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Contemporary Anabaptists Historiography and Theology and the Broadening of Baptist Identity

An Introduction

DR. RADY ROLDAN-FIGUEROA

Why study Anabaptist theology and historiography in a Texas Baptist seminary? Why dedicate an issue of the TRUETT JOURNAL OF CHURCH AND MISSION to articles on Anabaptist theology?

I CAN THINK OF SEVERAL REASONS WHY. For instance, a good reason is the relevance of the historical Anabaptist pacifist position for a time in which as a nation we are engaged not in one, but in at least three different war fronts. A thorough examination of the Anabaptist peace witness ought to shake churches out of their complacency with the use and abuse of fear in order to mold and shape public opinion and sentiment. Another reason is the historical Anabaptist position regarding the separation of church and state. In a time when churches, even Baptist churches, have turned toward the state for the resolution of the great moral conundrums that have befallen us as a nation, the Anabaptist witness ought to remind us of the inherent dynamism that stems from the most important resource within our reach, namely the gospel itself.

Nevertheless, I want to dedicate the following paragraphs to an

outline of yet another important reason why the study of Anabaptist theology and historiography is pertinent in a Texas Baptist seminary. Contemporary Anabaptist theology stands upon the solid foundation of a generation's robust engagement with the sources of its tradition. Contemporary Anabaptist theology has been able to establish an open-ended dialogue between the biblical witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and its own distinctive tradition, the latter informed by the lives and writings of men and women who fed the ranks of Continental and North American Anabaptism. In this sense, contemporary Anabaptist theology represents the most consistent and confident theological expression of the Free Church tradition, far more consistent and *self*-confident than Baptist theology.

The Anabaptist witness ought to remind us of the inherent dynamism that stems from the most important resource within our reach, namely the gospel itself.

Accordingly, I would like to humbly suggest that Anabaptist theology and historiography provide an example that ought to be emulated by Baptists. I am not suggesting that we reduce the importance of our Baptist heritage and appropriate wholesale Anabaptist theology. To the contrary, I am suggesting that as Baptists we ought to emulate Anabaptists in their turn back to the sources. The spirit of Renaissance humanism was informed by this very idea, namely the idea of the return to the sources, or *ad fontes*. And it was this same spirit that informed the Reformation, perhaps one of the greatest periods of renewal in the history of Christianity. Just as for contemporary Anabaptists these sources can be traced in their origin to sixteenth-century Continental Anabaptism, the sources that ought to be initially tapped by Baptists today are the lives and writings of seventeenth-century English Baptists, and even the sixteenth-century Separatists before them. This is not to say that there are no historical connections between Baptists and Anabaptists, nor to deny that there is much that we as Baptists can learn about sixteenth-century Continental Anabaptists. It is just to affirm the historical and theological significance of the earliest formative period in Baptist history.

A return to the sources can only inject new dynamism into Baptist

theology, a dynamism that, with few exceptions, has been lost in the midst of denominational strife and the resulting sad state of Baptist life in the United States. Indeed, serious engagement with historical Baptist sources can potentially move Baptist theological reflection beyond denominational strife. In fact, what we stand to discover is the historical complexity, the plurality of voices, and the significant diversity of views that informed early English Baptists. This discovery would allow us to think of Baptists in new ways, ways that would allow for a broadening of Baptist identity. But before I continue, I will provide a brief outline of the contours of Anabaptist historiography that will allow the reader to better understand the present proposal.

Anabaptist historiography has significantly evolved in the last half century. A view that dominated Anabaptist historiography well into the 1970s was best represented by Harold S. Bender (1897-1962), founder of the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (1927).[1] It affirmed the central role played by Swiss Anabaptism in the origins of the movement. From this perspective, Anabaptism was represented as essentially a monolithic tradition that can be traced to a circle of Zurich humanists who initially gathered around the figure of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) in the first half of the 1520s. Deviations from central tenets of the movement as articulated by representatives assembled at Schleitheim in 1527 have been considered from this standpoint as not real manifestations of the essential Anabaptist character.[2] Indeed, other forms of Anabaptism that emerged around the time of the Peasants' War (1525) are quickly disqualified from this rather confessional perspective and not seriously considered in historical terms. This view is better known today as the "monogenesis" thesis.

A return to the sources can only inject new dynamism into Baptist theology, a dynamism that, with few exceptions, has been lost in the midst of denominational strife and the resulting sad state of Baptist life in the United States.

In the 1970s, the face of Anabaptist historiography was significantly changed. The historical complexity of the origins of the

Anabaptists (*des Taufertums*) was increasingly acknowledged as well as the plurality of dissident religious expressions emerging in the 1520s throughout the lands of the Holy Roman Empire and elsewhere in Western and Central Europe. A major impetus in the revision of Anabaptist historiography came from the work of George W. Williams. His *The Radical Reformation* stands as an important milestone not only in Anabaptist historiography, but in Reformation studies in general.[3] Williams managed to integrate in a sweeping narrative, beginning with Juan de Valdés in the Iberian Peninsula and extending to Eastern Europe, a conglomerate of otherwise dissimilar figures and religious impulses under the label of the Radical Reformation. While scholars reacted in different ways to the overarching narrative provided by Williams, his notion of the Radical Reformation turned out to be highly appealing as it captured the complexity and plurality of forms of religious dissidence throughout Germany in the 1520s.

Anabaptist theologians have demonstrated remarkable adeptness in the integration of historiographical findings and conclusions into their doctrinal formulations.

Certainly Williams did not accomplish this turnaround in Reformation scholarship single-handedly. Other scholars joined in an unyielding critique of the confessional historiography that had prevailed until then in Reformation studies.[4] Other historiographical approaches, notably Marxist as well as French-inspired social history, contributed to the emergence of what today is better known as the "polygenesis" thesis.[5] The polygenesis view asserts that Anabaptism emerged in different centers and that Anabaptists in their origin were far from monolithic. This view was far better prepared to address the plurality of impulses within sixteenth-century Continental Anabaptism.

The move away from confessional historiography contributed in a significant way to the broadening of contemporary Anabaptist identity. This is again well reflected in Anabaptist historiography of the last quarter of last century. The best example is the series *Classics of the Radical Reformation*, inaugurated in 1973 under the auspices of the Institute of Mennonite Studies in Elkhart, Indiana.[6] In its ten volumes,

the series has brought together the contrasting theological works of figures like Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486-1541), Balthasar Hubmaier (1485-1528), Pilgram Marpeck (1492-1556), Michael Sattler (c. 1500-1527), David Joris (1501/02-1556), Dirk Philips (1504-1568), and Peter Riedemann (1506-1556). The theological contrast among these figures is highly significant, as in the case of the pacifism of Sattler and the more traditional and less radical outlook of Hubmaier; or, the Scripture-centered spirituality of Karlstadt and the more mystical orientation of Joris.

Another expression of the contribution of Anabaptist historiography to the broadening of contemporary Anabaptist identity is the work of C. Arnold Snyder. Contemporary Anabaptist historiography in North America is dominated by his historical synthesis. In his *Anabaptist History and Theology*, Snyder provides a historical narrative that captures the historically intricate character of Anabaptism.[7] Snyder manages to integrate the insights of contemporary critical historiography with due attention to the properly religious character of Anabaptist theological discourse. While theological ideas receive a fair hearing, Snyder does not abdicate his integrity as an historian to confessional pressures. The result is a coherent narrative that incorporates the historical diversity of sixteenth-century Continental Anabaptism.

Anabaptist theologians have demonstrated remarkable adeptness in the integration of historiographical findings and conclusions into their doctrinal formulations. Perhaps the best recent example is the work of Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*.[8] Finger's appropriation of Anabaptist historiography was significantly enhanced by his adoption of the broader theological framework provided by narrative theology. The language of "narrative" is one that enabled him to see the theological significance of the story of Anabaptism as a movement defined by its radical imitation of Jesus Christ. Again, in Finger we find the vigorous engagement of the sources of Anabaptism that has become the landmark of vibrant contemporary Anabaptist theology.

Therefore, I think we Baptists have much to gain in emulating developments in contemporary Anabaptist historiography and theology. There are two main impulses that we can appropriate for the regeneration of a more consistent and *self*-confident Baptist theology. The first, for historians of theology, is an intentional return to the written sources that we have inherited from seventeenth-century English Baptists and sixteenth-century English Separatists. The second impulse is a conscious effort among theologians to seriously engage the sources and to integrate their distinctive insights into their doctri-

nal formulations alongside or in dialogue with the biblical witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Here I want to provide one example, and it relates to women in the Baptist tradition. Today the recovery and retrieval of the writings of Baptist women bears significant promise. The retrieval of these far-too-long-ignored sources will provide a solid foundation for further theological reflection on and about the ministry of women. Moreover, they will also provide a solid foundation to a more holistic understanding of the historical Baptist insight, informed by the biblical witness, on human nature.

The writings of Katherine Sutton (1630-1663) are an outstanding example of the kind of early English Baptist sources that ought to be retrieved and valued for their theological insights. Her hymns, spiritual journey, and the record of her prophetic words have survived in her A *Christian Woman's Experiences of the Glorious Working of God's Free Grace* (Rotterdam, 1663).[9] The memorable English Baptist minister Hanserd Knollys (d. 1691), in his preface to Sutton's *A Christian Woman's Experience*, called her words an "effectual means of the conversion of many."[10] Sutton's spirituality is only one example of the complexity, plurality, and diversity that we are bound to rediscover among the early English Baptists. This rediscovery can reinvigorate our Baptist witness today in many ways. Certainly it can reinvigorate our witness by allowing us to broaden our Baptist identity, a timely corrective to the pathological narrowing of our identity in years past.

Finally, the articles included in this issue illustrate some ways in which Baptist theologians can critically appropriate the Anabaptist tradition. In her article, Julie Merritt addresses the pastoral implications of the Bruderhof's characteristic stress on the feeling of melancholy. Merritt recognizes the pastoral significance of the feeling of melancholy while also calling our attention to its possible manipulation as a means of psychological control. The pastoral implications of contemporary Anabaptist theology are also revisited by Ed Hett in his piece. His is an examination of the treatment of suffering in contemporary Anabaptist literature. In his essay, Derek Hatch examines the conversion narrative of the Dutch Anabaptist leader, Menno Simons. Hatch's exploration of the epistemological import of narratives of conversion, or of "new birth," highlights their constructive potential for Baptist theology. Lastly, Damon Martin provides an interesting analysis of Anabaptist responses to the problems posed by postmodernism. His analysis leads Martin to conclude that the Anabaptist accent on praxis provides a valuable answer to the challenges of postmodernism and outlines how Baptists can harness the constructive value of devotional practices for theology. Together, the essays contained in this

issue provide a valuable resource for the continuation of a dialogue that remains as much obscured as enlightened by history.

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Notes

1. See Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel (c. 1498-1526): The Founder of the Swiss Brethren Sometimes Called Anabaptists* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1950).
2. See Michael Sattler, "The Schleitheim Articles," in *The Radical Reformation*, ed. Michael G. Baylor, 172-80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
3. See George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).
4. See Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "History and Theology: A Major Problem of Anabaptist Research Today," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 3 (1979): 177-88; see also response by Carter Lindberg, "Fides et Intellectus ex Auditu: A Response to Hans-Jürgen Goertz on 'History and Theology', " *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 3 (1979): 189-92; see also Adolf Laube, "Radicalism as a Research Problem in the History of Early Reformation," in *Radical Tendencies in the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1988), 9-23.
5. See James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, "From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Origins," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 2 (1975): 83-121.
6. See John Howard Yoder, ed. and trans., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, Classics of the Radical Reformation, vol. 1 (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1973).
7. C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1995).
8. Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
9. [Katherine Sutton], *A Christian woman's experiences of the glorious working of God's free grace, Published for the edification of others, by Katherine Sutton* (Rotterdam: Printed by Henry Goddaeus, 1663); see Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, ed., *Life Writings I*, The Early Modern English Woman, vol. 1 (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001).
10. *A Christian woman's experience*, A[r].

The Other Side of Community

Religious Melancholy and the Bruderhof

JULIE MERRITT

Many religious communities have tried to adhere to Christ's commandments and subversive teachings that emphasize self-denial. One community in particular, the Bruderhof, founded in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century, consists of devoted followers who have chosen to give up private property, share living spaces, and commit to upholding the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

EVEN TODAY, THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT provides the basis for Bruderhof theology and communal life with specific emphasis on brotherly love, love of enemies, nonviolence, purity, and fidelity within marriage and family. They continue to follow the example of Christians in the early church in Acts who shared everything in common. To do this, Bruderhof members pool their monies and possessions together in order to provide for everyone. Meals are shared, and there are multiple times set for meetings of fellowship, worship, prayer, and decision making.[1] The effects of these Bruderhof practices, examined from a socio-historical and theological perspective, provide insight into the ethos of this community with regard to joy and religious melancholy.

Several noteworthy features characterize the Bruderhof. First, they unify all of their lives in pursuit of the ultimate values that Christ upheld. Second, they practice a form of asceticism or simplicity in their daily routines. Third, the social ethic of brotherhood is central to their

identity. Living in community separate from the world, they believe they are to be a vessel to capture the Holy Spirit. This tenet is repeated in much of the Bruderhof literature. Fourth and finally, the belief that to be reborn and live through Christ requires the death of self is upheld to the utmost. The Bruderhof ethic emphasizes *inwardness* with no concern for reward. Further, like their Anabaptist predecessors, they continued to pursue *Gelassen* as a supreme virtue. *Gelassenheit*, complete yieldedness and submission, was a way of living in all areas of spiritual and practical life.[2] The Bruderhof maintain the importance of living detached from the self, submerging one's own will, in order to seek and honor the will of God.

The Bruderhof are rooted in the Radical Reformation of the early sixteenth century, when many Anabaptists decided to flee the institutional church, desiring a simpler life grounded in nonviolence and brotherhood. A branch of this movement known as the Hutterites formed separate villages, or Bruderhofs ("places of brothers"), where these ideals could become a reality. They decided to settle in Moravia.[3] In recent years, the Bruderhof have stood together in unity with the Hutterite Brothers, who are viewed by the Bruderhof as their western North American counterparts.[4]

The beginnings of the Bruderhof community itself go back prior to World War I, when Eberhard Arnold experienced first-hand the political upheaval and unrest in Germany. Because of this, he began exploring ways in which to be a follower of Christ and live by the principles set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. Deciding to leave his prestigious job in Berlin, he set off for a rural area and settled in Sannerz, Germany. Determined to live out the ways of the apostolic church, Eberhard began the first "hof," creating an intentional community that desired to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. With the persecution experienced under the Nazi regime, the community was forced to relocate twice. In 1937, they were forced to leave (at which time some Bruderhof communities developed in England), and they were expelled again with the outbreak of World War II. They migrated to Paraguay because it was the only country opening its borders to such a multinational group. It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that Bruderhof communities were formed in the United States. Unfortunately, later in the 1960s, the South American communities were disbanded. Currently there are six Bruderhofs in New England, two in England, and one in Australia, composed of around 2,500 members altogether.[5]

Julius Rubin, in *The Other Side of Joy*, states his conviction that the Bruderhof "embraced a variant of Anabaptist, Pietist, and Fundamentalist religion that rejected modernity, Mammonism, and mass

society."[6] He asserts that the Bruderhof wanted to recreate the primitive church, a "New Jerusalem" to save people from the dying age, a tragic history full of sin. In response to the Fourth Great Awakening (mid- to late twentieth century), its revivals, and other populist religions, Rubin states that the Bruderhof were under attack and even criticized for their deep piety and inclination towards the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[7]

"Our goal is not 'to be free' for the sake of freedom, but like the apostle Paul, to be bound and committed to a life active in love."

Despite attacks, the countercultural kingdom ethics that Eberhard Arnold set forth in the beginning are still followed today. Concepts such as usefulness, freedom, and individualism are challenged. All Bruderhof faithful are united in the paramount vision of Eberhard Arnold, which affirms, "Our goal is not 'to be free' for the sake of freedom, but like the apostle Paul, to be bound and committed to a life active in love."[8] In addition, at the end of many of the Bruderhof publications, disseminated through their own press, Plough Publishing House, the central vision states the core of the Bruderhof identity:

> This planet, the earth, must be conquered for a new kingdom, a new social order, a new unity, a new joy. Joy comes to us from God, who is the God of love, who is the spirit of peace, unity, and community. This is the message Jesus brings. And we must have the faith and the certainty that his message is valid still today.[9]

Literature Review

The bulk of the research within this article will be drawn from the two major sociological pieces of scholarship that have been written about the Bruderhof community. The first one, a sociological critique of the Bruderhof called *The Joyful Community*, was written by Benjamin Zablocki in 1971. Zablocki visited over 100 communes and enjoyed several visits to the first North American Bruderhof, Woodcrest, located in Rifton, New York. Zablocki evaluated the Bruderhof in its third generation. His sociological analysis did not hinder him from seeing

what he terms "a joyful community." Though not backing down from stating the harsh realities that exist within the community, in general he portrays the Bruderhof positively.

A generation later, Julius Rubin provided another sociological analysis of the Bruderhof with a particular emphasis on religious melancholy and other spiritual problems that several Bruderhof members reported after leaving the community. In *The Other Side of Joy*, Rubin builds on Zablocki's material in some ways, but he also reveals a different face behind the "joyful community" than that presented by Zablocki.[10] Rubin, however, focuses his discussion on those who, under the dynamic leadership of Heini Arnold, were expelled from the Bruderhof community in the United States between 1951 and 1982. Rubin reveals in his preface the limitations of his study (though he never mentions this as a possible weakness to his research). He states that his study only surveyed a limited amount of people. He makes this admission:

> With limited empirical and medical evidence, we do not know whether these cases are representative or typical of the experiences of the Bruderhof faithful. We cannot attempt a quantitative presentation of rates of depressive illness among the Bruderhof in past times or today.[11]

Rubin had in fact already written a work on religious melancholy and Protestantism and was looking for a contemporary Pietist group that could be suffering from this problem when he happened upon an ex-Bruderhof member, which fueled his research in its current direction.[12] This is problematic in that certain presuppositions were made by having a predetermined mold into which to fit a certain religious sect. Also, Rubin declined invitations to visit the Bruderhof community; thus, all of his research comes from the testimonies of Bruderhof apostates and books that the Bruderhof have published.[13]

Further, several works will be cited from members of the Bruderhof community, namely Johann Christoph Arnold (senior elder and grandson of the founder, Eberhard Arnold) in his book *I Tell You a Mystery*, and those published in *The Plough* and *Plough Reader*, the Bruderhof quarterly periodical from 1983-2002. In order to provide historical breadth and cultural context, books written by founder Eberhard Arnold will also be used as resources, primarily *Innerland* and *Why We Live in Community*.

Report Findings

Emmy Arnold illuminates the ethos behind the Bruderhof and specifically their view of suffering:

> Simplicity-poverty for the sake of Christ was like an article of faith with us. How could we, who wanted to share the suffering of the masses in those post-war years, keep anything for ourselves? That is why we shared everything in common, giving away all we had to those who wanted to serve the same spirit of love with us.[14]

In the Bruderhof community, suffering was not avoided but was embraced as the great teacher of self-discipline, self-denial, and ultimate conformity to the likeness of Christ. This suffering, however, that would characterize the experience of many Bruderhof faithful for years to come was considered less benign by sociologist Julius Rubin. He believed that this willingness to suffer, experience humiliation for the kingdom, and renounce the self contributed to "religious melancholy." He defines religious melancholy as including *psychomachia* (or war against the self), a crisis of conversion, and multiple trials of faith.[15] Max Weber terms this disposition "spiritual sickness" or "nervous exhaustion," which was a category for depression in the early twentieth century. In periods before Arnold this experience of spiritual sickness was named "religious melancholy" by Protestants, according to Robert Burton.[16] Burton provides the following characteristics of religious melancholy: extreme levels of guilt and anxiety over salvation, fears of eternal punishment, and fixation with sin.[17] By this definition it seems that religious melancholy exists within the Bruderhof community. To be a good-standing member and faithful disciple, one is encouraged to annihilate the self and all forms of self-love.[18] Many times this produces symptoms of religious melancholy.

To understand all of this, though, one must grasp the pervasive influence that Eberhard Arnold had on Bruderhof life and practice. His most significant work, *Innerland*, is a practical theology that is still foundational for Bruderhof today. In addition to describing the ideas of joyful surrender, love, and united brotherhood, Arnold establishes the concept of self-emptying as necessary for experiencing the Holy Spirit:

> We must first become quite empty before God in Christ can enter into us through the Holy Spirit. Stripped of all comfort and pride, we must lie prostrate at God's feet before God can come to lead us, the dead and the slain, to resurrection. An utter agony of despair must knock at the doors of our heart—only then are we allowed to hear about faith.[19]

As demonstrated here, Arnold espouses self-denial and an imitation of Christ, whose ultimate display of love was in self-sacrifice. He also builds on Luther's theology of the cross, adding his own flair

for mysticism and the experience of deep joy. Luther suffered from an overwhelming sense of *Anfechtung*, "feelings of sinful alienation from God," landing him in places of spiritual desolation. Luther's answer was to imitate the suffering of Christ. Arnold adopts the preeminence of suffering in his theology as well as Luther's emphasis on inner mutual surrender. *Busskampf*, "intense, emotionally wrenching inner struggle," was a part of the *Innerland* spiritual journey that Arnold describes.[20] Arnold encouraged followers to welcome periods of suffering which would bring about spiritual transformation. For those surrendering to a religious vocation, Arnold stated that *Busskampf* was a necessity. *Anfechtung* and *Busskampf* were said to bring about joy, and maybe even sudden rapture.[21] Thus from the very beginning, the interconnection between extreme suffering and joy was made.

Unlike Julius Rubin, Benjamin Zablocki actually visited the Bruderhof at Woodcrest, two hours outside of New York City. Upon his arrival in the winter of 1965, he likened his first impression to walking into a medieval village. What stood out most to him, however, was the amazing sense of love that people showed to one another. He said he felt like he was breathing in brotherly love like he had never before experienced.[22] When asking a Servant of the Word (a male executive leader at the Bruderhof) to describe the experience of joy found in the Bruderhof community, the Servant was surprised. He believed this was the natural experience and expression that is found when connected with the Holy Spirit. Zablocki observed that for most Bruderhof members, it is this very experience of joy which is the payoff for community living. This payoff is twofold: a direct, personal, emotional gratification and an experience of the community under God's grace. Some members describe the joy they feel as being connected to a historical lineage of great saints and the apostles. Others

Collective behavior occurs as a result of personal ego-loss and the merging of individual identities to form a communal identity. He sees ego-loss not as a disintegration of selves but as a way of creating a new and greater affiliation with a group.

say they feel joy because they do not have to experience life in lonely isolation as individuals. Reflecting on his observations and experience, Zablocki believes the joy of the Bruderhof people to be genuine and central to Bruderhof life.[23] Rubin also asserts that the Bruderhof ideal is to have this joyous breakthrough or ecstatic experience enabled by the Holy Spirit, but he notes that this is caused by *Busskampf*.[24] Thus, Rubin states that "those who fashioned a religiously grounded personality from *Innerland* piety experienced both joy and the other side of joy—religious melancholy."[25]

Mediating between the spiritual and psychological costs and benefits of the Bruderhof experience is difficult. An aid to that process is an understanding of what Zablocki terms "collective behavior." Collective behavior occurs as a result of personal ego-loss and the merging of individual identities to form a communal identity. He sees ego-loss not as a disintegration of selves but as a way of creating a new and greater affiliation with a group. Zablocki believes that collective behavior is the key that unites and sustains the Bruderhof.[26] Exercising collective behavior releases intense emotion and energy. One of these outcomes is the experience of joy, but it must be properly harnessed to fulfill the communal tasks. This joy process is explained by Zablocki with emphasis given to the euphoria/crisis cycle.[27]

The community is the crucible for purifying self-interests, burning away individuality and sinful humanity.

Zablocki states that joy is the product of a triggering experience: crisis. When unity cannot be achieved, crisis sets in. However, even in this crisis time or "spirit of the fight," members also experience an invigorating joy.[28] It seems that there is this paradoxical nature at work: joy can only occur through suffering. Rubin believes that the Bruderhof are caught between this dialectic of joy and religious melancholy, of freedom and surrender of self to the community.[29] This submission to community is where the Bruderhof believe they find true freedom and joy. The community is the crucible for purifying self-interests, burning away individuality and sinful humanity. The joy/crisis dialectic seems to be created from the very origins of the Bruderhof. In a pamphlet entitled *Why We Live In Community*, Eberhard Arnold states from the beginning that their form of community life is extremely dan-

gerous and a cause for deep suffering, yet also one for joy. He declares, "It is a way that leads straight into the struggle for existence and the reality of a life of work, into all the difficulties created by the human character. And yet, just this is our deepest joy: to see clearly the eternal struggle."[30]

Rubin's concern is that religious melancholy is heightened through the methods of exclusion and social control. He believes that these methods of discipline utilized by the Bruderhof leadership result in trauma of ostracism, family disruption, and extreme guilt.[31] Rubin tells the story of Miriam Holmes, the granddaughter of Eberhard Arnold, who experienced great torment as a result of discipline. Raised in the Bruderhof community, Miriam struggled with expressing her own autonomy. When she was seventeen, she went to a public high school and then attended West Virginia University as a freshman, pursuing a music major. Once outside the confines of the Oak Lake Bruderhof, she experienced the freedoms of the outside world and reveled in them. After completing her first year, she returned to the community only to be accused of being selfish for asking to borrow a record. She was asked to give an explanation of herself at the brotherhood meeting. "Her offense pertained to the unfettered exercise of will, the capacity to act and make requests to satisfy her personal needs, and her uncontrolled passion for music."[32] Though she confessed these sins at the meeting, she received the punishment of small exclusion for over a year, which included living in isolation from most of the community. In this time, Miriam experienced depression and stigmatization as many people refused to speak to her. She was denied working with children or teaching music but appointed to clean toilets. After almost two years of exclusion, Miriam was told of impending expulsion and submitted to the brotherhood's discernment. She worked in a nearby town but did not feel accepted in either world. She became more depressed, anorexic, and suicidal.[33] Many other members and novitiates have shared similar experiences, suffering great torment under Bruderhof leadership. Some ex-members recount traumas of battling depression but express it in terms of possessing an evil spirit.[34]

Zablocki reports that in these particular brotherhood meetings it is common that members often do not speak up because if they say something contrary to the consensus of the rest of the group, they could be accused of not being aligned with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they doubt their opinions, attributing them to their own personal problems. Many would fear stating what seemed to be obvious only to find out later that many people held those convictions. Some call this problem the "Phenomenon of the Emperor's New Clothes." Zablocki states that this process of brotherhood socialization works because

it is easy to play on one's feelings of selfishness, worthlessness, and inadequacies. This system is viable because the good is found in the collective entity and in not being controlled by the individual self.[35]

Rubin attributes this great sense of fear resulting in religious melancholy to a Bruderhof shift from more democratic principles to a more authoritarian style of governance built on hierarchy. Especially during the Great Crisis time under the leadership of Heini Arnold (1959-1963), it seemed that arbitrary exclusion and church discipline were used to punish "wayward" members and purge them of their sins. Heini also revitalized the concept of *Gelassenheit*, which Rubin believes is another contributing factor to Bruderhof religious melancholy. Disrupting families was even a method used to ensure *Gelassenheit* and submission to the community more than to one's spouse or family.[36]

Rubin attributes this great sense of fear resulting in religious melancholy to a Bruderhof shift from more democratic principles to a more authoritarian style of governance built on hierarchy.

Further, Rubin believes that, under Heini Arnold's rulership, the Servants of the Word used humiliation and chastisement of Bruderhof unfaithful as opportunities for spiritual growth. They would call these expressions of love, intending to bring about unity. Bruderhof leadership had the authority even to judge whether Bruderhof members were exhibiting authentic spirituality. Those who were not displaying these qualities would be subject to discipline and exclusion.[37] However, Janet Liebman Jacobs considers this type of evangelical humiliation a form of psychological abuse.[38]

Yaacov Oved, in his historical account of the Bruderhof, provides a window for seeing those living outside of the Bruderhof community and their feelings regarding it. Oved reports that in 1990, ex-members who needed a sounding board for their complaints and many times hostile attacks formed a network and produced a newsletter entitled K.I.T. (Keeping in Touch). Some of the grievances that ex-members voiced over time included the difficulty for children to leave the community, that they were uninformed about their history, that unalienable rights were forsaken, and that financial stability was hard to

attain after leaving.[39] Julius Rubin also states that apostates have little recourse legally upon leaving the community. They can not claim any property or take any wages with them from the community.[40]

Probably most striking, however, in contributing to the potential for religious melancholy is the resocialization process that many novices experience while awaiting Bruderhof membership. Zablocki, though assenting that there is no set time period that novitiates must go through this process, speaks of the specific steps in detail. First is the stripping process. Once one enters the Bruderhof community, one's symbols of identity are exchanged for new ones, and one begins to become isolated from one's past because roles from the outside world have changed. A woman with training in psychology was told once she joined the Bruderhof community that this training would be something she would have to overcome.[41]

After the stripping process, one is asked to scrutinize one's internal state frequently, alerted to a change that should soon begin within him or her. After self-betrayal occurs, which leads to a breaking point, one enters the second major stage: identification with the Bruderhof ideals. From there one begins a series of confessions and is called to leave behind the old or bad self. Finally, after the good self emerges, progress and healing can occur. This process of death and rebirth is not uncommonly accompanied by great anxiety.[42]

Once one enters the Bruderhof community, one's symbols of identity are exchanged for new ones, and one begins to become isolated from one's past because roles from the outside world have changed.

Rubin terms this culturally-embedded depressive disorder that many Bruderhof have experienced the Bruderhof Syndrome. The symptoms of this syndrome are both physical and spiritual and are similar to depression. They include "chronic fatigue, listlessness, malaise, sleep and appetite disorders . . . abiding hopelessness," as well as an obsession with spiritual perfection and purity.[43] The Bruderhof, however, deny the existence of depression or melancholy stemming from religious issues, even though Heini Arnold finally admitted to these realities.[44]

Though Rubin continues to admonish the Bruderhof's sacrifice of autonomy and self-distinction for community, Zablocki challenges this assumption with essentially this question: "What is better, freedom or community?" Beyond that, he asks a philosophical question: "What is freedom?" In one sense, a person is truly free in his or her ability to choose to live and act under community restraints. If one sets this voluntarily as one's ultimate goal and achieves it, then he or she is free. Bruderhof members, however, do not seem to be free in the sense that they are free to change their minds. Though membership is voluntary, once one becomes a member, he or she makes serious lifelong vows to the Bruderhof community. And knowing the constitution that goes into one who willingly embraces self-renunciation, a change of mind by him or her is unlikely.[45] The Bruderhof life seems to breed a type of personality that chronically feels guilty, especially in regards to turning against one's vows. In fact, Rubin recounts many pain-filled stories of ex-Bruderhof members who struggled for many years with the guilt they had from leaving.

It seems that in identification with the community, even though it involves giving up autonomy, one's individual needs are truly met, and thus a sense of spiritual freedom is felt.

Hermon Schmolenbach believes it is technically impossible to have the best of freedom and of community. And yet Zablocki responds most profoundly: "The problem might be left at this impasse, except for one curious fact: alienated Western man does not feel that he really possesses community, but the members of the Bruderhof feel that they really possess freedom."[46] It seems that in identification with the community, even though it involves giving up autonomy, one's individual needs are truly met, and thus a sense of spiritual freedom is felt. The ironic connection of freedom and self-sacrifice is given voice in the "Editor's Note" in one edition of *The Plough*. It states that the kingdom of God "creates *free* people united in the cause of peace and brotherhood. Only complete sacrifice of self-will and self-interest will overcome the needs of isolation and hostility."[47]

The benefits of community over the cost of individual freedoms

are expressed by the current senior elder, Johann Christoph Arnold. His message and vision are tied to the Bruderhof tradition of the past. All things are viewed through the lens of community, even death and suffering. "In community, life and death can be carried together," he claims.[48] Later he makes the bold assertion that "the truly communal person, no matter how despairing, can find peace."[49] Healing and finding hope, according to Arnold, are not found in one's own efforts. They come through the role of community. It is self-centeredness, he believes, that is often at the core of despair.[50] For Arnold, freedom and joy are found within the community as members talk their issues out and confess sins to one another. Further, Arnold believes that guilt and unconfessed sin are at the root of depression, though he does concede that at other times the reasons for religious malaise are unexplainable. He also asserts that some members have a predisposition to suffer from mental illness and affirms the helpfulness of medication.[51] Though Rubin states that people with a clinical pathology may use religious language to describe their illness,[52] Arnold seems well acquainted with the real possibility of mental illness as separate from the experiences of doubt and fear that are tied to spiritual issues, and he sees the use of medicine, doctors, and hospitals as viable means of intervention. Arnold is very clear, however, that a cosmic battle exists in this world where evil is real and present. More complex, though, is his belief that Satan uses mental illness to break people down. Arnold states that Satan "throws people into deep despair and depression, into a dark heaviness that may not lift for years."[53]

From the psychiatric perspective of *Culture and Mental Disorders*, Eaton and Weil state that mental health is a concept not of science but more of a value judgment. If having few antisocial behaviors is the mark of mental health, the Hutterites would exhibit good mental health. But as the authors note, viewed by their own standards, this is not the case, as is seen by the numerous members that leave the colony.[54] Thus, the issue of reference is a methodological key when unlocking the reality of the experience of religious melancholy.

Speaking to this issue, Zablocki responds to those who view the Bruderhof as masochistic:

> It is important to remember that the rhythm of the Bruderhofer's life differs from that of most people. It is based not on tranquility or equilibrium (or the search for these), but on the continual oscillation of struggle and joy, of tension and release. The Bruderhof member's lot cannot then reasonably be judged according to the criteria of a different culture.[55]

Thus, Zablocki believes that the Bruderhof community has to be

judged on its own terms. In his own estimation, Zablocki feels that the Bruderhof life is rich. Ego-loss does not flatten out personalities. Nor does he believe that they are one homogenous, bland people. Rather, he sees the Bruderhof as a diverse people.[56]

Evaluations

In some ways, Rubin's assessments are subjective in regards to those who have suffered as a result of living in the Bruderhof community. At times, he seems appalled that members are called to renounce self and even experience periods of forsakenness by God. But from a Christian worldview, these experiences have been realities affirmed and witnessed by the church fathers of the past and the church today. Though Rubin believes freedom of conscience and liberties for the individual have been denied and other psychological costs have been paid,[57] this is the very point of the Bruderhof community—that their calling is not to live as free individuals but that, as Eberhard Arnold states, "Community life is like martyrdom by fire: it means the daily sacrifice of all our strength and all our rights, all the claims we commonly make on life and assume to be justified. In the symbol of the fire, the individual logs burn away so that, united, its glowing flames send out warmth and light . . . ."[58] Thus, the greater question should be asked: From whose or what perspective is mental health defined? So many of the Bruderhof members find "mental health" in giving up all individual rights, even the right to property, for a new identity within community.

"Community life is like martyrdom by fire: it means the daily sacrifice of all our strength and all our rights, all the claims we commonly make on life and assume to be justified."

Nevertheless, Rubin's assertions that the Bruderhof became more authoritarian in order to create ways to control human behaviors that were acceptable should be noted. The issue then becomes making a value judgment on the use of authoritarian means and methods. Rubin states that Bruderhof leaders impose unity and conformity, and repression is required even to maintain certain behaviors. Rubin be-

lieves the leadership structure moved beyond moral absolutism to an authoritarianism that created major burdens for those living within the community. He finds this paradox at work: such an obsession with unity causes schisms and member expulsions.[59]

What is more subtle, however, is that beneath all of the Arnolds' theologies, stoicism seems to be pervasive. Sayings such as "God has given life, he can take it away," "It should be a privilege to suffer," and "Even when facing death, acceptance of God's will is all that matters" seem hard to swallow and to be a perfect breeding ground for depressive disorders.[60] In addition, the idea of *Gelassenheit*, taken to the extreme, contributes to an overall belief that one is not valued before God and is unworthy to receive love. Many testimonies of the Bruderhof speak of people who feel overwhelmed and spiritually plagued. Some leaders even tried to engineer a religious preoccupation with spiritual sickness to foster spiritual growth. This, coupled with an overemphasis on the attacks of evil forces, can create an unhealthy sense of fear.

Also, by creating a centralized leadership under the Servants of the Word and the Housemothers, the potential to form unhealthy spiritual dependency exists. In addition, the leaders can take (and have taken, so it seems) advantage of their position of power, giving spiritual direction and guidance when they are uninformed. Some leaders have overextended their spiritual authority and arbitrarily demonized and shunned some faithful Bruderhof members. The inequality between the gender roles is also bothersome. The Bruderhof colonies are still designed as a patriarchal system with many women in subservient roles performing kitchen tasks, cleaning, and cooking.

The question of whether or not holding to *Gelassenheit* completely necessitates depression is difficult to answer. It does seem, though, that with this spirit of *Gelassenheit*, the Bruderhof value a childlike spirit in which dignity is given to simple things. This simple lifestyle would seem to uncomplicate one's life, freeing him or her to imitate the way of Christ through surrender. All of the given research indicates, however, that spiritual burdens lay heavy on the hearts of the Bruderhof. Though

In the end, many Bruderhof members experience themselves as mere channels of God's love and not recipients of it.

they experience times of deep joy bordering on the euphoric, the cost of such experiences is living in the shadow-side of joy, religious melancholy, waiting for God to return to purify them again. This cycle can be very mentally and spiritually exhausting, and it is no wonder that members have left the community or in some cases attempted suicide.

Further, from an ontological perspective, just because one does not feel oppressed does not mean that one truly is not. Some Bruderhof members may willingly accept religious melancholy as normative and therefore not consider it as oppressive. But extreme forms of social exclusion and ideologies that perpetuate feelings of worthlessness are indeed oppressive. In the end, many Bruderhof members experience themselves as mere channels of God's love and not recipients of it. They feel compelled to give but never to receive. And though they yield their spirit, their self-sacrifice is exchanged for religious melancholy.

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41. Zablocki, 248-50.
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"The Other Side of Community" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. Are genuine freedom and authentic community mutually exclusive realities? Does voluntary submission to the governance and discipline of a group effectively stifle the promptings of individual consciences?

2. How can Christian communities practice church discipline without having authoritarian leadership?

3. Is there any way to maintain stringent requirements for participation in an intergenerational Christian community without subordinating the majority, including children raised within the community who could only leave it with considerable difficulty, to the will of a governing minority?

4. How are struggle and suffering connected with joy in the Christian life? What is the connection between identification with Christ's crucifixion and identification with Christ's resurrection? Is lack of the experience of suffering a signal of self-absorption? Is community possible apart from suffering? Is voluntary submission, to Christ and to other Christians, a form of self-imposed suffering without which one cannot be a Christian?

5. Can "religious melancholy" be a helpful part of spiritual development or is it symptomatic of a disorder in the way one and/or one's society views spiritual growth and relates to God?

Prepared by Josh Burden

Has the Bruderhof Been Framed?

A Response to Julie Merritt

HOWARD WHEELER

A member of a Central Texas intentional Christian community that traces is roots to Anabaptism points out interpretive frames that may cloud our judgement of the Bruderhof.

"FRAMES," "PERSPECTIVES," "VIEWPOINTS"—these concepts so surround us in postmodern culture that one cannot help but at least bump into an awareness of their controlling effects, at least an awareness of the principle involved. But it remains harder for any of us to consistently identify these effects as they actually operate. One influential cognitive scientist from the University of California, Berkeley, puts it this way: "Frames," he writes, are the often unrecognized "mental structures that *shape* the way we see the world. As a result, they *shape* the goals we seek . . ." and *shape* "the way we act, and what *counts as . . . good or bad.*"[1] The idea of unexamined presuppositions controlling and shaping how people evaluate behavior, attitudes and beliefs—whether they deem them good or bad—is, of course, hardly unique to postmodernism. In fact, the Apostle John speaks of the determinative effect of frames or viewpoints when he rather straightforwardly (perhaps too much so for modern ears) states, "They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us . . ." (1 John 4:5-6, NIV). To someone shaped by "the world," the world's viewpoint will make sense. To someone centered in the realities of God, a different view of good or bad will make sense and therefore be "listened to." In fact, the controlling aspect of frames or viewpoints, it could be argued, is central to the biblical explanation of conflict: will judgments concerning good or evil arise from the archetypal "tree of knowledge," from a perspective *severed* from a relationship with God, or will evalua-

tions of good or evil be framed by a view reaching toward relationship with the God who defines himself as redeeming love?

In explaining how frames control our evaluations, Polyani made an analogy with eyeglasses. He pointed out that a person cannot simultaneously look *through* the lens at his or her surroundings and *at* the lens, at his or her frame or viewpoint.[2] I have said all this because, rather than focus upon what this intriguing paper offers as to what is good or bad in the Bruderhof, past or present, I would like to back up and perhaps take a look at the lens, the frame, used to make evaluations of Christian community.

We cannot cover everything needed but can sketch out a few points. In her article, Merritt earnestly aims at fairness toward the Bruderhof. Yet the paper still seems tainted by the frame of its sources, specifically, that of Julius Rubin, who on network television just two years before his book's publication intimated that the Bruderhof was potentially a suicide cult like Heaven's Gate.[3] Rubin has a point of view. In countering Rubin, I do not want to neglect the many positive insightful aspects of this paper that reviews Rubin's work and that of Zablocki. Yet Merritt seems aware of problems, noting that Rubin "was looking for" a group to prove his thesis that psychological problems arise from certain religious perspectives. The author explains this as "problematic in that certain presuppositions were made [by Rubin] by having a predetermined mold into which to fit a certain religious sect." She further states that Rubin does not mention his decision to limit his study to "apostates" from the Bruderhof "as a possible weakness to his research." I suggest this is a fatal "weakness," as later discussed.

Before looking at an example of Rubin's prejudicial frame toward the Bruderhof, let us look, in the brief space allotted, at the prevalent frame applied to what religious liberty advocate Dean Kelley called "serious Christianity," exemplified in part (but certainly not exclusively) by intentional communities such as the Bruderhof.[4] Kierkegaard warned that "there is that which is more contrary to Christianity . . . than all heresies and all schisms combined, and that is, to *play* Christianity."[5] Kelley agreed and warned against "leniency" (as opposed to mercy), an indulgent attitude that can destroy the very essence of a religion whose central motif is found in the extremity of the cross.[6] Kelley further warned:

> [P]eople who have become accustomed to leniency do not find it congenial to contemplate strictness, let alone live under it . . . . The indispensability of strictness seems to some an ungracious and abrasive prescription, if not incomprehensi-

> ble. Yet it is simply the necessary corollary and projection of seriousness in what one is doing."[7]

Kelley suggests a frame here, a "viewpoint of the world": those not committed to "serious Christianity" often cannot help but see its "prescriptions" and restraints on the human will as incomprehensibly "abrasive" or, in today's favored terminology, "authoritarian," "legalistic," "abusive," and "toxic." So complacency itself can pejoratively frame an evaluation of "high-demand" Christianity.[8]

Will judgments concerning good or evil arise from the archetypal "tree of knowledge," from a perspective severed from a relationship with God, or will evaluations of good or evil be framed by a view reaching toward relationship with the God who defines himself as redeeming love?

Yet modern culture, with its promises of comfort and ease, does more than cultivate a frame based on complacency. St. Louis University's James Hitchcock explains that the "*essence* of modernity" is "the refusal to accept any standard of truth *outside oneself*."[9] A radical, sometimes even fierce, individualism characterizes modernity. This radical individualism also produces a frame. Indeed, the frame is the ripened solipsistic fruit of the tree of knowledge: everyone determining good and evil for themselves. It sees everything from the perspective of self and, in contrast to Jesus's view, sees self-preservation as the highest good. Hitchcock therefore characterized modernity as to a great degree a revolt against exertion of "moral authority over the self."[10]

From the "viewpoint of the world" centered on individual rights and autonomy, commitments to community and shared values appear abrasive to individuality—even if voluntarily embraced. The extent of the influence of this "revolt" of radical individualism appears in "revolutions" such as George Barna's "churchless Christians," unfettered by any tangible commitments to other believers. Barna approvingly speaks of the "personal 'church' of the individual."[11] *Christianity Today*'s

Kevin Miller comments that this phrase surely "must be the most mind-spinning phrase ever written about the church of Jesus Christ."[12] It may be "mind-spinning" to Miller and others of us, but surely those the Apostle John classified as "of the world," whose frame centers on individualism, will "listen to it." They therefore cannot "hear" or understand groups such as the Bruderhof.

This radical individualism leads to one last point in this all too brief response: the need to distinguish between the compulsory authority of the state and the noncoercive, familial authority found in associations such as voluntary churches. It seems more than ironic that the Bruderhof, who fled the persecutions of totalitarian Nazi Germany, is branded with the epithet of "authoritarianism" and accused as "ruthless." (Rubin in his book favors modifiers such as "ruthless," "harsh," and "draconian" when describing their authority.)[13] Aside from considering just what tone, attitude, and deeds these adjectives might be describing, and whether these critics would have placed the same labels on Jesus and Paul if the latter had ministered in our day, the *primary* context (though certainly not the only context) for legitimate discussion of individual rights should, in a free country, be the realm of *coercive* authority. Christians across the globe from China to the Sudan are indeed suffering under "ruthless authoritarianism." But when books such as Rubin's appropriate such terms to describe authority within voluntary associations, they cheapen discourse on religious rights and fatally confuse the issues, actually setting up those voluntary associations for "draconian" persecution by "ruthless" states that permit no challenge to their ubiquitous authority.

Kierkegaard warned that "there is that which is more contrary to Christianity . . . than all heresies and all schisms combined, and that is, to play Christianity."

Conscience should never be coerced, and earthly paradigms of political power have no place in religion. Yet Kelley warned that "many people misapply this essential and excellent canon of *civil* liberty to the internal affairs of *voluntary* organizations, which do *not* command the force of civil authority."[14] Surely this point should appropriately apply to nonviolent, nonresistant churches, such as the Bruderhof, who renounce all participation in or appropriation of compulsory authority.

Paradoxically, as the idol of individual rights has reached its zenith in the contemporary era, all individuals become so isolated and atomized that we see concurrent growth in the referee between, and protector of, all those competing rights—ubiquitous states that, according to Rummel, killed more of their own citizens in the last century than at any other time in history, even apart from the wars that raged nonstop during that time.[15] Consequently, parents and churches are increasingly targeted as authoritarian, abusive, oppressive, and so on, merely when they take a stand for a moral authority that transcends self-indulgence. Yet the same critics who use these pejorative labels against the weak draw back from using them where they have more proper application—against regimes and institutions and coercive religions that truly are at times authoritarian, abusive, and oppressive. For example, to undergo massive recruitment and "resocialization" into an institution—say, the military—that will tell its converts how to dress, direct their every move, and require them to kill and die upon command is not termed authoritarian or abusive even when it has been involuntary. It is socially accepted in the name of defense of the state. Yet an institution like the Bruderhof, who calls people, in order to love one another in committed relationships, to voluntarily forfeit individual goals, wants, desires, and the right to self-defense against hostile enemies is branded as oppressive and ruthless to individual rights even though those individuals may leave the Bruderhof at any time.

From the "viewpoint of the world" centered on individual rights and autonomy, commitments to community and shared values appear abrasive to individuality–even if voluntarily embraced.

Lesslie Newbigin, writing about post-Enlightenment Europe for the World Council of Churches, explained that the nation-state has taken the place of the "old concepts of the Holy Church" as the fundamental collective unexaminedly accepted by most individuals in today's frame or viewpoint. For instance, said Newbigin, "The charge of blasphemy, if it is ever made, is treated as a quaint anachronism; but the charge of treason, of placing another loyalty above that to the nation state, is treated as the unforgivable crime. The nation state has

taken the place of God."[16] To take an oath of allegiance unto death to protect the state is deemed heroic. Yet to uphold discipline for breaking vows to Christ, a discipline that can go no farther than exclusion, is now abusive. In fact, vows themselves are deemed incomprehensible. Again, in the twentieth century, governments, apart from declared war, killed three hundred sixty *million* people.[17] Yet the Bruderhof is "ruthless" and "authoritarian" when it excludes a member under discipline? Surely the conflict of frames is apparent here.

So this confusion of coercive and noncoercive authority perfectly represents Kelley's "misapplication" of the principles of civil liberty to voluntary associations, and it therefore cannot help but confuse what constitutes legitimate versus abusive authority. Voluntary associations, Kelley explained, "have only one means by which to preserve their purpose and character, and that is *the power of the gate*—to control who may enter and remain and on what conditions."[18] So it is a misapplication to constrain a church to the "canon of civil liberty," that is, to insist that each individual member remain "free" to believe anything and behave any way because, as Kelley explains, "the gate swings only one way: it cannot compel anyone to become or remain a member for one minute against his will."[19] The state, because it possesses compulsory, even lethal, power, should allow freedom of belief; for a *church* to tolerate all beliefs and practices only devastates its identity and would reveal a lack of "seriousness" in its mission. The "power of the gate" and the "power of the state" are being dangerously confused. The former may be painful, but it is not only legitimate but also limited compared to the latter and the only means the church has to preserve the noncoercive moral authority of Christ in the face of Caesar's ever-present coercive authority.

The state, because it possesses compulsory, even lethal, power, should allow freedom of belief; for a church to tolerate all beliefs and practices only devastates its identity and would reveal a lack of "seriousness" in its mission.

Yet it is precisely this "power of the gate" that seems distorted in Rubin's book, filled with case histories and "atrocity stories" from

ex-members, some of whom Rubin freely admits were into sexual sins and rebellion, and he even includes one who attempted to sniper shoot a Bruderhof leader![20] Rubin seems to want to dismiss how fraudulent such witnesses have proven to be and the catastrophic consequences that have followed giving such testimony any credence, from waves of persecution in China[21] to incidents such as those in this country depicted in the book *Remembering Satan*.[22] Rubin's frame seems to be utterly of the world, the collective governed under the ideal of permissiveness toward all beliefs and of all that goes down today in the name of "civil liberties." The issue of the legitimacy of the "power of the gate" in a way stands at the center of his book, for it is a book shaped by the viewpoint of *severed* members. As Merritt states, Rubin focuses on those "expelled from the Bruderhof community" under the "dynamic leadership" of Heini Arnold. Then, as she rightly observes, "the issue . . . becomes making a value judgment" on the authority of the Bruderhof. So from what frame will such judgment be derived? Rubin describes the authority of the Bruderhof as having "ruthlessly cast aside" its ex-members under discipline. Why the modifier "ruthlessly"? As abrasive as it is to modern sensibilities, was Paul, in the biblical frame, ruthless in expelling the immoral member of the Corinthian church whom he commanded be turned "over to satan" (1 Cor. 5:3-3)? I wonder if Rubin's evaluations simply reveal a frame he possessed before he ever investigated the Bruderhof and one reinforced by the particular ex-members from whom he draws.

Indeed, let us look at a central example to test this hypothesis: does branding these expulsions as ruthless represent the value judgments of the frame, the viewpoint, of the world? In the present paper we read of people "suffering great torment under Bruderhof leadership" primarily occurring as the Bruderhof shifted "from more democratic principles to a more authoritarian style of governance . . . . Especially during the Great Crisis time under the leadership of Heini Arnold (1959-1963), it seemed that arbitrary exclusion and church discipline were used . . . ."[23] The paper leaves the impression (drawn from Rubin's book) that the Great Crisis resulted from authoritarian control by Heini Arnold, which crushed the former "democratic" coexistence of the earlier community.

Now let us shift frames from that of "democratic" principles of individual rights, that is, the "canons of civil liberties," and ask ourselves from a biblical frame what happened. Would it make a difference to the reader interested in a biblical evaluation to know that after the death in 1935 of the Bruderhof's founder, Eberhard Arnold, leadership of the communities passed *de facto* to Hans Zumpe, who did not truly share Eberhard's vision of the centrality of Christ to community? Un-

der the guidance of Zumpe, who viewed community as a humanistic endeavor, many people of various views outside even a nominal Christian perspective joined themselves to the movement. Serious trouble eventually surfaced, much of it resulting from the leadership and goals of Zumpe. The entire character of the Bruderhof had changed, and many, including Heini Arnold at the time, could not fully explain the transformation of the community's identity and goals. Then the Great Crisis occurred. Yet it was not precipitated by an "arbitrary purge" by Heini Arnold but by the shocking discovery by the community of a decade-old adulterous affair of Zumpe with his secretary. Then Arnold and others understood what had been happening. Zumpe was disciplined, and many who came in under his regime left as well.[24]

Should we listen to those who so often seem almost pathologically obsessed with their own individual rights, or should we listen to those who, however imperfectly, confess their aim is to live according to Scripture?

To expel the "immoral man" (to use Paul's terminology) seems arbitrary and ruthless to the modern psyche trained in the mantra that a person's "private life" does not affect his or her vocation. But Josef Pieper warned that the contemporary frame has simply "lost the awareness of the close bond that links the knowledge of truth to the condition of purity."[25] Aquinas recognized that "unchastity's first-born daughter is blindness of the spirit."[26] A Bruderhof leader had become blind, and the community had wandered from a christocentric intentional community to a humanistically oriented communitarian model. The "Great Crisis" was the call to repentance led by Heini Arnold and others and an attempt, through "the power of the gate," to return to the Bruderhof's Christian identity. Rubin considers this explanation a "hagiographic" myth constructed by the Bruderhof to "revise" the dark details of its draconian measures.[27] But who are we to believe? To whom must we "listen"? Should we listen to those who so often seem almost pathologically obsessed with their own individual rights, or should we listen to those who, however imperfectly, confess their aim

is to live according to Scripture? In the biblical frame, should this not help determine to whom we "listen"?

The point here is not to make a defense of every action on the part of or every belief held by the Bruderhof leadership. As a disclosure, neither my organization nor myself are in any way affiliated with the Bruderhof. We even disagree with some of their frames, practices, and goals. But the facts of the Great Crisis, though peripheral, perhaps even an obstacle, to Rubin's goal of finding spiritual sickness at the Bruderhof, seem essential to those who would seek to make an evaluation, from a biblical frame, of the Bruderhof's exertion of authority. In fact, during the time of the Great Crisis the larger number who left did so voluntarily, and about one-third of the total eventually returned to the Bruderhof.[28]

It is self-centeredness that seems more often at the core of despair. In this view, the abrasiveness to the self brought by the demands of community becomes an avenue to freedom.

One last point concerning Rubin's frame: he himself explains and identifies his own sources as centering on those "apostates" associated with the "KIT" ex-member network founded by Ramon Sender. Rubin explains that through the KIT newsletter, the organization has "mediated to the readership a variety of perspectives by which to understand their past lives in the community."[29] These perspectives, these frames, these "interpretive paradigms," include, according to Rubin, "Robert Lifton's analysis of thought reform and the psychology of totalism," "the Cult Awareness Network's controversial denunciation of minority and high-commitment religious groups," and "John Bradshaw's notions of religious addiction."[30] Space prevents full exploration of these models. But suffice it to say that Lifton, who did valuable work on Nazi and Communist totalitarianism, fell into the "misapplication" of "the canons of civil liberty" and applied the term "totalism" indiscriminately to both church and state.[31] Lifton's antidote to totalism was his ideal "protean man," intentionally named after the Greek god Proteus, who refuses to commit himself totally to anything.[32] Perhaps this ideal has some redeeming value when applied by a citizen of a tyrannical state, but from a biblical perspective, should

one remain uncommitted to total surrender to Christ and his body? As for Bradshaw's "religious addiction" model, it simply absolves people of responsibility, so under such a view naturally the Bruderhof's leadership must, by default, stand to blame for any adversities and problems in the victim's life.

The Cult Awareness Network's model is the ideology identified by Richardson, Melton, Wright, Shupe, Bromley, and many others as the primary cause for "atrocity stories" and vituperative attacks by ex-members against their former co-religionists. For instance, Robbins explains that "research by sociologists has revealed . . . recriminative attitudes are exhibited primarily by ex-members who have been . . . involved in ex-member support groups and therapeutic programs linked to the ACM [anti-cult movement]."[33] In fact, Bromley and Lewis have found that it is this contact with the ACM ideology *after* leaving a high-demand group "rather than group experiences" that often "is the source of the kinds of emotional turbulence putatively labeled" a "disease," such as Rubin's "Bruderhof Syndrome."[34] Lewis and Bromley write:

> It seems clear that the process of exiting groups which are *high demand* or in which individuals have deeply invested themselves socially and psychologically can be emotionally turbulent. The type of psychological disturbances reported by individuals going through other traumatically stressful role transitions such as bereavement and divorce suggests that many of the symptoms anti-cult analysts have sought to configure as a unique cult-induced syndrome [such as Rubin's Bruderhof Syndrome] are better understood as symptoms of more generic traumatic stress.[35]

As Rubin admits, the KIT network "facilitates the formation of *reconstructed* collective memories" and produces "familiar, almost formulaic recital of abuse received in the community."[36] KIT provides "many ex-members with the opportunity to pursue an identity as a 'career apostate,'" those who "devote themselves whole-heartedly to the goals of destroying a faith that they at one time had embraced."[37] Should we not, then, question the view of the Bruderhof as seen through the lens of these ex-members' "reconstructed memories"? Should we evaluate Jesus's ministry on the basis of those who rejected him, or even upon Judas's viewpoint? One last central aspect to the "Cult Awareness Network" model should be noted, given Rubin's focus on the abuse of authority in the Bruderhof, especially that of Heini Arnold. Connecticut College's Eugene Gallagher points out that "the most powerful image that has been constructed by the contemporary

anticult movement is that of the eerily powerful cult leader."[38] In fact, opponents must automatically "adopt an unwavering focus on the leader . . . . The leader, who in anticult rhetoric is inherently deranged, unstable, manipulative, and corrupt, is the pivot around which the entire anticult movement turns."[39] So are Rubin and his sources to be trusted to accurately picture Heini Arnold?

As the article mentions, an alternative exists to the viewpoint that spiritual "sickness" derives from abuse by those in authority. We do not know what has happened in every instance of "deconversion" from the Bruderhof. But from my (hopefully) biblical viewpoint, something rings true, so I "listen" to the suggestion by the Bruderhof's current senior elder, Christoph Arnold: it is *self*-centeredness that seems more often at the core of despair. In this view, the abrasiveness to the self brought by the demands of community becomes an avenue to freedom—that is, if freedom *from* the sinful nature is one's goal, not freedom *for* that nature. As Paul said, it all depends on your frame: "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:15-16). He then told the Corinthians that "those who are perishing" are those "whose minds the god of this age has blinded" (2 Cor. 4:3-4, NKJV). Their minds remain framed by life in a world over which, Paul says here, this god reigns, a life where self-preservation remains the controlling value. He who has "the power of death" controls "those who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15, NKJV). For those controlled by the frame of this world, Jesus's admonition that we lay down our lives for his sake seems a message of despair. When the reality of believers' lives, in contrast to their professions of faith, remains essentially bounded by existence

Even Jesus himself did not survive scrutiny under the frame offered in this world. How much less will imperfect reflections found in the church withstand criticism under that frame as they bring his message of self-denial?

in "this world," they may learn to fear and hate the message of self-denial: it then becomes to them only "death leading to death." Even Jesus himself did not survive scrutiny under the frame offered in this world. How much less will imperfect reflections found in the church withstand criticism under that frame as they bring his message of self-denial? As Jesus cautioned his followers: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own . . ." (John 15:18-19, NKJV). Again, "who is sufficient for these things?"

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Notes

1. George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), xv (emphasis mine).
2. Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 37.
3. Transcript from CBS News, *48 Hours*, show no. 412, 27 March 1997, 16, 25.
4. Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 120-21.
5. Ibid.; Søren Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaard's Attack upon "Christendom" 1854-1855*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), 8 (emphasis in original).
6. Kelley, 120.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 121.
9. James Hitchcock, "What Went Wrong in the Fifties," *Crisis* (November 1992): 17 (emphasis mine).
10. Ibid., 16.
11. Kevin Miller, "No Church? No Problem," *Christianity Today* (January 2006), 69; George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), 66.
12. Miller, 71.
13. Julius H. Rubin, *The Other Side of Joy: Religious Melancholy among the Bruderhof* (New

York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 174, 116, 153.

14. Kelley, 125 (emphasis mine).
15. R. J. Rummel, *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1996), xi; R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 4, 9; Wolf Blitzer, Introduction to *Century of War*, by Luciano Garibaldi (New York: Friedman/Fairfax Publishers, 2001), 6.
16. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 14-15.
17. Rummel, *Lethal Politics*, xi; Rummel, *Death by Government*, 4, 9; Blitzer, 6.
18. Kelley, 125 (emphasis mine).
19. Ibid.
20. Rubin, 180.
21. Jeff M. Sellers, "Crushing House Churches," *Christianity Today* (January 2004): 63.
22. See Lawrence Wright, *Remember Satan* (New York: Knopf, 1994) for the devastating effects of recovered and reconstructed memory on innocent lives.
23. Julie Merritt, "The Other Side of Community: Religious Melancholy and the Bruderhof," *TJCM* 4.1 (2006): 20.
24. See, for example, Peter Mommsen, *Homage to a Broken Man: The Life of J. Heinrich Arnold* (Rifton, N.Y.: Plough Publishing House, 2004), 281-98.
25. Josef Pieper, *The Silence of St. Thomas: Three Essays* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1965), 19-20.
26. Ibid.
27. Rubin, 181.
28. Mommsen, 281-98.
29. Rubin, 171-72, 176.
30. Ibid., 176.
31. Robert Jay Lifton, *The Future of Immortality: And Other Essays for a Nuclear Age* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 211; Robert Jay Lifton, Foreword to *Cults in Our Midst*, by Margaret Thaler Singer and Janja Lalich (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), xi-xiii.
32. Robert Jay Lifton, *History and Human Survival: Essays on the Young and Old, Survivors and the Dead, Peace and War, and on Contemporary Psychohistory* (New York: Random House, 1970), 314; Robert Jay Lifton, "Protean Man," *Archives of General Psychiatry* (April 1971): 299.
33. James T. Richardson, "Cult/Brainwashing Cases and Freedom of Religion," *Journal of Church and State* (Winter 1991): 59; J. Gordon Melton, "Brainwashing and the Cults: The Rise and Fall of a Theory," *CESNUR, Center for Studies on New Religions*, online; Stuart A. Wright, "Exploring Factors That Shape the Apostate Role," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromley (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 101; Anson Shupe, "The Role of Apostates in the North American Anticult Movement," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromley (Westport, Conn.:

Praeger Publishers, 1998), 210-12; James R. Lewis and David G. Bromley, "The Cult Withdrawal Syndrome: A Case of Misattribution of Cause?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 26.4 (1987): 508, 513; Bob Passantino and Gretchen Passantino, "Overcoming the Bondage of Victimization: A Critical Evaluation of Cult Mind Control Theories," *Answers in Action*, online; Lee Coleman, "New Religions and the Myth of Mind Control," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* (April 1984): 323; Lewis F. Carter, "Carriers of Tales: On Assessing Credibility of Apostate and Other Outsider Accounts of Religious Practices," in *The Politics of Religious Apostasy: The Role of Apostates in the Transformation of Religious Movements*, ed. David G. Bromley (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 226-27; Thomas Robbins, *Cults, Converts and Charisma: The Sociology of New Religious Movements* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 96-97 (emphasis mine).

34. Lewis and Bromley, 508; Rubin, 144.
35. Lewis and Bromley, 520 (emphasis mine).
36. Rubin, 176-77 (emphasis mine).
37. Ibid., 176.
38. Eugene V. Gallagher, *The New Religious Movements Experience in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 220.
39. Ibid., 12.

Melancholy and Community?

A Response to Julie Merritt

JOHN ESSICK

Community has become a watchword for numerous expressions of Christianity. In fact, the landscape of Christian history is dotted with attempts at "intentional community."[1]

MANY OF THESE EFFORTS HAVE RELIED HEAVILY on primitivist ecclesiologies which often seek to imitate or repeat the events found in the early chapters of Acts. Perhaps no Christian lineage exhibits this trend more clearly than the Anabaptist heritage. Anabaptist groups such as the Amish, Brethren, Hutterites, Mennonites, and Bruderhof strive in various ways to realize unity and concord as a community. Sadly, many modern intentional communities fail to achieve—or at least are unable to sustain—harmony.

I am intrigued by Merritt's assessment of religious melancholy among the Bruderhof for several reasons. First, history suggests that a) communities are pleasant when everyone behaves, and b) struggle inevitably attends any prolonged effort at intentional community. Merritt's article highlights the unique challenges that disruptive behavior poses in close-knit communities and raises key questions concerning appropriate disciplinary responses to such behavior. Second, Merritt's work indirectly touches on the contemporary interaction between two similar yet distinct expressions of the Anabaptist vision. Despite the Bruderhof's relatively recent appearance on the religious scene, they have generally sought to locate the roots of their lifestyle in the Hutterian practices of the sixteenth century. Thus, the relationship between the Hutterites and Bruderhof has an interesting and rather complex history which requires additional scholarly attention. Third, I suspect religious melancholy plagues many Christians today regardless of denominational affiliation or theological convic-

tion. Bookstore shelves are lined with Christian counseling for doubt, depression, and fear, while still other titles advocate stronger faith in divine healing for such problems. So, I am grateful to Merritt for her work on the Bruderhof and the opportunity to dialogue about its significance.

Merritt's treatment of religious melancholy among certain members of the Bruderhof succeeds on a number of levels. Inquiry into the causes, symptoms, and effects of religious melancholy is not new. Merritt admits a heavy reliance upon the foundational sociological studies of Benjamin D. Zablocki (1971) and Julius H. Rubin (2000) where the Bruderhof are concerned. Yet there is a measure of critical distance in Merritt's reliance upon these important sources. For example, following the publication of Rubin's *Religious Melancholy and the Protestant Experience in America* (1994), he was interested in applying his research to a contemporary pietist group. He happened to meet an ex-Bruderhof member, and through her became acquainted with the larger community. Merritt correctly notes the inherent danger in this methodology, and points out that attempts to categorize any religious sect according "a predetermined mold" are problematic.[2] In addition, Merritt reminds the reader that Rubin chose to limit his research to ex-Bruderhof testimonies and Bruderhof publications.

Criticisms aside, Zablocki and Rubin offer significant insights, and Merritt's incorporation of their findings in her own work is most helpful. Zablocki's contributions, dated though they may be, become clear as they are placed in conversation with Rubin's more recent scholarship. Merritt recognizes that both scholars touch on an important dialectical tension in Bruderhof life: joy and crisis. Zablocki's findings led him to conclude that joy is the "primary evidence that [the individual] and the community are in a state of grace."[3] Furthermore, joy can only be experienced on an individual level, yet it is somehow a contagious individual experience. As the title of his book suggests, Zablocki is decidedly positive in his assessment of the Bruderhof. Rubin's research, as his title suggests, took him in a slightly different direction. Interviews with ex-Bruderhof members who felt they had been mistreated in various ways convinced Rubin that community was ostensibly attained at the cost of autonomy; freedom was exchanged for control. Still, a question lingers: what did Rubin expect to find? The bulk of his research was conducted with disgruntled ex-members.[4] The same could be asked for Zablocki, since he visited communes and talked with members who, for whatever reason, chose to remain in the Bruderhof. Merritt correctly underscores this apparent shortcoming of both Zablocki and Rubin by referencing the work of Joseph W. Eaton and Robert J. Weil. Eaton and Weil remove any discussion of mental

health from the scientific realm and maintain that diagnosis is always a value judgment. While the final answer is evasive for Merritt, she rightly concludes that one's point of reference is "a methodological key when unlocking the reality of . . . religious melancholy."[5]

Another contribution of Merritt's article is the inference that crisis apparently triggers joy in Bruderhof communes.[6] Crisis in this case likely falls under the category of *Anfechtung*. Merritt defines *Anfechtung* as a pronounced "feeling of sinful alienation from God" which may lead to isolation or withdrawal. Bert Kaplan and Thomas F. A. Plaut encountered this phenomenon when observing the Hutterites in the 1950s. Hutterites who suffered from *Anfechtung*, they found, tended to obsess about their unworthiness, worry about the devil, and even ponder suicide.[7] Hutterite scholar John A. Hostetler says that Hutterites "accept *Anfechtung* as a form of deviance,"[8] but refrain from punishment or reproach. Hostetler's findings are germane to the present discussion insofar as there is intense pressure to conform to communal norms for both Hutterites and Bruderhof. Symptoms indicative of *Anfechtung* are likely to surface when compliance with established norms proves difficult. Still, as Merritt points out, *Anfechtung* can be simultaneously a moment of great struggle (*Busskampf*) and realization of great joy. These are only a few of Merritt's successes, and there are certainly others.

I suspect religious melancholy plagues many Christians today regardless of denominational affiliation or theological conviction.

Critical interaction is a necessary ingredient of any academic response. So, without denigrating the best of Merritt's work, I offer three suggestions which may, I hope, shed additional light on this critical aspect of communal life. The first suggestion centers on the ever-problematic question of sources. While it is incumbent upon any scholar to work with primary sources as much as possible, Merritt's investigation of possible religious melancholy among Bruderhof was beset by certain limitations from the beginning. Of utmost importance in a study of this nature is access to interviewees or some other form of personal interaction with the subjects. Merritt's conclusions are susceptible to the same shortcomings as those ascribed earlier to Rubin and Zablocki, for "the bulk of research within this article"[9] is derived

from their publications. This observation is offered to highlight the need for such crucial data. Better understanding of religious melancholy among the Bruderhof will only emerge as members and current leaders become more inclined to open their world to the outside world. Whether this will occur remains to be seen, but scholarship that relies solely on the testimony of disgruntled ex-members for clarity will always be incomplete.

My second suggestion also revolves around the question of sources. Merritt consulted a number of superb secondary sources for this article, and no article can be expected to exhaust a bibliography. In fact, no paper focusing on the Bruderhof and religious melancholy would be complete without referencing Zablocki, Rubin, Eaton, Weil, Oved, and Hostetler. Yet there are critical sources available which supplement Merritt's conclusions and should not be overlooked. *Personality in a Communal Society* (Kaplan and Plaut, 1956) was introduced earlier. Despite its narrow focus on the mental health of the Hutterites, the evaluation of *Anfechtung* in a communal setting certainly has implications for the question at hand. Current Bruderhof members may be unwilling to speak openly with outsiders; Hutterites are not.

In August 1990, the staff of K.I.T. hosted a conference for expelled Bruderhof members. John Hostetler was invited to attend this conference as a guest and scholar. Following the conference he drafted an unpublished article which a) narrates ten accounts of extreme hardship and b) voices several concerns.[10] While the stories and comments he included are not surprising or groundbreaking, they do shed additional light on the issue. These one-sided accounts do supply the researcher with much-needed data and another window into Bruderhof life, but one must proceed cautiously when working with biased data.

Better understanding of religious melancholy among the Bruderhof will only emerge as members and current leaders become more inclined to open their world to the outside world.

Two final secondary sources deserve mention. Michael C. Barnett's 1995 dissertation (though not readily accessible to the average seminary student) provides a thorough account of the complicated history between the Bruderhof and

the various Hutterite communities.[11] Rod Janzen's recently published "The Hutterites and the Bruderhof: The Relationship between an Old Order Religious Society and a Twentieth-Century Communal Group" offers a shorter and more readable overview of each group and their vacillating relationship.[12] The historical sections of Merritt's article could be improved and nuanced by incorporating insights gained from these valuable resources.

A final suggestion brings us to what may be a crucial component of religious melancholy among the Bruderhof: Arnoldism. "Arnoldism" is a slippery term frequently used by outsiders or ex-members as the name for the Bruderhof way of life. It can also denote the worldview of Bruderhof members or its authoritarian leadership structure. The attached "ism" suggests that theories, opinions, or ways of thinking derived from any or all of the leading Arnolds (Eberhard, Heini, or Johann Christoph) carry an inordinate amount of weight in the community. Rubin lists the key elements of Arnoldism:

> [T]he belief in the ever-present danger of satanic attack from without and of sin and impurity from within; the crisis-call to interpret adversity as the special providence of God visited upon the community as chastisement for individual sin and collective declension into Mammonism; and the obligation for all believers to renew and deepen their faith and reappropriate a Christocentric religious enthusiasm through repentance, confession, and purgation.[13]

Rubin's definition implies the presence of considerable pressure upon the individual to accept, internalize, and appropriate communal identity and responsibility. Furthermore, testimonies in K.I.T. claim that Bruderhof leaders intervene and interfere unjustifiably in the lives of ordinary members and levy excessive punishments for failure to meet expectations.

While it is not uncommon to hear similar reports from other strict communities such as the Amish, Brethren, Mennonites, or Hutterites, Merritt seems right in arguing that the Bruderhof appear to be more susceptible to religious melancholy than their counterparts. But why? Rubin argues that private ownership "mitigate[s] the tendency toward religious authoritarianism and moral absolutism" for the Amish, Brethren, and Mennonites, while factionalism and schism are "institutionalized safety values" in Hutterite life.[14] Arnoldism neither possesses nor desires these values, and instead places decision-making and disciplinary power in the hands of a few. Rubin concludes from this that the "Bruderhof offers the strongest example of authoritarian church community."[15] The Bruderhof certainly is exemplary in this

manner, but would the Hutterites or Amish not also offer their own unique expressions of an authoritarian church community? Is it more authoritarian to grant complete authority to a small group within a community than to an entire unified community? Is the same punishment less severe when a unified community favors it and more severe when the decision is made by a few? Maybe, but it seems likely that individual members of a community would more readily accept punishment or discipline when the community has clearly spoken. If it is true that Bruderhof members are more susceptible to religious melancholy, a comparative look at polity and communal decision-making among primitivist and pietistic groups might prove fruitful. Given the proliferation of Christian counseling publications and self-help plans, one wonders about similar patterns among Protestants where high levels of control are not present, but that is a question for another day. In the end, Merritt rightly reminds all strict communities, especially those of a religious nature, that melancholy is a legitimate concern.

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Notes

1. One could point to early cenobitic communities in Egypt or later monasteries, convents, and monastic orders as examples of "intentional community" prior to the proliferation of splinter groups in the sixteenth century.
2. Julie Merritt, "The Other Side of Community: Religious Melancholy and the Bruderhof," *TJCM* 4.1 (2006): 15.
3. Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community* (Baltimore, Md.: Kingsport Press, 1973), 158-59.
4. Julius H. Rubin, *The Other Side of Joy: Religious Melancholy among the Bruderhof* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), viii. By Rubin's own admission in the Preface, he declined invitations to visit the Bruderhof (because he was not granted full access to historical and medical records) and his research was "drawn largely from a limited number of persons who were expelled or who left during the charismatic leadership of Heini Arnold."

5. Merritt, 23.
6. Merritt, 18.
7. Bert Kaplan and Thomas F. A. Plaut, *Personality in a Communal Society* (Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press), 67.
8. John A. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 264.
9. Merritt, 14.
10. John A. Hostetler, "Expelled Bruderhof Member Speak Out," http://www.perefound.org/em-s_sp.html, accessed 14 May 2006. To my knowledge, neither Hostetler (before his death) nor The Peregrine Foundation published this article.
11. Michael C. Barnett, "The Bruderhof and the Hutterites in Historical Context" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995).
12. Rod Janzen, "The Hutterites and the Bruderhof: The Relationship Between an Old Order Religious Society and a Twentieth-Century Communal Group," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 79.4 (October 2005).
13. Rubin, 83.
14. Ibid., 189.
15. Ibid., 190.

Journeying Towards Christian Community

A Response to Julie Merritt

KATIE AND CHRIS BRENNAN HOMIAK

Two Truett students share their own adventure in intentional community.

LAST SPRING, WE BEGAN AN EXPERIMENT in intentional Christian community. It started with shared dreams of "someday" living in community with Truett graduates Mike and Rachel Sciretti. Over the months of our developing friendship we would joke with each other about living and ministering together years down the line. On Pentecost weekend, 2005, the Scirettis led a silent retreat for a sister Baptist church in Houston at the Villa de Matel, a beautiful convent located in the middle of the city. They were both deeply drawn to the quiet, disciplined rhythms of the life of the sisters, and their dreams for intentional Christian community were stirred. During the drive home they wondered, "Why are we waiting? How can we make this dream a reality? Let's pursue this while we're young and foolish. God, guide us."

In the meantime, I (Katie) was reading Ron Sider's *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*. Sider challenges the church to live more communally; rather than gathering in small groups to talk only about spiritual issues and Scripture, he urges groups to serve together, talk openly about economic decisions and priorities, and share material possessions.[1] Since we were all participating in a small group at the time, I suggested, "Why wait until we own some land and a Baptist retreat center to start living communally?"

On Pentecost, our associate pastor preached about the Celtic image of the "Wild Goose" Holy Spirit, who moves us to places of risk, unpredictable places where we lack control. That Sunday night, we talked to Mike and Rachel about developing a "covenant of life" to live out our values together. Monday morning, Chris prayed that dangerous prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit, Come." That same night, Mike and

Rachel invited us over for banana splits (little did we know what that "split" implied); they asked if we wanted to help them convert their garage into a bedroom and move in together. After much prayer and discussion, brainstorming sessions about our values and the logistics of living together, we decided to follow this Wild Goose and take on the experiment of living communally.

Out of our brainstorming sessions together we discerned four major values that we wanted to live out in our common life together: Sabbath, sharing, simplicity, and service. *Sabbath* speaks to how we hope to carve out space for rest and renewal, including a house Sabbath (an afternoon of no house work or homework) and personal daily times for prayer, reading, and reflection. *Sharing* speaks to how we hope to relate openly and freely to each other and those around us. We meet weekly for a shared time of prayer and bi-monthly to review our values, share confessions and new commitments, and discuss other day-to-day issues. *Service* speaks to how we hope to embody Christ's presence in our immediate situations through hospitality and advocacy. *Simplicity* speaks to how we hope to make small, often hidden impacts upon our larger world through frugality, conservation, and recycling.

Intentional Christian community has long been about resisting individualism and materialism, choosing disciplined sharing, Sabbath, service, and simplicity.

During the summer, I (Chris) briefly researched the history of intentional community, and how it serves as an effective practice for ministering with the poor. I discovered that what we are doing is not all that new, nor is it really all that radical—particularly since we were living in a middle-class neighborhood, making a short-term commitment, and only sharing a common purse for groceries. Intentional Christian community has long been about resisting individualism and materialism, choosing disciplined sharing, Sabbath, service, and simplicity. The thread can be traced from the early church living in common (Acts 2:42-46), to the monastic revival of the Middle Ages (Franciscans, Cistercians, Waldensians, Humiliati), to Catholic

Worker Houses, to the Christian communes of the 1960s and 1970s, and to contemporary intentional urban communities (Sojourners, The Simple Way, Camden House). As we began to work out our covenant, we found that many of our values resonated with the new monasticism movement, a network of mostly urban intentional Christian communities committed to sharing, serving, hospitality, reconciliation, spiritual discipline, and ecological stewardship.[2]

Our journey of trying to live these values has drawn us to CrossTies Ecumenical Fellowship. CrossTies is modeled after Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. Their way of being with and talking about the poor is refreshing and inspiring. They have been in Waco's Kate Ross neighborhood for twenty years; their five members (and several core volunteers) sacrificially love and serve the poor through The Gospel Café and the Talitha Koum Nurture Center. They also seek to nurture the call of God in individuals through the Servant Leadership School and silent retreats. We resonate deeply with their vision of being church; we see Christian community as a radical commitment to an inward journey and an outward journey. Christ's radical self-giving liberates Christians to serve and give, and community makes radical serving sustainable. I (Chris) decided to complete my Truett mentoring requirement at CrossTies in order to encounter Christ in the poor, the community, and the challenges of serving. I wanted to observe the inner strengths and challenges of a local church incarnating holistic, creative ministry and to learn how such sacrificial, risky service is sustainable.

Responding to Julie Merritt: Living from the Blessing

Although we speak as beginners, we believe we have encountered a healthy alternative to the Bruderhof way of community, at least as the Bruderhof was reviewed by Julie Merritt. We have tasted this alternative both in our intentional community experiment and through our involvement with CrossTies. We have not found community to be a purely joyful, easy path. On the contrary, community reveals new selfishness and brokenness and requires great openness, risk, and inner work. There is a constant discomfort and dying to the self—to 'my rights,' to personal ownership, power, and control. However, this does not have to mean self-hatred and self-rejection, like that which seems to have been cultivated in the Bruderhof communities mentioned by Merritt.

Instead, we believe that community should be grounded in awareness of God's love and blessing. Our communal covenant starts with "O Loving Trinity, you who live in self-giving community, give us the

grace to meet you in the sacrament of our common life together." Perhaps a more positive transformation occurs through welcoming God in oneself and affirming God's presence in others. Meister Eckhart asserts that "if you love yourself, you love everybody else as you do yourself."[3] According to Morton Kelsey, we must "turn inward and meet the source of love, and allow this love to flow into us and help us love ourselves. Then we can open ourselves up in actions of love so that this love may flow out toward other human beings."[4] Recognizing God's blessing and affirmation, transformation can happen through grace-filled and honest self-awareness and sharing. These practices require discipline and accountability, but in a way that moves toward blessing and healing rather than alienation. Accountability should be rooted in self-awareness and confession and nudged along with gentleness by others. God is the primary change agent, not others in the community.

We have not found community to be a purely joyful, easy path. On the contrary, community reveals new selfishness and brokenness and requires great openness, risk, and inner work.

Focusing on battling and punishing the sin in ourselves and in others seems to lead to the destruction of both the individual and the community. A culture of self-hatred and criticism seems to cause a culture of competing with and critiquing others. Punishment and shame will only deepen the struggle—as evidenced by some of the stories of those who had been excluded from the Bruderhof communities.

Further, the Bruderhof practice of patriarchal hierarchy does not reflect our understanding of God. A punishing God looking down on fallen humans would in turn motivate people to create a community with hierarchical, critical leadership that distributes punishments. An alternative is to understand God as Trinity, as co-equal community who both invites humanity to participate in God's life and dwells within God's good creation. This latter theology would inspire a more egalitarian, inclusive, grace-filled community.

I (Chris) have encountered a community of radical commitment and grace while mentoring at CrossTies: waiting tables at the Gospel Café, worshipping with the community, conversing with pastor

Marsha Martie, observing CrossTies community meetings, attending the Narcotics Anonymous twelve-step group, and participating in the Servant Leadership School. CrossTies anchors itself in belovedness, in God's love. They are constantly seeking to improve how they love themselves, each other, their neighborhood, and their enemies. Because they realize God's love for them, everything they do as a community is motivated by God's blessing and call, not by fear of condemnation.

Living from blessing does not mean an easy path for the community; it involves the difficult inner journey, a journey of transformative healing through constant dialogue of confession and grace.[5] Living from the blessing also includes an ongoing commitment to the corporate inward journey, to vulnerable sharing and conflict in the community. Having regular community maintenance meetings creates safe space and time for these difficult yet life-giving conversations. As the Bruderhof communities have recognized, in order to truly become community, a group must go through crisis or chaos. M. Scott Peck talks about "chaos" and "emptying" while Merritt's article speaks of "crisis" and "submission to community." Either way, this is a necessary stage in moving towards healing and joy, and thus becoming true community.

Peck outlines four stages of community-making: pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness, and community.[6] Most groups, including churches, stay in the first stage, *pseudocommunity*. These groups are pleasant, conflict-avoiding, and tend to minimize or ignore differences. Our own short-term experiment in intentional community has tended to stay in this first stage, although we have tasted a sampling of the last three. The next stage is *chaos*, in which individual differences are out in the open, and there is painful, noisy fighting. The group may escape the community-making process here by turning to task avoidance, authoritarian leadership, pairing, or organization. Perhaps Bruderhof communities in the situations outlined in the article chose to escape into authoritarian leadership?

Accountability should be rooted in self-awareness and confession and nudged along with gentleness by others. God is the primary change agent, not others in the community.

The third stage is *emptiness*, requiring the release of expectations and preconceptions, of having the 'right' theology/ideology, of trying to heal or convert, and of trying to control. The Bruderhof version of emptiness presented by Merritt seems to be limited to the individual. The leadership tries to empty the individual of sin rather than the entire community opening up to emptiness. Emptiness demands that the corporate body, not just the individual, engage in struggle, vulnerability, and change. The entire community should re-enter the stage of emptiness each time a new member joins or a member leaves.[7] Peck offers that emptiness involves contemplative prayer and stages of grief. The act of emptying is painful; just as many dying individuals are not able to accept their own death, many groups will not pass through emptiness to community.[8]

If a group passes through emptiness, members discover *community*. Community is characterized by patient and accepting silence, vulnerability and safety, graceful fighting, released attempts to heal and convert each other, and greater joy and agony. Community is self-aware and regularly self-emptying, making room for the other as new situations arise. Community is a safe place, a place where one is truly accepted and free to be oneself. In true community, healing and converting happens, but not by human effort. Healing and converting are released instead of forced.[9] This definition of community seems different from Merritt's portrayal of selected Bruderhof communities.

In addition to the personal and corporate inward journeys, living from the blessing also involves a corporate outward journey of service. Elizabeth O'Connor, a member of Church of the Savior, shares that they "set out to restore the lives of others and find our own lives redeemed."[10] In addition to committing to the spiritual disciplines of the inward journey, members of Church of the Savior commit to being active participants in Mission Groups. In these communal serving groups, individuals and their groups can be healed while healing the deep needs of their neighborhood. CrossTies' outward journey includes the ministries of the Gospel Café, the Talitha Koum Nurture Center, the Servant Leadership School, and silent retreats. Through hospitality and food, nurturing childcare, and transformative small groups, all of these ministries serve their neighborhood and the larger Waco community. Although our house community experiment set out valuing intentional neighboring, communal service, and advocacy projects, we have thus far focused more on the personal and corporate inward journeys. At best we have nurtured new commitments to personal outward journeys, making more time for advocacy and mentoring. It has been difficult to intentionally do new projects together when we are already involved in personal ministries of service. Perhaps

these inward journeys are necessary to build a foundation for community that can discern a call to a shared outward journey.

Our own journey of communally engaging Sabbath, sharing, service, and simplicity has only just begun. The formative, subversive, and serving communities of CrossTies and new monasticism have challenged us to commit to long-term community. We have found community vital to living out our faith. We encourage you to follow the Holy Spirit to uncomfortable, new places of community.

KATIE AND CHRIS BRENNAN HOMIAK
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Notes

1. Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).
2. http://www.newmonasticism.org
3. Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart*, trans. R.B. Blakney (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), 204.
4. Morton Kelsey, *Caring: How Can We Love One Another?* (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981), 44.
5. Dorothy Devers and N. Gordon Crosby, *Handbook for Churches and Mission Groups*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: Servant Leadership School Press, 1991).
6. M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 86-106.
7. Interview with Marsha Martie, pastor of CrossTies Ecumenical Fellowship, 3/30/06.
8. Peck, 221.
9. Ibid., 230.
10. Elizabeth O'Connor, *Servant Leaders, Servant Structures* (Washington, D.C.: Servant Leadership School Press, 1991), 77.

Anabaptist Ecclesiological Responses to Postmodernity

Knowing in Community

DAMON MARTIN

From its beginnings, Anabaptism has been difficult to locate within the Christian theological landscape. Too Catholic to be Reformed but dissenting too much to be Catholic, the Radical Reformers' relationship to the other reform movements continues to raise questions.

THIS IS COMPLICATED FURTHER BECAUSE WHILE THERE were many areas of disagreement between the Radical Reformers and the Magisterial Reformers, there were also many equally vexing disagreements among the Radical Reformers themselves. What we now know as Anabaptism was by no means certain in those early days of reform, yet the movement did eventually congeal around certain themes. The most important of these became the centrality of the biblical narratives and especially of the Gospels, as they provided a pattern for the imitation of Christ and *Gelassenheit* in particular.[1] Eventually, Anabaptism would come to be identified also with individual conversion, the role of the community in that conversion, and, by extension, the necessity of a regenerate church membership that can be identified at least in part by the participation of believers in baptism.[2] My thesis is that these themes create a context in which Anabaptism has a distinct advantage over other forms of Christianity in attempting to develop a response to the impending (or perhaps, recent) collapse of the modern project that gives rise to postmodernity. I cannot here explain every way in which Anabaptism provides a response to the collapse of modernity. Thus, I

focus primarily on the relationship between Anabaptist ecclesiology and epistemology in a postmodern era.

In what follows, I demonstrate the manner in which Anabaptist ecclesiology lends itself to the development of a non-foundationalist epistemology—that is, an epistemology that explicitly rejects the foundationalist commitments of the modern project. By interacting with a handful of Anabaptist theologians who themselves recognize the privilege Anabaptism has in its engagement with postmodernity, I show that Anabaptist ecclesiology and ecclesial practices parallel many of the developments in postmodern epistemology such that Anabaptists can engage in critical interaction with postmodernity without surrendering many of the so-called distinctives of Anabaptist theology. This being the case, I point out several practices within the Anabaptist tradition that could prove beneficial to other communities that desire to develop a corporate life adequate to the epistemological challenges of postmodernity.

One of the claims of postmodernity, as I discuss more fully below, is that all knowledge is contextual. That is to say that all knowledge is formulated according to the criteria provided by particular communities and their formative narratives. What should also become clear in what follows is that the Anabaptist vision already incorporates a view of the church as the formative community. As postmodernity demands communities do, Anabaptist ecclesiology provides a context in which knowledge and true learning can be cultivated. Thus, for the Anabaptists, the church is the epistemic community of greatest import, and whatever else Anabaptist ecclesiology does, it surely provides an epistemological response to the postmodern condition.

The remainder of this project requires several distinct steps. After briefly defining what I take to be the central themes of the modern project, I endeavor to identify postmodernity. I then turn my attention to contemporary Anabaptists, outlining important contributions in the respective work of J. Denny Weaver and Sara Wenger Shenk, as well as identifying parallels in the work of other contemporary Anabaptists. This is followed by a brief account of some implications, both positive and negative, of the views articulated by these Anabaptist theologians. Finally, in the conclusion, I discuss some of the actual practices found in the Anabaptist tradition and their ability to promote an epistemology adequate for a postmodern world.

What Is Modernism, and How Is Postmodernism Different?

Before a definition of postmodernity is possible, one must establish what constitutes modernity. Jean-François Lyotard, for ex-

ample, claims that to be modern is to assume the "unanimity of rational minds."[3] Richard Rorty similarly claims that modernity is characterized by the view that all principles are products of a special rational faculty.[4] Along with this is a belief in the objectivity of truth and a commitment to the correspondence theory of truth.[5] This view is not original to the modern period, but it is an important view within the Western philosophical tradition that is perpetuated throughout modernity.[6] Thus, the heart of the modern project is a commitment to the primacy of reason, the objectivity of truth, and the correspondence theory of truth. These principles are present in Descartes, Locke, and Kant, but these are also the assumptions on which modern science (along with modern theology) is founded.

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Postmodernity, by contrast, is the rejection of the primacy of reason, of the objectivity of truth, and of the correspondence theory of truth; or, as Lyotard claims, postmodernity is characterized by "incredulity toward metanarratives."[7] In other words, there is a rejection of the modern claim that reason can lead to unanimity. Accompanying this is a rejection of objectivity. Rather, postmodernity claims:

> Knowledge and reason itself are significantly shaped by cultural, traditional, physical, and emotional particularities. Postmodernity challenges the possibility of objective knowledge and stresses variety among epistemological perspectives—so strongly that the term itself is perhaps indefinable.[8]

Furthermore, postmodernism values many different ways of knowing and just as many modes of expressing this knowledge.[9] Thus, postmodernism rejects claims of the objectivity or universality of truth. Any knowledge that one has is understood through the matrix of one's own experience and within the context of one's tradition and communal narratives.[10]

Thus, whereas modernity is concerned primarily with reason and autonomy (emphasized, perhaps most poignantly, by Kant), postmodernity rejects both such possibilities, emphasizing that there are

multiple ways of knowing and that humans are always bound by the traditions and communities in which they have been socialized. In the same way, while modernity emphasizes the objectivity and universality of knowledge, postmodernity rejects these possibilities as well, suggesting instead that all knowledge is subjective and leaving open the possibility for relativism.[11]

In their own accounts, both Shenk and Weaver attempt to take into account not only these general themes in Western philosophy and culture in general but also the particularities of Anabaptism. In being faithful to the Anabaptist tradition, they see a clear conflict between Anabaptism and the dominant culture of the West—not only 'secular' Western culture but also the dominant 'Constantinian' Christianity of the West.[12] This sense of conflict is one of the factors motivating Anabaptists to embrace some form of attack on the modern project. Modernity, because of its commitment to the unanimity of reason, assumes that rational minds will agree, which in turn means that minority views—such as those of Anabaptists—which are clearly not derived from objective reason, must be rejected.[13] Shenk and Weaver both reject the ideological tyranny of such a view of reason. By perpetuating an attack on the modern project and in turn formulating an alternative to it, they hope to provide an escape from the dominant Western worldview that they see as stifling to the Anabaptist way of life.[14]

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An Anabaptist Perspective on Knowing

First, Shenk claims that all learning—hence, all knowledge—is tradition based.[15] That is to say that whatever a person learns, he or she is able to learn because of a particular cultural inheritance. Our ability to learn is conditioned by the language we speak, by the practices of our communities, and by the stories we tell.[16] We cannot learn what we do not have language to express, and we cannot express what our communal experience cannot render intelligible.[17] This is not to say

that tradition itself is beyond criticism, but rather that any criticism of tradition can only be intelligible to the adherents of that tradition if it is made from within. In other words, dissent (such as the Anabaptist tradition maintains with respect to Catholic and magisterial Protestant Christianity) is only intelligible from within the confines of the larger tradition. The early Anabaptists were not rejecting tradition altogether, but rejecting certain elements of it as conflicting with what they saw as the more important part of the tradition—namely, Scripture.[18] This is not to say, necessarily, that these Anabaptists traced everything within their tradition directly to Scripture, limiting themselves to what is specifically commended by Scripture—though this is certainly what many Anabaptists claimed. These early Anabaptists drew inspiration from a number of contemporary streams of thought—for example, certain forms of mysticism that flourished in the late medieval period and humanism, neither of which was derived directly from Scripture. Rather, these were means of engaging Scripture.

Our experience is story. Narrative is not simply the means by which we recount our experience but the very structure of our experience.

Weaver makes a similar point when he states that all theology is particular.[19] He describes the process by which many Mennonite theologians have attempted to develop a theology based on the (modern) assumption that there existed a 'theology-in-general.' This view assumed that there was a core set of doctrines that were Christian, and that all Christians shared these doctrines. What made Mennonites—or, we could substitute Baptists, Anglicans, Catholics, or Orthodox—different was a set of supplemental doctrines, as if Christian theology were a base model and sectarian differences amounted to different sets of optional features.[20] (Every Christian drives a Volkswagen Beetle. The only questions are whether you want air-conditioning or not, a CD player or not, manual or automatic transmission, and so on.) The problem with such a view is that it downplays the importance of certain aspects of Anabaptism (such as the importance of peacemaking and the centrality of ethics as a whole), while formulating theology in a way that is itself hostile toward dissenters. For example, this 'theology-in-general' assumes a

particular Christology and a particular ethic, which in turn labels dissenting views as heterodox.[21] In addition, any approach to theology that does not conform to the methods of 'theology-in-general' is also condemned as heterodox. Thus, orthodoxy requires not only conformity of propositions, but agreement, for example, that the listing of these propositions is the best means for producing a theology. If one attempts to operate under a different paradigm (if we drive a motorcycle rather than a car—or even more dissimilar, fly a helicopter or sail a boat), the method itself is not suited to answer the questions posed by the dominant theological method and is therefore rejected. ("Do you have anti-lock brakes or not?" is a meaningless question to someone paddling a kayak.)

The second point that Shenk makes about learning is that all learning is ethical. This is not to say that all learning is about ethics but that all learning has some ethical component, either ethical implications or ethical assumptions underlying it—or even more fundamentally, our very pursuit of knowledge is informed and motivated by certain ethical assumptions, such as the inherent goodness of knowing. The modern project assumes that learning and knowing are morally neutral and that knowledge is attained objectively. Thus, both virtuous and vicious people alike can arrive at true knowledge. This is simply not so for Shenk, for she is committed to the view that our moral convictions will guide and shape our quest for knowledge, just as they will direct the ways in which we apply the knowledge we possess. Since there can be no perfect objectivity, there can be no morally neutral knowledge. The practical implications of this for Shenk's project are that there can be no morally neutral modes of teaching or learning, nor any morally neutral subjects.[22]

Third, Shenk argues that knowing is possible only within a narrative context in which we ourselves become participants in the narratives. This is closely related to her first point about tradition, but here she goes one step further. It is not simply that we live within particular communities, that we have particular traditions—though this claim itself is contrary to the assumptions of modernity. Rather, our lives are stories, and the practices of our communities, our traditions, take place within and are informed by stories. Our experience is story. Narrative is not simply the means by which we recount our experience but the very structure of our experience:[23]

> We live in the stories and practices of our communities and can only think and perceive by the images and categories they provide. To truly understand the Scriptures for example, we must attempt to enter the world of the Bible by learning

> its language and taking up its practices. It isn't enough to know *about* the world of the Scriptures.[24]

As a result of this, it is also not enough for us simply to be socialized into a narrative. Rather, we must constantly be nourished, reinvigorated by our communal narratives.[25] To lose touch with our stories is to leave ourselves unable to make our experiences intelligible.[26]

In addition, true learning requires 'intuitive imagination.' 'Intuitive' suggests that there is something extra-rational about this aspect of knowing. Because of our embeddedness in our communal narratives, there are certain claims that we simply know, whether by intuition (as Shenk claims here) or by some other means.[27] At the same time, however, our ever-changing context requires that we use our imagination in attempting to continue our narratives in a faithful manner. We will not always (perhaps we will never) simply be able to reenact past episodes from our communal narratives. Rather, we will be called upon to continue these narratives without writing entirely new ones along the way.[28] The role of imagination is especially important for minority or dissenting traditions such as the Anabaptist tradition because members of such communities must imagine new solutions to problems whose present solution—proposed by the dominant or majority tradition—is not faithful to their own community's tradition.[29]

Lydia Neufeld Harder makes this point while also countering the community's possible abuse of power—a point that we encounter more keenly below. She claims that the postmodern condition creates a unique opportunity for the development of hermeneutic communities such as those of the Anabaptist tradition. Such communities exercise two important faculties: suspicion and imagination.[30] Suspicion leads us to question our own traditions, but this suspicion is also directed toward other, dominant traditions.[31] At the same time, imagination is one of the hallmarks of knowing in the postmodern mindset, for imagination allows us to know and act in a world in which we lack "settled certitudes."[32] Additionally, imagination is an important means of reordering the power structures around us, which is especially important for adherents of the Anabaptist tradition.[33]

Furthermore, Shenk claims that knowing in the Anabaptist tradition is centered on a community involved in a process of disciplined discovery. A commitment to disciplined discovery places members of the community in positions of accountability. The community places certain checks on its members. Any novel claims—or even old claims made anew—are subjected to communal discernment. This process draws on the communal narratives, for any claim must be measured against the biblical story and the community's faithful telling and re-

telling of that story. This process requires not merely individual but communal discernment as well. There is an expectation that the truth will be made clear to all the members of the community so that, in accordance with the commitment to peacemaking, the community will reach some form of consensus regarding these claims.[34]

Shenk acknowledges that there can be abuses of the community's power. However, the risk of such abuse pales in comparison to the danger of allowing individuals to have the final authority in all matters pertaining to faith or practice. The process of disciplined discovery is an effort to ensure that the community is always made subject to Scripture rather than allowing any individual to run roughshod over Scripture. There may be historical examples of the church abusing its power in such circumstances, but these are far less significant—given the importance of consensus in her view—than those instances in which individuals rationally and autonomously interpret the text, and in so doing, prevent themselves from being accountable to anyone.[35]

Weaver makes a similar point when he emphasizes the importance of Anabaptist ecclesiology and eschatology. Weaver points out that one of the contributions of Anabaptism is a renewal in the view that the true church is a visible church. He points out that the church is not a conglomeration of individuals but a distinct people created by God, and that the church is visible in the relationships among its various members.[36] Thus, the sense of community is clear, but also evident is a strong sense that this community, the relationships that make up the church, relies on the kind of discipline Shenk discusses. Clearly, theology (and by extension every form of knowing) takes place in some sort of communal context. The further emphasis on eschatology, that the kingdom of God is currently being lived out in the life of the church, speaks to the importance of discipline in maintaining the integrity of the church—integrity, not simply in the moral sense, but in the sense of being unified as well.[37]

A commitment to disciplined discovery places members of the community in positions of accountability.

Furthermore, in keeping with his claim that theology is ethical, Weaver argues that all theology either embraces violence or repudiates it in some way and that, while the dominant Christian theology may tolerate pacifism, it does not embrace nonviolence in the way that

Anabaptist theology does. Anabaptist theology is informed by a commitment to nonviolence, and as a result, all theologizing from an Anabaptist perspective is intimately connected to peacemaking in a way that other theologies are not. This commitment to peacemaking is not simply an 'add-on' but rather offers a radically different point of origin for theology.[38]

Finally, in accordance with the various alternatives to traditional modes of knowing offered by these Anabaptist theologians, Elaine Swartzentruber argues that any postmodern Anabaptist ecclesiology must be holistic.[39] We are embodied creatures. Thus, our ecclesiology—and our epistemology—cannot take only reason into account but must also take into consideration the physical and emotional aspects of our experience. We do not know merely by thinking, but also by doing and by feeling. Our actions and emotions can be just as knowledge-producing as our thoughts. This is yet another reason why the sacraments are important—just as in other forms of discipleship in the Anabaptist tradition—for in performing these acts, we come to know more fully. Likewise, the emotions we feel when we hear the gospel proclaimed, when we participate in the sacraments, or when we feed the hungry can lead to just as much knowledge as scientific experimentation or Cartesian introspection.

Why Does This Matter?

What does this mean for ecclesiology, or, more importantly for our purposes here, for epistemology? First, there are some dangers in the view I am advocating, but these dangers can be avoided. As Shenk points out, there is a possibility that the community can abuse its power both by trumping the importance of the text and by subjecting members of the community to harsh injustices. Within the Anabaptist tradition, however, practices have developed to prevent both the subjugation of the biblical text to the community and the subjecting of community members to injustice. In many Anabaptist communities, for example, the practice of seeking unanimity has become the natural outworking of the belief in the priesthood of all believers. Such a practice demands that everyone have an equal voice within the community. This leads to a sense of intellectual and hermeneutical egalitarianism. No member of the community is more privileged than any other with respect to interpreting Scripture or formulating doctrine. Every Christian has an equal standing in such matters. At the same time, within the Anabaptist communities—at least within many of them—the requirement of consensus on all communal decisions prevents any group within the community from abusing any other group or person within the community.[40] This desire to prevent injustice is based not on a

modern conception of rights, but on a commitment to the Christian conception of 'revolutionary subordination' by which Christians are called to a form of egalitarianism *within the church*.[41]

Also, within this framework, a sense can develop that the community is beyond reproach. While acknowledging that the community can be criticized from within, a question still exists as to the way in which such questions could be phrased as well as the manner in which the community can relate to those who pose such criticisms. The previous point regarding the equality of all members of the community with respect to communal discernment and the importance of consensus in communal decision-making also speaks to this issue. Furthermore, the claim that the community is involved in *disciplined* discovery directly counters any claim that the community is beyond criticism. By subjecting all claims, both old and new, to the disciplined discernment of the community, the community continuously reexamines and reaffirms those beliefs, practices, narratives, and interpretations that remain central to the community while leaving open the possibility that the community can at any time reform what it now takes to be an inadequate formulation or practice of a previous generation.

That we are bound in subjectivity and particularity, conditioned by our prior experiences and the formative narratives of our communities, does not eliminate our ability to make judgments about ethical matters.

Finally, a sense can emerge that we should simply forgo any claim that the Christian or, more specifically, the Anabaptist position is somehow better than any other position; in other words, we might succumb to relativism. Rorty, who has no serious theological commitments that might give him pause at the possibility of relativism, refuses to submit to the possibility. Rorty argues that even if there cannot be objective grounds for adjudicating among various alternatives, we are still able to adjudicate. That we are bound in subjectivity and particularity, conditioned by our prior experiences and the formative narratives of our communities, does not eliminate our ability to make

judgments about ethical matters. These judgments will be relative but only in the sense that we judge one act by comparison to others. We may not be able to say that this act is *the* right one, but we can say that this act is better than that one. Whatever else this sort of relativism might imply, it does not imply that every way of life or practice is just as good as every other.[42]

Our goal is not to discover the objective truth, but to make our lives faithful to the story of our community, to the Christian story.

Furthermore, relativism holds less sway over us when we reject the importance of finding 'the Truth.'[43] Without making ourselves slaves to objectivity, we can reject the usual conceptions of truth for an alternative conception, that of faithfulness. Our goal is not to discover the objective truth, but to make our lives faithful to the story of our community, to the Christian story. This is relativism in the sense that it acknowledges that different communities do in fact have different stories and these stories guide their respective judgments. This view does not say, however, that these communities cannot or should not adjudicate among competing narratives or conflicting judgments. The standard for these adjudications is analogical and hermeneutical. It requires a comparison to other retellings of our communal narratives to determine the degree of faithfulness demonstrated by each.

While these dangers are significant, there are ample resources within the practices of Anabaptism to overcome them. Moreover, there are significant advantages offered by Anabaptism in terms of epistemological and ecclesiological responses to postmodernity. These advantages present themselves as means of avoiding common criticisms offered by postmodernity against those forms of thought that are committed to the principles of modernity.

First, and most clearly, knowledge is not arrived at autonomously or by reason alone—though reason still plays an important part in providing an epistemic framework. Knowledge is communal. We arrive at it by immersing ourselves in the traditions and stories of particular communities. These communities offer not only the context for our discovery but also correctives and further guidance for our search for knowledge in an ever-changing world. This quest for knowledge

requires us to employ not only reason but also intuition, emotion, and the whole of human experience. This is clearly contrary to modernity while taking the criticisms by postmodernity seriously and remaining faithful to the Anabaptist tradition.

Furthermore, there are certain advantages to such a view, particularly with respect to Anabaptism. A view such as the one I describe here allows us to escape the need to arrive at the single definitive, authoritative reading of the biblical text. Nadine Pence Frantz points to a particular practice in illustrating this point. She argues that the category of testimony as practiced within the believers' church eliminates the need to identify a single, authoritative reading of a text or to uncover the received meaning of the text by the original audience. She further argues that the analogical guidance the text provides prevents the contemporary world from wholly suppressing the text's authority over the community while also allowing the text—rather than social, historical, or textual criticism—to provide that authority.[44] This also means, of course, that the text's meaning is fluid rather than fixed yet retains a degree of continuity between the text, the community's narratives, and the narratives of individuals as they seek to identify themselves with the stories of the community.[45]

In accordance with Frantz's claim, this view does not simply provide an expectation that we will be incorporated into the community of the church but also provides means by which we are so incorporated. The very process of communally interpreting the text draws the members of the community into the biblical story and the story of the community, for this practice is but one of many commended to us by those stories. Furthermore, in the practice of offering testimony, we find that the stories of individuals are presented to the community in order for the community to judge their faithfulness to the larger Christian story as retold by the community. Testimony, then, provides a means of measuring the faithfulness of various retellings of the Christian story.

Testimony, then, provides a means of measuring the faithfulness of various retellings of the Christian story.

Moreover, there is an acknowledgement, given the impossibility of true objectivity, that our communal experience will shape our interpretation of the text. With such an acknowledgement comes a degree of responsibility and communal accountability in interpreting the

text. At the same time, we hold the text up as the measure of our experience. Thus, the relationship between Scripture and our communal life is an ongoing process of reinterpretation and reinforcement. This is exemplified in a commitment to the use of intuitive imagination as well as the subjection of all community members to the discipline of the community. On the one hand, this discipline calls all interpreters to account before the community. On the other hand, imagination allows us to constantly reform and renew our interpretations as our context changes and we encounter new situations.

We are released from the need to 'out-narrate' competing narratives. We are freed to acknowledge that we cannot eliminate dissent by appealing to reason, but we can appeal to comparisons to attempt to resolve disagreement.

Given this flexibility in interpretation, the text is able to speak anew to each new situation, cultural context, and interpretative community. As we have already seen, there are practices within the Anabaptist tradition that place checks on the community's retelling of the story, yet this flexibility means that no outside group can impose an authoritative reading of the text or telling of the Christian story on any other group. This is an explicit rejection of 'Constantinian' Christianity, as well as the hierarchical imposition of doctrine on a particular community that can occur in other traditions.

One might wonder, if this is the case, what serves to unite Christians? How is it possible that there is truly one church if a multitude of interpretative communities with essentially no relationship to one another exist? Ultimately, the relationship among communities is similar to the relationship among members of any particular community insofar as particular believers are committed to the belief that they are not truly individuals, but members of a new people, created by God. Likewise, we are committed to the view that all Christians are part of this people. What makes the church visible is the relationship among its members.[46] Furthermore, each of these communities is engaged in the same interpretative process. They are all committed to retelling the Christian story. They surely do not agree as to the interpretation

of that story, but they are committed to the 'canonical' portions of the story in a way that those outside the church are not.[47] Thus, they may disagree about a good many things, but they will share a number of practices—in particular those practices related to the receiving, interpreting, and retelling of the Christian story—even if the expression of those practices might vary from community to community.

Additionally, there are ethical implications of such an epistemological view. If our theology cannot take into account only the considerations of humankind but must account for the whole of creation, then doing damage to creation not only alters what we can know, but the very process by which we can know it. Furthermore, a holistic ecclesiology, which emerges from this holistic epistemology, demands that we seek redemption, not just for souls but also for bodies, and not just for human bodies but for all bodies.[48] The church may be the gathering of Christian souls, but only if we understand 'soul' in the Hebrew sense of *nephesh* as 'living being.' The church is the gathering of 'embodied selves,' and if we are to take this embodiment seriously, we must minister to the whole person just as we must seek the redemption of all creation.[49]

Finally, we are released, by this view, from the need to 'out-narrate' competing narratives. We are freed to acknowledge that we cannot eliminate dissent by appealing to reason, but we can appeal to comparisons to attempt to resolve disagreement. Both Rorty and Wright make this point, yet in very different ways.[50] Ultimately, however, there is no neutral, objective position from which we can sway others that our own view is *the* right view. Rather, we can point out that based on the traditions we hold, the stories we tell, and the practices in which we participate as a community, this view is better than that view. This is not so much a competition as it is a dialogue. Without the assumptions of *this particular* community, the practices of some other community may make perfect sense, may appear better than our own practices. In such a case, we must admit, that reason is not sufficient to sway our interlocutors.[51]

What Are These Epistemic Practices?

I have discussed at some length the relationship between epistemology and ecclesiology in a postmodern world and the manner in which Anabaptist thought and practice address the epistemological concerns of postmodernity. I have suggested that there are certain practices within the Anabaptist tradition that carry epistemological weight—that is, the Anabaptist tradition includes practices that further the ability of its adherents to know, given the postmodern condition. These practices are formative insofar as they provide the

members of the community with the knowledge and skills necessary to perpetuate the community, which is to say that these practices provide community members with the knowledge and skills necessary to transmit the community's story and incorporate others into that story while they themselves also are being incorporated into it. These practices provide both the linguistic and intellectual skills necessary to faithfully transmit and enact the community's constitutive narratives. In concluding, I outline some of these practices and relate them to my earlier discussion.

The sacraments remind us that our identity, both as individuals and as a community, is found in this story rather than any other.

I have already discussed testimony and the manner in which this practice overcomes the need to discover a single authoritative interpretation of the text, to establish a fixed orthodoxy. Testimony also provides community members the opportunity to practice (in the sense of 'rehearse') their interpretation of particular attempts to retell the community's story. In this practice, the community is able to engage its collective imagination and habituate itself in practices necessary for the continued retelling of the community's story and the adjudication of alternate retellings of that story.

In addition, the practice of community discipline allows Anabaptist communities a resource for calling their members to account for their respective performances of the community's story. Whereas testimony allows the community to evaluate verbal retellings of the Christian story, community discipline requires that individual members of the community recognize that their own actions will be subject to evaluation by the community and that they will be responsible for participating in the corporate evaluation of the actions of other members of the community. This demands that the community employ imagination in attempting to further the retelling of the Christian story within its community, as well as employ imagination in evaluating the faithfulness of other retellings of the community's story.

The sacraments are also central to the development of a communal epistemology within the Anabaptist tradition, for in the sacraments we find a visual enacting of the Christian story—or at least portions of it. Thus, the sacraments cause us to recall the canonical story and

draw us into it. In baptism, we recall the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and we ourselves enact our own death, burial, and resurrection, in that instant being made part of the Christian story. Likewise, in communion, we become participants with those original disciples in looking forward to sharing this meal with our Lord, thereby placing ourselves in the Christian story *in medias res*.

Furthermore, the sacraments remind us that our identity, both as individuals and as a community, is found in *this* story rather than any other. In the Eucharist, for example, we do not simply participate in communion; we practice communion. In this sacrament, we are made community. Likewise, in baptism, we are made a new community. We are no longer identified as Jews or Greeks, slave or free, male or female. In this act, we are made members of a new people.[52] The practice of the sacraments, then, provides identity for the community and its members and habituates the community in the retelling of the Christian story.

Moreover, in worship, particularly in preaching, the community is exposed to the continued retelling of the Christian story; yet whether through preaching, song, testimony, the reading of Scripture, or the sacraments, participation in worship further habituates the community in its story. This further prepares the community to adjudicate among alternative retellings of that story. In addition, worship provides a context in which we can promote holistic learning, for worship can incorporate a variety of ways of knowing. Worship also prompts us to employ our imagination as we continually retell the Christian story corporately. Moreover, in worship, the community is continually called to corporate discernment as it attempts to determine whether the message proclaimed is a faithful rendering of the Christian story. In so doing, the community acts on its commitment to spiritual egalitarianism and—as I discuss below—the shared ministry of the church, while at the same time placing checks on the authority that any one person might wield within the community.

The community, by requiring consensus, both reduces the possibility for future conflict and encourages the ongoing thoughtful reflection on the community's corporate life.

Related to this corporate worship experience is the Anabaptist

commitment to a shared ministry, to the view that every member of the community is equally responsible for carrying out the ministry of the church. This means that every member, not only clergy, is habituated in the practices of ministry. The whole community is socialized in practices of ministry and, by extension, in the public expression of the Christian life that grows out of the congregation's participation in the biblical story.

Additionally, focus on the life and ministry of Jesus, both in terms of public proclamation and in terms of personal morality, and especially the focus on *Gelassenheit*, immerses the community in the central narrative of the Christian life: the story of the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. In addition to habituating the community in this narrative, this focus on Jesus calls the community to faithful imitation, which also requires the use of imagination insofar as we are called not to act the same as Jesus—surely the cultural context is sufficiently different that such a mindless replication would be neither possible nor intelligible to either the community or the world—but we are called to act *like* Jesus. The call and the focus on the centrality of the life of Jesus requires that the community employ imagination in devising faithful ways of continuing and retelling this story in distinct and ever-changing cultural contexts.

Another practice historically observed by Anabaptist communities that lends itself to the kind of epistemological project proposed here is the practice of communion, particularly as expressed in economic sharing. This focus on communion and on sharing habituates the community members in seeking the community's input in the use of the individual's resources. This is important epistemologically because it leads individuals to surrender the modern notion that they can be autonomous agents utilizing their own property in isolation from the community's influence or, epistemologically, thinking as if they were autonomous, rational agents who have no need of external, communal influences.

Furthermore, the practice of dialogue, as Yoder describes it, is a practice centered on the belief that every member of the community can contribute to its corporate knowledge.[53] This practice is also important in that continuous dialogue constitutes an acknowledgement that the community's knowledge is not fixed but is always subject to modification as new situations arise or old formulations or practices no longer carry sufficient weight within the community. Moreover, dialogue provides a means of engaging other communities while remaining faithful to the Anabaptist commitment to peacemaking.

Finally, however, the community does not merely practice dialogue, for the Anabaptist tradition has also emphasized the importance

of consensus in corporate decision-making. In demanding consensus, the community further recognizes the significance of each member's contribution as well as the possibility that the majority, considered as a conglomeration of individuals, can err. The community, by requiring consensus, both reduces the possibility of future conflict and encourages ongoing thoughtful reflection on the community's corporate life.

These practices, when considered collectively, constitute a set of epistemic practices that habituate the community in a particular way of knowing that is recognized by that community to provide sufficient grounds for knowledge. There may be other practices within some communities that also contribute to the development of a communal epistemology.[54] Such epistemic practices surely are significant in the lives of those communities, yet the description provided here has been sufficient to demonstrate the resources that the Anabaptist tradition offers for the development of an epistemology adequate to the challenges of postmodernity.

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Notes

1. *Gelassenheit* literally means 'yieldedness' or 'calmness'. The early Anabaptists used the term to refer to the sense of surrender to Christ and to the will of God that believers feel.
2. Many would mention the importance of peacemaking, but this is a more recent theme in Anabaptism. The early years of Anabaptism saw several experiments counter to such a theme—e.g., the Peasant's Revolt and the Münster Reform, to name but two.
3. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiii.
4. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin, 1999), xxix. In the passage cited, Rorty actually claims that all moral principles are the product of reason, but the claim applies equally to other kinds of principles.

5. The correspondence theory of truth is the view that truth is judged based on the correspondence between statements and reality. 'The brown dog is sitting on the rug' is true if and only if there is an exact correspondence to reality, namely that there is a dog, that the dog is brown, that there is also a rug, and that the dog is in fact lying on said rug. Rorty speaks of this view in both *Philosophy and Social Hope* as well as in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). See, e.g., Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 23-39.
6. I will not delve deeply into Rorty's relationship with modernity at this point. Rorty does claim that his purpose is not to undermine the modern project but to further it, and that he is, rather, committed to modernity. This may be true, but only in the sense that Rorty is committed to the political and economic outgrowths of modernity—namely, democracy and capitalism.
7. Lyotard, xxiv.
8. Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 15.
9. Ibid.
10. Sara Wenger Shenk, *Anabaptist Ways of Knowing: A Conversation about Tradition-Based Critical Education* (Telford, Pa.: Cascadia Publishing House, 2003), 16; see also Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2d ed. (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 204-25.
11. An alternative, though largely parallel, account of modernity and postmodernity can be found in Nancey Murphy and James W. McClendon, "Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," *Modern Theology* 5 (1989): 191-214. Murphy and McClendon distinguish three axes that define the modern intellectual landscape: epistemologically the range from foundationalism to skepticism, linguistically the range from representationalism to expressivism, and ethically or anthropologically the range from individualism to collectivism.
12. By 'Constantinian,' Anabaptists refer to any ecclesial structure in which membership in the church is connected with political citizenship, thus distinguishing those movements arising from the Radical Reformation on the one hand from the Magisterial Reformers, Orthodox, and Catholic traditions on the other.
13. The further implication is that such minority views are either irrational or outright unethical in that they violate the autonomy of the individual agent.
14. This is not an uncommon position. Ted Koontz, e.g., points out what he sees as a trend toward modernism in the Anabaptist tradition (away from what he takes as the traditional—i.e. pre-modern—Anabaptist view). See, Ted Koontz, "Mennonites and 'Postmodernity,'" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 63 (1989): 401-27.
15. Throughout her own work and in particular at this point, Shenk draws on the work of Michael Polanyi, Nancey Murphy, and Rebecca Chopp.
16. Shenk, 122-23.
17. MacIntyre also makes this point in *After Virtue*, 208-21. This is similar to points made by other critics of the modern epistemological project. See, e.g., Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 48.
18. Shenk, 123-24.
19. J. Denny Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third*

Millennium (Telford, Pa.: Pandora Press, 2000), 22, 67.

20. Ibid., 49-67.
21. Ibid., 124-27.
22. Shenk, 125-26. Weaver makes this point as well. His claim is that all theology is, by necessity, ethical. While Weaver focuses a great deal on violence, he is equally clear, if not as loquacious, that ethics cannot be distinguished from theology—nor theology from ethics, for that matter. On this point, Weaver relies on McClendon and Hauerwas, among others. See Weaver, 113-16.
23. Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971): 291-311. For a more extended argument, see Kevin M. Bradt, *Story as a Way of Knowing* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997).
24. Shenk, 127 (emphasis mine).
25. Ibid., 128.
26. See also MacIntyre, 216-23.
27. Peirce, e.g., suggests that we might arrive at such beliefs by retroduction. 'Retroduction,' or 'abduction' is the process by which we arrive at a conclusion, and only in arriving at that conclusion (or assuming its truth) are we able to provide justification for it. Peirce presents this as an alternative to the more traditional inductive and deductive forms of argument. The idea in this particular essay being that only after accepting the existence of God as true can one provide rational justification for such a belief. Charles S. Peirce, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), 368-73.
28. N. T. Wright makes this point excellently. N.T. Wright, T*he New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 140.
29. Shenk points out the importance of imagination in finding new solutions to problems that may currently be resolved by means of violence. See, Shenk, 129-30.
30. Lydia Neufeld Harder, "Postmodern Suspicion and Imagination: Therapy for Mennonite Hermeneutic Communities," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 71 (1997): 267-83.
31. This very conception of suspicion is incorporated into MacIntyre's definition of a tradition as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." MacIntyre, 222.
32. Harder, 278.
33. Ibid., 279.
34. Ibid., 130-31.
35. Ibid., 132.
36. Weaver, 134-35.
37. Ibid., 135-36.
38. Ibid., 68-70, 127-29.
39. Elaine K. Swartzentruber, "Marking and Remarking the Body of Christ: Toward

a Postmodern Mennonite Ecclesiology," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 71 (1997): 243-65.

40. See, e.g., John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2004), 220-24.
41. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 171-73. In contrast to modern conceptions of 'natural rights' or 'human rights,' Yoder points out that, for Christians, the created order is not the source of broader moral commitments to end social injustice. Rather, for Christians, the elimination of social injustice is rooted in redemption. See John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community before the Watching World* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 34-35.
42. Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 15.
43. Here, I refer not to the sense in which the Gospels portray Jesus as the Truth, but the way in which modernity claims that 'the Truth' is something external, objective, and (perhaps) unchanging. Whatever else it means for Jesus to be the Truth, it means that we do not know him objectively, for we do not know Jesus as an object but as one with whom we are in relationship.
44. Nadine Pence Frantz, "Biblical Interpretation in a 'Non-Sense' World: Text, Revelation, and Interpretative Community," *Brethren Life and Thought* 39 (1994): 158.
45. Ibid., 159.
46. Weaver, 134-35.
47. Here, I use 'canonical' not in the sense of referring exclusively to Scripture, but in the sense that they accept as given certain practices, texts, narratives, and the like. One might recall Wright's analogy of the incomplete Shakespearean play. See Wright, 140-43.
48. Swartzentruber, 264-65.
49. I borrow the phrase "embodied selves" from McClendon and his discussion of 'body ethics.' See, James William McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 78-109.
50. Wright, 140-41; Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 15.
51. This is a Kroeker's conclusion based on his reading of Yoder. See P. Travis Kroeker, "The War of the Lamb: Postmodernity and John Howard Yoder's Eschatological Genealogy of Morals," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 74 (2000): 310.
52. Yoder, *Body Politics*, 28-29.
53. Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland*, 222-24.
54. With respect to the Anabaptist tradition, one might immediately think of peacemaking. I have intentionally avoided this practice first due to its contentious nature among the early Anabaptists and second due to its disputed nature among contemporary Anabaptists. Reimer, e.g., presents a view that can hardly be distinguished from just war theory. See A. James Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics* (Kitchner, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2001), 493-500.

"Anabaptist Ecclesiological Responses to Postmodernity" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. How does your church interact with its heritage within the Christian tradition?

2. Is it necessary to hold out for *the* objective, correct reading of Scripture? Or, within limits, are there several possible readings of the biblical text?

3. How can your church take seriously Martin's claim that knowledge is communal?

4. Overall, should churches seek to be more communally oriented? What can your church do to improve in this area?

5. What practices does your church have to ensure that all voices are heard within a discussion, including marginal positions? What can be done in your church to foster such open dialogue?

Prepared by Derek Hatch and Adam Horton

Autobiography as Theology

Narrative Theology and Menno Simons's *Confession of My Enlightenment, Conversion, and Calling*

DEREK HATCH

One may notice that the events and occurrences of one's life often do not follow any sort of pattern, nor do they have any continuity from one day to the next. They are haphazard and without connection to each other.

WITH THIS UNDER CONSIDERATION, is it necessary that the events of one's life are coherently bound together, and, if so, what could provide this coherence for one's life and the events of that life? Further, can coherent autobiographical reflections have constructive theological value? In response to these questions, this essay will examine the language of narrative theology as it relates to an understanding of life experience, personal reflection, and theology. This language will then be utilized to analyze the autobiographical writings of Menno Simons (ca. 1496-1561).[1] In his *Confession of My Enlightenment, Conversion, and Calling*, Menno passes along the only known information concerning his life as a Catholic priest and what Irvin Horst calls "his spiritual struggles in coming to a biblical faith."[2] This tract, written in 1554, contains Menno's reflections on his life story and the events therein, as well as a defense of his actions in becoming part of the radical movement of the Reformation. As I demonstrate in what follows, Menno's work exemplifies the theological language of narrative, providing a better understanding of the continuity between his life and the life of his community.

Importance of Narrative

Narratives permeate all aspects of life. Alasdair MacIntyre describes human beings as story-telling animals.[3] The stories that we

tell, though, not only illustrate life, but also shape our framework of understanding life as a whole, including our attitudes and conduct.[4] Indeed, stories are used for artistic expression as well as for communication, describing where we have been and what we are doing.[5] From these observations, Stephen Crites underscores the significance of seeing the world of consciousness in terms of narrative by stating that stories are "among the most important means by which people articulate and clarify their sense of that world."[6] He discusses the tension that occurs in each moment of life between the remembered events and actions of the past and the many anticipated possible scenarios for the future.[7] This balance can only be maintained by a narrative that connects the two modes of time (determined past and yet-to-be-determined future) together in the present tense, where there always exists a moment of decision that shapes life as an unfolding artistic drama.[8] The formulation and performance of this drama leave experience coherent only within a narrative. For this reason, Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones describe narrative as "a crucial conceptual category for such matters as understanding issues of epistemology and methods of argument, depicting personal identity, and displaying the content of Christian convictions."[9]

A story, as defined by Hauerwas, is "a narrative account that binds events and agents together in an intelligible pattern . . . .To tell a story often involves our attempt to make intelligible the muddle of things we have done in order to have a self."[10] Consequently, to be a self is to be a moral agent. One cannot be a self (a moral actor operating with some sense of directionality) without the use of a narrative that gives coherence and continuity to one's life. Stories connect actions to responses, giving intelligibility to human activity. In discussing how one (or one's community) learns how to act responsibly as a moral agent, Hauerwas notes:

> Our moral lives are not simply made up of the addition of our separate responses to particular situations. Rather we exhibit an orientation that gives our life a theme through which the variety of what we do and do not do can be scored. To be agents at all requires a directionality that involves the development of character and virtue . . . . To be moral persons is to allow stories to be told through us so that our manifold activities gain a coherence that allows us to claim them for our own.[11]

Narrative becomes the operative method for making sense of the world and making definitive progress toward some sort of *telos*. One's life and ethics flow from a coherent narrative that offers purpose to

one's acts. These acts can take many different forms, such as acts of construction, deconstruction, or memory. Charles Taylor elaborates by stating that in order to orient one's life toward the good, one must integrate this sense of the good into an understanding of one's life as a story. This requires that, in order to make sense of ourselves, we must understand our lives in a narrative form.[12] Taylor sums up the nature of such a narrative:

One cannot know anything about one's identity and the world except through the integrity and sense provided in the form of a narrative.

> It has often been remarked that making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra . . . our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.[13]

Narrative's epistemological function becomes clear: one cannot know anything about one's identity and the world except through the integrity and sense provided in the form of a narrative. Hauerwas, along these lines, writes that stories "do not illustrate a meaning, they do not symbolize a meaning, but rather the meaning is embodied in the form of the story itself. Put differently, stories are indispensable if we are to know ourselves."[14] Further, John Milbank claims that narrative is the main manner of living within the world, a manner that "characterizes the way the world happens to us."[15] Thus, narrative is how we describe our lives, bringing integrity and purpose to our actions.

Theological Significance of Narrative

Narratives offer distinct resources for theological discourse. With an understanding of the narrative characteristics of human experience, theological discussion that is embedded in that experience may also be aided by narrative. Johann Baptist Metz writes, "Theology is above all concerned with direct experiences expressed in narrative language."[16] Richard Hays, referring to the biblical narrative, notes the paramount importance of the stories of Scripture over against any process that attempts to find the "real meaning" of a text in some abstract concept.

Instead, these stories "become the framework in which we understand and measure our lives."[17] Narrative is not merely one possible means by which theology is communicated, but instead, narrative becomes "a means of expression uniquely suited to theology or at least to Christian theology."[18] Hauerwas notes that, if nothing else, theological reflection should remind us of a story.[19] An example is Michael Root's argument that narrative is constitutive of soteriology.[20] Noting that this doctrine requires one to move narratively from a state of deprivation to a state of release, he contends that the Christian soteriological task involves relating the Christian narrative to the audience's life and world in particular ways.[21] Through re-descriptions of the story of Jesus, a story of redemption emerges that impacts one's life.

In the same way that stories grant intelligibility to human actions, God, as a particular agent whose actions also have purpose and directionality, can only be known through narrative. Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, in noting the church's response to the *Euthyphro* quandary, write that, "they [Christians] need not nor cannot avoid the issue. They begin to answer it with a story that tells of who God is and who it is that obeys."[22] Once again, narrative offers epistemological resources. We (or our communities) come to know God through a story that includes the biblical narrative, but also reaches beyond it to our lives, the lives of our communities, and the stories of past and existing communities who sought and are seeking to live in such a way as to obey God. It is in this sense that God is the ultimate author/narrator of our stories. That is, God does not make us do what we do, but rather describes to us how we should act in order to be faithful to the character of a Christian (albeit through the community's prior actions, such as recording and preserving Scripture).

In the same way that stories grant intelligibility to human actions, God, as a particular agent whose actions also have purpose and directionality, can only be known through narrative.

Finally, constructing theology using the language of narrative can open doors for the formation and maintenance of the church. McClendon underscores the social value that is conveyed by the stories that a people tells and shares.[23] Thus, narrative has a unifying aspect with

regard to constituting the church as a social entity, but this is not all. The story of God, which undergirds the theological convictions of the community of faith, must have practical implications that lead to a better understanding of how to live faithfully as the people of God. The resources available to the church are not only limited to the story of God as seen in Scripture, but also, as mentioned, include the smaller and lesser-known stories of the people and particular communities called by God. In this way, narrative theology provides opportunities for taking seriously the connectedness of the whole Christian tradition.

As the narrative coherence of a person's actions makes him or her a moral agent, so also do the shared stories of a community shape it into a moral body, whose ethics bear witness to that story.

As the narrative coherence of a person's actions makes him or her a moral agent, so also do the shared stories of a community shape it into a moral body, whose ethics bear witness to that story. Thus, this story connects theological convictions to their lived-out contexts, pointing toward the "inherently practical character of theological convictions."[24] The shared theological convictions of the community must reside in shared living in connection with shared beliefs to some extent. There is no room for the bifurcation of a community's convictions and the community's ability to cultivate truthful (i.e. faithful) lives.[25] Hauerwas disagrees with any notion that one can separate 'internal' convictions from 'external' character, seeking the integration of the two instead.[26] Thus, theological investigation has farther-reaching implications than merely one's intellectual concepts:

> The true stories that we learn of God are those that help us best to know what story we are and should be, that is, that which gives us the courage to go on. Namely, the story that is necessary to know God is the story that is also necessary to know the self, but such knowing . . . is more like a skill that gives us the ability to know the world as it is and should be—it is a knowing that changes the self.[27]

Autobiography

Autobiographies constitute a particular form of narrative and therefore have certain characteristics. Pascal states that an autobiography attempts to reconstruct a life, but that this is impossible due to the unlimited trajectories backward and forward that come from a day's experience. For example, in a day in which one only goes to work and returns home, the possibilities for description are innumerable. What is essential to the coherence of that day and what gives meaning and purpose to the actions and events that transpired? As a result of these difficulties, Pascal determines that autobiography molds the past and creates a pattern of life that builds a coherent narrative from past events.[28]

Furthermore, the shaping that occurs is from a particular perspective. In biographical writing, authors not only stand apart from the life of the subject, enabling a more detached treatment of the life in question, but they also see the whole life of the subject, often writing after the subject's death so that they can examine, describe, and order that life. With autobiography, however, the connections and coherence that the autobiographer (i.e., the subject) gives to his or her life arise from a particular point of view *within* that life, where he or she reviews, evaluates, interprets, and tells his or her own story: "The standpoint may be the actual social position of the writer, his acknowledged achievement in any field, his present philosophy; in every case it is his present position which enables him to see his life as something of a unity, something that may be reduced to order."[29] Without a doubt, autobiographical writing is "an interplay, a collusion, between past and present; its significance is indeed more the revelation of the present situation than the uncovering of the past."[30] This connection to the present involves the movement of the reader (and autobiographer) toward a clear, coherent trajectory for the future life story that is unwritten at the present moment.

The myth of autonomy clouds autobiographical literature, allowing readers to sense that they can determine their own course in life and can be the sole authority in constructing their own stories.

Despite the image of the self seen in autobiography, the resultant story is not solely determined by the individual. Paul John Eakin reminds us that autobiography, while certainly related to the self (*autos*), still involves many other sources for its formation. We are deceived into thinking that self-determination is embodied in the autobiographical enterprise.[31] The myth of autonomy clouds autobiographical literature, allowing readers to sense that they can determine their own course in life and can be the sole authority in constructing their own stories.[32] This, however, is patently false, for all narratives, including those of autobiographies, are shaped, at least in part, by one's respective communities and the relationships therein.[33]

Self-Deception

What is the nature of the relationship between describing one's life and the interpretative storytelling that makes sense of the chronicled events in autobiographical writing? Certainly the story that we tell will have more continuous content than isolated life events, but the hermeneutical aspect of autobiography can raise questions about whether a given account of our life is consistent with the actual events. This inconsistency can take place in biography, in which the life that is represented in the constructed narrative is somewhat detached from one's self. In autobiography, however, the possibility for inconsistency is enhanced because truth-telling involves the story we tell and retell to ourselves and relates to our identity. Michael Goldberg states it well:

> Like biographies, autobiographies, too, gain part of this compelling quality by claiming to be 'true to life,' that is, by both ringing true to some common ground of human experience and by being true to the facts of the individual lives of which they speak. However, the truth of autobiography comes from another feature as well: the truthfulness of the self who writes the story of the self who is.[34]

Therefore, this truthfulness and the danger of deviating from it are foremost concerns when addressing autobiography.[35] It is important for readers of autobiographies to recognize the points where the self represented in the autobiography diverges from the life of the self who is autobiographing, a situation identified as "self-deception."[36]

George Stroup describes self-deception as "a discrepancy between the past and what a person says about the past, and an incoherence between how a person actually lives in the world and the account that person offers to others."[37] Because this discrepancy involves incoherence, it undermines the entire project of building narrative in-

tegrity and making sense of one's existence. Further, self-deception is not a mere single act, but a cultivated life that displays inconsistency between one's story and one's life. Herbert Fingarette indicates that there is a certain purposefulness in deceiving oneself, noting that self-deception often arises from a concern for developing integrity for one's life even if it does not exist.[38] Goldberg describes self-deception as "a matter of policy, a policy adopted to preserve and protect a person's current way of conceiving and maintaining the integrity of the self."[39] When this disparity between the story told about one's life and one's actual life becomes too great, then personal identity—the self that integrates past, present, and future—is lost.[40] Ultimately, Goldberg writes:

When this disparity between the story told about one's life and one's actual life becomes too great, then personal identity–the self that integrates past, present, and future–is lost.

> The self-deceiver and the deceptive autobiographer both lack a story which is expansive and comprehensive enough to allow them to acknowledge and incorporate disharmonious and unflattering elements into their lives. In short, they lack a story that can sustain them in the face of current engagements that seriously challenge the current stories they give of themselves.[41]

Self-deception is possible because of the inherent separation between experience and the personal awareness and description of those experiences. Psychological research indicates that memory is not a static concept.[42] Memory is not simply a recall of the past; there is a construction that occurs in order to "'*make*' sense of our lives and of our history."[43] Hence, the dependence of autobiography upon acts of memory always leaves self-deception as a possibility.

When one falls into self-deception that is merely individual, it can be solved by encountering a communal narrative that challenges the deceptive account of one's self and the world. Stroup indicates that such communal narratives can "function as clues and signals that this kind of distortion [self-deception] has become a problem."[44] From this

encounter with another story, the autobiographer is given the ability to reconstruct his or her personal narrative (or at least the interpretative coherence of it).

Confessions

For Christian theology, autobiography offers certain resources. McClendon states that theology must be self-involving, and consequently, "One's own story must be part of the common story."[45] To this end, autobiography takes a certain form within the written confession. Stroup claims that "the narrative of Christian confession or autobiography emerges from the collision between individuals and their personal identity narratives and the Christian community and its narratives."[46] This personal identity narrative could be called an autobiography, and it is also the form by which the author knows anything about the world.[47] This collision between previously constructed personal identity narratives and the narratives of the Christian community is where conversion occurs. Seeking to retell the story of one's life and the world, a new story emerges from the person who reinterprets the life events of the past in light of the faith of the believing community and the new account(s) of the world offered by it. Therefore, Stroup asserts:

> Confession necessarily assumes narrative form, but it is a narrative that cannot be identified with that narrative which recounts the believer's personal history prior to conversion, nor with that narrative which articulates the faith of the Christian community . . . . To confess faith in Jesus Christ is to reconstruct that personal identity narrative in light of the community's *Credo*.[48]

Because confessions represent acts of faith (as articulations of faith), it is necessary to take the written accounts of those conversions seriously.[49] Augustine's *Confessions* serves as the prototype for this exercise. Within the dialogical nature of this work, Augustine pleads for a greater understanding of God and for greater self-understanding as well.[50] In his writing, Augustine describes his conversion by retelling the story of his life in light of the story of the Christian faith, making the exercise of writing his *Confessions* part and parcel of his conversion. He narrates his disillusionment with Manichaeanism,[51] which opened the door to "grasp the alternative offered by Christian faith."[52] Finally, he tells of the events that gave rise to his acceptance of the Christian narrative and its claims on his own personal story.[53] Overall, Augustine's *Confessions* demonstrates that one's faith is not complete without an articulation of life events in light of the church's narrative,

underscoring the role of communities and their narratives in the development of an autobiographical confession.[54]

One Particular Autobiography: Menno Simons's "Confession"

Menno Simons's *Confession of My Enlightenment, Conversion, and Calling* contains responses to accusations by Gellius Faber, a priest from Friesland who had joined the Reformed movement.[55] Faber had obtained an Anabaptist letter that explained why they could not unite with the Lutheran state church. Faber fiercely criticized the Anabaptists in a 78-page response, which in part drives Menno's penning of the *Confession*.[56] Thus, an apologetic tone is evident at times throughout the tract, not only in defense of Menno and his own story, but also of his community, the Anabaptists.

On the one hand, Menno seeks to tell the story of his life, to give meaning and coherence to his "past" life events (those that occurred before the writing of this piece) by simply recalling the events. At the same time, Menno's aim is to construct narrative integrity for his own life, an integrity which best enables his new anticipations and hopes for the future—with regard to his own life and actions—to become a reality. This perspective allows the reader to see the directionality of Menno's confession in the form of a narrative which grants purpose to the actions that Menno undertakes and points toward a particular *telos* and a certain range of future life possibilities. Consequently, Menno embeds various communities of reference into the text of his autobiography. Thus, he intends to narrate his shift from one corresponding community and story to another, highlighting the role of narrative and community in his discovery of God and his living truthfully according to the story of that God.

This collision between previously constructed personal identity narratives and the narratives of the Christian community is where conversion occurs.

Narrative Theology and Menno Simons

Menno's work embodies elements of autobiography. He writes in

the first paragraph of the confession that he had not read the Scriptures before becoming a priest. He comments, "You see what a stupid preacher I was for almost two years."[57] Certainly Menno would not have described himself in that way at that point in his life. The "present" perspective of the autobiographing Menno, however, leads him to that evaluation. He has reinterpreted his life through his community's sense-making narrative, which provides the hermeneutical evaluation: "stupid preacher" (*domme Predicker*).[58] The evaluative perspective that is characteristic of autobiography is evident in other places of the confession as well, such as the aspersions Menno casts on the statements of the people of Pingjum, who thought that he "preached God's word and was a good fellow [swell guy]" (*fijn Man*).[59] Menno counters this sentiment by stating that he was anything but good. Once again, Menno's interpretive lens views the past in a different light than would have the Menno of that time.

From this process emerges the particular story that was becoming a normative influence in Menno's life: Scripture.

Menno's autobiography is one of self-deception exposed, confronted, and overcome. He describes his earlier life when he lived by a narrative that allowed him to seek personal gain above true service to God and narrates how he received the story of the church through his Catholic training, a story that failed to connect to his life and conduct.[60] He was only able to turn from the discrepancy between his professed life and his actions through an encounter with an alternate story that entailed a different and more consistent way of living. In this way, Menno's *Confession* involves a shift to a life of truthfulness, that is, one that is true to life and produces a more truthful life.[61] He seeks to name the undesirable elements of his past life and locate them within the story of his conversion, while at the same time describing his movement toward a new story, one that is lived out in community before God. Therefore, it is not coincidental that Menno links his conversion (narrative shift of allegiance) to a new community and a new way of life:

> See . . . the merciful Lord through the good favor of his abounding grace drew me to him as a miserable sinner, stirred first in my heart, then gave me a new mind, humbled

> me in his fear, taught me to know myself in part, turned me from the way of death, and mercifully called me to enter the narrow way of life and join the fellowship of his saints.[62]

The beheading of Sicke Snijder in 1531 marks the beginning of Menno's turn toward the Anabaptist movement.[63] This man, who is labeled by the autobiographing Menno as "a devout hero of the faith" (another statement that is based on the authorial perspective), is executed on account of his receipt of rebaptism. Menno is intrigued by this event and begins to search through the Scriptures for adult baptism but instead finds no biblical evidence for infant baptism.[64] Because of this discovery, Menno consults other sources:

> When I now saw this [lack of evidence for infant baptism], I had a talk with my pastor about the matter, and after many words, he admitted that infant baptism was without scriptural foundation. Still, I dared not trust my own understanding entirely but sought the advice of several old authors. They taught me that infants by baptism are cleansed from original sin. I thought it better to hold to Scripture and noted that they ignored Christ's blood.
>
> After that, eager to know the grounds for the practice of infant baptism, I consulted Luther. He taught me that children should be baptized upon their own faith. I saw that this also did not agree with God's Word.
>
> Thirdly, I went to Bucer. He taught that children should be baptized so that they might be nurtured more diligently in the ways of the Lord. I saw that this, also, was without firm footing.
>
> Fourthly, I turned to Bullinger. He pointed to the covenant and circumcision. This I found likewise without support in Scripture.[65]

Menno's comparison of the ideas of his pastor, "several old authors" (*sommighe oude Scribenten*),[66] Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, and Heinrich Bullinger places him within what McClendon calls a "tournament of narratives," in which each account articulates a different way of viewing the world and how one is to live within the world.[67] Menno describes himself examining these different traditions but finding them all inadequate in justifying infant baptism. What he is doing is adjudicating between the various narrative options in the tournament. From this process emerges the particular story that was

becoming a normative influence in Menno's life: Scripture. It is at this point in the autobiography that he compares with Scripture each account of baptism that is given, finds all of them incongruent, and therefore rejects them.

While the events of Menno's life were his own, his interpretation and narrative telling of the significance of those events necessarily incorporated his life into a community.

This tournament of narratives appears later in Menno's account of the "Munster sect" (*die Secte van Munster*).[68] The persons involved with this group sought the establishment of an earthly Anabaptist kingdom. While this event occurred at the town of Munster in Westphalia (western Germany), the Netherlands was affected by others who attempted similar revolutionary acts. Menno quickly notes the error of these people but realizes that those who live in unrepentant sin, whose disregard for projects such as Munster may have arisen from their avoidance of all moral norms, rally behind him in his refutation of the Munsterites.[69] Thus, Menno is caught in a difficult dilemma: he must navigate between two communities with correspondingly different narratives and ethical claims, all the while disagreeing with both positions. The tension between the two begins to challenge his own life: "What if I won the whole world and also lived a thousand years and then finally had to submit to God's punishment and wrath? What would I have gained?"[70] He can reject Munster's ideas, even in their more proximate manifestation at "Oude Clooster."[71] In order to do this, he states that the violent actions of the Munsterites are contrary to "the spirit, word, and example of Christ," which brings Scripture forward as the normative narrative for Menno's life.[72] Despite this ability to articulate a refutation of the Munster sect and its subsequent effects, however, Menno is uncomfortable with his supporters, which leaves him increasingly alienated from his communities of reference and without a sense-making narrative for his own life.

Menno's conversion to an Anabaptist position involved more than his own individualistic journey. He notes that after he left the priesthood in 1536,[73] he "sought out the devout and found some, although few in number, who had true zeal and doctrine."[74] While the events of

Menno's life were his own, his interpretation and narrative telling of the significance of those events necessarily incorporated his life into a community. It is then, when Menno abandoned the priesthood, that he adopted a new community of reference and with it, a new narrative that made sense of the practices that constituted that community and his own life as well. Menno shifted to another community and hence another set of lenses with which to view the world. Concerning this shift, he writes that God had "taught me to know myself in part."[75] This knowledge of himself could be construed as a growing awareness of the story of which he was a part. In that sense, then, Menno is accountable for his telling of his own story within the community, since ultimately the narrative of the community is constituted to some degree by the stories of its members.[76] Therefore, he reports that, after this point of his life, he was better able to give a faithful account of his actions.

In the final paragraph of the *Confession*, Menno writes, "I here once more humbly entreat the faithful reader—for Jesus' sake—to accept in love the confession of my enlightenment, conversion, and calling, wrested from me as it was, and to interpret it rightly."[77] He continues the apologetic theme that runs through the entire piece. Concerned that his community (and by implication, himself) was being slandered by Gellius Faber, among others, Menno constructed this account of his life. However, this final statement functions as more than the conclusion of his apologetic words; it is a call for the reader. Here the reader is called to account for Menno's story, which is intertwined with the narrative of the community and in the unfolding story of God. In this call to interpret his story rightly, then, Menno is appealing for a correct hermeneutical approach, not only to his life but to the life of his community as well.

Scripture becomes part and parcel of the narrative that makes sense of his life, even before his encounter with the Anabaptists, who offered him a communal alternative that was, at the same time, faithful to the witness of Scripture.

Menno uses scriptural allusions, images, and quotations through-

out the *Confession*.[78] This fact signifies the importance of Scripture for Menno in ordering his life. Scripture becomes part and parcel of the narrative that makes sense of his life, even before his encounter with the Anabaptists, who offered him a communal alternative that was, at the same time, faithful to the witness of Scripture. Indeed, in asserting the truthfulness of the account of his life, Menno opens the entire confession with an allusion to two biblical texts: Rom 9:1 and 1 Tim 2:7. Soon after this, Menno notes that in his first place of service as a priest, there were two others serving, who "had read the Scriptures somewhat, but I in my lifetime had not touched them. I was afraid that if I read them, I would be misled."[79] Here, Menno indicates the irony that existed in his life: by avoiding what he feared would mislead him (reading the Scriptures), he was genuinely misled. What follows in the remainder of the *Confession* is a description of his life that is inextricably linked with his encounters with Scripture, as has already been indicated. Following his exit from the Catholic Church, Menno notes, "I now quietly exercised myself in the Word of the Lord by reading and writing."[80] He narrates his journey using phrases that refer to Scripture as some sort of standard, such as his indication that the rebellion at "Oude Clooster" was "against the spirit, word, and example of Christ. He commanded Peter to thrust the sword into its death."[81] As is seen in this reference, the life and teachings of Christ also rise to the surface, which led Menno and his community to seek to embody a life that bore witness to the way of Jesus: "What I and my faithful fellow workers have sought and could only have sought in this heavy and dangerous service can be measured by all kindhearted persons from our work and its fruit."[82]

Menno seeks to live a faithful life, but in order to embody that, he must accept the role of the community in interpreting Scripture and discerning God's will.

Menno's use of Scripture is significant because it expands the narrative scope of his life and the life of his community. The importance of Scripture for forming narrative coherence is underscored, but it also connects Menno's particular life and that of his community to the narrative of Scripture and to the previous hundreds of years of biblical interpretation by the church through the ages. The life and teach-

ings of Christ are continued through the universal church, and here, Menno indicates how he and his community utilize that narrative, not only to make sense of their lives but also to hold themselves accountable for the possible futures of the story that depend on their lives in the present. Thus, Menno's opening statement, "I write to you the truth in Christ and lie not,"[83] might be construed as a statement that refers not only to the veracity of his account, but also to the degree to which a truthful life has been formed. This contributes to Menno's definition of a Christian: "My only desire is that the world might by his grace wholeheartedly revere him; seek, love, and serve him; do good and right before him; and thus become irreproachably devout and Christian."[84] Menno seeks to live a faithful life, but in order to embody that, he must accept the role of the community in interpreting Scripture and discerning God's will. Wanting to know if it was God's will for him to become a leading minister among his Anabaptist community, Menno asked his community to pray with him for guidance, once again entwining narrative and community.[85] Menno's confession reflects the fact that the community, as an entity that is constituted by the narratives of its members and held accountable to the narrative of Scripture, also holds its members accountable for the tellings of their past stories and the future ones that have yet to be formed and told.

Conclusion

Menno Simons comes to know God and the way of God in Jesus Christ, in part, through a narrative-formed community. The narratives that intersect within the story of Menno include those of Scripture, his communities of reference, and his own personal narrative. In the end, even the title *Confession of My Enlightenment, Conversion, and Calling* indicates that Menno considered his life to be more than merely a juxtaposition of unrelated events. He viewed his life as a narrative that had continuity from his days as a Catholic priest to this writing in 1554, as well as a coherence that drew from the biblical narrative. The narrative of Menno's life summarizes his story as a journey of discovering who he was, as well as what it meant to follow God faithfully.

In similar fashion, the institutions of the church and the people who constitute the church should take seriously the implications of autobiography. Menno's confessional story, while describing his own life, was inextricably linked to the intersections of that story with those of other communities (e.g., Munster sect, Catholic Church, Anabaptists) and the influences of other people on his own formation. As seen in Menno's life, theological convictions arise out of the lived contexts of communities. It is only as we come to belong to a particular community that we are held accountable for the story we tell of the

world and ourselves (*autos*). Therefore, autobiography is theological to the extent that it involves the self in a community and a story that give sense and meaning to the world and coherence and continuity to past events, present existence, and future trajectories.

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Notes

1. For further information concerning his life and his impact on Dutch Anabaptist theology and life, see Gerald R. Brunk, ed., *Menno Simons: A Reappraisal; Essays in Honor of Irvin B. Horst on the 450th Anniversary of the "Fundamentboek"* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Eastern Mennonite College and Seminary, 1992); Sjouke Voolstra, *Menno Simons: His Image and Message* (Newton: Mennonite Press, 1996). For a contemporary anthology of works by Menno Simons, see Menno Simons, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons: c. 1496-1561*, trans. Leonard Verduin, ed. J. C. Wenger (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978).
2. Menno Simons, *Confession of My Enlightenment, Conversion, and Calling*, in *"Confession" and The New Birth*, trans. & ed. Irvin B. Horst (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1996), 3. A reprinted Dutch edition of the 1621 text was also consulted: Menno Symons, "Wtganck ofte Bekeeringhe van Menno Symons," in *Tractaat over zijn Uitgang van het Pausdom* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1889).
3. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 217.
4. Charles Scriven, "Schooling for the Tournament of Narratives: Postmodernism and the Idea of the Christian College," *Religious Education* 94.1 (1999): 40.
5. Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971): 296.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 302-03.
8. Ibid., 303.
9. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, "Introduction: Why Narrative," in *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 5.
10. Stanley Hauerwas, Richard Bondi, and David B. Burrell, *Truthfulness and Tragedy:*

Further Investigations in Christian Ethics (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 76.

11. Stanley Hauerwas, V*ision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame: Fides Press, 1974), 74.
12. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 47.
13. Ibid.
14. Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, *Truthfulness and Tragedy*, 77.
15. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 359.
16. Johann Baptist Metz, "A Short Apology of Narrative," trans. David Smith, in *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, 252.
17. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, and New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 295.
18. James Wm. McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 188.
19. Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, 71.
20. Michael Root, "The Narrative Structure of Soteriology," in W*hy Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, 263.
21. Ibid., 265.
22. Socrates, in Plato's *Euthyphro*, asks whether what is good is beloved by the gods because it is beloved by the gods or becuse it is good. For Christians, in the first instance, the definition of morality would be arbitrary, dependent upon God's possibly capricious whims. In the second instance, morality is independent of any divine being, thus binding God to obedience as well. Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 145.
23. James Wm. McClendon Jr., *Ethics*, rev. ed., vol. 1, *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 177.
24. The term "conviction" first arises from McClendon and James Smith. A conviction is "a persistent belief such that if X (a person or community) has a conviction it will not easily be relinquished without making X a significantly different person (or community) than before" (James Wm. McClendon Jr. and James M. Smith, *Convictions: Diffusing Religious Relativism* [Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994], 5). Cf. Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, 73.
25. "For at least part of what it means to claim that convictions of Christians are true is that they must produce truthful lives" (Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, 80).
26. "It is impossible to separate its [the story's] metaphysical claims from the demands the story places on our lives. The 'internal' evidence requires that the 'external' have a certain character, the truth of the story requires that we be truthful if we are to see rightly the way the world is" (Stanley Hauerwas, "Why the Truth Demands Truthfulness: An Imperious Engagement with Hartt," in *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, 305).
27. Hauerwas, Bondi, and Burrell, 81.

28. Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 9.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 11.
31. Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 43.
32. Why? Because autobiography is viewed as a product of only the individual (Ibid., 61).
33. "Identity formation is socially and (more specifically) discursively transacted" (Ibid., 63).
34. Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 96.
35. This "truthfulness," the level of honesty with which one operates when constructing one's life story, is to be distinguished from Hauerwas's use of the term, which indicates the degree to which one's convictions (i.e. truth) are borne out in faithful ethics that are embodied in one's life.
36. Self-deception is treated in Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, rev. ed. (New York: Humanities Press, 1969; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
37. George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology: Recovering the Gospel in the Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 127.
38. Fingarette, 139.
39. Goldberg, 106.
40. Stroup, 128-29.
41. Goldberg, 106.
42. For the discussion of this research, see Eakin, 106-10.
43. Nicholas Lash, "Ideology, Metaphor, and Analogy," in *Why Narrative?: Readings in Narrative Theology*, 120.
44. Stroup, 130.
45. McClendon, *Ethics*, 39. Likewise, Lash describes the Christian as a story-teller who relates a story in which she is a participant as well. See Lash, 120.
46. Stroup, 91.
47. Ibid.; Stroup asserts that any articulation of personal identity must take the form of a narrative.
48. Ibid., 194.
49. Ibid., 190-91.
50. Ibid., 176.
51. Augustine, T*he Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. Hal M. Helms (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 1986), 85.
52. Stroup, 184.
53. Augustine, 152-54.
54. For a fuller treatment of Augustine, his *Confessions*, and the narrative coherence of his life, see Stroup, 170-98.

55. Simons, *Confession*, 7.
56. Simons, T*he Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, 624.
57. Simons, *Confession*, 9.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 10.
60. "Although I knew much from the Scriptures, I wasted that knowledge in youthful lusts, in an impure and carnal life. I sought only profit, ease, human favor, glory, a name with honor as in general all do who live a high life" (Ibid., 12). Cf. C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1995), 151.
61. Goldberg, 96; Hauerwas, "Why Truth Demands Truthfulness," 305.
62. Simons, *Confession*, 17.
63. See Snyder, 152.
64. Simons, *Confession*, 11; cf. Snyder, 152.
65. Simons, *Confession*, 11-12.
66. This is a reference to several of the church fathers.
67. McClendon, *Ethics*, 149.
68. Simons, *Confession*, 13.
69. See Snyder, 152.
70. Simons, *Confession*, 14.
71. Ibid.; For more information about this incident, when 300 Anabaptists seized a monastery from March 30-April 7, 1535, see "Oldeklooster," *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, 5 vols. (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), 4:52-53; cf. Snyder, 149.
72. Simons, *Confession*, 14.
73. See Snyder, 151.
74. Ibid., 17.
75. Simons, *Confession*, 17.
76. MacIntyre, 217-18.
77. Simons, *Confession*, 24.
78. E.g., Ps 51:3; Matt 16:26; 18:19-20; 26:52; Mark 6:34; Luke 19:12; Rom 10:2; 1 Cor 9:16.
79. Simons, *Confession*, 9.
80. Ibid., 17.
81. Ibid., 14.
82. Ibid., 24.
83. Ibid., 9.
84. Ibid., 22.
85. The marginal note here states, "I submitted myself to the Lord and to the prayers of the righteous" (Ibid., 19).

"Autobiography as Theology" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. How might the ideas of narrative and autobiography stressed by Hatch be beneficial for the church in which you serve?

2. What encouragement might you take from Simons's journey toward re-understanding baptism and his own role as a leader within his own church community?

3. In what ways might Christians benefit by knowing the stories of those with whom we share life in our own communities of faith?

4. How might your own autobiography also fit within God's grand narrative?

5. How have the events of your own past shaped your theology and the person you are today?

Prepared by Adam Horton

Anabaptist Pastoral Care

A Comparative Study of Responses to Suffering

ED HETT

When approaching the notion of suffering, a question arises not regarding whether suffering occurs, but how to deal with it when it does. Suffering is part of the human condition; everyone suffers in one form or another, but there are numerous ways one may respond to suffering itself.

WITHIN THE ANABAPTIST TRADITIONS, there are large differences in how pastors have responded to suffering over the centuries. The question that remains, though, concerns the appropriate contemporary response. There are very few theologians dealing with these questions in Anabaptist theological communities today. Even though they attend to issues of theology, theological treatment of suffering frequently is submerged under other discussions in their writings. Anabaptists have chosen to address different theological questions, but there is still a strong pastoral care influence discernable as they deal with other theological issues, reflecting the need and tradition of dealing with suffering. Thomas Finger and John Howard Yoder each lay out significant ideas concerning pastoral care for those who are suffering, though frequently these ideas are not explicit in their writing. These two theologians enable a better understanding regarding the appropriate response to suffering in the present world, a response that allows for the provision of proper pastoral care to parishioners.

John Howard Yoder's Understanding of Suffering

Yoder views suffering as the Christian condition in this world. When one takes on Christ, one also takes on his cross and therefore should expect suffering to follow wherever he or she goes. Yoder

seems to be pursuing this line of thought from the historical position of the earliest roots of the Anabaptist movement through the works of Ulrich Zwingli and Thomas Müntzer.[1] The centrality of Christ provides the basis for Yoder's ethic, which is central to understanding the response to suffering in the world. It becomes clear that the communal nature of Anabaptism is where Yoder would begin to discuss the Christian response to suffering.[2] Yoder argues that this communal nature extends completely back to the New Testament church. This community is knit so tightly together that members are willing to subject themselves to pastoral care, even to the point of extreme community discipline.[3]

Martyrdom would constitute the most extreme form of suffering for the sake of Christ and has become an integral part of the long history of Anabaptist suffering.

Yoder also seems to have a belief that suffering is required to be a follower of Christ. He takes this position from Christ's words in Luke 14:27-33: "No one who does not carry his cross and come with me can be a disciple of mine" (NASB). The intention of Christ is not to have his followers seek out suffering, but to have them seriously count the cost of being a Christian before they make the decision to become one.[4] It is not so much a concern of whether or not the Christian should accept suffering, but more the understanding that if one is a Christian, then suffering will inevitably follow. This view is not restricted to Yoder by any means, but it is in the subtext of many of his writings.

This suffering is not something to be sought after but is something common to Christians as a result of humanity's sinful condition. As such, the communal aspect begins to come into play. Frequently in contemporary situations, a pastor is seen as an individual who has authority over the community, but Yoder seems to move the pastor back inside the community, even though he or she still retains an elevated status.[5] The pastor seeks to lead first and foremost by example, but the pastor also retains the ministerial role of preaching. Pastoral care becomes something that is brought into the community as a whole to assist the pastor. It becomes very important for community members to be familiar with each other and to be able to share each other's

burdens.[6] The pastor's role then becomes assisting the community in understanding how best to approach the needs of the community when suffering intrudes. The pastor helps individuals understand how to share each other's burdens while maintaining order. The pastor enables the lay people to share each other's pain and lift each other up.

During the Reformation, the Anabaptists presented a much higher view of community than the other Reformers. This has been maintained today with the strong sense of community that permeates the Anabaptist tradition to the edge of communalism. The Reformed tradition sees pastoral care as something similar to the physician-patient relationship. Pastors care for their lay members by providing them direction, but the pastor is seen as having an elevated calling in the community.[7] Though Anabaptists would not completely disagree with the Reformed church on this, they would return the pastor to a place within the community and have the physician role be taken over by the whole community as co-laborers.

The ultimate suffering of martyrdom is a specific problem for Christians when struggling to understanding the pastoral community. Martyrdom is the ultimate in suffering for Christ, and therefore death becomes the sacrifice. The Anabaptists are not given a greater reward necessarily, but this is an honor for the martyr and adds great historical identity.[8]

The first Anabaptist martyr was Felix Manz, who was drowned in Switzerland in January 1527 for being part of a group of rebaptizers. This pushed the movement underground and touched off a period of persecution.[9] Martyrdom would constitute the most extreme form of suffering for the sake of Christ and has become an integral part of the long history of Anabaptist suffering. What is amazing is that the movement was able to continue through the ages and seems to still have a strong following. The idea of the community reaching out to the hurting world in missions is how Anabaptism survived to the present.[10] Anabaptists were able to reach out while they were under such strict persecution and were able to grow. The care naturally spilled out of the community on to those surrounding the community, especially to those who also experienced suffering. When looking at the community it becomes clear that members were concerned with each other's care as well as each other's needs. This tightly knit community creates a bond that allows the fellowship of the believers present to guide the pastoral helps which they receive both from the pastor as well as lay members of the community.[11]

This explains the means of pastoral care for suffering, but what is the intention present in Yoder, and what are the explicit ways in which one would help those who are suffering? An answer begins to

emerge in his views on social ethics and interaction in the community. Yoder sees the Christian revelation as the norm for love. Christians are called to live according to the Scriptures by understanding the extreme bond of love to which all believers are called. This is naturally not explicitly laid out for the Christian because there are multiple situations that cannot all be addressed.[12] This lack of explicitness in ethics creates some difficult ambiguity for the Christian life. Yoder's answer comes from the radical communal ecclesiology which he advocates. Christians are called to acknowledge suffering and help each other to endure the suffering by sharing one another's burdens. The community finds its renewal in Christ as a new creation, extending into its views of social justice and ethics.[13]

Thomas Finger Addresses Suffering through Freedom

Sometimes when addressing the issue of suffering, pastors and historians begin to sound gnostic. Their comments, which are meant to address suffering, focus on helping people rely on their spirit to carry them through, or sometimes they point to the greater good as part of understanding why they are suffering. These well-meaning caretakers give the idea that suffering is a necessary part of human existence because physical things are evil. This leads some people to desire "depreciations of the body," which is an inappropriate view.[14] The question becomes how a Christian should rejoice at suffering and yet not seek it. Thomas Finger sees this as a very important distinction to make.

In seeking to understand the human condition, Finger takes on the Anabaptist view of suffering indirectly with a discussion of free will. His consideration of free will allows the careful reader to appropriate Finger's view of suffering by understanding how the two are linked, and how a pastor's appropriate reaction to both will undergird each discussion. The idea here is not the contemporary notion of libertarian free will with its radical power. Rather, this freedom is more concerned with the relationship between God and humanity. Finger finds that Anabaptist theologians are lacking in this area and turns to a dialogue with Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr. In doing so, Finger begins to formulate a free will theology that is centered on God's interaction with humans, an idea that begins to appear very early in Anabaptist theology. Barth introduces the idea that human free will comes from the interaction with God. This creates a situation in which humans hurt themselves by not responding correctly to God.[15] Finding that Barth's view of freedom lacked the ability to combine God's sovereignty with human autonomy, Finger moves into dialogue with

Niebuhr. The freedom of the will that is discussed here centers more on the transcendence of God rather than on typical ideas of free will. Niebuhr sees sin as caused by humans seeking to transcend the body into the realm of spirit and infinity. Niebuhr's insistence on the bondage of the will returns to a semi-Augustinian view of freedom.[16]

Finger responds to these two views by attempting to appropriate the full Anabaptist understanding of free will. The Anabaptist response to freedom must open with a scriptural idea: the first Adam leading humanity away from God and the second Adam leading humanity back. Following the first Adam, God lays out a set of laws to allow his people to be faithful. As his people repeatedly are unfaithful, he sends the second Adam to actualize faithfulness for all people. For this faithfulness to be lived out in the individual and be meaningful to Finger, there must be a certain degree of freedom. This freedom requires a blending of Barth and Niebuhr so that humans have the ability of self-transcendence, that is, to choose one's own actions.[17]

It is clear that Finger would support pursuing a movement towards assisting the oppressed and raising them up out of the depths of suffering.

In order to have a full understanding, though, this freedom must be further defined. Is there a set of choices with which humans are presented, or is freedom something radically different? It would seem that Finger has a view that is different from the typical Reformed idea. He, however, returns to a historical view of freedom by accepting what he calls a semi-Augustinian position on free will, which he supports with Scripture. The Scripture texts in which Finger sees the human condition losing interaction with God are Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:20-22, 45-49; and Phil 2:7-9. A change occurs when Jesus acts in faithful obedience to God (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8-9). Finger contends that the Old Testament testifies to the redeeming quality of faithfulness from Abraham all the way to Jesus.[18] He sees it from two different strains of reasoning. First, humans were unable to escape condemnation on their own; and second, the Holy Spirit releases human beings from bondage to this condemnation and allows for free choice. The conclusion is that God is the sole initiator of salvation, and yet human response to this salvation is a true response to the actual event.[19]

The freedom which is advocated here clearly is always operating within certain limitations. The limitations are connected to God and humanity's dependence on him for salvation. This is where suffering's role comes into play in Finger's discussion on freedom. He sees freedom as something that is extremely risky to exercise, especially when oppressed, because if one exercises freedom against the government's ideas, the consequences can be very dire. It can be argued that all humans fall under the oppression of sin, and therefore freedom in Christ is what provides the ability to overcome this suffering/oppression. Finger sees the Anabaptists' lower social position as something that allows them to minister to people who are oppressed by opposing the oppressive structures that are holding back individuals from making free choices within their own rights. The push here is to partner with other church movements around the world to take on the oppressors and bring Christ's salvation to the world by freeing other people from suffering.[20]

The pastor should respond to suffering within the church in a clear way that allows the members of the community to interact with the pastor and allows him or her to minister in their lives.

This is where Finger's views of the pastoral role in suffering becomes clear. With his call for opposing the oppressors, Finger is calling for the pastoral response to suffering to be that of direct opposition, but not in the typical Protestant manner. Other Protestants, as viewed by the Anabaptists, are more violent than would be advocated by Christ. It would seem as though Finger wants a radical departure from the typical framework for opposing the oppressors.[21] Instead, he advocates an opposition that would radically change the world. It is clear that Finger would support pursuing a movement towards assisting the oppressed and raising them up out of the depths of suffering. This resistance might take place in the workplace by focusing on helping co-workers succeed, especially non-Christians. In the case of governmental oppression, it seems as though there is much more discussion within the Anabaptist traditions concerning the opposition of governments without the use of war. This is the most difficult arena

in which to find non-violent means to end oppression. Perhaps this would be accomplished by going into a particular country and feeding those who are denied food; perhaps it would be simply creating jobs in the country for the oppressed, moving companies that are run by Christians who would not oppress the individuals. The problem the Anabaptists take on is the distinct lack of attempts at finding non-violent means of opposing oppression.

A Melding of the Minds

Next, it is important to unify these two views to get a standard layout of the two authors' positions on suffering. When analyzing these two positions, it seems as though they are taking on the problem from two different yet complementary views which need to be taken together for a complete view of pastoral care. Yoder is looking more within the individual community with his work. He shows concern for Christians, but suffering for the sake of Christ is seen as coming with the territory, and therefore the focus is different. Finger is looking at the other side of the coin: those who are not within the community already. He focuses much more on the outside world and how the Christian should deal with suffering outside the church. These two views are important in order for a pastor to have a full view of how to handle suffering, both inside and outside the walls of the church.

The question then becomes what these two ideas would look like if they were played out practically in the real world. The first examination should focus inside the church for how a pastor would care for suffering within the congregation. Suffering is seen as an inevitability within the world. Christians will naturally experience suffering in the world; it is a consequence of sin. The pastor should respond to suffering within the church in a clear way that allows the members of the community to interact with the pastor and allows him or her to minister in their lives. When a person is diagnosed with cancer, the pastor should be there to grieve with the family. When a member dies, the pastor needs to have a significant presence with the family. Whatever the situation might be in a church member's life, it would seem that the pastor needs to have some presence there. This does not necessarily mean the pastor will know what to say, or even have anything to do but be there. Pastors are co-laborers with all Christians in the world and, as such, do not have all the answers. Sometimes the best pastoral care is simply being there when something happens. It is also important for the pastor not to offer empty words of encouragement to people who are suffering, but rather to suffer along with them and provide support in whatever way possible.

Outside the church, pastoral care takes on a different shade. The

suffering that Finger proposes to oppose is that which is imposed upon others by oppressors. This opposition would, of course, fall under the purview of Christian ethics, which both Finger and Yoder see as pacifistic, but it would not be a passive resistance. In order to overcome the oppressors, it would be important to take on the force in a visible way, not in a violent way. Sometimes the modern response to suffering is to emphasize radical freedom or its opposite, radical determinism, and make these excuses for inaction. Finger sees the Anabaptist position, though, as one that is radically different from the traditional Christian approach, which is to emphasize the restrained freedom which comes through the Christian life, because it allows the Christian the freedom to respond in the face of suffering.[22]

Separation from the world allows the individual members of the church to take comfort in the knowledge that God is in control.

With the backdrop of these two men's ideas on suffering laid down, we may now explore ways to respond to suffering that are not explicitly addressed within these two theologians' works. In Anabaptist theology in general, suffering can be alleviated by understanding that God's covenant has bound him to the church so that God shares with the church in its suffering. Thus, Anabaptists are connected to one another in this bond and form a sharing brotherhood, whereby they even attempt to share each other's suffering.[23] The success of the community can be measured by a simple creed, "*Wo keine Gemeinshaft ist, da is auch keine rechte Liebe*," which loosely translated means, "Where there is no Community, there is also no Love."[24] In this, the love of the community is the measure of its success. The pastoral response to suffering becomes love. The pastoral perspective of suffering then becomes a sharing love that the entire community practices, in which suffering is borne on the shoulders of other members of the community. This love is, of course, to be understood as the anticipation of suffering in the church. The church is placed under the cross and anticipates persecution. Church members are supposed to accept suffering and persecution while not persecuting in response.[25] While it is clear that the church should anticipate suffering, walking through the midst of it is never easy. Separation from the world allows the in-

dividual members of the church to take comfort in the knowledge that God is in control. The pastor must then begin to take on the role of comforter. It is important to encourage lay people that they are under the protection of God.

Practical Applications of Anabaptist Theology for Baptists

At this point, it is important to note that there are different kinds of suffering present in the world which necessitate very different pastoral responses. A child gets terminal cancer; a missionary is martyred in Southeast Asia; a man finds out that his father has been having an affair—all of these have distinct aspects of suffering, but they all require different pastoral responses. The problem that arises is that situational propositions are all unique, involving different pastoral responses. The parents of the child need to be reassured that God loves them and will remain with them; the family of the martyr should be reassured that God is in control and that the man was doing the Lord's work; the son who finds out his father failed should be assured that people make mistakes and that his father still loves him dearly. Each of these situations has a common feature already addressed by Anabaptists views as we have discussed them up to this point: pastoral care comes from being involved in the lives of the lay people. It is impossible to reassure someone that God loves him or her without a relationship with that person. The pastoral response, especially for Anabaptists, starts much earlier than when one is in the throes of suffering; it begins with the formation and growth of the relationship. The communal aspect of the Anabaptist tradition creates a situation in which this is most easily and effectively accomplished. Pastoral care is placed in the hands of the congregation rather than simply those of the pastor. Friends of the family are able to be the arms of Christ to the individual since the relationships are already mature in these cases. The pastor should be a fixture in the community, but there is no possible way for close relationships to be formed with every member of the communi-

Perhaps the greatest aspect of Anabaptist heritage which Baptists should attempt to emulate is the defined, expressed, and practiced view of community.

ty in such a way as is needed for pastoral care to be complete. This is where the pastoral community comes into play. The community is able to take its direction from the pastor and move pastoral ministry out to the entire community.

Baptists also have a sense of community, but it is much less defined and less closely knit. This partially comes from the missiological vision of Baptist churches, but it also comes from a lack of understanding of community. Baptists seem to long for community. Roger Fredrikson writes in his commentary on John:

> In a gathering of the Lord's people, particularly in small groups, it is good to see someone share a hidden pain, anger, or wrongdoing. It has often been a heavy burden for a long time. Then those on whom Christ has breathed have interceded, given the burden to the resurrected Christ, and in His name have pronounced forgiveness and affirmation, and all have left rejoicing![26]

This is accomplished even in small ways, and it is a practical model of how Christians should seek to address suffering as well. Here the community gathers together and prayerfully supports individuals in their longing to deal with their pain, anger, or wrongdoing. Pastoral care is brought on by the community, and members are able to help the person address his or her concerns. Perhaps the greatest aspect of Anabaptist heritage which Baptists should attempt to emulate is the defined, expressed, and practiced view of community. Though many Anabaptist sects closed themselves off from the world, many have maintained communication with the world while maintaining a strong sense of community. The stated goals of the community allow pastoral care to be much more efficiently accomplished, and these types of communities are probably better equipped to address suffering in the lives of their members.

Baptists and traditional Anabaptist communities share a common characteristic: both of these traditions have historically suffered persecution. However, Anabaptists have embraced this as part of their history much more than Baptists. Part of this communal idea seems to have come from the fact that the persecution of Anabaptists has extended throughout the whole of their history. This creates a situation in which some Anabaptists need persecution to maintain their identity. During my time at Tabor College, a Mennonite Brethren College, I was continually confronted with the strong sense of persecution that exists within the Anabaptist tradition. A great deal of my classmates' identity came from the corporate feeling of being against the world and persecuted by it. Many individuals saw persecution and suffering

where the typical person would not. This idea, though, also created a situation where the individuals had a common thread to their stories. They formed a strong bond of love as they walked alongside one another through what they viewed as suffering. Baptists would benefit in some respect from seeking out common bonds of suffering that would lead to common threads in their own storeis. This would help to create a stronger sense of community, which in turn would allow pastoral care to be more personal wihtin the congregation.

Conclusion

The pastoral response to suffering that Anabaptists practice seems to be that of communal support of the individual. The pastor helps to foster this growth of community and does a great deal of the teaching for the community, but the overwhelming portion of the care falls on the shoulders of the lay people. Suffering is very real to both Yoder and Finger, and their responses taken together create a situation in which any form of suffering can be addressed properly and dealt with inside the community, thus creating a strong sense of love and commitment among members. This sense of community should extend to the whole of the Christian movement. Perhaps the greatest impact of Yoder should be the idea of explicit community that comes out of his view of the Christian community.[27] We are all linked in Christ and therefore should all share one another's burdens together.

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Notes

1. John Howard Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2004), 289.
2. Ibid., 285.
3. John Howard Yoder, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church* (Scottdale, Pa.:

Herald Press, 1958), 24.

4. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 127.
5. Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1973), 120.
6. Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland*, 286.
7. J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1993), 207.
8. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 129.
9. C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1995), 60.
10. Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland*, 280.
11. Ibid., 283.
12. Robert Mereman Parham, III, *An Ethical Analysis of the Christian Social Strategies in the Writings of John C. Bennett, Jacques Ellul, and John Howard Yoder* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1984), 192.
13. Ibid., 197.
14. Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 508.
15. Ibid., 495.
16. Ibid., 496.
17. Ibid., 500.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 503.
20. Ibid., 511.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Friedmann, 123.
24. Ibid., 124.
25. Ibid., 131.
26. Roger Fredrikson, *The Communicator's Commentary: John* (Waco: World Books, 1985), 287.
27. Yoder, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church*, 36.

"Anabaptist Pastoral Care" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. What role should and do experiences of suffering play in the Christian life?

2. Is your church one that embraces those who have encountered suffering? In other words, does your congregation make space for pain?

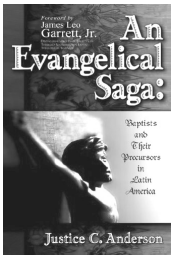
3. What practices and/or structures within your congregation facilitate pastoral care for those in crisis?

4. Is love necessary for authentic community to exist within the church? Do love and community exist within your congregation?

5. Does your church accept suffering or try to avoid it altogether?

Prepared by Derek Hatch

Book Reviews



Anderson, Justice C. An Evangelical Saga: Baptists and Their Precursors in Latin America. Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2005. 637 pgs.

"If a 'saga' is the story of heroic persons and events, is not **Baptist** history sufficiently replete with heroes and events to constitute a separate denominational saga?"[1] With a tone of ecumenical respect and evangelistic zeal, Justice Anderson tells the stories of the founders of evangelical Christianity in Latin America. Country by country, he explores the roots of the Baptist denomination in particular, within the larger Christian context.

This book is a translation and revision of Anderson's previous book, *Historia de los Bautistas, Tomo III* (El Paso, Tex.: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1990), a history of Baptists worldwide. Anderson has added chapters on the evangelical forerunners of the Baptists and an epilogue on the future direction of the church in Latin America.

An Evangelical Saga is a warm and highly readable story. With deep love and respect, it leads the reader through the lives and ministries of Christians from all over the world who gave themselves to the promotion of the gospel in Latin America. The book begins with the providential precursors of the Evangelicals. Included among these are the German Lutherans in Venezuela, the French Huguenots in Brazil, and the English in the Caribbean. Many of these earliest mission attempts ended in fearful Christian ghettos, whose inhabitants would not reach out across ethnic lines and ultimately ended in their loss of testimony before their indigenous neighbors. Still others gave a bold and faithful witness and saw some limited fruits of their labor during their lifetimes.

Anderson goes on to describe what he calls the "intentional pioneers" of Evangelicalism in Latin America, or full-time missionaries

and Bible colporteurs. These, too, had mixed results. Some of the earliest, who came to Latin America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, lost their lives upon their first contact with indigenous groups. Many were pioneers of mission strategy. Anderson shows how each of these pioneers made a lasting impact on their area of service that opened the doors for later Evangelicals.

The rest of the book is organized according to region and country. Anderson works systematically through the founding of the Baptist denomination in each Latin American nation. He includes the names and stories of the first missionaries, the first national church leaders, and the development of the denominational organization. The story is not triumphalistic or glorious, but it draws out the good works of each character and deals graciously with failures.

Baptist pioneers in Latin America were a diverse lot. The earliest Baptist presence in Guyana, for example, was a man named Lough Fook, a Chinese minister who voluntarily sold himself as an indentured servant in order to go to Guyana and reach out to Chinese indentured servants there. The first Baptist missionary to be sent from Ireland was Robert Hosford, who ultimately served in Argentina. He was not a believer when he married a former missionary, but through the witness of his wife and the work of a local evangelist, he came to faith in Christ. Soon after, he felt a burning call to serve overseas, and since his denomination had no history of sending missionaries, he found a job with the Argentine Railway. With his secular work he was quite successful, but he maintained a strong identity as a missionary, kept a strong relationship with the Irish Baptists, and planted churches along the rail lines.

In Bolivia, Baptist work was begun by Canadian Baptist missionaries. While home on furlough, they learned about self-supporting and self-propagating mission work in India. Upon their return, they presented this model to the Bolivian church leadership, and the churches decided to form a self-governing convention. In order to form a national organization, Mestizos, Áymaras, and Quechuas had to work together as peers in leadership. It was a social experiment that met with success. The Bolivians became adept in missionary sending and cross-cultural ministry. Like Christians in the rest of Latin America, they suffered persecution and violence from their neighbors, weathered national revolutions, and struggled to cooperate with each other.

Each country's story is different but intimately woven together with the stories of its neighbors. The story ends on the threshold of the twenty-first century. Today the church in Latin America is blessed with exploding growth, a renewal movement in the Catholic Church, and rapidly rising Pentecostalism. Anderson points out that

Latin America and Africa are becoming the new centers of the Christian faith, as faith dwindles in the North. Baptist churches in Latin America are continuing to mature and to take on more responsibility as co-laborers on the global level with other Christians. According to Anderson, the strength of Pentecostalism in Latin America is bringing balance to the evangelical church's practical theology of the Trinity, which in the North has historically downplayed manifestations of the Spirit and emphasized Christology in its teaching. Anderson is hopeful that the church in Latin America will play an important and positive role in the renewal of the worldwide community of Christians in the twenty-first century.

Anderson's history is thorough, rigorous, and compassionate. The author freely states his interpretation of events and includes well-reasoned and researched arguments for his judgments. This book is a pleasurable read for anyone who loves church history, Latin American history, or who is seeking to expand their vision of the church beyond the West.

Notes

1. Justice C. Anderson, *An Evangelical Saga* (Longwood, Fla: Xulon Press, 2005), xxv.

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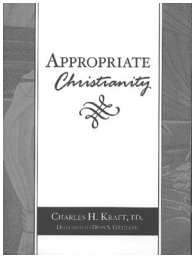

Kraft, Charles H., ed. Appropriate Christianity. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2005. 638 pgs.

In *Appropriate Christianity*, Charles Kraft utilizes the varied perspectives of eighteen contributors to substantiate his experiential concept of communicating the gospel of Christ. Kraft expresses this centralizing thesis as a tripod framework in which three encounters of the Christian experience correlate to three of its dimensions. The three encounters of allegiance, truth, and power define the experiential nature of Christianity. These encounters indelibly connect to three essential dimensions of Christianity: relationship, understanding, and freedom.[1]

Although *Appropriate Christianity* claims to focus on the disproportionately under-addressed encounters of allegiance and spiritual power, one could certainly argue that it contains more than its share of truth.

Kraft organizes this volume by providing an introduction to the concept of appropriate Christianity, followed by extrapolations upon its theoretical and practical aspects. The first four chapters form the nexus of the introductory material. Here, *Appropriate Christianity* delves into the historical development of missiological theory to recount the emergence and prominence of the theory of contextualization. The authors emphasize such seminal theories as the Three-Self Formula, indigeneity, and dynamic equivalence, leading to the advent of the parallel terms of "contextualization" and "inculturation" in the early 1970s. This discussion serves as a foundation upon which Kraft and the other contributors can build their critique of contextualization. The introductory chapters also afford the opportunity to proclaim the necessity of a vocabulary shift away from contextualization to "appropriate Christianity." The goal of this transition is not to discard the work advanced by contextualization but to reframe the contextualization debate with an innovative lens.

The advent of appropriateness as a new hermeneutical lens by which to approach missions has a myriad of theoretical ramifications. *Appropriate Christianity* asserts two distinct analogies to explain these ramifications. The first relates missional theology to modern law, which encapsulates case law as well as the parallels of systematic theology with constitutional law and biblical theology with statutory law. Thus, missional theology is an amalgamation of phenomenology, ontology, and missiology.[2] The second analogy is that of the Hebrew covenant as an inculturated message of God's relational love and a scriptural model for contextualization.[3] Kraft moves beyond analogies to introduce the term "meaning equivalence," as an alternative for his earlier concept of dynamic equivalence, which takes the felt needs of the receptors of communication more seriously than its predecessor.

Appropriate Christianity seeks to accomplish more than a transformation in vocabulary: it strives to emancipate the concept of contextualization from academic debates and discuss it in terms of Christianity's relational and freeing dimensions. Kraft emphasizes the disjunction between religion as the culturally defined forms expressing a specific worldview and the Christian faith, which he defines as "an allegiance, a relationship, from which flow a series of meanings that are intended to be expressed through the cultural forms of any culture."[4] Epistemologically, contextualization is transformative because it is theology from below; it stems from the praxis of relationship rather that the postulations of philosophy.[5]

The crux of contextualization, and of appropriateness, is the relational nature of God's love at the "level of human beingness that is deeper than our cultural differences."[6] This is the level at which the meaning of faith in Christ must be communicated. Frecia C. Johnson deftly addresses the need for relationship and dialogue based on mutual respect in her proposal for "reciprocal contextualization." Kraft recognizes this baseline humanity, as well as its problematic nature, in his assertion of the dual models of the "Point Plus Process" and "the Homogeneous Unit Principle" to address God's initial acceptance and subsequent transformation of individuals and groups. The application of these models impacts the manner in which various generations of Christians grapple with spiritual freedom.

Kraft places chief importance on the role of spiritual power in the life of individuals and communities. The bifurcated cosmology in his understanding of spiritual warfare on both ground and cosmic levels encapsulates a vast array of human experience, from sinful emotions to the deities of other religions. Although the discussion has perhaps been taken too lightly in the Western church, the deterministic precision with which Kraft is willing to pinpoint the presence of evil spirits based on certain circumstances is incredibly troubling.[7]

Kraft embarks on his discussion of *Appropriate Christianity* with an elevated confidence that the terminology shift he and his contributors propose is valid. Perhaps such bravado is to be expected and is certainly not unfounded, given the pivotal role Kraft has played in the field of missiological anthropology. The level of confidence due to the acceptance of his former works leads Kraft into a problematic assumption of ascent from the perspective of his readers. This assumption manifests itself not only overtly in Kraft's introduction but also in the manner in which he approaches his subject. Consequently, there is surprisingly little space devoted to arguing the need for and implications of the terminological shift from contextualization to appropriate Christianity.

Kraft argues for the use of a term that would inherently focus on communicating Christianity in such a way that it is accountable to both the receiving culture and the gospel itself. This would stand in opposition to the assumption of contextualization, which tacitly contends that the gospel is fully understood and the culture is what must come to be understood. Thus, he asserts the need for a term that decreases the technicality of contextualization, as it currently focuses on culture rather than people. He also suggests that the term contextualization carries a negative connotation. Each of these concerns is valid and innovative for the progress of missiology in the future. All of these points contribute to a cogent negative argument against the continued

reliance upon the terminology of contextualization; yet they do not substantiate the case for adopting the term "appropriate" in its place.

The argument for a vocabulary shift makes only scant reference to the inherent value of "appropriate" as a term and no attempt at all to discuss possible stigmas with which it might be associated. *Appropriate Christianity* recognizes that "since meaning is in the minds of people, we need to recognize that there will be a variety of understandings of any of the terms we use."[8] Despite this declaration, Kraft never addresses the general perceptions of the word "appropriate." He defines it solely in reference to the interaction of culture and the Bible in the confines of his missiological project. The wider connotations of the word "appropriate," however, denote a hyperbole of conservatism belying images of Victorian imperialism. It invokes rigidity and prejudice against innovation as well as a denial of historical mistakes. In short, the term stands as the quintessential bastion of the status quo. Perhaps this negativity is best illustrated by a juxtaposition of the loaded root word "proper" with the neutral root word "context." Despite the technicality of its extended form, the word "context," in and of itself, carries a far less problematic vision for the communication of the gospel to culture and the future of Christian missions.

The value of *Appropriate Christianity* lies in the thought process through which it assesses the current status of missiology, and this is no mean contribution. The book anthologizes profound and landmark discussions of the formative theories of the past, the present challenges of praxis, and quandaries for the future. It is a wellspring of theoretical inquiry and practical wisdom that will serve as a catalyst for poignant dialogue in the field of missiology. Whether the terminology proposal that it champions will be, or should be, adopted remains in question.

Notes

1. Charles H. Kraft, ed., *Appropriate Christianity* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2005), 99.
2. Ibid., 125-28.
3. Ibid., 135-36.
4. Ibid., 86.
5. Ibid., 199.
6. Ibid., 335.
7. Ibid., 382.
8. Ibid., 3.

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