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Soldiers for Christ: The History and Future of Dominionism in America

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Soldiers for Christ:
The History and Future of Dominionism in America

Sarah Powell Miller

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in Religion

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Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction: Dominionism in America.....	4
Chapter One: Taking Our Cities For God.....	8
Chapter Two: Church, Sect, or Cult?.....	36
Chapter Three: Dominionism and Evangelicalism.....	59
Chapter Four: Dominionism and Violence.....	91
Epilogue.....	115
Works Cited.....	118

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Introduction: Dominionism in America

An Overview

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea...and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’.”¹ This passage from the book of Genesis forms the basis of a newly emergent strand of American Charismatic Christianity called Dominionism. Multiple groups have appropriated Dominion Theology over the course of the late 20th and into the 21st centuries including Christian Reconstructionism and currently, the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). Dominionism rests on a the foundational claim that Christians have a divinely mandated duty to take control over all areas of secular and religious life in America, and throughout the world. Dominionists maintain that these institutions are currently in the hands of demonic forces that actively oppose the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth.

It is the duty of Dominionists, through means of spiritual aggression, to defeat these forces and take back the world for God. Through a practice called spiritual warfare, Dominionists target demons, defeat them through prayer methods called warfare prayer, and establish Christian institutions in their place. Backed by an end-times thinking which posits that humans must establish God’s kingdom on earth before Christ can return to save the faithful, Dominionism is also inspired by an eschatological urgency. In this way, God’s call for total Christian dominion is fulfilled through this movement.

¹ Coogan, Michael David., Marc Zvi. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and PHEME PERKINS. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: with the Apocrypha*. New York: Oxford UP, 2010. Gen 1:26-27.

In addition to the practice of spiritual warfare, and the total belief in Christian dominion, a specific organizational hierarchy backs the NAR and its claims to legitimacy. Apostles and Prophets have a divinely appointed position in the Church, and it is these men and women who must make decisions for the people. They have the ability to hear God's word, and to translate that word into action. The most influential of these apostles is C. Peter Wagner, the founder of the NAR, and the figurehead of modern-day Dominionism. Wagner, through his leadership within the movement and through his abundant writing, speaks for the NAR and makes its practices known to those outside the movement. It is from Wagner that much of the information of Dominionism in this thesis comes. Because Wagner views himself as the personal liaison between the people and God, his word is considered by Dominionists to be practically infallible, and through him, the functions and practices of the NAR take shape.

The goal of this thesis is to explore the history, theology, and methodology of Dominionism in order to establish its significance within the narrative of Evangelicalism in America. More importantly this work seeks to locate Dominionism's use of violence in order to defend the ultimate claim that the movement has the potential to become physically violent. With such an emphasis on spiritual violence, and the exclusive mental concentration on aggression, the movement is poised to shift from rhetorical to physical violence. Perhaps increasing political pressure, or negative attention from the media will catalyze this shift. By comparing Dominionism to other millennial movements that have manifested their beliefs in the form of physical violence, the instability of Dominionism becomes clear. Dominionism shows the ideology of violence and the action of violence are interconnected, and one will ultimately lead to the other.

In order to prove this claim, I will engage the Dominionist movement from a variety of perspectives. My methodology is descriptive, analytical, and comparative. The first chapter will analyze the history of Dominionism, its leaders, and its most obvious practices, including that of spiritual warfare. The second chapter will locate Dominionism within different theories of religion. Church, sect, and cult theory will be discussed and then applied to the movement, followed by a comparison of more comprehensive theories of religion including Rational Choice Theory, and Salvation Theory. The third chapter will compare the specific practices and beliefs of Dominionism to mainline Evangelicalism in America, in order to contextualize Dominionism within this religious narrative and to analyze the appropriateness of the Dominionist claim to Evangelicalism. And finally, the last chapter will provide an in depth analysis of spiritual warfare, and then compare it to other examples of religious violence, including the Defensive Action Movement in the U.S, and Aum Shinrikyo in Japan. These comparisons will provide blueprints for the possible physical manifestation of Dominionist violence in the future.

Certainly, Christian social activism is not a new concept in America, nor is the use of the war metaphor an anomaly. How then is Dominionism different from past usages of these concepts? This thesis will seek to describe these differences through acute methods of analysis and most importantly, through comparison. This task is a difficult one, since Dominionism's practices as expressed in primary source material are secretive and vague. The specific methodology of spiritual warfare is almost impossible to discover, and yet I believe the available information on Dominionism is enough to contextualize it, and make predictions about its future behavior. The urgency of this task outweighs the challenges. A movement which claims to adhere to normative patterns of

Christian belief, but which also maintains an aggressive and violent view on society as a whole, poses a threat to Christianity and to American society. Dominionism's practices and theology must be revealed in order to understand its place in religious and social history.

Chapter 1: Taking our Cities for God

The History, Practice, and Theology of Dominionism

I. Reconstructionism

Reconstructionism is the movement that directly preceded and influenced Dominionism; it shares its desire for establishing a Christian nation by taking over secular and religious institutions. In 1981, Francis Schaeffer published a book titled, *A Christian Manifesto*, a short volume that would occupy a place at the center of Dominionist social and political ideology for the next decades. Schaeffer was trained as a Christian apologist but was heavily influenced by the father of Reconstructionism, Rousas John Rushdoony. Rushdoony propagated an active form of Christianity at which civil disobedience was at the center of belief.² In a Reconstructionist version of America, all public and private life would be guided, or rather dictated, by the principles laid out in the Bible. Here, Theocracy is the obvious goal, a form of Christian revival and reclamation that would directly counter the humanist developments of the past decades. Humanists place human progress at the center of civilization, rather than God. Schaeffer writes that Christians must, “be opposed to the false and destructive humanism, which is false to the Bible and equally false to what Man is.”³ Here, Schaeffer not only challenges the theological foundations of humanism, but the ontological nature of man as well. This

² Schaeffer, Francis A. *A Christian Manifesto*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1981, p.4.

³ Schaeffer 24.

analysis mirrors the Reconstructionist world-view; the challenge is not just rectifying religion, but the nature of man and society as a whole.

The urgency and legitimation of Reconstructionism is reflected in its belief that reconstruction symbolizes the return to what religion, and what America once was. “It is not too strong to say that we are at war, and there are no neutral parties in the struggle. One either confesses that God is the final authority, or that Caesar is Lord.”⁴ This immovable world-view is what guided Schaeffer and the Reconstructionists in the late 20th century. Their political goals were oriented most especially to the Christianization of public schools and the eradication of abortion. Practically speaking, a political agenda was still at the forefront of this ideology, but the radical and comprehensive world-view that the Reconstructionists presented would have implications for future strands of Evangelicalism. The focus was not just moral, but sociological and institutional.

The message of reclamation at the center of Reconstructionism was a persuasive use of rhetoric that made their mission look less radical and more like an expression of national heritage and duty since, “The United States began as a nation rooted in Biblical principles.”⁵ The root of Reconstructionism is reconstruction, which implies a return to something that has been lost. The equation of Dominionism with the founding of America would prove successful for Schaeffer and later Dominionist leaders for its uniting effect, bringing together Evangelicals who may have diverged over theological issues in the past.

⁴ Schaeffer 116.

⁵ "Dominion Theology: The Truth About the Christian Right's Bid for Power." *Social Apartheid in Tri-Cities Bristol Virginia-Tennessee 2012*. Web. 19 Apr. 2012.

II. The Formation of the New Apostolic Reformation

Schaeffer spawned the emergence of the Coalition of Revival (COR), which would later transition to the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). The COR's purpose was to develop specific applications of Dominion theology to Christian socio-political activism in more than twelve areas of life including government, business, religion and even entertainment and the media. The COR shows that dominion theology has been action-based since its inception in the 1980s. This action-based, millennial, patriotically couched ideology would guide the next phase of Dominionism, the NAR. Though the NAR inherited much of its theology and mission from Reconstructionism, it differs in some important ways both in theology and methodology.

An exact date of establishment for the NAR is difficult to determine, since it was so closely linked to and established from other Evangelical movements, like Church Growth and Spiritual Mapping. C. Peter Wagner, the figurehead of the NAR by all accounts, became interested in Dominionist action in the 1980s.⁶ To be very clear, the NAR by no means initiated Dominionism into Evangelical rhetoric or practice. Rather, by the 1990s it became the leading body through which Dominionist ideas were developed and transferred. In 1996, Wagner established the World Prayer Center in Colorado Springs, as well as the Wagner Leadership Institute in 1998. These organizations became quite literally the training grounds for members of the NAR, places to teach Dominionist theology and more importantly, to instigate action among the students. The NAR's unique practices and theology will be explored later in this chapter, but historically

⁶ Holvast, René. *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina: 1989 - 2005 : a Geography of Fear*. Leiden: Brill, 2008, p. 92.

speaking, the late 1990s were the most formative years for the NAR and would set up the foundations for a powerful movement.

III. Spiritual Mapping

The movement that most heavily influenced the NAR's practices is the Spiritual Mapping Movement, an action-based form of Evangelicalism that directly inspired and trained C. Peter Wagner. Spiritual mapping is both a movement and a concept. While the movement only materialized in the 1980s, the concept had existed long before that application. Author and historian Rene Holvast defines spiritual mapping as, "an international Evangelical and Neo-Pentecostal movement that specialized in the use of religious techniques to wage a territorial spiritual war against unseen non-human beings."⁷ Adherents of spiritual mapping advocate a sociological and supernatural approach to faith. They posit that the material world has both a natural and supernatural element and that the natural world is now under control of demonic forces that must be identified, mapped out, and defeated.

To eradicate the world of those demons, a specific, geographically focused form of evangelism must be practiced. Missionary work has long been a tradition in Evangelicalism, as the goal of this form of Christianity is to evangelize, to convert as many people as possible through proselytizing. But spiritual mapping differs from traditional forms of evangelizing in a significant way. Instead of focusing conversion on individuals, the concentration has shifted to whole areas and demographics. George Otis names Hinduism, materialism, and Islam as, "the three spiritual superpowers" through

⁷ Holvast 3.

which demonic authorities exercise control.⁸ These three “superpowers” show that demons can possess both physical areas, cultural groups, and less tangible conceptual frameworks. While spiritual mapping is still an agent for evangelism, it has changed the methods of conversion by increasing the scale of conversion and replacing the individual experience with the collective.

This large-scale view of conversionism is taken directly from the Bible. Matthew’s gospel shows Jesus informing the people of God’s plan for them, and their role in establishing God’s kingdom on earth. One verse from Matthew says, “And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.”⁹ Another later passage reads, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰ Here, Jesus’ words are taken as literal instructions. This Biblical emphasis on national conversion informs the method of spiritual mapping. Demonically possessed areas are identified, usually by divinely appointed prophets and apostles who have been granted a special sagacity in this area. A city with an extremely high crime rate, or a large concentration of residents living below the poverty line is a prime target for conversion efforts, since social trouble is a sign of demonic possession. Mapping is the tool used to identify and diagnose the problems of a community. Once the demonic forces are identified, a practice called strategic level spiritual warfare is applied. Christians come together in large numbers in these areas and use intercessory prayer to

⁸ Wagner, C. Peter. *Warfare Prayer*. Monarch Pubns., 1992. Print, 152.

⁹ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* Mat. 24:14.

¹⁰ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* Mat. 28:19.

undermine the demonic powers. This step will weaken the demons so that the last step, a full frontal evangelistic attack will completely destroy the demons.

This last step relies on methods of mass communication especially through television and radio as well as intensive prayer. This allows for access to a large audience and the eventual conversion of mass groups of people. In the wake of this Christian victory, an almost theocratic society should be implemented, with new church construction, Christian political leaders, and community prayer ensuring sustained success. An example of spiritual mapping's success, according to Wagner, is the 10/40 window. This "window" is a geographical area that is made up of North Africa, sections of the Middle East, as well as Asia and Japan. Wagner claims that this area is, "the most crucial are for the focus of the forces for world evangelization...within in it are the centers of Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, and Taoism."¹¹ Here, Wagner shows that identifying and mapping demons is concerned mostly with the destruction of non-Christian religions. This scapegoating is yet another example of the good versus evil binary, which forms the crux of Dominionism and of spiritual mapping.

Practically, this form of recruitment and conversion is seen as a more efficient way to increase church growth, and to eliminate demonic forces from the world, bringing each area converted closer to the Christian nations that Jesus encouraged his followers to establish in Matthew. The movement is an application of Dominion theology; it is one method that facilitates global Christian dominion. Spiritual mapping began in the late 1980s, when dominion theology was taking hold of the Evangelical community. Like many appropriations of Dominionism, spiritual mapping took an amorphous form in its

¹¹ Wagner, *Warfare* 151.

early stages. But as early as 1990, a definite structure was forming among supporters of spiritual mapping. Spiritual Warfare networks were developed, then large community prayer rallies. In 1994, the first ever International Conference on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare was held in Anaheim, CA. The meeting gathered over 1,000 attendees and showed the popularity of warfare prayer and spiritual mapping within the Evangelical community.¹²

Missionaries were meanwhile applying these methods to the areas in which they were proselytizing, most often in Latin America. They hailed the success of spiritual mapping, citing its socially and religiously transformative powers. Transformation was evaluated with observable socio-economic data. Poverty, church attendance, and unemployment were all factors measured to evaluate the effectiveness of spiritual mapping efforts. C. Peter Wagner and other Dominionist leaders often cite Almolonga, Guatemala as a prime example of the real world value of spiritual mapping. Almolonga has a thriving agrarian community and a high standard of living, but was once an economically depressed area. According to Wagner, over 90% of the city's residents identify as born-again Christians, a statistic Dominionists claim that is directly correlated to the economic and social prosperity of the area.¹³ A Christian Broadcasting Network news alert from 2005 says, "Repentance and revival have completely transformed Almolonga...changed from a culture of death, a culture of alcoholism, idolatry and witchcraft, to a culture today where they think only about the kingdom of God."¹⁴

¹² Holvast, p. 250.

¹³ Wagner, C. Peter. *Dominion!: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2008, p. 152.

¹⁴ Wagner, *Dominion* 56.

Dominionists attribute the social and religious transformation of Almolonga to the power of warfare prayer and spiritual mapping.

Spiritual Mapping changed the concept of prayer and evangelism for many Christians both within and outside the United States. The focus of faith on deliverance ministries and the casting out of demons through intercessory prayer made faith less about individual experience and more about the transformation of other communities. This focus on the “other” reinforces the idea that those communities doing the praying are the ideal archetype for good Christian behavior; an example of what communities could look like if they were freed from the demonic bondage that currently enslaves them. On the other side, those communities in need of transformation are painted in a negative light, possessed by demons and the anti-type of Christianity. Even Christians, if they do not conform to the ideals of Dominionism, are seen as demonically possessed. Spiritual mapping became the means through which Christians could achieve dominion over multiple facets of civil life; it functioned, and still functions as the primary tool of Dominionism and was the first real-world application of Dominion theology.

IV. Dominionist Leaders

To summarize, spiritual mapping provided the tools and methodology that would later be used by the NAR to wage spiritual warfare on godless nations. Not only did the Spiritual Mapping Movement provide the methodology, but the leadership as well. Three people, George Otis, Charles Kraft, and C. Peter Wagner played pivotal roles in the Spiritual Mapping Movement and in later forms of dominion theology. These men, already prominent writers and leaders in the Neo-Evangelical community, were

responsible for publishing materials, organizing grass-roots campaigns, and formulating specific strategy for spiritual mapping. All three taught at Fuller Seminary as well, and would be responsible for catapulting it into a bastion of Neo-Evangelical thought and leadership. Kraft is responsible for many pastoral and congregational applications of spiritual warfare. Otis founded the Sentinel Group, an organization responsible for facilitating spiritual mapping across the country and the globe. His publications represent some of the most comprehensive explanations of spiritual mapping and spiritual warfare in general. And of course, C. Peter Wagner would become the most recognizable and prolific leader of the NAR. He would go on to found Global Harvest Ministries, the central organization of the NAR. These three figures were responsible for catalyzing and reappropriating the spiritual mapping movement and laying the foundations for future forms of dominion theology.¹⁵

Dominionism is a combination of tactical spiritual mapping efforts, as well as offensive prayer techniques. Cindy Jacobs led this latter contribution, forming strategic warfare prayer rallies and meetings. It was Jacobs who introduced Wagner to the power of prayer on a collective, rather than an individual level. In his autobiography, Wagner refers to the period in his life between 1989 and 1996 as the Jacobs era, highlighting Cindy Jacob's impact on Dominionism.¹⁶ The two would coin the phrase "spiritual warfare" which is the primary practice of the NAR. As Wagner writes in his biography, Jacobs convinced him, "that we should pray not only for individuals, but we should also pray for whole social units...we must begin taking *corporate* prayer seriously."¹⁷ We

¹⁵ Holvast 91.

¹⁶ Wagner, C. Peter. *Wrestling with Alligators, Prophets, and Theologians: Lessons from a Lifetime in the Church : A Memoir*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010. Print 151.

¹⁷ Wagner, *Wrestling* 157.

have seen that this kind of large-scale prayer was manifested in the Spiritual Mapping movement, but it was Jacobs who brought Wagner in as a student of spiritual mapping. So while Wagner, Otis, and Kraft developed the organizational components of the NAR, it is Jacobs who inspired the methodology of the movement and brought the ideas of spiritual mapping to the NAR and to Wagner himself.

V. Dominionist Structure: Prophets and Apostles

By the late 1990s, the practice of spiritual mapping became less autonomous and was appropriated by the burgeoning New Apostolic Reformation. The NAR represents the culmination of all the dominion theology that had come before it. Reconstructionism provided the theology, spiritual mapping the practice. The theory and praxis came together in 1996 when C. Peter Wagner broke off from the spiritual mapping movement to establish a new form of “doing church” as Wagner himself has said.¹⁸ Wagner had been a professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theology Seminary in Pasadena, CA, teaching ways in which pastors and congregations would increase their membership. In May of 1996, Wagner organized the National Symposium of the Postdenominational Church. His goal was to bring together what he perceived to be newly emerging organizational forms of churches. He would later refer to these churches as New Apostolic Churches. This idea of a new organization and structure would inform Wagner’s entire theological worldview.

Using dominion theology as the basis for his beliefs, and spiritual mapping as one step in achieving dominion, Wagner advocates the total reorganization of Evangelical

¹⁸ Wagner, *Dominion* 57.

churches to a form of apostolic government. Wagner writes, “There is a new acceptance of the fact that the Holy Spirit...delegates extraordinary amounts of spiritual authority to individuals.”¹⁹ Instead of independently, self-governed church bodies, Wagner believes that divinely appointed prophets and apostles should guide these churches forward. Not only do these individuals lead the Dominionist movement, they possess divine authority, and control the state of the Church. Prophets and Apostles form the apex of church hierarchy, with congregants at the bottom of the pyramid. Instead of collaboration, prophets and apostles make theological and organizational alone, since they have the gift of hearing God’s will directly.

With a background in Church Growth, literally the study of how church membership can best be increased, (of which spiritual mapping is a huge part), Wagner argues that this growth can only be achieved through the proper balance of church government. In his book, *The New Apostolic Churches*, Wagner writes, “[Jesus] gifted people to the Church on two levels: (1) the government level (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers)...and (2) the ministry of the saints in general. When the government is in its proper place, biblical unity of the saints emerges and ‘every part can do its share.’”²⁰ The most successful churches of the 1990s, argues Wagner, are those who have taken on this proper organization. Wagner categorized these churches as members of the New Apostolic Reformation writing:

I use ‘reformation’ because these new wineskins appear to be at least as radical as those of the Protestant Reformation... ‘Apostolic’ connotes a strong focus on outreach plus a recognition of present-day apostolic ministries. ‘New’ adds a contemporary spin to the name.²¹

¹⁹ Wagner, *Dominion* 34.

²⁰ Wagner, C. Peter. *The New Apostolic Churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1998. 15.

²¹ Wagner, *Apostolic Churches* 18-19.

Wagner insists that these new churches represent the fastest growing Christian churches in the world, only second to Roman Catholicism.²²

The theological underpinnings of the apostolic government are important for both internal and external legitimation of the movement. Wagner writes of the prophets and apostles in the Church:

the members of the body of Christ that are most designated for hearing the voice of God are the prophets, and the prophets who are properly related to the apostles, apostles and prophets form a team, and they hear from God, and they can hear directions from God how he wants the church to move forward.²³

The need for these apostles and prophets is taken as a direct Biblical mandate. Ephesians, chapter two reads, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”²⁴ Corinthians 12:28 says, “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers....”²⁵ The authority of prophets and apostles is God given, and cannot then be disputed. These positions should not be relics of the past, but must be incorporated into the authentic church of the present. Wagner describes the modern-day apostle as, “a Christian leader...commissioned and sent by God with the authority to establish the foundational government of the Church...by hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches and by setting things in order accordingly.”²⁶ Wagner himself is an apostle, and a central authority of the NAR. In the war for

²² Wagner, *Dominion* 23.

²³ Wagner, *Dominion*, p. 25.

²⁴ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* Eph 2: 19-20.

²⁵ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 1 Cor: 12-28.

²⁶ Wagner, *Dominion* 31.

dominion, Wagner and the other apostles are the officers, strategizing and giving orders for battle.

But how exactly are apostolic churches different in their structure from traditional charismatic churches? Wagner identifies nine ways in which the NAR churches are unique. First of course, is the name and second, the new structure of authority. Third is the training of new leadership, the literal creation of networks and armies for spiritual warfare. Fourth is the focus of ministry on the future, rather than the past. Fifth is a new and contemporary style of worship. Wagner describes a typical apostolic congregation as, “some keeling, some looking at the ceiling, some holding up hands, some closing their eyes, some using tambourines, some dancing, and some just walking around”.²⁷ The modern church services to which Wagner refers incorporate modern forms of music and technology into worship while encouraging the congregation to become physically and emotionally involved in the service.

The sixth difference, according to Wagner, is the new apostolic focus on prayer as the center of worship, instead of dogmatic ritual. The NAR incorporates new forms of prayer into both the church and the external community including praise marches, prayerwalking, prayer journeys and prayer expeditions. The seventh difference refers to the NAR’s new forms of financing. Generous giving is expected from church members, and large amounts of tithes and donations are collected weekly. The eighth difference is new forms of outreach, including spiritual mapping. And finally, the NAR practices a new power orientation. Here, Wagner refers specifically to prophesy, demonic deliverance, and spiritual warfare. These nine unique qualities of the NAR separate its

²⁷ Wagner, *Apostolic Churches* 22.

member churches from other Evangelical churches and explain the abundance of their resources and membership, argues Wagner. If only all Evangelical churches would follow suit, dominion would be a reality.²⁸

VI. The Social Mandate: Kingdom Theology and the Social Gospel

In addition to the importance of organizational structure and power is the socio-political focus of the NAR. Like Reconstructionism, the NAR focuses on specific applications of dominion theology to areas of public and private life. Though its structure differs from other Dominionist groups its primary goal is still the possession of authority over the material world to prepare for Christ's Second Coming. As Wagner writes, "Dominion theology provides the biblical paradigm for understanding how the Church must involve itself in the cultural mandate as well as the evangelistic mandate. God's will is not only for us to save souls, but to transform society."²⁹ The cultural mandate requires Christians to take control of all social and political institutions; according to Wagner, "God is mandating our involvement in aggressive social transformation".³⁰

The idea of social transformation is not new in American Evangelicalism. Early 19th century America saw the emergence of the Social Gospel as propagated by Walter Rauschenbusch. Proponents of the Social Gospel Movement believed that the Church had a responsibility to challenge not just individual sinfulness, but the institutional sinfulness of the country as well. In his book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Rauschenbusch suggests that the focus of Christianity should not be on the churches, but on the entire

²⁸ Wagner, *Apostolic Churches* 18-25.

²⁹ Wagner, *Dominion* 6.

³⁰ Wagner, *Dominion* 61.

Kingdom of God, on society as a whole. As Rauschenbusch writes, “The problem of Christianizing the social order welds all the tasks of practical Christianity with the highest objects of statesmanship.”³¹ Thus, Rauschenbusch is credited as one of the first supporters of Kingdom Theology; the idea that God’s kingdom on earth should be initiated here and now by Christians.

Rauschenbusch’s emphasis on political-ideological commitments, as well as his focus on Kingdom Theology is clearly echoed in the social mandate of Dominionism, yet the NAR’s view on social activism differs in some clear and important ways from the socio-political focus of 19th century Evangelicalism. Dominionism stands in opposition to the kind of theological liberalism that many like Wagner claim the Social Gospel Movement came to uphold.³² The NAR does not hold social improvement above spiritual conversion and personal commitment to the Church, but rather gives both perspectives equal weight. The Christian cultural mandate is raised to the same plane as the evangelical mandate; neither overshadows the other. When the Social Gospel Movement identified the root of social evil as Capitalism and advocated a socialist government, they alienated themselves from the Evangelical community. More conservative Christians saw any doctrine of social transformation as liberal. Wagner and the NAR are trying to reclaim the social mandate while at the same time keeping their focus equally on the evangelical mandate. As Wagner writes, “There was a time when most Evangelical leaders would have assumed that any book written on social transformation would have

³¹ Rauschenbusch, Walter, and Christopher Hodge. Evans. *Christianizing the Social Order*. Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2010, VIII.

³² Rauschenbusch himself was still an avid proponent of the Evangelical mandate but later appropriations of the Social Gospel would place greater importance on the social mandate than on the Evangelical mandate, a shift in focus that caused schism among Christians.

been penned by a liberal. That of course has now changed.”³³ Wagner and the NAR have now reappropriated Rauschenbusch’s Social Gospel to fit into their own charismatically inclined Dominionist world-view.

VII. Demons and Territorial Spirits

The Dominionist social mandate requires Christians to transform seven different areas of society, the seven mountains as Wagner calls them. Wagner writes, “Human society is regulated by seven supreme molders of culture—namely, religion, family, government, arts and entertainment, media, business, and education.”³⁴ Christians must dominate each of these seven mountains in order to create God’s kingdom on earth. According to the NAR, society is currently under the control of demonic forces, which must be destroyed. Satan is not an archaic power, but a real and living threat to modern-day communities. As Wagner writes, “Satan delegates high-ranking members of the hierarchy of evil spirits to control nations, regions, cities, tribes, people groups, neighborhoods and other social networks of human beings throughout the world.”³⁵ His power in the modern world can be attributed to all of the ills experienced by and perpetuated by society. These demons can manifest themselves in individuals, in cities and nations, as well as in inanimate objects like “trees or mountains.”³⁶

The basis for this assertion comes again from scripture. The Gospel of John refers to “the ruler of this world”³⁷, Ephesians to, “the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit

³³ Wagner, *Dominion* 49.

³⁴ Wagner, *Dominion* 12.

³⁵ Wagner, C. Peter. *Wrestling with Dark Angles*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990. Print 77.

³⁶ Wagner, *Warfare* 77.

³⁷ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* John 14:30.

that is now at work among those who are disobedient.”³⁸ These Biblical references to Satan reveal to Dominionists that he is the ruler of his own kingdom; he has taken dominion over this world. It is Satan’s control that Dominionists, and the NAR in particular seek to defeat. Jesus’ coming to earth was the start of the war with Satan. Wagner describes this spiritual battle through the metaphor of World War II. He writes, “Jesus’ coming in the flesh, dying on the cross, and being raised from the dead was the equivalent of Satan’s D-day...However, even today the spiritual war is not yet over by far.”³⁹ The primary goal today is to defeat the ultimate enemy, which uses the means of the seven mountains to establish power and control.

VIII. Dominionist Methodology: Spiritual Warfare

Wagner outlines a three-step process that will ensure the destruction of demonic forces, a process that he names spiritual warfare. First is the Ground Level and consists of Christians’ praying for each other's personal needs. Following this first level is the Occult Level, which deals with demonic forces released through activities related to Satanism, witchcraft, astrology many other forms of structured occultism. The third step is Strategic-Level or Cosmic-Level spiritual warfare, which concludes the battle against demons by binding and bringing down spiritual principalities and powers that rule over governments. The combination of these three levels of spiritual warfare will engage, challenge, and ultimately defeat the enemy, according to Wagner. The methodology developed during the Spiritual Mapping Movement has been retooled by the NAR and

³⁸ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* Eph 2:2.

³⁹ Wagner, *Dominion* 116.

incorporated into strategic-level spiritual warfare. It remains a crucial element of identifying demonically controlled geographic areas as well as specific communities.

But spiritual mapping is only one tool in the arsenal of a spiritual warrior. In his book, *The Last of the Giants*, George Otis identifies the weaponry used by Christians to defeat territorial spirits. Otis writes, “Prayer is both a strategy and a weapon...so are fasting, unity, and deliverance...In addition to the powerful sword of truth, useful weapons today include the Biblical gifts of knowledge, wisdom, healing, and miracles.”⁴⁰ This passage from Otis reveals the subaltern world-view put forth by Reconstruction Dominionists in particular. Demonic spirits cannot be defeated through any kind of mainstream cooperation or through established secular institutions. The goal in many strands of Dominionism is not to influence politicians to pass new legislation, but to create an entirely new Christian system in which to formulate enemy strategy and wage war. The activist mind-set is at the center of Dominionist ideology. As Otis writes, “Activism—a term not to be confused with busyness—is the inevitable result of a soul that moves into close proximity to the heart and purposes of God”.⁴¹ Thus, social activism and spiritual warfare are not just purifying for those possessed by territorial spirits, but are required actions to be performed by those faithful to God. This world-view combines the bellicose theology of Reconstruction with the activism of the Social Gospel to produce a uniquely informed and motivated theology.

⁴⁰ Otis, George. *The Last of the Giants*. Tarrytown, NY: Chosen, 1991. Print 243.

⁴¹ Otis 250.

IX. Church Evangelism

Dominionism not only seeks to take over secular society, but religion as well. This focus on the falsity of non-western religions, as well as other Christian denominations shows the exclusionary nature of Dominionism. Not only are these religions false religions, they are possessed by demons. While working as a missionary in Bolivia from 1952-1971, Wagner came into contact with Catholicism via the Catholic mission. He reveals in his autobiography that it was this encounter with Catholicism that inspired his reformatory mission. Wagner writes, “The spirit of [Catholicism] has continued to maintain its powerful demonic possession over the people.”⁴² This disdain for Catholicism led Wagner toward the evangelization of Christianity, as well as the other six cultural mountains. It solidified his desire to separate from the established church to form a new movement of reformation. Wagner’s use of the word reformation calls to mind Luther’s quest to eradicate Christianity of Catholic sinfulness. Wagner uses the term strategically to point to church reform as a primary goal of the NAR.

The NAR’s war against false Christianity extends beyond Catholicism and into Protestant Christianity as well. Wagner’s issue with mainline Protestantism is its ascription to cessationism, “the general idea that the more supernatural spiritual gifts (such as those the Pentecostals has been using) actually ceased at the end of the apostolic age.”⁴³ The offices of the prophet and apostle form the central authoritative structure of the NAR, and as previously discussed posit that select humans have been given the supernatural ability to converse directly with God. To challenge this authority, as cessationism does, is to undermine the NAR as a legitimate Christian body. As Wagner

⁴² Wagner, *Alligators* 50.

⁴³ Wagner, *Alligators* 114.

came to uphold the powers of apostles and prophets, he was forced to split with mainline Protestantism, and to situate himself in direct opposition to any movement that did not uphold the legitimacy of supernatural gifts. All such movements, like Catholicism, are demonically possessed, and must be included in the Dominionist mandate to reclaim society. In this way, Christianity poses just as big a threat to Dominionism as secular society, and is considered an equal enemy in the battle against the dark powers.

X. Eschatology

The historical, sociological, and practical perspectives of Dominionism and the NAR have been discussed. But at the root of the NAR's structure, leadership, practices, and methodology is an important and influential theology. The understanding of this theological framework is a crucial part of exploring the anomaly of Dominionism within American Evangelicalism. Dominionism is guided and inspired by a post-millennial theology, which posits that the coming of Christ will occur only after the establishment of his kingdom on earth, the millennial period. The tribulation that the Bible outlines has already occurred with the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and so the world is now at the period of the millennium. This idea runs counter the more widely accepted view of a pre-millennial kingdom of God, in which Christ will return to earth before the period of the millennium. Thus, the world cannot be in the midst of that period, since Christ has not yet returned to earth.

This shift in end-times narrative has colored the actions and ideology of Dominionists since Rushdoony and Schaeffer introduced the idea of Biblical governance. Post-millennialism posits that we are currently in the midst of the millennial period of

peace and righteousness, the period that precedes Christ's Second Coming. The Kingdom of God must be established here and now. Charged with the post-millennial task of establishing God's kingdom on earth now, dominion theology becomes colored with an urgency and resolve that makes aggression necessary for the defense of the kingdom. Their eschatological view anticipates total global victory, and so no achievement is out of reach. The idea of a transformed world becomes a real and tangible goal for Dominionists, something that will only be achieved through hard work and personal commitment.

The history of eschatological thought in Christianity is complex, but the different stages and epochs of end-times belief in American Evangelicalism must be understood in order to contextualize Dominionism and the NAR within the theological narrative of Evangelicalism. The Christian Church has gone through stages of pre-millennialism, a-millennialism, dispensationalist pre-millennialism, and post-millennialism. The nature of the earthly and heavenly kingdoms of God as presented in the Bible has been divisive within Christian circles. Is the Kingdom a heavenly or an earthly kingdom? What is the nature of the return of Christ to earth? These questions are answered through various eschatological perspectives. The dispensational pre-millennial view has been adopted by most of today's Evangelicals. This eschatological view relies solely on Biblical scripture to outline the exact process of Christ's return to earth. The evangelist J.N Darby articulated this dispensationalist understanding of the Second Coming in 1831. He described Christ's return as consisting of two stages. The first, a sudden rapture that would remove the church before the seven-year devastation of the earth, the second,

Christ's coming to set up his earthly kingdom for 1,000 years.⁴⁴ The millennium has yet to occur then, and we are currently waiting for the rapture as promised by Christ. This view is expressed in the *Left Behind* series written by popular Evangelical leader Tim LaHaye. The fictional series chronicles the state of the earth after the rapture has taken the faithful to the heavenly kingdom. The current world is possessed by the Antichrist and those left behind must prepare for the seven-year Tribulation. The popularity of this series shows the prominence of the dispensational view of eschatology and how atypical post-millennialism is within Evangelicalism.

There are Biblical justifications for these different eschatological views but the historical social and political climates of America have also influenced which view has been adopted at which time in history. The bleak post-Civil War picture of America discouraged many Evangelicals in the 19th century. The post-millennial belief that the earthly kingdom of God is manifested here and now and that the tribulation has passed could not be reconciled with the social failures of Evangelicals in 19th century America and so they turned to pre-millennialism. As Evangelical writer Bruce Barron writes, "This escapist dispensational outlook flourished in late nineteenth-century America largely because it provided rationalization for defeated Evangelicals: having failed to transform society, they discovered that God has never intended them to do so anyhow."⁴⁵ Thus, many Evangelicals turned inward to await a rapture over which they would have no control. The rise of the liberal Social Gospel sealed the view of social-progress as

⁴⁴ Clouse, Robert G., George Eldon Ladd, Herman Arthur Hoyt, Loraine Boettner, and Anthony A. Hoekema. *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977. Print. 12.

⁴⁵ Barron, Bruce. *Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan House, 1992. Print. 117.

humanist, liberal, and ultimately godless. The focus was again turned to saving individual souls, as opposed to societal institutions.

Dominionists on the other hand, place the rapture and the millennial period into human hands. Gary North, a leader from the Reconstructionist Movement has famously said that if the pre-millennial view of end times is correct, that Christ will come before his kingdom is established on earth, then “God is a loser in history.”⁴⁶ He states that Evangelicals today have lost hope that society can be transformed without Christ’s physical presence on earth, a hope that is explicitly stated in the Bible. Dominionists and the NAR believe that the cultural mandate is a real and urgent call from God for Christians to transform earthly society before Christ returns to reign on earth. As Jim Hodges writes, “Christians need to get rid of our excessive desire to leave the planet.”⁴⁷ C. Peter Wagner himself identifies with Preterist post-millennial view of eschatology.⁴⁸ This view states that the end times were fulfilled in 70 AD when the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed. That period marked the beginning of a new covenant with God and the Kingdom of Christ was then established on earth. One can see how the debates over eschatology can and have divided Evangelicals since each respective view gives an entirely different interpretation of the world as it is today. The Second Coming of Christ is the hope of all Evangelicals, but Dominionists’ insistence on a post-millennial world-view separates them from mainstream Evangelicals in America.

⁴⁶ Barron 160.

⁴⁷ Wagner, *Dominion* 61.

⁴⁸ Wagner, *Dominion* 49.

XI. The Ideal Dominionist Society

We have now seen that the practices and beliefs of the NAR and other Dominionist groups are informed by their unique view of eschatology and the infallible word of the Bible. But the vision of a Dominionist society still remains vague. How will religion, government, media, the family, the arts, and business look in a world under Christian dominion, after the demons have been cast out of society and the apostles and prophets come to their rightful place in the Church hierarchy? Here we must first examine the Reconstructionist views of Christian society and then compare them to the slightly different views of the NAR. Reconstructionism offers a complete theonomy as the alternative to current American society. A theonomy is a society governed entirely by God. Apologist Greg Bahnsen in his book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, illustrates the most comprehensive view of a Reconstructionist society. Bahnsen offers four main points in his argument. The first is that “God communicated his perfect law to Israel in the Old Testament”. Second is, “The Old Testament shows that God held Gentile nations to the same ethical and moral standards as Israel”. Third, “Christ canceled the ceremonial portions of the law but confirmed the moral law, including its civil precepts”. And finally, “The law given by God in the Old Testament remains in force and is binding upon all nations today.”⁴⁹ The line of Bahnsen’s argument concludes that because God prescribed a law to all nations in the Old Testament, that same law should dictate human activity today.

In *The Institutes of Biblical Law* by Rushdoony, a picture of Reconstruction society is depicted. In Rushdoony’s ideal society, the death penalty would be required for

⁴⁹ Bahnsen, Greg L. *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 1984.

those who commit adultery, blasphemy, homosexuality, incest, striking a parent, astrology, and premarital sex. The federal government's only responsibility would be national defense; all other issues would be deferred to the Christian rulers of the state. This chilling societal alternative is disturbing to many, both Christians and non-Christians. Rushdoony and Schaeffer insist that their mandates on Biblical law and government are in accordance with the goals of the founding fathers and that discrimination will not be a part of such a Christian society. All faiths will be free to practice, but if the majority faith happens to be Christians, then Christian principles will rule the nation.⁵⁰

This Reconstructionist idea of a theonomy is vast and leaves no room for diversity or dissent. But the practicality of applying such a form of governance to the modern world is doubtful. Reconstructionism is intentionally ideal and as Barron writes, "functions more effectively as a stimulating set of theoretical principles than as a guide to action in the real world."⁵¹ Part of the NAR's goal then is to reappropriate the theology of Dominionism as utilized by Reconstruction, but to make the application of that theology more tangible and practical. Instead of theocracy, the NAR insists that it wants to work within the framework of the political institutions in place. The duty of Christians in a democracy is to elect officials who are also Christian and who will implement dominion theology at the highest levels of government. As Wagner writes, when Christians are elected, "This is not a theocracy. It is simply a normal outworking of democracy. Biblical principles will, of course, penetrate society if the government is in the hands of the right

⁵⁰ Hedges, Chris. *American Fascists: the Christian Right and the War on America*. New York: Free, 2006. Print. 13.

⁵¹ Barron 47.

people”.⁵² Furthermore, Wagner supports the idea of majority rule in a democracy. He argues that if Christians are the majority, their opinions should carry more weight than the goals of minorities. Wagner writes for example, “If a majority feels that heterosexual marriage is the best choice for a happy and prosperous society, those in the minority who disagree should conform.”⁵³

Like Reconstructionism, the NAR envisions a society where Christians lead and Biblical law rules. But in part to make that image more accessible and less outwardly threatening, they have scaled down the theonomy rhetoric and embraced America’s history of democracy. As with the Reconstruction message of Patriotism discussed earlier, the NAR has developed a message of Christian rule couched in American values. Since the founding fathers themselves envisioned a society guided by Christian principles, then Dominionist theology is a pure extension of American beliefs and virtues, a reclamation of what once was a Christian nation. Wagner for example writes, “Taking dominion comes about by...fairly and squarely, gaining the necessary influence in the seven molders of culture to ultimately benefit a nation.”⁵⁴ But we must also remember that Dominionism is not a political but a religious movement; the political arena is just one outlet for Dominionist rule. It is by no means that only way that Dominionists believe they can alter American society.

Even within this seeming embrace of American culture, the radical nature of Dominionism’s approach to the seven molders is clear. Only a few lines after speaking to the peaceful submission of minorities under the majority rule of Christians, Wagner

⁵² Wagner, *Dominion* 16.

⁵³ Wagner, *Dominion* 17.

⁵⁴ Wagner, *Dominion* 18.

writes, “In all of human history, three things above all have transformed society: violence, knowledge, and wealth”.⁵⁵ The aggressive language of the NAR’s methodology and theology is clear. Apostolic warriors use their arsenal of weaponry to defeat the enemy through spiritual warfare. The NAR’s assurance that they will operate an open and accepting society is undermined by this emphasis on violence. If the popular rhetoric of the movement puts the use of violence, whether spiritual or physical, on a pedestal, then what is to stop the Dominionist majority from persecuting those non-Christians that refuse to comply with their quasi-theocratic demands? This question of spiritual versus physical violence will be explored in a later chapter, but within the task of describing Dominionism’s history and function, the focus on violence is important.

XII. Conclusion

Bruce Barron published his book in 1992, before the NAR had become the voice of Dominionism. In the final chapter of the book, Barron makes an almost prophetic statement when he writes, “As far as broader influence is concerned, dominion theology in all its forms is likely to remain politically marginal unless...a major social or economic crisis overturns American attitudes.”⁵⁶ In a time now when economic recession still plagues the nation, could the Dominionist alternative become a more appealing worldview to a jaded Evangelical community? Or will Evangelicals use this moment to retreat back into a pre-millennial state of mind and take the emphasis off of social activism? The NAR’s growing influence within the Republican Party and within the Evangelical community as a whole is telling. Rick Perry, Michele Bachman, and Sarah Palin have

⁵⁵ Wagner, *Dominion* 19.

⁵⁶ Barron, p. 149.

given their support to this movement, Rick Perry being especially involved in Dominionist prayer meetings known as “The Call” headed by Lou Engle.⁵⁷ In the past, the likelihood of Dominionist political influence was doubtful, and even though its role is still marginal, Dominionism is starting to permeate the world-view of many powerful politicians. The subsequent chapters will compare Dominionism to religious theory, as well as traditional Evangelical practices and theology. But from this analysis of Dominionist history, ideas, and practices, the reality of its influence becomes clear, and the possible dangers of its presence within the American religious marketplace chilling.

⁵⁷ "TheCall Detroit Mixes Anti-Muslim Rhetoric With Message Of Racial Reconciliation." *Breaking News and Opinion on The Huffington Post*. Web. 07 Nov. 2011.

Chapter 2: Church, Sect, or Cult?

An analysis of religious theory and its application to Dominionism

An examination of any religious movement would not be complete without both a descriptive and an analytical dimension. While Dominionism does not fit perfectly into any preexisting religious or socio-political category, analyzing this movement within the context of multiple theories of religion pinpoints various elements of Dominionism that are of prime importance. The comparison is valuable for showing both what Dominionism is and what it is not. For example, how are Dominionism's structure, function, and theological emphases different or similar to other religious groups that have been categorized by their separateness from more traditional Christianity? Using existing theories also allows for predictions about Dominionism's future character and behavior. It is important to understand however that the task of this chapter is *not* to theorize, but to analyze. Dominionism does not fit into one theoretical model, and it is not my goal to force it into any preexisting boxes. By first examining various church, sect, and cult theories, then two more modern theories of rational choice and salvation, Dominionism's multiple functions and hybridized nature can be seen. Dominionism is both social and secretive, both rational and irrational, and both organized and diffuse. Though the subjective experience of Dominionism is inaccessible to the outside world, a comparative exercise such as this allows for a more detailed and nuanced analysis than a purely descriptive examination of the movement.

I. Sects

Sociologically, sects are defined by their separateness, “members separate themselves from other men in respect of their religious beliefs, practices, and institutions.”⁵⁸ Sectarians are commonly dissenters of the orthodox structures from which they separate; it is their dissatisfaction with the status quo that motivates schism. Sects are diverse; they can have varying organizational structures, charismatic or equilateral leadership, as well as varied theological beliefs. It is thus the action of separation that defines sects. By extension, in that sectarians feel that they must separate themselves from a larger religious body rather than continue to conform to that structure, sects are also movements of protest. Dissent is not just voiced, but acted upon. Sectarian groups become outlets through which members can register their protests against both the secular and religious arenas. In the midst of doctrinal or social upheaval, sects appeal to those seeking a new structure, a new method of interacting with the divine. Let us not forget that Christianity was formed out of a protest against orthodoxy, and separation became a necessary action, one of protest as well as religious fervency.

Theologically speaking, sectarianism is a rejection of orthodoxy. Sects most often modify orthodox belief, rather than abandon it. Sectarians often see themselves as reformers, rather than radicals, meaning that they do not seek to create something new, but something different. As Bryan Wilson writes, “The power struggles of the early church were fought, if not always about belief, at least in terms of it.”⁵⁹ Here Wilson shows that the nuances of belief have often sparked rupture within Christianity. Eschatology and the reading of the book of “Revelation” is one such example, as

⁵⁸ Wilson, Bryan. *Religious Sects*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970. Print. 7.

⁵⁹ Wilson 15.

examined in depth in the previous chapter.⁶⁰ The difference in belief here is subtle, but has sparked a sharp division between pre and post-millennialists. The example shows how belief and doctrine have been at the center of Christian sectarianism. Wilson defines the sects of the early church, writing, “Sectaries were those who voluntarily professed beliefs different from those of the church, and associated together in common faith outside the church’s control.”⁶¹ Those divergent beliefs were often aimed at creating a less dogmatic, doctrinally dependent religious body, in exchange for one based on action and the subjective experience.

A classic example of this doctrinal reform spirit is Martin Luther’s separation from the Catholic Church, which would result in the creation of Lutheranism. Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses were concerned largely with justification by faith, rather than the Catholic belief in justification by good deeds, specifically, through the purchase of indulgences. Luther believed that faith was the only measure of a person’s relationship with God, as opposed to the Catholic understanding that through the performance of good deeds or favors, the divine relationship could be strengthened. Luther’s complaint was a doctrinal one, and his disdain for the bastardization of orthodox Catholicism led him to create a modified system of faith. Luther did not seek to create something new, but rather, “the true church cleansed of worldly encrustations.”⁶² Such is the pattern for both early and modern sectarian movements; protest against orthodox doctrine is followed by

⁶⁰ Soldiers for Christ 21.

⁶¹ Wilson 16.

⁶² Stark, Rodney, and Williams Sims Bainbridge. "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18.2 (1979): 117-31. JSTOR. Web. 125.

schism and finally the creation of a modified theology. As Stark and Bainbridge write, sectarianism is, “an endless cycle of birth, transformation, schism, and rebirth.”⁶³

The theological separateness of sectarianism is evident in Dominionism. The belief in warfare prayer, the biblical foundations of spiritual warfare, as well as the belief in post-millennialism all place Dominionists outside the framework of traditional Evangelicalism. Dominionism is a prime example of the recombinant, hybridized nature of sects. Dominionists still lay claim to the Evangelical identity, and yet its members think very differently about many central theological concepts such as eschatology and violence. Sects equip their members with tools for understanding the world, and that world-view is often different from the church world-view. Dominionists, for example, see the world as a precursor to Christ’s Second Coming, with all areas of human life in need of serious, war-like, Christian conversion. Remembering that the earlier movement that inspired the NAR is Reconstructionism, the reconstituting nature of Dominionism becomes more obvious. Dominionists have inherited the activist mentality and focus on changing both the secular and religious worlds, the seven mountains. As Wagner writes, “The urgent mandate of God to the Church is to actively engage in transforming society.”⁶⁴ The specific doctrinal differences between Dominionism and Evangelicalism will be discussed in the next chapter, but in the context of sectarianism, Dominionism appears to be a sect, birthed from the desire to modify and realign traditional Evangelical beliefs.

From the social perspective, Dominionism can be thought of as anything but a sectarian movement, since members seek to fully engage in society, rather than retreat

⁶³ Stark and Bainbridge, *Church Sect* 125.

⁶⁴ Wagner, *Dominion* 5.

from it. Dominionists seek to become fully involved and in control of society by, “placing Christian leaders into positions of leadership influential enough to shape our culture.”⁶⁵ Bruce Barron explores this interpretation when he compares Dominionism to the Amish community. The Amish have remained socially, culturally, and politically separate from society, while maintaining a very specific Anabaptist theology. By separating themselves totally from society, the Amish have succeeded in creating a truly reconstructed theology and community. Barron uses this example to suggest that, “Substantial social reconstruction is probably unattainable among persons whose values and lifestyles have been formed not in the seclusion of a sectarian colony but in the midst of American society.”⁶⁶ Dominionists also seek to reconstruct society, but from the inside, rather than within an isolated community.

Wilson also examines the social facet of sects by using the examples of Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Amish. He shows that sects can both embrace and reject the society in which they live. Wilson writes that sects can be both highly organized and socialized, as in the case of Dominionism as well as more segregated and equilateral in leadership, as evidenced in the Amish community. He writes:

Jehovah’s Witnesses...have in the Watchtower Society a highly routinized publishing organization; on the other hand, the Amish use their religious ideas to sanctify and justify their distinctive, segregated communal way of life.⁶⁷

From Wilson’s analysis, we can see more clearly that sects must not be defined by the way they interact with society, since both the Amish and the Jehovah’s Witnesses are

⁶⁵ Wagner, *Dominion* 5.

⁶⁶ Barron 51.

⁶⁷ Wilson 17.

sectarian. Rather, sects are, “separate and voluntary minority religious movements”⁶⁸, they are separate in religious belief, but do not need to be socially separate. From this perspective, based on their doctrinal separateness, Dominionism is a sectarian movement.

In addition to the theological separateness of sects, many theologians and sociologists including Wilson, as well as Max Weber emphasize the importance of charisma within sectarian movements. The initial schism between the sect and church is often catalyzed by one person’s actions, as seen in the Martin Luther example. The charismatic leader provides both inspiration and organization for the sect internally, and acts as the figurehead of sectarian movements externally. As Wilson notes, the charismatic leader legitimizes the sect’s claims to divine truth, since he is in control of the movement. Wilson writes, “There must be a man—or men—under authority to make this legitimation known.”⁶⁹ The power of authority is echoed by Weber when he writes, “the charismatic authority...distributes grace.”⁷⁰ As seen here, the charismatic leader performs the dual role of communicating with the divine, and constructing the new sect. Without the charismatic leader, the sect’s connection to the divine and their justification for divorce from the parent church comes under scrutiny from the outside world. With a strong leader at the head of an organizational structure, playing both defense and offense, sects can protect themselves from these kinds of attacks.

Charisma plays a hugely important role in Dominionism in many ways, but especially by legitimizing the unique Dominionist world-vision. Though C. Peter Wagner denies being the founder of Dominionism, he is the most visible of the Dominionist

⁶⁸ Wilson 17.

⁶⁹ Wilson 34.

⁷⁰ Weber, Max. *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston, MA.: Beacon, 1963. Print. 190.

apostles. Wagner writes, “I have been called the “founder,” but this is not the case. One reason I might be seen as an “intellectual godfather” is that I might have been the first to observe the movement, give a name to it, and describe its characteristics as I saw them.”⁷¹ Here, Wagner shows how he performs the role of the charismatic architect, designing the sectarian movement. His prolific collection of published works are the source for explaining Dominionism to outsiders, for providing inspiration and direction to insiders, and for defining the scope and trajectory of the movement as a whole. Wagner’s naming of the NAR emphasizes his role as organizer, the second of the dual function performed by the charismatic leader.

Wagner also performs the first charismatic function, that is, communicating with the divine. The office of the prophet and the apostle form the basis of the Dominionist theological platform and mediate between the human and the divine. As Wagner writes, “The gift of the apostle is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume and exercise general leadership...with an extraordinary authority in spiritual matters.”⁷² Here, Wagner shows how the charismatic leader in the NAR also performs the duty of mediator with the divine. In these two ways, charisma is central to Dominionist sectarianism. Wagner’s authority as a leader legitimizes Dominionism as a sect for those who adhere to its theology by acting as the divine and the managerial leader.

Unlike Wilson, many sociologists do not see the separateness of a sect from its mother church as its defining characteristic. Rather, sects are defined by the degree to which they are in tension with the society around them. This is an analysis of sects more

⁷¹ "THE NEW APOSTOLIC REFORMATION." *Global Spheres*. Web. 26 Mar. 2012.
<<http://globalspheres.org/>>.

⁷² Wagner, *Alligators* 209.

concerned with the social rather than the theological nature of sects. Sociologist Benton Johnson expresses this idea when he writes, “A church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists. A sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists.”⁷³ Johnson’s definition provides a scale through which we can identify a sect based on its relationship with society. His focus on tension as the identifying factor of sectarianism paints sects as reactive and instigative. In this way, sects are not identified by their relationship to their parent organization or by their theological beliefs, but by their social role. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, in an essay titled “Of Churches, Sects, and Cults”, identify three factors that determine the social tension, or, in their words, the social deviance of sects. Difference, antagonism, and separation define sectarianism, all in relation to the society in which they operate, rather than the church from which they came. These defining characteristics allow sociologists and theologians alike to identify the more acute differences between church and sect that may not be identifiable using a broader definition like the one from Wilson.

It must be noted that Wilson too reveals the diversity of sects, and refrains from overly broad definitions or generalizations about them. But Stark and Bainbridge’s analysis is much more scientific in nature, and thus allows for concrete application, comparisons, and contrasts. As the authors write, “Since tension defined in this way can be measured, numerous empirical studies can now readily be performed.”⁷⁴ This additional analysis of church-sect typology is vital, in combination with Wilson’s more historo-theological description, to the understanding of Dominionism’s role within the

⁷³ Stark and Bainbridge, *Church Sect* 123.

⁷⁴ Stark and Bainbridge, *Church Sect* 124.

church-sect spectrum. Without Stark and Bainbridge, Dominionism might not be sectarian, since they profess to no point or period of separation from Evangelicalism.

When explored in terms of Stark and Bainbridge's empirical definition, Dominionism looks very much like a sect. First, prophets and apostles make clear Dominionism's difference from society. Society has strayed from "God's original design for human life,"⁷⁵ and it is the task of Dominionism to realign both secular and religious societies along the lines of its post-millennial, spiritually antagonistic beliefs.

Antagonism, Stark and Bainbridge's second category, is a vital component of Dominionism's approach to society. The goal is not to convert or to persuade, but to destroy those areas of society, which stand in opposition to Dominionist principles.

Wagner writes, "Strategic-level spiritual warfare advocates aggressive spiritual confrontation with cosmic powers of darkness."⁷⁶ The goal of the movement then is to antagonize these demons by identifying the areas of society that they have infiltrated, and subsequently pushing them out of society. Though the methods of spiritual warfare are often vague, and frustratingly so to a person trying to understand Dominionism from the outside, the antagonistic motivations of the movement are made very clear. In difference, antagonism, and possible separateness, though Wagner would contest that claim,

Dominionism seems to fit the mold of sectarianism as laid out by Stark and Bainbridge.

We have seen how sects can be characterized via theology, charisma, and society. But what is the role of the individual member within a sect? Membership within a sect is a commitment, and loyalty is the quality valued most in individual members. Wilson writes, "membership takes precedence over all other secular allegiances and normally

⁷⁵ Wagner *Dominion* 11.

⁷⁶ Wagner *Dominion* 15.

precludes other religious allegiance.”⁷⁷ Individuals become so attached to the sect that they define themselves in terms of their sectarian beliefs. Again, the fierce commitment of the Amish in every mode of living is an example. Since Amish belief is manifested in family, education, and work, loyalty to the sect becomes a part of a person’s very humanity; without their sectarian beliefs, they have nothing to call their own. Thus, the loyalty that individuals feel to the sect is tested by standards of membership imposed on individuals. In other words, “the integrity of the sect is simply the integrity diffused among the members.”⁷⁸

Here, one can see that membership is also based on the presupposition of elite member status. Members believe not only that their sect holds the ultimate link between the human and the divine, but that they, as individuals, have been uniquely chosen by God to lead the true faith. Wilson refers to this feeling of superiority as self-conscious eliteness. This conception of individual perfection is extended to negate any sinful behavior that, if performed by other less perfect Christians, would be considered morally abhorrent; “the concept of elite status is so strongly accepted that the faithful believe that they are a chosen people regardless of their moral behavior.”⁷⁹ This feeling of moral dominance is called antinomianism, and is a chief characteristic of sectarianism that causes tension between the sect and the society in which they operate. In summary, membership in a sect demands extreme loyalty, but grants elite status in return.

Identifying the exact standards of membership in Dominionism is difficult, since the subjective experience is so concealed to the outside world. In an essay, Wagner

⁷⁷ Wilson 27.

⁷⁸ Wilson 27.

⁷⁹ Wilson 33.

writes, “The NAR is not an organization. No one can join or carry a card.”⁸⁰ In an interview conducted with one member of the New England Apostolic Prayer Network, the summary of Dominion belief seemed to have been read directly from a script. In answer to the question of the specific practice of the prayer warrior, this person answered, “Our goal is to establish the Kingdom of God here and now by building up an Army of the Lord”. What weapons will the army use? Who will the army target? How is the army trained? These questions were left largely unanswered. This interview shows the loyalty and complete dedication required by members of the NAR. There is not room for dissenting or even slightly modified opinions. Without believing completely in the tenets of spiritual warfare, post-millennial theology, and the active work of satanic forces on earth, members cannot take part in Dominionist practices.

Like the Amish example, Dominionism guides all areas of public and private life, so loyalty to the movement also becomes loyalty to oneself. Since members are likened to soldiers, fighting the spiritual battle against demons, there is clearly an intensity to membership in Dominionism. But other than these general observations on membership, the specific duties of Dominionists are still unclear. This amorphous quality actually likens Dominionism to a sectarian movement by building borders between Dominionism and the outside world, borders of separateness. Though Dominionists claim to be full members of American society, taking the Dominionist message with them to each of the seven mountains of culture, they actually do more to separate themselves from the world, by making the movement inaccessible.

⁸⁰ The New Apostolic Reformation.

In classifying different types of sects, Wilson identifies multiple categories, three of which allow for comparison and contrast to Dominionism. They are conversionist, revolutionist, and manipulationist. These three sect types are differentiated by the ways in which they seek to achieve salvation. Conversionist sects require conversion as the basis of Christian commitment. In this way, individual emotion, rather than dogma and ritual is the primary manifestation of divine salvation. This individual expression of the divine is illustrated in Pentecostalism for example in which the Holy Spirit is believed to enter the physical body of the individual and cause a mode of speaking called glossallia. Conversion requires an individual relationship and connection to God.

Revolutionist sects are almost always associated with some kind of millennial theology and give way to a desire to “overturn the existing dispensation.”⁸¹ While the Second Coming is an article of faith present in most orthodox theologies, it is only when that millennialism becomes the central article of faith in a post-millennial eschatology that the formation of revolutionary sects is facilitated. Post-millennialism posits that the God’s kingdom must be established on earth now, by the people, and so an earthly revolution must occur. Coupled with concurrent periods of social upheaval, revolutionary sects offer an appealing theology based on rapid and urgent social transformation. In 18th century revolutionary America for example, Evangelical revivalism spread at a rapid pace, promising a great future for people of all socio-economic classes. The social and political upheaval of the time made Evangelicalism all the more appealing to those seeking personal and societal transformation. Revolutionary sects are thus the most identifiable for their relationship to society.

⁸¹ Wilson 93.

The most important category of sect that Wilson presents and that holds the most comparative value for Dominionism is the manipulationist sect. Manipulationist sects are much more congenial to secular culture than conversionist or revolutionary sects. As Wilson writes, “What [manipulationist sects] provide for their votaries is less an alternative set of values for life, than the semi-esoteric means to the ends that are general to society.”⁸² Dominionists certainly do not believe that salvation is an end that is broadly open to society since not everyone is a Christian, but their salvation is dependent on the transformation of society. In this way, Dominionism is a combination of conversionist, revolutionist, and manipulationist. Conversion, while focused on entire populations rather than individuals, is a definite component of Dominionism. Revolution, the total restructuring of society is also a central goal of Dominionism. Millennial theology combined with a scornful view of global society gives Dominionism an urgency and a sense of superiority that mirrors the revolutionary sects that Wilson discusses. As is its theological and theoretical pattern, Dominionism evades specific definition, but these three sect categories show that Dominionism’s goals and methods are similar to sectarian Christian groups that have come before it.

II. Cults

If Dominionism does not fit perfectly into theories of sects, the possibility of its cult status must also be explored. Sociologists and theologians alike have debated the differences between church, sect, and cult. Disparities are often delicate, but the social implications of a cult religious group are great. Sociologist Howard P. Becker coined the

⁸² Wilson 141.

term cult. Becker, unsatisfied with the broad definitions of sect, broke up the term into the two categories of sect and cult. He claims that the primary characteristic of cults is the creation of new religious beliefs. As Stark and Bainbridge write, “Cults...do not have a prior tie with another established religious body. The cult may represent an alien religion, or it may have originated in the host society—but through innovation, not fission.”⁸³

Whereas a sect breaks off from a parent church and modifies its theology, a cult creates a new belief system which is not related to any parent church. Both sects and cults are deviant religious groups, but the difference lies in the novel theology of cults.

Greater than the theological differences between cult and sect are the social differences, most notably the social reaction to cult formation. Cults usually garner a negative, reactionary response from society, so this societal conception of the cult must be a part of its analysis. Since cultic belief systems are alien, as they are not related to any parent theology, society views them as a more of a threat; the tension between cult and society can be great. Sects occupy some normative space within societies, since they share many characteristics of their parent church. Stark and Bainbridge describe three types of cults, audience cults, client cults, and cult movements. The first two types of cults are benign; they retreat from society, and do not pose a threat to the established church.

The last category of cult movements however, as Stark and Bainbridge describe them, are cults that start to appropriate the qualities of religious movements, or churches. They seek to become more involved in society, and stand in opposition to the established order. Stark and Bainbridge use the example of Scientology when they write, “As

⁸³ Stark and Bainbridge 125.

Scientology evolved from a client cult to a movement seeking major commitment from its members, its legal troubles grew.”⁸⁴ Here, Stark shows that as Scientologists were required to be more committed, the visibility of the movement grew and subsequently, the societal disdain for the movement. So long as the cult beliefs are kept among the members, they pose no threat to society. But as soon as those cults shift to for mobilized religious movements, and membership manifests itself in mainstream society, society reacts. The Scientology example shows that as the notoriety of a cult grows, so too do misconceptions and distrust. The vague boundaries and belief systems of cults are disconcerting to those within secular and religious communities.

The cult status of Dominionism is highly debatable. Dominionists themselves, C. Peter Wagner chief among them categorically deny that their movement is a cult. Wagner writes, “The NAR is definitely not a cult. Those who affiliate with it believe the Apostles’ Creed and all the standard classic statements of Christian doctrine.”⁸⁵ Dominionists cling to Evangelicalism as a parent church, partly for its legitimizing power. More will be said in a later chapter about Dominionism’s place within Evangelicalism, but many in the secular and Evangelical worlds do believe that Dominionism is a cult. The negative reaction of society to Dominionism categorizes it as a cult, and yet, using Wilson, Stark, and Bainbridge’s criteria, Dominionism seems to fall somewhere between cult and sect. It has a highly developed and theologically based organizational structure, but it also has vague theological boundaries and little doctrine, at least none that is available to outsiders. It might be better to say that Dominionism is a puritanical movement, rather than a cult or a sect. Its actions are all done in the name of

⁸⁴ Stark and Bainbridge 128.

⁸⁵ The New Apostolic Reformation.

societal purification, as well as the purification of the church. By focusing on Dominionism's action, rather than its structure, more observable evidence can be drawn from it. Since Dominionism is more focused on action than on organization it seems only fair to categorize it in terms of that action. The term purification movement describes the action of Dominionism, and shows that its categorization as a sect or a cult must not overshadow the central goals, mission, and action of the movement.

III. Rational Choice Theory

Comparing Dominionism to more modern theories of religion like rational choice theory allows for a more detailed analysis of Dominionism's function and the possible motivations of its members. In trying to distinguish what Dominionism really is and what it isn't, rational choice theory reveals the appeal of the message of Dominionism. In their book, *A Theory of Religion*, Stark and Bainbridge present a theory based on economic principles that explains the reasons for human participation in religious institutions as well as the function of religion. Within their theory, the authors present different axioms, definitions, and propositions, which describe religion as a system of compensators. Axioms two and three say that humans will pursue "what they perceive to be rewards" while avoiding "what they perceive to be costs."⁸⁶ And yet, as in the world of free market economics, some rewards are limited in supply. People will continue to pursue those rewards however, and when the rewards become unavailable, will accept compensators or a "postulation of reward" that serves as a "substitute" for the reward.⁸⁷ Religion promises to give answers to questions of life and death and is thus a supernatural

⁸⁶ Stark, Rodney, and William Sims. Bainbridge. *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996. Print 27-28.

⁸⁷ Stark and Bainbridge *Theory* 36.

compensator, filling the people's desire for these answers not with anything material, but with immaterial promises of salvation in the afterlife.

In keeping with this theory of rewards, costs, and compensators, Stark and Bainbridge arrive at a definition of religion, which they perceive to be, "systems of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions."⁸⁸ When applied to the promises and the function of different religions, this theory provides a certain insight. Within many modes of Christianity, peace, salvation, and happiness in the afterlife are accepted as compensators when those earthly supplies of the same qualities become unavailable. Heaven is often referred to as the great reward, a goal to keep working toward through earthly deeds. Rational choice theory tends to ignore the emotional side of the subjective religious experience however, which many would argue is a central component of the individual religious experience. Discussing religion in economic terms seems inappropriate since religion for many must not be reduced objectively. But by describing in purely objective terms the function of religion for individuals, Stark and Bainbridge do an excellent job of identifying the motivations that individuals bring to religion and the benefits that they receive from religious systems. Furthermore, the theory combats the oft-cited criticism that religion and its believers are irrational. Stark and Bainbridge show how rational choice plays a central role within religious participation. While reductive, rational choice theory highlights the inherent human need for answers to life's most difficult questions, and religion's ability to provide satisfactory, though not material, answers to those questions.

⁸⁸ Stark and Bainbridge *Theory* 39.

In some ways, Dominionism fits into rational choice theory. Wagner posits that culture, government, and religion have performed unsatisfactory roles in the lives of human beings, and so a new system must be implemented for changing society. In one way, this could be seen as a compensatory system. The idea of Christ's Second Coming functions as a compensator, motivating the people to adhere to the tenets of dominion theology. However, Dominionists are looking for real and very tangible results in their quest for spiritual domination. Wagner writes, "I believe our goal should be nothing short of sociologically verifiable transformation."⁸⁹ A satisfactory compensator would not be prayer for example, but the total transformation of poverty within a city that the prayer inspires; the actual statistical evidence that the average income of households within the city has risen.

Without these results, we must wonder how long members will continue to adhere to Dominionism; how long will they accept compensators that do not prove to have material results? On the other hand, the message of spiritual warfare is so intense and persuasive that members may indeed continue to accept spiritual compensators, even when earthly society in America continues to go unaffected by the Dominionist mission. This idea is similar to that of the Millerites, who predicted the end of the world very specifically. The Millerites, known today as Seventh Day Adventists, predicted that in October 1844, Christ would come again to earth and Armageddon would begin. The prediction failed, and yet members continued to adhere to the Adventist faith just as fiercely as before the failed prophecy. As Wilson notes, "inspiration redeemed

⁸⁹ Wagner *Dominion* 55.

disappointed prophecy.”⁹⁰ The Millerites blamed the failure on their own human sin, and strived to be better Christians than they had been before. The same kind of inspiration has been drawn in Dominionism. Though Dominionists do not make specific predictions like the Millerites, they do generally predict that society will be transformed. If that transformation doesn’t happen, they simply pray harder, or tailor their methods of spiritual warfare to be more affective, though still in ways that are inaccessible to the public. As Wagner writes, “Let’s not condemn what we have done, let’s strive to do better.”⁹¹ In this way, both the message and the function of Dominionism work as compensators and can be applied to Stark and Bainbridge’s theory.

IV. The Promise of Salvation

Another theory of religion that seeks to objectively define the religious experience in terms of its action and function is Martin Riesebrodt’s, *The Promise of Salvation*. Riesebrodt writes that there are common functions that connect religious traditions and allow for a comprehensive definition of religion. That definition, Riesebrodt writes is, “based on communication with superhuman powers and is concerned with warding off misfortune, coping with crises, and laying the foundation for salvation”.⁹² Unlike other theories, which suffer either from overly broad or overly specific analyses of religion, Riesebrodt gives his readers a seemingly airtight theory based on observable action, rather than subjective interpretations, which is helpful in a case like Dominionism when the subjective experience is inaccessible from the outside. Riesebrodt calls this

⁹⁰ Wilson 99.

⁹¹ Wagner 209.

⁹² Riesebrodt, Martin. *The Promise of Salvation*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. xii.

observable action liturgy, which he defines as, “institutionalized practices.”⁹³ No matter the religious tradition, liturgical action within religion functions to achieve the three things laid out in his initial definition. Religious practitioners seek to ward off misfortune, cope with crises, and seek salvation. Through different means, they seek to achieve the same ends. Riesebrodt draws from a wealth of real-world examples like Catholicism and Hinduism, as well as other religious theories to apply and challenge his own claims. At the same time, Riesebrodt shows impressive restraint, refraining from taking his theory too far or relying on, “culturally specific concepts.”⁹⁴ He writes, “Religion is not an empirically accessible object. It can be studied only in its concrete forms and practices.”⁹⁵ By examining other theories and acknowledging his own shortcomings and doubts, Riesebrodt succeeds in qualifying all of his claims, ultimately presenting a well-researched and solid theory of religion.

Riesebrodt claims that by observing religion not through discourse or institutions, but through action, a set of religious goals can be posited. Religion in this context must be thought of as “a complex of practices,”⁹⁶ rather than a theological tradition. Religion developed as a way to interact with the superhuman. These interactions Riesebrodt deems “interventionist practices,” or ways of connecting with the divine.⁹⁷ By observing these practices, one can see that they function to ultimately achieve salvation for the practitioner. The supernatural is the ultimate agent of help and escape in times of trouble and interventionist practices seek to establish a connection in order to avert misfortune

⁹³ Riesebrodt 72.

⁹⁴ Riesebrodt 16.

⁹⁵ Riesebrodt 19.

⁹⁶ Riesebrodt 72.

⁹⁷ Riesebrodt 92.

and gain salvation for the believer. In the Abrahamic traditions, this intervention is sought through prayer in song, chant, and the spoken word. Riesebrodt writes, “In Abrahamic religions, general practices are seen as interactions with a God who controls salvation and can both avert and cause disaster.”⁹⁸ According to this then, the supernatural is not just a positive and benevolent force, but also has the power to destroy. Intervention not only seeks to avoid earthly misfortune, but divine retribution as well. Similarly in East Asian traditions, practitioners consult with mediums and shamans in the hopes of curing illness, nightmares, or even demonic possession. Natural disasters especially are seen as punishment from the supernatural, and interventionist practices are used to maintain a good relationship between the earthly and the divine. It is liturgical action that illuminates the meaning of interventionist practices and allows religion to be theorized. The ritual itself ascribes meaning.

Applying Riesebrodt’s theory to Dominionism tests the movement and further reveals its hybridization. Since Dominionism has resisted institutionalization, are there liturgical practices to be analyzed? While the theology and social mission of Dominionism is clear, its specific practices are not. Intercessory prayer is the main function of spiritual warfare, but there are no written creeds through which to analyze Dominionism. Leaders of the movement like C. Peter Wagner, have written over hundreds books expressing its history and mission. And yet these sources do not express the specifics of liturgical action or interventionist practices, making them difficult sources through which to analyze Dominionism. However, prayer could be seen as the primary liturgical action of Dominionism, since that prayer is being utilized to achieve salvation.

⁹⁸ Riesebrodt 117.

Wagner writes, “spirit directed prayer opens the way for the blessings of the Kingdom of God to come upon the earth.”⁹⁹ In this way, Dominionism could fit into Riesebrodt’s idea of salvation, liturgy, and intervention.

On the surface then, it seems that Dominionism fits into the system of intervention and salvation that Riesebrodt outlines. Prayer is used to avoid misfortune, overcome crises, and achieve salvation. And yet the system of spiritual warfare used in Dominionism resembles a slightly different form of intervention. Dominionists themselves believe that they have already achieved earthly salvation. Their goal is not to pray for their own well being, but for the salvation of others. Intercessory prayer is thus used to connect God to the areas in most need of his help, rather than to the Dominionist community itself. Through Dominionist prayer, God will intercede for others in need. In this scenario, Dominionists represent the ideal community; their prayer seems to have greater power than the prayers of other communities. As Wagner writes, “History belongs to the intercessors!”¹⁰⁰ Here, Wagner claims the real power of intercession, a form of prayer that, when practiced by the right community, can have a transformative power. Just as the need for apostles and prophets is taken from the Bible, so too is the power of intercessory prayer. Christ functioned as a mediator in the New Testament, taking the prayers of the people to God. By adopting intercessory prayer methods, Dominionists are acting in the way of Christ; selflessly seeking God’s mercy for the needs of others, rather than their own.

⁹⁹ Wagner, *Warfare* 29.

¹⁰⁰ Wagner, *Dominion* 94.

V. Conclusion

The slightly mismatched ideas of intercessory prayer, and Riesebrodt's liturgies show that Dominionism is not a straightforward religious movement, as it does not have clear liturgical practices. Though it may function similarly to a sect or a cult, or fit into the rational choice model, it evades specific characterization. Its goals are both spiritual and social and its methods of transformation confound even the most modern religious theory. Certainly, like Riesebrodt describes in his theory, Dominionism ultimately seeks connection with the divine, but through very different and vague processes than traditional modes of salvation. Until we understand every aspect of dominion practice, can we know enough to theorize it? The answer is no. But even without a perfect theoretic compliment to Dominionism, exploring church, sect, cult, rational choice, and salvation theory allows for a more in depth analysis of Dominionism's practices and functions. Although these theories do not pinpoint the exact parameters of Dominionism, they do allow for a deeper exploration. We see that Dominionism is part sect, part rational choice system, and partly a way for individuals to achieve salvation. Though the specific practices of Dominionism may confuse these theories, broadly speaking, they reveal that Dominionism functions as a separate community seeking salvation for a world in desperate need.

Chapter 3: Dominionism and Evangelicalism

A Comparison of Evangelical and Dominionist practices and theology

Just as Dominionism evades a theoretical model, its practices and theology do not fit perfectly into the Evangelical model from which it claims its foundations. C. Peter Wagner, as the leader of the NAR, has escaped the extremist label because he continues to tie Dominionism to traditional modes of Evangelical prayer, prophecy, and rhetoric. His claims of moderation and continuation seem grounded in the externally observable practices of Dominionism. And yet upon closer inspection, Dominionists have clearly broken with the Evangelical tradition in some important and polarizing ways. Theologically, methodologically, and organizationally, Dominionism represents a new breed of Christian expression, which, though it includes elements of mainstream Evangelicalism, presents a radically different interpretation of Christian mission and history. By exploring the Evangelical view on leadership, prophecy, prayer, and social reform, the anomaly of Dominionism becomes apparent. Dominionism's focus on intercessory prayer, the power of the prophetic office, and the militancy of social and theological reform represent a great departure from the norms of Evangelical Protestantism and help scholars identify the distinguishing factors of the Dominionist message.

I. Leadership

Just as leadership plays a central role in Dominionism, it has also heavily influenced movements throughout the history of Evangelicalism. Most forms of

Evangelical Protestantism have a specific power structure in place, with a highly visible figurehead, or figure heads in some cases, holding the reigns and representing the faith to the outside world. Sociologist Max Weber focuses on the authority gained from the charismatic leader when he defines charismatic authority as, “resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him.”¹⁰¹ Weber shows the multi-step process of charismatic authority. Not only does the leader have the exceptional power to hear God’s word, in the case of Evangelical leaders, but he also has the power to interpret that word and set guidelines of normative behavior for those who depend on his authority. Those behaviors form a system of belief; in Weber’s terms, they are routinized. The normative beliefs of the faith are derived directly from human interpretation, rather than divine mandates. A middleman of sorts is needed to hear and interpret God’s word.

a. Preaching

Within the history of Evangelicalism, individuals with special gifts for preaching, healing, and promoting religious belief have catalyzed revival movements and helped to build the popularity of Evangelicalism in America and abroad. Whether the authority is diffuse, as seen in the Jehovah’s Witnesses, or more obvious as with different versions of Pentecostalism, some form of hierarchical power seems to characterize most versions of Evangelical faith. That power is most

¹⁰¹ Weber, Max. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Free, 1964. Print 150.

often exhibited through preaching, since preaching God's word to others represents the means through which grace can be learned and achieved by the faith community. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says:

He has put His Word in our mouth. He wants it to be spoken through us. If we hinder His Word, the blood of the sinning brother will be upon us. If we carry out His Word, God will save our brother through us¹⁰²

Thus the cruciality of preaching, and of the leader performing the preaching, is centered on the effect of the word upon the faith of others. As early as the 16th century, John Calvin stressed the importance of preaching. Human instrumentality is the essential component in the bestowal of divine grace, according to Calvin.¹⁰³ The Puritans stressed a more confrontational mode of preaching; pinning sinful man directly against a righteous God. And later, Karl Barth stressed the importance of biblical literacy through preaching. Though preaching has undergone significant changes from doctrinal precision to the emphasis on individual experience, and from biblical to cultural emphases, it remains the central ritual within Evangelical worship. Everyone from Calvin, to Schleiermacher, to Edwards and Wesley focused on the power of preaching within the process of conversion. It is the binary process of preaching and hearing that can lead to the cultivation of individual grace.

This emphasis on preaching within the process of conversion clearly charges the preacher with a level of power and responsibility. And here is where the authority of the charismatic leader comes into play within Evangelicalism. If hearing

¹⁰² Bloesch, Donald G. *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. Vol. 1. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978. Print 72.

¹⁰³ Bloesch 78.

God's word is of primary importance, the person who transmits God's word, who makes that word audible, holds a high level of authority. Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, these are just a few people who have come to hold that level of authority by constantly transmitting and translating God's word to Evangelicals. From the pulpit to the pamphlet, to the television screen, preaching still holds the highest level of importance in Evangelicalism. However, many warn of the tendency to prioritize the preacher over the word of God, the man over scripture. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr recognizes this tendency and urges preachers to practice, "mercy, humility, and charity."¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Bonhoeffer wars against the emphasis on individual personality:

Every cult of personality that emphasizes the distinguished qualities, virtues, and talents of another person, even though these be of an altogether spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community; indeed it poisons the Christian community"¹⁰⁵

Here, Bonhoeffer shows that idolatry of the preacher, rather than faithfulness to the word is an all too common phenomenon in modern day Evangelicalism, and is to be avoided if the word of God is to be preserved. Rectifying this sentiment with the ferocity of Evangelical preaching, the powerhouse personalities of preachers themselves, and the direct link for many between the physical preacher and the word of God is difficult. Keeping scripture at the center of ritual and maintaining its infallibility has been the key strategy to maintaining this balance. Though the charismatic leader is charged with some authority, the word of God must always be charged with more.

¹⁰⁴ Bloesch 87.

¹⁰⁵ Bloesch 94.

This authoritarian balance is challenged by the hierarchical power structure presented in Dominionism. The qualities, virtues, and talents of the apostles leading the movement are touted as exceptionally divine. These men and women interpret God's word because they have been given the special power of prophecy. At one point, Wagner stresses the authority of the apostle as equal, if not greater than that of God's word. He writes, "The chief distinguishing characteristic of an apostle is God-given authority."¹⁰⁶ The fact that Wagner himself uses the term "authority" shows how inerrant the prophets' and apostles' words are taken to be, likening these human men and women to the level of the divine Christ. Wagner writes, "When intercessors do their job well, the voice of God can be heard more clearly here on earth."¹⁰⁷ As Bonhoeffer claims, the power of men and women is ultimately worldly, and so the power structure of the church has been sharply changed in Dominionism, heightening the power of human beings. Bruce Barron echoes this sentiment when he writes, "The often inflated rhetoric Dominionists use in motivating Evangelicals to pursue social transformation tends to transfer ultimate meaning from the next world to this one."¹⁰⁸ So while Wagner claims to uphold the values of mainstream Evangelical Protestantism, this major shift from divine authority to human authority represents a great departure from the norm.

b. Interpreting Scripture

Unlike the inerrancy of scripture in traditional Evangelicalism, scripture plays a somewhat different role in Dominionism, and is often second to the word of

¹⁰⁶ Wagner *Dominion* 31.

¹⁰⁷ Wagner *Dominion* 27.

¹⁰⁸ Barron 168.

the prophets. Scripture is used most prominently to justify the office of the prophet, apostle, and intercessor, but prayer is the primary ritual used in Dominionism. The emphasis on prophecy and warfare prayer is very different from the sections of the Bible that modern Evangelicals emphasize. Though a popular criticism of most forms of Evangelicalism is the overemphasis of some sections of scripture, and the de-emphasis of others, this specific Dominionist emphasis is perplexing to many. Dominionists have created their own terminology in the phrase “warfare prayer” and then used the Bible to support that concept, though it does not directly use the same phrase. The Bible is used for its legitimation, rather than inspiration. As Bruce Barron writes, “perplexing to Evangelicalism are those innovators who, unlike the liberals who are easily identifiable as opponents, derive new ideas from the Bible while still affirming its infallibility.”¹⁰⁹ Preaching the gospel is also not a priority in Dominionism, since it cannot engage whole populations and expose them to the truth of dominion. We will discuss the role of prayer in a later section of this chapter, but for now the power of the charismatic authority is clearly more acute within Dominionism than it is in traditional forms of Evangelicalism, as seen through the inerrancy of men over scripture, and the use of scripture to boost the power of human beings.

II. The Use of Prophecy

Prophecy as a rhetorical tool can be seen in many Christian movements. As seen in Chapter one, Dominionism draws the necessity for prophets to lead the

¹⁰⁹ Barron 110.

church directly from the Bible. And indeed, their biblical claims are not unfounded. The Hebrew prophets, Paul in the New Testament, and Jesus Christ himself personify the character of the prophet, bearing witness to the corrupt world, asking the meaning of suffering, and announcing God's will for the future. Prophetic rhetoric has always been a popular mode of speech used by politicians as well. Leaders from the Founding Fathers to Abraham Lincoln, and Barack Obama have taken up the office of the prophet, as they call American back to its roots while urging it to move forward on its divinely mandated path. The Dominionist use of prophecy then is not only a continuation of a biblical Evangelical tradition, but represents a profoundly American form of speech and tool of persuasion. And yet many categorize Dominionism as a bastardization of mainstream Evangelicalism, and an anti-Democratic, anti-American movement of subversion. How is the Dominionist use of prophecy different from past uses of the same concept?

a. Types of Prophets

Prophecy in the Bible is an office occupied with those who can mediate between the people and their God. The Old Testament gives examples of two types of prophets. First are the house prophets who support the monarchy, speaking for the royal houses of David and Solomon. After Solomon's death in 922 BC, Israel splits into two kingdoms and another prophetic office emerges called the canonical prophet. These prophets warn against the ruling monarchy and posit that God judges Kings just as he judges the common people. Prophets, like Samuel, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah link the monarchy to the blasphemous worship of God's other

than Yahweh.¹¹⁰ Both house and canonical prophets claim to speak for God, and accuse each other of false prophecy. As Max Weber writes, “Prophecy and counterprophecy confronted each other in the street. Both equally claimed ecstatic legitimation and cursed one another. Where is Yahweh’s truth? everybody had to ask.”¹¹¹ Faced with exile, destruction, and oppression, Hebrews in the Old Testament had to question God’s justice, and listen to those who claimed to know his truth as a means of survival.

But what exactly does the prophetic office entail? Many view prophets as magicians, seeing the future through their crystal balls. But a closer inspection of biblical prophecy reveals a much more complex role. As Martin Buber notes, “A ‘true prophet does not announce an immutable decree,’ but ‘speaks into the power of the decision lying in the moment’ in a way ‘dependent on question and alternative’ and ‘call and response.’”¹¹² The prophets are charged with making real and collective decisions *for* the people *through* a connection to the living God. So with power, comes immense responsibility to carry out God’s truth. In his book, *American Prophecy*, George Shulman describes the characteristics of the Hebrew prophet in four steps. First, the prophets are messengers who announce truths that their audience is, “invested in denying.”¹¹³ The prophets announce the inconvenient truth of God’s word. Next, prophets bear witness; they “testify to what they see and

¹¹⁰ Shulman, George M. *American Prophecy Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008. Print. 4.

¹¹¹ Weber *Sociology* 4.

¹¹² Buber, Martin. *The Prophetic Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960. Print 5.

¹¹³ Shulman, George M. *American Prophecy Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008. Print 32.

stand against it.”¹¹⁴ Prophets are charged with standing against injustice wherever they see it. Thus, Frederick Douglass is a modern day social prophet, bearing witness against slavery in the name of God, just as a seemingly polar example, Jerry Falwell serves as a prophet to many conservative Christians. The prophet for justice can be both secular and religious. Third, prophets are “watchmen” who “forewarn.”¹¹⁵ And finally, echoing the idea of a dialogical relationship with God, Schulman claims that prophets are singers who, “ask and answer the question, what is the meaning of our suffering?”¹¹⁶ These four functions show the active, the symbolic and the mediating function of the prophet in secular and religious arenas.

b. Prophecy as a Form of Speech

Schulman goes on to analyze prophecy as a genre of literary and political speech. Secular and religious leaders throughout history have taken up the methods used by prophets in the Bible for their own ends. Shulman points to three narrative forms, which the prophetic genre takes: theodicy, jeremiad, and lamentation. Theodicy is the interpretation of God’s just judgment. Prophets ask why the people suffer and theodicy answers that question: because it is God’s will. The jeremiad is rooted in reference to past trials and tribulations. It uses the example of the past to inspire present day redemption and reformation. Prophets use the covenantal relationship between the people and Yahweh to instill a spirit of renewal in the

¹¹⁴ Shulman 33.

¹¹⁵ Shulman 35.

¹¹⁶ Shulman 37.

people. And finally, lamentation dramatizes loss in order to sustain the people. As Hannah Arendt writes, “we can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it. The form for this is the lament, which arises out of all recollection.”¹¹⁷ These three forms of the prophetic narrative were used by the Hebrew prophets of course, but are also used today in various socio-political circumstances. Politicians hearken back to the mores of the founding fathers, using the jeremiad to remind the American people of our democratic covenant. Dominionism uses this same language of renewal in order to paint a desolate picture of modern day society, and urge prayer warriors to change the corruption that they see.

The dual nature of prophetic rhetoric is clear from Schulman’s three narrative forms. Prophecy can be used to both free and to oppress, to uphold the status quo or to challenge authority. Many use prophecy in order to dictate moral absolutes. Such was the case when Jerry Falwell announced that the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were the divine punishment against American immorality. Falwell said:

The pagans, the abortionists, the feminists, the gays and lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternate lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way—all of them who have tried to secularize America—I point the finger in their face and say, ‘you helped this happen.’¹¹⁸

Here, Falwell uses Shulman’s third characteristic of prophetic narrative, lamentation, to dramatize the 9/11 attacks and to use God’s judgment as an answer to the question of suffering. And yet the great emancipator Abraham Lincoln also

¹¹⁷ Shulman 11.

¹¹⁸ Shulman 14.

uses the prophetic voice to bring the American people together to ensure the value of human life in the Gettysburg Address saying:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal... it is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us... that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom.

Lincoln uses the language of the jeremiad to encourage renewal and redemption.

Like the Hebrew's covenant with Yahweh, America's covenant with democracy must not be broken. Though they do not lay claim to the authority of the Biblical office of the prophet, these social and political leaders utilize the rhetorical tool of prophecy.

Unlike Lincoln and Falwell, the prophets and apostles of the Dominionist movement do indeed claim to fill the biblical office of the prophet, exercising not just leadership, but power over their people. Their prophetic language is taken literally, not as a representation of struggle. Apostle Lance Wallnau is a leading Dominionist speaker who promotes the seven mountains campaign. In a TV interview, Wallnau said:

When Jesus calls His apostolic company and says, Behold, I send you, and I give you authority over all manner of unclean spirits, that means that He has given you authority as part of His apostolic company to go in to remove the garbage and eradicate the rats, creating a healthy culture where the presence of garbage no longer draws rats.¹¹⁹

The dialogic relationship between the prophets and God as seen in the Hebrew Bible is echoed here, but instead of performing a mediating role, Dominionist prophets are possessed with an incontestable authority. This quote is just one example of the Dominionist use of the lamentation narrative. Loss is dramatized, the language is

¹¹⁹ "Quotes on Dominionism From the Apostles and Prophets of the New Apostolic Reformation | Monitoring a Growing Dominionist Movement." Web. 6 Feb. 2012.

tailored to reduce non-Christians to rats and garbage, making warfare prayer an attack on the inhuman, on those who deserve and need to be made clean. In his book, *Prophetic Scriptures Yet to be Fulfilled*, apostle Bill Hannon writes that the purpose of the Church is, “to fulfill God’s original mandate to subdue all things, to take dominion and fill the earth with a race in God’s own image and likeness...”¹²⁰ Like Lincoln and Falwell, Hannon uses the past as a tool to remind the people of their covenantal duty. Each describes that duty differently, but the language of prophecy remains the same.

c. The Function of the Prophet

The prophets in the Dominionist movement differ in another significant way from the Hebrew prophets. Schulman writes that the function of a prophet is not to predict but to mediate between the people and God and to connect communities to larger inexplicable realities. But many, including C. Peter Wagner, make very real and specific predictions about the future, acting as fortunetellers and often failing to cite God’s authority over their own. In his book *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*, Wagner writes, “10 million Japanese will come to Christ by the year 2000.” In a paper to the World Congress of Prophets Wagner said, “There will be a persecution of the Jews in Russia that will notably escalate during the fall of 2000.”¹²¹

Wagner never makes clear the origin of his prophecies. Is he engaging in a dialogue with God or making his own predictions in the name of God? The divine nature of Wagner and the other apostles’ prophecies is implied, since these men and

¹²⁰ Hamon, Bill. *Prophetic Scriptures Yet to Be Fulfilled: During the Third and Final Church Reformation*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2010. Print.

¹²¹ Wagner, C. Peter. *Breaking Strongholds in Your City*. Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1993. Print.

women have been divinely appointed to their positions of power within the Church. But did the Hebrew prophets exercise power in the same way or were they merely the interpreters of God's plan, instruments of divine will? From Shulman's writing, it seems that authority and power were never handed down fully to the prophets, but always attributed first and foremost to God. As the previous prophecies from C. Peter Wagner show, many prophecies are not attributed to God at all, but to the human prophet himself. If the Dominionists' claim to authority lies in the biblical example, then their practice has, according to some, ceased to follow that biblical outline, making it fallible.

d. True and False Prophecy

Certainly, claims of both true and false prophecy are continually used to both defend and accuse, but how can one tell the difference between the true and the false prophet? Martin Buber writes, "It is not whether salvation or disaster is prophesied, but whether the prophecy, whatever it is, agrees with the divine demand meant by a certain historical situation that is important." Anyone can make a prophecy, but the line between human and divine prophecy is often blurred. There is inherent risk then in following the guidance of a prophet; faith is required. Thinking back to Weber, the qualities of the prophets are not available to the ordinary person, nor can their origin be attributed to any earthly, rational source. However, the power of the prophet must also be recognized in order to be legitimized. The authority of the charismatic leader rests not only in his divine claims, but also on the faith of those who follow him. If that faith fades, so too does

that prophet's legitimacy. By extension, the power to distinguish the false prophet lies with the people.

We have seen the primary characteristics of both the office of the prophet and genre of prophecy, as well as the controversial role of prophecy within Dominionism. Prophecy can be both authoritarian as well as profoundly democratic at the same time. Dominionism provides a clear contrast in many ways to Evangelicalism through the prophet's exercise of power. But the spirit of prophecy is undeniable within the Hebrew bible and within American socio-political history. Here lies both the promise and the danger of the prophetic narrative. Its universal redemptive promise appeals to many, but a return on that promise cannot be assured. Furthermore, the idealization of the past, the constant references to past lamentation and jeremiads can prevent new innovation. The Dominionist movement has used prophecy to its advantage, claiming to channel God's authority in its war against the demons of the world. Whether or not dominion prophecy is true is irrelevant. Rather, Dominionism exemplifies the qualities of prophecy that make it so appealing, and so parallel to the rhetorical strategies used by American politicians since the Founding Fathers. In this way, dominion prophecy markets itself as a supremely American and Christian truth, incontestably divine and infallibly necessary for the life and future of the nation.

III. Modes of Prayer

In addition to preaching, scripture, and prophecy, prayer is another area in which Dominionism has departed from traditional Evangelical methods. Prayer is that action which mediates between the human and the divine realms. Since the ultimate goal of Evangelicalism is the connection with God and his manifestation in the individual human spirit, then prayer as a means of connection is one of the most valuable Evangelical rituals. As William James said, “prayer is the very soul and essence of religion.”¹²² From the beginning of Evangelical belief, prayer has been viewed as a means of very real and concrete change, through direct communication with God. Unlike the Calvinist belief in God’s sovereign grace, Evangelical prayer is seen as a way to influence God’s decisions and the engage in a dialogue with him. Donald Bloesch, a systematic theologian expresses this idea when he writes, “God’s ultimate purposes, are unchangeable ... his immediate will is flexible and open to change through the prayers of his people.”¹²³ A personal God, who loves and cares, can be solicited in prayer, because God makes “himself dependent on the requests of his children.”¹²⁴ Thus prayer allows individuals to approach God on a deeply personal level, as a child would make requests of her parents.

In their book, *Prayer: A History*, Phillip and Carol Zaleski identify the distinguishing characteristics and functions of prayer in Christianity. They open their analysis with this observation: “The story of prayer is the story of the impossible: of how we creatures of flesh and blood lay siege to heaven, speak to the

¹²² Zaleski, Philip, and Carol Zaleski. *Prayer: A History*. Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2005. Print. 29.

¹²³ Bloesch 40.

¹²⁴ Bloesch 45.

Maker of all things, and await, with confidence or hopeful skepticism, a response.”¹²⁵

We can see here that prayer has a dual nature, with both the action of petition and response having equal weight for the performer. Prayer is communication, and that communication must go both ways for a prayer to be successful, and for the performer to be heard. In this way, prayer is both a state of being and a state of becoming; it takes place in the present but looks almost always to the future. The Zaleskis identify multiple forms of prayer that are normative to Evangelicalism including this type of petitionary prayer. Among the other types are confession, adoration, intercession, and thanksgiving. These different modes of prayer are employed to achieve different modes of connection with God: forgiveness, celebration, thanks, healing etc. Prayer is thus always changing to suit the needs to the performer, and individual prayer is often free from doctrinal guidelines.

The physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit within the individual is the desired result of petitionary prayer in many strands of Evangelicalism. The physicality of God’s answer to prayer is important “evidence” of his hearing the call and answering it; it is evidence of the cycle of communication between the human and the divine. Just as the role of the pastor is a gift given to the individual by God, so too are these manifestations of God’s presence considered spiritual gifts. This gift is justified scripturally through the story of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit gave the disciples the power to speak in multiple languages so that the Jews from all lands could hear the gospel message. A member of Freedom Valley Worship Center in Gettysburg, PA says of speaking in tongues:

¹²⁵ Zaleski 3.

For me, it is almost as if I am able to tap into God's heart and what he wants. I don't really know what I am saying, but I know it is what God wants me to say and speak. It is more of an enlightenment -- you can feel him all around you, and you can feel him speaking through the words that you are saying.¹²⁶

From this phenomenon, one can see the importance of the physical evidence of God's answer to prayer in Evangelicalism. Prayer is the essential catalyst for this kind of spiritual gift, as well as for other, less physically apparent gifts.

To instigate these physical and emotional connections with God, the power of the charismatic leader is often employed. One of the most iconic photographs of Evangelical preacher Oral Roberts is of him laying hands on a young woman, covering her eyes with his fingers and fiercely calling the lord to come into her body and convert her to the Christian faith.¹²⁷ Thus the Holy Spirit must first come into Roberts in this case, and only then into the person seeking conversion. The altar call, the time during the Evangelical tent meeting or church service when the preacher calls on those seeking conversion to come up to the front so that he can lay his hands on them and call the holy spirit to them, was an iconic vision of early and mid 20th century Evangelicalism. It shows how pivotal prayer is to the Evangelical, but also the importance of the charismatic leader to the prayer ritual.

In most all of these cases, prayer is used for the individual. Whether prayer is taking place in a church, a tent meeting, or in someone's home, it is used most often for personal transformation and conversion. Even intercessory prayer is most often targeted at the health and well-being of individuals. For example, the sinner's

¹²⁶ Mabrey, Vicki, and Roxanna Sherwood. "Speaking in Tongues: Alternative Voices in Faith." *ABC News*. ABC News Network, 20 Mar. 2007. Web.

¹²⁷ "Oral Roberts Faith Healer 1956." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group. Web.

prayer, which can take a variety of forms but which expresses repentance might read:

I invite Jesus to become my Savior and the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You and to convict me when I sin. I pledge to grow in grace and knowledge of you. My greatest purpose in life is to follow your example and do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.¹²⁸

This kind of personal and experiential relationship with God through prayer is a formative concept in Evangelicalism.. Personal faith and piety, as well as the act of being born again through Jesus Christ all occur at the individual level.

Dominionist prayer focuses on the conversion of large populations and on the eradication of demons from the world, rather than on individual faith and experience. Since the apostles and prophets within the movement consider themselves to be model Christians, their own faith is of little concern. It is the purification of those who do *not* possess the same levels of faith that is the goal of Dominionism through intercessory warfare prayer. Dominionists do view prayer as a crucial component of their faith, but that prayer departs from more mainstream Evangelical methods in many significant ways. Warfare prayer targets the satanic principalities that are ruling over the earth and preventing God's message from reaching the people. As seen in the first chapter with spiritual mapping, the Dominionist methods of evangelizing have shifted from the individual to the collective. The same is true for prayer. Prayer is not employed for purposes of individual conversion or piety but for the eradication of evil from the world. Since

¹²⁸ Speaking in Tongues.

Jesus has charged his believers with a certain level of authority, Christians can exercise that authority over evil. C. Peter Wagner refers to this type of prayer as the “Prayer of Command,”¹²⁹ highlighting the importance of human control in the battle against evil.

Some have gone even further to suggest that Dominionist prayer cannot be called prayer at all. Instead of praying the in the traditional sense, Dominionists resist and challenge the evil spirits in the world through their own faith; it consists of defensive and offensive strategy. As Dominionist Tom White says, “We do not pray at the devil. We resist him with the authority that comes out of the prayer closet.”¹³⁰ This justification has been used to allay any fears that Dominionists pray *to* Satan. However, the statement could also be read to mean that God’s role within spiritual warfare is unimportant. If Wagner and those like him are not praying to the demons, but also not praying to God, but rather praying that they themselves will have the strength to defeat evil, how can they consider their prayer methods to be Evangelical? Does not this focus on the forces of evil overshadow the central mission of Evangelicalism, that of conversionism? The answer to the previous question of conversionism must be yes. All energy, all verbal communication is directed not toward God, but towards demons. While doing battle, Dominionists have lost sight of the conversionist mission of Evangelicalism, and by extension, the focus on prayer.

IV. Moral and Social Reform Efforts

¹²⁹ Wagner, *Warfare* 32.

¹³⁰ Wagner, *Warfare* 33.

The last level of comparison between Evangelicals and Dominionists is social reform. The impulse to reform has run through Evangelicalism for centuries, from the abolitionists to the prohibitionists, to the pro-lifers. Many viewed the regeneration of individuals coupled with the quest for individual perfection as a method through which society could be reformed as well. If the ultimate goal of Evangelicalism is to convert individuals, the natural progression of human conversion is social conversion, since human beings form the institutions that guide social life. Historian Joel Carpenter writes that nineteenth century Evangelicals, “by means of revivalism and voluntary reform sought to provide the virtuous political culture that would keep the American republic true to its covenant.”¹³¹ Carpenter echoes the Evangelical belief that those socio-political institutions run by human beings should shift towards a Christian ideology as the individuals themselves convert. Reform efforts have ranged in focus from moral to political. Some movements are aimed at abolishing a specific legal doctrine; others are targeted at lifestyles and ideologies. Whatever the methods or goals, reforming individuals as well as societies has long been a tradition in Evangelicalism and fits into the cycle of conversion.

a. Lessons from the Social Gospel

The question over social politics and Evangelicalism is one that many have tried to address, and one that is highlighted by a further analysis of the Social Gospel Movement. We have seen in Chapter 1 that by combining biblical ethics with

¹³¹ Carpenter, Joel A. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. Print. 117.

economic and social justice theory, the Social Gospel Movement became politically charged. The movement's focus on the reform of different areas of social life is not unlike the Dominionist focus on the seven mountains. One member of the Social Gospel described the movement as, "the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life, and social institutions...as well as to individuals."¹³² A Dominionist could have easily uttered the same statement. Both Dominionism and the Social Gospel rest on a similar view of Kingdom Theology, which posits that human beings have the responsibility of establishing God's kingdom on earth. Yet the two socio-political initiatives differ in some significant ways. Dominionists maintain that the Social Gospel went too far, politicizing the Gospel in a way that undermined its theological content. To mitigate the resulting imbalance, Dominionists claim to engage in the social world while maintaining the authority of the Gospel. The Social Gospel was politically participatory in a way that Dominionism is not. Dominionists want to take over and transform politics, they do not wish to engage in the established system, as it exists in the present. In these ways, Dominionism has inherited the activism of the Social Gospel, while distancing itself from its more secular goals.

It can be seen from this comparison that the lines between religion, society and politics are delicate, but also intertwined. As Sociologist Robert Bellah writes, "Religion and morality and politics are not the same things, and confusing them can lead to terrible distortions. But cutting all links between them can lead to even

¹³² White, Ronald C., and Charles Howard Hopkins. *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1976. Print. Xi.

worse distortions.”¹³³ To some extent, Dominionists can rightly claim to have struck a balance between these three categories. However, Dominionist socio-political initiatives can be better understood not as reform, but as transformation.

Dominionists want to abolish modern social structures and replace them with Christian ones in order to prepare the world for Christ. The Social Gospel on the other sought to inject morality into the national landscape so that social injustice could be avoided. According to Dominionists, they confused religion, politics, and morality, in Bellah’s terms. Total social transformation is the end goal of Dominionism, through direct occupation of these seven areas of human life. While transformation was also the goal of Social Gospel, it did not go far enough to try to Christianize society, claim Dominionists. In this way, Dominionism’s desire to transform and control goes beyond the bounds of moral movements like the Social Gospel. Though the Social Gospel leaned more towards the cultural than the evangelical mandate, Dominionism leans just as far in the other direction.

b. Prohibition

Temperance (1825-1919) and subsequently Prohibition (1919-1933) are examples of moral movements aimed at a very material goal, the legal banning of alcohol consumption. This goal of legal change stands in opposition to the focus on broad moral movements. Both the social gospel and the prohibition movements acted upon the same impulse to reform, but their strategies were different. The religious connection to the temperance movement is clear from both the historical actors involved, as well as the rhetoric used to condemn alcohol and to promote

¹³³ Bloesch 167.

abstinence from the drink. As Joseph Gusfield writes, “as an aspect of religious revivalism, Temperance was enjoined as a moral virtue.”¹³⁴ The issue was painted in terms of good and evil; if temperance was a moral virtue then alcohol became the scapegoat for the destructive behavior seen within the growing urban areas of the country. Temperance was characterized and championed from its earliest foundations by Christians. The revivals during the 19th century catalyzed the fervor of social activism amid Evangelicals, calling on them to convert individuals through the removal of corrupt activities that could block God from saving their souls. As author George Thomas notes in his book *Revivalism and Culture Change: Christianity, Nation Building, and the Market in 19th Century United States*, “The greater prevalence of revival religion within a population, the greater support for the Republican and Prohibition parties within that population.”¹³⁵ In Prohibition, moral absolutes and social activism came together to form a powerful coalition.

One of the leading Temperance organizations was the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. In their platform, written by then President Frances Willard in 1888, the WCTU states, “The Prohibition party, in national convention assembled, acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all power in government, do hereby declare...”¹³⁶ This statement places God at the head of the Prohibition movement, even above the men and women engaged in the struggle. Others religious groups championing temperance included the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America, and the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals. These titles

¹³⁴ Gusfield, Joseph R. *Symbolic Crusade; Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1963. Print. 44.

¹³⁵ Gusfield 35.

¹³⁶ White 122.

show a clear connection between Christianity and Temperance. These and other Christian groups viewed alcohol as the direct enemy of the revival movement, a distraction from good Christian principles and individual conversion. The focus throughout the political campaign was kept on the ultimate power of the divine, even though the fight was aimed at changing political institutions.

A moral movement like Temperance has a very specific enemy in mind, in this case alcohol, and uses religion as a means of absolution. Templars based their objections to alcohol on very real social evidence, like crime rates and violence against women. This evidence was used as a tool through which Christianity could spread its message and solve a problem that plagued multiple groups of people from Christians, to Jews, to immigrants, to women, children, and men. As William Dyrness writes, "The world was either something to be won over...or to be avoided as a source of temptation, but it could also represent a resource to be exploited in pursuit of their Evangelical calling."¹³⁷ So the basis of Christian Temperance could be said to have been moral as well as practical, targeting a specific societal ill in order to instill a Christian ideology of self-control into the population. With real concern over the state of society came the opportunity to gain religious influence. Many charismatic leaders like Presbyterian Preacher Lyman Beecher recognized Temperance as an opportunity to reform the masses. Thus, temperance became a moral issue after the Christian community transformed it into a religious quest. The fight against alcohol was just as much about abolishing a social practice as it was about gaining converts, about control over law and man.

¹³⁷ Larsen, Timothy, and Daniel J. Treier. *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print. 145.

“[Prohibition] goes beyond the bounds of reason in that it attempts to control a man’s appetite by legislation, and makes a crime out of things that are not crimes.”¹³⁸ This quote by Abraham Lincoln shows that the very goals Christians sought to achieve through Prohibition were the things that led to its downfall. Religious control over society’s guiding principles was not received well by the public. Prohibition is just one example of a failed Evangelical movement oriented toward a specific issue. By inserting itself into a specific social issue, Evangelicalism characterized itself as totalitarian. As Gusfield suggests, the public backlash to Evangelical social reform occurred when voluntary moral reform was replaced with coercive political reform.

The backlash against Prohibition is similar to the complaints against Dominionism. Because the movement wants to invade all areas of public life, and because it is so religiously fervent, Dominionism can also be seen as overly authoritarian. However, the coercive legal reform of Prohibition is slightly altered in Dominionism. The goal is not to target specific instances of lapsed morality, but to totally transform every aspect of society that has been corrupted. Dominionism shows that the spirit of reform even after the failed experiment of Prohibition ended remains a forceful message in American Evangelicalism. Even with its failure, temperance remains, “the template for social reform”¹³⁹ for Evangelicals. In Dominionism however, that desire for social transformation takes on a more extreme nature than either the Social Gospel or Prohibition. The Social Gospel was more moral than religious, and Prohibition more concerned with legal reform than

¹³⁸ Gusfield 109.

¹³⁹ Carpenter 89.

total Christianization. Dominionism sets itself apart from these example of Evangelical social reform in the extremism and breadth of its mission.

V. Evangelicalism and Dominionism: A Comparison

We have seen through an analysis of charisma, prophecy, prayer, and social movements that Dominionism does not fit perfectly into any of the central modes of Evangelicalism. Though the movement has appropriated the Evangelical moniker, its validity comes under scrutiny upon closer inspection of its leadership, scriptural interpretations, prophetic claims, and prayer methods. Though the Dominionist use of these concepts shows the cursory nature of its claims to Evangelicalism, Dominionists have attached themselves fiercely to the Evangelical mold. C. Peter Wagner admits that his movement, the NAR, “represents the most radical change in the way of doing church since the Protestant Reformation”.¹⁴⁰ But in the next sentence he writes:

This is not a doctrinal change. We adhere to the major tenets of the Reformation: the authority of scripture, the justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers. But the quality of church life, the governance of the church, the worship, the theology of prayer, the missional goals, the optimistic vision for the future, and other features, constitute quite a change from traditional Protestantism.¹⁴¹

Herein lies the brilliance of Wagner’s leadership. In some ways, he can legitimately claim a continuation of Evangelical doctrine, and at the same time, he can present a radically different agenda than any epoch of Evangelicalism before. How can he do both things at once? Dominionism has picked out the major canons of Evangelical

¹⁴⁰ The New Apostolic Reformation

¹⁴¹ The New Apostolic Reformation

belief and co-opted, reimagined, and reframed them for the support of their own, fundamentally different agenda. Practically speaking, the connection between Dominionism and Evangelicalism is crucial for the legitimacy of the movement, and those who lead it. So while many outsiders and some within Evangelicalism would consider Dominionism a sectarian movement, Dominionists themselves would not.

The issue of doctrine is a complicated one. What does it mean to adhere to Evangelical doctrine and what makes one an Evangelical? How can a movement that barely resembles Evangelicalism in its professed theology and practice be considered Evangelical? Bruce Barron describes the two basic tenets of Evangelicalism to which a person must adhere in order to be a card carrying Evangelical so to speak as, “personal faith in Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation, and the complete inspiration of the Bible as free from error”.¹⁴² Similarly, Historian David Bebbington describes the Evangelical quadrangle, the four most important components of Evangelicalism as Biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and activism.¹⁴³ Dominionists do indeed ascribe ultimate value to these two creeds, making them Evangelicals in a broad sense. And yet Dominionists have deviated slightly from each of Bebbington’s four characteristics of Evangelicalism. Dominionists consider the Bible to be inerrant, and yet leave out large sections of Biblical evidence that directly counter their claims of spiritual warfare. For example, they focus on the violence presented the Bible without reference to the peaceful teachings of Christ. Crucicentrism, or the atonement of

¹⁴² Barron 107.

¹⁴³ Bebbington, David W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. London [u.a.: Routledge, 2005. Print.

Christ's death on the cross, is central to Dominionism, and yet Dominionists hold a post-millennial interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection, which deviates from the Evangelical interpretation of that event. Conversionism is important, but it is the conversion of entire populations and geographical areas, rather than the traditional focus on individual salvation. And, as previously discussed, Dominionists are activists, but in a way that seeks to transform the world through an aggressive message of spiritual violence, rather than through peaceable biblical morality. These differences cannot be ignored, and taken together, contradict the Dominionist claim to Evangelicalism.

VI. Responses: Mainstream Media and Discernment Ministries

We have explored the theological differences between Dominionism and Evangelicalism, and will now focus on the reactions to the movement from mainstream and new media outlets, as well as from inside mainline Evangelicalism. The NAR and C. Peter Wagner have long blamed the liberal media for portraying Dominionism as a threat to both American democracy and American religion.¹⁴⁴ These sources claim that the NAR advocates complete theocracy in the U.S. Dominionism as a threat is merely a paranoid fantasy fabricated by a biased media system, according to Wagner. But, as the blog Right Wing Watch writes, "if Dominionism doesn't exist, someone forgot to tell the Dominionists."¹⁴⁵ Not only is Dominionism a real living breathing movement, concerns about its influence are

¹⁴⁴ The New Apostolic Reformation.

¹⁴⁵ "If Dominionism Doesn't Exist, Someone Forgot To Tell The Dominionists." *Rightwingwatch.org*. Web.

palpable within a broad range of American religious groups from the Assemblies of God to the Roman Catholic Church. Bruce Barron writes that Dominionists, because of their technical membership within Evangelicalism, “pose a difficult problem for several groups of fellow Evangelicals who wish the Dominionists would disappear.”¹⁴⁶ While the media focuses on the threat of Dominionism to the separation of Church and State, religious watchdog groups focus on the flawed theology and encroachment on Evangelical traditions of and by groups like the NAR. These grievances are aired within groups called discernment ministries who fulfill their biblically mandated duty to judge all movements that claim divine inspiration. These groups show that Dominionism is far from a benign movement or a continuation of Evangelicalism; its presence within American Christianity has triggered a reaction among conservatives and liberals.

A large amount of analysis and criticism against the NAR comes from independent liberal blogs. These blogs exist to analyze, discuss, and reveal to the public the practices of Dominionism. Since specific practices and doctrine are often treated vaguely by Dominionist groups themselves, these blogs function to uncover the hidden truths of Dominionism, they view themselves as concerned public citizens, charged with alerting the public to a pressing danger. The largest and most comprehensive of these watchdog groups is Talk To Action, a website founded by Bruce Wilson and Frederick Clarkson, two self-educated scholars of the Christian Right. The goal of the site is to, “reclaim history, citizenship and faith.”¹⁴⁷ As listed on the website’s statement of purpose, “Talk to Action is a platform for reporting on,

¹⁴⁶ Baron 107.

¹⁴⁷ “| Reclaiming Citizenship, History, and Faith.” / *Reclaiming Citizenship, History, and Faith*. Web.

learning about, and analyzing and discussing the religious right -- and what to do about it". In addition to Talk To Action, a plethora of other websites exists covering the relationship between the Christian Right and the Political Right and the supposed danger of encroaching theocracy including Right Wing Watch, The Wall of Separation, and Herescope, to name just a few. Not all of these blogs criticize the movement, but they are all called to present the tenets of Dominionism to the public, for reasons of both concern and education.

Within the mainstream media, coverage of Dominionism is minimal. Journalists seem to discount the religious right, partly because they do not understand the seismic theological shifts of the movement and partly because as some observers like Sarah Posner writes, "[journalists] are still uncomfortable writing about religion; it takes work to understand the nuances of belief."¹⁴⁸ When presidential candidate and Texas Governor Rick Perry held his Call to Prayer, which drew upwards of 30,000 attendants, a big enough footprint was left in its wake for the media to perk up and pay attention. The event called Christians together for a day of prayer and fasting to end the financial and moral decline of American government, or "the nation in crisis"¹⁴⁹ as Rick Perry said. The New York Times, the Huffington Post, and even the British Newspaper The Guardian ran stories about the rally, and about the Dominionist movement. Electoral politics was mingling freely with an Evangelical and more specifically, a Dominionist agenda. Leaders of the NAR planned and executed the event, and served as hosts, speaking and endorsing

¹⁴⁸ "Beyond Alarmism and Denial in the Dominionism Debate | (A)theologies | Religion Dispatches." *ReligionDispatches*. Web.

¹⁴⁹ MacAskill, Ewen. "Rick Perry's Call to Prayer Draws Crowd of 30,000." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 07 Aug. 2011. Web

Governor Perry. For the first time, the Dominionist quest to infiltrate secular institutions was made visible. The event shows that Dominionism only makes a mark in mainstream media when it coincides with developments in the political arena, and it will likely be this relationship that causes Dominionism to garner more attention from the media in the future.

But just because these mainstream outlets pay little attention to Dominionism, doesn't mean that its impact is minute. Similarly, not all criticism against Dominionism comes from the liberal press. The Evangelical community has not remained silent; they have reacted both positively and negatively to the new changes to church hierarchy, scriptural interpretation, and conversion methods. Discernment ministries are organizations who claim to be called by Paul's order in Thessalonians, "do not quench the spirit...But test everything; hold fast to what is good"¹⁵⁰. These men and women are theological vigilantes, protecting their faith from false prophets. Evangelicals object to multiple areas of dominion theology. First is the supposed mandate that prophets must rule the church. Though scripture identifies the presence and importance of prophets, there is no hierarchical office mandated for them, not is there an order for them to rule over others in the present. Dominionism overlooks, "the high calling of every officer and minister of the church,"¹⁵¹ according to one discernment group. Next, many discernment ministries object to the constant reference to the devil and the threat of his presence on earth. According to a paper issued by the Assemblies of God, though demons are at work in

¹⁵⁰ *The New Oxford Bible*, Thes 5:19,21.

¹⁵¹ "End Time Revival Spirit Led and Spirit Controlled." Rev. of *General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God*. 11 Aug. 2000. Print.

the world, the ultimate and supreme power of God is irresistible and will always conquer over evil. As such, demons pose no real threat. Most importantly, “believers cannot be demon possessed.”¹⁵² Thus, equating Christians with demonic forces conflicts with God’s call for unity and Christian brotherhood. The Dominionist emphasis on demons stands against the scriptural supremacy of Christ the redeemer.

The same document from the Assemblies of God claims that being a Christian is not about the fighting off evil, but about spreading the gospel to others. The idea of prophecy in general makes religion into a magic act. To prove their connection to God, many prophets make predictions in Christian communities and seek to identify the past and future experiences of individuals. As one blogger writing for the website Personal Freedom Outreach writes, “What home addresses, descriptions of houses...have to do with biblical sanctification and true biblical prophecy is well beyond this writer. Tricks, psychic gimmicks and manipulation have no place in the Christian ministry.”¹⁵³ This kind of specific prediction undermines the Christian mission to hear and spread the gospel. It is used to inspire faith in the prophets of the NAR, but signal to many the cursory nature of Dominionism.

Criticism against the NAR also extends beyond the bounds of Evangelicalism. For example, more and more Catholic organizations are responding to Dominionism and the threat that it poses to religion and religious tolerance, as evidenced by the blog, Catholic Reason. They object to the fact that the NAR is, “recreating an

¹⁵² End Time Revival

¹⁵³ "Christian Fortune Tellers Never Get It Right, Either." *PFO Home Page*. Web. 8 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.pfo.org/fortune.htm>>.

Apostolic Government entirely separate from Catholic authority.”¹⁵⁴ Since the Catholic Church rests on the apostolic authority of St. Peter, Dominionism’s claim that a new church government must be instituted goes against very foundational Catholic doctrine. These examples of theological objections from Evangelicals throughout America show that there has been serious backlash against Dominionism. The opinions of discernment ministries must be heard in order to properly judge the Dominionist claims to Evangelicalism. Though they do not speak for Evangelicalism as a whole, they do show that objections to Dominionism exist within and outside of Christianity, and that Dominionists do not speak for all Evangelicals.

VII. Conclusion

In the ways outlined in this chapter Dominionism differs in form and function from mainline Evangelicalism, a sentiment that is often echoed by Evangelicals themselves. Dominionism has not invented anything new; rather, it has reinstated ideologies that it can claim are Evangelical, while changing them significantly so that they resemble mainline Evangelicalism very minimally. The power charged to the office of the prophet and the idolatry that the prophets have evoked, the claims of Biblical spiritual warfare, the focus on demonic spirits within prayer, and the desire to aggressively take over society, all show the anomaly of Dominionism. These differences point to an ideological schism between mainline Evangelicalism and Dominionism. Pointing out these disparities has not been enlisted in order to

¹⁵⁴ "Catholic Reason - Toronto Blessing and the New Apostolic Reformation." *Catholic Reason*. Web. <<http://www.catholicreason.com/shtml/government.shtml>>.

criticize Dominionism or support mainline Evangelicalism, but rather to show how much of Dominionist practice and theology recycles ideologies of the past, and changes them in significant ways to support their cause of spiritual warfare.

Understanding these differences and questioning C. Peter Wagner's claim to Evangelical membership is a crucial step in the historical and theological process of understanding Dominionism. If not an Evangelical sect, what is Dominionism, and how can we decipher its practices and functions?

Chapter 4: Dominionism and Violence

An Analysis of Dominionist Violence and a Prediction for the Future

While leadership, prophecy, prayer and social reform represent differences of degree between Dominionism and Evangelicalism, the Dominionist use of violent rhetoric is definitively and demonstrably outside the bounds of mainline Evangelicalism. At first, the use of this violent language could be seen as an extension of standard Christian theology. Soldiers for Christ, doing battle against the devil to save the holy kingdom from destruction; this rhetorical scenario is used in various circles of Christianity. In Evangelicalism, aggressive language is coupled with the image of Jesus as a force of love over all else. But in Dominionism, the wrathful God poised to do battle against his enemies is the dominant image. This narrow vision of God and Christ makes violence seem like the only option available to Christians, certainly in a spiritual sense, and I believe, in a physical sense as well. Comparing violence in Dominionism with other Christian movements that have adopted a violent rhetoric like the Salvation Army, with movements on a more apocalyptic scale like Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, and finally movements that have been directly inspired by Dominionism, like the Defensive Action Movement, all aid in characterizing the violence found in Dominionism. The three examples provide blue prints for the possible levels of Dominionist violence that could occur in the future. Violence is not just rhetoric, but a mode of action and so in a movement that uses rhetoric to glorify the ideas of battle, warfare, violence, and the “enemy” the most logical progression of that rhetoric would be the corporeal manifestation of an established bellicose

theology. All four of these movements, including Dominionism, are positioned along a shared scale of apocalyptic violence. They show how Dominionism can be taken to new extremes through the tools of violence that it has already given to its believers.

I. Christianity and Violence

a. Violence and Peace in the Bible

The relationship in Christianity between God and violence is difficult to analyze. The contradiction between the God of terror and the God of peace within the Bible is an issue that evokes confusion from Christians. The Old Testament portrays God as vengeful, willing to literally destroy his enemies and those who deviate from his teachings. Violence too is present in the New Testament, but in this case, it is not perpetrated by God, but against him, in the ultimate form of the Passion of Christ the Messiah. A serious shift in violence occurs here, and one that can be difficult to interpret literally. How can the God of terror and the God of love be versions of the same God?

The question evades answers, and many Christians tend to focus on one or the other God to suit her personal needs and vision of the true Christianity. The crusades were justified biblically, but in the opposite vein, so is the Quaker refusal to enlist in the military. Biblical scholar John Hemer argues that to ignore the violence of the Bible would be a mistake, since “it is central, in many ways it is the issue, because of course it is the human problem.”¹⁵⁵ Violence is central in the Old Testament, while peace, though shadowed at times with violence as well, is the

¹⁵⁵ Hemer, John. "Violence & The Bible." *Christendom Awake: Dedicated to Rebuilding Catholic Culture*. Apr.-May 2003. Web.

central theme of the New Testament. In this way, the Bible must be viewed from the Old to the New Testaments as, “the story of the slow, painstaking and sometimes faltering escape from the idea of a God who is violent to a God who is love and has absolutely nothing to do with violence.”¹⁵⁶ If indeed viewed in this way, as a progression, then the final ruling on violence in the Bible must be that peace is the most obvious reflection of the divine.

Biblical scripture shows how God and Christ equally support violence and peace. Using the Bible to justify violence cannot be denied as a legitimate interpretation of Biblical events since, as Hemer reminds us, violence is not peripheral, but central to the stories of the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, peace is given equal weight. In the book of Numbers, God orders Moses to kill the Midianites saying:

Avenge the Israelites of the Midianites: afterward shall you be gathered in thy people. So Moses said to them, “Arm some of your number for the war, so that they may go against the Midianites, to execute the Lord’s vengeance on Midian...They did battle against the Midianites, as the LORD had commanded Moses; and killed every male.”¹⁵⁷

Here, the people do not take on the idea of war themselves, but are ordered directly by God, through Moses, to instigate a war on the people of Midian. God defends war, vengeance, and murder, ideas that Jesus in the New Testament strictly prohibits. All four of the Gospels of the New Testament contain a passage similar to the following instruction from Jesus:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who

¹⁵⁶ Hemer

¹⁵⁷ *The New Oxford Bible* Num 31:1-3,7.

persecute you...Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.¹⁵⁸
(Matthew 5: 43-44, 48)

Here, not only does Jesus promote love over all else and for all people, he equates that human love with the divine, showing that human love is an extension of God's love. God here is painted as benevolent towards all people, even those that hate and persecute others. And so these passages, isolated from each other, could be used for divergent purposes, either to support human violence, or to oppose it.

b. Just War Theory

The rectification of these two images has often been to live a life of love in accordance with Jesus' teachings, but to use violence as a last resort against injustice and instigation. Such was the case for theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who ended his academic studies in America to join in on a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler in Germany. The Nazis hanged Bonhoeffer before the plot could be carried out, and his image of death in the face of serious injustice characterizes him as a martyr for many. The idea of just war has been a part of Christianity since the fourth century A.D, when Augustine propagated the theory that physical force could be used under certain conditions, and only defensively. Author and Sociologist Mark Jurgensmeyer summarizes the conditions necessary to support just war, conditions including, "proportionality— the expectation that more lives would be saved by the use of force than would be lost— and legitimacy, the notion that the undertaking must be approved by an established authority".¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *The New Oxford Bible* Mat 5:43-44, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California, 2000. Print. 26.

The abuse of just war theory has led many, like Thomas Aquinas to support a completely pacifistic theology, but just war theory remains the central tool of validation for the use of force today. If the seriousness of violence is always kept at the forefront, and the violence itself is supported and performed reluctantly and as a reaction to injustice, that violence is seen as legitimate in the eyes of Christians and more importantly, in the eyes of God. Responsibility to the social order becomes the main justification of violence as Reinhold Niebuhr suggests when he writes, “a responsible relationship to the political order...makes an unqualified disavowal of violence impossible.”¹⁶⁰ Thus, Christian love must be understood not only as peace but as social justice, which, in some cases, must be defended in a physically violent way.

II. Movements of Spiritual Violence: The Salvation Army

To understand the idea of violence in Christianity, movements of spiritual violence that have not become physical must be examined and then applied to the Dominionist rhetorical strategy. The Salvation Army is a classic example of such a movement, one steeped in the Protestant tradition, concerned with social welfare, backed with a rhetoric of war, but never allowing that rhetoric to be taken literally. William Booth, a member of the schismatic Methodist group, New Connexion, founded the Salvation Army. Booth was inspired largely by the holiness movement, and used modern tools like powerful oratory and social welfare in his Christian message. He adopted a military metaphor, which was extended to all aspects of the

¹⁶⁰ Niebuhr, Reinhold. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*,. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935. Print. 170.

movement. Members were given officer and other ranks as well as military clothing, buildings were referred to as barracks, members had to take part in drills, they talked about enemies etc. But the metaphor remained a metaphor. Booth was concerned with raising the motivation of the poorest classes, and the martial metaphor, “captured the imagination of the working classes.”¹⁶¹ War-like rhetoric was used as a tool for motivation, rather than a biblically grounded theological concept. Even the name Salvation Army suggests that the individual connection with God outweighs the military metaphor of the movement; salvation is the primary goal.

The Salvation Army mirrors many sectarian trends including the emphasis on the role of the charismatic leader, the rejection and modification of many orthodox practices like baptism and communion, as well as the belief in the priesthood of all believers. Against the backdrop of military hierarchy, the movement was actually accessible and leadership was extended to all members. By extension, the appeal of the war metaphor for the Salvation Army is emotional, rather than literal. The uniforms for example set the Salvationists apart, and make them visible Christian leaders. Like the Dominionist message, war is used to inspire an urgency and importance to the Christian message. However, the ultimate expressed goal for members is to embody the divine perfection set forth in the bible, and that perfection rests upon the idea of humanitarianism over violence, according to the Salvation Army. As stated on its website, “The Salvation Army seeks to

¹⁶¹ Wilson 61.

improve the physical environment, provide for material needs and lead people to a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁶²

The practices of spiritual warfare and the rhetoric used in Dominionism represent a strong shift from the metaphorical violence of the Salvation Army. On the scale between purely rhetorical and outwardly physical violence, the Salvation Army falls far to the left, while Dominionism rests somewhere in the middle. Warfare prayer, city transformation, spiritual mapping, Christian soldiers. These terms describe the process of strategic level spiritual warfare, but always in the most vague language. In an interview with an anonymous member of the New England Apostolic Prayer Network, the member recited almost word for word the organization’s online description of the NAR mission. In answer to my question about the specific methodology of warfare prayer she says, “Our goal is to establish the Kingdom of God here and now by building up an Army of the Lord.”¹⁶³ What weapons will the army use? Who will the army target? How is the army trained? These questions were left largely unanswered.

This interview is just one example of the indistinct nature of spiritual warfare. At this, the base level of the NAR’s hierarchical structure, the mood is truly one of naïveté. This recitation of scripted organizational mantras and referral to ambiguous ideologies opens the door for leaders of the NAR to exert their power and influence. The power structure of the NAR is one of a hierarchical pyramid and what is decided at the top trickles down to the bottom. As Wagner himself writes,

¹⁶² "Salvation Army of Southern California." *The Salvation Army: USA: About The Salvation Army, Mission Statement, FAQs, Careers, Beliefs, History, Colleges, Leadership*. Web.

¹⁶³ "A Conversation with a Dominionist." Telephone interview. 20 Jan. 2012.

“The chief distinguishing characteristic of an apostle is God-given authority.”¹⁶⁴ It is this authority combined with the willingness of the members to validate that authority that could lead to a violent shift with the NAR. Furthermore, the Dominionist power structure is propped by a seemingly innocuous theology that could easily support the circulation of a radical agenda. As discussed in previous chapters, Dominionism thrives on its ability to preserve traditional Evangelical traditions like prayer and conversion practices while at the same time propagating a “revolutionary”¹⁶⁵ to use Wagner’s words, theology. It is this combination that has kept Dominionism off the radar of most Christians and also facilitated its growth among conservative Christians.

III. The Shape of Religious Violence

If the Salvation Army is limited to spiritual, rhetorical violence, what actually constitutes religious violence and how might Dominionism fit into this violence? Mark Jurgensmeyer provides an outline of religious violence in his book, *Terror in the Mind of God*. We can compare Dominionism to analyze its function as a movement of religious violence. Jurgensmeyer claims that religious violence is unique for its symbolic, performative nature. Though it takes place in the material world, it symbolizes the immaterial spiritual struggle that cannot be seen on earth. The violence is valued not for its social or political effects, but for its symbolic representation of the divine. This form of violence is often exaggerated to function as a type of theater, mesmerizing and terrifying audiences in order to convey the

¹⁶⁴ Wagner *Dominion* 31.

¹⁶⁵ The New Apostolic Reformation.

significance of the spiritual struggle. Mark Jurgensmeyer refers to religious violence as, “the theater of terror.”¹⁶⁶ Jurgensmeyer writes, “at center stage are the acts themselves—stunning, abnormal, and outrageous murders carried out in a way that graphically displays the awful power of violence.”¹⁶⁷

The characterization of religious violence as symbolic should not suggest that the violence is insignificant. The symbolism of the action refers to the focus of religious violence on something beyond its immediate physical target. The violence is representative of a greater cosmic struggle. As symbols, acts of religious violence can be viewed as observable public rituals, performances of sacred drama. For example in Dominionism, Wagner and his camp would argue that their propagation of spiritual warfare is simply the continuation of examples provided for them in the Bible, the physical acting out of spiritual drama. Wagner cite this verse from Luke, “I have given you authority...over all the power of the enemy,” (Luke 10:19) and then writes, “I myself believe that we have the spiritual potential to do the works that Jesus did.”¹⁶⁸ Wagner shows that spiritual warfare is simply a reenactment of Jesus’ Biblical example. In religious violence then, symbolism and meaning can be drawn from the performative action itself.

IV. Apocalyptic Violence: Aum Shinrikyo

Our next level of analysis will be on the far right side of the scale of religious violence, an apocalyptic movement that has become physically violent. There is

¹⁶⁶ Jurgensmeyer 119.

¹⁶⁷ Jurgensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the mind of God: the global rise of religious violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, p. 127.

¹⁶⁸ Wagner *Warfare* 56.

perhaps no incident of terrorism in the past two decades that best exemplifies the distinctiveness of religious violence than the 1995 sarin gas incident in Japan. Comparing this attack to Dominionism shows how easily religious groups can appropriate violence, whether on a collective or an individual level. Violent rhetoric can easily shift to action through political, social, or theological instigators. A radical Buddhist sect called Aum Shinrikyo, committed the gas attack with the intention of catalyzing Armageddon. Shoko Asahara founded the group in 1984, giving it the name Aum Shinrikyo, which translates to “religion of truth” in English.¹⁶⁹ By 1989, Aum was given status as an official religion by the Japanese government. Asahara himself had been educated in both the European and East Asian traditions and brought to Aum social and religious theory from a variety of thinkers. Relying heavily on Buddhism and Hinduism as well as writings from the French thinker Nostradamus, Asahara formulated his own unique world-view. His decision to form a sectarian religion occurred after being rejected from university and seeking solace in meditation. That religion would function as a source of inspiration for Asahara, and would be focused on the hope of life after death.

Asahara became more and more involved with end-times thinking, and made Armageddon, or the end of the world, the central belief of his new religion. Asahara’s use of term Armageddon is curious, since it comes directly from the Judeo-Christian tradition. The book of Revelation in the Bible predicts the cataclysmic events of the final days of earth, a time in which God’s wrath will be

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 105.

issued upon sinners while believers will be saved and taken to heaven.¹⁷⁰ Death then, as seen through this lens, is a form of release, and the ultimate expression of mercy. The inclusion of this westernized view of end-times adds to the complexity of Aum, revealing its dependence on multiple religious traditions and Christian eschatology in particular.

When a person decided to become a member of Aum Shinrikyo, a multi-step initiation process was required to establish connection between a person's kundalini, the Hindu term for personal energy and the divine.¹⁷¹ First, prospective members were required to wear a costume consisting of a diaper and robe. Sitting in a small room after a period of extended silence, they were next asked to speculate about life after death. Next was the apex of the initiation, when Asahara himself appeared to speak with the new members. As one former member notes, "it was as if Christ himself appeared".¹⁷² Asahara drank from a glass and passed it around the room to each initiate, instructing them to drink. As the drugs in the drink, probably hallucinogens similar to LSD, began to take hold, actors dressed as bad and good spirits tormented initiates and asked them to confess their sins. After the effects of the drink wore off, initiates gathered to discuss what they had learned, and how they would continue their faith in light of this newfound insight. Again, the idea of death and the afterlife was given prime significance in these ceremonies, signaling its vital importance to the religion as a whole.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 124.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 106.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 107.

Asahara predicted the end of the world and spent his time educating members of Aum on how to react and behave once Armageddon began. Not only were members given roles in an apocalyptic world, they were charged with the responsibility of bringing about Armageddon in the first place. Asahara referred to the apocalypse as World War III, citing the nuclear attacks on Japan during World War II as mere previews of the devastation to come. The date of this war was predicted to be August 1, 1999. Asahara said that on that date, "The ground will tremble violently, and immense walls of water will wash away everything on earth. . . . In addition to natural disasters, there will be the horror of nuclear weapons."¹⁷³ The practices of Aum were seen as defensive measures against this coming attack; only those with good karma would be spared.

On March 20, 1995 at the Kasumigaseki station in the center of the city, members of Aum carried bags of poisonous sarin gas onto opposite ends of two subway trains heading towards each other, and released the gas when the trains passed each other. Thirteen people were killed while thousands more suffered loss of vision and brain damage. Sarin gas attacks the nervous system and in its purest form is fatal. Not wanting to risk the lives of Aum members involved, the sarin released on the subway was contaminated and did not result in the destruction that could have been caused by the use of a purer compound. Regardless of the extent of the damage, it seemed that Asahara's prophecies had been fulfilled and the start of World War III had commenced. Because members of Aum did not have access to mainstream media outlets, they were blind to Asahara's role in the gas attacks and

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 115.

viewed them as divine interventions. The people killed were lucky according to Aum; they had escaped the material world and the apocalyptic chaos that was bound to ensue.¹⁷⁴

When reporters caught hold of the sarin story, they concluded that the attacks must have been political, since Tokyo's main government buildings are housed near the subway station where the gas was released. But attaching political motivation to the incident was misguided. The motivation behind the attack was primarily religious; it was an example of Jurgensmeyer's concept of symbolic violence. Perhaps the media was thwarted by the tradition of ahimsa, or non-violence in Buddhism. Images of war and destruction are atypical in Buddhism, and so the connection between Aum's theological agenda and the attacks may not have been immediately obvious. But as with many acts of violence committed in the name of God, and even in eastern religions, faith can often find ways to justify human suffering. In Sri Lanka for example, Buddhists justified the killing of many, including the Prime Minister in 1959, for moral reasons. A Sri Lankan monk during an interview with Mark Jurgensmeyer said of the violence there, "We believe in the law of karma," he added, "and those who live by the sword die by the sword."¹⁷⁵ The spirit of killing in Japan was similar to that in Sri Lanka. Both saw violence as a means to express their religious views. The violence was not seen as a last resort, but as a way to catalyze the spiritual battle.

Aum fits into Jurgensmeyer's analysis of performative violence. The concept of Armageddon blinded Asahara and his followers to the moral wrongs of murder.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 113.

When put into a divine perspective, the sarin attacks were only a necessary and divinely inspired step in the cosmic struggle, acted out in the theater of terror. Not only was the gas leaked onto the subway in order to catalyze Armageddon, but to bring the public into Aum's alternative world-view. It was a proclamation of the Aum religion, a stunning example of the power of Aum beliefs. For these reasons, the sarin gas attack can be considered a symbolic act of performative violence. The attack was symbolic of a greater struggle between the material world and the spiritual world; it was representative of a religious doctrine rooted in apocalyptic death. The symbolism of the act should not undermine its severity but show that the violence itself functioned as a catalyst for the earthly manifestation of devout religious beliefs.

Comparing Aum to Dominionism presents some clear problems, but also valuable similarities. The most obvious difference is that Aum Shinrikyo is a non-western, non-Christian movement, though it is sprinkled with Christian eschatology. Thinking back to sect and cult theory, Aum presents itself as a more of a cult than a sect, though as previously discussed, that term carries many misconceptions along with it. In terms of membership and belief, Aum is cultic. Members are not free to come and go as they please, and though the initial membership is voluntary, dismembership is not. The initiation process shows how serious membership in Aum is taken. It is seen as a conversion of the human soul toward a new way of thinking. Aum theology is a hybrid of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, and is set apart from most of the mainstream religions of Japan. In Stark and Bainbridge's terms, creating this new system of belief within the Buddhist and Hindu religious

systems categorizes Aum as a cult in a sociological sense. And its secrecy, intensive ritual and vague theological foundations, would reflect cult status in the popular sense of the word. Dominionism, in theology, membership and ritual is much less cultic and more sectarian than Aum Shinrikyo, as discussed in Chapter 2. In terms of sect and cult theory then, Dominionism and Aum are in many ways divergent.

In other ways, Dominionism and Aum present tellingly similar motivations, leadership, and most important, eschatology. Both Asahara and Wagner believe to have established the true religion, the one belief system that will lead to divine salvation. Both leaders hold immense power in their respective movements and function as symbolic figureheads. And most importantly, both movements ascribe to the belief that God's earthly kingdom must be established here on earth before the Second Coming. Human intervention is central within both belief systems. This idea places enormous responsibility in the hands of believers, and that responsibility has inspired a sense of urgency and excitement within each community. This human role within the millennial sequence of events also encourages members to become active, constantly working toward their movement's goals, since they are not only trying to initiate Armageddon, but trying to save their own souls as well. As in Christianity, only the chosen will survive the end of the world, those "with great karma"¹⁷⁶ in the words of Asahara. Individuals in Aum and in Dominionism are thus responsible for both their individual salvation, and the fate of the new world as well. With such a widely circulated mission and

¹⁷⁶ Jurgensmeyer 109.

intensely supported, individuals have great motivation to take events into their own hands, as Asahara did in Japan.

In addition to these structural and motivational similarities, it is the violence of both movements, and the physical manifestation of that violence in Japan, that provides the most useful level of comparison between Aum and Dominionism. What catalyzed the violence in Japan, and how could a similar occurrence happen in American Dominionism? Aum's focus was cosmic warfare, a greater divine struggle between the evil of earth and the truth of the divine. Of course, Aum never presented itself as innocuous, its goals and focus were always on physical violence. But in the justification of that violence, and its motivations, the Japanese example is similar to Dominionism. Dominionism teaches a similarly violent theology, though it claims that the violence is spiritual, in Jurgensmeyer's terms, it is cosmic, not earthly violence. And yet, the war metaphor is central to the Dominionist message. Christians will take over the world through violent confrontations with demonic forces. So too, Aum teaches that the final confrontation between the evil and the divine will be supremely violent. It was due to increased political pressure that Asahara carried out the sarin gas attacks. The attacks were meant to symbolize the start of Armageddon. As Dominionism becomes more and more visible to the mainstream media, and as more and more secular and Christian groups come to reject Dominion theology, a similar act of desperation may be resorted to in order to assert Dominionism's strength and control over American society and religion.

V. Dominionism in Action: The Defensive Action Movement

The ultimate example to which Dominionism can be compared is the Defensive Action Movement's (DAM) attacks on abortion clinics and physicians. The movement represents one very specific and physically violent manifestation of dominion theology, and shows how easily that theology can be used to support a radical and violent agenda. Rev. Mike Bray, a leader in the Defensive Action movement, was charged in 1985 in the case of bombing ten women's health clinics, clinics that performed abortions. Around the same time, Paul Hill, another member of the DAM murdered Dr. John Britton in Florida. Bray was a minister in the Lutheran Church, who split from the main body of the church in 1984 to establish the Reformed Lutheran Church. Bray became increasingly involved in social activism, claiming that America was in, "a state of utter depravity, over which its elected officials presided with an almost satanic disregard for truth and human life."¹⁷⁷ Bray pictured a future conflict in which American Christians would engage in an armed revolutionary struggle against the demonically possessed government. The result of the struggle would be a new moral order based on Biblical law. Using Bonhoeffer's example and Niebuhr's writing, Bray justified violence against abortion clinics and doctors using the rhetoric of just war theory. He claimed that his actions were not retributive, but defensive, not malicious but liberating. As a Christian, Bray believed that he had the right to use force in order to defend the lives of unborn children.

¹⁷⁷ Jurgensmeyer 23.

Bray relied specifically on dominion theology, as well as Reconstructionism to defend his violence. As examined in Chapter 1, Reconstruction was one of the first Dominionist movements and calls directly for a theocratic state through the Christian control of secular and religious society. Similarly, the NAR believes that society needs to be overhauled by Christians in order to defeat the demons that are opposing God's kingdom on earth. The goals of Reconstructionism and the NAR are parallel. Reconstruction seeks to reconstruct American society; the NAR seeks to take dominion, or control, over areas of public and private life in America, and eventually, around the world. Both schools of thought are backed by a post-millennial eschatology, meaning that Christ will only return to earth after the establishment of his kingdom on earth. Bray's actions were definitively and directly informed by Dominion theology. In Jurgensmeyer's interview with Bray, he writes that, "Bray sees the legitimacy of using violence not only to resist what he regards as murder— abortion— but also to help bring about the Christian political order envisioned by Reconstruction thinkers such as Gary North."¹⁷⁸ Thus, the link between the murders committed by Bray and Dominionism is direct.

VI. Support in Silence: Dominionism's Violent Tendencies

The connection between Bray, Hill, and Dominionism shows that the greatest fault of Dominionism, and its greatest strength is its silent support of violence. How can a movement support something without verbalizing that support? Dominionism instills the inclination toward violence mentally within believers by speaking only in

¹⁷⁸ Jurgensmeyer 30.

terms of war, enemies, and weaponry, and then failing to distinguish between the value of spiritual violence and the sinfulness of physical violence. In this way, the movement leaves the door to physical violence wide open to its members. While “silent advocacy” is a difficult concept to both understand and prove, I believe that this silence on the topic of physical violence is the strongest and most purposefully designed gateway through which Dominionism can become a violent movement. This silence, coupled with the Dominionism’s reliance on spiritual violence directly inspired Hill and Bray. Dominionist leaders can rightly claim that they do not support violence, since leaders like Wagner never explicitly call for physical violence. And yet the line between spiritual and physical warfare is thin, and with a small push, be it political, social or theological, the shift can be catalyzed. Dominionism is guilty for what it does not say, just as much as it would be guilty for supporting violence.

a. Support for Bray and Hill

Paul Hill wrote to Gary North, a Dominionist leader, months before he killed Dr. Britton, a doctor who performed abortions in Pensacola, FL. North was aware of Hill’s plans yet only responded to the letter after the murders were carried out. Such is the pattern of Dominionist leaders. Violence is never supported or condemned. This silence on violence, the void left open in writings and speeches opens the doors for people like Hill and Bray who support dominion theology to move from spiritual to physical warfare. In the case of Hill, a single socio-moral issue prompted the violence. Issues like gay marriage, immigration, and religious diversity in America could instigate other murders performed in the name of Christianity, since

Dominionism provides no direction against such acts, while at the same time ordering believers to take over the world for Christ. Soldiers for Christ have become a physical reality, and have done so with the lethal combination of violent rhetoric, and silence on the issue of physical violence. In this way, Dominionism supports violence, by doing little to stop it.

Comparing Dominionist practice, theology, and rhetoric to that of the Salvation Army, Aum Shinrikyo, and the DAM all provide a deeper analysis of Dominionism and paint a picture of the possibility of future, large-scale Dominionist violence. Dominionist violence on a small scale has already been seen in the bombing of abortion clinics. This violence was focused on a specific moral issue and was considered to be a necessary, defensive move. And yet Dominionism maintains, not a position of pacifism, but one of ambivalence toward violence. So though Dominionism is not as direct about violence as Aum Shinrikyo, the absence of any direct warning against violence can be interpreted as a the condoning of physical force. For the violence to take on a larger scale, apocalyptic nature, some kind of threat against Dominionism must occur, as in the case of the Japanese attacks. When the legitimacy and the very existence of Dominionism comes into question, physical violence will be a logical progression of Dominionist ideas, as well as a move of defense, not just for Dominionism, but for the divine kingdom as a whole. After all, the soldiers of Christ are not just defending dominion theology through spiritual warfare, but Christianity as a global faith, a task filled with immense human responsibility. The stakes are high, and the soldiers are poised for battle mentally,

so when a match is struck, such as a political threat against Dominionism, the bomb of physical violence will easily be set off.

b. Biblical Evidence

Nowhere is the silent advocacy of violence in Dominion theology as evident as in the biblical stories that prophets like C. Peter Wager use to justify warfare prayer. In his book, *Warfare Prayer*, Wagner cites the story of Elijah and Baal as the most powerful biblical example of warfare prayer. After correctly predicting a severe drought, Elijah returns to Israel to confront King Ahab. Elijah criticizes Ahab and his people for worshipping false Gods, and the god Baal specifically. Elijah proposes a test and he and the Baal worshipers go to the peak of Mount Carmel to build altars to their respective gods. Elijah instructs the Baal priests to pray that their god will light their sacrifices on fire. The people pray all day and even sacrifice some of their own blood, but their altar remains the same. Then Elijah builds his own altar to the Lord and pleads with him saying, "Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."¹⁷⁹ Fire comes down from the sky and lights Elijah's altar on fire, even the area that had been covered in water, signaling Elijah's victory. Wagner cites this story from Kings as a prime example of the power of intercessory prayer against the enemy. Wagner writes, "Elijah was not wrestling so much against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers."¹⁸⁰ His account of the story ends with the success of the Lord against Baal.

¹⁷⁹ *New Oxford Bible* 1Kings 18:37.

¹⁸⁰ Wagner *Warfare* 195.

But a hugely important part of this story is missing from Wagner's account. Elijah's battle was both theological *and physical*. After Elijah's altar is lit, Elijah orders the Baal worshippers to be brutally killed. The passage continues, "Elijah said to them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.' Then they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to Wadi Kishon, and killed them there."¹⁸¹ The only way that Elijah can defeat this "territorial spirit" Baal is by killing its followers. Wrapped up in this passage is the incredible gap left open in Dominionism for physical violence that the prophets and apostles never address. Just as a violent end is the ultimate conclusion of this story, it must also be acknowledged as a logical next step in the Dominionist mission. Certainly, a follower of Wager, reading his praise of Elijah's actions against Baal, and then reading the biblical account of Elijah's violence might interpret Wagner's words as the encouragement of violence against demonic forces.

c. Wagner's Ambiguity

And here in lies the brilliance of the Dominionist message. It is not what is said, but what is left unsaid that makes the biggest impact and suggests the most unthinkable actions. Wagner can rightly claim that he has never openly supported the use of physical violence within the movement, and indeed he hasn't. Wagner writes, "A great danger, which is all too common, is to go into spiritual warfare in the flesh."¹⁸² This is literally the only sentence about physical force in a book that is dedicated to violence. In the next sentence Wagner writes, "It is essential to hear from God what he wants us to do, how He wants us to do it, and when it should be

¹⁸¹ *New Oxford Bible* Kings 18:40.

¹⁸² Wagner *Warfare* 178.

done.”¹⁸³ In another section of the book Wagner writes, “I do not believe that we should see spiritual warfare as an end in itself.”¹⁸⁴ Could God’s message be one of violence, as it was for Elijah? Could physical violent be the end and spiritual warfare just the first step? The vagueness and violent suggestiveness of Wagner’s writing would have to suggest that it could be. Wagner has never fully condemned violence and has left a significant window open to take the battle against demons from a spiritual to a physical plane. It is Wagner himself who opens that window by creating a zeitgeist of violence within Dominionism, both spiritual and physical.

d. Christian Terrorism?

A crucially important issue that arises from this analysis is the nature of terrorism, and Christian terrorism specifically. In deciding how to classify Dominionism through its violence, Christian terrorism as a concept and as a term must be understood. Jurgensmeyer refers continually to religious violence as religious terrorism; he uses the terms interchangeably. Can Dominionism be considered a terrorist organization, even though it does not propagate violence in the physical realm? Is a terrorist action based on the violence itself, or the ideology of terror? As Jurgensmeyer writes, “terrorism is meant to terrify.”¹⁸⁵ In this way, it is the ethos of terrorism, the motivations behind it that are significant rather than the act itself. If terrorism is defined by the goal of inciting terror in a target, then Dominionism, even if it never transitions into a physical movement, might be

¹⁸³ Wagner *Warfare* 178.

¹⁸⁴ Wagner *Warfare* 19.

¹⁸⁵ Jurgensmeyer 51.

considered a terrorist organization. Dominion theology is fundamentally violent, and though only expressed on a cosmic level, the goal of Dominionism is to incite terror in the demons that possess the seven mountains of culture. If and when the violence does become physical, the terrorist nature of the movement will become even clearer.

If Wagner was serious about preventing these violent developments, his rhetoric wouldn't blatantly support and glorify violence. If a person read any of Wagner's books without knowing that the violent language used by Dominionists is only symbolic, the NAR would seem unequivocally like a terrorist organization. Leaders of the movement claim that the use of this rhetoric comes directly from the Bible. But the Old Testament did not separate violent language from physical violence, as seen in the story about Elijah. The Dominionist reliance on scripture as the source of their rhetoric conflicts with the exclusive support of spiritual violence. So why the need to use this aggressive language at all? The answer must be linked to the desire to create in Dominionists a feeling of aggression toward others in order to make their mission of dominion a success. The language is enough itself to suggest the prospect of violent developments. As Wagner says, "doing battle against the spiritual principalities and powers is not an activity for the timid or fainthearted. It is war, and casualties are to be expected."¹⁸⁶ Without qualifying this statement or warning against taking these claims of warfare literally, Wagner invites violence openly into his movement.

¹⁸⁶ Wagner *Warfare* 180.

Similar to Wagner's use of violence in his rhetoric, when praying for the *end* of violence in other nations, Dominionists paradoxically use their own language of war. Cindy Jacobs, while praying for Wagner to seek forgiveness in Japan for the nuclear attacks of World War II said, "Father, Peter will be used like a nuclear bomb in the Spirit to break apart the darkness that Satan has worked against the nation of Japan and the Japanese people."¹⁸⁷ A movement that stands seriously against the use of violence would never invite such analogies into its rhetoric. Using Wagner as a nuclear bomb to break apart the destruction that the nuclear bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused just does not make sense, nor is it appropriate. These examples, along with many others point to a serious trend in Dominionism toward violent force. The line between rhetoric and literality is thin and could be crossed at any time.

VII. Conclusion

Imagine, a bomb is set off in a mosque, followed by similar attacks in different cities around the United States. C. Peter Wagner issues a statement to Dominionists saying that the time has come, the spiritual battlefield has been prepared, and the soldiers of Christ must engage in the struggle for the kingdom against the forces of darkness. Keeping in mind the rhetoric of Dominionism, the biblical violence supported by Wagner and other leaders, the holes left in dominion theology regarding the use of physical force, and finally, the individual violence

¹⁸⁷ Wagner *Warfare* 135.

committed by Paul Hill in the name of Dominionism, this scenario is not difficult to imagine. When warfare prayer stops functioning as an effective tool against demons, when the demons acquire new weapons, Dominionists themselves must adopt new weapons as well, weapons that carry more force than spiritual level warfare. NAR scholar Rachel Tabachnick warns of, “the role that demonization and scapegoating of others plays in bringing about [the second coming].”¹⁸⁸ So much liability has been placed into human hands, that human violence and human demonizing seems a rational extension of Dominionist teachings. The distinction between cosmic warfare and earthly warfare, between a mentality of violence, and the physical action of violence are so blurred that one could easily transition into the other. Dominionism is a movement on the verge of rupture. If one or two individuals can use it to justify violent action, then others will continue to do so, until Dominionism becomes a movement based on violence in both spiritual and physical terms.

Epilogue

The aim of this analysis has not been to predict when Dominionism will commit a violent act, but to state that it has the tools and motivations necessary to do so. The ideology of violence is just as threatening as the violence itself, and instills in believers a mindset which, when coupled with the urgency of post-millennial eschatology,

¹⁸⁸ "The Evangelicals Engaged in Spiritual Warfare." Interview. NPR, 24 Aug. 2011. Web. <<http://www.npr.org/2011/08/24/139781021/the-Evangelicals-engaged-in-spiritual-warfare>>.

encourages aggression toward those who do not comply with the tenets of Dominionism. We have seen that Dominionism has already inspired individuals to murder. Through the Japanese example, we have also seen that violence on a more collective scale is a real possibility in a movement that is founded on spiritual violence. To claim that Dominionism is a form of Christian terrorism then is not only grounded in ideological proof, based on Jurgensmeyer's definition of terror, but in tangible proof, as seen in the actions of Michael Bray and Paul Hill. The fact that this connection has not been made public before, shows the fundamental underestimation of Dominionism.

Through historical, theoretical, comparative, and analytical methods, these conclusions have been reached. Dominionism represents a serious deviation from traditional Evangelical practices and theology. Its authoritative hierarchy departs from the more mainstream belief in the authority of all believers. Its focus on large-scale conversion and spiritual warfare, and warfare prayer reveals the shift in focus from a personal relationship with God in Evangelicalism, to a more communal view. In function, the God of peace has been replaced with the God of warfare. And its extreme view of social and religious activism is different from past socio-political initiatives in its scale and in its exclusionary nature. It is not legal, as Prohibition was, nor is it purely moral, as the Social Gospel was. In these ways, Dominionism has departed from traditional modes of Evangelicalism, and cannot rightly claim membership to it.

This deviation from traditional Evangelicalism shows that Dominionism cannot be characterized from the perspective of mainstream Christianity. Coupled with its focus on spiritual warfare, the presence of demons, and a post-millennial eschatology, Dominionism is in a preparatory state, poised ideologically for physical violence. As such

a movement, it should be examined in terms of real religious violence, in the terms that Jurgensmeyer give us. Its deviance from Evangelicalism allows Dominionism to act upon its ideology of violence, while its claims to Evangelicalism grant it legitimation from within. Analyzing Dominionism then is valuable not only because it represents a religious anomaly, but because it represents a threat to American society and religion.

Though gaining access to the movement from the outside is difficult, and though many of its practices are not made public, the ideology that Dominionists like C. Peter Wagner present in their writings is enough to spark concern. By writing about spiritual violence, and failing to acknowledge the moral injustice of offensive physical violence, Dominionism is complacent in that violence. Its silence is strategic, since Dominionism cannot be said to support violence, nor can it be said to oppose it. It is this silence on physical violence supported by a millennial urgency that allowed Hill to commit murder without moral culpability. This moral ambiguity reveals the protean nature of Dominionism, and makes it an unstable movement, on the verge of large-scale violence, and in need of societal understanding. This thesis has revealed the theology, practices, and danger of Dominionism in the hope that the movement will cease to be dismissed, and begin to be understood for the serious shift in Christian belief and practice that it truly represents.

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