

Radical Christianity

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Radical Christianity in Intentional Communities

1. Introduction

In this paper I will look at the 'radical' in what is commonly referred to as 'Christianity' (indeed, often irreconcilable today, even within the 'mainstream' spectrum) and attempt to describe the radical's primary features. My premise is that the radical is one of intentional community with an insightful model at its roots, proclaimed, taught and implemented by an unconditioned, liberated, and enlightened character: Jesus!

However, what I'll not do is to apply or even attempt to apply that radical to analyse specific intentional communities. Firstly, it is far beyond the ambit of this paper; secondly, I have inadequate first-hand knowledge; and thirdly, since such application on another is completely outside my path and calling¹. Yet, I hope that this paper will be useful to intentional communities, to honestly and realistically understand their features and nature, and should they so wish, strive towards that radical in praxis – Jesus' model.

I will address this topic firstly defining terms – 'radical', 'Christianity', 'radical Christianity', 'intentional' and 'communities'. That will be followed by describing my 'sources'. Then I will dwell on 'intentionality', and finally, identify some key features of 'radical Christian intentional communities as propagated by Jesus', or in relation to the topic of this paper, 'Radical Christianity in Intentional Communities'.

2. Definitions

2.1 Radical

The English word 'radical', derives from the Late Latin *radicalis* meaning "of roots" and from the Latin *radix* meaning "root".

2.2 Christianity

The English word "Christianity" derives from the Greek word Χριστός, *Christos*. The earliest recorded use of the term "Christianity" (Gk: Χριστιανισμός) was by Ignatius of Antioch,

¹ For descriptions of some lay Christian communities in the UK in their own words, see John Vincent (ed.), 2011; see also Alison Norman, 2007.

around 100 CE². However, the term "Christians" (Gk: Χριστιανός; *Christianos*) was first used in reference to disciples of Jesus in the city of Antioch (Act.11:26) about 44-50 CE. What is absolutely clear in that passage is that the existing emic (internal) category "disciples" (Gk: μαθητής; *mathētēs*), unarguably initiated by Jesus, which had no name, was given a name, an etic³ (external) one - "Christians", by others (Gk: χρηματίζω; *chrēmatizō*; "to receive a name or title, to be called") and began to be identified as such. However, it is doubtful whether the disciples used that name. In evidence, there are only two other instances in the New Testament where the word "Christian" is used; at Acts 26.28 (59-60 CE) and 1 Peter 4.16 (60-65 CE). It is absolutely clear that it is another who uses the term in the first passage, while it is implied in the second. Today, it is entirely different with numerous types, often irreconcilable with each other, all self-identifying as Christians, while the root category of "disciples" has faded into the background, to put it at the highest. Hence, arises the need to search for radical Christianity, or to put it realistically and simply – 'to get to the bottom of it' – "discipleship"!

2.3 Radical Christianity

The term, μαθητής; *mathētēs* (disciples) occurs in the Greek text, some 42 times in Mark, 74 in John, 71 in Matthew, 37 in Luke and 28 times in Acts – a total of 252. In irreconcilable contradiction it is absent in the rest of the New Testament. The reason for this is apparent, but falls beyond the ambit of this paper. What is within the ambit, and primary to this paper is that "Christianity" at the root, was none other than "discipleship". Referring to the Markan stance, Vincent (1976, p.116) writes: "The disciples are the key to such understanding in Mark. But if disciples are the key, then this means that discipleship to Jesus along the way is the content of it, and nothing other."

2.4 Intentional

Is doing with intention or on purpose; or pertaining to intention or purpose.

2.5 Communities

The word "community" comes from the Old French *communité* which is derived from the Latin *communitas* (*com*, "with/together" + *munus*, "gift"), a broad term for fellowship or organised society.

² See Elwell/Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, pp. 266 & 828

³ See Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike, and Marvin Harris (ed.), 1990

The term community refers to a usually small, social unit of undefined size that shares common values. In human communities, intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks, and a number of other conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the participants and their degree of cohesiveness.

3. Sources

The obvious sources have to be in words attributed to, and narratives about, the initiating character. Therefore, my axiom is the texts about Jesus, irrespective of Jesus. What is available to us today are the four canonical narratives on Jesus (the mostly cited herein), the Acts of the Apostles being a continuation of the narrative attributed to Luke (also cited), and some extracanonical texts ('Thomas' and 'Mary' sometimes cited). All these were originally written in *Koiné* (common) Greek⁴.

It is understandable that many clerics, theologians and scholars have been reluctant to rely on extracanonical texts relating to Jesus. But, I am friendly to Crossan's (1985, p.10) attitude which considers that certain extracanonical texts including that referred to as the 'Gospel of Thomas' must most importantly be placed in dialectic with the canonical ones. Further, some scholars have argued that once the gnostic covering is penetrated the sayings in Thomas may well be more proximate to the radical and others advocate that it is fresh interpretations of the canonical 'Gospels' (Stanton, 1989). Koester (1990) is of the view that that these extracanonical writings might lead to insights to the radical of the gospel tradition. However, independently and apart from all that, my use of those texts, and here particularly Thomas and Mary is because they have supportive interpretative evidence of the radical – namely; features of 'intentional discipleship community' originated by Jesus and clearly Jesus' intention of "Kingdom" for those radical discipleship communities. For instance the relatively diminutive Thomas text and the even shorter six of nine chapters of Mary available to us today, are exclusively Jesus-disciple and Mary-disciple dialogues. They are indisputably aphorismic unlike

⁴ A form of Greek commonly used by those who were not ethnically or culturally Greek; namely those then in the Roman Empire who adopted the lingua franca which was unquestionably Greek, albeit in another form (potent though unclassical). This is natural and real as evidenced in language of empires, such as the English used by both colonisers and colonised in British India and the Creole (Pigeon French) adopted in French colonies such as Haiti and Mauritius.

the biographical narrative in the four canonical texts on Jesus. However, such difference has no effect on this exercise. To that end, the *sui generis* applied and rooted in second half of the 2nd century CE of pseudo epigraphic titling of each text as a “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον; euaggelion) becomes inapplicable (Koester, 1990, pp. 24-26). I strongly argue that all writings relating to Jesus should be considered as evidence, provided they are not pseudo epigraphic, irrespective of their literary genre and kerygma (‘generalised message’), such as Jesus’ death and resurrection (Koester, 1990, p.46). Most importantly, all evidence relating to the issues must be patiently extracted from those reliable sources.

The dating of the texts (the sources herein) is unimportant to this essay. It is commonly accepted that all were written within a century of the death of Jesus. It is often the case that subsequent writings clarify former ones, add omissions and sometimes even correct errors. To me, also given my legal training and practice, the first evidence has no superiority over those that follow. The test is reliability and the proximity to the issues. Here the issues are; ‘radical Christianity’ and ‘intentional community’.

4. Intentionality

4.1 Jesus’ Intention

Jesus’ primary intention of calling people to discipleship was to implement in practice and preaching, the one gospel (Gk: εὐαγγέλιον; euaggelion) proclaimed by him.⁵ It was a call to look away, change mind, heart and way of life (Gk: μετανοέω; *metanoēō*) from all extant cultures of the day – conventional, popular, or other. Importantly, “*euaggelion*”, a rare term in then extant Greek literature, was however used in a manner of proclamation in the early period of the Roman Empire (31 BCE onward) in imperial inscriptions written on stone. The most potent within the empire was the inscription in Priene in 9 BCE⁶. The term accordingly becomes elevated, dignified and authoritative in Jesus’ time. The key features of that imperial *euaggelia* are: I. Written; II. Plural (εὐαγγέλια); III. Detailed and well defined; IV. Augustus Caesar is perpetual god and saviour of the world surpassing all others before him; V. Good news to be celebrated; VI. Religio-political propaganda; VII. Wisely formulated for a

⁵ Initially in the narratives at Mk.1.14-15 and Mt. 4.12&17; see also, Mk. 1:1, 13:10, 14:9, 16:15; Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 11:5, 24:14, 26:13; Lk. 4:18, 7:22, 9:6, 20:1; GMary. 4.37, 5.1, 9.9

⁶ For the full text written in Greek, see Dittenberger, 1960, pp. 48-60.

predominantly theistic people of the empire, however varied their concepts of theism.

Now, the usage of “euaggelion” attributed to Jesus in the narratives, comes from a mind having complete right understanding, right view and right action in context. There is no evidence of opposition or criticism of the imperial proclamations; yet, there is an alternative proclamation. Whether it is an ‘alternative good news to be celebrated’ is beyond the ambit of this paper, as is the ‘surpassing all others before him’. However, any countering concept of Jesus (and not Augustus Ceasar) being the perpetual god and saviour of the world is totally absent in Jesus’ euaggelion. Instead the ‘salvation’ is the content of the euaggelion itself. Namely: the confidence to lead the way of life of righteousness: “The time is right, and the Kingdom of God (Gk: βασιλεία θεός; *basileia theos*; a domain of right-eousness) is here, look away, change your mind, heart and way of life, and believe (Gk: πιστεύω; place confidence) in this proclamation”.

Further, the usage of the singular term “euaggelion” attributed to Jesus is an intentional departure from the imperial plural (“εὐαγγέλια”) – Jesus’ is a singular culture termed ‘Kingdom’. However, most important to this paper is that which is also perhaps unprecedented – the euaggelion attributed to Jesus is oral and unwritten, just a single sentence, perhaps intentionally lacking in definition and detail, particularly about the ‘Kingdom’ he proclaims. What is clear in the euaggelion is the emphasised prerequisite that cannot ever be compromised – “look away, change your mind, heart and way of life and have confidence in this euaggelion” – renunciation of attachment to everything in one’s extant culture. That is a call to ‘alternate culture’ – quite independent of any intention to counter the extant or any other culture⁷. Yet, the striking similarity of Augustus’ εὐαγγέλια and Jesus’ εὐαγγέλιον is, that they are both wisely formulated contextually for a predominantly theistic people, however varied their concepts of theism!

4.2 Disciples’ Intention

Now, an undefined future for those who accept this call (disciples) initially entails only the intentionality of total renunciation of the past – it is about letting go of everything rather than hoping for something. It is certainly not an escape from boredom or finding something to be occupied in for reasons of ‘self-satisfaction’ or

⁷ See Mk.2.21-22; Mt.9.16-17; Lk.5. 36-39; GTh.47

ambition either in action or inaction. However, the narratives clearly show that Jesus didn't leave them guessing without hope. Almost immediately, they are invited to follow him and come to his dwelling and accompany him wherever he travelled, in their homes and those of others; for, if one calls others to renounce⁸, provision has to be made for basics however sparse they may be.⁹

The undefined and unclear (here the alternate Kingdom culture) often organically evolves into clearly featured definition and clarity in ensuing implementation of the intention. We shall see this realised here, in way of life (exemplary action), teaching (instruction) and preaching (dissemination of the euaggelion).

5. Some Key Features of 'Radical Christianity in Intentional Communities as Propagated by Jesus'

These features are many, and addressing all of them isn't possible here. So, the following are some features that I consider fundamental, but need nurturing in today's intentional communities if they identify as being radical Christian.

5.1 Kingdom

Jesus' proclaimed Kingdom/alternate culture is certainly his advocated way of life for the intentional communities of discipleship that he propagated¹⁰. The 'Kingdom' is more than well-defined to those who cultivate unconditioned minds¹¹ to rightly understand by focussing with absolute concentration with the full mind (mindfully) applied to the concentration, resulting in penetration of the word and action, reflection thereon, and en-

⁸ See for example Mk.1.18-20, 2.14, 10.28-29; Mt.4.19-22, 8.19-22, 9.9, 19.27-29; Lk.5.11&27-28, 9.57-62; 18.28-30; Jn.1.43-51- note v.47 – Jesus' sarcastic dismissal of national identity; GTh. 81, 110

⁹ See for example, Jn.1.37-39; Mk.1 29-34,2.1, 3.13-15, 11.11-12; Mt.4.18-22, 8.14-17, 21.17-20, 26.6-8; Lk.5.8-11, 4.38-41

¹⁰ **Mk.** 1.14, 1.15, 4.11, 4.26, 4.30, 9.1, 9.47, 10.14, 10.15, 10.23, 10.24, 10.25, 12.34, 14.25, 15.43; **Mt.** 3.2, 4.17, 4.23, 5.3, 5.10, 5.19, 5.20, 6.10, 6.13, 6.33, 7.21, 8.11, 8.12, 9.35, 10.7, 11.11, 11.12, 12.28, 13.11, 13.19, 13.24, 13.31, 13.33, 13.38, 13.41, 13.43, 13.44, 13.47, 13.52, 16.19, 16.28, 18.1, 18.3, 18.4, 18.23, 19.12, 19.14, 19.23, 19.24, 20.1, 20.21, 21.31, 22.2,24.14, 25.1, 25.14, 25.34, 26.29; **Lk.** 4.43, 6.20, 7.28, 8.1, 8.10, 9.2, 9.11, 9.27, 9.60, 9.62, 10.9, 10.11, 11.2, 11.20, 12.31, 12.32, 13.18, 13.20, 13.28, 13.29, 14.15, 16.16, 17.20, 17.21, 18.16, 18.17, 18.24, 18.25, 18.29, 21.31, 22.16, 22.18, 22.29, 22.30, 23.42, 23.51; **Jn.** 3.3, 3.5, 18.36; **GTh.** 3 (x2), 20, 22(x3), 27, 46,49, 54, 57, 76, 82, 96, 97, 98, 99, 107, 109, 113(x2), 114; **GMary.** 4.37,5.1,8.19.

¹¹ Similes of cloth and wine skins – Mk.2.21-22; Mt.9.16-17; Lk.5.36-39; GTh.47

fleshing in the being. The many ‘Kingdom parables’¹² are primary, although addressing them here is beyond ambit. Yet, it is of much import to survey the narratives to decipher the meaning of ‘Kingdom’. Similar to the imperial proclamations, the narratives show that Jesus rightly uses the word “*theos*”, in context of theistic ‘world’ he’s proclaiming to. The Matthean text, perhaps more accurately, uses frequently the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” (Gk: οὐρανός; *ouranos*; the universe, the world), the Markan, Lukan and Johannine use “Kingdom of God”, while all four narratives also use just “the Kingdom”, “my Kingdom” and “thy Kingdom” as well. Turning to our two extracanonical texts, it is remarkable that the Thomas and Mary text leaves “God” completely unmentioned in conjunction with “Kingdom”. However, most significant and important to this paper is the equation of the “Kingdom” with “Righteousness” (Gk: δικαιοσύνη; *dikaïosynē*; integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking feeling, and acting)¹³. Therefore, the theism is equated with righteousness, here and now in the world; it is a domain of rightness where ‘theism’ becomes a variable and ‘non-theism’, another variable, fits in well.

Now, such righteousness most clearly set out by Jesus to his disciples, is entirely alternative to the Judaic, Roman, or any other culture around them. In fact, this culture departs from all cultures of the day. It departs from individualism, even from Jesus to that right-eous culture – a way of life, contrary to the imperial proclamation where the emperor is the saviour. Here, the ‘saviour’ is the right-eous culture. Therefore, discipleship in intentional community with Jesus means living out that right-eous community culture, and that is radical Christianity.

5.2 Public Proclamation and Selected Call

Our texts agree that Jesus’ euaggelion was publicly proclaimed to all¹⁴. It was glorified (Gk: δοξάζω; *doxazō*; praised, celebrated and honoured) by many¹⁵. However, there is no evidence that anyone wished to follow ‘Jesus the celebrity’ or ‘Jesus the glorified’ in discipleship. Perhaps, Jesus didn’t want that – praise, glory and honour – redeemer king¹⁶ or saviour? What he clearly does want is to select discerningly, and call those who would follow him as true

¹² See C H Dodd, 1935/1946; Joachim Jeremias, 1954; Warren S Kissinger, 1979.

¹³ See Mt.3.15;5.10;5.20;6.33; Act.10.35;13.10;17.31;24.25

¹⁴ See Mk.1.14-15; Mt.4.12&17; Lk.4.14-15; Jn.4.43-45

¹⁵ Lk.4.15

¹⁶ See Jn.6.15

friends¹⁷ as equals with him¹⁸ and lead the way of life he lives and advocates¹⁹.

5.3 Ordination of Microunit and its Purpose

The purpose of Jesus' ordination (from Gk: ποιέω; *poieō*;²⁰ to be the authors of a cause) of selected twelve disciples among many he had chosen²¹, was solely for the purpose of creating a viable microunit 'to be with him', and for 'sending out to preach' (Gk: κηρύσσω; *kēryssō*; of the euaggelion matters pertaining to it – the Kingdom) and 'to heal' (Gk: θεραπεύω; *therapeuō*; to serve/restore to health, have therapeutic effects on others towards their holism)²². We know from our texts that several other microunits were created²³ and were sent out to do the same missions as the twelve²⁴ to wider social sectors, importantly not excluding the non-Jewish homes²⁵.

5.4 Locus

5.4.1 The Home-bases

Jesus' selected base for discipleship community life was firstly his own home, and then also the homes of others²⁶. Sometimes these were unilaterally selected by Jesus with right discernment²⁷, at other times at other's invitation²⁸, by chance on missions to the unknown²⁹, but perhaps mostly, just made available when they

¹⁷ Jn.15.13-15

¹⁸ Jn.17.22

¹⁹ See Mk.1.16-20, 2.13-14; Mt.4.18-22, 9.9; Lk.5.8-11; Jn.1.35-51

²⁰ This word occurs in the Greek text of Mark 47 times, in Matthew 73, Luke 81, John 97, and Acts 66 times, but is translated in the KJV using words such as; do, make, bring forth, commit, cause, work, show, bear, keep, fulfil, deal, perform, etc. It is translated as 'ordained' only at Mk.3.14. However, Jn.15.16, and Acts 1.22, 10.42, 13.48, 14.23, 16.4, and 17.31 have other Greek words translated as 'ordained' in the KJV. Addressing this is beyond the ambit of this paper.

²¹ See Mk.3.13-14; Lk.6.13

²² Mk.3.15

²³ See for example, Jn.4.39-42; Mk.6.10,14.3; Mt.10.11-13,26.6-8; Lk.8.39,9.4,10.7 & 38

²⁴ Mk.6.7-10; Mt.10.1, 5-13; Lk.9.1-5

²⁵ Lk.10.1-11

²⁶ For example see; **Mk.** 1.29, 2.1, 2.15, 3.19, 6.10, 7.17, 7.24, 9.28, 9.33, 10.10, 10.29-30, 14.3, 14.14; **Mt.**8.14, 9.10, 9.28, 10.12-14, 13.1, 13.36, 17.25, 19.29, 26.6, 26.18; **Lk.** 4:38, 5.29, 7.36-37, 9.4, 10.5, 10.7, 10.38, 14.1, 18.29-30, 19.5, 22.10-11; **Jn.**12:3, 20.10; **Act.** 2.2, 2.46, 5.42

²⁷ Ex: Zacchaeus' – Lk.19.1-10

²⁸ Ex: Matthew's – Lk.5.29; Emmaus – Lk.24.28-29

²⁹ Ex: The Twelve's and the Seventy's – Mk.6.7-11; Mt.10.1,5-42; Lk.9.1-5,10.1-11

arrived at the door of those in discipleship communities or supportive to them³⁰.

In my personal experience, the home is where intimacy begets and culture arises. It is most viable provided there's no mind-set of 'me' and 'my', ownership, family, and is not a fortress for privacy. In fact, that leaps into the wide spectrum of going forth to 'self-homelessness' or 'a form of dispossession' by selfless sharing of homes without attachment and devoid of all fears³¹. Perhaps the best evidence for this is the metaphor, albeit extreme attributed to the lips of Jesus at GTh.21 – "Mary said to Jesus, What are your disciples like? He said, they are like little children living in a field that is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, give us back our field. They take off their clothes in front of them in order to give it back to them, and they return their field to them. For this reason I say, if the owners of a house know that a thief is coming, they will be on guard before the thief arrives and will not let the thief break into their house (their domain) and steal their possessions. As for you, then, be on guard against the world. Prepare yourselves with great strength, so the robbers can't find a way to get to you, for the trouble you expect will come". Further, home-bases eliminate the unnecessary burden of financially and administratively maintaining centres and specially built or adapted buildings. It saves time and effort spent in administrative meetings, running trusts and charities, keeping accounts, taxation, abiding by legislation obsessed with health and safety consumerism, counting cost, determining price, assessing profit, etc. – all appalling pathologies of the State's spectrum (Kingdom of Mammon). All that is absent in our narratives! As a matter of pertinence, see Jesus' attitude to his and disciples' taxation at Mt.17.24-27³².

³⁰ Ex: Bethany – Mk.11.11-12,14.3 Mt.21.17,26.6; Lk.10.38; Jn.21.1; and the upper room – Mk.14.15; Lk.22.12; Act.1.13

³¹ Mt.8.20; Lk.9.58

³² John Wesley limited his expenditures by not purchasing the kinds of things thought essential for a man in his station of life. In 1776 the English tax commissioners inspected his return and wrote him the following: "[We] cannot doubt but you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry." They were saying a man of his prominence certainly must have some silver plate in his house and were accusing him of failing to pay excise tax on it. Wesley wrote back: "I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol. This is all the plate I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread." (White, 1994)

5.4.2 Public and Desolate Places

Of course Jesus and his intentional community were itinerants and hence had to take to the streets. They also frequented the seashore and uninhabited places like mountains and plains. The narratives state that it is around the seacoast that key persons were called to discipleship by Jesus³³.

5.4.3 Synagogues

Then what about the synagogues? The experiences that Jesus and his disciples had in synagogues are much varied. That spectrum embraces healing, disputes on breaches of the Mosaic Law, rejection, expelling and even persecuting or trying to kill them³⁴. The one consistency is that there is no record in our texts that the synagogue ever led to anyone becoming a disciple and joining the community by intent. Even the narrative about Jairus, a leader of a synagogue occurs by chance quite apart from the synagogue. Probably, Jairus couldn't get any in the synagogue ('his' assembly) to follow Jesus as disciples, and neither does Jesus even invite him to intentionally join the community³⁵.

5.4.4 The Temple

Similarly, the Temple and those around it are hardly supportive of discipleship apart from one recorded instance³⁶. Jesus clearly dismissed the Temple as a locus when deciding upon his mission³⁷. Perhaps, Jesus' actions recorded at Mk.11.15-19; Mt.21.12-13; Lk.19.45-46 and Jn.2.13-25 was to show the unrighteousness of temple culture and that it cannot be reformed, and that was certainly not his mission – for, what is not said, is that they obviously reverted back to exploitation the 'day after', although 'the tables were turned' and the 'boat was rocked' by Jesus. Such an institution may well have been far beyond reform. It was destroyed some forty years later. Again Jesus' and the disciples' Temple experience is mixed between healing, praise, confrontation, rejection, persecution and attempts at their life; moreover Jesus often criticises the Temple adversely³⁸.

³³ See Mk.1.16-20, 2.13-14; Mt.4.18-22; Lk.5.1-11

³⁴ See **Mk.**1.21-28, 3.1-6,6.1-6; **Mt.**12.9-14, 13.54-58; **Lk.**4.16-30, 33-37, 6.6-11, 13.10-17; **Jn.**6.59-65, 9.22, 12.42-43; **Act.**6.9-15, 13.14-43, 14.1-2, 17.1-21, 18.4-26, 19.8-9, 22.19, 26.1-1

³⁵ See Mk.5.22-24 & 35-43; Mt.9.18-19 & 23-26; Lk.8.41-42 & 49-56

³⁶ See Act.3.1-11 & 4.10-14

³⁷ See Mt.4.5-7; Lk.4.9-12

³⁸ See **Mk.**11.27-28; **Mt.**12.5-6, 21.14-17&23, 23.16-22&35, 24.1-2; **Lk.**11.51, 19.47, 20.1-2, 21.5-6&37-38; **Jn.**5.14, 7.14-15&28, 8.2&20&59, 10.22-27, 11.56-57; **Act.**2.46, 4.1-4, 5.21-42, 22.17-18, 24.1-18, 25.8, 26.21

5.5 Exclusiveness with Open Doors

It is absolutely clear from the narratives that Jesus and his disciples consistently wanted to be to themselves, even retreated away from the public, and plainly there was a privacy excluding others³⁹. The home-bases also became so 'invaded' by others who had various motives but did not seek discipleship or had no call from Jesus to join the intentional community⁴⁰. However, the call to discipleship was public – there wasn't a fortress!

5.6 Love and Compassion

A vital feature of Radical Christianity in Intentional Communities, which may well be the principal one, is acting in love at all times towards all and with compassion when necessary.

Now, out of at least three Greek words comparable to the one word 'love' in modern English usage, ἀγάπῳ (*agapaō*) was on the lips of Jesus as narrated in our texts⁴¹. It meant selfless love or love without a self – it is purely objective without a 'lover' and 'loved', and hence it is beyond measure and outside the concept of reciprocity. As for 'compassion' (Gk: σπλαγχνίζομαι, *splagchnizomai*; to be moved as to one's inwards (*splanchna*), to be moved with pity), it is frequently recorded in our texts in Jesus' attitude towards the multitude and towards sufferers, but not towards disciples⁴².

5.7 No False Scruples of Discarded Cultures or Otherwise!

It is common knowledge that little children are the most unconditioned by culture. They think, feel and act naturally in pure innocence and contradictions that occur with the environment including adult behaviour is an ignorant or helpless by-product of pathological culture. To that end Jesus is said to have reiterated metaphorically that discipleship in the Kingdom unquestionably entails being like children (Gk: παιδίον, *paidion*, metaph. like children in mind)⁴³. Perhaps, the best, because it is extreme, thus dismissing false scruples of cultures left behind is at GTh.37 – His disciples said, "When will you appear to us, and when will we see

³⁹ For example see Mk.4.35-36,6.30-32&45,9.28,14.17; Mt.8.18&23,13.36, 14.22,17.19,26.20; Lk.9.10,22.14; and Gth. and GMary are exclusively disciple conversations.

⁴⁰ See for example Mk.2.1-12, 15-17; Mt.9.10-11; Lk.5.29-30

⁴¹ See Mk.10.21,12.30-31&33; Mt.5.43-44&46,6.24,19.19,22.37&39; Lk.6.27,32&35, 7.42&47,16.13; Jn.8.42,11.5,13.1,23,34,14.15,21,23,24,28,31,15.9,12,17,19.26, 21.15,16,20; GTh.25,43,101,107; GMary.5.5,9.9

⁴² See Mk. 1.41, 6.34, 8.2, 9.22; Mt.9.36, 14.14, 15.32, 20.34; Lk.7.13, Jn.11.33

⁴³ See Mk.10.14; Mt.19.14; Lk.18.16; GTh.4,21,37 & 46

you?" Jesus said, "When you strip without being ashamed, and you take your clothes and put them under your feet like little children and trample them, then [you] will see the son of the living one and you will not be afraid." – Of false scruples? Also, compare Jn. 21.7, where Peter who was naked covered himself to go to Jesus.

5.8 Elimination of Social Contradictions – Class, Vulnerability and Acceptance

What is commonly called the 'Beatitudes'⁴⁴ attributed to Jesus, explicitly state that the Kingdom culture is for liberation of the poor materially and/or 'spiritually'. At Mt.5.3 'poor in spirit' means (Gk: πτωχός, ptōchos) lacking in (πνεῦμα, pneuma) the sentient element – perception, reflection and feeling. It is also for those that are vulnerable in mammon's extant cultures – sufferers, humble, those seeking a righteous culture, compassionate, pure in being, and loving peace. The best evidence for this is written systematically in the Acts of the Apostles⁴⁵ implying that those who took to intentional community discipleship in the Kingdom (radical Christianity) were relieved of 'spiritual poverty' and that they shared all possessions according to need. Now, using only as needed is indeed the 'the bread for the day' and clinging to anything beyond that is clearly 'trespass'⁴⁶. Also, today's practice of explicit or implicit 'paying for one's own costs', is absolutely contrary to Act.2.41-47 and clearly un-radical in Christian intentional community. Apart from the clarity in our sources, that Jesus' mission had no element of cost, and was resourced by voluntary donations, we know from the radical example of Ananias and Sapphira⁴⁷ that giving was voluntary, and that is donation – a gift – an indispensable ingredient in *communitas* (com, "with/together" + munus, "gift"). The reward is written at Acts.4.34, which confirms that there was none lacking among them. But, such refuge in to the right-eous Kingdom also entailed 'acceptance',

⁴⁴ Mt.5.1-12; Lk.6.20-26

⁴⁵ Act.2.41-47

⁴⁶ Mt.6.11-12; Lk.11.3-4; See Fernando, 2010; Also John Wesley's example of using only £30 of his grand annual income of over £1000. In 1744 Wesley wrote, "When I die if I leave behind me ten pounds...you and all mankind can bear witness against me, that I have lived and died a thief and a robber." When he died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the miscellaneous coins to be found in his pockets and dresser drawers. Most of the thousands of pounds he had earned in his lifetime he had given away (White, 1994)

⁴⁷ Act.5.1-11

even rejoicing when persecuted by others⁴⁸. Therefore, the liberation in refuge necessarily requires intention, but realistically involves acceptance of persecution from the conventional, popular or other cultures⁴⁹.

5.9 Defining the Kingdom's Morality

What is commonly referred to as the 'Sermon on the Mount'⁵⁰ and the 'Sermon on the Plane'⁵¹, clearly emphasises intention in culpability which may be likened to the Latin phrase "*actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*", meaning: "the act is not culpable unless the mind is guilty". These sermons attributed to Jesus, certainly come from a great jurisprudential mind. To my understanding, it is entirely alternative to the jurisprudence of the Pentateuch. Given limitations as to length of this paper to fit the time allocation, I will just give two examples; the first relating to killing and the second to adultery (or in today's terms 'sexual abuse'); both looked upon as immoral by numerous cultures throughout history. In Jesus' jurisprudence the culpa for killing lies in being angry, while adultery is determined upon lust. Notably, these definitions on the Kingdom's morality directly follow the commencing stanzas of Jesus' sermon: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ..." ⁵² Anger (Gk: ὀργίζω, orgizō) means both to provoke/arouse and to be provoked/aroused with wrath. Now, lust (Gk: ἐπιθυμέω, epithymēō) means "to fix desire upon" (*epi*, "upon," used intensively, *thumos*, "passion"), whether on things good or bad; hence, to long for, lust after, covet. So, it is the psycho-emotional attachment or possessive attitude that is the determinant of pathological sexuality. And, that I know results in unnecessary suffering due to ignorance of the possessor, possessed and those around them!

5.10 Intra Kingdom Relationship

Here, the primary basis is caring and sharing – I refer to the final chapter of the Johannine narrative. There, Peter is called to undertake in action, provided he has selfless and unconditional love or even loyal love to Jesus, to 'feed' Jesus' 'flock' which is primarily the communities of disciples⁵³. Two terms translated as 'feed' are used by Jesus in Greek; βόσκω; boskō; 'spiritual'

⁴⁸ Mt.5.10-12; Lk.6.22

⁴⁹ See Act.16.19-24

⁵⁰ Mt.5.1 – 7.29

⁵¹ Lk.6.20 – 49

⁵² See Mt.5.13-28

⁵³ Jn.21.15-17

(psycho-emotional needs); and ποιμαίνω; poimainō; (to nourish physically, serve the body, also to supply the requisites for 'spiritual' needs)⁵⁴. Further, being friends (Gk: φίλος, philos, loving, dear friendship)⁵⁵; and relating to each other as sisters, brothers, parents, and children⁵⁶. It is interesting that all three narratives include the category (not individual) "wife" (i.e. partner) in the leaving behind, forsaking, or renunciation, and only the Markan text leaves out the category of 'wife/partner' in the hundred-fold more in the 'Kingdom', while implicitly it is included in the Matthean and Lukan!⁵⁷

5.11 **Beyond Gender**

One of the most off-putting features of so called 'intentional communities' today, whether Christian or other, is that identity, biases and phobias related to gender prevalent in conventional, popular or other cultures is carried in to the new cultural unit. Then, a serious contradiction arises – the new wine into old bottle simile. This leads to segregation at any place of its spectrum, which is often self-orientated. Now, a reading of the four canonical narratives shows to the contrary. While there's no doubt that the women disciples were together with the men, the physical and psycho-emotional proximity irrespective of gender impliedly encouraged by Jesus is most apparent at Lk.7.44-46; Jn.12.3, 13.25, and 21.20. Turning to Thomas and Mary aphorisms, there is evidence that issues of gender were prevalent among the disciples. But Jesus aborts gender identity within discipleship/Kingdom in context of the enquirer (GTh.114), and Levi follows suite at G.Mary.9. Yet, the best evidence of 'beyond gender' is perhaps at G.Th. 22 – "... and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female ... then you will enter [the kingdom]."

5.12 **Liberation**

It is clearly apparent from our sources that Jesus' liberation is in intentional community (discipleship) which is an alternative culture (right-eous Kingdom). There is no evidence whatsoever that Jesus or the disciples thought of, let alone became engaged in liberating empire, nation, city, or even the region where they primarily inhabited – Galilee! Neither was there any serious campaign to

⁵⁴ See, Fernando, (Forthcoming)

⁵⁵ Jn.15.13-15

⁵⁶ Mk.10.29-30; Mt.19.29; Lk.18.29-30

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*

reform or liberate religious institutions – synagogue and temple. However, it is indisputable that the liberation they sought was to change the culture at individual home-bases without coercion, but encouraging intentionality. This in my view is by far the most potent ‘weapon’ to change culture. Although exclusively a micro in motive and praxis, it sometimes results in spinoffs leading to macro effects, subject to prevailing socio-economic, political conditions. At the highest, dialectical leaps seeing demise of pathological cultures of nations, empires or regions, sometimes for substantial periods, albeit transitory, subject to decay, demise and revival.

5.13 Identity and Loyalty

Despite the Matthean writer identifying Jesus as an inheritor of the heritage of Jewish royalty – descendant of Abraham and David⁵⁸, and the Lukan narrative placing him in a similar lineage, but also as a descendant of Adam, the son of God⁵⁹, our narratives do not have any evidence of Jesus self-identifying in that lineage, race, nation, or even the ‘promised land’. In fact, he explicitly dismisses such identity⁶⁰. Irrespective of all that, it is absolutely clear that a penetrative and reflective reading of our sources unquestionably conveys that Jesus’ euaggelion was a call to have confidence in ‘his’ Kingdom and not in any other kingdom, lineage, race, nation, or land – ‘promised’, ‘colonised’, ‘occupied’ or ‘usurped’! It is equally clear that identity with self⁶¹, blood family⁶² and private property⁶³ had no place in the Kingdom, and that sole loyalty to the Kingdom was required. There is also no evidence in our sources that those who followed Jesus as disciples in intentional community to live-out the Kingdom’s culture, ever engaged in any other culture, organisation, campaign or project. The Kingdom was unnamed and hence it entailed an unswerving and non-compromising loyalty to its features; not to a name or organisation. So, it was not a blind perpetual loyalty to any particular organisation or community, but certainly to the features of the Kingdom wherever it may be, in fluctuating time and place.

⁵⁸ Mt.1.1

⁵⁹ Lk.3.23-38

⁶⁰ See Jn.8.58; Mk.12.35-37; Mt.22.41-45; Lk.20.40-44, 23.2

⁶¹ See Mk.8.34; Mt.16.24; Lk.9.23

⁶² See Mt. 12.49; Mk.3.34; Lk.8.21

⁶³ Act.4.32

5.14 Detachment and Letting Go

In my observation and experience of intentional communities today, I am minded to say that some use the vocation with the attitude of being engaged, sometimes dominantly in 'something or nothing', a highly virulent feature of mainstream society, which has certainly infected alternative groupings. It is obvious that, that is far removed from radical Christianity. Jesus' implementation of his euaggelion was to 'get others on their feet'⁶⁴ to carry on without him; and know that the radical founder is, the gathering of two or more in the radical foundation irrespective of the founder⁶⁵.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Radical Christianity was living-out in intentional discipleship communities, the Kingdom culture as evolved around Jesus.

6.2 The Kingdom culture was the sole purpose, identity and loyalty, both individually and collectively.

6.3 If lesser and/or in compromise, it might have been something 'good', but there has to be right understanding that it falls short of the Kingdom culture, and the primary emphasis has to be 'perfection in Kingdom culture'.

6.4 Jesus' intentional discipleship community was not caught up in resolving issues in mainstream society within mainstream society as an entity; it was about providing an alternative Kingdom culture void of such issues, where followers could look sideways and intentionally join in.

6.5 Radical Christian Intentional Community was not about addressing/engaging in socio-economic political contradictions in the world, empires, nations, states, or their devolved local authorities. It was about renouncing all that in order to create benign microcommunities void of such contradictions – a caring and sharing refuge without counting cost, or seeking any reward, devoid of individualism, phobias, or biases – based on and laced with selfless and unconditional love, enabling holism in being – physical, psychological and emotional. To have love and compassion to one's ever changing neighbour, and therapeutic

⁶⁴ Jn.14.16,26, 15.26, 16.7; with the 'holy spirit' Comforter: παράκλητος; paraklētōs; to take the place of Jesus with the apostles, to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the kingdom; Spirit/Ghost: πνεῦμα; pneuma; the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides the disposition or influence which fills and governs the being, the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc. a movement of air, breath of nostrils or mouth.

⁶⁵ Mt.18.20

effects on others towards their holism. In a single phrase it is 'abandoning any concept/category of 'self' in a lifestyle of 'non-self' – sharing and caring!' ⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ Adapted from one of the six commitments taken individually and collectively by members of the Ashram Community

