ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:

PLACE, SHALOM, AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of

Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts in Urban Ministry

By

Nathan Alan Davis Hunt

April 2016

Accepted by the Faculty of the Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in Urban Ministry.

(Name), Adviser

(Name), Second Reader

The views expressed in this thesis are those of the student and do not necessarily express the views of the Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary.

I grant Hiebert Library permission to make this thesis available for use by its own patrons, as well as those of the broader community through inter-library loan. This use is understood to be within the limitations of copyright.

(Student) Signature

4/21/16

Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables, Maps, and Figures

PRELUDE

On Shalom in the Community of Creation

> I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'[1]
>
> Alasdair MacIntyre

> I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.
>
> Exodus 20:2-3

Somewhere in those imaginative hopes between our richest memory of love and the heart's deepest longing soars a dream. Protest chants crackle with its fire. A child's laughter sings its possibility. Old men sigh at its stubborn distance. Alpine brooks babble on each spring that it is a promise, and a warm meal with friends and family remind that it could be here—right now.

Language stretches its descriptive powers wide as they go to express the dream. Words tumble from the tongues of poets and the pages of scripture, linking arms to capture the inexpressible:

> Completeness, wholeness, health, welfare, safety, soundness, security.
>
> Tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony.
>
> The absence of agitation, discord, violence, fear, enmity.
>
> Relationship, order, stewardship, beauty, rhythm.
>
> Friendship, intimacy, fidelity, community.
>
> Liberty, freedom, life.
>
> Peace, justice.

[1] *After Virtue*, 216

Love.[2]

Alone they only echo the freight born in the dream. But together, together they recall a story which is at once ancient, personal, and cosmic. The dream transcends us because it was not first ours: it is the dream of God for his creation.[3]

If there is a word that comes closest to gathering the streams of Divine passion into a coherent pattern—into a vision for every life, time, and place—that word is *shalom*.

Shalom evokes the holy dance of creation and recreation, pointing back to what was in the beginning and will be in the end. Shalom is both our telos and ultimate a priori longing. Around us, the land retains shalom's fingerprints while history bends indefensibly toward its destination. Shalom was the "good" before the serpent's temptation and the power of sin. Now, it is the goal toward which God draws the firmament—already glimpsed but not yet fulfilled. It is God's all-consuming intent. Shalom stands across the bridge of salvation, the outcome of liberation, the joyful communion of the reconciled.

It is the character of the Kingdom of God.

Not only God's creational intent, shalom is the Divine personality calling out to our oft-obscured imago Dei. The Trinity dreams of shalom because the I Am *is* shalom. God's own relational harmony constantly reaches out with other-oriented love. Out of love, the Lord imprints the option for shalom into all he makes. God's internal lifestyle

---

[2] Descriptions listed in Woodley, *Shalom in the Community of Creation*; Brueggemann, *Peace*; Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*.

[3] I am borrowing Walter Brueggemann's evocative language: "It bears enormous freight—the freight of a dream of God that resists all out tendencies to division, hostility, fear, drivenness, and misery. Shalom is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation" (Peace, 14).

offers the blueprint for just, righteous, and reconciled community—the prerequisites of shalom.

Direct and literal definitions seem to fail. They are too flat for its heights, too coarse for its delicate edges. It defies the dry and reductively academic. Shalom is beauty demanding art.

Shalom is better captured in a toddler's delight than an academic's proof. It is the raw vulnerability of finally knowing and being known. It is tear-filled laughter. It is being altogether home and together, in love and whole, joined in intimacy with all without barrier or breakdown, violence or shame. It is to behold the terrifying presence of God and be swept up breathtakingly as his beloved.

Though pregnant with emotion, God's work does not begin or end in abstraction. Shalom is unrelentingly located, historical, political and economic. It takes hold in the midst of homes and street corners, parks and marketplaces, snow-heavy peaks and courtrooms. Shalom is equitable and abundant fresh food, fulfilling work, and neighborhood safety. It is flourishing watersheds, caretaking economies, and restorative policies.

Shalom is glimpsed in the good farmer's healing care of land and livestock. Old growth forests teeming with synergistic life hum its wonders. It is suggested each time a horizon erupts in symphony at the sun's comings and goings. The still contentment of misty mornings, a glass-topped lake split by a loon, a salmon run returning to their breeding waters through a healthy spring, the introverted blooms of a desert shrub—it is each member of creation communing in mutual interdependence. Where there is shalom all have a place. All thrive through God-given, others-blessing self-expression.

Shalom lies in the city where every neighbor has a voice, the city that cultivates each block with equal care, and gives as much as it takes. It is seen in public squares where differences converge in compassion, streets that teem with all things human, families that are whole and full of affection, neighbors who look out for one another's needs, and industries that replace exploitation with stewardship. Shalom appears in homes where strangers find welcome, where the vulnerable become the empowered instead of the oppressed.

Scripture drips with images and stories to enrapture our minds and energize our bodies for participation in God's dream. We see it in a garden walk with the Maker. It is in the thrill of finally entering the Land. It strikes us in the audacity of lions lying peacefully alongside lambs. It is the foolishness of swords beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. It is Solomon's rapture at his bride. It is seeking the peace of a city that just conquered you. It is enemies made friends, the last made first, the poor inheriting the earth, the blind with sight returned, captives set free. It is a father's prodigal embrace of his shameful son. It is a table old enemies gather around in fellowship. It is every tribe reconciled and equally honored before the throne, raising every tongue in undiluted worship. It is a rock rolled away and a tomb laid open empty. It is a day, at long last, glory hallelujah, when the heavens are no longer brass, a city without need of sun or moon because the radiant presence of God beams on unfettered display.

Shalom is the story our Lord invites us to join. More than a projection of our best thoughts or a utopic flight of imagination, it resonates with us "because the creator has embedded this desire deep within the core of our being" (Woodley, 11). It is the unfathomable, indescribable will of God for the community of creation.

Oh, it is good, my friends. It is better than you can imagine.

Finding Clarity

As we forge deeper in the pages to come, evaluating the state of the world and imagining what it could be like, God's desire for shalom in the community of creation will set the terms of debate. What should the world be like? We will assume that it should be filled with shalom. So, before diving in, we need some firm propositions to supplement the vision cast above. Seven statements can provide us with a working framework which, though they cannot contain the complexities of this beautiful word, offer adequate guidelines for critical reflection.

1. *Shalom results from God's actions centered in and through Jesus*. Whether God is acting as creator, king, judge, liberator, or redeemer, these roles are always carried out to establish shalom. This mission is centered in Jesus. He is "the fulfillment of former images, to the point where he is named not only as the shalom bringer, but as shalom itself, 'for he himself is our peace (Eph 2:14a)" (Woodley, 13). God's pursuit of shalom thus provides a unifying theme of God's activity in history.
2. *Shalom is a relational construct in which creation lives in worshipful dependence on God and loving interdependence with others.* Identifying shalom and the opportunities for its creation requires focus on the ties between actors even more than the actors themselves. Shalom is seen in wholes and systems, not in isolation or individualism. Solitary, internal spirituality is virtuous only insofar as it empowers the follower of Jesus to live well with God and others. Shalom cannot be cultivated independently.

3. *Shalom is God's will for the entire community of creation.* "Shalom is never the private property of the few" (Brueggemann, 20). It is either held in common or it is absent. Shalom is extended to plants, animals, soil and all the things that compose the ecological world along with every culture and class of humanity. People must find our appropriate place within this community as fellow creatures.
4. *Shalom is the outcome of just systems, righteous living, equitable conditions, and reconciled relationships which are validated at the margins by the wellbeing and voice of the vulnerable*. It is a vision beautiful and mighty, cast by God himself, but it is never to obscure present predicaments of injustice. Rather, the vision electrifies our bodies and imaginations with dissonance. It refuses the easy peace of the powerful whose call for order seeks to maintain a self-serving status quo. In situations of domination, shalom demands liberation. Shalom is "the abolishment of the structures of oppression and violence" (Yoder, 6).
5. *Shalom is both an ethical praxis and a state of being.* Shalom the noun (the state of being that is our end goal) requires shalom the verb (the ethical praxis which provides the means to reach the goal). A godly lifestyle and society are responses to salvation, a post-liberation culture that in gratitude upholds the conditions of freedom made by God. "Biblical law was to be an instrument of shalom justice and as such a bulwark against oppression" (74). Thus, shalom is never so much a static presence as it is an ongoing process of theological remembrance and performance. God's acts of salvation set things right, but we must respond with uprightness for shalom to endure.

6. *Shalom is concrete and located, physically manifested in ecologies, political economies, and built environments*. It occurs in places, interconnected across geography and scale, and reflected in the health of bodies, societies, and ecosystems. "Since in English we often use peace to refer either to relationships between people or to an inner state of mind, we must underline the fact that contrary to the English meaning of peace, shalom in the Hebrew Bible refers primarily to a physical state of well-being, to things being as they ought to be in the material world" (13).
7. *Shalom is an eschatological promise that breaks into the present.* Shalom's full presence awaits the arrival of God's full presence: the great and terrible day of the Lord, the second coming, the return of our King. Faith believes God for this future. But in addition, faith looks back at the resurrection and sees a moment when the future burst into the present. The coming of shalom has already been inaugurated. Therefore Christians labor to expand its reach in the here and now. With Dr. King, we know that "although man's moral pilgrimage may never reach a destination point on earth, his never-ceasing strivings may bring him ever closer to the city of righteousness" (8).

INTRODUCTION

> To be an American is to move on, as if we could outrun change. To attach oneself to place is to surrender to it, and suffer with it.[1]
> Kathleen Norris
>
> Take up your cross and follow me.
> Matthew 16:24

The world wrapped itself in tones of passion. Muggy, skin temperature air of Texan dusks suspended my narrow frame and I wandered barefoot across our field crunching toward the back fence, heavy tangs of fresh mowed grass and final mockingbird calls filling my head. Nothing captured me with quietness more than the shifting slashes of fading light across the Engelings' pastures, dropping just over that stand of trees a quarter mile out. Nothing could place me more at home.

This was my land. The place my family tended soil and planted trees. It makes up so much of me. Those childhood evenings came at the end of hard working Saturdays. Dad and I sat for hours on the tractor or riding mower to keep the property sharp. Mowing was followed by tasks ordered through the descending size of our tools: edgers, weed eaters, brooms, shovels, rakes, loppers, trowels, hands, fingers, nails. The day's accumulation of grass stains, callouses, and fire ant bites were the medals won from care. Above our beaded foreheads, mustard-yellow crop dusters wandered in circles as they sprayed fields of cotton and maize that stretched beyond us. Their elongated hum epitomized my "all-is-well" sense of being.

We loved to garden, and our property was almost always blooming with some fragrant mix of hibiscus, lantana, old world roses, wisteria, daylilies, ajuga, confederate

[1] Quoted in Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place*, 11.

jasmine, butterfly weed, yarrow or honeysuckle. Maybe it should not come as a surprise then that the garden, great educator that she is, first planted in me the thought that this land was not always ours—did not always look as it did under our tenure, had not always served the purposes we asked.

The flowering trees on our property never seemed to bloom properly. Other places with the same varieties of ornamental pear, holly and red buds sagged with color each spring, but ours would hold out naked before skipping straight to leaves. Seasons of frustration passed before a local nursery worker revealed the secret flaw: cotton farming depletes certain minerals from the soil that trees need to flower. Well that explains it, my father opined. Our property was rowed fields a long ways back.

Almost without notice, a thread came loose. The first seams of a rift opened in my mind that day. What felt so familiar, so possessed, started giving way to a history that knew nothing of my family. Not all at once, but gradually what was mine became that which was wholly beyond me. The soil, through those bloom-bare trees, was testifying to stories half remembered, set well beyond my privileged young imagination.

Behind the place I knew and loved, other stories clung to the land. I could not, at that early time, imagine the villages of Karankawan natives who tilled the rich Gulf coast clay beneath us for centuries before Europeans arrived. That their genocide provided us a home never occurred to me. I could not imagine the years when my home was Mexico or that the poor immigrants in their crumbling mobile homes up the road had a much older claim than ours (no matter how much we protested their encroachment as a slight to property values). It was beyond me to think of colonists forcing slaves to grow cotton and

sugarcane along the banks of the Brazos just miles from where we lived.[2] That my symbol of peaceful assurance, the undulating crop dusters, were dropping poison on the world and participating in the industrialized degradation of creation was too jarring to consider.[3]

Nor could I piece together the subtle yet direct ways by which our pleasurable experience of the American Dream on this patch of dirt was predicated on robbing life from others. I did not realize the paradox of a rural existence whose livelihood was dependent on an urban economy or the effect of our lifestyle on the environment. It seemed impossible that the highways and suburbs constantly sprawling toward us were empowered by our own behavior, no matter how deeply we resented them. To accept that our well-being was implicated in other people's suffering was beyond consideration.

Choices and Challenges

I have been shown that privilege includes the ability to choose what burdens one wishes to carry. Oppression, on the other hand, is to be crushed by burdens without avenue for escape. As a well-educated white man, our society lets me decide if the sordid past behind the place of my family's home matters to me or not. A black woman cannot opt out of her gender or the color of her skin, and therefore cannot opt out of the violence done to her because of these identities.

---

[2] Texas State Historical Society, "Fort Bend County." Our county was also home to the poorly titled Jaybird-Woodpecker War from 1888-89. Freshly emancipated black families outnumbered whites in certain districts and steadily acquired public office. White people, including police and military, organized and murdered blacks to force them out of politics—an arrangement that held for the next 70 years. There are four recorded lynching in Fort Bend County. See: Equal Justice Institute, "Lynching in America: Supplement: County by County."

[3] Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* sounded the alarm on pesticides in 1962.

The longer I follow Jesus and the more I find myself in relationships with people who do not share my privileges, who have instead been ravaged by the current order, the more my "gift to choose" looks like an illusion. Autonomy is a fantasy that can only be sustained in the short-run. We are all tangled up in each other's well-being. That is the lesson of shalom. Discipleship for a person of privilege involves becoming nailed to the world's burdens alongside the Christ whose crucifixion epitomizes solidarity with the oppressed. Native American historian Jack Forbes taught that "while living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did, they are responsible for the society they live in, which is a product of that past" (Dunbar-Ortiz, 235). One way or another, the road to shalom passes through the sins of our fathers.

My journey down that path led into urban ministry, and, though I hope all Christians and white Christians in particular will benefit, it is to urban ministers like myself that I address this thesis. The same dilemmas I discovered through my rural home are denser and more vicious in the city. This vocation thrusts practitioners into a heightened degree of complex problems—problems our profession has yet to fully account for. For me, three genres of problems stand out in particular.

First, there are significant limitations in the theory and methodologies undergirding most Christian justice efforts. In particular, our field suffers from inadequate analyses of "what is" and "why it is that way." Roughly stated, every urban minister has to answer four questions: 1) What are things like? 2) Why are they like that? 3) What else should they be like? and 4) How do we get there? Misreading setting or causation leads to fruitless and even damaging trajectories. In our present confusion, we have failed to thoroughly sort through the question of if and how to partner with public

and private institutions who are bound up with the structures that drive injustice. A perennial divide exists between ministries that engage individual change, those doing community development, and ministries that work toward systemic change with little clarity on how these should or could synergize together. We have yet to meld care for people and creation into an integrated agenda. And most disturbingly, we have attempted to engage in the work of justice before deeply reckoning with Christian culpability for today's inequitable and oppressive milieu.

A second set of problems are existential. How can a person like me account for the gap between my story of home and the stories others would tell of that place? Can I still cherish my story and love my land if I admit that my family's presence there was dependent on centuries of terror? What does someone who yearns for God's shalom do when they realizes it is their own self from whom the oppressed have been crying for liberation? Jennifer Harvey calls this the moral crisis of whiteness.[4] On the other end of the spectrum, does our religion actually have a meaningful response for those with their "backs against the wall?"[5] Reflecting on his experience of oppression, Ta-Nehisi Coates told his son "'the meek shall inherit the earth' meant nothing to me. The meek were battered in West Baltimore, stomped out at Walbrook Junction, bashed up on Park Heights, and raped in the showers of the city jail" (28). Are the dispossessed better off accepting this sort of practical atheism that avails them to other options for liberative action? Or is there actually a God who still hears the cries of those held captive and acts for their salvation?

---

[4] Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 59-61. The reasons for this crisis will be developed in greater detail over the course of the paper.

[5] Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

A final category, related to the second, involves descriptive limitations. Like many in this field, my ministry focus has been on people and their well-being: on the poor, poverty and its elimination. However, my actual work always seemed to correspond to geography. Though I could not articulate it at the time, I first felt this dynamic as an undergraduate student. Why, I always wondered, did the socioeconomic floor drop from beneath my feet each time I crossed the border from my university town of College Station into its sister city Bryan (the third poorest city in Texas at that time)? Why was this socioeconomic shift from place to place consistently mirrored by shifts in race? These bizarre trends became explicit when I moved to Fresno: a city renowned for what demographers call "concentrated poverty."[6] While the urban ministry community is well aware of the correlation between poverty and neighborhoods, we lack a robust explanation for why this pattern exists. Additionally, there is increasing awareness that the social justice problems we face are caused by the macro-systems that organize our society—structures like our economy, justice system, and food industry. Poverty in the twenty-first century is a phenomenon heavily shaped by larger trends of soaring inequality and structural racism. Climate change and ecological destruction are driven by economics of growth and a culture of consumption. Race-based suffering is so incalcitrant because it is coded into our nation's policies in finance, policing, education, housing and more. We are generally aware of these things, yet our strategies leave us handicapped to understand or address their magnitude.

[6] A census tract is deemed "high poverty" when 20% or more of its residents lives below the poverty line ($23,492 per year for a family of four in 2012). A neighborhood has "extreme poverty" when that percentage crosses 40%. The concentration of poverty has shot up, particularly for minorities, since the Great Recession. See: Kneebone and Holmes, "U.S. Concentrated Poverty in the Wake of the Great Recession."; Jargowsky, "The Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy."

In short, the community of Christian urban ministers—particularly the contingent closest to the white, evangelical church—has reached a point in its own development that demands careful reappraisal and reorientation. We excel at embedded lifestyles, ministries of empowerment, and analyses from below. Unfortunately, while we should carry our strengths with us into the next phase, our perspectives have grown too parochial to effect substantive transformation. Today's issues are too permeated across scales, interrelated to places beyond our own, buried in the substrates of dominant ideology, and codified in the systems that govern us to keep on with business as usual.

A Context and a Vision

Urban ministry is a response to Jesus' call to come and follow. Before it is anything else, we must locate it as one vocation within the Body of Christ. Seeking the welfare of a city is a way to be Christian. As Christians, we are called to approach life with a question: what does it mean in the visceral contours of this world to live as co-creators with our God? Urban ministers seek a contextualized, praxeological response to that basic missiological question. Paulo Freire was correct when he wrote "that the role of man [is] not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world—that through acts of creation and re-creation, man makes cultural reality and thereby adds to the natural world, which he did not make" (*Critical Consciousness* 41). Humans are creative beings, and we image God when our acts of creation are aligned with his vision. Bearing that in mind, we must ask: what is God up to and how do we join him?

I suggest that any constructive speech or action in response to these questions begins where God began: *with place*. The opening stanza of scripture describes God launching his cosmic project through the formation of places. "In the beginning God

created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). In response we can make a striking claim: *creating is placemaking*. Co-creating, when it seeks to follow the Creator, happens on the material-historical plane. It is located; emplaced. And it is always in these fields of locality that God's passion for love-relationship manifests. The placemaking God tirelessly presses closer and closer in placial intimacy—from places called heaven and earth, to places called sea and land, to a garden called Eden, to a place at the side of his friend Adam.

We humans are always making the world into something. Places are continually in a process of becoming through human agency. Thus, if creating is placemaking, then the theological task that lies ahead is determining what form of creation amounts to co-creation. Is our creative activity seeking to press forth the Kingdom of God or are we creating places at odds with Divine plans? To pose the questions in this manner is to enter the theological mode Gustavo Gutierrez describes as critical reflection. The rather lofty goal is to "penetrate the present reality, the movement of history, that which is driving history toward the future" (12) and test it—particularly its economic and socio-political aspects—for alignment with God's will. "By keeping historical events in their proper perspective," Gutierrez explains, "theology helps safeguard society and the Church from regarding as permanent what is only temporary. Critical reflection thus always plays the inverse role of an ideology which rationalizes and justifies a given social and ecclesial order" (10).

Place, when integrated with a theological worldview, offers the tangible contours we need for critically assessing our creative works. Place is where our hopes in God will be realized—where salvation is granted and received, where abundant community takes

root, and where liberative, reconciliatory justice is established. Place is also the context of suffering. The landscape spread across America, so easy to take for granted and pass through as though it were natural as rain, is the relatively recent material outworking of the ideas and practices of white Euro-Americans in their encounters with the Land and the Other. The shape of our maps are shockingly contemporary. Seventy-five percent of US cities were founded after 1840—just as the Industrial Revolution was revving up on this side of the Atlantic.[7] Looking back at the history of placemaking in the United States, we find gathered together all the harshest accusations that can be brought against faith in an exceptionalistic, Christian nation. If placemaking is taken seriously, we are forced to take account of our nation's birth through the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous Americans. We come face to face with the terrors of racism: one group of people who took places of honor while another was sentenced to the auction block, the plantation shack, the reservation, the ghetto, the prison and the far side of the border. The enquiry leads us to bioregions and watersheds where ecological destruction continues to unfold on a scale unequaled in any other corner of the globe. We see the rape of God's creation and learn that each of these atrocities are acts in the same performance.

Places are not static. That fact needs to work deep within us if we are going to think and act differently. Two sides of the nature of place relate dialectically to produce the world we experience. Place begins with God-given characteristics like local topography and ecological particularities. These constitute the "genius of a place," and the degree to which its inhabitants honor this nativity holds enormous downstream

[7] Gottdiener, et. al., "Chapter 5: Urbanization of the United States," *The New Urban Sociology*, 105-128.

implications.[8] However, not all aspects of a place are intrinsic, and the failure to fully exegete this second dimension stunts us politically, missiologically, and as disciples of Christ. Places evolve, merge, shape-shift, migrate, disappear and reemerge based on human activity. Many of our places' characteristics are acquired through societal processes. These include "the ecology of people as organisms sharing the universe with many other organisms, the political economy of people as social beings reshaping nature and one another to produce their collective life, and the cultural values of people as storytelling creatures struggling to find meaning of their place in the world" (Cronon "Kennecott Journey, 32). Once we can see our places in light of their socially-constructed dimension, we need only a brief turn through scripture to find the truth in Walter Brueggemann's claim: "Not only does it not seem politically possible to have it otherwise, but it seems like the natural order of things" (*Shalom* 46). Brueggemann's words should fill us with a twin sense of accountability and hope. We are accountable for the way things are, and thus responsible to do something about it. At the same time, realizing that injustice forms not through immutable laws of nature but through the path a culture chooses to take, we know we have an opportunity to make the world into something else—something like shalom.

A Thesis and a Prayer

I pursue the following argument in this thesis. Place offers a way to look at the world and see what is real. The placial world is historical and systemic, storied and interconnected, material and in process. Shalom in the community of creation is the blueprint for what God desires reality to be like, and represents the goal of God's actions

[8] See: Jackson, *Consulting the Genius of Place;* Martin, *Genius of Place*.

in place and history. The witness of oppressed peoples and the Land—those human and non-human members of the community who are denied wellbeing and subjecthood—expose the principalities and powers of coloniality/modernity, capitalism, and whiteness as the anti-Christ narratives and placemaking forces that shape America. *In this context, urban ministry co-creates shalom with God by re-placing our society's systemized injustices with the love of Jesus Christ in solidarity with the oppressed and exploited, first through prophetic adoption of an alternative story and second by performing that story into multivalent structural existence.*

Jesus has extended a better way to be human, one that grounds us in our own flesh and lovingly reconnects us to the other and to creation. Place is the site of reunion, but to become reacquainted with its terrain requires us to make the hard journey of decolonizing our own imaginations. Centuries of maladapted socializing in the Western world have aborted the gift-giving nature of Christian community: a community who, like Abraham, has been blessed to bless the world (Genesis 22:17-18). In lieu of intimacy and care, we constructed relationships of hostility and domination. As we gaze out on a planet at war with itself and heedlessly rushing beyond the point where biological life can be sustained, the futility of that path has never been more obvious. My fear is that the stumbling blocks of my own privilege have at times led me to recapitulate our culture's failings in the process of writing. Where this is true, I beg the reader's forgiveness—particularly my brothers and sisters of color who deserve so much better. I ask that you read critically and communicate to me where I fall short.

Still, in the face of all this, I believe there is cause for overflowing hope: hope for our own shortcomings, hope for the Church, and hope for whatever place we find

ourselves in. I pray something written here contributes to the liberation of our minds. That a fresh, embracive imagination would tumble out of us. That we might discover a new way to be human through solidarity and connection. That we would be empowered us as liberators of the oppressed, co-creators of shalom. And in the end, that we would be better followers, better lovers, of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 1

Rediscovering Place

> A new perspective is not only beginning to recompose the spatial or geographical imagination, it is entering disruptively, if still located on the margins, into the ways we think about historicality and sociality, demanding an equivalent empowering voice, no more but no less.[1]
>
> Edward W. Soja

> But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
>
> Genesis 3:9

SPACE AND EMPIRE

When Thomas Jefferson arrived in Paris as the newest U.S. delegate, he moved through the city with a confidence that belied the youth of his nation. Jefferson relocated to France with his eldest daughter Martha—whom they all called Patsy—in July 1785 bearing, primarily, the responsibility to broker trade deals with his hosts and other European nations. In the two brief years since signatures dried on the Treaty of Paris and the Revolutionary War came to a close, the United States emerged as a state with whom the world needed to reckon. U.S. military power was wanting. They eked out a victory on home turf, much thanks due their French allies, but the late eighteenth century was an era when naval power defined true might. Everyone knew the U.S. fleet was a shadow of their counterparts across the Atlantic. Jefferson's aplomb drew from another source, one that had already risen as the defining feature on the geopolitical scene: economic power. It was no secret that the New World was a treasure chest of commodities Europe sorely lacked, and the American ability to exploit its ecological gifts was burgeoning. But this was not the primary mode of profit on the middling diplomat's mind.

---

[1] *Thirdspace*, 273.

Two months before arriving in Paris, Jefferson was present as the Congressional Congress ratified the Land Ordinance of 1785. It was an adaptation of a plan he put forward as representative for Virginia the previous year. As the chief architect behind its elegantly simple, seemingly destined, and ultimately catastrophic strategy, Jefferson knew the United States was about to be a very wealthy nation.

Land claimed by the thirteen colonies more than doubled after the Revolution. To the Founding Fathers, this presented an enormous opportunity dilemma: millions of acres of 'unsettled' territory. Sprawling to their west, all the way to the Mississippi River (the other side was claimed by Spain), the settlers saw vacant wilderness. For Jefferson it was the perfect moment to breathe his vision for a nation of yeoman farmers into life. He and others "devised a plan whereby all the vacant unclaimed land in the young republic could be divided into an almost infinite number of squares, each of them a square mile, or 640 acres—more than enough to satisfy the average would-be settler" (J. Jackson, 3-4). Each plot would then be sold off by the government as pure profit. The Public Land Survey System, as it was called, was used to reduce the complexities of thousands of bioregions and Native civilizations to abstract geometry available for purchase. Its methodology was extended with zeal under Jefferson's presidency when massive new quantities of land entered U.S. control through the Louisiana Purchase, and it continued to shape the parceling of nature into property until Manifest Destiny reached its westward terminus. "In this US system, unique among colonial powers, land became the most important exchange commodity for the accumulation of capital and building of the national treasury" (Dunbar-Ortiz, 124). Anyone looking out a plane window today can still see

Jefferson's vision stamped over ancient, disjunctive soil in the patchwork grid of fields and roads so familiar on the middle-American landscape.

It would be hard to name all the outcomes the Land Ordinance of 1785 had on American life.[2] For our purposes, we should notice how our third president failed to perceive the land stretching toward his west as *place*. He followed a storied tradition that treated land outside white-European control like *space*. Colonists saw the New World as a *vacuum Domicilium*, open and available to their 'civilizing' inhabitation.[3] Just before departing with merchants of the Massachusetts Bay Company, Puritan minister John Cotton preached on the settler's logic: "In a vacant soyle hee that taketh possession of it, and bestoweth culture and husbandry upon it, his Right it is."[4] The tragic irony, of course, is that many peoples did possess the soil, participated in a rich cultural world, and practiced a complex system of husbandry that, while opaque to most settlers, had cultivated the unprecedented ecological abundance encountered by early explorers.

"Since the particular had no place in the hierarchy of values developed in the post-Enlightenment world, studies of place were often relegated to 'mere description' while space was given the role of developing scientific law-like generalizations. In order to make this work people had to be removed from the scene. Space was not embodied but empty" (Cresswell, 34). This philosophical turn to space was an excellent gateway for totalizing projects like Thomas Jefferson's. Empty space—quite the opposite of

---

[2] I discuss both the commodification of nature and the effects of transforming land into real estate in Chapter 2 (see also Cronon, *Changes in the Land*; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*). I will also look at the dissociation of identity from land/place in Chapter 2. For a mind whirling treatment of this second theme, I highly recommend Jennings, p. 225-226.

[3] Cronon, *Changes*, 56.

[4] Cotton, n.pag.

populated, storied place—can make no demands on you. As an ethical void, it offers no claims of truth, value, or morality and is thus free to be filled by whatever the newcomer brings. When space was married to (and eventually subsumed under) a unidirectionally posited theory of time, they collaborated in the minds of Euro-Americans to offer an abstract setting for "progress."[5] Space-time became a ravenous, unexamined lie buried in the mind of the colonizer. With its categories the coordinates were charted toward fresh vistas of Manifest Destiny, racial and class segregation, ecological destruction, and neoliberal globalization. America's meteoric rise to power, the oppression of non-white peoples, the destruction of nature and a worldview that denied place are constituent of a single whole.

Decolonizing ourselves to inhabit the co-creative rhythms of human vocation asks that we discover, perhaps for the first time, this nation as place.

REDISCOVERING THE WORLD OF PLACE

Space-time has grown ubiquitous in hypermodern cosmologies and descriptions of 'Being.' In this milieu, reintroducing ourselves to place is best begun by rejecting disembodied rationality—the West's epistemological darling since Descartes—as the preferential point of departure. Instead, following other place thinkers, I suggest re-engaging questions of ontology through phenomenology: the study of direct experience. However, in contradistinction to other major works on place, it is my conviction that phenomenological analyses must be conducted inside a dialogical relationship with the

[5] Though he fails to make the necessary sociopolitical connection with colonization, John Inge gives a clear outline of the philosophical turn from place to space and finally time. See, Inge, "Chapter 1: Place in Western Thought and Practice," *A Christian Theology of Place*.

oppressed.[6] Thankfully the first (phenomenology) lends itself to the latter (dialogue). While phenomenology may begin with reflection on first-person subjectivity, as soon as a person takes note of his or her experience, illusions of individualized existence crumble. Others fill our world encounters with flesh-level immediacy. "Humans are tuned for relationship," writes ecological phenomenologist David Abrams, "The eyes, the skin, the tongue, ears, and nostrils—all are gates where our body receives the nourishment of otherness" (ix).

Generative interaction with otherness relies on a means to overcome the power differentials native to our world. Paulo Freire's work on liberative pedagogy offers a path through this challenge while also reconciling the problem of an objectively existing and shared world (a precommitment for Christian theology, philosophies of place, and advocates of justice) that can only be accessed subjectively. In brief, he denies flights into relativizing subjectivism on grounds that oppression and the experience of the oppressed are manifested in concrete situations that demand concrete transformation. However, he likewise rejects the option of rational-empirical objectivism due to its easy co-option by oppressors. Instead, he emphasizes the shared nature of the world and calls for "subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship" (*Pedagogy* 50) through a process of dialogue that honors the Subjecthood—and, subsequently, the humanity—of all people. Only through the ongoing meeting of my subjectivity with yours can we collectively imagine what the world is like.[7] Dialogue and liberative action form the two

[6] The reflection that opens this paper's introduction is an attempt to practice both methods: my personal phenomenological remembrance of home (note the use of embodied language) and the dissenting voice of the oppressed regarding this same place.

[7] This summary is a highly truncated summary of Freire's argument pursued most fully in two texts: *Education for Critical Consciousness* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

praxeological pillars of Freire's system, to which we as followers of Jesus add prayer in the Spirit and communal reflection on scripture.[8] Having shalom as our goal means that the perspectives of the marginalized must be privileged in these dialogues. Ultimately, only they can have the final say on the status of justice and reconciliation.

What is Place?

Bearing these methodological considerations in mind through the proceeding chapters, the pressing question awaits: What is place?[9] Its very omnipresence keeps it hidden from regular consideration, yet for humans, "nothing we do is unplaced" (Casey, *Fate of Place* 93). We are bodies irremovably located somewhere, some place. So, the first thing we can say about place is that it is the site of existence—the stage on which the human drama is performed. We can advance this idea by offering that, commensurate with our embodied nature, places are material things with concrete form.[10] The materialism of place alerts us to a radically alternate cosmology than those traditionally articulated in Christianity and is a theme to which we will repeatedly return.

Its function as host to humanity provides the most common definition of place: a meaningful location.[11] Yi-Fu Tuan, the humanistic geographer most responsible for

---

[8] See Branson and Martínez's excellent reworking of the praxiological circle within a confessional paradigm: "Figure 1.2. Practical theology steps," *Churches, Cultures & Leaders*, 45.

[9] Language is not used uniformly across the literature. Some thinkers use the word space in the same way I will be using place. Most notable are Henri Lefebvre and his followers—Neil Smith, David Harvey, and Edward Soja among others—who have done much to further our understanding of how places come into being through processes of structuration. Place, I believe, best captures my intent due to its English language usages and helps us situate the debate historically.

[10] Cresswell, 14.

[11] Formulated by John Agnew and based on three aspects: location, locale, sense of place. See Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (1987).

bringing place to the forefront of his discipline's attention, offered a first-person-centric theory for the source of placial meaning with his claim that, "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). I take issue with Tuan here. Location is place prior to our valuation of it.[12] When we perceive somewhere as space we simply display our ignorance of its life and history. Everywhere already contains a world of characters and stories to which we are called to humbly attend. Yet even before culture, ecosystems, or topography impart themselves, meaning for place begins with the source of all meaning: creation by and relationship with God.[13] Joseph's awestruck declaration reminds us of the sacredness of place, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."[14]

The previous insights lead to the next assertion: place is pervaded by intersectionality. Age, gender, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality—place shirks abstract representations by holding each of these human identifiers together embodied. Additionally, we share place with every manner of creature. Trees, dust mites, moths, salamanders and cabbage take up residence alongside us. Even non-living things are quite uncontroversially components (and members) of place: the ground we stand on, the built environment we sleep within and walk between, the air and water that sustain creation's life. However, the nature of a place cannot be determined by simply compiling a comprehensive list of all the stuff located there. The relationships between the "stuff of place" is as important to its character as the stuff itself. Relationships, whether in nature

[12] I also disagree with Tuan and follow Casey in his claim that place precedes space, but there is not room to develop this thought here. See Casey's essay, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time," *Getting Back Into Place*, 317-348.

[13] Note: I want to acknowledge that in making this claim it can be argued that I am departing from my phenomenological methodology. That is debatable, but it is not a digression I have "space" to entertain.

[14] Gen 28:16

or in human communities, take on patterns that we refer to as systems. Place, therefore, is the material site of systemic performance. Economics, politics, cultures, and ecological systems (water cycle, predation flows, metabolism, etc.) all show up together, interacting concretely in place. The elements of place interact to generate these systems and are likewise impacted by them for the simple reason that they are all there in interdependent relationship. Injustice or justice, shalom or oppression are functions of these relationships. Ta-Nehisi Coates demonstrates the direct contact of seemingly disparate things within place through his account of racism: "Racism is a visceral experience...it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. you must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (*Between the World* 10). Coates clarifies that racism is fundamentally physical. What generally goes unnoticed is that its physicality and capacity to impact the body flow from racism's placial nature. Indeed, all phenomena find expression in place at some stage of their life cycle. Place as field of cohabitation and interdependence exposes the foolishness of self-aggrandizing and anthropocentric ideologies, including those that crop up in missiology. As we will explore in greater depth throughout this thesis, the comprehensive intersectionality of place is precisely what makes it the central leverage point in the effort of co-creation.

Continued reflection on our experience of places draws together three interwoven characteristics: scale, nodes, and networks. First, we relate to places of vastly different size. From the home to the local, regional, national, and geopolitical we can imagine innumerable ways to size and group a place. Ecologists describe these interrelated scales

as nested systems. “Each individual system is an integrated whole and—at the same time—part of larger systems. Changes within a system can affect the sustainability of the systems that are nested within it as well as the larger systems in which it exists. For example: Cells are nested within organs within organisms within ecosystems.”[15] In a similar way, my silverware has a “place” in a drawer in our kitchen within our house. Our home is nested in our neighborhood, city, region, state, nation and so forth.

Next, we can describe each identifiable place as a node networked with all other places through: 1) biospheric interdependencies like the water and carbon dioxide cycles and 2) social structures like economic exchange, intercultural encounter, and political relations. The experience of my home is not conceivable or sustainable without water that flows through our faucets from the Sierra Nevadas, materials acquired from mines and forests, electricity generated from global wind patterns and the fossil fuel industry, and food from far off farms and fisheries all over the world. Globalization has intensified remote connections so that my choices have significant placemaking impacts on locations I never visit, much less inhabit. In summary, each place lies at an intersection in a vast web whose members continually shape one another.[16]

Two further dimensions, each exhibiting complex shades, can be set in tension. Place is both a site of activity and itself an actor. Place has subjecthood while also being a social construction. It is both identity shaping and shaped by our identities. “The two poles here at stake—place as locatory vs. place as an event with cultural/historical dimensions—are not exclusive of each other: one and the same place can support both

[15] Michael K. Stone, “Applying Ecological Principles.” Center for Ecoliteracy.

[16] This final sentence holds the seeds of structuration theory. See Allen Pred, “Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places.”

poles just as it can exemplify widely variant cultural vicissitudes" (Casey, *Getting Back* xxv). The social conditioning of place was discussed in the introduction. A place's appearance cannot be simply taken as the inert result of natural laws. They are shaped for better and worse by collective life over time. At the same time the significance of place's socially produced side should not overshadow its agency.

Alexander Pope's poetic phrase "the genius of place" alludes to the subjecthood a location possesses.[17] Consider how frequently we use place concepts in everyday speech.

- ❏ Want to come to my place?
- ❏ This is my place not your place.
- ❏ She put me in my place.
- ❏ Everything has its place.
- ❏ There's no place like home.
- ❏ I don't trust that place.
- ❏ Fresno is a great place.
- ❏ I feel out of place.
- ❏ They were displaced.
- ❏ Where are you from?
- ❏ We are lost.
- ❏ Don't go to that part of town.[18]

In ways subtle yet pervasive, place is one of our primary means of existential categorization. Particular locations—a childhood home, a grandparent's farm, a school, a place of origin, the site of trauma—retain powerful influence over our identities. We frequently speak of places as a means to describe who we are, even if we are no longer located there; I am a Texan, a country boy, a mountain man. A self's formation through its relationship with place and, conversely, the formation of places through relationship with selves is a theme I will return to. The impact of place on a person and community does not stop at the level of their psyche. The Urban Institute condensed recent scholarship on the relationship between place and poverty in the following quotation:

---

[17] "Consult the genius of the place in all; That tells the waters or to rise, or fall; Or helps th' ambitious hill the heav'ns to scale, Or scoops in circling theatres the vale; Calls in the country, catches opening glades, Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades; Now breaks, or now directs, th' intending lines; Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs." (Pope, "*Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*." 1731.)

[18] Linguistic uses of place adapted from the following: Tuan, *Space and Place*; Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*; Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*; Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*.

> A large body of scientific evidence indicates that where people live matters for their well-being.…Growing up in disinvested, distressed, or socially and economically isolated neighborhoods is associated with an increased risk of many adverse outcomes for children, including school failure, poor health, victimization, delinquency, teen childbearing, and youth unemployment (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Aber 1997; Ellen, Mijanovich, and Dillman 2001; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003). The influence of the places where these children live persists throughout their life course, especially as there is a strong chance, despite residential mobility, that those who grow up in distressed areas live in similar areas as adults (Sharkey 2008). (Kingsley et. al., 5-6)

Native American communities offer the deepest articulation of place as the source of human identity as well as the functions of implacement/displacement on wellbeing.[19] Cherokee leader Jimmy Durham explained these connections before Congress in resistance to the Tennessee River Valley Authority's plan to build the Tellico Dam: "In the language of my people there is a word for land: Eloheh. This same word also means history, culture, and religion. We cannot separate our place on the Earth from our lives on the Earth, nor from our vision and our meaning as a people."[20]

The agency of place shows up in a second way. The internal dynamics of one place interact with and shape other places to whom they are related. The scope of a place's influence is a function of the power concentrated in that location (considered below). For example, cities—as regional and now global centers of power—have historically been places whose economic demands enact sweeping transformations on the surrounding geography.[21] In closing, notice the way Wendell Berry holds these dimensions of Subjecthood and social production together: "We and our country create

---

[19] See: Vine Deloria, Jr., *God is Red*; Randy Woodley, *Shalom in the Community of Creation*.

[20] Quoted in Dolores-Hayden, 105.

[21] No text explores the impact of a city on its region better than William Cronon's opus, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. I will briefly examine these relationships in the following chapter.

one another, depend on one another, are literally part of one another...culture must be our response to our place, our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other" (Berry, *Unsettling* 22).

A THEOLOGY OF PLACEMAKING

"The Bible begins and ends with places—a garden to a gardened city" (Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, xv). Strewn between the beginning and end are stories rooted and guided by place: from walking with God in a place called Eden to expulsion toward the East (Gen. 2; 3:22-24); from Ur toward the Promised Land of Canaan and into bondage in Egypt in a place named Goshen (Gen. 12:1-Exodus 1:13); wandering in the Wilderness until the day the river Jordan was crossed and the people came to dwell in the Land (Joshua 3:14ff); being "vomited out" of the Land (Lev. 18:28) and becoming a people of exile, a displaced people longing for replacement. Place keeps insisting itself in the opening moments of the New Testament. God appeared incarnate as a body, "and bodies can only exist in place" (ibid, xii). Scripture etches the Messiah's place in intimate detail: hailing from good-for-nothing Nazareth, birthed in the dirt of Bethlehemian squalor, laid in a food trough for animals. The pulse of Jesus' ministry throbbed with place.[22] Jesus filled his parables with images of soil, vineyards and Samaritans (Mark 4:1-20; Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 10:29-37). Each reference is rife with political, economic, cultural, and theological meaning connected to place.[23] The decisive moment of his life on earth came

[22] David Sibley has made a connection between a society's practice of erecting exclusionary boundaries and the development of the self constituted through object relations, particularly "abject" objects as described in psychoanalysis. The connection is particularly fascinating when one considers that primary objects of abjection include feces and other fluid excretions that are rife in places like a stable and feed trough—Jesus' first location of psychological development. See: Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion*.

[23] Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*.

when Jesus turned toward Jerusalem—the place called Zion that became the city of chaos (Mark 8:27ff; Isaiah 24:10). Our savior agonized in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36), was crucified on a hill called the Place of the Skull (Matthew 27:33), was buried in a garden tomb nearby (John 19:41), and ascended to heaven from a mountain called Olivet (Acts 1:12). The book of Acts lists thirty-two towns and cities by name. The Pauline letters were messages to specific places regarding the particular dynamics of those locations.[24] John directed his revelation to seven cities in Asia Minor and communicated his message by dramatizing iconic places: the Whore City Babylon against the Bride City New Jerusalem.[25]

Why were these records of place so explicitly preserved? Scripture is incessantly reminding us that life plays out on a physical terrain, that this life is primarily a relational matter of fidelity to God and servanthood toward others, and that for God's driving passion for shalom to manifest it must do so in a place. Allen Pred tells us "places are never 'finished' but always 'becoming.'" Place is what happens "ceaselessly, what contributed to history in a specific context through the creation and utilization of a physical setting.'"[26] Scripture is thus the drama of places in process, ever in the materialistic act of "becoming" closer or farther away from the heart of God as communities perform their values into being. In this sense, the Bible uses the character of

[24] For a deeper look into the function of place and its ecological dimensions in Paul's thought, see Sylvia Keesmaat, "Land, Idolatry, and Justice in Romans."

[25] See Gordon Campbell, "Antithetical Feminine-Urban Imagery and a Tale of Two Women-Cities in the Book of Revelation." I leaned on two texts in particular for this paragraph which offer a much expanded portrait of place in Biblical usage: Brueggemann, *The Land*; and Bartholomew, *Where Mortals Dwell*.

[26] Allan Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Place." Quoted in Cresswell, *Place*, 65.

a place as a society's ethical barometer and compares its character to the biblical vision of shalom for the community of creation.[27]

It is helpful to reframe these ideas in terms of praxis. The demanding question to which we must return is: how do we, as followers of Jesus, create a world where the disinherited and plundered are liberated and flourishing?[28] Because places are intersectional, material[29] fields that cannot help but be treated holistically, I argue the most generative answer to this question is the vocation of placemaking. Indigenous theologian Randy Woodley reminds us that "place is primarily a relational concept. When the Creator made our world, he was creating the place for relationship between God and all of creation"

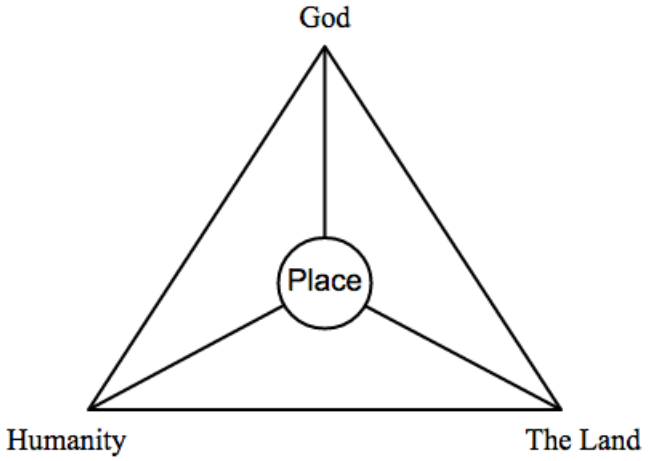


Figure 1.1: Place Production and Relationality

[27] A mind-whirling list of case-studies are available to back up this statement. However, a quick perusal of the prophetic traditions illustrates that Jerusalem received the most sustained ethical evaluation of any place in scripture.

[28] The language of disinheritance is drawn from Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Plunder is the image taken up in Ta-Nehisi Coates' work, *Between the World and Me.* Again, I include both the marginalized and nature in these categories.

[29] I am harping on the word "material" because American Christianity has been so spiritualized and ephemeral. To clarify the language, this word should not be construed with consumeristic materialism (against which biblical faith stands firmly against), but rather associated with what Ellen Davis calls "a wholesome materiality" found "in the heart of Torah...central to the agrarian view of life" (82). See Davis, "Chapter 5: A Wholesome Materiality: Reading Leviticus," *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 80-100. Paul Farmer explains that "social life in general and structural violence in particular will not be understood without a deeply materialist approach to whatever surfaces in the participant-observer's field of vision." Materialism, as a philosophical disposition, does not deny the reality of culture, language or other similarly conceptual categories, but emphasizes how "any social project requires construction *materials*, while the building process is itself inevitably social and thus cultural" (Farmer, "Structural Violence" 308).

(Woodley, 135). Christian placemaking is therefore the ordering of these relationships for shalom. Figure 1.1 is an attempt to represent the relational structure of this enterprise.

Placemaking is a matter of applied ethics. It is fitting, then, that I have adapted this diagram from Christopher Wright's illustration of the Old Testament's ethical paradigm.[30] He explains: "God, Israel and the land—these were the three pillars of Israel's worldview, the primary factors of their theology and ethics. We may conceptualize these as a triangle of relationships, each of which affected and interacted with both the others" (19). My contribution is based on the insight that ethical practice is always tied to the production of place. While I do not claim that place is the exclusive mediary of these relationships, I am arguing it is the central manifestation of the health or sickness of the whole. We can find these three relationships and their implacedness in Jesus' famous prayer: God's will has to manifest in places ("on earth as it is in heaven") and is a function of relationships between humans and God ("hallowed be your name" and "forgive us our debts"), humans and humans ("as we have forgiven our debtors"), and humans and the land ("daily bread").[31]

In chapter four, each point and relational connection on the triangle is re-examined to renew the imagination for shalom-oriented placemaking. At this stage, the definitions of 'God' and 'Humanity' can fairly well be taken at face value. My use of 'The Land' requires a moment of clarification. I am not referring to the geographical boundaries of Israel's promised land, though the term is intentionally used to elicit the

[30] John Inge also uses a visually similar model in *A Christian Theology of Place* to portray a "relational view of place" (46). I diverge from him due to his choice to position Place where I have located The Land, a choice which fails to instigate my later directions (his model is just a triangle, no middle feature).

[31] Matthew 6:9-13

theological implications of land in Israel's life. Rather, here 'The Land' is shorthand for what Aldo Leopold called 'the land-community,' an idea upon which he develop his land ethic. Leopold explains his concept quite simply: "All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts...The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (172). 'The Land' as I use it is the whole ecological community. While humans are members of the community of creation—and the loss of that vision is deeply implicated in our destructive culture—humanity's unique agency and responsibility within creation warrant differentiation.[32] Thus, for reasons of theological and theoretical clarity, I am positioning humans and the Land as two distinct categories within the community of creation.

Shalom, Sin, and Place

Shalom occurs in places where the triadic relationship between God, humans and Land is synergized through self-giving love.[33] Additionally, there are relational subsets in each category which also must practice love for the system to be whole: 1) first in the internal dynamics of the Trinity, whose shared life energizes others, 2) among the countless biospheric members in ecological systems, and 3) most tenuously in the multitude of interlocking human relationships, particularly as they are systematized in political and economic structures. Because it is the meeting place of exchange for the three points, we might call this an *economic* theory of place—economics defined loosely

[32] Differentiation does not equate to hierarchy. Leopold, "The Land Ethic," A Sand County Almanac, 171-189, in *Leopold: A Sand County Almanac & Other Writings on Ecology and Conservation*.

[33] Epitomized in the cross of Christ. I will take care to defend and expand this idea in Chapter 4.

as the structured practice of transfer between agents. Shalom results from the patterns in these flows of exchange.

We have already seen how shalom is "placialized." On the other hand, we can explain placemaking that fails to partner with God's creative intent by bringing together two statements with overlapping language—one geographical, one theological. First, David Sibley opens a text on critical geography with a terse observation: "The human landscape can be read as a landscape of exclusion" (ix). The gravity of his claim comes into focus when set next to Miroslav Volf's contention:

> Sin's more immediate goal is not so much to undo the creation, but violently to reconfigure the pattern of its interdependence, to 'put asunder what God has joined and join what God has put asunder,' as Plantinga states more correctly. I will give the name 'exclusion' to this sinful activity of reconfiguring the creation, in order to distinguish it from the creative activity of 'differentiation.' (66-67)

God desires for places to be sites of abundant, worshipping community. Sin is an anti-community force that denies the sovereignty of God. When we think of sin as exclusion, we see that it is a fundamentally placial experience, to bar or be barred from physical presence with another. Isaiah is explicit about the place-impact of Israel's sin:

> "Your *country* lies desolate,
> your *cities* are burned with fire;
> in your very *presence*
> aliens devour your *land*;
> it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.
> And daughter *Zion* is left like a booth in a *vineyard*,
> like a booth in a *vineyard*,
> like a shelter in a *cucumber field*,
> like a besieged *city*." (1:7-8, emphasis added)

Showing similar placial sensitivity, Jesus was never more offended than when the temple was co-opted for anti-shalom purposes: "He said to them, 'It is written, 'My *house* shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers'" (Matthew 12:13, emphasis added). Similarly, Amos locates the judgement of God placially:

> "In the *squares* there shall be wailing;
> and in all the *streets* they shall say, 'Alas! alas!'
> They shall call the farmers to mourning…
> in all the *vineyards* there shall be wailing." (5:16-17a, emphasis added)

Though just a taste of biblical literature expressed in placial terms, these examples drive home the relational dynamic of sin and its universal manifestations in place.

If sin is anti-relational behavior and if all things are joined in mutual interdependence, then exclusionary action against one is an action against all. Sin is thus demonstrably an act against God who is the creator and weaver of these relationships. The health of the whole—which, again, manifests in places—is therefore always a function of what Michael Gorman calls "first-commandment faithfulness."[34] The worship of God is the central attribute of a placemaking strategy that leads toward shalom. Scripture is never shy in its claim that worship is the shared vocation of creation:

> All mountains and hills,
> fruit trees and cedars,
> every wild and tame animal,
> all reptiles and birds,
> come praise the Lord!
> All creation, come praise
> the name of the Lord. (Psalm 148:9-10, 13a)

Worship is also a function of rightly aligned places. Both urban and rural places are portrayed in worship to the Lord.[35]

---

[34] Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 25.

[35] 1 Chronicals 16:32; Psalm 48:12; Psalm 147:12; Psalm 96:12; Isaiah 55:12. The spread of verses presented at this point should also give us substantial data for characterizing the so called "nature of cities"—a long debated topic in Christian development circles. The question of whether or not cities are good or evil cannot be answered by appeals to the ontology of a city itself. Rather, a city is defined by the culture that produces it; specifically, by what that culture worships: idol or YHWH. "The city" therefore, like any place, is a structure with *capacity*. It will be what we make it to be. Furthermore, this leads us to see the nature of cities as a derivative of theological anthropology. The human capacity for good or evil is structuralized in the urban forms we create.

The prophets are particularly careful to identify what qualifies as acceptable and worshipful relationship with God. Jeremiah 22:16 explains, "'He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?' declares the LORD." Isaiah 58 reinforces the point when the prophet describes worship as the work of justice:

> Is this not the fast that I choose:
> to loose the bonds of injustice,
> to undo the thongs of the yoke,
> to let the oppressed go free,
> and to break every yoke?
> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
> and bring the homeless poor into your house;
> when you see the naked, to cover them,
> and not to hide yourself from your own kin? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

A few verses later, Isaiah completes the circle back to place. Once you have done these things, the prophet declares, then "your ancient *ruins* shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the *foundations* of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the *breach*, the restorer of *streets* to live in" (v12, emphasis added).

Place and Power Relations

One final cornerstone needs to be added to our understanding of place before advancing into a critique of America's placial development. The actual mechanisms that generate what a place becomes have everything to do with who holds power and how it is put to use. As bodily creatures, humans need food, water, shelter, and other physical resources in order to stay alive. Providing each requires human civilization to engage in place-transforming activities. The need to produce food has led us to graze animals and plow fields, substituting some living things for others and reconfiguring ecosystems. Not only that, but we build roads, railways, airports and shipping docks to transport the goods

from their place of production to a place of consumption—reshaping a host of environments along the way. Our need for shelter causes us to fell trees, mine ore, and construct a built environment where once a "natural" one reigned. Cities are the collective extension and complexification of this enterprise. Our physical needs demand us to be placemakers. We simply cannot be otherwise and survive. God has lain it in our DNA, and thus we cannot but call it good.

The problem arrives when, in hubris, we become convinced that our needs and capacity to transform justify a careless approach to creation and to other human beings upon whose support we are wholly dependent. People rightly perceive that we have certain limited powers over the rest of creation, but forget our limitations. We cannot, for example, by brutish control bring needed resources into being without a life-supporting biosphere. The lie of unilateral dominion has likewise been applied in the social sphere when those with more power treat the power-impoverished as yet another resource available for self-gratifying plunder. Of course, the powerful forget that without the poor's labor and the inequitable distribution of its fruits, they would have no means of accumulation. They are dependent on the poor for their wealth just as they are dependent on the earth. The placial results are likewise mirrored. As ecologically ignorant farming leads to a dust bowl, so does social ignorance and violence lead to a ghetto.

The precise mechanisms by which place is structured through power-relations will be gradually unpacked over the course of this paper.[36] Theologically, we simply need to

[36] Once again, I recommend Allan Pred's classic article for a close look at place-production and power relations. It is a difficult read but offers an integrative theory with impressive explanatory breadth: Pred, "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Place."

be reminded of the proper ordering of power in God's creation. Norman Wirzba speaks eloquently of culture molded on God's created order:

> The defining characteristics of a culture of creation are its acknowledgment of the full range of interdependencies between humanity, creation, and God and its acceptance of responsibility for the wholeness of relations that can exist among them. It is, we might say, a just culture built on a full regard for others, a culture in which we humbly face each other, the creation, and God without evasion or shame since we have to the best of our ability done what is right and best for others. (150)

Contrary to Mr. Jefferson, the colonists whose power transformed our continent, and the neocolonialists who continue extending their totalizing systems, our world is never vacant space. It is the place-based creation of God. It is what Pope Francis calls "our common home," a house we are called to live in equitably, restoratively, communally.[37]

In the final analysis, we must reckon with God's model for power management exemplified in his unresisted execution. It is a terrifying journey with which to identify, but it is the surest road to shalom:

> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
>
> who, though he was in form of God,
> did not regard equality with God
> as something to be exploited,
> but emptied himself,
> taking the form of a slave,
> being born in human likeness.
> And being found in human form,
> he humbled himself
> and became obedient to the point of death—
> even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:3-8)

[37] See: Francis, "Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father On Care for Our Common Home."

CHAPTER 2

The Past of Present Places: the Historical Place

> I often say that studying history liberated me. Because until I studied history I would look at our world and I didn't understand—Black people *weren't* shit. You don't understand why our neighborhoods are the worst, why our schools are the worst, our men were always the ones who are unemployed. And studying history helped me understand why we were living the way we were living, in a racialized nation.[1]
>
> Nikole Hannah Jones

> Be careful that you do not forget.
>
> Deuteronomy 6:12

PLACE AND HISTORY: A REUNION

When Edward Casey reissued his philosophy text *Getting Back into Place* after a twenty-year interim, he decided to restore some balance to his emphases. "My more recent thought," he wrote, "proposes that time and place are coeval partners in the constitution of events taken as the primary ontological terms" (xxii). If this is true, it is remarkable that both appear in the first verse of scripture. "In the *beginning* (time), God created the *heavens* and the *earth* (place)." The implication? If you want to understand either history or a place, you have to look at its counterpart.

Casey's slow turn to affording place and time partnership comes from the precariousness of their relationship in Western thought. History dominated European philosophy, always projected forward in the march of progress. Time, for Westerners, is typically represented through the familiar image of the timeline, a ray moving forward into the future. The linear progression of that image is a metaphor tailor made for

[1] Spoken during an interview with Ta-Nehisi Coates at a New York center for African American Studies.

imperialistic projects like the United States' 'manifest destiny.' In this model, time does not develop within place, but plows into the future ignorant of place and the ethical value of dwelling.[2] Moving forward chronologically appears to be dependent on moving forward geographically.

If we are to turn to history for wisdom without rehearsing our predecessor's mistakes, we need a new metaphor. I believe we can find it in an ecological process: sedimentary stratification. History (i.e. time) lays down one grain after another on this plot of earth, building the foundation for the present.[3] Our need for this emplaced historical imagination is urgent. Today, history and place are lost in the hulking shadows of the tyranny of the urgent, the present's siren song of self-advancement, and the dream of a future laden with personal glory. There is no space for placial attentiveness, for compassionate remembering, or for service to the other in a world so tightly crammed.

When the dimension of history is added, a further characteristic of place can join the previous chapter's development. There exists a profound relationship between places and stories. This relationship manifests in three ways: 1) A place bears its current characteristics due to the stories of history played out within it; 2) Places are story tellers. Their functions and forms communicate meaning and a worldview; and 3) Places are where we perform our guiding narratives or worldviews. The sedimentary metaphor keeps time from overrunning place by displaying their interdependency—joined at the

[2] The ethics of "dwelling" were developed by Martin Heidegger.

[3] This image of history as sedimentation is fitting for our nation who clings to its ahistorical disposition while depleting its topsoil at alarming rates. According to an article published in the *Journal of the Environment, Development and Sustainability* (Vol. 8, 2006) the United States is losing soil 10 times faster —and China and India are losing soil 30 to 40 times faster (thanks to the West's globalized economic demands)—than the natural replenishment rate. See: David Pimentel, "Soil Erosion: A Food and Environmental Threat."

hip by story. Not only is it possible for them to coexist, we see that time and place cannot exist without each other.

This chapter attempts to hold together points one and three by examining the way places in America were developed by the stories white European settlers and their children believed. Think back to the story of my childhood home told in the introduction. What made that house and piece of property meaningful to me were the stories we lived there.[4] At the same time, the ways we lived—from erecting a white picket fence, to maintaining our lawn, to commuting an hour each way for work—were a function of the American stories that helped us make sense of the world. Furthermore, as I discovered, our land told a polyvocal story that was not contained or always in agreement with mine. Patricia Price describes the contesting interplay of place-stories:

> Narratives about people's places in places continuously materialize the entity we call place….Tales are retold and their meanings wobble and shift over time. Multiple claims are made. Some stories are deemed heretical. The resulting dislocations, discontinuities, and disjunctures work to continually destabilize that which appears to be stable: a unitary, univocal place. (4)

The same is true of all places. Sorting through narratival disharmony is the crucial challenge in the discipline of history.

History is not stable or unitary. The process of making meaning from the past is run through the subjective mind of historians.

> It is the historian who has decided for his own reasons that Caesar's crossing of that petty stream, the Rubicon, is a fact of history, whereas the crossing of the Rubicon by millions of other people before or since interests nobody at all….The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of

[4] Place theorists often talk about this in terms of memory. For David Harvey, "place is often seen as the 'locus of collective memory'— a site where identity is created through the construction of memories linking a group of people into the past….Harvey takes issue with the idea that a place can unproblematically strand for the memory and identity of a particular group of people" (Cresswell, 96-97). See Harvey, "From Space to Place and Back Again," *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*..

> the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which is very hard to eradicate. (Carr, 9-10)

This belief is clung to tenaciously because the historical narratives we accept shape our collective social identity. If these guiding narratives are challenged or lost a cultural crisis would ensue until a new story were found around which a common life could be built. The early leaders of this country were well aware of this need. The New World lacked the long history and cultural heritage of the European nations against whom early Americans compared themselves. National identity was forged through historical myth making.[5] American history was passed down as a carefully curated form of nationalizing propaganda training children in our nation's exceptionalism, moral infallibility, and destined greatness.

What do these things mean for our search to become co-creators of shalom places with God? Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez reminds us that "history is, after all, the field where human beings attain to fulfillment as persons and in which, in the final analysis, they freely say yes or no to God's saving will" (xxxix). He goes on to state that we can only gain a clear sense of what God is calling us to today by setting the present in its historical context. If we accept these premises and agree that history is contested ground whose stories are inevitably selected and told by interested parties, then the Christian historian will need to listen like Yahweh, the God who prioritizes the stories of slaves above their master.[6]

---

[5] For a literary example that draws themes of placemaking, the settling of the West, and myth-making together, see Wallace Stegner's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *Angle of Repose*.

[6] God's act represents a radical inversion of what Walter Mignolo calls the "geopolitics of knowledge" as they have been forged since the late medieval period. See Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference."

In summary, I am suggesting two approaches to history aligned with a Christian view of place. First, the past is a succession of stories performed in interconnected places. Over time these stories deposit the sediment of memories that gives each place its unique character. Additionally, these lived stories have material impacts, both in their immediate location and on the places to which they are connected. They transform relationships within nature, between nature and humans, and in the human community while giving form to the continually evolving built environment. Second, multiple stories experienced from diverse perspectives play out simultaneously. A Christian assessment of these competing narratives preferences the vantage point of the poor, marginalized, disempowered, and exploited. When history is told from below it guides us into the strategic mission of God's shalom.

Two primary categories represent the 'below' of American history: the Land and marginalized, nonwhite peoples. Their stories illustrate where we as a nation, and white people specifically, have fallen short of God's will. Since 1600, the ecology of North America has degraded more drastically than any other comparable time or place. Likewise, every period of our nation's history oppressed some human beings to advance others. These processes are two manifestations of the same will to power.[7] In the words of James Cone,

> The logic that led to slavery and segregation in the Americas, colonization and apartheid in Africa, and the rule of white supremacy throughout the world is the same one that leads to the exploitation of animals and the ravaging of nature. It is a mechanistic and instrumental logic that defines everything and everybody in terms of their contribution to the development and defense of white world supremacy.

[7] To clumsily use a Nietzschean phrase.

I explore this oppressive logic, which continues to provide the dominant narrative for most white Americans, through three distinct though intimately related social constructs. In theological terms, we might name them "principalities and powers." These forces are: modernity/coloniality, capitalism, and whiteness. Together they have been and remain the matrix of power shaping U.S. places. I cannot remotely do justice to these complex histories in the brief space of this chapter. My intent, however, is not to prove but to illustrate through representative examples. I will pay particular attention to four levels of each topic: 1) their historical presence, 2) the content of their logic, 3) the theological rationales Christians used to support them, and 4) the specific mechanisms through which they created oppressive and exploitative places.

COLONIAL POWER AND THE NARRATIVE OF MODERNITY

Native religious scholar Vine Deloria often spoke of times from his childhood when his father took him back to their people's land in South Dakota. "During these trips," Deloria remembered, "he would point out various features of the landscape and tell me the names and stories associated with them" (1). For indigenous Americans, this land was a world of places. Their intimate associations with place allowed them to navigate the land "through stories as much as names….Imagine a living map, impossibly covered in names and lore, perhaps the size of the land itself" (Conrad, 14). Far from an untrammeled wilderness scattered with impoverished Stone Age tribes, it was host to rich cultural, political, religious and economic civilizations.[8] The present world is not

[8] Notice the way a phrase like the "Stone Age tribes" attempts to locate contemporaneous groups at different points in time, the assumption being that certain cultural signifiers qualify someone as "modern" and thus as valid in the present historical moment. Those "premodern" groups are assumed to require modernization for their own benefit. This time-dominant, place-absent paradigm is a leading culprit behind cultural genocides.

appreciable until we recapture a sense of our places prior to Western encroachment. As a rule colonists deny value, needs, and truth from outside their in-group boundaries. Subjects are reduced to objects, humans become tools, creation nothing more than resources for empire expansion. We begin detoxifying ourselves of this colonial imagination by looking with attentiveness to the world of the other.

Archaeologists estimate between five and eighteen million people lived in pre-conquest North America.[9] In New Mexico, "the [Spanish] colonizers found a thriving irrigation-based agriculture supporting a population living in ninety-eight interrelated city-states" (Dunbar-Ortiz, 125). Canal systems were established in the Sonoran Desert as early as 2100 BC. The Hohokam people built “more than eight hundred miles of trunk lines and hundreds more miles of branches serving local sites” (22). Many Native American groups, contrary to the popular caricature of primitive hunter-gatherer societies, developed advanced agricultural and urban-oriented civilizations. In the fertile farmlands of the Mississippi Valley, a city-state called Cahokia was built in the twelfth century supporting “tens of thousands, larger than that of London during the same period” (23). Vast, structured trade networks connected people from the empires of Mexico through commercial centers like Casa Grande in Arizona to others across the continent. Turquoise mined in the Southwest, for example, was carried and exchanged northward for use as currency by Crees in the Lake Superior region while furs and other goods flowed south.[10]

[9] Worster, 5.

[10] Dunbar-Ortiz, 20-21.

European colonists plowed under the Land community with the same determination as its people. Prior to their arrival, it teemed with abundance. On Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's first trip through the midwest, he marveled at the forty million bison swathed across the grasslands: "I found so many cattle...that it would be impossible to estimate their number. For in traveling over the plains, there was not a single day, until my return, that I lost sight of them."[11] Alongside buffalo, newcomers to North America encountered an estimated forty million white tailed deer, five billion prairie dogs, and between three and five billion passenger pigeons (driven to extinction by the turn of the nineteenth century) who migrated "in dark, torn clouds that blotted out the sun, breaking trees when they came down to roost" (Worster, 4). Cape Cod earned its name from the unprecedented schools of fish that once bred off the Massachusetts coast in such numbers that Reverend Francis Higginson declared in 1630, "I should scarce have beleeved it except I had seene it with mine owne eyes."[12] In spring, so many alwives squeezed up North Eastern streams that early settlers claimed they "might have walked on their backs without getting [their] feet wet."[13] Aside from animal life, forests stretched unbroken from New England to Minnesota while the prairies supported tallgrass that could hide a herd of buffalo. These ecological communities were a fundamental component of their place, but, for reasons soon explored, they have been lost to history.[14]

---

[11] Quoted in Worster, 4. Buffalo New York's name is not a misnomer. It represents the actual range of the creatures, in part made possible by the Indigenous practice of controlled burning. These burns zone created park-like open areas beneath the trees through which larger animals could freely travel.

[12] Quoted in Cronon, *Changes* 22.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ecological change should not automatically concern us. This is not a characteristic unique to colonialism--all human cultures change their environment in some way. Rather, it is the unsustainability of these changes in the United States that strikes the student of ecological history so dramatically. "The best measure of a culture's ecological stability," William Cronon proposed, "may well be how successfully its

Taking Shape

By 1650, the sociopolitical order today's Americans find natural was starting to coalesce. Iconic East Coast names were already drying on narrow maps of explored coast called the "New World." The first English settlers arrived in the Chesapeake Bay May of 1607. The Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. New York City was settled in 1624, Boston in 1630. As settlers rushed to hammer civilization out of "a wilderness where nothing appeareth but hard labour [and] wants," changes forced by colonization were visible everywhere.[15]

The first and most apparent transformation underway in the early decades of the seventeenth century was land appropriation. The U.S. came into existence through a method of settler-colonialism whose central tenet is the forceful acquisition of land from its pre-existing residents.[16] Even at this early stage of development, land was acquired through a complex set of economic, cultural, and religious activities:

> Through economic penetration of Indigenous societies, the European and Euro-American colonial powers created economic dependency and imbalance of trade, then incorporated the Indigenous nations into spheres of influence and controlled them indirectly or as protectorates, with indispensable use of Christian missionaries and alcohol. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 7)

When tangential means met resistance, colonists turned to violence. The so-called Pequot War waged against the natives of what is today southern Connecticut between 1634 and 1638 is an emblematic precursor of the pattern revisited throughout the period of

---

environmental changes maintain its ability to reproduce itself" (*Changes* 13). Loss stability (shalom) is our concern.

[15] John Eliot, "The Learned Conjecture" (1650). Quoted in Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p. 26.

[16] Dunbar-Ortiz demonstrates that the English had already perfected settler-colonialism during the conquests of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Even these events had precedent in the Crusades, Moor and Jewish purges on the Iberian peninsula, and other acts of earlier Christendom. See: Dunbar-Ortiz, "Chapter Two: Culture of Conquest," *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*.

westward expansion. Prior to the Puritan's arrival at Plymouth Rock, the Pequots contracted smallpox from traders, dramatically reducing their local numbers--a humanitarian disaster King James called "[God's] great goodness and bounty toward us."[17] The natives' capacity to resist was crippled by disease, allowing settlers to easily co-opt the land.

Sixteen years later, however, Pequot numbers were growing and the tribes began organizing to reclaim their homes. "A single violent incident" prompted the Puritan colonists, people who reportedly relocated for religious freedom, to attack the displaced indigenes with intent to annihilate. Mercenary John Mason was commissioned to storm two Native forts on the Mystic River: "Pequot fighters occupied one of the forts, while the other one contained only women, children, and old men. The latter was the one John Mason targeted. Slaughter ensued. After killing most of the Pequot defenders, the soldiers set fire to the structures and burned the remaining inhabitants" (62). Total war was foreign to Native American culture for whom "war was...highly ritualized, with quests for individual glory, resulting in few deaths" (63). They were quickly overwhelmed. Once the settlers reduced the living Pequots to two hundred from their original two thousand, they set fire to the homes and fields of those who remained. In reflection on this event, the Puritan leader William Bradford wrote, "It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fyers, and the streams of blood quenching the same,...but the victory of God seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God,

[17] Note the theological assertions in the following quote in light of the doctrine of shalom: "As a result of [plagues], in the first seventy-five years of the seventeenth century, the total number of Indians in New England fell precipitously from well over 70,000 to fewer than 12,000. In some areas, the decline was even more dramatic: New Hampshire and Vermont were virtually depopulated….To Puritans, the epidemics were manifestly a sign of God's providence, 'in sweeping away great multitudes of the natives...that he might make room for us there.' John Winthrop saw this 'making room' as a direct conveyance of property right: 'God,' he said, 'hath hereby cleared our title to this place" (Cronon, *Changes* 89-90).

who had wrought so wonderfully for them" (63). Morally reprehensible as this sounds to most Christian ears today, these theologically justified acts foreshadow our present in which "the problem of landlessness is one of the most immediate and significant issues faced every day by ordinary people" (Young, 45).[18]

The second trend sinking its roots by 1650 was the stratification of society through racialized identities. Racism was a staple of the colonizer's social-psychological world from his moment of genesis in the mid-fifteenth century. "This colonialist vision is symbolically positioned and historically datable between 1442, the year the Portuguese first loaded their vessels with the human cargo of African slaves to be exported back to Europe, and 1492, the year Christopher Columbus came upon 'the Indies'" (Carter, 5). The first people of African descent arrived in what would become the United States under a forced form of indentured servitude in 1619.[19] Two decades later a watershed moment took place between Europeans and people of color. Three servants ran away from their Virginian master, were recaptured and stood trial in 1640. Their rulings read as follows:

> [All] shall receive...thirty stripes apiece….One called Victor, a Dutchman, the other a Scotchman called James Gregory, shall first serve out their times according to their indentures, and one whole year apiece after...and after that...to serve the colony for three whole years apiece….The third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his said master of his assigns for the time of his natural Life. (J. Harvey, 49)

Here, for the first time, the color of a person's skin was entered and established as valid legal precedent. Soon it would become the featured methodology of the young nation's imperial politics.

---

[18] In his book *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*, military historian John Grenier argues that the total war practices cultivated during the waging of genocide and land annexation against native Americans provided the template for U.S. military theory and practice going forward.

[19] Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 48.

Finally, after just four brief decades, the ecology of the east coast was changing. The relationships with the land "the English sought to reproduce in New England...were simpler and more concentrated" than the contextually sensitive methods of animal husbandry, periodic burning, migratory farming, hunting and gathering practiced by indigenous peoples.

> Whereas Indian villages moved from habitat to habitat to find maximum abundance through minimal work, and so reduce their impact on the land, the English believed in and required permanent settlements. Once a village was established, its improvements—cleared fields, pastures, buildings, fences, and so on—were regarded as more or less fixed features of the landscape. (Cronon, *Changes* 53)

So convinced were the settlers of the superiority of their transplanted way of life, that they viewed the Indian lack of permanent settlement and "improvements" as proof of their rightlessness to the land. In reality, European agriculture and town building were significantly more labor intensive and ecologically destructive.[20] Colonialism, as an extractive and exploitative force striving for accumulations in wealth and power, seeks out of necessity its increase from nature. The first victim in the young colonies was the beaver, which "disappeared from Massachusetts coastal regions by 1640" (Cronon, *Changes* 99). Other creatures vanished to trappers in the years to come. As forests fell to make way for pasture, cropland, roads, and towns, whole watersheds transformed. Ground temperatures swelled in summer, watercourses left their banks, and erosion accelerated.[21]

The Colonial and the Modern

[20] Cronon, "Chapter 4: Bounding the Land." *Changes in the Land*, 56-81.

[21] Cronon, *Changes in the Land*.

Edward Said, father of postcolonial theory, wrote about the disembodying experience of becoming an object for study and control: "How rich our mutability, how easily we change (and are changed) from one thing to another, *how unstable our place*—and all because of the missing foundation of our existence, the lost ground of our origin, the broken link with our land and our past" (emphasis added).[22] Colonization has been the dictating agent in the lives of people like Said around the world and continues to describe the experience of marginalization in this nation. It is a primary force behind the creation of place in America, but what exactly is it? What are the ideologies that energize its continued life? And how are its effects distinguishable in our present geography?

Said experienced a systematized narrative that extended its ontological and epistemic vision in totalizing structural control. This system is what we refer to as modernity, but here the philosophical tradition starting with René Descartes is not the theoretical centering point. Rather, our focus is on modernity as a sociopolitical project. I follow the work of two philosophers: decolonialist Walter Mignolo, who has done the most to make the connection between modernism and colonialism explicit, and ecofeminist Charlene Spretnak who developed a unique theory called ecological postmodernism. Together they offer a critique external to Modernity and forge an alternative imagination through the oppressed voices of colonized peoples and the Land.[23]

---

[22] Quoted in Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Brief Introduction*, 11

[23] Mignolo identifies three types of critique to modernity: 1) "internal to the history of Europe" and thus Eurocentric in its critique and categories (psychoanalysis, Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernism), 2) critiques from non-North Atlantic contexts that focus on the idea of Western civilization (dewesternization, Occidentosis), and 3) non-North Atlantic critiques that center their critique on coloniality (postcoloniality, decoloniality (Mignolo, xi). From my perspective, the Deep Ecology framework begun in Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and extended in Spretnak's work provides a fourth

"'Modernity,'" in Mignolo's words, "is a complex narrative whose point of origination was Europe; a narrative that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, 'coloniality.' Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity--there is no modernity without coloniality" (2-3). The modern imagination asserts itself over others through two primary categories, the epistemological and the economic, and attempts to define everything (ontology) through these tools.[24] Epistemological imperialism extended Eurocentric thought "to encompass both science/knowledge and arts/meaning" (6). Colonists denied the viability of local knowledges (place-based knowledge) because of their supposed inferiority to rationality and empiricism.[25] The effects were devastating for the colonized. "Premodern and nonmodern cultures have no meaning or definition if their essential connection with place is denied….Even worse, their identity as a people-of-place has often been deliberately suppressed by the modern state in order to create a new cosmopolitan, modern society" (Spretnak, 28). Mind and culture were controlled by determining which "truths" were admittable to the public square. With knowledge-power in colonial hands, modern reductionism enabled settlers to shrink the thick complexity of social and environmental life to the realm of economics, which we will take a closer look at in the proceding section.

---

which, though Euroamerican-centric, offers a generative and distinctly non-modern critique. See Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom*.

[24] Historian Karen Armstrong is credited by Mignolo for this two part categorization. See Mignolo, 6.

[25] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,* for an account of the local relativity of supposedly objective European systems of rationality.

The confluence of ideologies found in coloniality/modernity can be traced through four movements: the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.[26] Though we cannot begin to scratch the surface of these intellectual traditions, it is worth lifting out a few of the defining features with implications for the becoming-of-place. Perhaps most significant for our study is the rise of anthropocentrism. "Renaissance humanism contrasted Christian views of the human as prone to sin and weakness with a neoclassical sense of rational man's unbounded potential" (Spretnak, 45). In a radical break from Augustinian ontological sinfulness, Renaissance anthropology elevated man as the measure of all things. In reaction, the Reformation intensified the absolute depravity of man but retained the focus on mankind (sic) to the exclusion of non-human creation. For Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant world they fathered, the central matter of faith became "an *individual's* direct relationship with God. The community of saints...receded before the new theology of the individual, standing alone before his God" (49).

The gap widening between humans and creation was codified in the Enlightenment's dualistic metaphysics. This departure from pre-modern cosmologies offered the paradigm for the scientific and social scientific theories that still shape the modern world. "Descartes based his view of nature on the fundamental division between two independent and separate realms—that of the mind and that of matter. The material universe, including living organisms, was a machine for him, which could in principle be

[26] Here I am following the development sketched by Spretnak, "Chapter 2: The Rise and Fall of Modern Ideologies of Denial," *The Resurgence of the Real*. These four movements are the moments when North Atlantic men came to self-awareness of shifts that were already long underway. They are intellectual movements, not historical points of origin . Theologian of philosophy Louis Dupré, for example, locates the turn toward a Modern consciousness in the thirteenth century. According to him, late Medieval theology and early Italian humanism dissolved the unity between the human, natural, and cosmic found in premodern beliefs and elevated human creativity. See Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture*.

understood completely by analysing it in terms of its smallest parts" (Capra and Luisi, 8). Newtonian mechanics—centered on principles of linearity and atomization—were the great scientific climax of Cartesian philosophy.[27] As the Scientific Revolution progressed, a creeping antagonism between humans and nature (who were suddenly quite distinct from one another) evolved from the duality between mind and matter. Francis Bacon channelled the spirit of his age when he intensified the biblical notion of dominion, claiming "'nature' was 'there' to be dominated by Man" (Mignolo, 11).[28] Immanuel Kant put the decisive nail in the coffin by demonstrating through his Doctrine of Antinomy that no single theory could explain the motions of God, humans, and nature as a unified whole. Though modern thought was initially theological, once revelation's epistemological authority was rejected and beliefs in mechanistic 'Natural Laws' gained precedent, God was steadily parochialized (as in Deism) before being dropped entirely by Hume and later moderns.[29]

Colonial powers wielding the narrative of modernity forced a dual augmentation of meaning and relations for places across the globe. First, they instituted the political, economic and military control of some places over other places. Europe, and eventually the United States, became locations who held power over colonized places. Second, a system of epistemological control was established wherein certain places were deemed

[27] Chapter 3 looks in depth at the mechanistic worldview in light of recent advances across a host of scientific fields that offer a new systems view of creation.

[28] Keeping this quote in mind, Bill McKibben makes a fascinating observation: "If that stable earth allowed human *civilization*, however, something else created *modernity*, the world that most of us reading this book inhabit. That something was the sudden availability, beginning in the early eighteenth century, of cheap fossil fuel. An exaggeration? One barrel of oil yields as much energy as twenty-five thousand hours of human manual labor--more than a decade of human labor per barrel." *Eaarth*, 27.

[29] Western thought has struggled to reconcile the relationship between God, humans, and nature ever since (typically by over-accentuating or dismissing one actor). Notice that I postulated these three together in the previous chapters as the Subjects whose relational dynamic produces the character of a place. One of the challenge ahead of us in Chapter 4 is reconciling these relationships.

legitimate sites of thinking and sources of knowledge, while others were excluded from the conversation. Colonizers, Mignolo explains, "inscribed a conceptualization of knowledge to a geopolitical space (Western Europe) and erased the possibility of even thinking about a conceptualization and distribution of knowledge 'emanating' from other local histories (India, China, Islam, etc.)" ("Geopolitics of Knowledge" 59). These same patterns are transposed within U.S. geography: places of wealth, whiteness, and prestige whose perspective dictates reality and places of poverty, darkness, and disrepute who are denied power and voice. Let us be clear. The performance of coloniality/modernity happened in material places and the order it erected has produced the placial dynamics we observe today.

CAPITALISM: SELF INTEREST AND THE LANDSCAPE OF INEQUALITY

Passengers poured off ships into San Francisco, quickly bolting north and east, energized by the same bizarre craze that drove Spanish soldier-merchants across the Atlantic almost three and a half centuries before. It was 1849 and gold had been discovered in California. Despite its uselessness in practical applications, gold possessed astronomically high value in abstract Euroamerican marketplaces. Digging up a few pounds of the yellowish metal could make a man rich.

A new economic system had come into its own in America. This system urged an ethical paradigm that departed radically from the late medieval world within which excess profit was a punishable crime. "The profit motive, we are constantly being told, is as old as man himself. But it is not. The profit motive as we know it is only as old as 'modern man'" (Heilbroner, 24). Befitting the modern turn, the highest good in the burgeoning American economy became acquiescence to one's individualistic thirst for

profit. Ninety years after the California gold rush, eminent economist Lord Maynard Keynes reflected on a day when everyone would be rich. When that day arrives,

> [We will] once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful. But beware! The time for all this is not yet. For at least another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight.[30]

Here, in undiluted absurdity, is the logic of capitalism: a system whose faith rests on an invisible though benevolent 'hand of the market' moved by competing self-interests.

Possessed by this new profit motive, Americans who flocked to California in the mid-nineteenth century foreshadowed Lord Keynes' call to avarice with reckless abandon:

> Under the protection of the US Army, beginning in 1848, gold seekers from all over the world brought death, torture, rape, starvation, and disease to the Indigenous people whose ancestral territories included the sought-after goldfields….In a true reign of terror, US occupation and settlement exterminated more than one hundred thousand California Native people in twenty-five years, reducing the population to thirty thousand by 1870. (Dunbar-Ortiz, 129)

Behind the movements of settlers, behind the felling of trees and tilling of fields, behind the construction of railroads and erection of cities, the evolving economy supercharged human oppression and nature exploitation. The heavy hand of capitalism is omnipresent in American placemaking.

The Commodification of Nature

"In Europe people talk a great deal of the wilds of America," wrote the keen social observer Alexis de Tocqueville after spending time in a remote part of Wisconsin. Such talk, however, was strikingly absent among his companions:

[30] Quoted in Schumacher, 24.

> The Americans themselves never think about them; they are insensible to the wonders of inanimate nature and they may be said not to perceive the mighty forests that surround them till they fall beneath the hatchet. Their eyes are fixed upon another sight: the American people views its own march across these wilds, draining swamps, turning the course of rivers, peopling solitudes, and subduing nature. (78)

Feelings about wilderness changed with the closing of the frontier (which Frederick Jackson Turner symbolically located at the 1890 census),[31] but the basic disposition toward nature remained: nature is the storehouse of commodities useful to the development of civilization. Capitalism is absolute in its appraisal and consumption of the environment: "In its constant drive to accumulate larger and larger quantities of social wealth under its control, capital transforms the shape of the entire world. No God-given stone is left unturned, no original relation with nature unaltered, no living thing unaffected" (Smith, 7-8).

The environmental historian William Cronon documented the commodification process in colonial New England. Forests, for example, were quantified by the uses and market value of tree species. White oak was used in shipbuilding, pitch pine provided a source for turpentine and resin, and towering white pines furnished a ships' masts.[32] Not surprisingly, forests were stripped of their most valuable trees. Local use considerations were devalued since they garnered less income than the trans-Atlantic market. "[New Englanders] applied European definitions of scarcity—that is to say, European prices—to New England conditions of abundance….Fish, fur, and lumber were assigned high values because of their scarcities in Europe, but were more or less free goods in New England"

---

[31] Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier*, 1893. For the conservationist's perspective on shifting attitudes toward wilderness, see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*. See also Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*.

[32] Cronon, *Changes* 109.

(Cronon, *Changes* 168). Once animals and plants ceased to exist as vital members of an ecological community and were instead evaluated by price, it did not take long for changes to sweep across the topography.

Even large-scale decisions were made with the simplistic framework of nature as commodity. In the minds of French settler-colonists, "New Orleans' strategic position as the gateway to the Mississippi River Valley bestowed upon it commercial advantages that outweighed any inherent site shortcomings" (Colten, 2). The settlers realized that the boggy, mosquito-infested Mississippi Delta was a terrible place to build a city from the beginning. New Orleans' obvious vulnerability to the elements was ignored due to the location's strategic trade location. The meeting place of the Gulf with North America's great river was nothing more than a tool for commerce. Their decision effectively trumped the wisdom of place and denying the voice of creation in the drive for profit.[33]

From Land to Property

The greatest placial transformation to occur in the forced transfer of lands from Indigenous residents to American settlers was the conversion to private property. At base a perceptual differentiation, the idea was codified in political and cultural structures through which perception was performed into material reality—ecological, topographical,

[33] In hindsight, poor black men and women have disproportionately borne the burden for this poor decision when their homes, less protected from flooding, were destroyed during events like Hurricane Katrina. In "A People's History: A Liturgical Call to Remembrance," Dominique Gilliard recounts several instances in the twentieth century when the levies were dynamited around poor black neighborhoods to protect the wealthy.

and social. Its legacy endures. Property ownership remains the crown jewel of the American Dream.[34]

Settlers read the biblical injunction to 'fill the earth and subdue it' through the burgeoning framework of the capitalist economy. Cronon is worth quoting at length here for his careful parceling of these developments:

> Colonists were moved to transform the soil by a property system that taught them to treat land as capital….The visible increase in livestock and crops thus translated into an abstract money value that was reflected in tax assessments, in the inventories of estates, and in the growing land market. Even if a colonist never sold an improved piece of property, the increase in its hypothetical value at market was an important aspect of the accumulation of wealth….If labor was not yet an alienated commodity available for increasing capital, land was. 'The staple of America at present,' wrote the British traveler Thomas Cooper in the late eighteenth century, 'consists of Land, and the immediate products of land'….It was the attachment of property in land to a marketplace, and the accumulation of its value in a society with institutionalized ways of recognizing abstract wealth…, that committed the English in New England to an expanding economy that was ecologically transformative. (Cronon, *Changes* 77-78, 79)

Beyond pure economic incentive, several push and pull factors produced America's lust for property. European elites began enclosing the commons in the sixteenth century, driving peasants from their ancestral homes.[35] Many of these newly unemployed and

---

[34] The issue of private property offers an excellent case study for the interaction of what sociologists call "agent side" and "structural side" forces in the production of society. Individuals make choices to save money to invest in property ownership. These choices are encouraged and directed by zoning laws, lending practices, cultural norms, and many other structures. Exegeting the interaction between these two forces is perhaps the most vital task of social analysis.

[35] Across urban ministry literature, the same polemic for city-focused ministry shows up again and again: more than half of the world's population now lives in city, therefore we should focus our efforts there (for examples see: (Van Engel and Tiersma, *God So Loves the City*; Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*; Spees, "Peace for Cities"; Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*). Obviously, I agree with the value of urban ministry (and much of what these authors have to say is excellent), but when our focus becomes a bias that keeps us from asking hard questions or seeing our place in its larger context, there is a major problem. I have yet to hear these voices ask: Why are rural places hemorrhaging people? What is it about the global economy that makes cities the only viable place for most people to live when that was not the case for most of history? Is this a good thing? Would we better serve cities by building up our rural hinterlands? Modern urbanization began with the closing of the commons—a tragic and damaging event—and subsequent rise of industrialization, and it continues to be driven by many less-than-holy push and pull factors that deserve missiological attention. A placial framework like the one I have developed here (with its attention to systems, nodes, and networks) offers a more balanced hermeneutic than the reductively

impoverished masses poured into Europe's overcrowded cities. Many more seized on the opportunities provided by Jefferson's land act discussed in the previous chapter. Displaced peoples poured through eastern ports and soon displaced Native Americans—who were of course denied legal property rights—in the press of Manifest Destiny.[36]

According to economists Erik S. Reinert & Arno Mong Daastøl, "In the United States, probably more money has been made through the appreciation of real estate than in any other way" (5).[37] The idea of private property has meant big money for our country, and so wields enormous power over the landscape. "The construction of new spaces proceeds through the actions of all those individuals, financial conduits, and corporations that make money from the change (or turnover) in land use" (Gottdiener, 17). It is unlikely that any force exists with more impact on the becoming-of-places in America than the idea of private property and the real estate sector. Even a trend like the conservation movement that is ostensibly antithetical to dominant culture needs to be set in the context of capitalized land (and commodified nature). John Muir and his Sierra Club gained widespread affection because of the reactionary spirit stimulated in the late 1800s by the rise of industrialization and the full enclosure of U.S. land by the property system. It can be argued that capitalism itself dictated the conservationist mentality because of the system's voracious consumption of nature. The only way to keep land from being used as a commodity was to draw lines around certain portions and tell

---

urban-centric paradigm that has gained traction in missions. We will understand cities *better* by not developing tunnel vision on them.

[36] John Winthrop and the earliest pilgrims "annulled any Native claims to the land by declaring Indian rights illegal. 'The Indians,' he said,'had not 'subdued' the land, and therefore had only a 'natural' right to it, but not a 'civil right.' A 'natural right' did not have legal standing'" (Woodley, 45).

[37] Reinert and Daastøl, 5.

Americans, “This far but no farther.” In the modern dualistic climate with its clean separation between culture and nature, this was the only available recourse.[38]

Uneven Development

The market economy’s most distinguished feature began flexing its muscles with vigor during the Industrial Revolution. The age of industrial growth was a furious season of placemaking. A staggering sixty-six percent of America’s major cities were founded in the seventy year period between 1840 and 1910, urged into existence by a concentration of economic activity in factory-filled urban areas connected by railroads.[39] As cities grew their geography was molded into bifurcated contours of concentrated wealth and concentrated poverty—a landscape we find all too familiar today.

Wealth is designed to concentrate in capitalism and does so on two planes. First, capital accumulates around individuals and corporations. Growth is the capitalist system’s overriding goal, and the fruits of growth are channeled into the hands of those with ownership. Money is invested into machines and labor to produce goods that can be sold at a profit which is subsequently reinvested to further expand production and maximize profits. The cycle of production, profit, and investment is called “extended commodity production,” and it constitutes the basic mechanism of capitalism. Those with excess capital are enabled to grow their wealth geometrically while the common working person is largely excluded from the fruits of economic growth. Human community steadily becomes elongated and reconfigured by inequality. By 1928, the highest one

[38] See Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

[39] Gottdiener, 114

percent earned twenty-four percent of earned income while the bottom ninety were paid just under fifty-one percent.[40]

At the same time, a mirror operation happens to places. Policies in the real estate sector make it most profitable for the wealthy to invest their money in a place where other wealthy people are also invested. The proximity of value to value works synergistically: property appreciates by being around other valuable property. The wealthy are thus incentivized beyond simple convenience to congregate in place. "[Additionally], wages are carried home to neighborhoods, and a significant portion is spent in the local area. Hence, the well-being of a place depends not only on the amount of investment it can attract but also on the wealth of its residents" (Gottdiener, et al., 82). Capitalist governments have an interest in supporting the inequitable growth of capitalist economies (due to their narrow focus on GDP and to the power elites' wield over the political domain through financial support) and so invest public dollars in public projects that lopsidedly benefit high-return locations. Excluded by their dearth of investable capital, the poor are cordoned off from these locations and relegated to separate neighborhoods with substandard infrastructure, work and educational opportunities, financial institutions, healthy and affordable food, green space and other public places, as well as many more determinants of well-being.[41] Critical geographers, following the

[40] Drew DeSilva. "U.S. income inequality, on rise for decades, is now highest since 1928."

[41] Even in their own neighborhoods, the poor typically lack ownership and are thereby further excluded from the benefits of capitalism. "According to one estimate, by 1890 as much as 77 percent of all city dwellers were renters, and the annual returns on rentals could be as high as 40 percent" (Gottdeiner, et al., 118). We see this today in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty like Fresno's Lowell where well over 80 percent are renters. Many are forced to rent from slumlords making multimillions off real estate whose profits are reinvested not in improving currently owned properties but in purchasing additional properties to expand revenues—a classic example of the detrimental, inequality generating cycle described above. The concept of "rent seeking" first identified in the housing market is used by economists to describe a wide range of practices whereby the powerful leverage their ownership and other forms of capital to extract

work of Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre, use the term 'uneven development' for the inequitable production of places in capitalist society.[42] The significance of the systems level problem of uneven development cannot be understated for urban ministry.[43]

THE WHITE RACIAL HIERARCHY

If the narrative of modernity and colonialism gives the primary answer to the 'what' question of American placemaking, and capitalism the main answer to 'how,' then *whiteness* answers the question: who? Cornel West exposes the harsh composition of white racial identity:

> The enslavement of Africans—over 20 percent of the population—served as the linchpin of American democracy; that is, the much-heralded stability and continuity of American democracy was predicated upon black oppression and degradation. Without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be 'white'—they would be only Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and others engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity. (156)

West is alluding to the three-fifths compromise made by the founding fathers to pass the Constitution. Without corporate agreement to the subjugation of enslaved African-Americans, the fragile bonds holding thirteen quite different states together in legal agreement would have broken. The presence of our nation in history was preserved by racism.

---

wealth from the middle and lower classes, subsequently driving inequality. See: Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Chapter Two: Rent Seeking and the Making of an Unequal Society," *The Price of Inequality*, 35-64.

[42] See the following: Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*; Neil Smith, *Uneven Development*; Edward Soja, *Seeking Spacial Justice*; David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*.

[43] The placemaking impact of these mechanisms is not internally confined to cities, but extends regionally (and globally in the present). In the twentieth century, the farm was increasingly designed to mirror the factory. Industrialization of rural economies increasingly drove small-holding farmers out of business, compressing ownership and profits into the hands of corporation while at the same time driving many rural people into cities and impoverishing farm workers. See Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*. For a more philosophical account, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*.

Colonization and capitalism were tools wielded by white people to create a white social hierarchy. Benefits of whiteness were intensified after Bacon's Rebellion in 1676. Nathaniel Bacon brought together slaves, indentured servants, and poor whites in an effort to overthrow landed elites in Virginia. Once the uprising was put down, the wealthy planters changed strategy "in an effort to protect their superior status and economic position." Michelle Alexander goes on to explain their logic:

> They abandoned their heavy reliance on indentured servants in favor of the importation of more black slaves….Fearful that such measures might be insufficient to protect their interests, the planter class took an additional precautionary step, a step that would later come to be known as a 'racial bribe.' Deliberately and strategically, the planter class extended special privileges to poor whites in an effort to drive a wedge between them and black slaves. White settlers were allowed greater access to Native American lands, white servants were allowed to police slaves through slave patrols and militias, and barriers were created so that free labor would not be placed in competition with slave labor. (24-25)

As the control of the US government gradually extended westward through militarized land seizures, a perennial conflict in earlier congressional caucuses flared over what character these newly possessed places would acquire: would new territories become free states or slave states?

States across the South were permanently marked by slavery. A person's social and physical location became functions of their phenotypes while in the same breath the region's ecology was reconfigured by the spread of King Cotton. Maps 2.2 through 2.8 in the appendix provide a detailed progression of the becoming-of-place through these factors. More of America was altered by slavery than just the South, however. Places, we must remember, are never purely localized but intrinsically networked to other locations through systems like the economy. So it was that while the North did not allow slavery on its soil it was still heavily invested in the enterprise and profited generously:

> With the creation of innovative financial tools, more and more of the Western world was able to invest directly in slavery's expansion. Such creativity multiplied the incredible productivity and profitability of enslaved people's labor and allowed enslavers to turn bodies into commodities with which they changed the financial history of the Western world. (Baptist, xxvi)

Along with the sale of stolen land, slavery was the chief means of the United States' economic, and subsequent political, rise. The wealth that built the great cities of America's North--its famous parks and squares, its downtowns, boulevards and iconic buildings--was extracted from the blood of enslaved peoples.[44]

Of course the white racial hierarchy did not meet its end along with slavery. It pursued its growth through Reconstruction into Jim Crow, a period in which placial boundaries were the distinguishing means of racial discrimination. Separate places, often intimate in scale like drinking fountains, bathrooms, restaurants, and school buildings, were created for whites and people of color. Boundaries were institutionalized through official political channels and reinforced by domestic terrorism. Violence has always been a crucial tool for white supremacy. "[Equal Justice Initiative] researchers documented 3959 racial terror lynchings of African Americans in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia between 1877 and 1950." That is once a week for seventy-three years.[45]

The White Racial Identity

[44] Edward Baptist's redrawing of slavery as a quintessentially modern and capitalistic enterprise in the book *The Half Has Never Been Told* is fixating and terrifying. I cannot recommend it more highly to the reader for its ability to concretely exhume the historical themes of this thesis.

[45] See "Lynching In America" http://www.eji.org/lynchinginamerica. In *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, James Cone argues that when attempting to answer Bonhoeffer's discipleship question, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" we must set our contemplation in the context of lynched black bodies. See also, Dominique Gilliard, "We Didn't Say a Mumbling Word: Christians and Lynching,"

Through all this history, the ideology of whiteness matured. The transition into structural racism occurs when prejudice is institutionalized through power.[46] As race increasingly acquired political, economic, and placial realism, reinforcing feedback loops formed that intensified racial stereotypes and their justification in white minds. White people qualified the differences between black and white people's social situations ahistorically, and looked into the poor parts of town for proof they were superior.[47] White people's power over knowledge and the political economy facilitated the white point-of-reference's ability to exert universalizing descriptive control. In the words of race scholar John E. Powell, "whiteness is our meta-story about race" and race is the American meta-story about human nature. But whiteness did not not complete its epistemological imperialism with anthropology. Willie Jennings discerns far more dramatic implications. Whiteness, he explains, "became determinative of the true (intelligence), the good (morality), and the beautiful (aesthetics)" (277).

If this is the function of white ideology, what is the content of the white self? Predominantly, it is a socialized internalization and/or willful identification with the narrative of modernity/coloniality. To be white is to live out the vision of Hobbes as an isolated, anxious self. Individualism is crucial to whiteness. It provides a deracialized rationalization for a white person's success while simultaneously shielding evidence from historical-structural perspectives that would undermine the white worldview. Whiteness is an identity constituted in distinction against and above the other. It thus has very little

---

[46] Jha, *Pre Post Racial America.*

[47] Additional affirmation of white prejudice came through the typically modern venue of biased science paraded as objectivity. Eugenics, based on one branch of Darwinian theory, attempted to establish 'proof' of racial difference and white superiority. Startlingly, these ideas are making a comeback in far right circles through a theory called "Human Biodiversity" (HBD) and the complementary social theory "race realism."

internal ground on which to stand. In Powell's words, "At its core, whiteness is vacant" (Powell, 154).

Placemaking and Whiteness

Since the layout of plantation complexes, place politics have been thoughtfully employed to oppress non-white peoples. The Civil Rights Movement targeted segregation in its Southern forms, but failed to address the Northern variation. Here the white racial hierarchy used place on a metropolitan, neighborhood by neighborhood scale to maintain its isolation and control.[48] At the same time black people won the vote and schools were being desegregated, white people were hard at work fashioning the new system of urban neighborhood segregation. "From the 1930s through the 1960s, black people across the country were largely cut out of the legitimate home-mortgage market through means both legal and extralegal. …[Whites] employed every measure, from "restrictive covenants" to bombings, to keep their neighborhoods segregated" (Coates, "Case for Reparations"). While black communities were compressed into the inner city,

> the country was creating, on a massive scale, a new place called the suburbs. From its inception, this place was explicitly white space….All three branches of our government have had a role in creating this landscape: the executive and legislative in financing white flight through transportation spending, subsidies for suburban development and homeownership, and other measures; and the courts in developing legal barriers that facilitated the exclusion of blacks and, to a lesser extent, other non-whites" (Powell, 147).

Jews, Latinos, Armenians, and Asians encountered the same forces as the financial and real estate industries guarded their white boundaries. Uneven development was thus channelled by racism. Even the design of suburbs can be interpreted as an extension of the white self. Privacy features like gated communities, privacy fences, and an

[48] Powell, 147

elimination of public space from neighborhoods are all expressions of the radical individualism in whiteness.[49] More recently, as explicitly racist language became taboo in political discourse, tough on crime rhetoric and the "war on drugs" intentionally targeted low-income neighborhoods with a high proportion of people of color. In the process, a new place was developed for the feared non-white other: the prison.[50]

Race and the Christian Imagination

The legacy of colonialism blurred and eventually dissolved the line between whiteness and Christian identity, between the truth as white people saw it and the truth as God declared it, and between what was good for white people and what was good as Christ defined it. With the Christian imagination infected by racism and the delusion of white supremacy, the faithfulness of theology to scripture and Jesus steadily eroded. In turn, the performance of this corrupted imagination deviated the Church from participation in shalom and, instead, toward the multifarious works of oppression.

From the first encounters between colonial era Europeans and Africans, "Christian formation [was] reconfigured around white bodies" (Jennings, 35).[51] The

---

[49] The history, design, and effects of those bizarre American places called the suburbs merit a chapter all their own. Sadly, I must simply refer the reader to these readings: Robert D. Bullard, ed., *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century*; Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia*; Duany, et al., *Suburban Nation*.

[50] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*. This section barely scratches the surface of connections between place and race. Education, public works and infrastructure, finance, economic development, policing, and a host of other mechanisms have been used to design opportunity and wellbeing into and out of places. Border guarding and immigration control for the Latin American community adds another layer of complexity to this conversation. See: Patrick Sharkey, *Stuck in Place*; Judith Bell and Mary Lee, "Why Place and Race Matter"; Elizabeth Kneebone, "U.S. Concentrated Poverty in the Wake of the Great Recession"; Paul Jargowsky, "The Architecture of Segregation"; Nikole Hannah-Jones, *Living Apart*; Miguel de la Torre, *Trails of Hope and Terror*.

[51] Jennings details how this unfolded by exegeting the writings of, among others, Gomes Eanes de Azurara, Prince Henry of Portugal's royal chronicler who wrote a theological account of slavery's earliest moments. The transition into a racial imagination, Jennings argues, was so smooth and rapid due to the

challenge of Christ was subsumed beneath white ideology, while the Jewish body of Christ was dematerialized to advance the white body. This dematerialization happened on a second level, however. The colonial moment was not only a matter of political and economic change. It was also the mass transfer of millions of bodies from their historical places of being. Jennings writes:

> A Christian doctrine of creation is first a doctrine of place and people, of divine love and divine touch, of human presence and embrace and of divine and human interaction….seeing place in its fullest sense….One of the first factors in rendering the Scriptures impotent and unleashing segregated mentality into [Christians'] social imagination was the loss of a world where people were bound to land. Through this loss the complex revelation of God's relation to land and people fell on deaf ears. The moment the land is removed as a signifier of identity, it is also removed as a site of transformation through relationship. (248)

As both Africans and Europeans were juxtaposed in a new "space" through a distinct set of power relations, distanced from their place of home and cultural orientation, a new system of identity had to be created. Race was constructed to fill the void where place once functioned in the doctrine of creation. "The story of race," Jennings writes, "is also the story of place" (285), and both of these were narrated into the story of Christian theology. The constitutive function of place in the Christian imagination, one that served to foster affection and community, was substituted for the alienating power of a racial hierarchy.[52]

---

preexisting prejudice against Jews that found theological articulation in supersessionism. See: Jennings, "Chapter 1: Zurara's Tears," The Christian Imagination, 15-64.

[52] We will discuss these problems in greater detail in Chapter 4. Based on the theme of this paper, I emphasize the relationship between place and race in Christian thought. However, I do not want to claim that this is the central problematic, nor do I want to the reader to think the implications of racism on Christian thought are limited to the topics discussed here. They have been pervasive across the enterprise of theology. For further engagement with this topic, see: J. Kameron Carter, *Race*; Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*; Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do With It?*; Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Ethics from the Margins*.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we traced three loci of power that shaped placemaking across the history of the United States. Colonialism performed the Modern imagination by appropriating [land], stratifying the human community into races for social control, and exploiting nature as an act of rightful dominion. Capitalism commodified nature, transformed land into property, and divided people and places along the spectrum from wealth to poverty through processes of uneven development. Finally, the white self internalized the narratives of coloniality/modernity and utilized capitalism to establish a white racial hierarchy across economic, political, well-being, and placial lines. Together, the forces described here—woven into the worldviews and systems of our society—work at odds with God's creative activity, laying down sediments of traumatic memory, inequitable and unsustainable built environments, and structural injustices that constitute places in America. In the following chapter, we reexamine how system-level crises can be reoriented for shalom.

CHAPTER 3

All the World a Garden: *the Systemic Place*

> We are more connected than we know. We and our systems follow the laws not of the clockmaker but of the gardener. Our imperatives are not to let things be once they are set in motion but rather to *tend*. The gardener understands the dynamics of the natural systems around him and has the humility to know he does not *make* nature. But he understands equally that it is his active hand that *shapes* it; that separates the garden from the wild.[1]
>
> Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer

> Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"
> "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"
>
> Genesis 4:9

RELATIONAL CREATION

Shalom, at its simplest, is an experiential outcome of rightly ordered relationships. Place is the material site of relationality. Their common denominator explains why place is where shalom happens, and why there is nothing arbitrary about their connection. Rather, the partnership results from carefully designed ontological entanglement. Trinitarian theology illustrates how intrinsic rightly ordered relationship is to God's own makeup. When God moves outward from his internal love dance in creative energy, chaos acquires form, structure, distinction, and meaningful connection. Light to dark, land to sea, animal to plant, all acquire a place in mutual interdependence with one another. How fitting it is, then, for Eden to take center stage as the biblical narrative commences. Eden was a place that expressed the intended pattern for all creation, places composed of mutually caring relationships. Nowhere are relationships found in greater density, collaborating for the common good, than a well-tended garden.

---

[1] *The Gardens of Democracy*, 161.

Perhaps that thing which makes us most human, finite though it may be, is our capacity to choose what sorts of relationships we will form. This is a mysterious gift, at once crowning us with the very image of God and plunging us into perilous responsibilities. It is out of this locus of identity that we too are empowered to operate as creators—as placemakers. Our operation is reflective of and performed in and through the Spirit of God when the relational ordering we create cultivates shalom. Human life can in this manner be co-operative and co-creative with God by his grace. Paul said it like this: "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18).

Tragically, something seems to have gone terribly wrong, not just in the course of human civilization but, more troublingly, in the social performance of the Church herself. I am haunted by the pain in Willie Jennings' words as he reflects on the failure of Christians to relate well:

> That intimacy [rooted in the faith of Jesus] should by now have given Christians a faith that understands its own deep wisdom and power of joining, mixing, merging, and being changed by multiple ways of life to witness a God who surprises us by love of differences and draws us to new capacities to imagine their reconciliation. Instead, the intimacy that marks Christian history is a painful one, one in which the joining often meant oppression, violence, and death, if not of bodies then most certainly of ways of life, forms of language, and visions of the world. What happened to the original trajectory of intimacy? (9)

The stories of colonialism, modernity, capitalism, and whiteness severed our bonds of community, replacing intimacy with individuality, care with commodification, and affection with the quest for affluence. All of this, somehow, has been done in the name of God and Jesus his son.

Our theological imaginations beg for renewal, but a pressing question needs to be addressed before we take up those problems directly: what kind of relationships are we

dealing with that foster or deny the expression of shalom in a place? It will not do to leap to the 'how' of relational ministry, what I have been calling co-creating, without a clearer image of the 'what' of relationships themselves. I believe this has been a crucial stumbling block for urban ministers. While our intuitions lead us to a strong awareness of larger relational entanglements that drive experience and possibility for our neighbors and neighborhoods, we rarely have the space to step back and rigorously assess the forces we struggle against. But social change remains, at root, a matter of reordering relationships—drawing them into the way of Jesus. As the challenges of justice have become increasingly complex, interconnected, and recalcitrant in our globalized world, it is time to question how accurately we actually understand the relationships in the places around us.

It will be helpful to hold some specific relational webs in mind as case studies while we pursue an answer. I suggest directing our attention to three levels. First, recall the meta-relationships in the theological account of placemaking. Biblical faith witnesses to a continual interaction between God, humanity, and the Land. Through their synergy or disharmony the character of place is manifested. We will focus squarely on the nature of these actors and the relational dynamics among them in the following chapter, but it will be helpful to weigh the principles about to be explored against this backdrop.

Second, I encourage attention to our current form of political economy, often referred to as neoliberalism.[2] Several reasons encourage this decision. To start with, our

[2] The intellectual father of neoliberalism is generally regarded to be Milton Friedman (Friedrich Hayek is a noteworthy later economist) while Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher are credited with institutionalizing its role as the global political economy. It has been embraced and extended by every US president—Democratic and Republican—in the intervening decades. It is an economic ideology associated with free markets, deregulation, privatization, and a state strong on defense against external and internal threats to the market while loose on regulation of its citizen's liberty to pursue self-interest. For fuller (critical) accounts of neoliberalism, see the following references: Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*;

hypermodern age has ushered such a proliferation, intensification, and penetration of the market into everyday life that it is impossible to think about how the relationships between humans, God and creation are exercised without closely considering economic structure and behavior.[3] Additionally, neoliberalism performs a very particular ideology of relationality that deserves close interrogation. Next, at least to my eyes, it manifests a contemporary consolidation of the powers of coloniality/modernity, capitalism, and whiteness examined in the previous chapter. Border fanaticism, expansion and privatization of the criminal justice system, militarism, accelerating inequality, climate change, the corporatization of everyday life, unmitigated gentrification and a host of other pressing justice concerns are unified under the logic of this movement. Finally, an unpredicted and un-necessitated resonance now exists between neoliberalism and the powerful right-wing of the Evangelical world.[4] It has acquired peculiar theological justifications through this partnership.[5] Any econopolitical philosophy deserves a healthy critical distance before gaining Christian support—particularly so for one that enjoys influence over every living thing on the planet.

Third (and back to a more human scale), walk through this chapter with an earthy image of your neighborhood—or perhaps a set of diverse neighborhoods with which you are familiar. A specific place helps make abstract ideas concrete, dramatizing in real life

---

Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*; Brenner and Theodore, *Spaces of Neoliberalism*. I am primarily indebted to Connolly.

[3] see Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism: Or the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism*.

[4] Connolly calls it the "evangelical-capitalist resonance machine." See his book *Christianity and Capitalism, American Style*. Look no further than the Tea Party for an example of these strange bedfellows.

[5] For a disturbing example of conservative ideological theologizing in action, see Wayne Grudem, *Politics - According to the Bible*. Grudem's famous systematic theology makes his voice authoritative on these subjects for many.

the intersections and imbrications identified in Chapter One. Every neighborhood is a confluence of innumerable relationships affected by and affecting the becoming of that place. Though they are the intimate setting of our daily lives, their actual processes are often too close or too large for us to notice. The goal here is to begin unveiling with greater specificity their inner dynamics. To recap, use these themes as case studies for testing the ideas developed in this chapter: 1) the three way relationship between God, humans, and the Land; 2) the reigning global political economy called neoliberalism; 3) one or more familiar neighborhoods.

FROM MECHANISM TO COMPLEX SYSTEMS

For as long as the oppressed have spoken out, they have identified bonds holding the fate of all in a unified whole. Dr. King captured the conviction as well as anyone when he wrote these words from a Birmingham jail:

> In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality. ("Letter from Jail" 65)[6]

These were subversive political claims in a Lockean state predicated on safeguarding individual rights and an economy fueled by competing self-interests. King's praxis of communal responsibility, interconnectedness, and care proposes something revolutionary

[6] King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," *Why We Can't Wait*. The data supports King's position. In January, 2016 Oxfam reported that world's 62 wealthiest individuals now owned the same wealth as 3.6 billion people--the bottom half of humanity. Extreme poverty and related maladies issuing from the wealth-concentration trend are horrifying but not surprising. More unexpected are studies that show how the ills of inequality also infect the rich. Wealthy people in places with high inequality experience worsening life expectancies, health, violence, lack of community life, teen pregnancy, mental illness, drug abuse, and most other measures of wellbeing when compared to places with greater equality. See: Oxfam, "An Economy for the 1%", 4; Pickett and Wilkinson, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*.

in our context. What is thrilling is that a swelling phenomenon across twentieth century science is validating that these claims of mutuality are not a romantic matter but situated at the very core of physical reality. This so called "ecological" paradigm "sees the world not as a collection of isolated objects, but as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent" (Capra, *Web* 7).

It appears that the genre of relationality that best captures bodies, cities, food chains, social communities, the weather, thought patterns and the psyche, economies, family dynamics, forest ecology, and quantum mechanics is not what undergirds the edifice of Modernity. Since this list represents the core constituencies of place, we need to get serious about studying the new paradigm. There is an intellectual reordering of comparable magnitude to the Copernican Revolution underway.[7] Two observers of this sea-change described the following conceptual shifts:[8]

- ❏ simple → complex
- ❏ atomistic → networked
- ❏ equilibrium → disequilibrium
- ❏ linear → non-linear
- ❏ competition → cooperation
- ❏ mechanistic → behavioral
- ❏ independent → interdependent
- ❏ predictive → adaptive
- ❏ individual ability → group diversity
- ❏ rational calculator → irrational approximator
- ❏ selfish → strongly reciprocal
- ❏ win-lose → win-win or lose-lose
- ❏ efficient → effective

To the left side of the arrows is a breakdown of the mechanistic worldview. For the purposes of this paper, we can think of it as a synthesis of Cartesian philosophy and Newtonian physics that explained physical reality through precise mathematical laws which supposedly allowed objects situated in empty space to function like a machine that

[7] I am not speaking hyperbolically; that is the language being used within the scientific community. See: Capra, *The Turning Point*.

[8] Liu and Hanauer, *The Gardens of Democracy*. 28.

is comprehensible through study of its smallest parts.[9] The epistemological corollary is variably referred to as atomization or reductionism, and North Atlantic men employed its logic as they developed social, political, and economic theories.[10] "The fallacy of the reductionist view lies in the fact that, while there is nothing wrong in saying that the *structures* of all living organisms are composed of smaller parts, and ultimately of molecules, this does not imply that their *properties* can be explained in terms of molecules alone" (Capra and Luisi, 35). In the modern world, the garden was reduced to a machine.

Systems Theory

Research in the twentieth century across physics, ecology, biology, psychology, cybernetics and other fields all began uncovering similar dynamics with startling implications. In the mid-twentieth century, a biologist-philosopher named Ludwig Von Bertalanffy gathered these discoveries into a whole and pioneered a field he called General Systems Theory.[11] The new theory attempted to describe what he called "organized wholes" that bucked the classical second law of thermodynamics: energy dissipates and moves order to disorder. As a biologist, he constantly observed phenomena that, far from running down like a machine, were living systems that unfolded into greater order and complexity. "He called such systems 'open' because they need to feed on a continual flux of matter and energy from their environment to stay alive" (Capra and

[9] Capra and Luisi, "The Newtonian world-machine." *The System View of Life*. 19-34.

[10] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 204.

[11] Bertalanffy, *General Systems Theory*.

Luisi, 86). Bertalanffy was scrambling to name something that made a radical departure from everything the algorithms and theories of the past insisted must happen.

The person who did the most to extend, clarify, and communicate systems theory for the public is Donella Meadows. She defined a system as "an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something" (11). We can begin clarifying what a system is by thinking about what is not a system. A pile of oranges is not a system because the arrangement of parts do not produce some new process or behavior different from a single grain. A collection of things, like oranges, with no 'intentional' arrangement that achieves something new is not a system. An orange tree is. What is so surprising is how rare "non-systems" are.

Three parts of Meadows' definition compose a system's structure: elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose. *Elements* are all the "stuff" that go into a system. These can be tangible or intangible. For a neoliberal economy, elements include: businesses and corporations, government departments, nation states, financial institutions like investment banks, meta-governmental organizations like the World Bank, individuals functioning as consumers, workers, investors, and owners, and even ideologies of patriotism and wealth creation. A list of neighborhood elements could include: houses, streets, water and sewage pipes, electricity lines, trees, grass and other plants, racoons, mice, birds, vehicles, soil, sidewalks, local businesses, and of course people. These lists can be endless, and Meadows urges caution in over-exhaustive cataloguing. "Pretty soon you lose sight of the system. As the saying goes, you can't see the forest for the trees" (13). Systems theory explains how (quite opposed to the mechanistic view in which the parts represent the most relevant aspect of macro-behavior) elements can be replaced

with other elements—even seemingly quite different elements—without changing the function of the system. We have all seen presidents and neighbors come and go without making significant impact.

Meadows defines the second aspect of system structure, *interconnections*, as all "the relationships that hold the elements together….Some interconnections in systems are actual physical flows, such as the water in [a] tree's trunk or the students progressing through a university. Many interconnections are flows of information—signals that go to decision points or action points within a system" (14). Interconnections may be equally or even more numerous than elements, and it is through these "flows" that system dynamics emerge. The third component of a system is its *purposes or functions* which are "deduced from behavior, not from rhetoric or stated goals" (14). A simple system like a home air conditioner has a set temperature that defines its purpose (e.g. keep the room at 75 degrees). The system's activities are constantly self-regulated to maintain this goal. However, systems theory teaches that we cannot only include the stated goal of temperature maintenance, but need to include all behavioral trends within a system's "purpose." Thus, in this definition, we could say that energy consumption and money use are other purposes of an AC. Neoliberalism's stated purpose is economic growth, but its behavior demonstrates that it also contains purposes like driving inequality and unrestricted extraction of nonrenewable natural resources. These byproducts have to be included when assessing a system's purpose.[12] Any change at these levels can have drastic results. Consider a neighborhood whose relationship with its surroundings

[12] Meadows notes that the words function and purpose often slide into one another. "The word function is generally used for a nonhuman system, the word purpose for a human one, but the distinction is not absolute, since so many systems have both human and nonhuman elements" (15).

switched from open avenues that allow anyone to enter, visit friends, and shop to a gated community where only a small number of predetermined outsiders are allowed access. What if an economy changes its primary purpose from unlimited growth to ensuring the wellbeing of every member of the community of creation?

Before moving further, it will be helpful to contextualize the developing mental model of systems by taking another look at the idea of *nesting* (first introduced as a feature of place in Chapter 1). Take a cell of the human body for example. It is a complex system in its own right made up of elements like a cell wall, ribosomes, and a nucleus organized to carry out an assigned purpose. This cell, however, is nested within the vascular system, which is itself nested inside the amazing system of a human body. Even a body is nested inside a larger bioregion and society that are part of the yet larger biosphere. Systems thus have horizontal and vertical interconnections with other systems. Horizontally, a neighborhood relates to other neighborhoods. Vertically it has many nested systems within it like blocks, houses and gardens while at the same time it is nested within larger systems like a district, a city, a metropolitan region, a county, state and so on. National economies also interact with other nations, contain local economies, and are situated within global economies. Additionally, systems relate to, contain and are nested within wholly other types of systems. For example, even the global economy is still situated inside the biosphere and is dependent on the ecological systems of nature.[13] To belabor the point, all of this multilevel, cross-system interaction is possible because systems always exist in the relational and material contexts of place.

[13] Wendell Berry calls nature the "Great Economy," and argues the hubris of the capitalist market which refuses to function within that larger system is at the root of our systemic crisis. See: Berry, "Two Economies," *What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth*.

If elements, interconnections, and purposes provide us with an outline of system structure, then stocks, flows, and feedback loops describe the basic parts of systemic behavior. "A *stock* is the foundation of any system. Stocks are the elements of the system that you can see, feel, count, or measure at any given time" (17). In a forest one stock is the number of trees. The primary measured stock for our neoliberal economy is GDP. For a neighborhood it might be population size and demographics breakdowns. For most systems, if a stock remains at the same size (called equilibrium) then it is moving toward death. Stock size is constantly in dynamic flux driven by *flows*: the movement of elements in and out of a stock. The classic stock and flow example is a bathtub. The stock would be the present amount of water in the tub which can be adjusted by an incoming flow from the faucet and an outgoing flow through the drain. Most systems are more complicated and will contain multiple sources of gain and loss. "The human mind," Meadows explains, "seems to focus more easily on stocks than on flows. On top of that, when we do focus on flows, we tend to focus on inflows more easily than outflows" (22). Furthermore, both push and pull causes may drive flows. To return to our neighborhood example, population may increase because of greater housing density, increased birth rates, or larger numbers of people inhabiting the same dwellings. Economic incentives often drive growth such as good jobs and affordable housing, but people may also be pushed into the neighborhood because of problems elsewhere, such as a crumbling rural economy that drives underemployed people to urbanize. However, at the same time, many people are leaving a neighborhood (churning is always higher as the proportion of renting to owning rises) due to death rates, evictions, and a variety of chosen departures. Meadows offers an important observation on stocks and flows for those of us seeking to

change unjust stocks: "A stock takes time to change, because flows take time to flow….Stocks generally change slowly, even when the flows into or out of them change suddenly. Therefore, stocks act as delays or buffers or shock absorbers in systems" (23). These delays have to be accounted for.

A bathtub with a dripping faucet and open drain left alone in an empty house will maintain the same stock indefinitely. The crucial differentiation between this simple mechanical device and a body, neighborhood, or economy that is a goal seeking, far-from-equilibrium system are mechanisms called *feedback loops*.

> *A feedback loop is formed when changes in a stock affect the flows into or out of that same stock*….The flows into or out of the stock are adjusted because of changes in the size of the stock itself. Whoever or whatever is monitoring the stock's level begins a corrective process, adjusting rates of inflow or outflow (or both) and so changing the stock's level. (emphasis added, 25-26)

Compounding wealth offers a simple example. On average, CEOs in the US are awarded 411 times the wages of the lowest employees.[14] The wealthy person is able to place their excess capital in investments with exponential growth rates. Each year their rate of return is larger thanks to feedback loops that cycle the growth back into their accounts. This example demonstrates one of two major types of feedback called a *reinforcing loop*. These exist "wherever a system element has the ability to reproduce itself or to grow as a constant fraction of itself" (31). Population growth is another example: the more people there are, the more babies they can produce. Feedback leads to nonlinear patterns of stock growth like the accelerating earnings of the wealthy person seen above and the shrinking

[14] Salvatierra and Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing*, 52. Note: This statistic is based on 2005 data. The numbers have grown dramatically worse in the intervening years since the financial crash in 2007. Economic recovery in the recent period has almost exclusively funneled GDP growth toward the richest one percent of the population.

number of years now required to double the global population. Reinforcing feedback loops intensify existing patterns of behavior.

The other form of feedback is called a *balancing loop*. These seek to maintain a certain degree of stability in the system by opposing "whatever direction of change is imposed on the system. If you push a stock too far up, a balancing loop with try to pull it back down. If you shove it too far down, a balancing loop will try to bring it back up" (28). Living things are filled with balancing loops. Think of all the processes a body goes through in order to maintain relatively stable body temperature, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels. A body is constantly intaking and expunging foreign substances like food, air, and pathogens. Balancing feedback loops in metabolism, endocrine systems, and other functions maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium. We can even think of forgiveness and apologies as a balancing loop to maintain a degree of harmony in interpersonal relationships.

Systems are not purely physical, but they are never abstract. Visual representations can thus be immensely helpful. A simple systems model of an industrial economy composed of goals, stocks, flows, and feedback loops can be found in the Appendix under Figure 3.1. Now that we have a grasp of these basic systems concepts, it is possible to differentiate the kind of systems places are. A place is a system of systems—a system with many nested, interacting systems contained within it. Each of its internal systems, or "elements," function as autonomous parts that "respond to changes via feedback, and...form self-organizing, self-maintaining assemblages that display emergent properties" (Hemenway, 12). After observing these patterns of behavior across the spectrum of social, astronomical, ecological, biological, and physical fields, scientists

have come to refer to them collectively as *Complex Adaptive Systems* (CAS). Table 3.2 in the Appendix unpacks CAS in greater depth.[15] For now, we would do well to simply pause and consider the ramifications of the systems view for our vocation to forge relationships of justice and sustainability. The world as God made it is a web of entangled systems, vibrating and humming in and out of rhythm with one another in an impossibly fragile, unimaginably creative dance, searching for patterns of life and stability.[16] If our human systems fail to live according to God's designs, if we interact cognizantly with the rest of creation, if we fail to recognize the great fragility of our cultures and livelihoods, we will not only fail in our pursuit of shalom, we will collapse the created order down around us.[17]

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

For the time being we can simplistically represent the systemic construction intended in the Biblical witness as one whose purpose, goals, flows, elements, interconnections and feedback loops are coordinated around the production of shalom in the community of creation. "I came," Jesus taught, "that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). If the relationships within and between God, the Land

[15] I also found this summary of CAS and its basis in Complexity Theory helpful: Chan, "Complex Adaptive Systems." For in depth looks at cities as complex adaptive systems, see: Bettencourt, "The Kind of Problem a City Is" and Portugali et. al. *Complexity Theories of Cities Have Come of Age*.

[16] Figure 3.3 in the Appendix charts the "system of systems" view of places, diagramming many of the macrosystems involved in the production of place, as well as common system goals, and sources of instability.

[17] William Connolly's main contention in *The Fragility of Things* is that neoliberalism attributes the self-organizing wisdom of CAS to the market, but forgets that "markets are not unique systems. The cosmos itself is composed of innumerable force fields" (11-12). Failing to account for the ecological and social with which the economy interacts and is situated inside, economists generate models that ignore feedback process flowing between human and nonhuman systems. We forget our entanglement and interdependency with the community of creation at our own peril.

and humanity flow according to the will of God, life ensues. Liberation theologians deepened our grasp of the social and physical implications of Jesus' mission, and applied the gospel of life to the experience of suffering among the poor.[18] "[I]n the final analysis, poverty means death. Liberation theology had its origin in the contrast between the urgent task of proclaiming the life of the risen Jesus and the conditions of death in which the poor of Latin America were living" (Gutierrez, xxxiv). In this country too, death has come upon our places.

Death here is not referring to the universal end all living things experience from natural processes. Rather, it issues from violence perpetrated against individual members of powerless communities. An interdisciplinary theory called *structural violence,* particularly used by community health scholars, helps expose injustice rooted in system design.[19] Hamer and Lang define structural violence "as the conditions and arrangements, embedded in the political and economic organization of social life, that cause injury to individuals and populations, or put them in harm's way." The theory attempts to expand the dominant notion of violence as an interpersonal act—called direct violence—to depersonalized, corporate acts that emanate from social systems as part of their normal lifecycles. Hamer and Lang explain:

> These relations are not the result of individual actions or interpersonal interactions, though both are involved. Rather, structural violence issues from

[18] While Liberation theologians have been great innovators on the theme, they by no means invented the life-death theological dichotomy: the idea is densely populated scripture. Nor was their focus on social dimensions a Marxian, left-wing misconstrual originating in 1960s Latin America. Gregory of Nyssa was discussing the life-death options and distinguished between natural death and death resulting from unjust structures in the fourth century (Carter, "Interlude on Race and Christology: Gregory of Nyssa as Abolitionist Intellectual," *Race: A Theological Account*.).

[19] Structural violence was pioneered in the work of Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung and currently finds its most prominent exposition in Paul Farmer. See: Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*; Galtung, "Violence, peace, and peace research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6:167-91

> institutional, often economically driven processes that supersede individual will or agency. Nor is structural violence experienced indiscriminately across society. To the contrary, it is visited primarily on groups whose social status denies them full access to legal and political protections. (899)[20]

Structural violence is the violence of everyday life experienced by the poor who die younger and more frequently from preventable diseases;[21] black neighborhoods bulldozed for highway projects or a city's new sports stadium;[22] mass eviction and redevelopment of low-income urban-core communities by neoliberal-fueled real estate developers;[23] escalation of violence and discriminatory policing practices coupled with racialized sentencing policies and for-profit prison systems that mass incarcerate people of color;[24] tax policies that foster inequality by redistributing wealth toward the rich;[25] "mountaintop removal" mining practices that decimate Appalachian ecosystems while causing health risks for local residents.[26]

Over the course of American history, the narratives of coloniality/modernity, capitalism, and whiteness reigned over the imaginations of people with power and governed the design of our social systems. Our biases aggrandized some and produced insatiable violence for others. Randy Woodley describes this experience for Indigenous peoples:

---

[20] Hamer and Lang, "Race, Structural Violence, and the Neoliberal University: The Challenges of Inhabitation." *Critical Sociology* 2015, Vol. 41(6) 897–912

[21] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*.

[22] Bullard, ed., *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century*.

[23] Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City*.

[24] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

[25] Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality*.

[26] Hendryx, et. al., "A Geographical Information System-Based Analysis of Cancer Mortality and Population Exposure to Coal Mining Activities in West Virginia." See also: Campbell, et. al., "Terrestrial carbon losses from mountaintop coal mining offset regional forest carbon sequestration in the 21st century."

> Native Americans, with the worst health-related demographics in the nation, understand these problems to be brought on by the disharmonious effects of colonization… [quoting John Mohawk], 'Colonization is the greatest health risk to indigenous peoples as individuals and communities. It produces the anomie—the absence of values and sense of group purpose and identity—that underlies the deadly automobile accidents triggered by alcohol abuse. It creates the conditions of inappropriate diet which lead to an epidemic of degenerative diseases, and the moral anarchy that leads to child abuse and spousal abuse. Becoming colonized was the worst thing that could happen five centuries ago, and being colonized is the worst thing that can happen now. (92)

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS

System thinking offers a distinctly alternate mode for conceptualizing reality, and subsequently a completely different mode of problem solving. In Wendell Berry's famous essay "Solving for Pattern," he offers a theory for distinguishing good solutions from bad based on the perspective we have been exploring:

> A bad solution is bad, then, because it acts destructively upon the larger patterns in which it is contained. It acts destructively upon those patterns, most likely, because it is formed in ignorance or disregard of them. A bad solution solves for a single purpose or goal, such as increased production. And it is typical of such solutions that they achieve stupendous increases in production at exorbitant biological and social costs. A good solution is good because it is in harmony with those larger patterns. (3)

On a purely pragmatic level, systems theory demonstrates that something only 'works' if it works collectively across the "network of mutuality" within which our personal lives and society are bound. By drawing, structural violence theory into dialogue with systems theory, we have a potent analytical framework for assessing injustice. "The concept of structural violence," Paul Farmer explains, "is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression" ("Anthropology of Structural Violence" 307). As these analyses are informed by the oppressed and by the Land, the architecture of society steering life away from shalom comes into focus.

Systems thinking is undergirded by three principles. First, when we think like a machine and not a garden, we see the world in terms of linear causality: A causes B causes C causes D. Like billiard balls bouncing off one another, we usually assume the events transpiring around us lead to one another in a fairly orderly manner. But a complex system filled with feedback loops and interconnections expresses nonlinear, circular, multisource webs of causality: A might be caused by both B, C, and D while causing them in return.[27] The sources of a problem are less obvious than we think, which leads us to the second principle. The nightly news tries to explain the world by describing recent events, but these immediately observable happenings barely scratch the surface. Systems theorists call events the tip of the "systems iceberg" that floats above the water. As we dive deeper, we move to 1) patterns of behavior that express trends over time, 2) the system structure, including the relations of elements, interconnections and purposes described above, and 3) mental models or the beliefs, assumptions and values that shape a system. The deeper you go, the more leverage you gain over the system (turn to the Appendix, Figure 3.2, to see the Systems Iceberg diagramed).[28]

The third principle asks us to look more closely at ourselves. In the middle of a tsarist Russia that fed an extraordinarily rich aristocracy while suffocating the peasantry, Leo Tolstoy stepped back from his novels and wrote a book titled *What Shall We Do Then?* Before mustering an answer, he gazed back at himself, mired as his life was in the privileged class, and lamented his complicity. "I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and

---

[27] See Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 133.

[28] Donella Meadows Institute, "Systems Thinking Resources."

wish to ease his lot by all possible means—except by getting off his back" (54).[29] Tolstoy realized something that social justice workers often miss. We do not exist outside the web of causality. Our efforts and organizations function *within* the systems we wish to change. When urban ministers falsely believe we can intervene from outside the system, we forget that, like Tolstoy, our actions have often been contributing to the problem. For example, an overnight shelter for the homeless that consumes a large percentage of its city's earmarked funds for homelessness abatement fails to recognize that in their effort to meet an immediate need they are extracting resources from activities that could contribute to long-term system change.[30] Complicity can also be ideological. As we saw in the previous chapter and will explore with more theological specificity in Chapter 4, white Christians offer neocolonialism, capitalism, and racial injustices support by embracing theologies coopted within those narratives.

In review, systems thinkers practice three principles when solving complex problems: 1) awareness of nonlinear causality, 2) deep level analyses that inquire into patterns of behavior, system structure, and mental models; and 3) self-assessment that questions how one's personal or organizational behavior or ideas contribute to systemic problems.

Finding Leverage

The task remains to identify insights from the systems perspective that will empower us as placemakers to cultivate shalom. The goal is to discover so called

---

[29] I pulled this quote from Gar Alperovitz's book that riffs off Tolstoy's title: *What Then Must We Do?*

[30] See: David Peter Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*.

"leverage points" that provide significant potential for system change. I am indebted to two sources for these perspectives. *Systems Thinking for Social Change* by David Peter Stroh is a dynamic resource that strategically applies a systemic worldview to recalcitrant injustices. The most significant work on the topic, however, is once again from Donella Meadows. Her brilliant article "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System" set the terms of debate on the topic. She lists twelve sites of leverage, moving toward the point that offers the greatest opportunity for change. I have included a distillation of this article in Table 3.2 of the Appendix.

While this could be a much larger discussion, I want to highlight two points of leverage that emerge from our analysis. The first goes back to the shift in attention from parts to relationships. The isolated characteristics of elements have the weakest sway over the system's behavior. Yet how often do we focus our critiques on individuals: the poor person too lazy to work hard in school or their career, the president whose policies supposedly ruined everything? Like a garden who grows lusher the more dense and diverse it becomes, system health is achieved when we seek "to improve the relationships among its parts, not to optimize each part separately" (Stroh, 35). This is an idea that can be readily applied to a disinvested neighborhood. We can ask the following relational questions to guide our work: How dense (i.e. how many) and how equitable are the connections between people in this neighborhood and other neighborhoods? Do their relationships extend across lines of race, religion, class, vocation, and other social categories? In what ways is this place connected to the natural world for food, water, energy, consumables and raw materials? How intimate and reciprocal are these relationships between the neighborhood's human community and the broader creation

(what we have been calling the Land)? Meadows captures this shift in attention perfectly: "You'll stop looking for who's to blame," she wrote, "instead you'll start asking, 'What's the system?" (34).

The second point of leverage is the most powerful change agent of all. Look again at Figure 3.1 in the Appendix, the simple model of an industrial economy. In the top left corner you will notice the engine driving the whole assemblage: the growth goal. The implication is simple: want to change a system? Change its goals.

A goal articulates the purpose or function of a system. Ultimately, purpose is derived from the *story* that helps a person or community make sense of the world. Americans derive our sense of patriotism and moral superiority from a variety of narratives that tell us we are a beacon of hope, liberty and democracy in an evil world. These include the story of our nation's birth through an underdog struggle against the oppressive British empire, our fight and victory over Hitler and fascism, our contrast against the Soviet Union and communism, and most recently terrorism. Each of these bear a degree of truth. Unfortunately, for many white Americans they are the entire truth of our history.[31] Any self-reflective capacity to consider how we may have also functioned as an oppressive empire are drowned out.

A society's guiding story is at once its most deeply ingrained point of identity and the highest point of leverage if changed. Thomas Berry, the priest and ecotheologian, saw how crucial a fresh narrative was for rescuing the modern world from its self-induced crisis and guiding humanity back into harmony with itself and nature. "It is all a question

[31] The classic book that launched the reorientation of perspective on America, taking the vantage point of those from "below" for whom American history had not been a story of freedom or wellbeing, is Howard Zehr's *A People's History of the United States.*

of story," he wrote. "We are in trouble now because we do not have a good story. The old story—the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it—is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the new story" (1).[32] These insights fit squarely within the place-based inquiry we pursued in these chapters. We already saw that story sits at the axis of place and time.

I recounted the Christian story of shalom at the very beginning of this thesis in the hope that it would lodge itself as an itch in the back of our minds through the pages that followed. Shalom is the hope of every place and all its members. Against its radiance, the history of America grates dissonantly across our heart. The stories of modernity/coloniality, capitalism, and whiteness appear vapid, uncompelling, even evil in comparison to the great story God is telling in our midst. The call standing before us echoes the tradition begun in Moses:

> On the one hand, Moses intended the dismantling of the oppressive empire of Pharaoh; and on the other hand, he intended the formation of a new community focused on the religion of God's freedom and the politics of justice and compassion. The dismantling begins in the groans and complaints of his people; the energizing begins in the doxologies of the new community (Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination* 115).

Like Moses, we face an empire that baptizes its oppressive culture through a brilliantly constructed narrative that has swept us up in the grip of its explanatory power. As followers of Jesus inaugurate the new story in the midst of the old, we expose the empire's grotesque distortion of reality, its failure to answer our nagging existential questions, its extortionary practices, and its destructive trajectory.[33] Like Moses, our

---

[32] "The New Story: Comments on the Origin, Identification, and Transmission of Values," 1.

[33] See Martin Luther King Jr. brilliant address to the American Psychological Association in which he encouraged listeners to be "creatively maladjusted" to society. See Perez-Stable, et. al. "MLK at Western."

performance of this story begins in liberation and is sustained by the law—an ethical map rooted in God's story.[34]

Remember that shalom is not itself a system. It is first a story that can shepherd the formation of goals, rules, and connections. Only then can it enter our experience as an emergent behavior from systems whose relationships are structured for its achievement. One of the great mysteries of systems is that they are *teleological*. They possess a creative dynamism that searches for an order in agreement with their root story.[35] Thankfully, for Christians, the most powerful tool we possess is our story. We call it the gospel, and it is "the power of God for salvation to all that believe" (Romans 1:16).

[34] Yoder, "Law: Instrument of Shalom Justice." *Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, & Peace*. 71-84.

[35] Connolly introduced me to the idea of *teleodynamism* in CAS. He draws on the work of Terrence Deacon who, in his book *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*, describes this quasi-conscious goal seeking function of complex systems. There is a newly available opportunity to bring teleological insights from the theological and scientific communities into dialogue which to me looks rich with possibility.

Chapter 4

Theology for the Shalom of Place: a Christological Account of God, the Land, and Humanity

> In each time and place Jesus' voice resounds: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The human response rings throughout the ages: "What does it mean to love neighbor as self in our day and place?"[1]
>
> Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

> In him we move and have our being.
>
> Acts 17:28

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY

"There are two Ways, one of Life and one of Death, and there is a great difference between the two Ways."[2] The options have always sat before the people of God. On the one hand, the way of the Lord, the path of shalom that brings forth life. On the other, the way of the principalities and powers, the path of violence that brings forth death. Less than a century after Jesus walked the roads of Galilee, leaders of the young Church penned these words in the opening stanza of a discipleship text designed for new converts. "Do not be conformed to this world" wrote Paul just a few decades earlier, "but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2). The earliest Christians knew they needed a reeducation to enter the way of life. Transformation required an overhaul of the mind, a liberative pedagogy that teaches a radically alternate story.

Christians since the writers of the Second Testament have attempted to give thoughtful expression to our story through the discipline of theology. The Christian

---

[1] *Resisting Structural Evil*, 163.

[2] The Didache 1:1.

intellectual tradition is a testament across millennia to a people who diligently sought the transformation Paul encouraged. Yet look at us. The community living this theology is deeply implicated in the production of a world that systematically perpetrates violence against the vulnerable and creation. Even if we try to pawn it off on the sinfulness of the world, we find ourselves back on the stand for injustices entirely internal to the Christian community. "In ecclesiological terms," wrote Alberto Pero Jr., "if the church is the one universal body of Christ, this body of Christ is divided among active thieves, passive profiteers, and deprived victims" (262). This is the first problem we have to reckon with before attempting to speak theologically. There is a disfigurement in the very landscape of Christian theology itself. The performance of the theological story inhabited by most Americans who profess to follow Jesus brought devastation. Somewhere the way of life became a way of death.

There is a sobering implication here for urban ministers. Like a man arm wrestling himself, we struggle against injustices our own body perpetrates. By reexamining histories of racism, colonialism, and capitalism from the perspectives of the land and the oppressed, scholars are showing that the theology urban ministers carry with us to breathe life into under-resourced neighborhoods is often the same theology that participated in the creation of those neighborhoods. Common theological discussions in the urban ministry field like justification for the value of cities to God, leadership insights, encouragements for the struggle, methodological insights, evangelistic approaches, or even doctrines of justice for the oppressed are all worthy projects. However, we cannot expect system level transformation to occur in our places of ministry with surface level treatments. The needs of our guild run far deeper. If "fundamentals" of

Christian theology are implicated in the production of an unjust world, and if Donella Meadows is correct that the greatest system leverage occurs at the paradigmatic level, then the task of urban ministry cannot be achieved without an overhaul of the deep structural interior of the Christian theological imagination. We need a revolutionary recovery of the faith, hope, and love found in Jesus that can guide us into new ways of enacting the social.

The theological dilemma implies a methodological crisis. The very act of thinking theologically is bound up within the disfigured Christian imagination. The Christian imagination has, in far more cases than any of us should like to admit, become a colonial imagination, a capitalist imagination, a racial imagination. "One can read Scripture within the theological grammar of the Christian faith," cautions J. Kameron Carter, "and yet do so in such a way as to read within and indeed theologically sanction, if not sanctify, as Michel Foucault says, 'the order of things'" (233). To argue otherwise is not only naive and ahistorical, it dehumanizes the oppressed by negating their voice. For those who yearn to avoid recapitulating these errors, how do we proceed? *Can* we proceed? By what means could we think theologically and, in fact, reform the theological itself for the God-glorifying, oppressed-liberating, creation-regenerating transformation of 'the order of things'?

These are bigger problems and questions than can be solved here, but they are problems we have to face. My journey of transformation is currently led by J. Kameron Carter and Willie Jennings, two African-American pioneers into the theological underpinnings of the modern, racist, colonial mind. Their recent books—*Race: A Theological Account* and *The Christian Imagination*, respectively—are not only

deconstructively excellent, they chart paths toward a theology and Christianity that inspires human living more reflective of Christ. I urge you to consider their work.

The following list unpacks the commitments I struggled to uphold during my research and writing process. I offer them as one imperfect though hard fought attempt through the morass described above in the hope of stimulating dialogue toward a hermeneutic of solidarity:

a) Faith is a commitment to following the person of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Doctrine is a work in process to be held with open hands.[3] Differentiating the two is crucial. It guards us from dogmatism and thereby becoming agents of exclusion instead of embrace.

b) As the center of Christian faith, the formulation of theology must continually circle back, enter in, and pass through the person of Jesus and his mission for shalom as revealed in—but not only in—the witness of Scripture.

c) Theological discourse becomes dangerous when compartmentalized from the material practice of discipleship within "crises of life and death" happening in place and time.[4] For theology to be genuine *theos*-speech, it must arise from participation with the unabstractable God whose hands are continually covered with *adamah* (soil), at work for the shalom of places through fleshy body, bloody cross, and empty grave.

---

[3] As process, theology is never closed. This is necessary for two reasons. First, history continues to unfold, creating new problems, new contexts, and new possibilities for theology that previous articulations are inadequately formulated to address. Second, as speech concerning infinite mystery, theology never can claim to offer a definitive or complete expression of YHWH. Theology is an ongoing quest for new language to express uncontainable reality.

[4] Carter, 377.

d) Theology is a community discourse that depends on engagement between the whole body of Christ. The Reality we attempt to express is multidimensional, and thus multiple points of reference are required to develop an honest sketch of its architecture. The theological finds expression through the dialogical. It is continually being renegotiated and contextualized through this dialogue, resisting undue synthesis to retain a multivocal account.[5] While the dialogue is primarily carried on within the community that knows God, it is not bounded to this group, but carries on generative engagement with thought and experience beyond the Church and theological academy's walls.

e) The key point of reference is from the margins where God makes his home. Theologians should "seek first the Kingdom" in the means of theologizing by privileging the "least of these" in their quest for truth. Specifically, white male perspectives cannot be normative for theology, but must rather find their place within the mosaic offered by the disinherited. Shalom—and thus the God of shalom—cannot be identified without the voice of the vulnerable. Stated negatively, it is tautological that the oppressed always have the definitive word concerning the conditions of oppression.[6]

---

[5] Notice how this multivocality mirror's the nature of place described in Chapter 2. The diversity of these voices is found both through identifiers like culture, gender and socioeconomic status, as well as diversities within the Christian belief spectrum. Ecumenical dialogue is paramount. As I did in Chapter 1, I refer to reader to Paulo Freire's two texts Education for Critical Consciousness and Pedagogy of the Oppressed for a brilliant exposition of dialogue.

[6] I have attempted (with varying degrees of success based on the topic at hand) to prioritize theological and non-theological accounts from marginalized communities in my research and in the citations found not only in this chapter but across this paper. These include African-American, Indigenous, Womanist, Feminist, Latin American, Latin@, and ecological voices. On some topics, like systems theory, I fell far short of this goal for lack of identifiable figures in the field.

f) Prayerfully seek the "renewing of your minds" as a transformation which, in the final analysis, is only available through the grace of God as a gift from the Holy Spirit. Only by the power of God can we enter into a new heart, mind, way of being, and story.[7]

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

We began this thesis by digging deep into the soil of shalom—the dream of God for the community of creation. In the introduction and Chapter 1, we saw more clearly how shalom is manifested in places through the relationships between God, the Land, and humanity (see Figure 1.1). The following sections expanded on the mechanisms through which the character of a place is produced diachronically in history (Ch. 2) and synchronically in the relational webs of complex systems (Ch. 3). Whether experiencing the just community of shalom or the exploitative and alienating culture of structural violence, a place's characteristics manifest through the ethical practice of systemically nested individuals-in-society performing their foundational stories.

Early on, we posed a big question to set urban ministry in the larger context of Christian vocation: what does it mean in the visceral contours of this world to live as co-creators with God? Said with greater urgency, how do we, as followers of Jesus, create a world where the disinherited and plundered are liberated and flourishing? For the past three chapters we worked to capture just what "the visceral contours of this world" actually are and what forces are driving the oppression of our neighbors—ruining our

[7] Implied across these six points is a theological disposition embedded in an ecclesiological vision. The production of theology as described here is one that emerges from within an emplaced, multicultural community of believers engaged in a unified praxis of scriptural-exegetical reflection, mystical-contemplative prayer, communal lifestyle and missional-political action which synergize as worship to God and love to neighbor. For a similar ecclesiology that takes place seriously, see: Sparks, et al. "Chapter 4: Ecclesial Center: How Worship Beyond the Gathering Reconfigures the Church," *The New Parish*. 75-92.

places. If we are to build toward the positive side of these questions, however, the time has come to turn from the creation back to the Creator.

God brought the place-world into being as a free extension of his internal life in order that creation might enter into worshipful enjoyment of the shalom of God. While true and useful, this statement does not describe our present experience. As members of creation, we *feel* its "subjection to futility" and long for the day when "creation itself will be set free from its bondage" (cf. Romans 8:18-23). A competing reality has infected the world, confusing what God intended for shalom. Jon Sobrino's statement about history is also true of place (since to be in history is to be emplaced):

> History contains the true God (of life), God's mediation (the Kingdom) and its mediator (Jesus) as well as the idols (of death), their mediation (the anti-Kingdom) and mediators (oppressors). The two types of reality are not only distinct, but conflictually disjunctive, so mutually exclusive, not complementary, and work against each other. (162)

Sobrino identifies the means to know the true God, the ways of God, and the source of shalom-life. We gain understanding through the mediator: Jesus. Christians refer to this personified epistemology as revelation. "The nature and the person of Christ," Dietrich Bonhoeffer declared, "is to be temporally and spatially in the centre. The one who is present in Word, sacrament and community is in the centre of human existence, history and nature" (62). Jesus, the very Word of God that was in the beginning, came and dwelled among us, opening a window into the life and personality of God (John 1:1-17). As Creator, Jesus has authority over what creation is meant to be (Mark 1:27, 7-12; 4:41). As man, Jesus perfectly demonstrated how to be creation (Col. 1:15).

Figure 4.1 attempts to represent the paradigmatic opening created in the person and work of Jesus. I refer to his illuminatory power as the Christological Prism. Jesus is

both the representative model of the trinitarian God and the teleological vision for the community of creation:

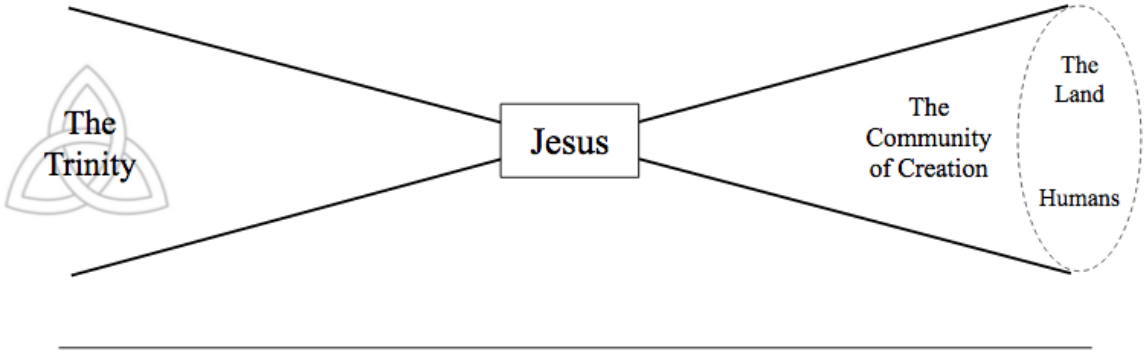


Figure 4.1: The Christological Prism

Christ is the "mystery of God" on display (Col 1:26; 2:2; 4:3). Through him the patterns of this world are set in stark relief against the patterns of Divine life. Bonhoeffer calls Jesus the Anti-Logos, the one whose being in every way contradicts the Logos of the world.[8] Like wheat interseeded with weeds, the way of Jesus is ontologically distinct (Matthew 13:24-30). Entering into the upside down way of Jesus, becoming "partakers of the divine nature" as Peter described it (2 Peter 1:4), requires a radical passage. It is like a man who discovers buried treasure or a pearl of great price and, recognizing its immeasurable value, sells all he has to obtain it (Matthew 13:44-45). It is like being born again (John 3:5-7), like dying and coming alive in Christ (Rom 6:11; 1 Cor 15:22; Eph 2:5).[9]

The trouble is that Jesus has been interpreted in so many different ways—many of which have served the "order of things." How do we know we have not confused worldly

[8] Bonhoeffer, 29ff.

[9] I am intrigued by the Patristic and Eastern Orthodox concept of theosis, or deification, as a way of describing this passage into the life of God. Its ecumenical rediscovery in recent scholarship is opening exciting new paths for imagining the relationship between God, creation, and humanity. See: Carl Mosser, "Deification: A Truly Ecumenical Concept."; Roger E. Olsen, "Deification in Contemporary Theology."; Robert V. Rakestraw, "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis."

wisdom with the foolishness of God? C. Norman Kraus suggests that theologians must hold together "the totality of his being for others" (22), what he calls the *gestalt* of Jesus' identity, to recapture what led the earliest followers to declare him Messiah and God. Greg Boyd says this is too broad. Rather, even Jesus needs to be interpreted through a more specific locus: the cross (1 John 4:9).[10] I am inclined toward Kraus. Boyd's crucicentrism is helpful in that a Jesus crucified on a Roman cross should by nature run contrary to an imperial Christ, but to my eyes he strays into the mechanistic fallacy of achieving accuracy through atomization.[11]

Even these options, however, fail to address the greatest crisis in the American theological imagination: the cooption of Jesus by the principality of whiteness. As inheritors of Europe's colonial legacy, we still think and worship inside a world that established "white bodies...as normative humanity in all its majesty or weakness" (Jennings, "Overcoming Racial Faith" 7). White people formed their cultural-phenotypical ideology inside the Christian community. To wash away the dissonance between the life of Jesus and the oppressive performance of whiteness, we declared Jesus white (at times explicitly, but always implicitly). To become like Jesus was to become white. The Christological Prism thus functioned as a Racial Prism—exclusionary and graceless.[12]

---

[10] Boyd, "Christ-Centered or Cross-Centered?"

[11] Jurgen Moltmann, on the other hand, appears to have done a better job of centering the cross while avoiding this footfall in his famous book *The Crucified God*. I think his success is due, at least in part, to his substantial engagement with Liberation theology.

[12] Of course, the colonial-racial transformation of theology was not the first time in history that Jesus was co-opted by the powerful. Empire has been the ever present temptation dangled before the Christian imagination since the Devil first offered the world to Jesus in the desert. Its siren call was heard by the disciples who argued over their position near Jesus' throne, and it appears repeatedly in Acts and the Epistles. Some say Constantine's conversion signaled the full scale capitulation of our faith.

Jennings suggests we recover a few biblical-historical truths to battle the distorted image of Christ:

> Racial faith emerged from forgetting that we were Gentiles. Christian belief in God begins with the astounding claim that we have met God in a Jewish man, Jesus of Nazareth, a vagabond rabbi who came not to us but to his own people, Israel….We Gentiles were outsiders to Israel. We were at the margins. So our engagement with Jesus was engagement from the margins, not from the center of power or privilege. In fact, anyone in Israel who connected themselves to Jesus moved to the margins. (ibid. 6)

Jesus is first-century Jewish. He stands outside the racial calculus and is substantively 'other' than white America. Korean-American theologian Jung Young Lee says that God appeared at the "margins of the margin" and made that the center—among and as the poor, plundered, and disempowered.[13] As Gentiles, we (white Americans and Christians generally) are peripheral to the Kingdom's center. We are marginals who have been grafted into the family by grace. Theological reflection from the margins remembers one's identity as someone "who others didn't imagine would be included and one who never forgets the feeling of being the outsider who was included by grace" (Ibid. 6).[14]

Somewhere in the midst of colonial fervor, we forgot that the Christian's guiding story is not our own. We have been honored to participate in the grand drama of covenantal relationship between God and Israel. Instead of gratefully accepting our marginal acceptance into God's story, we became enamored with our own power and

---

[13] Lee, *Marginality*.

[14] Much earlier, Howard Thurman identified the same fact in a lament: "How different might have been the story of the last two thousand years on this planet grown old from suffering if the link between Jesus and Israel had never been severed" (17). James Cone, following a Barthian reasoning that took a Tillich-turn (according to Carter), was also at the forefront of naming the hermeneutical/theological priority of Jesus' Jewishness in *Black Theology and Black Power* (see: Carter, "Christology, Or Redeeming Whiteness: A Response to James Perkinson's Appropriation of Black Theology."). An article by Peter Hetzel and Christian Winn explores possible trajectories for Jewish-rooted Christology by bringing bringing readings of Barth together with J. Kameron Carter. See: "Jesus the Jew in the Americas: The Promise of Post-Colonial Barthianism."

substituted myths of Manifest Destiny, national exceptionalism, white supremacy and wealth creation. The story of God and the story of America collapsed together under the weight of a white Jesus. To rediscover the liberative Jesus and thereby rediscover ourselves, we have to relate to him as a Jew.[15]

The Incarnation

A Jewish body is an emplaced body. When "the Word became flesh and lived among us," he was immersed in the historical-structural complexities of his place. All the intersectionalities, formational powers, and ecological entanglements of Galilee flowed through Jesus. Coupled with his Jewishness, Jesus must be understood in placial terms.

Theologically, we call the bodily emplacement of God the incarnation. The incarnation is arguably the most significant fact about Jesus (there may be a "Son" without the incarnation, but there is no Jesus), and, in my estimation, the most undervalued piece of theology. Only by acquiring a human body is God capable of crucifixion and resurrection. But the incarnation is not only significant instrumentally. Could God have saved the world some other way? Theoretically, yes. Yet he chose not to. He saved it by becoming a Jewish man who lived in Galilee. In faith we take that fact seriously, believing that nothing God does is arbitrary. Rather, by choosing to enter the physical world and become one with it, God preached an entire cosmology.

Obvious but barely discussed, the incarnation is the greatest affirmation of place in scripture. John Inge makes the point emphatically:

[15] That said, a dialectic remains between Jesus and his Jewish identity. Both interpret and redefine the other. His praxis and identity as the Son of God challenged every reigning worldview. For a look at philosophies and political currents in Roman and Israel during the first-century and how Jesus provided an unexpected alternative, see N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus*.

> It is clear from the incarnation that places are the seat of relations or the place of meeting and activity in the interaction between God and the world, and argue further that place is therefore a fundamental category of human and spiritual experience…. [The incarnation] entails a movement away from a concentration upon the Holy Land and Jerusalem but at the same time initiates an unprecedented celebration of materiality and therefore of place in God's relations with humanity. (52)

Jesus research has been stunted by a lack of placial sensibilities. Biblical studies have increasingly drawn on social-scientific exegetical methods, and through them have become "alert to economic and social factors but still tend to ignore place" (Bartholomew, 94). The specificities of Galilee in the time of Roman occupation are vital clues to Jesus' praxis, clues that can help us wrestle the theological imagination free of its Western-imperialistic captivity.[16]

Not only does God celebrate place in all its thick complexity, he honors a particular place above all others by choosing it as the site to manifest his glory. God enters creation in places respectable people react to with incredulity. Like Nathanael, our gut response is, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:45-46). Love's universal embrace begins in a place of marginal, disdained particularity.[17] There is a charge embedded here. We are right to say that the Church's social activity is appropriately Christological if targeted to a specific locality, as the "new parish" movement has done, but alone this is insufficient. Jesus' impoverished Jewish body and backwater hometown matter. God intentionally appeared in obscurity, poverty, and weakness, and it was through weakness that God's power was realized. So too must the

[16] A few scholars are of note for studying the Gospel with a strong sensitivity to place. See their works: Halvor Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*; Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story*; anything by Sylvia Keesmaat.

[17] Local ministry could thus also be considered global ministry by its very nature, just as the local ministry of Jesus was his means of global redemption.

locating of transformative praxis not acquiesce to *laissez faire* implementation.[18] The site of ministry matters. It matters as an affirmation of life for the dehumanized, as the means by which the marginalized are centered, as the real conversion of death into abundant life, as the unexpected greatness of the least. Urban ministry begins in places of abandon and distress not simply because the need is most acute, though this is a worthy motivation, but because we imitate Jesus Christ through action in particularized sites of oppression.

The Way of Jesus

If place comes into being through the relational ethic practiced within it, then Jesus creates places of shalom through an ethic of love. "The religion of Jesus makes the love-ethic central," wrote Howard Thurman. It was because of love that God's only Son came into the world, and it is through love that all things can become "on earth as it is in heaven" (John 3:16; Matt 6:10b). First Testament authors repeatedly assert that justice (*mishpat*: the right ordering of things, or shalom), was predicated on righteous behavior (*sadiqah*: fidelity to the covenantal law). Jesus clarifies what righteousness means by explaining that "all the law and prophets hang on" two commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). He then removes any lingering ambiguity by teaching his followers to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Why? Because when we love, we model our behavior on the righteous character of God himself and thereby establish justice (5:45). All are embraced within

[18] My primary critique of *The New Parish* (a book and subsequent movement which I hold in high regard) centers on the authors' failure to adequately differentiate between places based on sociohistorical trends of privilege and exploitation.

God's justice-making love. "The substance of [God's] righteousness," Walter Brueggemann explains, "is the well-being of the world." He goes on to write:

> "When Yahweh's righteousness (Yahweh's governance) is fully established in the world, the results are fruitfulness, prosperity, freedom, justice, peace, security, and well-being (*shalom*). Because Yahweh in righteousness wills good for creation, there is a complete convergence of Yahweh's self-regard and Yahweh's commitment to Israel and to creation." (*Theology of the Old Testament* 303)

It is by participating with God as lovers that we join him as co-creators.

What does the love of God look like? The standard and not inaccurate answer prooftexts 1 John 3:16 which reads, "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another." Incredibly, and less quoted, John immediately follows this line with an economic exhortation: "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (3:17). This is the word of the Lord, but we should not rush by so quickly that we forget to ask to whom this word is directed. John is encouraging people who possess power and wealth. For them, the love of wealth is their stumbling block to discipleship, their ability to follow Jesus as an instrument of God's love. Theology has largely traded on the assumption that self-interest is the basic, sin-producing human flaw. Reinhold Niebuhr played a leading role in foregrounding this doctrine in modern theology. He believed that sin is primarily caused by the fact that "man loves himself inordinately."[19] The language used here exposes the theologian's flaw. Theology, for most of its history, has been expounded by *men* whose common fault is an inordinate love of self. As women publicly entered theological discourse in the twentieth century,

[19] Quoted in Lakey Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*, 34.

the one-sidedness and damaging power of the Church's teaching was exposed.[20] A love-ethic as self-denial was taught by men but not practiced by men. Carol Lakey Hess says that, "sadly, it is often the already humble who take the message of pride to heart" (37). She goes on to quote Jacquelyn Grant, who,

> writing to African American women who have taken on the greatest burden of service in our society, speaks even more boldly of "the sin of servanthood" and calls for "the deliverance of discipleship." "A language needs to be adopted or emphasized that challenges the servant mentality of oppressed peoples and the oppressive mentality of oppressors." (ibid)

Fortunately, I believe the teachings of Jesus have already provided us with a language that holds the paradox of love together.

In the closing remarks of a parable in which every worker is paid equitably regardless of their time spent laboring, Jesus says, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:16). Three chapters later, in a tirade against Israel's religious elite, he exclaims, "The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted" (23:11-12). Paul picks up on Jesus' theme in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29: "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so no one might boast in the presence of God."

These verses, representative of a far larger swath of scripture, capture what might be called the *dual operations of love*. For the oppressed, love offers empowerment and

[20] One of the greatest shortcomings of this thesis is the absence of women's issues and perspectives. The main reason is that the scales of place I am most focused on are not the levels at which injustice toward women is manifested; for example uneven urban development at the neighborhood level does not bring women's suffering into purview. That said, women disproportionately bear the weight of all injustices. There is also a strong connection between the treatment of nature and the treatment of women.

the upward mobility of liberation.[21] The dehumanized are humanized; a stolen self is recaptured. Conversely, love is a downward trajectory of self-sacrifice for the powerful. Our shalom lens dissolves any tension between the two. Both operations are crucial for the equitable conditions of shalom to be met. The social reordering described in the above passages is not an arbitrary method for God to display his power. It is an act of love that brings his will for shalom into being.

Note that all people still have to exercise ethical discernment on a situation by situation basis. To paraphrase Martin Luther, the line between good and evil runs through every person. In the same way, each person is a composite of privilege and powerlessness, varying from one relational context to the other. Socioeconomically a black man might be quite vulnerable, while at the same time exercising disproportionate power over his family and acting unsustainably with the Land.[22] Additionally, we should emphasize that power gained by the disempowered through love is not used for self-advancement, but for the community's wellbeing in which both the self and the other are included and cherished.

For the ultimate Greatest, the perfect act of love was the most disgraceful death. But we should be wary of doling out this trajectory to every man, woman, child and

---

[21] Note that these are reorganizations of relationality within the community of creation and human society specifically, not in relation to God. The fear that arises in many people when talking about empowerment is that this automatically sets up a slippery slope that undermines a person's subservience to God. The exact opposite is the case. When a person is forced to live in submission to another human being, it violates their imago Dei and blocks their ability to live in dependence on God. Empowerment that cultivates equitability provides the context for proper dependence on God and mutuality with other.

[22] Miroslav Volf holds together the precarious tension we are toying with here as well as anyone I have encountered through the claim that while all people share *solidarity* in sin we do not share *equality* in sin. "The aggressors' destruction of a village," he states, "and the refugees' looting of a truck and thereby hurting their fellow refugees are equally sin, but they are *not* equal sins; the rapist's violation and the woman's hatred are equally sin, but they are manifestly *not* equal sins" (82). As such, both parties have different sorts of work to do: different in kind and different in magnitude. See: Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace,* 79-85.

creature. Slaves are not more like Jesus by being better servants to their master. How could they be if what Jesus' atonement provides is freedom and abundant life (John 10:10; Galatians 5:1)? The goal of Christian love is not corporate masochism. It is communion. Sanctification is the sojourn of disciples from our various social, cultural, economic, ecological, sin-smattered locations to a seat at the table where we can in unity share the bread and wine of Christ's broken body. Both repentance *and* liberation are prerequisites for the reconciled community.

The Kingdom's Multivalent Love

In Table 4.1 of the Appendix, I included Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda's excellent fourteen point breakdown of neighbor-love. Her analysis adds a great deal of density to the love-ethic of Jesus described so far. While many more volumes can be and have been written on love, I want to advance one further idea with particular significance to the argument being developed in this thesis.

Love has traditionally been portrayed as an interpersonal dynamic. Sunday school teachers instruct us to practice the Galatians 5 fruits of the Spirit with family, friends, coworkers, others we encounter in daily life, and perhaps the poor and people in our neighborhoods (if the church is "missional"). These behaviors encompass the general Christian imagination for love. Unfortunately, individual behavior and interpersonal interactions do not capture or adequately address the complex systemic relationality of place. Human life is far more, and so the extent of our love remains anemic and ineffectual.

As Paul concludes his first letter to the Corinthians, he urges them to "let all that you do be done in love" (16:14). What would it look like to take him at his word?

Answering this question asks us to build greater specificity into the systemic view of society developed in the previous chapter—particularly in the assessment of structural violence—and brings us back to the multiple relationalities of the place-world. We can identify four coherent layers of human social life, each a complex system highly entangled with the other three and with the systems of the more-than-human world:[23]

1. *Intrapersonal*: A person's internal composition and activities—thought life, emotional world, subconscious, spiritual state, and the construction of the self.[24]
2. *Interpersonal*: Relationships between individual people.
3. *Collective*: Communities and institutions through which people act as a group. Examples include the family,[25] a church or denomination, a business or corporation,[26] a school, nonprofit organizations, and public sector entities like a police force, code enforcement office or city council. Can also be local, unofficially organized groups of people with whom one associates (i.e. a group of neighbors, an ethnic or racial group, a mob or protest rally).
4. *Structural*: Macrosystems that arrange the patterns and norms for a society's common life which subsequently influence the previous three levels. Structures include the political economy generally, subsystems of the political economy

[23] I was introduced to this categorization during an anti-racism training in Fresno, CA conducted by the Rev. Deth Im, a trainer from the faith-based community organizing group PICO.

[24] See studies on internal family systems for a systemic approach to personality, identity, and the psyche: Richard Schwartz and https://www.selfleadership.org/.

[25] Family systems theory has generated a shocking glimpse into the thickness of relational complexity between a relatively small group of people. See: Roberta Gilbert, *Extraordinary Relationships*.

[26] The inability of courts to adequately punish corporations—like the big five banks—that were highly culpable in the 2007 economic crash results from the American justice system's lack of a cogent philosophy of society that extends beyond the individual, the market, and the state. A bizarre inverse of this conceptual vacuum is observable in the recent decision of Citizens United vs. FEC which led to the treatment of corporations as individuals.

> (finance, criminal justice, military, etc.), cultural systems like language, education systems, the media and entertainment industries, technological systems, religious systems, and the physical systems of the built environment.[27]

These layers are neither inherently good nor evil; they are simply the way human life unfolds. As social systems, however, they are produced through dialectics between individual agency and socialization that have the capacity for good and evil. Places of all scales are penetrated by each layer, however some places will function more in one layer than the others. The home, for example, is regulated by structural forces but is more intimately engaged in collective, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. The neighborhood is the most intimate size at which the powers of all four are fully expressed.

The potential to enact love on each level can be illustrated negatively by examining how a sin like racism is currently manifested in American society. Racism appears on each level: prejudiced thoughts/worldviews (intrapersonal); internalized sense of deficiency and shame among the oppressed (intrapersonal); individual actions on a spectrum from microaggressions to hate crimes (interpersonal); discriminatory hiring practices and loan distributions (collective/institutional); "urban renewal" and gentrification patterns that gut or displace people of color from neighborhoods (structural);[28] the many processes imbedded in our criminal justice system that incarcerate people of color en masse (structural); the inequitable distribution of wealth

---

[27] Robert Linthicum created a simple but profound systems model based on the relationships between religious, economic, and political forces. See, Linthicum, "Chapter 2: What Keeps Going Wrong? Evil That is More Than Personal," *Transforming Power*, 41-56.

[28] Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City*.

between races (structural).[29] Here, grotesque as all evil looks when brought into the light, is an example of the structural violence named in the previous chapter.

The scope of sin is sobering, but it exposes unimaginably hopeful possibilities. My point in this digression is to open our imaginations to new spaces for the expression of the love of God. Just as sin ranges from the heart to the structures of society, so can love.[30] Doing all we do in love means predicating the way of Jesus as a multivalent force to counteract the power of sin at each level of society. Every mind, individual behavior, business and public institution is an opportunity for the manifestation of love. I believe, however, that it is uniquely imperative for the Church to take up the call to weave love into the macrosystems that govern our society. It is time to become practitioners of structural love—to don what Moe-Lobeda call's our "economic-ecological vocation." The compassion of Christ compels us to stretch our imaginations. What would a political-economy of love be like? How could we create a built environment of love? Such questions are largely absent in Christian thought and have been met with anaemic responses. In the final analysis, however, can we claim to love our neighbor while doing nothing to address the forces raining misery on their lives? We cannot join our placemaking God in the creation of shalom without this scope of action. The primary goal in Chapter 5 is identifying, through the framework of place, what forms this vocation can take.

---

[29] john a. powell, "Structural Racism and Spatial Jim Crow." *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century: Race, Power, and Politics of Places*. See also, Oliver and Shapiro, eds., *White Wealth/Black Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality, 2nd Edition*.

[30] Unfortunately, I do not have space to support this argument exegetically. This is by no means because the bible—or, specifically, the life of Jesus—does not teach this position. For some examples, see the following where either love or sin is approached under these categories. *Intrapersonal*: Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 5:8, 21-30; Luke 17:21; James 4:2. *Interpersonal*: Matthew 5-7; Ephesians 2:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21. *Collective*: Matthew 21:12-17; John 2:13-22; Luke 19:1-10. *Structural*: Amos; Matthew 23; Colossians 1:15-23; Revelation.

LOVE AND THE COMMUNITY OF CREATION

God created the community of creation to relate to him and each other through the trinity's placemaking methodology: the ethic of love taught, modeled, and personified by Jesus.[31] I would now like to turn to the Land and humanity—the other points on the placemaking triangle. What theological trajectories are suggested by their placial identities? Where is our imagination warped and needing rescue? What does the Christological prism reveal about their nature? These questions guide us to the end of the chapter.

The "Subject" of Creation

In the mainstream American theological imagination, the topic of creation is constricted to two ideas located in the distant past. First, creation is something God did "in the beginning." Creation is a verb exercised in Genesis then left behind. Second, creation is nature. It is a noun that was good for two chapters before becoming incurably corrupted by sin. We still love to gawk at it on vacations, but creation is located outside human culture and has very little other bearing on our thoughts. For many, these two beliefs are subconsciously coupled with an eschatological vision that limits redemption to the souls of the faithful before destroying creation once and for all with fire. Creation—made and fallen in the past, annihilated in the future—is strikingly absent in the present:

[31] Though this is not the place to develop it, I believe there are fascinating theological insights available in fractal mathematics: simple patterns whose reiteration leads to incredibly complex (and beautiful) emergent features. Many features of nature can be explained through fractals, including clouds, shorelines, plant growth, and river systems. I believe Jesus established a pattern which was to be reiterated through his disciples out into "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth" (a notably placial progression).

once again place becomes empty space.[32] Such a mindset allows people to avoid an experience of dissonance between their economic exploitation and destruction of creation and their faith in the Creator God.[33]

The perspective I have advanced under the themes of place and shalom differs on three accounts. First, the verbal form is ongoing. God remains a Creator who brings life into being. The Redeemer-God *is* the Creator-God; Jesus' work of redemption generates "new creation." Second, God is faithful to his creation. The scope of salvation is cosmic, famously portrayed in Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 15, Colossians 1 and Revelations 21,[34] but is present as early as Genesis. "The Creator is still concerned with all creation," says Woodley. "In his covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen 9:9), we see that God has also included 'all living creatures' in the covenant" (7). God does not participate in America's throwaway culture. Creation is not bound for destruction, rather through Jesus "God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Colossians 1:20). Additionally, God does not love creation simply because it serves a purpose for humankind. In passages like Job 38-41 and Matthew 6:25-33 we witness a maker fully invested in the goings-on and well-being of what he made.[35] Nothing

[32] The exception is creation as "landscape."

[33] According to Connolly, neoliberalism and evangelicalism "share the dogma that together they should have full hegemony. Both resist or defer regulatory action to respond to climate change, reconstitute prevailing traditions of energy use, curtail market tendencies to create meltdowns, reduce inequality, or challenge the internal authority structures of firms. Neoliberalism does so because of its theory of rationality, evangelicalism because it joins that theory to an image of God who would not allow human being to affect the climate" (68).

[34] See: Wright, *Surprised by Hope*.

[35] Also note the following passages: Hosea 2:18; Prov 9:10; Is 40:26; Ps 145:9-19, 148; Matt 6:22-34. See: Wirzba, "The Character of Creation: Scriptural Profiles," *The Paradise of God*, 23-60.

displays God's fidelity to creation with dramatic clarity like the incarnated Christ.[36] God entered into solidarity with all he made and experienced the vulnerability of creation: dependent for survival on plants, animals, and a bioregion's health. When Jesus is resurrected (Colossians 1:5 calls him the "firstborn of creation") he comes back to life in his original human flesh—glorified, yes, but the same. In the empty tomb, creation beheld the promise of redemption answered in the very body of God.

Third, and most applicable to placemaking, creation is a *Subject*. Not just a topic to theorize, she is an "other" with whom we relate. This otherness is, of course, only partial. The biblical differentiation between humans and the Land occurs inside their common membership within the community of creation:

> "Humans are not demi-gods with creative power, set like God above creation, but creatures among other creatures, dependent, like other creatures, on the material world of which they are part, and immersed in a web of reciprocal relationships with other creatures. The unique tasks and roles of humans, given them in Genesis 1:26 and 28, are bound to be misunderstood and abused unless the fundamental solidarity of humans with the rest of creation is recognized as their context." (Bauckham, 28).

The name used for creation-as-subject in this thesis is the Land. It seeks to communicate two levels of meaning: 1) a diverse ecological community to be exegeted scientifically and 2) a weighty theological entity to be exegeted biblically. The two approaches are mutually informative and should be supported by a third, less empirical approach: intimate personal experience.[37] Human life is participation with the Land. She is our partner in every sphere of existence. There is no way around it. As emplaced beings, we

---

[36] "The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ represents the most complete affirmation of the creation possible" (Wirzba, 57).

[37] In fact, many studies show a lack of physical connection with nature, particularly during childhood, has a variety of adverse effects on human development. See: Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*.

are enmeshed in the wonderful interdependencies of an ecological world. Drawing on his Indigenous roots and careful exegesis, Woodley writes, "Living out shalom means taking account all of creation in reciprocal relationships and learning from creation as object lessons for understanding God's shalom provision" (36). Like a groom captivated by his beloved, we should look on the world God made with ravenous curiosity, delight, and need. If we are to walk through life with her, we should strive to know her every nuance that we might love her well and together create something beautiful.

Far from a doting lover, Christians have supported and participated in creation abuse for too long. At a minimum, we can agree with Norman Wirzba's cry: "Surely it is a contradiction to profess belief in the Creator while showing disregard or disdain for the works of the Creator's hands" (Bahnson and Wirzba, 20). How do we begin to move from exploitation to care? Well, repentance starts with listening. Only then can we hear the Spirit's urging, feel the cries of the abused, and see ourselves in our sin. "The whole creation is groaning" (Romans 8:22), longing for us to be concerned like Job that our "land has cried out against [us]" (31:38). Shalom awaits that day when we grow quiet enough to hear the "genius of place" sung by the Land.

Being Humans

How might humanity be reimagined in light of all we have surveyed to this point? I suggest three categories, though they are only a beginning: 1) a theology of the body, 2) relationality and otherness, and 3) the poles of worship and idolatry.

Arguably the earliest and most sustained attack on the Christian imagination has been against the knowledge that to be human is to be a body. Western thought has relentlessly denied the body's relevance and wisdom: from Platonic dualism that denied

the authenticity of physical form, to ill-balanced Medieval mysticism that dismissed the body for spiritualism, to Modernity's flight into disembodied rationality, to capitalism's evaporation of being into rational profit-maximizing machines, to postmodernity's deconstructionist insistence that "the real" is inaccessible behind power-grabbing metanarratives.[38] All this should not surprise us. The threat Jesus poses to the order of things is most direct and defiant in and through his body. Christians gather weekly in remembrance of "Christ's body broken for us" (c.f. 1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19). Jesus' physical nature became the site where the "fullness of the Deity dwells in bodily form," and so the powers that be (Rome and Israel's religious elite) appropriately rejected God by destroying his body. And it is equally appropriate that scripture describes embracing the way of Jesus as becoming part of Christ's body.

Communities who bear the heaviest burdens of body-denial are vigorously pursuing the reclamation of the body. Indigenous peoples and non-modern cultures, agrarian evangelists, womanist theologians,[39] black theologians, Latin@ liberationists, environmental activists and ecological thinkers, postcolonial and decolonial critical theorists, race scholars, of course placial philosophers, and many more are all reclaiming the primacy of the body for understanding what it means to be human. For the oppressed, it is nonnegotiable. "A given social order...imposes its rhythms on the bodies of people"

[38] See: Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do With It?*; Spretnak, *The Resurgence of the Real*.

[39] As those who have suffered the deepest wounding of body-denial, black women are generating some of the most original and useful ideas about the body. See the following books for a primer into this field: M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being*; Kelly Brown Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do With It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls* and *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*; Eboni Marshall Turman, *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon*. I believe Jennings was on point when he said, "I suggest a new test for the character and quality of Christian intellectual work today: What effect does our work have on the bodies of poor women of color in this world?" (Jennings, "Christian Intellectual").

(Cresswell, 65), and our poor have the scars to prove it. At this point we know this is true because bodies are located in place, and a place impacts its inhabitants according to the character of its structuration. The body is a human's mode of connection, and through the body we receive and deliver blessings and curses.

To state the idea more firmly, to be human is to be in connection. Indeed, we can only be human when we are being human together. Before rational or emotional capacities emerge, a person is a tiny developing body within and umbilically fused to another. Independence is a ruse. Relationality and negotiating otherness comprise the chief functions of the human self. While this is true to some degree for every member of the community of creation, human uniqueness appears (as previously mentioned) through the agency we exercise over certain aspects of our connectedness. Our greatest challenge is learning to build a shalom community with that mysterious and fearful "other." The other is someone or something we do not know, and who more often than not becomes the container for our many anxieties. Henri Nouwen says there are two ways to relate to this threatening stranger: hostility or hospitality.[40] The love-ethic of Jesus propels us kicking and screaming toward the latter.[41] As fraught with danger as this disposition is for interpersonal relationships, it raises mountains of challenge at the structural dimension. Every challenge, however, is also an opportunity. Twenty-first century

[40] Nouwen, *Reaching Out*.

[41] One difficult aspect of relating hospitably lies in the nature of Christian belief itself. Our faith contains universal descriptive power: a comprehensive ability to capture every aspect of life. Metanarratives like ours easily become totalizing ideologies that seek to control people through knowledge-power. The Christian worldview, however, should guide us into a "power under" versus "power over" posture. Our big "T" truth is not meant to be wielded as a coercive force, but rather poured out 1) as a sweet perfume on the feet of the lonely and needy (John 12:3) and 2) like burning coals of prophetic critique on the heads of the oppressor (Romans 12:20). The challenge before us as citizens of the 21st-century who share our places with others is to create cosmopolitan partnerships with others through love for the common good.

humans continually interact with far-flung others through globalized political, economic, and ecological entanglements.[42] Breathing Christ-like love into impersonal relationality is a tall order, but it is theologically imperative. The ethical dilemmas caused by the remote distribution of relationality are further indicative of the wisdom of place: the more local our connections become the better chance we stand to relate justly and regeneratively (an implication I will lean on in the final chapter). More radical still, we begin to see how all connection between the self and the other—because both are embodied beings—is only capable in a place, even while it both mitigates the terms of connection and is shaped by them. We might remember that Miroslav Volf's great reflection on the problems of identity and otherness was initiated by the inability of his people and Serbians to share the Balkans.[43] Our capabilities in love are inseparable from our capabilities in placemaking.

Finally, and all too briefly, human life rests on the axis of idolatry and worship. If the Christological prism reveals anything, it is Jesus' total allegiance and dependence on the Father. No one upheld the first commandment with greater fidelity. Jesus' complete reliance, his "first commandment faithfulness," was the source of his ability to love others. All we are and do flows from the object of our greatest affection.[44] Proper dependence (love) on God fosters proper interdependence (love) with others. When our affections shift, when creation is worshiped in place of the Creator, "things fall apart, the

[42] See the moral anthropology Moe-Lobeda proposes to undergird structural love, 195-198. I also recommend Manfred Steger's concise (and fair but critical) analysis in *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*.

[43] Yet the Index of *Exclusion and Embrace* is devoid of place references.

[44] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*.

center cannot hold" (to quote Yeats). Sylvia Keesmaat's scrupulous exegesis of Romans 1 shows the unwinding brought by idolatry:

> "Idolatry prevents knowledge of the true creator, (Rom 1:20–21; Hos 4:6), it is rooted in falsehood (Rom 1:25; Jer 10:14//51:17; Hab 2:18,14) and results in futility and foolishness (Rom 1:21–22; 2 Kgs 17:15//Jer 2:5; Pss 97:7; 115:3–8; Isa 44:9; Jer 10:2, 15; 51:17–18; Hos 5:11)....Finally, idolatry engenders greedy patterns of consumption, both sexually and economically (Rom 1:24–31; 1 Kgs 21; Isa 2:6–8; Jer 5:7–9; 22:9–17; Ezek 18:1–19; 22:1–16, 22; Hos 4; Amos 2:6–8; Mic 6:9–16; Hab 2:9–10). No wonder idolatry always manifests itself in the lives of ancient Israelites in abuse of the land." (93)

Modernity/coloniality, capitalism, and whiteness attempted to substitute wealth, power, individualism and the white self for the glory of God. Today, the failure of their efforts are obvious. On a walk through any ghetto we can see the world these idols created is a house built on sand. Our challenge, our great calling, is to rebuild on the rock, to reimagine our world around the worship of God and to perform his love into placial existence.

Chapter 5

Putting Politics into Place

> If we think of new creation as the politics that Christians represent, then the invitation to be ambassadors is to live wherever we find ourselves, to engage the politics of that place from the vantage point of God's new creation and to try to influence that politics through various tactics so that it may increasingly resemble that new creation.[1]
>
> Chris Rice and Emmanuel Katongole

> And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.
>
> Isaiah 32:17-18

THE LIBERATION OF IMAGINATION

God still calls from among trees, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). To know the answer is to be compelled to join Adam and Eve in hiding. Where are we? We are in this place: teeming with contested stories, built on an Indigenous father's home, an abuela's tears, a slave's blood, a species' bones and still eroding soil. Are we willing to stand up from the ferns, naked, ashamed, but humble enough to speak, "Here am I Lord?" Will we move toward the Father for healing? Is there still hope that this bruised and bruising people can join our Savior to co-create the New Creation, to fashion through love a place of shalom?

In the risen body of Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, there is hope. As Jurgen Moltmann taught us, in the end we find the beginning that transforms the present.[2] God's question is not the harsh demand of a master set to punish his slave. Rather, like the Prodigal Father, he beckons with arms stretched

[1] *Reconciling All Things*, 119.

[2] Moltmann, *In the End—The Beginning: The Life of Hope*.

out for embrace. In our Lord's gracious hold, we cannot remain the same. The old dies so that new life may begin.

I have written in the conviction that shalom can only manifest through the crucifixion and resurrection of the great systems that mediate contemporary life. An exodus on this scale begins with the liberation of the imagination. Out of our imaginations we perform society into being. We, as Americans generally and white Americans in particular, need a radical break with our forefathers' stories. As liberation theologians first announced, and as postcolonial studies, deep ecology, and a host of mature theologies from oppressed peoples continue to insist, we cannot reach the beloved community down the same path that led us to the neo-colonial present.

This may at first sound discouraging for those of us who make it our life's work to seek the peace of the city. To steal a phrase from David Orr, urban ministers in the twenty-first century find ourselves walking north on a southbound train.[3] The intensity of our stride and the fact that others now walk alongside us has for a time consoled our hearts even though the scenery still whirls by in the wrong direction. But we cannot continue as before a day longer. Too many Trayvon Martins still litter the streets. Too many Mission Districts, Lowells, and Brooklyns languish until their residents are evicted to make room for the gentrifying elite. Too many rivers run dry, too many slumlords grow rich, too many jails burst at their seams. Too many farms poison the earth, and too many cities can only be explained by two starkly different tales.

In these pages, I tried to chart a fresh imagination, not to claim a new totalizing narrative that defines *the* reality, but to offer the community a lens through which problems and possibilities might be more sharply glimpsed. My approach was to draw

[3] Orr, "Walking North on a Southbound Train."

four ideas into a sustained, constructive encounter, represented in Figure 5.1. Through a dialectic between place, shalom, christology and marginality/ecology we have slowly watched a fresh epistemology, cosmology, and ethics emerge. This vision is wholly disjunctive from the worldview expressed in the white-colonial-modern-capitalist matrix.

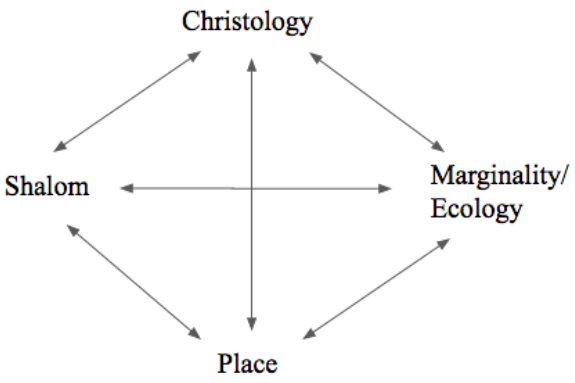


Figure 5.1: *Constructive Dialectics, Toward a New Epistemology, Cosmology, Ethics, and Politics*

Place remained our closest partner. Through it we found an unambiguous guide who holds all things together in irreducible, material relationality. Places are built on and with the Land, and so reject anthropocentrism. They contain the powerful and the vulnerable, and so reject all rationalizing and capitulation. They host our bodies, and so reject abstraction. Next, shalom provided our goal and the Divine story into which we immersed ourselves. Through it we could see orthopraxy separate from oppression, faithfulness from apostasy. Third, the christology of a placial, Jewish Jesus gave us a prism and a liberator. Jesus—the authoritative Teacher, the love Practitioner, the perfected Creature, the principalities Defeater, the incarnated God—led us to an ethic through which the self and the other can both find peace. Only in Christ (quite literally) are we freed and empowered to live as agents of shalom. Finally, testimonies from the margins of human oppression and ecological exploitation served as our preferential interpreters, leading us in thought and praxis. Together, I believe these four points of

reference contain the seeds of a decolonized, post-capitalist, non-modern, non-white theological imagination.

SHALOM, POLITICAL ECONOMY, AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In early 2015 over 400 academics, business leaders, activists, community developers and other leaders issued a signed declaration called "The Next System: A Call for National Discussion and Debate." Their signatures were soon endorsed by thousands more. The message was direct and urgent:

> When big problems emerge across the entire spectrum of national life, it cannot be due to small reasons. When the old ways no longer produce the outcomes we are looking for, something deeper is occurring. We have fundamental problems because of fundamental flaws in our economic and political systems. The crisis now unfolding in so many ways across our country amounts to a systemic crisis. Today's political system is not programed to secure the wellbeing of people, place, and planet….If we are to address the manifold challenges we face in a serious way, we need to think through and then build a new political economy that takes us beyond the current system that is failing all around us. However difficult the task, however long it may take, *systemic problems require systemic solutions*.

Our analysis agrees. People are the wild card in the placemaking diagram (Figure 1.1). God and the Land dependably act according to their character. Human culture, on the other hand, is wildly variant. The places we get are the outcome of the ethic our society builds into its structural relationships. In America, our placemaking continues to perform under the regimes of coloniality/modernity, capitalism, and whiteness.

The lesson is straightforward: if you want a different sort of place—one distinguished by shalom instead of suffering—you will need a different sort of system. As with any decent lesson, however, a host of fresh questions quickly follow. The first question was already raised: how do we change the system? While the answers are many (see Appendix, Table 3.2), we found that the greatest point of leverage was a society's

guiding story. Change the story, change the system. At this point we could sketch the outline of a new story: its setting (place and time), its cast of characters (God, the Land, humanity), its narrative arch (God's pursuit of shalom), its antagonists and basic problem (coloniality/modernity, capitalism, whiteness; structural violence), and its chief protagonist (Jesus, the Trinity).

The compelling question now is, how do we *live* the story?[4] Specifically, how do we perform it into structural love. What political economy (or economies) could derive from our epistemology, cosmology and ethics? What, concretely, does a system designed for shalom look like? At the end of the day, all our theologizing is worthless if we cannot find ways to connect vision to action in the real place-world where mass swaths of creation suffer at this moment.

Six principles, and the structural violence they oppose, can be distilled from this thesis to provide a critical framework for cultivating justice and abundance at the structural level. A society that is designed for shalom:

- ❖ Builds structures with place-rooted attention to history, multiple stories, and materiality.
    - ➢ Instead of designing in abstract space and "progress time."
- ❖ Sets goals for holistic vitality measured by the well-being (shalom: equity, justice, joy) of the whole community of creation.

[4] I am limiting my response to the structural aspects of society, however, "living the story" means a renewal across each social level: intrapersonal, interpersonal, collective, and structural. Additionally, our way of life should find expressions at every scale of place: from the home to the neighborhood, city, region, nation and globe. Furthermore, I recognize that to ask this sort of system-changing praxis from the community of believers is to imply a particular set of relationships between the Church and the world or "politics." These matters are complicated by our so-called post-Christendom context, the politically domineering practices of historical Christianity, and the terms of debate set by various theological camps. I do not think these matters are insignificant, indeed they deserve careful study, however there is no room to delve into them.

- ➢ Instead of GDP and the growth goal.

- ❖ Recognizes interdependencies, supports diversities, and strengthens relational bonds within and between places.
  - ➢ Instead of elevating whiteness, individuality, and competition.
- ❖ Seeks out and elevates the voice of marginal community members for public decision making.
  - ➢ Instead of wealth and whiteness equating to political power.
- ❖ Localizes societal activities, connections, processes, and solutions.
  - ➢ Instead of centralization and globalization.
- ❖ Spreads assets equitably across people and places, utilizes common ownership models, and reinvests excess in the community.
  - ➢ Instead of uneven development, a sole reliance on public and private property, and profit reinvested in private wealth generation.

Principles are not rules and should remain negotiable. As circumstances evolve and reflection around the Place-Shalom-Christology-Marginality/Ecology dialectic exposes fresh insight, they should grow and shift. Some readers may notice that a core feature of shalom, if not *the* core feature, is absent: worshipful dependence on God. It is missing for two reasons. First, we should not and in fact cannot legislate worship. True commitment to God is a decision of the heart and a gift from the Spirit. To impose it is to work against the liberty and life the principles are designed to cultivate. Second, while we cannot force worship through politics, we can make our political economy and built environment something worshipful to God (Isaiah 58). Business and governance can

become gratuitous acts of praise. We can love God and our neighbor through the structural reality we bring into being.

A vigorous conversation is underway to identify "systemic solutions" that can lead us to a "next system."[5] I charge urban ministers reading this to steep yourselves in the literature pouring out on system-level alternatives and strategies for change. I have included several proposals worth our consideration in the Appendix, Tables 5.1-5.10. Use these resources to begin your exploration. Christians have not gone far enough in this arena (with the exception of some branches of the Black Church and other minority congregations). We need to learn from the insights coming from unconventional economists, sociologists, political theorists, philosophers, ecologists, urban planners and others who are thinking across disciplinary, cultural, political, and socioeconomic lines. But they need us to join the conversation as well. They need the wisdom of our faith, the practitioner's capacity to make system change a reality, and our solidarity with the oppressed.

To continue making our vision concrete, I will close with a few specific recommendations. This is not a comprehensive plan, nor is it a road map from "here" to "there." It is a snapshot of "there" to inspire us to make the journey. A host of strategies will have to be employed to make the change reality—from critical pedagogies to institution building, advocacy and organizing—but those are problems for a different thesis to solve. I share these ideas, prayerfully anticipating the ways they might fuel our imagination.

---

[5] The founding text in the "new economy" movement is E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*. I also recommend: Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good*; Gar Alperovitz, *What Then Must We Do?*; William J. Barber II, *Forward Together.*

Reparations and Targeted Universalism

Even the best of systems, if implemented without first leveling the playing field, will not lead to equity or justice. Advantage and disadvantage compound, and American society has spent the past several centuries institutionalizing these divides.[6] The disparities largely revolve around possession of multiple forms of capital (wealth, private property, education, social connections, health care, nature access, etc.), are separated along racial lines, and are segregated by place at the neighborhood scale.[7] If we are accountable to history, and the bible continually emphasizes that we are, then the case for repairing these divides is virtually unassailable.[8] If we are accountable to the wellbeing and voice of the oppressed, which stands at the very heart of biblical theology, then it is a moral imperative.

A reparations program, particularly for Blacks of African descent and Native Americans, can start us on the road from disparity to parity. Patterns of American wealth and American poverty began in the sale of land that was not ours and the forced labor of black bodies. All paths to shalom have to pass through this history. Outcries over the complexity of implementation should not be allowed to drown out moral clarity—the difficulty of a goal has never been a valid excuse for Americans.[9] In addition to reparations between people, we need policies that redistribute resources between places to combat the uneven developments of our race-based capitalist society. These changes

---

[6] Royce, *Power and Poverty*.

[7] Bell and Lee, "Place and Race Matter: Impacting Health Through a Focus on Place and Race."

[8] Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*; Coates, "The Case for Reparations."

[9] If you dislike government administration and growth, this is a tailor made opportunity for the church. Calls for reparations were originally made to the church in the late 1960s and '70s. Several denominations are pioneering this work and can offer a roadmap to others. See: Harvey, *Dear White Christians*.

are particularly crucial (and more politically viable) for children in the areas of education and earmarked savings accounts.[10]

Alongside reparations, we need social policies that factor disparity into their goals, methods, and self-evaluation. Powell call this "targeted universalism." He defines it as a strategy that is:

> inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginalized groups, but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginalized group. For example, if the goal is to open up housing opportunity for low-income whites and non-whites, one would look at the different constraints for each group. Targeted universalism rejects a blanket approach that is likely to be indifferent to the reality that different groups are situated differently relative to the institutions and resources of society. It also rejects the claim of formal equality that would, as a way of denying difference, treat all people the same. (24)

Reparations and targeted universalism connect us with God's original strategies for sustainable justice: sabbath laws and the Jubilee.[11] Jesus began his ministry by declaring jubilee ("the year of the Lord's favor," cf Luke 4:17-21), and it was practiced with great celebration by the early church (Acts 2:44-45). May it be enacted again today.

Renewing the Commons: Trusts, Dividends, Credit Unions and Co-ops

Many so-called "natural resources" that have been commodified by the market exist within an ecological support system whose health is vital to the continued survival of the planet. Over-extraction or over-use can offset the delicate balances that make life possible, always with the first and greatest impact on the poor. "Resources" embedded in nature (or, to use this paper's language, the Land) but used by all include oceans, the atmosphere, carbon sinks, oil deposits, forests and land. There are also many "built or

[10] Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) provide one well tested and federally funded option.

[11] Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*.

social resources" like streets, parks, public squares, the internet, and power grids that are shared assets. Our government generally claims ownership of these resources and has increasingly made them available to private corporate interests at costs well below their actual value. Corporations then exploit these resources in unsustainable, anti-community ways and distribute the earnings of their usage to the wealthiest members of society.

To better capture all that we share, an old phrase is being revived: the commons.[12] The benefits derived from the commons are called common wealth, however the modern world has squeezed out most structures that capture, steward, and distribute common wealth for the community. Research and experimentation with so-called "commons sector" strategies is flourishing. Elinor Ostrom won the 2009 Nobel Prize in Economics for her monograph *Governing the Commons* which demonstrated the effectiveness, equity and sustainability of functioning commons economies around the world. Most commons legal structures create collective ownership through some form of trust, dividend, union or cooperative. Urban land trusts are creating ways to remove property from the ravages of gentrification and spiking real estate costs.[13] Other land trusts are maintaining open green spaces for communities and managing shared agricultural property.[14] Trusts have also been used to claim ownership over natural resources and charge use fees, the earnings from which are distributed as dividends to all citizens, such

[12] Walljasper, *All that We Share*; Reid and Taylor, *Recovering the Commons*; Bollier, *Think Like a Commoner*.

[13] Barley, "Urbanism at a Crossroads."

[14] Swann, "Land Trusts as Part of a Threefold Economic Strategy for Regional Integration."

as Alaska's Permanent Fund that charges for oil drilling.[15] Credit unions are owned by members and, with total assets around $1 trillion, most reinvest their holdings locally.[16]

As a social entrepreneur who has dabbled with a variety of other less-impactful approaches, I want to pay special attention to cooperatives. According to economist Gar Alperovitz,

> One of the obstacles to ordinary businesses factoring social benefit into their operating plans has been the design of corporations themselves. Since a traditional corporation is required by law to make decisions that financially benefit its stockholders, officers who devote significant resources to social purposes can be sued by stockholders for not paying attention to their primary business responsibilities. (39)

Other private ownership models (LLC, S Corp) do not have shareholder interests to manage, but still retain primary decision making and profit disbursement benefits for executives. "[Social] systems," Alperovitz explains earlier, "revolve in significant part around who owns productive wealth" (32). Worker-owned cooperatives place business into the commons. They naturally distribute earnings equitably, democratizing wealth, and build social and ecological good into a corporation's design.[17] Cooperatives have a long and vibrant history affecting these changes in communities of color.[18]

---

[15] Dividends are typically associated with the finance sector where people with "investable" (or extra) wealth buy shares in a private corporation whose growth is returned to the shareholder in the form of a dividend. Massive wealth is generated from resources that are not privately owned. When wealth is made from resources that are a shared asset of the community, creating a commons structure allows for these earnings to be enjoyed by the whole community. See: Peter Barnes, *With Liberty and Dividends for All*.

[16] Alperovitz, 36. See also: Rosenthal and Levy, "Organizing Credit Unions: A Manuel"

[17] Kelly, Dubb, and Duncan, "Broad-Based Ownership Models as Tools for Job Creation and Community Development." The authors of this report identify and examine the roles of six models for growing worker ownership in a community: Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), Cooperatives, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Social Enterprises, Municipal Enterprises, and Hybrids (L3Cs, B Corps).

[18] See the historical research on cooperatives in African American communities in Jessica Gordon Nembhard's book *Collective Courage*. See also Muhammad and Collin's essay connecting myths of individual wealth-creation to the maintenance of white wealth in "Race, Wealth and the Commons," *Nonprofit Quarterly*.

Localizing Economies

One of our greatest challenges is redirecting the flow of money from the finance sector where it benefits a small percentage of the population and large corporations, to our local communities and disinvested neighborhoods in particular. To build a just and sustainable economy we need to shift capital from "Wall Street to Main Street," but also to MLK Streets and Mandela Blvds. Though small businesses make up around half of GDP and national employment, they receive less than one percent of finance sector investments.[19] Credit unions and cooperatives can take us down this road, but other mechanisms are available. Better leveraging anchor institutions is a particularly generative option.[20] Large organizations who are unlikely to relocate and are commonly present in or near under-resourced neighborhoods include hospitals, universities, sports teams, major cultural institutions (museums, zoos, performing arts centers), and utility companies—all have a vested interest in seeing their surroundings improve that typically goes untapped. These organizations have large budgets and are major employers across professional tiers. Beyond philanthropy, anchor institutions can bolster local economies by: meeting purchasing needs locally to stimulate local business; committing to a certain percentage of contracts with minority, female and worker owned businesses; serving as an incubator for new businesses; hiring from the surrounding community; offering workforce development; and real estate development.[21]

---

[19] Michael Shuman, *Local Dollars, Local Sense*.

[20] Serang, Thompson and Howard, "The Anchor Mission: Leveraging the Power of Anchor Institutions to Build Community Wealth."

[21] "Anchor Institutions and Economic Development: From Community Benefit to Shared Value." *Inner City Insights*. This publication list seven arenas through which anchor institutions can leverage their

The "slow money movement" offers a finance model that can be built upon in other sectors. Woody Tasch and other innovators recognized two intertwined problems: entrepreneurs in the local-sustainable food industry had limited access to start up capital and socially/ecologically/locally conscious investors had no effective channels for directing their money. The slow money movement has created local investment groups around the country committed to investing "as if food, farms, and fertility matter" with goals of directing fifty percent of a community's investments within fifty miles.[22] Table 5.8 presents the Slow Money Principles. Sectors most in need of targeted, localized finance for just and sustainable businesses are those that interact most directly with the Land. These include energy companies, mining and lumber, water and sewage, waste disposal, and real estate development.[23]

Rebuilding Place

While each of the above recommendations seeks to corral economic placemaking forces for the good of the whole community, we must also rally our energies around the actual physical form our places are acquiring. In urban planning literature that falls in the

---

normal functions to create shared value, which they define as "policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates… Shared value is not social responsibility, philanthropy or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve economic success" (2). These arenas are: core product or service, real estate developer, purchaser, employer, workforce developer, cluster anchor, and community infrastructure builder.

[22] Tasch, *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money*; Tasch, "Commons nth."

[23] Much can be learned from the local food movement—both in its successes and in its short comings. While demand for healthier, more sustainable and local food has burgeoned, the new industry has still been subjected to market forces whereby demand has driven up cost which has excluded the poor and frequently been complicit in gentrifying minority neighborhoods. The whiteness of the local food world is not a side issue, it is a new manifestation of the same old racial hierarchy. For a constructive analysis, see: Antonio Roman-Alcala, "Concerning the Unbearable Whiteness of Urban Farming."

lineage of Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte,[24] placemaking is a technical term that refers to:

> a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. With community-based participation at its center, an effective Placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well being.[25]

A wealth of literature demonstrates the causal relationship between our built environment's form and public health, flourishing local economies, and environmental sustainability.[26] Just as important, good urban planning—particularly as it contributes to great public places—fosters what former mayor of Bogotá Enrique Peñalosa calls "a sense of belonging."[27] Belonging sparks the affection and commitment to a place in the heart of community members that is the bedrock of positive, long-term transformation.[28]

---

[24] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*.

[25] Project for Public Space, "What is Placemaking?"

[26] Unpacking this body of research is not feasible here, but I cannot overpress its significance for urban ministry. The design of our cities is anything but a passive influence on the poor. Better planning—particularly as disempowered neighbors are involved in the planning process—is a leverage point that can positively impact every social well-being indicator we labor to improve. I direct the reader to the following sources. On public health: Frumkin, et. al, *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*; Jackson, "Health and the Built Environment;" American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Environmental Health, "The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children." On local economics: Project for Public Spaces, "Place Capital: Reconnecting Economy with Community;" Speck, *Walkable City*; Smart Growth America, "The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns: A Model for Municipal Analysis." On environmental sustainability: Mehaffy, "The Urban Dimensions of Climate Change;" Hemenway, *The Permaculture City*; Farr, *Sustainable Urbanism*.

[27] Quoted in: Walljasper, "How to Design Our World for Happiness."

[28] "I will say, from my own belief and experience, that imagination thrives on contact, on tangible connection. For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it. To have a place, to live and belong in a place, to live from a place without destroying it, we must imagine it….By imagination we recognize with sympathy the fellow members, human and nonhuman, with whom we share our place. By that local experience we see the need to grant a sort of preemptive sympathy to all the fellow members, the neighbors, with whom we share the world. As imagination enables sympathy,

Two basic ideas can carry us well down the road toward great urban form: walkability and the "power of 10+." According to Jeff Speck, a place is walkable if a person finds it: 1) *useful* because "most aspects of daily life are located close at hand," 2) *safe* from being hit by cars or mugged, 3) *comfortable* thanks to "buildings and landscape [that] shape urban streets into 'outdoor living rooms' in contrast to wide-open spaces, and 4) *interesting* through differentiated buildings, windowed shop-lined sidewalks, artwork, and other "signs of humanity."[29] Greater density, bikeability, and improved public transit services are all mutually supportive goals.[30] The "power of 10+" is a concept developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) that provides an actionable rule of thumb for placemaking. They argue that every city should work toward ten destinations (districts or neighborhoods) that contain ten places (streets, parks, public squares, markets) with ten reasons to be there (a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, people to meet) that are ideally connected to the culture of that place and decided on by locals.[31] I have also included the "Charter of New Urbanism" in Table 5.9 in the Appendix for a more detailed agenda for improving the built environment. While I support these movements, I must reemphasize that they will only recapitulate our societies' race and class based injustices unless coupled, and often preceded, by the tactics described above. Mechanisms inherent to capitalism and whiteness described in Chapter 2 force these genuinely positive placial improvements to

---

sympathy enables affection. And it is in affection that we find the possibility of a neighborly, kind, and conserving economy" (Berry, "It All Turns on Affection").

[29] Speck, 11. See his book for ten steps to cultivate walkability.

[30] Walker, *Human Transit.*

[31] Project for Public Spaces, "The Power of 10+: Applying Placemaking at Every Scale."

drive up real estate value and drive out the poor (and, increasingly, even the middle class). Affordable housing, community organizing, commons sector policies that remove strategic parcels of land and resources from private/corporate control, and many other methodologies are essential to cultivating better urbanism with justice.[32]

CONCLUSION

God has not stopped dreaming of shalom. No matter how far afield his Church may go, his passion for the well-being of creation lies unquenched, his resolve to bring it into being irresistible. Somewhere in the colonial experience, our connection between human identity and the relationships that endear us to genuinely human ways of being ruptured. It is a separation still waiting to be rejoined. Place evaporated from our imagination, and lacking its grounding in the interconnections of material life, we only rushed faster, floating through space in racialized bodies who worship at the altar of the Market. We became a people who sever what God sought to mend: sister from brother, self from body, culture from Land, life from Creator.

There is no going back. We cannot recover what was before colonialism, modernity, capitalism and whiteness created the world as it is today. Yet hope does not lie in forgetting and leaving behind, but in better remembering and staying put so as to imagine what lies ahead through a broadening embrace. The great dream has already burst into time and place through our Lord Jesus the Christ. Much that was broken has already been made new. But much is still broken and is further rended with each passing day. Our cities, farms and forests are desperate for a people who will learn to love the

[32] Long term, I would argue that a deep overhaul of the real-estate and property system is crucial. As long as land remains submerged beneath the market we simply cannot maintain justice.

Land and the other as their neighbor. They will be a placemaking people, a people who seek first the Kingdom and join the God who makes life on earth as it is in heaven.

APPENDIX

CHAPTER 1

Table 1.1: Aspects of Place	
1. Site of existence	As embodied creatures, human life is only possible with a place to contextualize existence.
2. Material	Place is physical. Because all things must exist in place, even theoretically abstract phenomena like ideas and economies find practical, concrete expression in places.
3. A Meaningful Location	Place is the site of life. The community of creation plays out its rhythms in place. Love, hardship and all human experience play out in specific locals. The unfolding of these events attaches memory and emotion to places. By making place and making himself known through places, God imparts and affirms their ultimate value.
4. Intersectional and Relational	Everything shows up in place: from the diverse categories of human identity, to animate and inanimate nature, to social systems, to God's own presence. They all intersect and relate to one another because their material manifestations and proximities in place.
5. Scale	Places come in a variety of sizes, from the palm sized to the global. Places "nest" and are nested within larger places. Each scale relates to each other along the continuum. The relationships between things is shaped by their interaction across scales and varied manifestations at different levels.
6. Nodes and Networks	Every place has an internal dynamic that relates to the dynamics of other places. A place has internal continuity, characteristics, and meaning, but is also influenced by the goings-on in another place. Abiding and dwelling is mirrored by movement and transfer. Both are necessary and need to be balanced.
7. Systemic	Places host all systems: living things, ecological systems, social systems, etc. By bringing all these systems together in material relationship, they eliminate the possibility of isolation or autonomy for these systems. Place draws a location (and ultimately the world) together into one relational web—a metasystem.
8. Composite Subjecthood	A place is not just a container for other things. It is a "thing" in its own right. Like most systems, it is made up of subparts but is not reducible to those parts. People may be a constitutive element of a place, but a place is more than its people, just as it is more the ground that place is built on or the built environment. It is a composite of those things which collectively produce an identity.

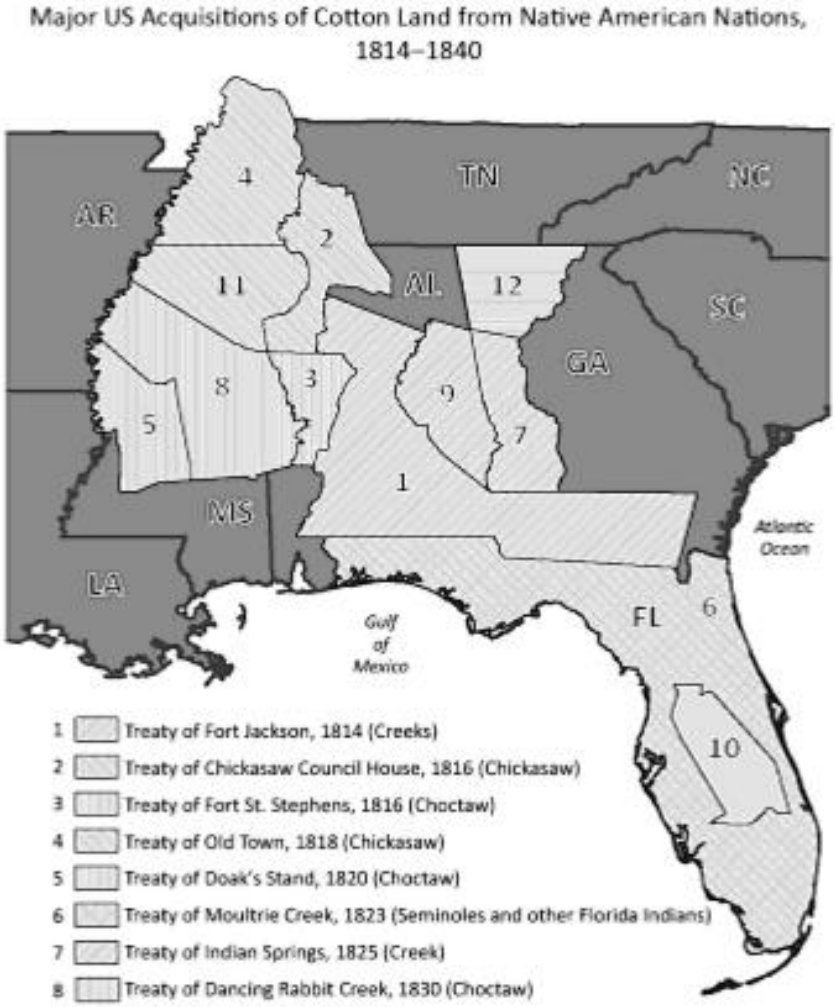
9. Active and Acted Upon	Places are not passive. They shape experience, feeling, health, prosperity, and the terms of relationship for whatever passes through them. Simultaneously, the actions people and the rest of creation impact and shape the characteristics of a place. Places in part preexisting Subjects and partially produced over time.
10. Storied Storytellers	The relationship between stories and place functions on three levels: a) A place bears its current characteristics due to the stories of history played out within it; b) Places are story tellers. Their functions and forms communicate meaning and a worldview; and c) Places are where we perform our guiding narratives or worldviews.

CHAPTER 2

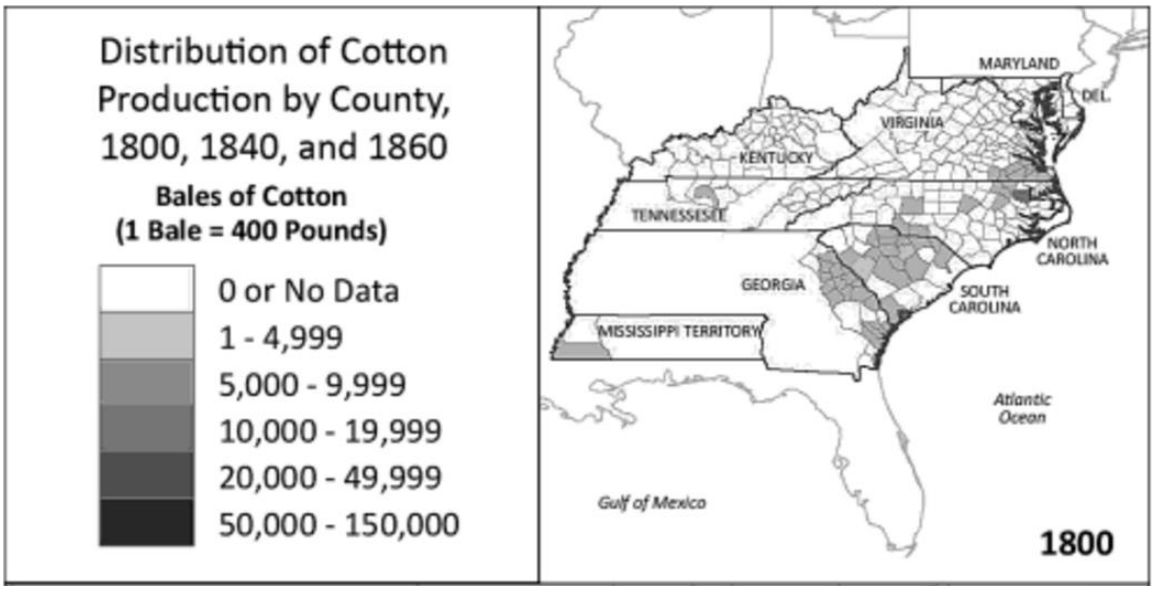
Place Production in America: An Example

Changes in a place happen on multiple levels in a variety of categories simultaneously. Their confluence in reality is often masked by our compartmentalized treatment of subject matter. The following example helps show how ecological, social, and moral change all are symptoms of a single process driven by cultural ideology--or a society's guiding narrative, what we have referred to simply as "story." Map 2.1 illustrates the forced transfer of land from Indigenous hands to the control of settler colonists. This should call to mind the previous people groups who inhabited those places and the systems of belief, culture, and social interaction that would have marked those locations. Each place on this map was a site of particular memory and meaning for the Native American peoples who dwelled there. The following six maps--Map 2.2 through 2.7--depict two developments across the American South during the nineteenth century. First, Maps 2.2 through 2.4 show the rise in cotton production by county. Two primary changes are reflected in this growth: the impartation of Euroamerican capitalism and shifts in ecological communities in these places. Second, Maps 2.5 through 2.7 show the increase in slave held in captivity per county. Here, we see the places acquiring new social relations. All of these are reflective of a deep morphology in the memory and meaning associated with these places. By reading these maps together, we are better able to capture the complex interwovenness and oneness of placial characteristics. As we imagine these narratives together, we better grasp the dissonance between shalom and American history and values.

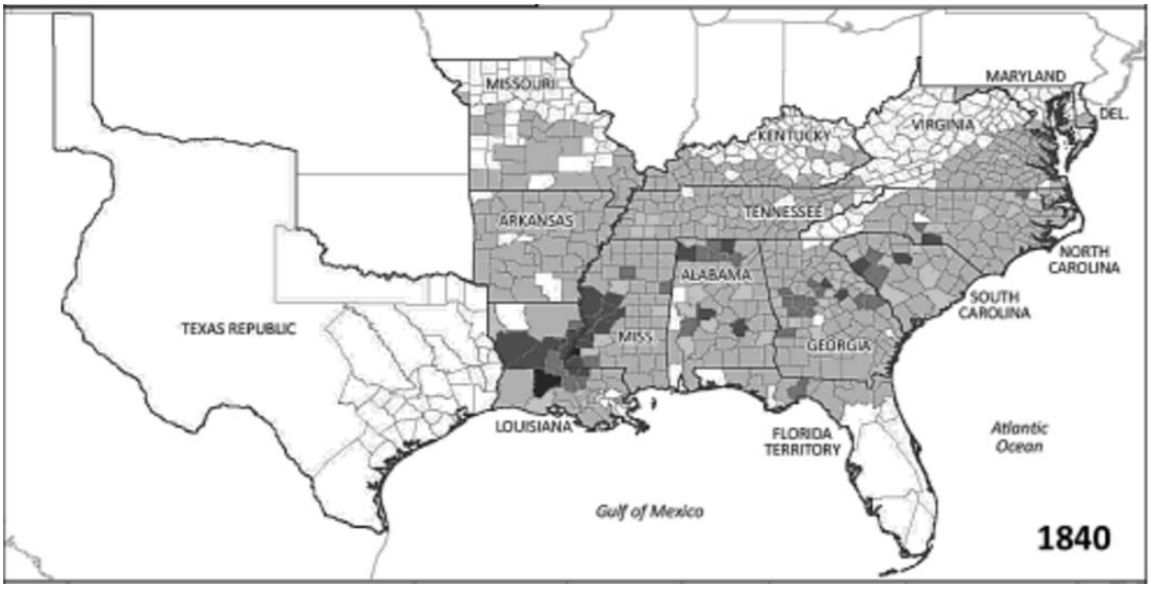
Map 2.1 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. ix.)



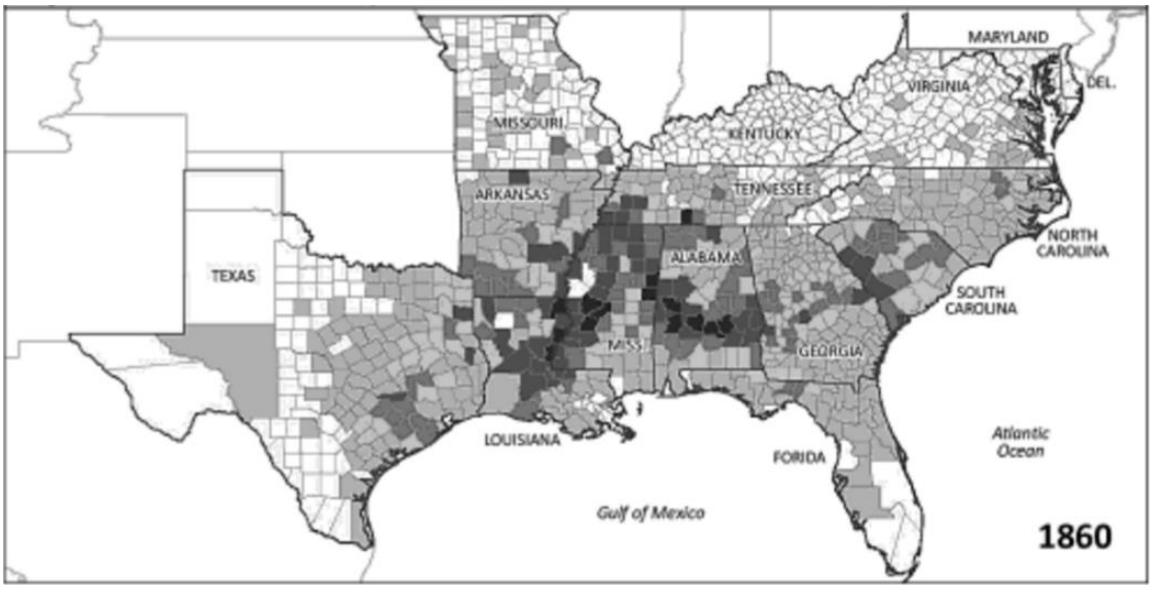
Map 2.2 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. x.)



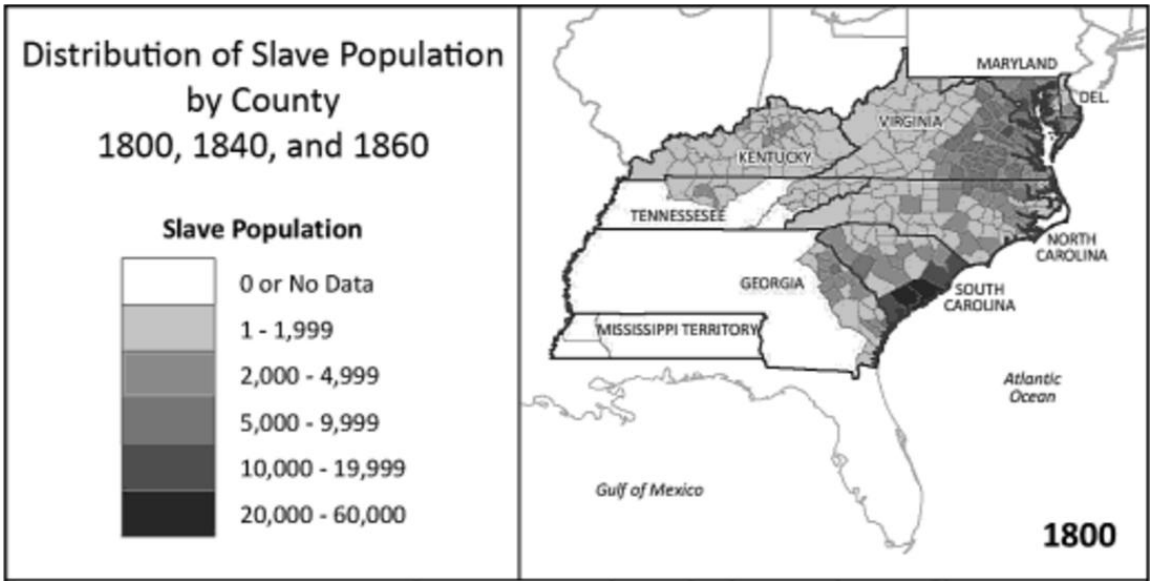
Map 2.3 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. x.)



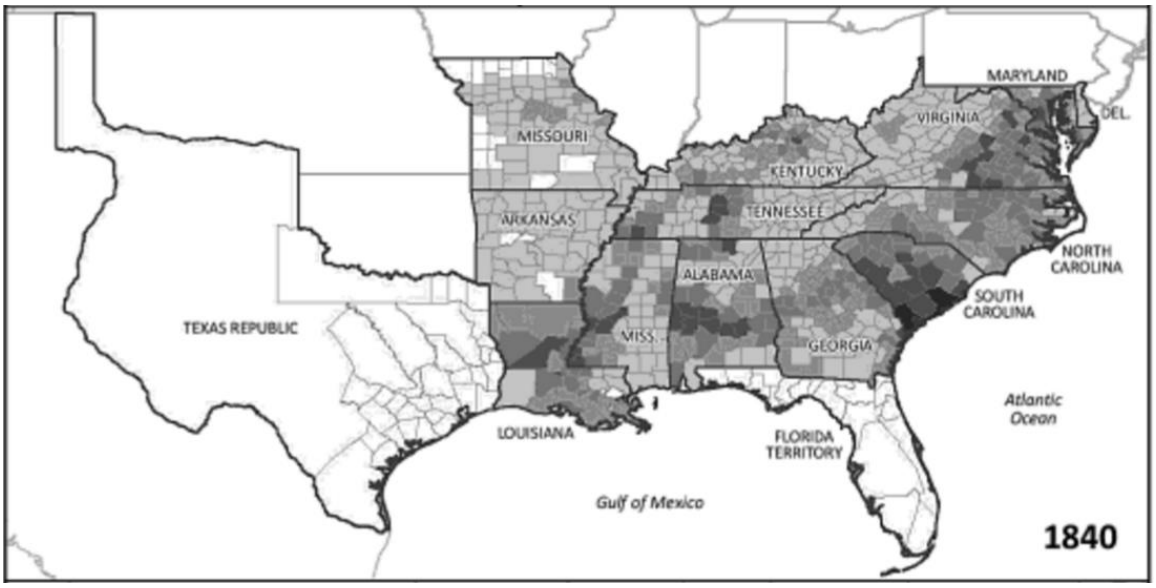
Map 2.4 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. x.)



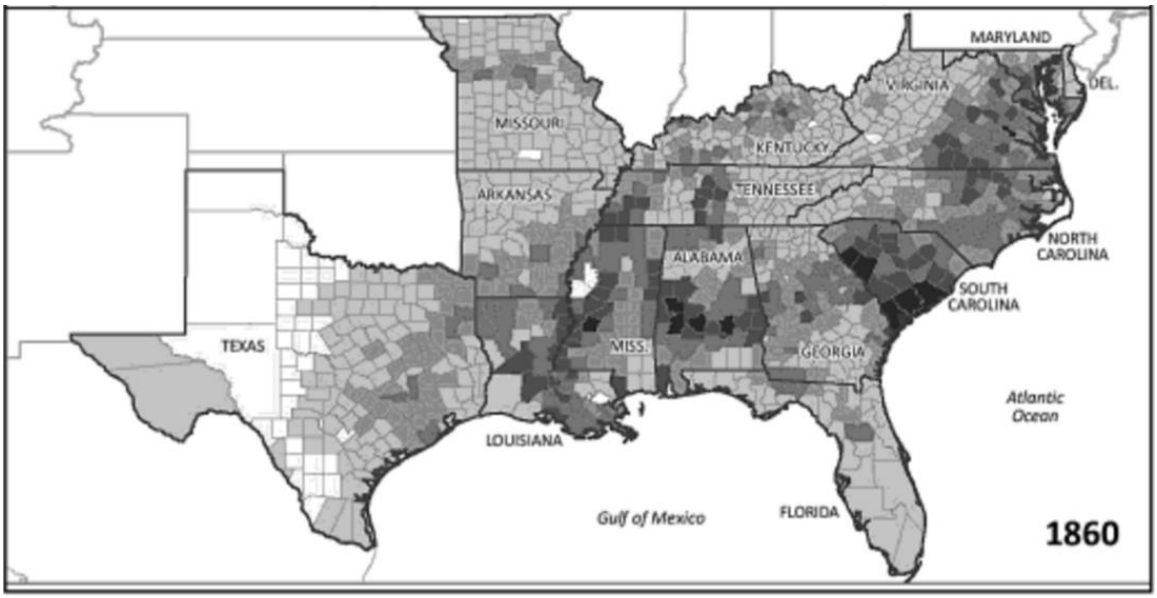
Map 2.5 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. xii.)



Maps 2.6 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. xii.)



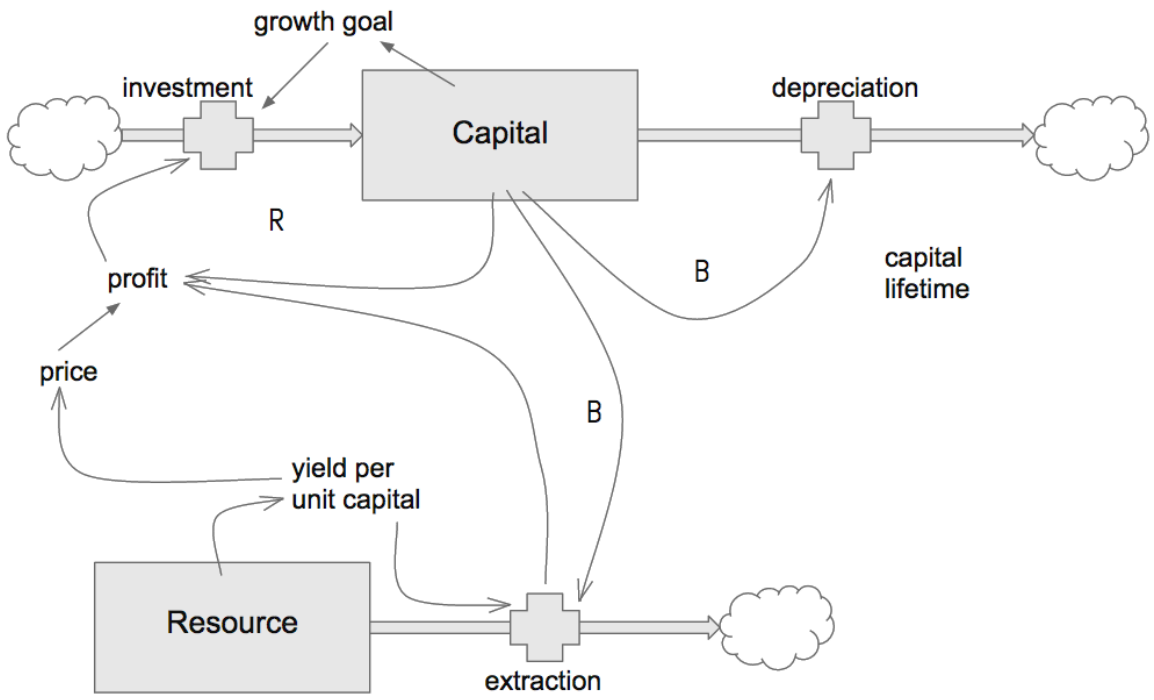
Map 2.7 (Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*. xii.)



Source: US Census, 1800, 1840, and 1860.

CHAPTER 3

Figure 3.1: System Model - An Industrial Economy (Meadows, *Thinking in Systems* 60.)



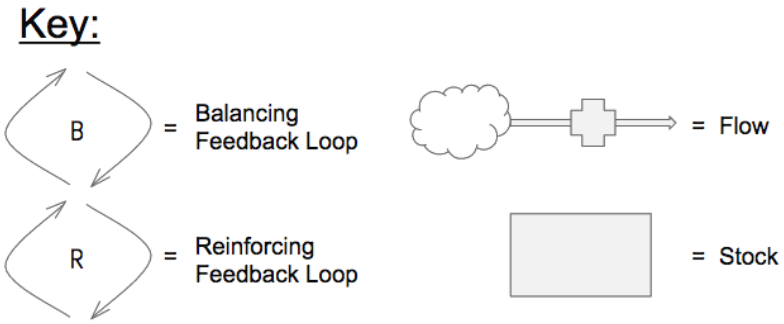


Table 3.1: Complex Adaptive System Characteristics		
1.	*Composed of Autonomous Agents*	Parts work according to their own internal operating rules, whether they are nerve cells, trees, or people.
2.	*Agent Interaction*	These agents interact with each other according to certain (often simple) rules. A rule for a bird in flock may be, "Keep the bird ahead of you at a 45-degree angle and 3 feet away." These simple rules can result in stunningly complex behaviors, as anyone can attest who has watched a shimmering flock of birds spin patterns against the sky.
3.	*Emergence*	Those new behaviors are an example of emergence, which is the appearance of novel properties that cannot be predicted by studying the parts in isolation. Watching a single bird in flight would never let you predict the intricate, captivating dance of a swooping flock of birds.
4.	*Feedback*	The agents respond to changes in their environment via feedback. They sense some of the effects of their actions, which allows them to adapt and learn.
5.	*Homeostasis*	CAS self-regulate and 'tune' their behavior to certain states that are prefered over other, less stable states, and they can return to these states after a disturbance. These states are usually far from equilibrium.
6.	*The Edge of Chaos*	These systems maintain themselves in a rich, possibility-filled region between perfect order and total randomness that complexity thinkers call the edge of chaos. An organism, for example, contains proteins that are made to a specific pattern but are constantly moving in and out of that pattern as they are built up and broken down in metabolism. But metabolism is not chaotic. It follows specific pathways and rules. Perfect order is dead, while complex chaos allows no structure. Life and other complex adaptive systems attune themselves to the fecund, creative place between frozen order and seething randomness, to the edge of chaos, and thrive there. Healthy cities do the same thing.
Hemenway, *The Permaculture City*, 10-11		

Figure 3.2 (Poste, "Understanding the Design Principles and Dynamics of Complex Adaptive Systems)

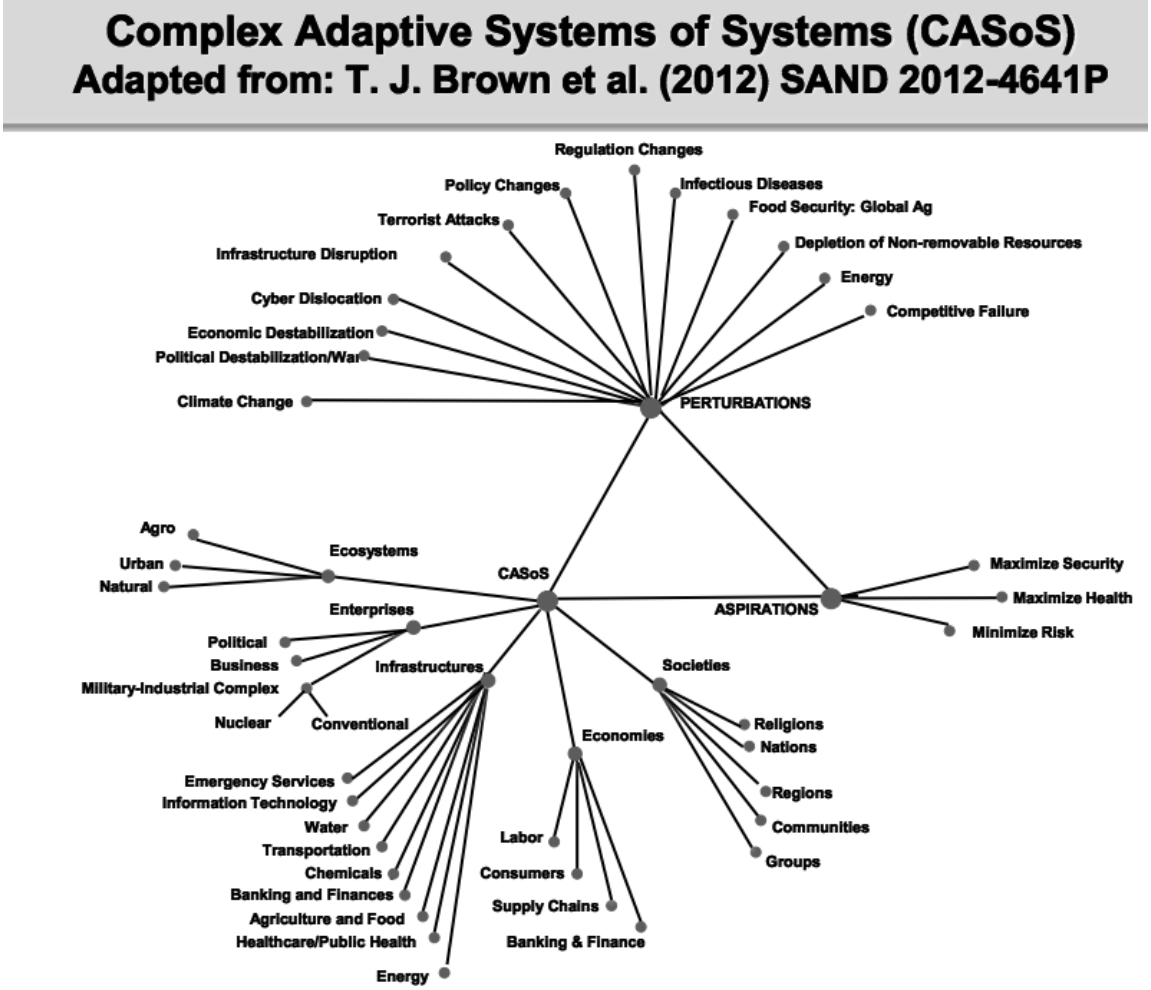


Table 3.2: Leverage Points - Places to Intervene in a System		
12.	*Numbers*	The amount/quantity of things flowing into or out of a stock. For example, if the stock is national debt, changing the amount of revenue through taxes (in-flow) or the amount of expenditures (out-flow) are numbers adjustments. A huge portion of debate stays at this level, but they make very little difference to a system's overall dynamic.
11.	*Buffers*	"Stocks that are big, relative to their flows, are more stable than small ones" (150). A lake is less in danger of flooding an area than a river. Unfortunately, changing a stock size is often difficult, if not impossible.
10.	*Stock-and-Flow*	The physical redesign of stocks, flows, and their arrangement to one

	Structures	another. "The only way to fix a system that is laid out poorly is to rebuild it, if you can…[often the] slowest and most expensive kind of change to make" (151).
9.	*Delays*	A system's reaction time to change affects its ability to maintain appropriate stock levels and avoid crash-boom cycles. Improving response times (do not assume this means make them faster; in some cases longer observation is what is needed) assists with stability and adaptation. Often cannot be changed.
8.	*Balancing Feedback Loops*	The power of a balancing feedback loop needs to be made equivalent to the force it is counteracting if it is to be effective. A thermostat works fine on a cold day, but open the windows and the tool is no longer up to the task. Many balancing feedback loops that maintain positive stock levels need strengthening, while those maintaining unwanted stocks (poverty, disease, etc.) should be weakened.
7.	*Reinforcing Feedback Loops*	Reinforcing loops push a system with increasing intensity in one direction. They are "sources of growth, explosion, erosion, and collapse...A system with an unchecked reinforcing loop ultimately will destroy itself" (155). Unhealthy/inequitable social systems have multiple strong "success to the successful" reinforcing feedback loops. "Antipoverty programs are weak balancing loops that try to counter these strong reinforcing ones. It would be much more effective to weaken the reinforcing loops. That's what progressive income tax, inheritance tax, and universal high-quality public education programs are meant to do" (156).
6.	*Information Flows*	Closing gaps in information between a system's actions and the nonobvious effects it has can stimulate drastic changes in activity. Commercial fishing companies invest in boats and equipment based on the price of fish at market, but are unaware of the effects of their actions on fish population and so do not base investment decisions on this information (a gap in information that is crashing fish populations, which will in time crash the fishing industry).
5.	*Rules*	Rules (incentives, punishments, and constraints) define a system's "scope, its boundaries, its degrees of freedom….Power over the rules is real power. That's why lobbyists congregate when Congress writes laws….If you want to understand the deepest malfunctions of systems, pay attention to the rules and to who has power over them" (158). Changes in rules (or "policy") determine all the above dynamics.
4.	*Self-Organization*	The ability of a system to evolve, advance or be revolutionized through self-organizing processes is "the strongest form of system resilience. A system that can evolve can survive almost any change, by changing itself" (159). Simple rules can define "how, where, and what the system can add onto or subtract from itself under what conditions." Often this is derived from encouraging diversity and loosening control on experimentation.
3.	*Goals*	Goals articulate the purpose of a system and inform what and how the system, from rules to feedback loops to connections to flows, should be

		designed. If goals are changed, the entire system must be overhauled to meet those goals.
2.	*Paradigms*	"The shared idea in the minds of society, the great big unstated assumptions, constitute that society's paradigm, or deepest set of beliefs about how the world works….Paradigms are the source of systems. From them, from shared social agreements about the nature of reality, come system goals and information flows, feedbacks, stocks, flows, and everything else about systems" (163). Paradigms are hard to change, but it does not require physical restructuring, great expense, or even necessarily large amounts of time. You change paradigms when you "keep pointing at the anomalies and failures in the old paradigm. You keep speaking and acting, loudly and with assurance, from the new one. You insert people with the new paradigm in places of public visibility and power. You don't waste time with reactionaries; rather, you work with active change agents and with the vast middle group of people who are open-minded. Systems modelers say that we change paradigms by building a model of the system, which takes us outside the system and forces us to see it whole" (164).
1.	*Transcending Paradigms*	To realize that no paradigm is perfect, no perspective has a lock on truth, no group has a monopoly on reality, and no plan of action is going to make things perfect, to be able open oneself to others' perspectives and embrace various pathways to the common good: this is the highest point of leverage because it releases us from the will to power and the desire for control that are the root problem for system health.
Meadows, "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System," *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. 145-165.		

CHAPTER 4

Table 4.1: Features of Neighbor-Love			
Neighbor-love...			
1.	is grounded in God's love	8.	is mutual
2.	embodies God's work to create a new world situation, is transformative	9.	builds community
3.	actively serves the well-being of those who are loved	10.	is subject to sin, and is especially blocked by the love of wealth and prestige
4.	is a disposition to be practiced	11.	pertains to whomever my life touches directly or through social or ecological

			systems
5.	may be more important for the wellbeing of the one who loves than for the one who is loved	12.	seeks justice
6.	entails self-love	13.	is political
7.	is not perfect	14.	may be dangerous
Moe-Lobeda, 184-185			

CHAPTER 5

Fodder for Imagination

As the effectiveness of current social systems to adequately care for community and creation steadily crumbles before our eyes, a fresh wind of innovation is taking place at the margins. Alternative paradigms are rapidly being innovated and tested. In this process of experimentation and dreaming, there seems to be an urge to generate principles. I succumbed to this urge as well, proposing six guidelines for shalom-oriented system design in Chapter 5. My own imagination was invigorated by the wealth of ideas pouring through justice and sustainability minded people, so I have chosen to share a selection of the proposals I came across in the process of researching this thesis. Again, I offer them not because I think any is uniquely "right" or "Christian," but because I believe they offer useful points of reference for the Church's cultivation of an effective missional-political vision and praxis. The first table is my own proposal. This is followed in table 5.2 by the Christian Community Development Association's philosophy of transformation. I included this for the sake of comparison. CCDA's philosophy is a rough mix of vision and methodology--heavy on the methodology. I hope readers will look on it both appreciatively as a possible strategy for implementing features of these proposals and critically for where its framework is inadequate to address the structural and ideological challenges of our time.

The Christian imagination is thin on these matters. I pray this collection encourages greater connection between the community of faith and those in the world who share our passions, and that reading these ideas would spark deeper, more hopeful, radical and audacious dreams and performances.

Table 5.1: On Earth as It is in Heaven - System Principles		
1.	Builds structures with place-rooted attention to history, multiple stories, and materiality.	Instead of designing in abstract space and "progress time."
2.	Sets goals for holistic vitality measured by the wellbeing (shalom: equity, justice, joy) of the whole community of creation.	Instead of GDP and the growth goal.
3.	Recognizes interdependencies, supports diversities, and strengthens relational bonds within and between places.	Instead of elevating whiteness, individuality, and competition.
4.	Seeks out and elevates the voice of marginal community members for public decision making.	Instead of wealth and whiteness equating to political power
5.	Localizes societal activities, connections, processes, and solutions.	Instead of centralization and globalization.
6.	Spreads assets equitably across people and places, utilizes common ownership models, and reinvests excess in the community.	Instead of uneven development, a sole reliance on public and private property, and profit reinvested in private wealth generation.

Table 5.2: Christian Community Development Philosophy			
1. *Relocation*: Live among the people.	2. *Reconciliation*: People to God, people to people.	3. *Redistribution*: Just distribution of resources.	4. *Leadership Development*: Raise up leaders from within the community
5. *Listen to the Community*: Identify "felt needs" and internal assets	6. *Church-Based*	7. *Holistic*: involvement in every aspect of a person's life	8. *Empowerment*: Create opportunities, require personal responsibility, and affirm dignity
Christian Community Development Association, "Philosophy," www.ccda.org.			

Table 5.3: *Resisting Structural Evil*			
Aim toward economies that...			
1. Operate within, rather than outside of, Earth's great economy.	2. Move toward more equitable "environmental space" use.	3. Move toward an ever decreasing gap between the world's "enriched" and "impoverished" people and peoples, and prioritize need over wealth accumulation.	4. Are accountable to bodies politic (be they of localities, states, nations, or other), and favor distributed power over concentrated power.
Moe-Lobeda, Resisting Structural Evil, 43.			

Table 5.4: The Next System Project - Getting to the Next System			
Common Values			
1.	ENVIRONMENT: sustainable, regenerative, resilient, stewardship	4.	COMMON GOOD: economic democracy, cooperative, maximize not growth, wellbeing, sufficiency
2.	PLACE: appropriate scale, decentralized, subsidiarity	5.	JUSTICE: fairness, equality, human dignity, diversity
3.	COMMUNITY: solidarity, caring, sharing, local and global	6.	DEMOCRACY: deliberative, participatory, people empowered
11 Transformations on the Path to System Change			
1.	*The Market*: from near laissez-faire to powerful market governance and planning in the public interest; from dishonest prices to honest ones, and from unfair wages to fair ones; from commodification to reclaiming the commons, the things that rightfully belong to all of us.		
2.	*The Corporation*: from shareholder primacy to stakeholder primacy; from one ownership and profit-driven model to new business models based on public scrutiny of major investment decisions, motivations other than profit, and economic democracy, including more democratic forms of ownership and control.		
3.	*Economic Growth*: from growth fetish to post-growth society; from mere GDP growth to growth in social and environmental well-being and democratically determined priorities.		
4.	*Money and Finance*: from Wall Street to Main Street; from money created through bank		

	debt to money created by government; from investments seeking high financial return to those seeking high social and environmental returns.		
5.	*Social Conditions*: from economic insecurity to security; from vast inequities to fundamental fairness; from racial and other invidious discrimination to just treatment of all groups.		
6.	*Indicators*: from GDP ("grossly distorted picture") to accurate measures of social and environmental health and quality of life.		
7.	*Consumerism*: from consumerism and "aÇuenza" to sufficiency and mindful consumption; from more to enough.		
8.	*Communities*: from runaway enterprise and throwaway communities to vital local economies; from social rootlessness to rootedness and solidarity.		
9.	*Dominant Cultural Values*: from having to being; from getting to giving; from richer to better; from separate to connected; from apart from nature to part of nature; from near-term to long-term.		
10.	*Politics*: from weak democracy to strong, from creeping corporatocracy and plutocracy to true popular sovereignty and the ascendancy of people power over money power.		
11.	*Foreign Policy and the Military*: from American exceptionalism to America as a normal nation; from hard power to soft; from military prowess to real security.		
Charter for a New Economy			
1.	*Economic Goals*. Th• e reigning priorities of economic life shall be human and ecological wellbeing, not profits and GDP growth. Public policy shall recognize that economic growth has diminishing returns and costs as well as benefits, and that, after a certain point, the former can outweigh the latter.	6.	*Equity*. Income and wealth shall be equitably distributed within and among countries, and programs shall be maintained to alleviate poverty, ensure freedom from want, provide economic security and opportunity for all, and prevent invidious discrimination against racial and other minorities.
2.	*Economic Democracy*. Investment and other economic decisions shall be guided by democratically-determined priorities. All economic institutions, including corporations, shall be governed by, and held accountable to, all those affected by their activities. New patterns of corporate governance, ownership, and operational management involving workers, communities, governments, and other stakeholders shall be the norm. Corporate chartering shall be at the level of corporate	7.	*Work*. All individuals shall be guaranteed opportunities for decent work, living wages, and continuing self-improvement. • The rights of workers to organize, bargain collectively, and participate in the management of enterprises shall be guaranteed.

	operations and charters periodically reviewed in the public interest.		
3.	*Regulation and Planning*. Democratically determined regulatory and planning initiatives shall guide market activity in socially and environmentally beneficial directions, ensure that prices are honest and reflect all real costs of production, police unfair labor practices, and prevent predation of public assets and the commons—the valuable assets that properly belong to everyone.	8.	*Consumerism*. Public policy, including regulation of advertising, shall move society in the direction of working and spending less, creating and connecting more. Consumerism, where people search for meaning and acceptance through what they consume, shall give way to the search for abundance in things that truly matter—good health, education, family, friends, the natural world, and meaningful activity.
4.	*Subsidiarity*. Economic policy and regulation shall foster activity at the most localized level consistent with democracy, equity, and effectiveness. Higher-level national, regional, and global governance shall be exercised where human and ecological well-being will be strengthened by so doing.	9.	*Money and Finance*. • Thee system of money and Finance shall be operated as an essential public utility for the benefit of society as a whole. Financial institutions shall channel resources to areas of high social and environmental return even if not justi.ed by financial return. Finance shall shift away from institutions that are driven to excess by the search for profits and personal financial gain and are remotely owned and managed to institutions that are small enough not only to fail but also to be held accountable by the communities in which they operate.
5.	*Environment*. Th• e economy shall be managed with the overall objective of preserving and restoring natural capital for future generations, preventing climatic disruption, and preserving the integrity of biotic communities and natural systems.	10.	*International Relations*. Th• e priority of international afairs shall be to maintain peace, security, and harmony among nations and to promote global governance and international rules that further these ten principles.
Steps for Change			
1.	Become teachers.	7.	Start doing.
2.	Get crisis-ready.	8.	Transform values and culture.
3.	Build progressive fusion	9.	Choose transformative leaders and narratives.
4.	Envision tomorrow.	10.	Focus on today *and* tomorrow.

5.	Craft new policy and strategy.	11.	Create true democracy.
6.	Strengthen institutional capacity.	12.	Build a movement.
Speth, "Getting to the Next System."			

Table 5.5: The Capital Institute - Regenerative Capitalism	
Core Idea: *The universal patterns and principles the cosmos uses to build stable, healthy, and sustainable systems throughout the real world can and must be used as a model for economic-system design.*	
1. **Right Relationship:** Humanity is an integral part of an interconnected web of life in which there is no real separation between "us" and "it." The scale of the human economy matters in relation to the biosphere in which it is embedded. What is more, we are all connected to one another and to all locales of our global civilization. Damage to any part of that web ripples back to harm every other part as well.	2. **Views Wealth Holistically:** True wealth is not merely money in the bank. It must be defined and managed in terms of the well-being of the whole, achieved through the harmonization of multiple kinds of wealth or capital, including social, cultural, living, and experiential. It must also be defined by a broadly shared prosperity across all of these varied forms of capital. The whole is only as strong as the weakest link.
3. **Innovative, Adaptive, Responsive:** In a world in which change is both ever-present and accelerating, the qualities of innovation and adaptability are critical to health. It is this idea that Charles Darwin intended to convey in this often-misconstrued statement attributed to him: "In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out at the expense of their rivals." What Darwin actually meant is that: the most "fit" is the one that fits best i.e., the one that is most adaptable to a changing environment.	4. **Empowered Participation**: In an interdependent system, fitness comes from contributing in some way to the health of the whole. The quality of empowered participation means that all parts must be "in relationship" with the larger whole in ways that not only empower them to negotiate for their own needs, but also enable them to add their unique contribution towards the health and well-being of the larger wholes in which they are embedded.
5. **Honors Community and Place:** Each human community consists of a mosaic of peoples, traditions, beliefs, and institutions uniquely shaped by long-term pressures of geography, human history, culture, local environment, and changing human needs. Honoring this fact, a Regenerative Economy nurtures healthy and resilient communities and regions, each one uniquely informed by the essence of its individual history and place.	6. **Edge Effect Abundance:** Creativity and abundance flourish synergistically at the "edges" of systems, where the bonds holding the dominant pattern in place are weakest. For example, there is an abundance of interdependent life in salt marshes where a river meets the ocean. At those edges the opportunities for innovation and cross-fertilization are the greatest. Working collaboratively across edges – with ongoing learning and development sourced from the diversity that exists there – is transformative for both the communities where the exchanges are

	happening, and for the individuals involved.
7. **Robust Circulatory Flow:** Just as human health depends on the robust circulation of oxygen, nutrients, etc., so too does economic health depend on robust circulatory flows of money, information, resources, and goods and services to support exchange, flush toxins, and nourish every cell at every level of our human networks. The circulation of money and information and the efficient use and reuse of materials are particularly critical to individuals, businesses, and economies reaching their regenerative potential.	8. **Seeks Balance:** Being in balance is more than just a nice way to be; it is actually essential to systemic health. Like a unicycle rider, regenerative systems are always engaged in this delicate dance in search of balance. Achieving it requires that they harmonize multiple variables instead of optimizing single ones. A Regenerative Economy seeks to balance: efficiency and resilience; collaboration and competition; diversity and coherence; and small, medium, and large organizations and needs.
(John Fullerton, "Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape Our New Economy," 8-9.)	

Table 5.6: Building a Sustainable and Desirable Economy-in-Society-in-Nature	
Worldview and Principles of Ecological Economics:	
1. Our material economy is embedded in society, which is embedded in our ecological life-support system, and that we cannot understand or manage our economy without understanding the whole interconnected system	2. Growth and development are not always linked and that true development must be defined in terms of the improvement of sustainable well-being (SWB), not merely improvement in material consumption
3. A healthy balance must be struck among thriving natural, human, social, and cultural assets, and adequate or well functioning produced or built assets.	
To make the change to a just and sustainable world will require...	
1. A fundamental change in worldview to one that we live on a finite planet and that sustainable well-being requires far more than material consumption.	2. Replacing the present goal of limitless growth with goals of material sufficiency, equitable distribution, and sustainable human well-being.
3. A complete redesign of the global economy that preserves natural systems essential to life and well-being and balances natural, social, human and built assets.	

The dimensions of the new economy include but are not limited to...	
I. Sustainable Scale: Respecting Ecological Limits	
- establishment of systems for effective and equitable governance of the natural commons, including the atmosphere, oceans, and biodiversity	- consuming essential non-renewables, such as fossil fuels, no faster than we can develop renewable substitutes
- creation of cap-and-auction systems for basic resources, including quotas on depletion, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions, based on planetary boundaries and resource limits	- investments in sustainable infrastructure such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, public transit, watershed protection measures, green public spaces, and clean technology
- dismantling incentives toward materialistic consumption, including banning advertising to children and regulating the commercial media	- linked policies to address population and consumption
II. Fair Distribution: Protecting Capabilities for Flourishing	
- reducing systemic inequalities, both internationally and within nations, by improving the living standards of the poor, limiting excess and unearned income and consumption, and preventing private capture of common wealth	- establishing a system for effective and equitable governance of the social commons, including cultural inheritance, financial systems, and information systems like the Internet and airwaves
- sharing the work to create more fulfilling employment and more balanced leisure-income trade-offs	
III. Efficient Allocation: Building a Sustainable Macro-Economy	
- use of full cost accounting measures to internalize externalities, value nonmarket assets and services, reform national accounting systems, and ensure that prices reflect actual social and environmental costs of production	- fiscal reforms that reward sustainable and well-being-enhancing actions and penalize unsustainable behaviors that diminish collective well-being, including ecological tax reforms with compensating mechanisms that prevent additional burdens on low-income groups
- systems of cooperative investment in stewardship (CIS) and payment for ecosystem services (PES)	- increase financial and fiscal prudence, including greater public control of the money supply and its benefits and other financial instruments and practices that contribute to the public good
- ensuring availability of all information required to move a sustainable economy that enhances well-being through public investment in research and development and reform of the ownership structure of copyrights and patents	

(Constanza, et. al., "Building a Sustainable and Desirable Economy-in-Society-in-Nature," v, vii-iii.)

Table 5.7: The Forward Together Moral Movement	
The Agenda	
1. Pro-labor, anti-poverty policies that create economic sustainability by fighting for employment, living wages, the alleviation of disparate unemployment, a green economy, labor rights, affordable housing, targeted empowerment zones, strong safety net services for the poor, fair policies for immigrants, infrastructure development, and fair tax reform	2. Educational equality by ensuring every child receives a high quality, well-funded, constitutional, diverse public education as well as access to community colleges and university and by securing equitable funding for minority colleges and universities
3. Healthcare for all by ensuring access to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security and by providing environmental protection	4. Fairness in the criminal justice system by addressing the continuing inequalities in the system and providing equal protection under the law for black, brown, and poor white people
5. Protecting and expanding voting rights, women's rights, LGBT rights, immigrant rights, and the fundamental principle of equal protection under the law	
The Methodology	
1. Engage in indigenously led grassroots organizing across the state and nation	2. Use moral language to frame and critique public policy, based on our deepest moral and constitutional values, regardless of who is in power
3. Demonstrate a commitment to civil disobedience that follows the steps of the movement and that is designed to change the public conversation and consciousness	4. Build a stage from which to lift the voices of everyday people affected by immoral, extremist policies--not a stage for partisan policies
5. Build a coalition of moral and religious leaders of all faiths	6. Intentionally diversity the movement with the goal of winning unlikely allies
7. Build transformative, long-term coalition relationships rooted in a clear agenda that doesn't measure success just by electoral outcomes and that destroys the myth of extremism	8. Make a serious commitment to academic and empirical analysis of policy
9. Use social media coordination in all forms: video, text, Twitter, Facebook, etc.	10. Engage in voter registration and education

11. Pursue a strong legal strategy	12. Resist the "One Moment Mentality"--We are building a movement!
(Barber, *Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation*, 160-162.	

Table 5.8: The Slow Money Principles
In order to enhance food security, food safety and food access; improve nutrition and health; promote cultural, ecological and economic diversity; and accelerate the transition from an economy based on extraction and consumption to an economy based on preservation and restoration, we do hereby affirm the following Slow Money Principles:
I. We must bring money back down to earth.
II. There is such a thing as money that is too fast, companies that are too big, finance that is too complex. Therefore, we must slow our money down—not all of it, of course, but enough to matter.
III. The 20th Century was the era of Buy Low/Sell High and Wealth Now/Philanthropy Later—what one venture capitalist called "the largest legal accumulation of wealth in history." The 21st Century will be the era of nurture capital, built around principles of carrying capacity, care of the commons, sense of place and non-violence.
IV. We must learn to invest as if food, farms and fertility mattered. We must connect investors to the places where they live, creating vital relationships and new sources of capital for small food enterprises.
V. Let us celebrate the new generation of entrepreneurs, consumers and investors who are showing the way from Making A Killing to Making a Living.
VI. Paul Newman said, "I just happen to think that in life we need to be a little like the farmer who puts back into the soil what he takes out." Recognizing the wisdom of these words, let us begin rebuilding our economy from the ground up, asking: ● What would the world be like if we invested 50% of our assets within 50 miles of where we live? ● What if there were a new generation of companies that gave away 50% of their profits? ● What if there were 50% more organic matter in our soil 50 years from now?
Tasch, "Commons nth," 6.

Table 5.9: Charter of the New Urbanism
The Congress for the New Urbanism views disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deterioration, loss of agricultural lands and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage as one interrelated community-building challenge.

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy. ***We advocate*** the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice. ***We recognize*** that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework. ***We represent*** a broad-based citizenry, composed of public and private sector leaders, community activists, and multidisciplinary professionals. We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design. ***We dedicate*** ourselves to reclaiming our homes, blocks, streets, parks, neighborhoods, districts, towns, cities, regions, and environment.
We assert the following principles to guide public policy, development practice, urban planning, and design:
The Region: Metropolis, City, and Town

1. Metropolitan regions are finite places with geographic boundaries derived from topography, watersheds, coastlines, farmlands, regional parks, and river basins. The metropolis is made of multiple centers that are cities, towns, and villages, each with its own identifiable center and edges.	2. The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world. Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality.
3. The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house.	4. Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. Infill development within existing urban areas conserves environmental resources, economic investment, and social fabric, while reclaiming marginal and abandoned areas. Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion.
5. Where appropriate, new development contiguous to urban boundaries should be organized as neighborhoods and districts, and be integrated with the existing urban pattern. Noncontiguous development should be organized as towns and villages with their own urban edges, and planned for a jobs/housing balance, not as bedroom suburbs.	6. The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.

7. Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty.	8. The physical organization of the region should be supported by a framework of transportation alternatives. Transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems should maximize access and mobility throughout the region while reducing dependence upon the automobile.
9. Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreation, public services, housing, and community institutions.	
The Neighborhood, The District, and The Corridor	
1. The neighborhood, the district, and the corridor are the essential elements of development and redevelopment in the metropolis. They form identifiable areas that encourage citizens to take responsibility for their maintenance and evolution.	2. Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian friendly, and mixed-use. Districts generally emphasize a special single use, and should follow the principles of neighborhood design when possible. Corridors are regional connectors of neighborhoods and districts; they range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways.
3. Many activities of daily living should occur within walking distance, allowing independence to those who do not drive, especially the elderly and the young. Interconnected networks of streets should be designed to encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy.	4. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.
5. Transit corridors, when properly planned and coordinated, can help organize metropolitan structure and revitalize urban centers. In contrast, highway corridors should not displace investment from existing centers.	6. Appropriate building densities and land uses should be within walking distance of transit stops, permitting public transit to become a viable alternative to the automobile.
7. Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.	8. The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.
9. A range of parks, from tot-lots and village greens to ballfields and community gardens, should be distributed within neighborhoods. Conservation areas and open lands should be	

used to define and connect different neighborhoods and districts.	
The Block, The Street, and The Building	
1. A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use.	2. Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style.
3. The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness.	4. In the contemporary metropolis, development must adequately accommodate automobiles. It should do so in ways that respect the pedestrian and the form of public space.
5. Streets and squares should be safe, comfortable, and interesting to the pedestrian. Properly configured, they encourage walking and enable neighbors to know each other and protect their communities.	6. Architecture and landscape design should grow from local climate, topography, history, and building practice.
7. Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city.	8. All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, weather and time. Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems.
9. Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban society.	
Congress..., "Charter of the New Urbanism."	

Table 5.10: Permaculture Ethics & Principles		
Ethics:		
1. Care for the Earth	2. Care for People	3. Return the Surplus
Primary Principles for Functional Design:		
1. **Observe.** Use protracted and thoughtful observation rather than prolonged and thoughtless action. Observe the site and its elements in all seasons. Design for specific sites, clients, and cultures.		

2. **Connect.** Use relative location: Place elements in ways that create useful relationships and time-saving connections among all parts. The number of connections among elements creates a healthy, diverse ecosystem, not the number of elements.
3. **Catch and store energy and materials.** Identify, collect, and hold useful flows. Every cycle is an opportunity for yield, every gradient (in slope, charge, heat, etc.) can produce energy. Re-investing resources builds capacity to capture yet more resources.
4. **Each element performs multiple functions.** Choose and place each element in a system to perform as many functions as possible. Beneficial connections between diverse components create a stable whole. Stack elements in both space and time.
5. **Each function is supported by multiple elements.** Use multiple methods to achieve important functions and to create synergies. Redundancy protects when one or more elements fail.
6. **Make the least change for the greatest effect.** Find the "leverage points" in the system and intervene there, where the least work accomplishes the most change.
7. **Use small scale, intensive systems.** Start at your doorstep with the smallest systems that will do the job, and build on your successes, with variations. Grow by chunking.
Principles for Living and Energy Systems:
8. **Optimize edge.** The edge—the intersection of two environments—is the most diverse place in a system, and is where energy and materials accumulate or are transformed. Increase or decrease edge as appropriate.
9. **Collaborate with succession.** Systems will evolve over time, often toward greater diversity and productivity. Work with this tendency, and use design to jump-start succession when needed.
10. **Use biological and renewable resources.** Renewable resources (usually living beings and their products) reproduce and build up over time, store energy, assist yield, and interact with other elements.
Attitudes:
11. **Turn problems into solutions.** Constraints can inspire creative design. "We are confronted by insurmountable opportunities."—Pogo (Walt Kelly)
12. **Get a yield.** Design for both immediate and long-term returns from your efforts: "You can't work on an empty stomach." Set up positive feedback loops to build the system and repay your investment.
13. **The biggest limit to abundance is creativity.** The designer's imagination and skill limit productivity and diversity more than any physical limit.
14. **Mistakes are tools for learning.** Evaluate your trials. Making mistakes is a sign you're trying to do things better.
Hemenway, "Permaculture Ethics & Principles."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1997. Print.

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2012. Print.

Alperovitz, Gar. *What Then Must We Do? Straight Talk About the Next American Revolution: Democratizing Wealth and Building a Community-Sustaining Economy from the Ground Up*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013. Print.

Agnew, John. *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1987. Print.

American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Environmental Health, "The Built Environment: Designing Communities to Promote Physical Activity in Children." Pediatrics. 2009. Web.

Bahnson, Fred and Norman Wirzba. *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012. Print.

Bailey, Kenneth. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008. Print.

Bakke, Ray. *A Theology as Big as the City*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997. Print.

Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014. Print.

Barber II, William J. *Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2014. Print.

Barnes, Peter. *With Liberty and Dividends for All: How to Save Our Middle Class When Jobs Don't Pay Enough*. San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2014. Print.

Bartholomew, Craig G. *Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. Print.

Bartley, Aaron. "Urbanism at a Crossroads." People United for Sustainable Housing. 30 June 2014. Web.

Baukham, Richard. *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. Print.

Bell, Judith and Mary M. Lee. "Why Place and Race Matter: Impacting Health Through a Focus on Place and Race." PolicyLink. 2011. Web.

Berry, Thomas. "The New Story: Comments on the Origin, Identification, and Transmission of Values." *Teilhard Studies*. Number 1, Winter 1978. Web.

Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*. New York, NY: Avon, 1977. Print.

------- "Chapter 9: Solving for Pattern," *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. New York, NY: North Point Press, 1981. Web.

------- *What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Publishers, 2010. Print.

------- "It All Turns on Affection: 2012 Jefferson Award Lecture." National Endowment for the Humanities. Web.

Bertalanffy, Ludwig von. *General Systems Theory: Foundations, Developments, Applications*. 1969. New York, NY: George Braziller Inc., 2015. Print.

Bettencourt, Luis M. A. "The Kind of Problem a City Is." Santa Fe Institute Working Paper. March, 2013. Web.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Christ the Center*. New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966. Print.

Bouma-Prediger, Steven and Brian J. Walsh. *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008.

Boyd, Gregory. "Christ-Centered or Cross-Centered?" *ReKnew*. May 2012. Web.

Branson, Mark Lau and Juan F. Martínez. *Church, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011. Print.

Brenner, Neil and Nik Theodore. *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*. Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. Print.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament; Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997. Print.

------- *Peace*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001. Print.

------- The Prophetic Imagination. Second Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001. Print.

------- *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith, Second Edition*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002. Print.

Bullard, Robert D. ed. *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century: Race, Power, and Politics of Place*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2007. Print.

Campbell, Gordon. "Antithetical Feminine-Urban Imagery and a Tale of Two Women-Cities in the Book of Revelation." *Tyndale Bulletin*. 55.1, 2004. 81-108. Print.

Campbell, J Elliott, James F Fox, and Peter M Acton. "Terrestrial carbon losses from mountaintop coal mining offset regional forest carbon sequestration in the 21st century." *Environ. Res. Lett.* 7 (2012). Web.

Capra, Fritjof. The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1984. Print.

------- *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996. Print.

Capra, Fritjof and Pier Luigi Luisi. *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Print.

Carr, Edward Hallett. *What is History?* New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1961. Print.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. 40th Anniversary Edition. Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2002. Print.

Carter, J. Kameron. "Christology, Or Redeeming Whiteness: A Response to James Perkinson's Appropriation of Black Theology." Theology Today, vol. 60 no. 4 (January 2004): 525-539. Web.

------- *Race: A Theological Accoun*t. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Casey, Edward. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997. Print.

------- *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Reviewed Understanding of the Place-World, Second Edition.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009. Print.

Chan, Serena. "Complex Adaptive Systems." MIT Research Seminar in Engineering Systems. October 31, 2001/November 6, 2001. Web.

Christian Community Development Association. "Philosophy." www.ccda.org. Web.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. Print.

------- "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*. June 2014. Web.

Colten, Craig E. *An Unnatural Metropolis: Wresting New Orleans from Nature*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005. Print.

Cone, James. *Black Theology & Black Power*. 1969 Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999. Print.

------- "Whose Earth is It Anyways?" *Sojourners*. 2007. Web.

------- *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011. Print.

Congress of the New Urbanism. "The Charter of the New Urbanism." www.cnu.org. Web.

Conn, Harvie M. and Manuel Ortiz. *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001. Print.

Connolly, William E. *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013. Print.

------- *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.

Conrad, Lisa. "A Map the Size of the Land," *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atla*s. Ed. Rebecca Solnit. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010. Print.

Cotton, John and Smolinski, Reiner , Editor, "God's Promise to His Plantation (1630)" (1630). Electronic Texts in American Studies. Paper 22. Web.

Copeland, M. Shawn. *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009. Print.

Costanza, Robert, Gar Alperovitz, Herman E. Daly, Joshua Farley, Carol Franco, Tim Jackson, Ida Kubiszewski, Juliet Schor, and Peter Victor. "Building a Sustainable and Desirable Economy-in-Society-in-Nature." New York, NY: United Nations Division of Sustainable Development, 2012. Web.

Cresswell, Tim. *Place: An Introduction, Second Edition*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015. Print.

Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2003. Print.

------- *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991. Print.

------- "Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town," *Under an Open Sky.* ed. W. Cronon, G. Miles, and J. Gitlin. New York, NY: Norton, 1992. 28-51. Print.

Daly, Herman E. and John B. Cobb Jr. *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*. Updated edition. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994. Print.

Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Print.

Deacon, Terrence W. *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged from Matter*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Comp., 2012. Print.

Deloria, Jr., Vine. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994. Print.

Desilver, Drew. "U.S. income inequality, on rise for decades, is now highest since 1928." Pew Research Center. 5 December 2013. Web.

Donella Meadows Institute. "Systems Thinking Resources." Accessed 4 April 2016. Web.

Douglas, Kelly Brown. *What's Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/Christian Souls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005. Print.

------- *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015. Print.

Duaney, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York, NY: North Point Press, 2000. Print.

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014. Print.

Dupre, Louis. *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993. Print.

Equal Justice Institute. "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror – Report Summary." www.EJI.org. 2015. Web.

------- "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror - Supplement: Lynchings by County." ww.EJI.org. 2015. Web.

Farmer, Paul. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Updated Edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001. Print.

------- *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003. Print.

------- "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology.* Volume 45, Number 3, June 2004. 305-17. Web.

Farr, Douglas. *Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design with Nature*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008. Print.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. Print.

------- *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Print.

Freyne, Sean. *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story*. New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2004. Print.

Fullerton, John. "Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape Our New Economy." Capital Institute. April 2015. Web.

Fumkin, Howard, Lawrence Frank, and Richard Jackson. *Urban Sprawl and Public Health: Designing, Planning, and Building for Healthy Communities*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004. Print.

Galtung, Johan. "Violence, peace, and peace research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6:167-91. 1969. Web.

Gilbert, Roberta M. *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1992. Print.

Gilliard, Dominique. "A People's History: A Decade After Katrina, A Liturgical Call to Remembrance." *Conformed to Be Transformed*. 28 August 2015. Web.

------- "We Didn't Say a Mumbling Word: Christians and Lynching," Conformed to Be Transformed. 24 February 2015. Web.

Gorman, Michael. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. Print.

Grenier, John. *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.

Grudem, Wayne. *Politics - According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues In Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010. Print.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberat ion: History, Politics, and Salvation.* Revised Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988. Print.

Hackworth, Jason. The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism. New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. Print.

Hammer, Clarence and Jennifer Lang. "Race, Structural Violence, and the Neoliberal University: The Challenges of Inhabitation." *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 41:6. (2015): 897–912. Web.

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. *Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law*. New York, NY: ProPublica, 2012. Kindle.

Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers. 1996. Print.

------- *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

Harvey, Jennifer. *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014. Print.

Hayden, Dolores. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth 1820-2000*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2004. Print.

Heilbroner, Robert L. *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, and Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*. 7th Edition. New York, NY: Touchstone Books, 1999. Print.

Heltzel, Peter and Christian Winn."Jesus the Jew in the Americas: The Promise of Post-Colonial Barthianism," *Princeton Theological Review*. Issue 41, vol. XV no. 2 (Fall 2009): 7-20. Web.

Hemenway, Toby. *The Permaculture City: Regenerative Design for Urban, Suburban, and Town Resilience*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015. Print.

------- "Permaculture Ethics & Principles." www.tobyhemenway.com. Web.

Hendryx, M., E. Fedorko and A. Anesetti-Rotherme. "A Geographical Information System-Based Analysis of Cancer Mortality and Population Exposure to Coal Mining Activities in West Virginia." *Geospatial Health* 4(2), 2010. Web.

Hjalmarson, Leonard. *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place*. Portland, OR: Urban Loft Publishers, 2014. Print.

Inge, John. *A Christian Theology of Place*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003. Print.

Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. "Anchor Institutions and Economic Development: From Community Benefit to Shared Value." Inner City Insights. Vol. 1 Issue. 2. June 2011. Web.

Jackson, John Brinkerhoff. *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 1994. Print.

Jackson, Richard J. "Health and the Built Environment." Southern California Environmental Report Card. Spring/Summer 2011. Web.

Jackson, Wes. *Consulting the Genius of the Place: An Ecological Approach to a New Agriculture*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010. Print.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 1961. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1992. Print.

Jargowsky, Paul A. "The Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy." *The Century Foundation*. n.p. Web. 7 August, 2015. Web.

Jennings, Willie. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2010. Print.

------- "Overcoming Racial Faith: How Christianity became entangled with racism." Divinity. Duke University (Spring 2015): 4-9. Print.

------- "The Fuller Difference: To Be a Christian Intellectual." *Fuller Magazine*. Web.

Katongole, Emmanuel and Chris Rice. *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008. Print.

Keesmaat, Sylvia. "Land, Idolatry, and Justice in Romans," in *Conception, Reception, and the Spirit: Essays in Honor of Andrew T. Lincoln.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016.
Advanced digital copy.

Kelly, Marjorie, Steve Dubb, and Violeta Duncan, "Broad-Based Ownership Models as Tools for Job Creation and Community Development." The Democracy Collaborative. January 2016. Web.

King Jr., Martin Luther. *Strength to Love*. 1963. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010. Print.

------- "MLK at Western: Western Michigan University Speech." 1963. Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections and University Libraries. n.d. Web.

------- *Why We Can't Wait*. 1964. New York, NY: Signet Classic, 2000. Print.

Kingsley, J. Thomas, Claudia J. Coulton, and Katherine L. S. Pettit. "Strengthening Communities with Neighborhood Data." Urban Institute, 2014. Web.

Kneebone, Elizabeth and Natalie Holmes. "U.S. Concentrated Poverty in the Wake of the Great Recession." *Brookings*. n.p. Web. 4 April 4 2016. Web.

Kraus, C. Norman. *God Our Savior: Theology in a Christological Mode*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1991. Print.

Lackey Hess, Carol. *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997. Print.

Lee, Jung Yong. *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995. Print.

Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*. Ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 1996. Print.

Leopold, Aldo. *Leopold: A Sand County Almanac & Other Writings on Ecology and Conservation*. New York, NY: Library of America, 2013. Print.

Linthicum, Robert. *Transforming Power: Biblical Strategies for Making a Difference in Your Community*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003. Print.

Liu, Eric and Nick Hanauer. *The Gardens of Democracy: A New American Story of Citizenship, the Economy, and the Role of Government*. Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 2011. Print.

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Book, 2008. Print.

Lowery, Richard H. *Sabbath and Jubilee*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000. Print.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Third Edition. 2007. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012. Print.

------- *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 1988. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. Print.

Martin, Justin. *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011. Print.

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.

McKibben, Bill. *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York, NY: Times Books, 2010. Print.

Meadows, Donella H. *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008. Print.

Mehaffy, Michael. "The Urban Dimensions of Climate Change." Planetizen. 30 November 2009. Web.

Mignolo, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Print.

------- "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101:1, Winter (2002): 57-96. Web.

Moe-Lobeda, Cynthia D. Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013. Print.

Mosser, Carl. "Deification: A Truly Ecumenical Concept." *Perspectives*. July/August 2015. 8-14. Digital.

Moltmann, Jurgen. *The Crucified God*. 40th Anniversary Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015. Print.

------- *In the End - The Beginning: The Life of Hope*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004. Print.

Moxnes, Halvor. *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*. Louisville, KT: John Knox Press, 2003. Print.

Muhammed, Dedrick and Chuck Collins. "Race, Wealth, and the Commons." *Poverty and Race*. vol. 16 no. 3. (Spring 2007): 1-5. Web.

Naess, Arne. *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*. ed. Alan Drengson and Bill Devall. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2008. Print.

Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind.* Fifth Edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014. Print.

Nealon, Jeffrey. *Post-Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. Print.

Nembhard, Jessica Gordon. *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014. Print.

Oelschlaeger, Max. *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991. Print.

Oliver, Melvin and Thomas M. Shapiro. *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. Second Edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. Print.

Olsen, Roger E. "Deification in Contemporary Theology." *Theology Today*. Volume 64. 2007: 186-200. Digital.

Orr, David. "Walking North on a South Bound Train."Twenty-Second Annual E. F. Schumacher Lectures. October 2002. Web.

Ostrom, Elinor. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.

Oxfam. "An Economy for the 1%." 210 Oxfam Briefing Paper. January 2016. Web.

Pero Jr., Alberto. "The Church and Racism," *Between Vision and Reality: Lutheran Churches in Transition*. Ed. Wolfgang Grieve. The Lutheran World Federation, 2001. Print.

Pickett, Kate and Richard Wilkinson. *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. Print.

Pimentel, David. "Soil Erosion: A Food and Environmental Threat," *Environment, Development, and Sustainability* 2006. 119-137. Web.

Pope, Alexander. "*Epistle IV, to Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington*." 1731. Web.

Pope Francis. "Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father On Care for Our Common Home." Vatican, May 24, 2015. Web.

Poste, George. "Understanding the Design Principles and Dynamics of Complex Adaptive Systems: Building New Knowledge Networks to Study Complexity in Healthcare, Sustainability and Security." Workshop on Complexity and Complex Systems Arizona State University. 18 January 2013. Web.

Powell, John A. *Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015. Print.

Pred, Allen. "Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 74, No. 2. (Jun., 1984), pp. 279-297. Web.

Price, Patricia. *Dry Place: Landscapes of Belonging and Exclusion*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2004. Print.

Project for Public Spaces. "What is Placemaking?" Web.

------- "Place Capital: Reconnecting Economy with Community." 6 November 2015. Web.

------- "The Power of 10+: Applying Placemaking at Every Scale." Web.

Portugali, Juval, Han Meyer, Egbert Stolk, and Ekim Tan, eds. *Complexity Theories of Cities Have Come of Age: An Overview with Implications to Urban Design and Planning*. New York, NY: Springer, 2012. Print.

Rakestraw, Robert V. "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis." *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society.* 40/2 (June 1997) 257-269. Digital.

Reid, Herbert and Betsy Taylor. *Recovering the Commons: Democracy, Place, and Global Justice*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010. Print.

Reinert, Erik S. and Arno Mong Daastøl. "Production Capitalism vs. Financial Capitalism - Symbiosis and Parasitism. An Evolutionary Perspective and Bibliography." *Working Papers in Technology Governance and Economic Dynamics*. no. 36, December 2011. Web.

Roman-Alcala, Antonio. "Concerning the Unbearable Whiteness of Urban Farming." Planting Justice. Web.

Rosenthal, Clifford N. and Linda Levy. "Organizing Credit Unions: A Manual - Fourth Edition" National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions. Ed. Brian Gately, Jennifer Thomson, Paola Diaz. New York, NY: 2013. Web.

Royce, Edward. *Poverty & Power: The Problem of Structural Inequality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & LittleField Publishers, 2009. Print.

Salvatierra, Alexia and Peter Heltzel. *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014. Print.

Schumacher, E. F. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. 1973. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2010. Print.

Serang, Farzana, J. Phillip Thompson and Ted Howard. "The Anchor Mission: Leveraging the Power of Anchor Institutions to Build Community Wealth." The Democracy Collaborative. 2 February 2013. Web.

Sharkey, Patrick. *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equity*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013. Print.

Shuman, Michael. *Local Dollars, Local Sense: How to Shift Your Money from Wall Street to Main Street and Achieve Real Prosperity*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012. Print.

Sibley, David. *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*. New York,

NY: Routledge, 1995. Print

Smart Growth America. "The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns: A Model for Municipal Analysis." April 2015. Web.

Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.

Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*. Third Edition. Athens, GE: University of Georgia Press, 2008. Print.

Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1996. Print.

------- *Seeking Spatial Justice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

Sobrino, Jon. *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993. Print.

Sparks, Paul, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen. *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014. Print.

Speck, Jeff. *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*. New York, NY: North Point Press, 2012. Print.

Spees, H. "Peace for Cities: Building a Global Christ-Centered Civic Renewal Movement for the Twenty-First Century." Bakke Graduate University. June 2012. Dgital.

Steger, Manfred. *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013. Print.

Stegner, Wallace. *Angle of Repose*. 1971. New York, NY: Penguin, 1992. Print.

Speth, James Gustave. "Getting to the Next System: Guideposts on the Way to a New Economy." The Next System Project. Report 2. October 2015. Web.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013. Print.

Spretnak, Charlene. *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Stone, Michael K. "Applying Ecological Principles." Center for Ecoliteracy. 25 July 2012. Web.

Stroh, David Peter. *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving*

Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015. Print.

Tasch, Woody. *Inquiries into the Nature of Slow Money: Investing as if Food, Farms, and Fertility Matter*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008. Print.

------- "Commons nth: Common Sense for a Post Wall Street World." Slow Money. 2014. Web.

Texas State Historical Society. "Fort Bend County." *The Handbook of Texas*. February 1, 2016. Web.

The Next System Project. "The Next System: A Call for National Discussion and Debate." The Democracy Collaborative. 2015. Web.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. 1976. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996. Print.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*, 2 volumes. New York, NY: Penguin, 1945. Print

Tolstoy, Leo. *What Shall We Do Then?* 1886. Fredonia Books, 2004. Web.

Torre, Miguel A. De La. *Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009. Print.

------- *Doing Ethics from the Margins*. 2nd Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014. Print.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977. Print.

Turman, Eboni Marshall. *Toward a Womanist Ethic of Incarnation: Black Bodies, Black Church, and the Council of Chalcedon*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013. Print.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." 1894. American Historical Society Archives. n.d. Web.

Van Engen, Charles and Jude Tiersma. *God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission*. Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994. Print.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996. Print.

Walker, Jarrett. Human Transit: How Clearer Thinking About Public Transit Can Enrich Our Communities and Our Lives. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2012. Print.

Walljasper, Jay. *All That We Share: How to Save the Economy, the Environment, the Internet, Democracy, Our Communities and Everything Else that Belongs to All of Us*. New York, NY: The New Press, 2010. Print.

------- "How to Design Our World for Happiness: The Commons Guide to Placemaking, Public Space, and Enjoying a Convivial Life." On the Commons. Web.

Wirzba, Norman. *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.

Woodley, Randy S. *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012. Print.

Worster, Donald. *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004. Print.

Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2008. Print.

------- *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2011. Print.

Whyte, William H. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces, 1980. Print.

Yoder, Perry B. Shalom: The Bible's Word for Salvation, Justice, & Peace. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House. 1987. Print.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.