence, however, the righteousness of Christ's resurrection overcomes the sin of the flesh.

Noting the historical and present lack of distinction between the church and the secular state, it is necessary for mainline Protestants to ask themselves to what extent they are of the Spirit and to what extent they are of the flesh. It is, of course, necessary for the church to maintain the way of the Spirit. Significant too, the church must support Christians in the struggle to avoid the ways of the flesh. Of course we cannot help but fail, but thus is the glory of Christ's death and resurrection. Even knowing the grace of Jesus Christ awaits us we must struggle against sin and the ways of our flesh; in fact, it is knowing the sacrifice, and gift, that Christ Jesus offers us that should drive the Christian to struggle all the more against sin. Again, Paul writes to the Romans.

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Rom. 8:9-11, NRSV.

⁵⁹ Rom. 6:15-16, NRSV.

If Christians do not struggle against sin, but merely accept their sin, what has changed with the resurrection? If Christians accept their sin they are still slaves to sin. Christians must repent for sins of the past, acknowledging their wrong. So too, the Christian must work to avoid sin; thus the Christian prays in the Lord's Prayer: "And lead us not into temptation."⁶⁰ The prayer asks for God's help in avoiding sin, but it is an acknowledgment of the necessary struggle against it.

The Spirit Seen through Works

The book of James continues to articulate the connection between the Spirit and the body. James speaks of faith; parallel to Paul's letter to the Romans, Romans speaks of the Spirit within the community of faith in Rome.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead....For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.⁶¹

Paul emphasizes in Galatians the way of the flesh is selfish and contrary to the community. James stresses the role of the faithful in supporting the community: "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food...and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?" James here supports Paul's letter to the Galatians which emphasizes the way of the Spirit as being associated with the community. "You shall love the neighbor as yourself." The text also parallels Paul's criticism of the way of the flesh. James writes "faith without works is dead" after providing an example of refusing

⁶⁰ Matt. 6:13, NIV.

⁶¹ Js. 2:14-17, 26, NRSV.

to support the community. If translated into Paul's terminology this incident could be considered selfish individualism contrary to community; it could only be considered an action of the flesh.

Faith, the presence of the Spirit, its living quality, can be judged by *works* of the spirit and our endless struggle against the flesh. Christians must struggle against these mortal bodies so long as they bind us—these mortal bodies, of the flesh, that will continually be inclined toward sin. It is upon the struggle in, and against, this world that we will be judged. Christians are not meant for this world. This was the assurance Christ gave his followers as he warned them of the fate Christians would face in this world.

If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you...If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.⁶²

Again, the life of the Christian is not meant to be easy, for the life of the Christian is not of this world. Distinguishing the mainline Protestants of today from the secular state includes defining what aspects of the state are notable ways of the flesh. The church's mission also has to include more than fellowship; it must be willing to challenge those aspects of the state that are contrary to the Spirit.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer and “Cheap Grace”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the most influential theologians of the Twentieth Century, writing out of World War II, acknowledges the depth of commitment involved

⁶² Jn. 15:19-21, NRSV.

in Christianity in *The Cost of Discipleship*. As much as any contemporary Christian, Bonhoeffer is qualified to write on the topic of commitment and cost of Christianity. He was imprisoned and eventually hanged for his role in resisting Hitler.⁶³ His letters from prison make it clear that he struggled with the moral repercussions of an assassination attempt on Hitler's life, but at the same time his Christian morality could not merely accept the actions occurring in his native Germany.

To stand as a Christian in the face of the world's persecution is the challenge of the Christian. It is the challenge that Bonhoeffer puts forth in *The Cost of Discipleship*. First, however, the Christian is given a warning to watch for the enemy of the Church, cheap grace. "Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say and so everything can remain as it was before."⁶⁴ It is clear that Bonhoeffer draws from Paul here: "Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!"⁶⁵ Bonhoeffer fights the same battle in the Twentieth century that Paul fought as he was establishing the church. Bonhoeffer mockingly describes the church of "cheap grace."

Let him not attempt to erect a new religion of the letter by endeavouring to live a life of obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ! The world has been justified by grace. The Christian knows that, and takes it seriously. He knows he must not strive against this indispensable grace. Therefore – let him live like the rest of the world!⁶⁶

⁶³ Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd ed., s.v. "Bonhoeffer, Dietrich."

⁶⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 2d ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 35.

⁶⁵ Rom. 6:15, NRSV.

⁶⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 36.

I ask again. Is the mission of the church supposed to be fellowship so we can appease the world? If the church becomes nothing but a YMCA with a theology to welcome in the society around, we must acknowledge that the church is a church of “cheap grace.”

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.⁶⁷

As Bonhoeffer writes, “cheap grace” is the enemy of the church⁶⁸; today there must be a mission of the church to call the Christian to. With the prominence of the church in contemporary society, there must be a church mission to guide the Christian in the way of the Spirit. There must be a church mission to distinguish the church from the secular state. That mission calls the Christian to a mission that distinguishes them from the world and avoids “cheap grace.”

Is it possible for the church to have such mission: a concrete mission to distinguish the contemporary Christian community by directing members in the way of the Spirit, against the way of the flesh, while encouraging church members in the continual struggle that will inevitably ensue? I propose such a mission in the Biblical concept of stewardship.

III. Stewardship: A New Mission

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 35.

Stewardship has been loosely tied to Christianity at various points throughout the church's history; Stewardship's historical application has been to varying degrees for differing purposes. In contemporary churches stewardship often connotes financial commitment. I wish to make clear from the beginning that this is not the stewardship I speak of when I refer to a new mission for the church. Stewardship, interpreted as returning to God the blessings He first gave us, limits stewardship to an act done by the Christian. Stewardship is not, in fact, limited to the doing of an act; stewardship implies much more than a financial commitment. Stewardship, as Christian mission, is the process of becoming a steward, not merely doing steward-like acts. It is a state of being; there are certain acts that stewards will undoubtedly commit themselves to, but these spring fourth from the inner being which defines the steward. The steward is not defined by his actions, but by his inner self. In this way stewardship is a state of being that can be recognized through the steward's actions.

I propose a new mission for the church in accepting and promoting stewardship. Individual Christians should accept the parallel mission of becoming stewards. The steward is a Christian in the "way of the spirit," called to responsibilities in the contemporary world. I will make this clear as I expand on the definition of stewardship, but I'll argue that stewardship's ability to address the issues of today make it the Christian mission for here and now.

The concept of stewardship is above all relational. It is a concept of responsibility based upon the Biblical position. For example, in the Joseph narrative Joseph is steward for the Pharaoh.⁶⁹ As Douglas John Hall describes the steward, it includes three different

⁶⁹ Gen. 41:37- 45:28

relationships: God, neighbor, creation.⁷⁰ The steward's relationship to God is that of the loving subordinate. Stewards gratefully accept the responsibilities that God places upon them; why shouldn't they be grateful? Stewards remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that continually sweeps away their sin. The inner being that defines the steward comes from this love and gratitude of their God. Then springing fourth from the steward's inner being, knowing the love they were given, the steward cannot help but try to offer the same love to the neighbor. Still, the steward knows that God has given him responsibilities in his relationships with neighbor and creation. Even as I will focus more on these other two relationships, I emphasize the necessity of God-given responsibility as part the Christian mission. I refer back to the church's struggle to distinguish themselves from the state. With stewardship as a mission there should be no such struggle; God calls the Christian to distinguish themselves from the state. That is the responsibility of the steward.

A significant part of the steward's responsibility is in their calling to relationship alongside the neighbor. Our neighbor should hold a relationship of equality through mutually beneficial struggle. Together, humans struggle to survive, but the steward acknowledges the inequalities of the world because of humankind's constant submission to the "ways of the flesh." The United States' connection to the "ways of the flesh" can be seen most obviously in the nation's endless need to possess. Capitalism is grounded in selfishness; it thrives when people feel compelled toward more and more for themselves.

Stewardship the Neighbor and Capitalism

⁷⁰ Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 81. Douglas John Hall, *The Steward* (New York: Fellowship Press, 1982).

Inevitably the possessive actions of the United States have negative effects on the underprivileged of the world, and the natural world itself. Capitalism has its winners and its losers; it is certainly not a system of equality. Just as there must be rich with capital to continually buy more and more and support the system, there must be those at the bottom who are willing to produce for minimal wages. The United States is among the rich in the capitalistic world system that they promote. It is not a manner of individual class in the United States; certainly capitalism promotes a division whereby some achieve more economic success than others. The reality, however, is that the United States, *as a whole* is among the rich of the world; because of that, most in the country cannot fathom the extreme poverty experienced by many throughout the world. “More than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive.”⁷¹

Humankind has forever been in conflict with one another; amidst conflict there have always been losers: those persecuted, taken advantage of, and merely forgotten. As such, the steward’s struggle is a struggle to spread the “way of the Spirit” on behalf of the oppressed who go unheard. Knowing that the “way of the Spirit” is that of equity, the steward offers themselves, their being, to their impoverished neighbors. So long as humanity is in conflict, the Christian follows Christ’s perfect example of stewardship. There are winners and losers in conflict and the steward supports the downtrodden the world has turned its back on.

Many of the priorities of United States culture, however, shift the balance away from equity by benefiting wealthy countries, such as the United States, and make progress difficult for poorer countries.

⁷¹ Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2005), 1.

The \$450 billion that the United States will spend this year on the military will never buy peace if it continues to spend around one thirtieth of that, just \$15 billion, to address the plight of the world's poorest of the poor, whose societies are destabilized by extreme poverty and thereby become havens of unrest, violence and, even global terrorism. That \$15 billion represents a tiny percentage of U.S. income, just 15 cents on every \$100 of U.S. gross national product, or GNP. The share of U.S. GNP devoted to helping the poor has declined for decades, and is a tiny fraction of what the United States has repeatedly promised, and failed, to give.⁷²

This conflict with the steward's responsibility to the neighbor forces the steward to oppose the state's priorities. Stewards must acknowledge that the United States has not committed any significant funds toward poverty. Stewardship calls the Christian to stand by the neighbor, specifically those downtrodden and struggling because of the world. The United States has committed only the bare minimum of its budget to these "poorest of the poor," which shows a significant conflict of priorities.

Stewardship and Creation

Stewards commit themselves to their neighbor because, among other things, they know that humankind is called to be in community. The final relationship of the steward is that with nature; humankind's role in nature has become a communal one. The biblical command to humankind is to "'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"⁷³ Throughout the past several centuries, this verse has allowed for significant conflict between humanity and creation; mankind has

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Gen. 1.28 NRSV

expressed “dominion” over nature, taking all it could. The United States, for example, produces 21% of the world’s Carbon Dioxide emissions,⁷⁴ the primary fossil fuel, and is one of the highest in per capita emissions.⁷⁵ As more and more evidence is gathered, Global Warming is being accepted as a reality that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, fossil fuel emissions, a significant share from the United States, have already weakened the ozone layer and significantly melted polar ice caps. The result has been huge migrations, as well as significant additions to the endangered species list, in addition to the many who have gone extinct. The United States seemingly has understood dominion in the definition of a dictator. The destruction of the ecosystem and other natural life is secondary, or unnoticed, beside the progress of humanity.

Humankind, however, was created *with* nature. They were certainly created with abilities and a relationship with God that placed them apart from the rest of nature, but *with* nature all the same. Douglas John Hall argues that that is the relationship of the steward to nature; humankind in a distinct role, but still within nature, is called to dominion, not to dominate over nature for humanity’s ends alone. This means responsible control of creation for creation’s benefit, humanity included; this is contrary to the common understanding that creation was made for human benefit. Stewards of creation view themselves as governors over creation. Stewards were elected, called by

⁷⁴ Energy Information Administration, “Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide Emissions from the Residential and Commercial Sectors, by Fuel Type, 1949-2005,” November 20, 2006, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/environment.html>.

⁷⁵ G. Marland, T.A. Boden, R.J. Andres. “Global, Regional, and National CO2 Emissions. In Trends: A Compendium of Data on Global Change.” (Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, 2000), http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2-emissions.html.

God, to a position of authority where they are responsible for all of creation. This responsibility extends to fellow human beings; we must hold each other accountable for our actions. Stewards' relationships to the neighbor and to creation can not, as such, be separated. One always affects the other for humanity is part of creation. For example, "It is clear that poor people are more vulnerable to and affected by environmental degradation. Over-consumption by wealthy groups is often a cause of such degradation and can exacerbate poverty."⁷⁶ Glutinous over-consumption, in multiple ways, is contrary to the steward's mission.

Stewards at Conflict

It should be apparent that the steward's mission is often at conflict with the state. At the same time, stewards cannot remain apathetic when they know the responsibility that they have. Stewardship is a calling from God that must take priority over any concerns of this world. Here stewards must distinguish themselves from the state. The state often does not show significant concern for issues of poverty or environmental degradation. For stewards these issues form the foundation of their calling from God. Stewardship can be distinguished from the state merely by looking at the budget of the U.S. government. Fifteen cents of every \$100 U.S. gross national product spent toward extreme poverty demonstrates a low priority of helping the less fortunate.⁷⁷ Stewards must acknowledge that their priorities are contrary to the states and move to re-prioritize the state.

⁷⁶ "Pan European and American Civil Society Forum Statement in Preparation for the WSSD," (Sept. 22-23, 2001), 3.

⁷⁷ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 1.

Obviously re-focusing the states' priorities and spending upon issues of poverty, the subjugated neighbor, and environmental protection and sustainability, rather than defense, is a huge mission. Stewards are not competing against individuals or a government; they are up against a societal mentality that places the self first and only considers the needs of the neighbor or the environment in passing. It is a consumer society that this year, 2007, had 147 million visit retailers over Thanksgiving weekend.⁷⁸ A societal mentality cannot be addressed by individuals. It is a widespread philosophy held, to varying degrees, and enacted by the vast majority of the population. It is common for individuals to do nothing because they concede to the philosophy of: "If I change what difference does it make?" Too many others will keep acting exactly the same and nothing will really change. This is the flesh speaking. The flesh desires to continue in the selfish ways of those around us, even though the spirit knows that it is wrong. Humans justify this continuation to themselves by arguing that their action makes no real difference because everyone else is continuing to act selfishly regardless. The "way of the flesh" cannot be chosen or justified by stewards.

The church must lead its stewards, for they must be united to stand against the sinful "ways of the flesh" so easy to turn to. To oppose the present societal mentality that emphasizes the self, the church must put the charge of stewardship to their congregations as an act of unification. Stewards oppose the consumer mentality so long as it takes away from the resources available to impoverished neighbor. Stewardship calls the steward to care for the neighbor and creation; this responsibility is considered when looking at the necessity of the stewards' own actions. Stewards' mentality is, as such, in opposition to

⁷⁸ Blanca Torres, "Shoppers Face Season of Bargain Prices," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland), 28 November 2007

the societal mentality of selfishness. It is only by establishing the united support of stewards from each other, however, that there can be the expectation that this new Christian mission will allow Christians to distinguish themselves from the state and significant “ways of the flesh.” It is, otherwise, to be expected, that under sin’s influence Christians’ will succumb to the call of their flesh and return to superfluous spending, prioritizing the self above the responsibilities of the steward.

Stewardship and Education

In order for the church to institute stewardship as a new mission, the first step is education. Stewards must understand their calling so far as it is a mission from God, but it is also necessary to know what the specific issues concerning the neighbor and creation are today and why stewards hold their opinion on the issue. The Pan European and American Civil Society Forum Statement points out that:

Lack of education and public awareness, and excessive corporate influence over government policy, has led to a situation where economic growth and trade liberalization over-ride social and environmental concerns.⁷⁹

Stewards must remain educated to counteract the reason of the selfish. For example, trade liberalisation, globalization is occurring most predominantly today in the Asia-Pacific region; many proponents would cite the vastly expanding economies of India and China as examples of the policies success. “By 2004, India was growing at around 7 percent per year, approaching the growth rate of China.”⁸⁰ This certainly points toward a successful policy, but for who?

⁷⁹ “Pan European and American Civil Society Forum Statement in Preparation for the WSSD,” (Sept. 22-23, 2001), 1.

The United Nation's Development Report of 2006 found that fewer jobs were created in the 1990s than the 1980s (176 million compared with 337 million) and unemployment increased from 3.9 to 6.3 percent.⁸¹ Liberalising trade has been extremely beneficial to industrialists in both developed and developing countries like India and China. Developing countries are now facing an increase in economic inequality, including a growing wealth gap between rural and urban areas.⁸² The poor have not benefited from the region's economic growth.

Stewards maintain the social concern of the neighbors well-being above economic growth which can not measure that well-being. Issues such as trade liberalisation serve to exemplify the need of stewards to educate themselves on the contemporary issues they are addressing. Only through education can it become clear what action is necessary to uphold our responsibilities to the neighbor and creation. And through education we are able to institute those responsibilities by counteracting the logical or illogical reason of a selfish societal mentality. In the quest for education, however, stewards must remain aware of the "excessive corporate influence" that exists within the United States media. "Today the ten largest media-owning companies produce half of all media revenues (Bagdikian 1997:xiii)."⁸³ Even education is not a straight road in a country of selfish societal mentality. Stewards must consider when looking at their resources that many of

⁸⁰ Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, 181.

⁸¹ Maseeh Rahman, "People Pay High Price for Global Trade Growth: Un; Report Finds Wealth Gap and Food Insecurity Among Negatives," *South China Morning Post* (China), June 29, 2006.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Martin Gilens, Craig Hertzmen, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act," *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 4 (May 2000) : 370.

them are being published by corporations and individuals who are invested elsewhere; this has been argued to bring an often unnoticed media slant toward corporations and government elite.⁸⁴ Educating the Christian as to issues of the society provides direction to stewardship. The divine calling from God provides the motivation and mission for stewards. Caring for the neighbor and creation are only a mission; constant education provides direction to the mission of the steward in the contemporary context.

Stewardship: A Contemporary Example

I have been critical of the actions the Church throughout this paper; I stand beside my position that there is a need to change, but there are also examples of action that the Church can look to as images of stewardship. “A Minnesota without Poverty” represents a convergence of religious leaders, varying in beliefs, around the common goal of eliminating poverty in Minnesota. One of the statements upon the 2004 signed document of common principles says: “We believe it is the Creator's intent that all people are provided those things that protect human dignity and make for healthy life: adequate food and shelter, meaningful work, safe communities, healthcare, and education.”⁸⁵ The document continues to educate and rally additional Minnesotans to fight poverty as it gains signatures to place before the legislative assembly. The program uses their volunteers to encourage both legislators and businesses to combat poverty.

In this effort, however, real success can only be expected if the program is supported by the churches and their congregations’ significant numbers. “A Minnesota

⁸⁴ Ibid. 370-371.

⁸⁵ “A Common Foundation: Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty” (2004).

without Poverty” can be looked to because of its effort at unification behind the common cause eliminating poverty. Stewardship aims to provide a broader mission for a much larger congregation, but the aim is still to unite behind that mission and incite significant changes. Mass unification is necessary; an independent effort organized by scattered religious leaders will always be begging for enough population support to make significant change. But the concerns of “A Minnesota without Poverty” are the concerns of Christians; these are the priorities of stewards: “human dignity...healthy life...adequate food and shelter.” Stewards should be reaching out to efforts such as “A Minnesota without Poverty” so as to uphold their responsibility to their neighbor.

There is no lack of organizations looking to lobby politicians or work toward direct service to the neighbor. In the same way there is no lack of organizations working toward environmental issues. The disconcerting deficiency is in the number of volunteers these organizations receive. In 2006 61.2 million U.S. citizens volunteered, which is actually a record high compared to past decades.⁸⁶ The study, “Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Ranking in Civic Life,” was done by the Corporation for National and Community Service and showed that one in three volunteers dropped out between 2005 and 2006, demonstrating a lack of significant commitment.⁸⁷ The 61.2 million citizens currently volunteering represent just over a quarter of the population.⁸⁸ This is another instance where the high rate of participation, compared to other decades, is only a statement relative to other generations where participation may have been lower

⁸⁶ “New Federal Report Shows Volunteering Strong in America, But 1 in 3 Volunteers Dropped Out in 2006,” *U.S. Newswire*, (Washington) , 16 April 2007.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

due to a number of variables. Stewards should be concerned with the near 75% of the population that does not volunteer and the significant loss of volunteers between 2005 and 2006.

The Commitment

True stewardship necessitates an economic commitment from the Christian. In this sense the Church's current connotations with stewardship are accurate. Stewards offer themselves to their neighbor and creation in response to their calling from God; to change a consumer society in an effort at global equity and reduction of environmental destruction, stewards cannot support that excessive consumerism. Living within the society it generally cannot be avoided, but education must provide each individual with their protest of the consumer mentality. Again, this is the commitment of stewards. They are placed in conflict like the early Christians or minority Protestants of 19th century America because they hold to their faith, even as they are challenged by the lifestyle they live. This is the meaning of bearing the cross, but the sacrifice is not for nothing. Rather than tossing more money to corporations and feeding the capitalist mentality, donations to a significant number of organizations redistribute those resources to the less the fortunate.

Christians often confuse need and comfort when considering their ability to offer their funds to those in need around them. When contemplating this distinction, stewards remember those they would be offering their funds to, for regardless of social standing, most Americans are among the wealthy of the world. Stewards also know that they are

called by God and that he has promised to provide; there is no need for concern so they offer themselves and their possessions willingly to those who are less fortunate.

Conclusion

My aim in this introduction to stewardship has been to briefly show that everything the Church needs to introduce stewardship as a Christian mission is already present. The stewardship mission focuses on aspects of Christianity that have been present since its beginning. It is a mission of service inspired by love for God and all of his creation, including humanity. Since this idea of committed service has always been present within Christianity I am not talking of a new Christian mission, but a re-focusing of the present Christian mission. Additionally, there are already significant organizations committed to working towards the same goals that stewards would aim to achieve. Uniting congregations behind the stewardship mission of service to the neighbor and creation would undoubtedly lead to significant growth in volunteers and funds for present non-profit organizations; religious organizations are already the most popular way for non-profits to get volunteers.⁸⁹ The theology and the volunteer outlets are already prepared for the stewardship mission to be instituted.

Historical events have made re-focusing a necessity for mainline Protestants of today. The Church at present cannot distinguish themselves from the state because of a lack of established mission. The prior Constantinian conquering mentality that Christians applied to mission and other religions was found to be largely inappropriate post-Auschwitz, and the empty space has yet to be filled. At the same time the state has separated themselves from the Church through policies of freedom of religion. The Church currently stands holding an expired relationship that the state no longer considers

⁸⁹ Ibid.

significant, and a mission that neither the Church nor the state apply to any longer.

Mainline churches have largely taken on fellowship as a mission. This is not a mission; it is not even Christian. The Church needs new mission. I have offered stewardship as a mission that will both distinguish the Church from the state and address significant issues in contemporary society. I hope, however, that I have made clear that even if stewardship is not the answer for the contemporary Church, the Church needs a mission here and now. Christians are called to mission; the Church needs to give their congregations some direction.

Annotated Bibliography

“A Common Foundation: Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty” (2004).

This is the founding document from the ecumenical movement to stop poverty. It demonstrates the philosophy of the movement and I cite it as holding the priorities of stewardship.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*, 2d ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966. Bonhoeffer addresses the issue of discipleship within his writing. I haven't made it through his whole text but to this point am specifically interested in his writing on “cheap” and “costly” grace. He addresses what it means to be a disciple of Christ; this is certainly a costly endeavor and I believe that there are a lot of parallels between the steward and the disciple.

Bratt, James D. *Minority Faiths, Protestant Immigrants and the Protestant Mainstream*, Jonathan D. Sarna ed., (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998) , 130. This essay within Jonathan Sarna's collection on minority faiths looked at Protest immigrants and their choice to become minorities rather than lose their faith. I used them as an example of placing the faith in priority and putting yourself in conflict.

Brereton, Virginia Lieson, "Education and Minority Religions," Jonathan Sarna *ed.*, *Minority Faiths*, 281. This was one of the essays in Sarna's text on minority faiths. It focused on the conflict in 19th century education between the Protestant majority and minority religions. The majority continually made efforts to force their faith upon the minority by using the education as a tool. This demonstrated the continued relationship of Church and state at this point as well as some responses of minorities when challenged by the state.

Doane, George Washington, "Fling out the Banner," *Songs by the Way*, 1875. This hymn exemplified the Constantinian mentality still present in 1875. The idea of conquering heathens for God is very present in the hymn.

"Doing the Numbers," *Christian Century* 118 (March 2007):7. Much like a less comprehensive article used. As I stress Christianity's need to form their own quality, this article demonstrates the quantitative nature still within the church. It focuses on a variety of population trends between denominations.

Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd ed., s.v. "Bonhoeffer, Dietrich." The Encyclopedia provided my biographical information on Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Energy Information Administration, "Energy-Related Carbon Dioxide Emissions from the Residential and Commercial Sectors, by Fuel Type, 1949-2005," November

20, 2006, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/environment.html>. This government website provides statistics on Carbon Dioxide emissions that I used to urge the necessity for change.

Gilens, Martin, Craig Hertzmen, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act," *The Journal of Politics* 62, no. 4 (May 2000) : 370. This study looked at the bias in newspaper due to corporate ownership. After finding that owners and investments influence the news available to readers I merely point out that this is something stewards must be aware of.

Hall, Douglas John. *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1995. In this short text Hall looks at the ideal transition that Christendom must make. He begins with the decline of Christianity's dominion (Christendom), and then looks at the response from various perspectives within the church. He concludes with the necessity that the Church intentionally disestablishes itself from the state.

_____. *Lighten Our Darkness*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.

The foundation of this text is that we live in a deteriorating world, but something needs to be done to change the world as is. Christianity, however, is a religion of hope. People flock to Christianity because of the hope that it provides as it removes one from the troubles of the world. But to what extent can a religion

address the issues of the world if it does not acknowledge the problems of the world?

_____. *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*. New York: Friendship Press, 1985. This text was the largest conversation partner with my writing. Hall introduces the steward with its historical and theological background and then proceeds to argue for its relevance as a symbol for the contemporary church. The two foci for Hall are our relationship as stewards with the earth and also with our neighbor. He looks into specific areas that should be addressed as well as the mentality we need to be holding as stewards.

_____. *The Stewardship of Life in The Kingdom of Death*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985. This text looks at Christianity and how it can adapt to specific issues of today. Hall discusses some early influences on Christianity and addresses various mentalities within Christianity at different periods. The work is presented as five different meditations followed by questions and answers.

Handy, Robert T., "Minority-Majority Confrontations, Church-State Patterns, and the U.S. Supreme Courts," Jonathan D. Sarna ed., *Minority Faiths*, 306. This is another essay in Sarna's text on minority faiths at the late nineteenth early twentieth century. It focuses on conflicts in the supreme court which notably

demonstrate progress for minority faiths. I found this significant to show the progression Protestant's deteriorating relationship with the state.

Hoover, Felix "Local Hindus to Celebrate," *Columbus Dispatch*, August 17, 2001. This was a national article looking at Hindu traditions that used merely for its estimation of Hindus in the country.

Jones, E. Stanley, Latourette, Kenneth Scott, Mackay, John A., McConnel, Francis J., Matthews, Basil, Miller, Francis P., Paton, William, Van Dusen, Henry P., Weigle, Luther Allan, Warnshuis, A. L., *The Christian Message for the World Today: A Joint Statement of the World-Wide Mission of the Christian Church* (New York, Round Table Press, 1934). This text was used only once to exemplify the Christian view of the world at the time. I cited a single reference to the Constantinian views of expansion and "heathens."

"Lutheran Numbers Up in Africa, Down in Europe," *Christian Century* 121 (March 2004):13. This brief article merely stresses the changing dynamics of Christianity today. It illustrates the continued quantitative presence within Christianity today.

Marland G., T.A., Boden, R.J. Andres. "Global, Regional, and National CO2 Emissions. In Trends: A Compendium of Data on Global Change." (Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory,

U.S. Department of Energy, 2000), http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2-emissions.html. This website provided per-capita information on most countries fossil fuel emission throughout the world. I was able to apply them to emphasize the need to focus on the environment.

Monge, David J., "Contextuality in the Theology of Douglas John Hall," *A Journal of Theology* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2002) : 210. I used this article on Douglas John Hall's theology mostly for biographical information. It addressed basic aspects of Hall's theology and his value to the Church.

Mujahid, Abdul Malik "Muslims in America: Profile 2001," 2001, online text www.soundvision.com/info/yearinreview/2001/profile.shtml. This article considered Islam in the United States. I applied its statistics on population.

"New Federal Report Shows Volunteering Strong in America, But 1 in 3 Volunteers Dropped Out in 2006," *U.S. Newswire*, (Washington) , 16 April 2007. The article reports on new statistics of volunteerism in the United States. While volunteering is high relative to the past, significant numbers demonstrate the lack of care for the neighbor that fits with the consumer mentality.

Olson, Roger E., review of *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World*, by Douglas John Hall, *Christian Century* 121 (July 2004): 36-38. Olson considers Hall's work with a relatively critical eye. As a book review he's focusing on one

piece of work, but I find his comments applicable to his other work. I used his critique in my biography of Hall.

“Pan European and American Civil Society Forum Statement in Preparation for the WSSD,” (Sept. 22-23, 2001), 3. The statement is from a document prepared by American and European NGOs to address the responsibility of developed countries for environmental sustainability. I focused specifically on their mention of the connection between developed countries over-consumption and injury to the poor through environmental effects.

Poppen, Julie, “Monument to Buddhism,” *Rocky Mountain News*, August 17, 2001. This article considered Buddhism in the United States. I applied its statistics on population.

Rahmen, Maseeh, “People Pay High Price for Global Trade Growth: Un; Report Finds Wealth Gap and Food Insecurity Among Negatives,” *South China Morning Post* (China) , June 29, 2006. This article looks at the effects of liberalisation in the Asia-Pacific region where economies have been growing fastest. It cites recent reports which show that economic growth has not benefited the poor. I apply this as an example of the necessity of education in a situation where statistics could easily make liberalization look like a successful policy. I also use it to oppose liberalisation specifically.

Sachs, Jeffrey D., *The End of Poverty*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2005), 1. Sachs is an economist who takes a world view at spending and poverty and considers the possibility of ending poverty in line with Millennium Development Goals. I apply his statistics and authority in statements concerning the present state of poverty.

Sarna, Jonathan, *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, University of Illinois Press (Urbana, IL), 1998. Sarna is the editor of the text on minority faiths in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The various essays look at how minorities respond to the Protestant mainstream. Sarna demonstrates the relation between church and state, and minority and majority religions in his text.

Sherkat, Darren E.; John Wilson, "Preferences, Constraints, and Choices in Religious Markets: An Examination of Religious Switching and Apostasy." *Social Forces*, Vol. 73, No. 3. (Mar., 1995), 993-1026. This sociological study looked at two generations religious preferences. The second generation they analyzed years later to see what changes they had decided on in regards to religious preference. Sherkat and Wilson look at two generations of religious choices in a sociological study. Most of their findings will be unhelpful to my research as they focus on the effects of parenting on the 2nd generations religious preference. There are a few references to religious activity in regards to denominational differences and choice.

Torres, Blanca, "Shoppers Face Season of Bargain Prices," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland) ,
28 November 2007. I cited this article briefly to note the significant consumerism
in United States culture.

Wilson, Bryan R., "An Analysis of Sect Development." *American Sociological Review*,
Vol. 24, No. 1. (Feb., 1959), pp. 3-15. This highly accessible look into the details
of the different types of sects as well as their progressions may be helpful in my
research as I look to transfer some of these characteristics of sects to the
mainstream.