

Mennonite Theology at the Edge: Ecumenism in a Prison Context



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Introduction

This book has been written with the idea that it is possible to develop a Mennonite theology within the context of a prison and ecumenical atmosphere. After being ordained as a Mennonite pastor, I served for thirty-five years as a prison chaplain. This experience made me reflect on the ways in which my Mennonite beliefs and theology influenced and were influenced by my context.

Chapter One

There were times when my Mennonite theology was influenced by other denominations. I worked for ten years with Pentecostal volunteers in a French context in which there were many conversion experiences on the part of inmates. Although these conversion experiences echoed my own experience of faith, the idea that these inmates could be baptized was another matter. A Pentecostal chaplain brought a bathtub into the prison and rebaptized several Catholic inmates on the basis of their confession of faith. This action caused no small amount of consternation on the part of the Catholic priest and the Regional Catholic chaplain. They asked me as a peace loving Mennonite to come up with a solution to this problem.

Conducting communion services was another challenge for me. I was used to the practice of closed communion in which baptized Mennonites would come together to receive the cup and host. I could not assume that the inmates to whom I was ministering were baptized, much less believers. I made a decision to offer communion on the basis of inmates' affirmation of Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Another challenge had to do with providing weekly worship services that were conducive to a sense of reverence and respect. After planning weekly services for a year in which I included a variety of songs, prayers, Scripture readings, and a message, I discovered that the Lutheran Church used a lectionary and liturgy that was similar to the way that the Catholic chaplain ordered his service. That included weekly scripture readings along with a set liturgy. I found this liturgy and lectionary highly practical in planning my services. The structured format allowed me adequate time to be creative in my meditations

and more reflective of worship. I had inmates read the scripture passages, the band lead various songs, and the congregation respond with spoken and spontaneous prayers. The set liturgy freed me up to think more intentionally about worship.

One of the things I discovered after working with Pentecostal volunteers for ten years and using an ordered service for thirty years was that my collaboration with these denominations did not make me a Pentecostal nor a Lutheran. Altar calls and the laying on of hands were at times appropriate in the context of my worship services. These practices, however, were not sustainable because they caused too much emotional upheaval in the inmates with whom I worked. The same limitation applied to my use of liturgy and lectionary. I found that the Lutheran Confession of faith was quite a ways away from my own understanding of faith. The Lutheran catechism regarded the ten commandments as part of the order of creation, separate from the realm of redemption. The commandments were intended to convict believers of sin while Jesus' crucifixion saved them from sin.

I had to rethink my Mennonite theology on the basis of these influences. While I was empathetic towards the Pentecostal and Lutheran expressions of faith, I found myself advocating for a more communitarian understanding of the gospel, along with an affirmation of the fellowship of believers that gathered in the prison chapel every Sunday evening. This journey is documented in the first chapter of the book.

Chapter Two

One of the things I discovered when I started working in prison is that its organizational structure is more like a large institution like the Catholic Church than the way the Mennonite church functions. The Correctional Service and the Catholic Church operate on the basis of a hierarchical structure in which there is a chain of command and a top down form of authority. A question that arises from this type of institutional structure is whether change is possible.

A prison chaplain for many years, Reverend Dr. Pierre Allard in his 1983 dissertation suggests that change is indeed possible. The Correctional Service's adoption of a mission statement during these years can be compared to the changes that happened in the Catholic Church during Vatican II. The Catholic Church adopted a "people of God" theology while the Correctional

Service committed itself to treating inmates as subjects in their own right. These documents regarding a “people of God” theology and the prioritization of inmates were placed before a discussion of hierarchy and organizational structure.

I was drawn to the Catholic Church for another reason. I was one of two Protestant chaplains among twenty-five Catholic priests, nuns, and lay Catholics who were serving as chaplains in the prison system in Quebec. I was curious about how their prison ministry compared to my own.

During my graduate work at McGill University, I worked with Professor Gregory Baum who was a Catholic priest as well as Catholic theologian. He had spent the last thirty years reflecting on the impact of Vatican II and whether change within the church was possible.

On the basis of my collaboration with Professor Gregory Baum, I turned to a book that he had published in 1968 in which he defended the credibility of the church. Baum had by this time been a Catholic priest for twenty years. He saw himself as an apologist for the church. I analyzed this book in order to compare myself as a Mennonite theologian with this Catholic thinker.

Gregory Baum defended the credibility of the church on the basis that it emphasized local initiatives as well as issued universal proclamations. Vatican II represented a time when many local initiatives transformed the hierarchy into a more collaborative and egalitarian structure. At the same time, the church continued to proclaim its universality.

Gregory Baum suggested that the Catholic Church operated on a dialectic between an emphasis on the past and the present. On the one hand, it was tempted to embrace a type of primitivism in which past doctrinal proclamations defined the contemporary church. On the other hand, the church was tempted to endorse a type of modernism in which the culture around it defined its purpose and mission.

These two dialectics made me think about where the Mennonite Church stood on these issues. In general, I would suggest that the Mennonite Church has opted for local initiatives over and above universal proclamations and for an emphasis on the past over the present. The Mennonite church’s emphasis on local initiatives can be traced to its transition from an episcopal system to a democratic, constitutional format. The Mennonite church adopted the ways in

which the society around it operated regarding its various organizations. The priesthood of all believers was a biblical injunction that spurred on this ecclesiastical reform. One could say that the Mennonite church set itself up as a separate society that mimicked the reforms initiated by the democratic revolution.

The Mennonite emphasis on the past can be seen in its recovery of the Anabaptist vision from the 16th century. During the last fifty years, many books by 16th century authors have been translated and published. Many Anabaptist theologies have been written. Seminary training involved learning New Testament Greek and Hebrew in order to recover some of the gospel insights in their original languages.

These two examples show that there is a sense in which Mennonites believe that the restitution of the Church in its original form is possible: egalitarian leadership, communitarian fellowship, pacifistic adherence, and informed voluntary assent to faith. These attributes represent signs of the early Church.

I conclude chapter two by suggesting that the Catholic Church subsists to a greater extent as an expression of the Christian faith than Protestantism. Gregory Baum's articulation of a dialectic between local and universal, and between the past and the present, demonstrates it is possible to defend a large institution like the Catholic Church while being open to reforms and change. The role of Mennonite theology within this dialectic remains to be seen.

Chapter Three

A reader may draw the conclusion from chapter three that I have moved significantly into a mainline church worship and belief format of doctrines, lectionaries, liturgies, and catechisms.

This is indeed true. I have found, for example, Jaroslav Pelikan's five volume work on doctrines, along with Hughes Oliphant Old's five volume work on lectionaries to be specifically important in understanding the broader church. I continue to endorse a Mennonite theology while being aware that these broader works include aspects of Christianity of which Mennonites are tangentially aware. Chapter three is dedicated to helping believers understand the broader nature of Christianity. I have specifically used creeds, lectionaries, liturgies, and catechisms to develop my theology.

Chapter Four

The fact that I continue to stand apart from some mainline church emphases can be seen in chapter four. A diagram in that chapter shows a continuum from low church worship practices to the manner in which mainline churches worship. I include a numbering system from 1 to 24, from the importance of the Bible, cross, and Sunday worship for numbers 1 to 3, to the importance of Mary, icons, and the pope for numbers 22 to 24. When I started as a prison chaplain, I would have emphasized the importance of testimonies, worship teams, and adult baptism, numbers 7 to 9 along the scale. More recently, I have become convinced of the importance of a confession of repentance, an affirmation of faith, and the passing of the peace during worship. These actions represent numbers 13 to 15 along the continuum.

More problematic for me has been the wearing of vestments, the role of Mary, and the idea that it is necessary to have a pope as the head of the Church, numbers 18, 22, and 24. I continue to hold on to a Mennonite theology while being empathetic to a more ecumenical and mainline format of worship.

Chapter Five

One of the surprising things that I learned about prison ministry was that many conservative and sectarian groups were interested in volunteering in the prison. Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, conservative Mennonites, Seven Day Adventists, Christian fundamentalists, and Hasidic Jews wanted to make sure that inmates of their own faith persuasions were being ministered to. These volunteers were open to including other inmates who wanted to become part of their faith group.

There are two reasons for the symmetry between these conservative groups and inmates. The first reason is that inmates represent marginalized people in society. They are attracted to marginalized religions that have to negotiate and interact with the broader culture. The second reason for the symmetry is that these conservative groups along with offenders generally have a black and white mentality. The groups have a clear idea about what truth is and the inmates have a clear idea of what they did wrong. Offenders want to replace the mentality that they had when they committed their crimes with a new strict disciplinary faith that these groups offer.

I compared a religious group that I worked with for five years in Quebec and my own Anabaptist upbringing to illustrate the dynamics of a sectarian perspective. Although radically different in terms of historical setting, theological outlook, and cultural context, the Rastafarians in Jamaica were similar sociologically to the Anabaptists from the 16th century. While the Anabaptist rejected the status quo by re-baptizing themselves, the Rastafarians adopted an illegal drug, marijuana, as key to their religious reasoning sessions. Both groups were persecuted for these stances and some experienced martyrdom. Both groups retreated to the country in order to establish a peaceful rapport with the larger society. Both groups adopted a kind of egalitarian leadership in the light of the fact that their leaders had been martyred. Both groups adopted an outward visible sign of faith, the Mennonite men with their straight coats and the women with long dresses and coverings, the Rastafarians with their colourful Jamaican flag belts and hair pieces along with their flowing dreadlocks.

I suggest in the fifth chapter that pacifism can be seen as a sectarian response to the broader culture. It operates as an intramural form of communication, association, and relationship building while not being applicable to general society. The Mennonite theology of these conservative groups means that pacifism serves an important discipleship role that is integrally linked to the beliefs and practices that make up these separate societies.

Chapter Six

This sectarian response on the part of Rastafarians and Anabaptists can be contrasted with the idea that pacifism serves as a universal principle. Theologian Gordon Kaufman has suggested that the non-resistance of Christ can be included within the freedom attribute of God. Christ emptied himself of divinity in order to become a man who sacrificed himself for the sake of other people. This non-resistant stance on a part of Jesus serves as an example for Christians and society as a whole.

I make comparisons in chapter six between this pacifistic theology on the part of Gordon Kaufman and the theologies of Maurice Blondell and Gregory Baum. The latter theologians believe that God is the ground of our being who calls us from within to act in redemptive ways. Pacifism in this case serves as an ideal for everyone rather than only operating as an internal practice within the church.

The question that chapter six raises is whether this pacifistic ideal is in some way applicable to the use of coercion. I cite three examples from within the correctional service that shows that coercion can be exercised for the greater good. Peace and reconciliation are possible in an institution as a result of these non-voluntary initiatives.

Chapter Seven

I make mention in chapter six of the Catholic Catechism's understanding of a beatific vision, its explanation of original righteousness, and its teleological interpretation on the ten commandments in order to show how these ideas compare favorably with pacifism as a universal ideal.

These ideas are carried forward in chapter seven in order to develop a specific discipleship model for inmates. The fact that the Catechism believes that human beings have been created in the image of God, that they naturally seek after God, and that they can be restored to original righteousness after falling from grace is something that is especially appealing to me. I worked for many years with offenders who had committed serious harm and who were deeply regretful of their actions. The question I asked is how these inmates could be healed and have hope for the future.

A belief that they had been created in the image of God, and that they could be restored to original righteousness through repentance and forgiveness meant a lot to the men that I worked with. Celebrate Recovery spoke about the reality of denial, the necessity of repentance, and the ability of believers to surrender to God. Lacking from this twelve step program was a specific way in which inmates could access original righteousness in order to move forward.

A second naivete, in which innocence, trust, loyalty, faith, belief, and love were experienced, was possible in order for offenders to move forward. The Catholic Catechism included a detailed description of how life in Christ could be accomplished. It spoke in specific terms about moral virtues, emotions, passion, and the role of conscience in integrating one's mind and body. While concupiscence represented a tendency to sin, it could be resisted by believers.

I dedicate the seventh chapter to developing this discipleship model as outlined in the Catholic Catechism. I am not aware of another catechism that

spends as much time looking at the ways in which we are all tempted to sin. The catechism builds on the injunctions of the ten commandments in making its point.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that I am at the edge of Mennonite theology because there are so many aspects of my reflections that are more tuned to a universalistic understanding of Christianity that includes doctrines, liturgies, lectionaries, catechisms, and communion.

This universalistic understanding of the gospel comes as much from my prison ministry experience as my ecumenical connections with Pentecostals, Lutherans, and Catholics. How does one explain the gospel to sixty inmates gathered in the chapel who have a very rudimentary understanding of Christianity? Repentance, forgiveness, conversion, surrender, and recovery are all included in what it means to come to faith in Jesus Christ. It is more difficult in this environment to know how to proceed with two sacraments of the church, baptism and communion. One thing is clear. Offenders want to hear the truth of the gospel in as black and white terms as I am willing to enunciate it. It is only as I and the men mature together that more shades of grey are allowed to creep in.

This book represents an ecumenical work in which I have adopted liturgy and lectionary while remaining transparent about the fact that I continue to be a Mennonite and Protestant. My development of the idea that there is such a thing as a beatific vision, that we can turn to original righteousness after falling from grace, and that the ten commandments can be seen theologically in relationship to loving God and loving neighbour are all ways in which I have built on a Mennonite theology of peace, pacifism, and reconciliation. Covenantal theology represents the framework in which the Old and New Testament can be seen as one. God's loving relationship represents the framework within which the recognition of sin and the forgiveness of sin can be exercised.

Chapter One

Conversion Narrative

Introduction

Gordon T. Smith, in his book, *Beginning Well*,¹ challenges believers to construct a conversion narrative of their coming to the Christian faith. He suggests that a sustained written testimony helps to place one's conversion experience into a specific context.

I have constructed such a narrative to better understand why I have emphasized certain aspects of the gospel within a prison context. Religious conversions are endemic within prisons. They result from the fact that inmates are in crisis and in need of help. Conversion experiences become a way for them to cope with the many new realities that they face.

My experience with dozens of conversions in prison forced me to think about my own religious transformation. What was it about that experience that was so formative? Why have I been empathetic to inmate conversion experiences while remaining cognizant of the many pitfalls that inmates fall into as they move from a good beginning to an uncertain future?² Why do so many conversions in prison go wrong? What is the role of an authentic religious experience in becoming integrated as a faithful believer of Jesus Christ?

My conversion experiences are divided into ten-year segments. They begin at the age of six when I went to my first Conrad Brunk II revival meeting. At the age of sixteen, I received catechism with a group of my peers and was baptized into the Bergthaler Mennonite Church. At the age of twenty-six, I was called to pastoral ministry and attended Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana. At the age of thirty-six, I was called to prison ministry in

¹ Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2001), p. 42.

² Seen Hank Dixon's autobiography, *A Lifer's Journey* (Winnipeg: Prairie Heart Press, 2021), pp. 9-74, for a description of his conversion experience.

Quebec. I became a prison chaplain after completing a Doctor of Philosophy Degree from McGill University in 1991. Each ten-year period is described to give the reader an idea of how my conversion experiences shaped my life and ministry career.

The latter half of the paper analyses the effects of my evangelical upbringing and conversion experience upon my chaplaincy journey. The purpose of the paper is to set these two aspects of faith into a larger context called sacramentalism.

A. Brunk Revival Meetings at the Age of Six

My conversion experience began with the Brunk revival meetings that took place in southern Manitoba during the 1950s and 60s. I was only six years old in 1960 when my parents took me to a weeklong evangelical service under a big tent near Plum Coulee, Manitoba. I was mesmerized by the experience. The saw dust trail ran down the centre aisle from the back to the front to cover the dust and mud that represented the floor of the pasture on which the tent had been pitched. 2" x 12" boards covered with brown tablecloth paper stapled to the bottom were placed on concrete blocks used to construct basement foundations. Tall wooden masts up to thirty feet held up the tent at twenty foot intervals. Many conversions occurred one night when a rainstorm pelted the tent and made the tall posts sway dangerously inside.

The service consisted of a lot of singing and preaching. After forty-five minutes of singing led by a song leader, the worship leader introduced the minister who was from either Virginia or Pennsylvania. They were powerful preachers. Unfortunately, I do not remember a word they said. After forty-five minutes, the preacher sat down, and I breathed a sigh of relief. It would soon be over. After singing for another twenty minutes, the worship leader stood up for what I assumed was a closing prayer.

The worship leader began by thanking the preacher. He commented on what a powerful message he had delivered. He thanked the audience for the wonderful singing. He then said, "I would now like to introduce the main speaker." That is the last sentence I remember for the rest of the week. The service each night lasted in an excess of three hours.

Figure 1: 1954 Picture of Brunk Revival Tent in Winkler, Manitoba³



I do not remember if there was an altar call at the end of each service. Revivalism in the Mennonite tradition consisted of less dramatic ways of announcing that a person had become a Christian. I know that I became a believer those evenings along with many others. I learned the value of Romans 10:10, which says that if I believed in my heart and confessed with my lips that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, I would be saved. Those evangelical services represented a turning point for many Mennonites in southern Manitoba. In danger of becoming a cultural entity, the German-Russian Mennonite people experienced a revival within their churches.

B. Being Baptized at the Age of Sixteen

Receiving catechism and being baptized into the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Altona represented a seamless continuity between my conversion

³ [Audience seated at Brunk Revival Campaign in Winkler, Manitoba - Mennonite Archival Information Database \(mhsc.ca\)](http://www.mhsc.ca)

experience and involvement in the church. I embraced Christianity and church for myself. It seemed natural for me to attend a Mennonite private school and become chairperson of the student Faith and Life Committee in grade ten. It seemed natural for me to be baptized upon my confession of faith and attend a Mennonite Bible College after high school. It was natural for me to immerse myself in Bible and Theology for the next three years of my young adult life.

Figure 2: Altona Ministerial Leadership at the time of my Baptism



Altona Lehrdienst, 1970 — Front row, l. to r.: Mrs. Abe Born, Mrs. G. A. Neufeld, Elder and Mrs. David Schulz, Deacon and Mrs. J. B. Braun, Mrs. Albert Schmidt, Mrs. D. J. Neudorf. Second row: Minister Abe Born, Mrs. Menno Funk, Mrs. H. J. Gerbrandt, Mrs. D. F. Friesen, Mrs. D. H. Loewen, Mrs. D. B. Friesen, Minister Albert Schmidt, Minister D. J. Neudorf. Third row: Minister G. A. Neufeld, Deacon Menno Funk, Ministers H. J. Gerbrandt and D. F. Friesen, Deacons D. H. Loewen and D. B. Friesen.

C. Enrolling in Seminary at the Age of Twenty-Six

That faith journey continued ten years later when I enrolled in our Mennonite Seminary south of the border, in Elkhart, Indiana. After two years of study to obtain a Master of Divinity degree, I became a youth pastor in Calgary, Alberta. I embraced the wonderful aspects of ministering to youth, preaching, worshipping, and pastoral care. Not satisfied with these results, I enrolled in graduate studies at McGill University. While conversion experiences, evangelicalism, and ministry were seen as keys to life, higher education was also emphasized in my tradition. Many of my friends went on to graduate studies and became professors at various seminaries and universities.

D. Called to Prison Chaplaincy at the Age of Thirty-Six

Being called to prison ministry at the age of thirty-six is a little late for a specialized ministerial call. Up to that point, I had assumed I would transition from being a pastor to becoming a university professor. I had assumed that academia was part of my future. During an interview for a university position halfway through my graduate program, I found out that I did not like teaching. I considered the content of teaching, information that was simply regurgitated by students. Although I had spent eight years obtaining my Ph.D., I regretted leaving my ministry call behind.

My involvement as a volunteer with prison ministry beckoned. I was invited to become a prison chaplain. I learned French and fell in love with the ministry. As I have said numerous times, I learned more about ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue in prison during the next ten years than I had at the university the last decade. Academia paled before the nitty gritty reality of prison life. I apparently needed something challenging to focus my life and ministry. I needed unique experiences to force me to think about what I really believed.

Conversion, Evangelism, and the Sacraments

Gordon T. Smith has written another book entitled *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal*.⁴ He considers how these three aspects of faith and church fit together. I was drawn to the book because it reflected my own experience. I interviewed many offenders who had conversion experiences because of their incarceration. I worked for ten years with Pentecostal volunteers who came to prison to help me with worship services. I established a Lutheran order of service to provide structure to the inmates' chaotic experiences of faith. I incorporated all three elements of faith and practice to ground faith in a solid worshipful and discipleship experience. The rest of the article shows how conversion and evangelism are related to two sacraments of the Christian church, baptism and communion. It considers how lectionaries and liturgies are attached to various denominational Catechisms. A sacramental view of ministry is introduced that goes beyond specific ecclesiological considerations.

⁴ See Gordon T. Smith, *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal* (Downer's Grove, Intervarsity Press, 2017).

Application of my Conversion Experience to Prison Ministry

The time I spent in Quebec with Pentecostal volunteers providing worship services in prison represented the most integrated services that I had in thirty years of prison ministry. We had simultaneous translations of the sermons into French and Spanish. I listened to powerful Bible based sermons and testimonies from the volunteers. Black, white, and Hispanic inmates intermingled freely with each other and volunteers. Evangelicalism combined with the witness of Pentecostal volunteers provided heart-felt meaningful worship services during these years.

I continued this evangelistic type of service intermingled with Pentecostal styles of worship for the next ten years. Each month, I would invite the Pentecostal volunteers to conduct a worship service that was complementary to what I offered through a more structured approach. Conversion testimonies by volunteers, a powerful sermon, wonderful singing, a laying on of hands at the end of the service, as well as a form of an altar call represented the format of the service. I felt comfortable with these aspects of ministry. I and the Pentecostal volunteers found common cause in our ministry.

Caveat Number One: Baptisms within Prison

I cite the above example to present a caveat to the above scenario. In the early 1980s, a Pentecostal chaplain at one of the Quebec prisons brought a bathtub into the prison and baptized former Catholics upon their confession of faith. He provided abjurement forms so that these inmates could renounce their Catholic faith and pledge adherence to the Protestant faith. These services were conducted in French.

These actions took place ten years prior to my involvement at the prison. They caused no small amount of consternation on the part of the Catholic chaplain and the regional chaplain, who was an “old style Catholic.” I was asked to step into this situation to “solve the problem.”

I decided that conducting worship services in English was an easy way to avoid the thornier problem of what to do with the rebaptized Catholics. These French inmates faithfully attended my services while being unable to understand what was going on. While the conversion experiences had been real, the aftereffects were anything but easy.

This experience made me realize that evangelicalism and Pentecostalism can get complicated when applied to prison and the initiation rites of the Christian Church. While the inmates had embraced the former, the actions of the Pentecostal chaplain made it difficult to know how to proceed. I together with several other chaplains have discouraged baptisms within prison because of their divisive nature. I have suggested that inmates wait until they are released to get baptized. My belief in the visible church means that I want former inmates to attend a specific church before participating in an initiation rite of the church.

Communion within Prison

My experience with communion in prison has been quite different. Even though my church practiced communion infrequently and within a closed context, I felt called within the first year of ministry to offer communion to inmates. My encounter with devout inmates and practicing offenders made me realise that the Christian faith and the Christian church were alive and well within prison. Serving communion represented a natural sign and symbol of communicating that reality.

I remember the first time that I conducted a communion service in prison.⁵ In spite of the fact that believers of a variety of faiths were worshipping together, inmates instinctively knew what to do when it came time for communion. As I was blessing the elements, the Christian believers stepped forward in a semi-circle around the altar. The inmates who were Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish stepped back to show respect. They knew what it was like to participate fully within their own faith traditions. At the same time, they felt welcome in the service. We could pray and worship together while knowing full well that this was unique situation in which we could pay reverence and respect to the divine.

Inmates and volunteers have reacted in different ways to the communion services that I conduct. As I have mentioned numerous times, the only offenders who refuse communion are ones who know something about its meaning. The same Pentecostal volunteers who had participated in the baptisms of inmates in prison chastised me for offering communion to the fellowship of believers gathered there.

⁵ Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, pp. 142-143.

There was a time of about six months when I did not offer communion. Inmates were not cognizant enough nor practicing their faith. I decided to suspend the sacrament until there was some relationship between the objective action of God and the subjective reception of the Eucharist. I have been recently chastised for this momentary suspension of communion. I was told that communion is primarily an action of God that should be offered. I begged to differ. The Mafia members who were muscling their way into the worship services were unrepentant in their criminal activities. While willing to publicly confess their sins, they were unwilling to go to private confession.⁶ The latter action would have meant that they were sorry for what they had done. I did not find it appropriate to give communion to them.

Sacramental Acts of Worship

The varied practice of offering two sacraments of the Christian Church within a prison setting has made me rethink the meaning of evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. I continue to hold on to Romans 10:10, which says that anyone who confesses Jesus as Lord and believes in the resurrection will be saved. I continue to meet many saved inmates who do not participate in prison chapel services. My role is to help them nurture their faith while giving space to the ways in which they practice.

My experience of communing with fellow believers outside a normal worship setting has convinced me that there is a sacramental aspect to prison chaplaincy that goes beyond the physical rites. Being created in the image of God means that we can commune with each other on a fundamental level of faith and belief. There is something spiritual in all of us that grounds us.⁷

This spiritual grounding places our participation with Being itself into a larger context in which the divine is working through us and others in many different contexts. At the same time, I am called as a Protestant chaplain to ground these deeply spiritual experiences into a church setting. While I can relate to people of all faiths, walk with them and nurture their faith, I am also called to help Christian believers understand how this is enacted within a Protestant context.

Working for ten years with Pentecostal volunteers validated my evangelical experiences within a prison context. There nevertheless came a point when I

⁶ Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, p. 32.

⁷ See Winnifred Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 173-191.

no longer considered altar calls and a laying on of hands appropriate. Inmates became so caught up in the emotional side of things that they did not know how proceed once they had been “saved.” I as a chaplain could not follow up with all of the faith transformations that had occurred at the Sunday evening service. Justification had to be linked to sanctification in order for faith and practice to become one.

I introduced a Lutheran liturgical order of service into the prison to provide a better grounding to faith. Public confession as a prelude to worship, Scripture readings from a three-year lectionary, passing of the peace, prayers of response, and communion represented a wonderful way of channeling inmate conversion experiences and evangelical affirmations into a well-rounded worship service. Inmates participated in these services through singing, praying, Scripture reading, and receiving communion. Songs led by an inmate band represented a wonderful complement to the spoken Word. I embraced this style of worship during the next twenty years of my ministry. Offenders grounded their faith in these expressions of worship.

Caveat Number Two: Theology and Sacramental Worship

I discovered at the end of this time that a caveat regarding the efficacy of Lutheran liturgy within prison was as necessary as the caveat regarding my involvement with Pentecostal volunteers. Pentecostal enthusiasm and evangelical conversions in prisons were circumscribed by the fact that emotional highs and the sacramental rite of baptism could play havoc with inmates’ newfound faith (and chaplains’ commitment to ecumenism).

A similar effect occurred regarding the Lutheran liturgy. While the liturgy grounded inmates in a solid understanding of Christian worship and faith, its use in prison did not mean that offenders would become Lutherans when they were released. I found this out the hard way when I thought that my use of the liturgy in prison meant that I could become a Lutheran pastor. Two months into my studies at a Lutheran seminary, I discovered that Lutheran theology, especially as it pertains to original sin, was a ways away from what I believed.⁸ I had adopted the liturgy for pragmatic reasons. While the liturgy grounded inmates’ evangelical faith, it did not necessarily reflect the theologies

⁸ Donald Stoesz with Joan Palardy, *Transforming Moments of Chaplaincy*, pp. 163-178.

espoused by the denominations -- Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran – that used these liturgies.

This realisation during the latter part of my prison ministry has been as hard to swallow as the fact that conversion experiences and Pentecostal styles of worship did not translate easily into ecclesiological expressions of faith. Baptisms in prisons represented a stumbling block regarding church adherence in the same way that the Lutheran liturgy did. Liturgical forms of worship did not mean that believers agreed with the Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran Catechisms that were attached to these forms of worship. Catechetical instruction was important insofar as individual inmates wanted to become part of a particular church. The same applied to the initiation rite of baptism. Roman Catholic believers could enroll in the Roman Catholic Initiation of Adults to see whether they agreed with the Catholic Catechism and could be confirmed or baptized.

Lessons Learned

The first lesson I learned from these two experiences is that prison chaplaincy is much more complicated than I first thought. Mennonite experiences of conversion and evangelism, Pentecostal testimonies and altar calls, Lutheran lectionaries and liturgies, along with Roman Catholic Initiation of Adults all have their place within the proscribed atmosphere that is called prison life. These expressions of faith can be brought to bear on the prison experience insofar as the adherent chaplain recognises that these faith expressions may or may not become part of the inmate's life upon release. The physical fences that keep offenders in prison also apply to the spiritual fences of faith that inmates inculcate for themselves while in prison. The chaplain's role is to nurture this faith through a variety of expressions while being respectful of all the visible paths of faith available.

The second lesson I learned was that my identity as a Mennonite pastor has been severely tested as a result of my ecumenical and inter-faith experiences as a chaplain. I cannot really say that I act as an ordained Mennonite pastor simply because the word "Mennonite" has such little meaning within a prison setting. I identify with a pan evangelicalism that believes in conversion and change and with a liturgical tradition that is grounded in the mainline churches' expression of worship. I also believe in a universal spirituality that participates in Being at a variety of levels. This universal spirituality is

necessary to work effectively with believers of all faiths. Respect is necessary in three areas: validation of an inmate's conversion experience, grounding in the historic Christian church's expressions of faith and practice, and empathetic accommodation of all inmates whose faith is different, even radically different, from one's own.

Chapter Two

Credibility of the Church Today

Introduction

I recently came across a book that Catholic priest and theologian Gregory Baum wrote in 1968, entitled *The Credibility of the Church Today*.⁹ Gregory Baum wrote the book in response to another Catholic priest and theologian, Charles Davis, who left the church. Baum shows in his book why staying within the (Catholic) church is better than leaving it.

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. In 1972, I was put in charge of organizing a youth retreat as part of my duties as the Christian Life Committee president at the Mennonite private high school that I attended. We invited a speaker, Rev. H. H. Epp, to talk about the future of the church.

We agreed as a group of thirty young people that the church was an important institution to maintain and “save.” The church was a place where many of us felt affirmed and encouraged. I was baptized into the Altona Berghaler Church the same year. The “Lehrdienst” (Church Leadership Oversight Committee) consisted of several ministers, deacons, a bishop, and their spouses whom I respected.

1968 was the year that Mennonite theologian Gordon Kaufman published his *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*.¹⁰ As theology students at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in the early 1970s, we agreed that that this was an important work that would stand Mennonites in good stead for the next generation. Kaufman outlined the salient features of Christianity within

Figure 1: Christian Life Committee, MCI, 1972¹¹

⁹ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today* (London: Burns and Oates, 1968).

¹⁰ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).

¹¹ *Mosaic: Mennonite Collegiate Institute Yearbook*, 1972, 30.



Figure 2: Altona Ministerial Leadership at the time of my Baptism¹²



Altona Lehrdienst, 1970 — Front row, l. to r.: Mrs. Abe Born, Mrs. G. A. Neufeld, Elder and Mrs. David Schulz, Deacon and Mrs. J. B. Braun, Mrs. Albert Schmidt, Mrs. D. J. Neudorf. Second row: Minister Abe Born, Mrs. Menno Funk, Mrs. H. J. Gerbrandt, Mrs. D. F. Friesen, Mrs. D. H. Loewen, Mrs. D. B. Friesen, Minister Albert Schmidt, Minister D. J. Neudorf. Third row: Minister G. A. Neufeld, Deacon Menno Funk, Ministers H. J. Gerbrandt and D. F. Friesen, Deacons D. H. Loewen and D. B. Friesen.

¹² Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* (Altona: D. W. Friesens and Sons, 1972), 164.

a theological framework that included the pacifism of Christ within the attributes of the freedom of God.¹³

When Gordon Kaufman came to lecture at CMBC in 1974, I was taken aback with his new emphasis on *God the Problem*.¹⁴ He no longer considered it possible to speak about a personal triune God. The most that could be said about the word “God” was that it was a concept that people used to speak about the prevenient grace that was operative in life. Human beings constructed concepts such as Christ, world, God, and Holy Spirit in order to speak about a mysterious Other.

Kaufman preferred to speak about God in relation to the universe rather than in relation to ecclesiology. God was a cosmic force within the world rather than a personal God involved in establishing the kingdom of God through Christ and the church.

This shift in thinking on the part of Kaufman left me baffled. While I could affirm the fact that God was transcendent, far removed from our conceptual ideas about God, God’s prevenient grace within the world meant that the presence of God could be affirmed in practical terms. The church was one locus of this divine presence. An ecclesiology could be established on the basis of this theological affirmation.

Defence of the Credibility of the Church

Having read Gregory Baum’s book for the first time in 2024, I wished that I would have read it fifty-five years ago. Here was a devout Catholic priest, part of a large institutional church, who continued to defend the adequacy of the church in spite of its many failings and in the face of a thorough going secularization that was happening in society.

Part of this defence had to do with the fact that Gregory Baum played an integral role in the Vatican II Council. He had seen how even a large institutional church like the Roman Catholic Church could respond creatively and redemptively to new circumstances.

Based on my reading of the book, I decided that it would be a good idea to provide a lengthier reflection on Baum’s key points. What was it about the

¹³ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective*, 148-166, 210-222.

¹⁴ Gordon Kaufman, *God the Problem* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1970).

institutional church that Baum was willing to defend and show how staying within the church was better than leaving it? The following account represents my dialogue with the book in relation to my identity as a Mennonite pastor.

Pluralism of the Churches

One of the first thing Baum says is that Vatican II acknowledged the fact that the other churches reflected the presence and body of Christ while remaining separated from the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵ There was no need for Protestants to be converted to Catholicism or the other way around. The important thing was for believers to grow and draw closer to Christ in the churches to which they belonged.

Uniqueness of the Catholic Church

The second thing that Baum says is that it is valid for the Catholic Church to see themselves as unique, as subsisting within the Christian Church in a more complete way than the other churches.¹⁶ Baum suggests that this is a specific issue that Catholics need to wrestle with. It is something that is claimed by the Catholic Church and needs to be defended by the Catholic Church in order for Catholics to know why they are Catholics. We will have more to say about this matter as we proceed.

Church as a Human Institution

The third thing that Baum says is that the institutional church needs to be analysed as a human institution that has its own faults and defects because of the institutional nature of its organization.¹⁷ Baum agrees with many of the criticisms of Charles Davis. He suggests that these criticisms are valid and can be applied to any large institution. The church functions as a human institution and so is subject to the same failings as other institutions such as the university or the state.

These criticisms do not nullify the validity of the church because the Spirit of God continues to reform and renew the church in spite of its failings. Throwing the baby out with the bathwater does not do the baby any good. The

¹⁵ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 52.

¹⁶ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 122-129.

¹⁷ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 56-64.

baby wants to continue to live in spite of the circumstances in which it has been placed.

Baum uses two arguments to show the fallen state of the institution. The first argument has to do with Baum's investigation of the anti-Semitism of the New Testament.¹⁸ He suggests that Christians in the last five centuries shifted the blame for the death of Jesus away from the institutions that were responsible to the Jews themselves. The lack of faith on the part of the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and priests was seen as the primary cause of Jesus' death, rather than the laws and rituals that these faithful Jews were defending.

Anti-Semitism ceases to be a problem when one does not regard the holiness of the leaders themselves as the principal part of the problem. In spite of the holiness of the leaders, they ended up defending their own intransigent position vis-à-vis the privileges and prestige that they had rather than being open to the reform of the synagogue. They were committed to maintaining the institution instead of being focused on its mission.

Consequences of this intransigence became tragically evident with the fall of the Temple, 40 years after Jesus' death. The Jewish leaders had to reorganize their Temple worship into synagogue worship, with the Torah now becoming the chief reference point of faith, rather, than for example, nationalism.

Baum suggests that the Jewish leaders' entrapment within the organization that they were defending is true of any large organization. As Baum said so many times in his lectures, any society, left to itself, will form a hierarchy. This hierarchy will subsequently end up defending itself rather than embrace the mission for which it was initially established. This could apply to the monarchy and other elite societies.

As Charles Davis has so eloquently pointed out, the question remains whether the Catholic church, as a large organization similar to the Jewish organizations in the New Testament and contemporary hierarchical societies, are open to change. Davis concludes that he has to leave the Catholic Church because it no longer carries the sign of Christ. Baum, on the other hand, believes that Vatican II is a result of the Holy Spirit moving in the church to create long lasting change while continuing to represent the Church as one, holy, apostolic, and catholic.

¹⁸ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 64-76.

What are the signs of these changes? The first sign is that God is no longer seen as an extrinsic presence that simply sets up a natural law that applies eternally. As Blondel in the nineteenth century recognised, God is an intrinsic presence that continues to transform creation along with humanity.¹⁹ Natural law is a dynamic reality that can be changed for the better. Subsidiarity, historicity, and dynamic interactions intervene at crucial times in a so-called fixed hierarchy to make the organization work more effectively for the people.

A case example is the Correctional Service. In the 1980s, it realised it had to change from a military operation and punitive system to take inmates seriously as subjects in their own right. The riots and violence that occurred because of a martial hierarchical system of command forced the service to reconsider how to do things. Many positive results have been documented as a result of this shift in emphasis.²⁰

Baum suggests that a similar shift happened with the Catholic Church. It embraced a People of God theology, symbolized by the priest turning toward the people during mass, in which the people were regarded as the *raison-d'être* of the church itself.

This new theology suggested that God was acting redemptively in the world in and beyond the church.²¹ God was calling people from the depths of their being to become involved in a salvific process. The church represented an institution that had a special mission to address the evil in the world and become a redemptive presence. Catholics could join in solidarity with Protestants, secular people, and people of other faiths to become a transformative movement in society.

Based on this new theology, both natural law and the church were more pliable in responding to the needs of society. The dynamic reality of history meant that sociology and psychology along with theology and sacramental liturgies could be used to show how institutions, including the church, worked. The church could at one and the same time embrace the development of doctrine that had taken place over many centuries while using these insights into faith and belief, structures and dynamics, to bring new insights to bear on the nature of the church.

¹⁹ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 14-17.

²⁰ Donald Stoesz with Joan Palardy, *Transformative Moments in Chaplaincy* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2024).

²¹ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 26-28, 36-48.

Baum sees the Vatican II Council as an example of how the church can affirm the past while being open to change. Baum sees the Catholic Church taking the stance of an Open Church, responding redemptively to the needs of its adherents along with the people of the world.

Defending the Unique Status of the Catholic Church

I agree with Baum that the Catholic Church has become open to other churches, other peoples, and the world, that it is committed to continual reform from within, and that a better sociological understanding of the church, specifically the fallen nature of hierarchical structures, helps to show how the church can both embrace its mission through social movements as well as why it sometimes gets stuck in its preoccupation with itself.

In spite of this general agreement, one of the more interesting issues for me has to do with Baum's defence of the Catholic church. Why is the Catholic Church better at reflecting the "essence of the true church" and thereby "subsisting within the Christian church" is a fuller way and richer sense than the Protestant churches?²² This, after all, is an important question, first because it places front and centre whether one should join or remain within the Catholic church, second, whether one should join a Protestant church instead, and thirdly whether one should, as Charles Davis did, simply leave the Catholic Church.

I believe that Baum's apologetic approach regarding this matter is an important one to listen to. Even though I have remained a Protestant and have continued to find sustenance within the Protestant church, there are several experiences that I have had that lead me to be empathetic to the idea of a universal church which is manifested in human terms. In other words, the Catholic church does represent the one, holy, apostolic, catholic church in a way that the Protestant churches do not. Let us listen to Baum's argument about the matter.

Local and Universal Church

The first thing that Baum says is that there is a dialectical relationship between the local church and the universal church.²³ Vatican II opened up the way for local churches to have a greater say to changes within the church. Collegiality

²² Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 122-129.

²³ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 129-141.

was the word of the day as the church shifted to take account of these new renewing winds of the spirit.

In spite of this renewing impact, the Catholic church continued to insist on its universality, oneness, apostolate status, and holiness. It could only take account of local initiatives in a tangential way while continuing to assert the priority of the many under one roof. One could say that Vatican II failed in some sense because it wanted to hold these two poles in dialectical tension. While the pull toward the local was strong in the beginning, that shifted over time to more emphasis on the priority of the pope and what he saw as needing attention.

One of the realities of the Protestant church is that it can prioritize the importance of the universal church in a limited way. Even though the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches are large and institutionalized, they continue to hold on to a few precepts as universally important, such as justification by faith,²⁴ and that God is present in the proper administration of the sacraments and preaching of the Word. These Protestant churches cannot claim on an institutional level that they have embodied the whole Christian church.

These larger churches can be affiliated in the closer sense to the Catholic church than evangelical churches because they continue to hold on to similar beliefs and practices, such as the assertion in the Apostles' Creed, that the church is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic. Evangelical churches have abandoned the idea of the universal church in favour of the local church.

Many evangelical churches see the local church as embodying the body of Christ in a way that frees it from many institutional problems. Any larger collaborations and affiliations with conferences and larger church bodies are simply surplus value without being necessary.

Gregory Baum does a good job of naming all of the ways that Christians use the word "church" in his introductory chapter.²⁵ Church means something different in different contexts. Baum suggests that holding the dialectic of local and universal in creative tension helps one better understand the outcome of Vatican II. While there were initial successes, the reforming nature of the

²⁴ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, editors, "The Augsburg Confession," *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000), 27-106

²⁵ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 20-28.

church continues to be exhibited, according to Baum, in a variety of social movements rather than in a specific way within the institutional church.

The attempt to rally around doctrinal consensus among the various churches is a case in point. While closer doctrinal consensus is a demonstration of the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic church, Baum suggests that being involved in mission and service and solidarity is a much better way of reflecting the redemption of God. Institutional transformation of the church, along with its doctrinal development, has to be seen from a longer perspective.²⁶

I would suggest that Protestantism has generally erred on the side of the local rather than having a sense of what affirming a universal church means. Evangelicals generally believe that they have been given freedom to pursue their own way without worrying too much how that fits into the larger picture of what a universal church means.

Let me give one small example. Three years ago, I read the Catholic Catechism for the first time. I read it because I had some disagreement with the way that the Lutherans were hanging on to the Augsburg Confession and interpreting concupiscence as part of the fall and original sin of Adam and Eve. I was pleasantly surprised by what I found. The Catholics' openness to natural law, to the goodness of creation, to human beings naturally seeking after God, and to the idea that concupiscence is a sinful tendency rather than sin in-and-of-itself represented a breath of fresh air for me.

Catholics are not bound to a sixteenth century confession which defines their faith. They are open and detailed about what it means to live for God within a concept of original sin that is still real. Their willingness to devote many pages of their Catechism to the somewhat simple notion of concupiscence showed me that there was a depth and breadth to the Catholic faith that was not evident in other confessions or catechisms.²⁷ These passages alone helped me understand how the Catholic Church subsisted within the Christian Church in a way that the Protestant churches did not.

²⁶ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 36-48.

²⁷ Donald Stoesz with Joan Palardy, *Usefulness of an Imago Dei Theology for Prison Ministry, Transformative Moments in Chaplaincy*.

Holding the Past and Present in a Dialectical Relationship

The second point that Baum makes is that the Catholic church is tempted to hold on to the past to the exclusion of the present and vice-a-versa. Baum calls the first temptation the pull of “primitivism” and the second the pull of “modernism.”²⁸ On the one hand, the Catholic church wants to recover the “true” historicism of the Bible and hold on to some eternal creeds. It wants to prioritize some aspects of the past in order to subvert emphases on some contemporary trends.

I was struck by the extent to which so-called primitivism has been a defining feature of Protestantism in the last fifty years. Calls for the restoration of the church to its original beginnings, to an Anabaptist vision that recovers the fellowship, pacifism, and egalitarianism of the radical reformation, and to a study of the Bible in its original Hebrew and Greek defined my generation of biblical, historical, and theological scholars.²⁹ There was something about translating the works of Anabaptist forbears that made the renewal of faith so exciting.

One could say that other Protestant churches are in a similar position. To hang on to the Augsburg Confession as defining the very nature and essence of the gospel appears far fetched.³⁰ Lutherans need to hang on to these unique and special aspects of Protestantism in order to justify the continued existence of their denomination. Why not consider the possibility of joining the Catholic church as a way of embracing a more wholistic aspect of the Gospel?

Baum also criticizes the tendency of some Catholics to adapt themselves to contemporary trends. Known as inculturation, this trend adapts various ritualistic practices according to local and modernizing movements. It is willing to give up on some historic practices in order for the gospel to be relevant to modern believers.

The need for worship to be performative in evangelical churches is an example of this modernizing movement. These churches want to imitate the mass concerts taking place in society in order to reach out to seekers. The pastoral

²⁸ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 141-176.

²⁹ Translations of the works of Conrad Grebel, Pilgram Marpeck, and Thomas Muentzer come to mind, along with various theological reflections, Harold Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision*, Guy Hersherberger, *Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, and Robert Friedman, *The Theology of Anabaptism*.

³⁰ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, editors, “The Augsburg Confession,” *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press.2000), 27-106.

needs of the parishioners are not as important as becoming as relevant to society as possible. Older practices, such as including Scripture texts as part of worship, give way to slick convincing sermons aimed at the new adherents and believers in the church's midst.

Idea of Church as Society

Baum suggests that one of the temptations of the church is to create a separate society that parallels the culture around it.³¹ In response to the establishment of constitutions, democratic reforms, voting rights in regard to volunteer and political societies, the church establishes its own set of committees, organizations, and constitutions to provide a framework for the working of the church.

Baum suggests that parishioners can get so caught up in establishing their own society that they forget what the purpose of the church is in the first place: evangelism, mission, solidarity, compassion, and confrontation of evil. Mimicking the structures of society around it creates increasing boundaries and rules that have to be followed within the church. The priority of the church is to transform society, not recreate it.

This modernizing trend has been evident in my own denomination. In 1967, the Bergthaler Mennonite Conference gave up its episcopal structure and adopted a series of constitutional documents that were meant to safeguard the integrity of the elected leadership and give more voice to church members.³² The Mennonite belief in the priesthood of all believers enhanced an egalitarian structure in which everyone had an equal say in almost all aspects of church polity, worship, and belief.

I remember endless weekend sessions in which innumerable proposals were brought forward, discussed, and adopted. It was an exciting time because now everyone had a voice. At the same time, things got bogged down quite quickly.

To give a simple example, many people wanted to organize as creative worship services as possible. They wanted to include as many people as possible. Within a year, all of these people were exhausted because they had spent so much time on preparation and facilitation for each service.

³¹ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 193-196.

³² Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* (Altona: D. W. Friesens and Sons, 1970), 352; Henry Gerbrandt, *.En Route*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994), 173-182.

Parishioners could not agree on a set service to follow. The order of service became a key issue which trumped all other aspects of the church.

Denominations have created their unique societies in order to show others how they are different from other Christians. They have emphasized difference and uniqueness in order to demonstrate specific aspects of the gospel. Fences around baptismal practices, communion rules, and adherence to specific confessions of faith have become more important than the mission of the church.

The Third Person

Gregory introduces the concept of a third person to find a way through the church's dialectical relationship between the local and universal church, between an emphasis on the past and the present, and between the structures of society and the structures of the church.

Baum suggests that there are three types of people in the Catholic church. There are those who want the church to return the ways of pre-Vatican II. There are those who want the church to fully embrace the reforms of Vatican II. And then there is a third type of Catholic who is ambivalent about both of these options.

I quote Gregory Baum at length regarding the third person:³³

This person is a Catholic. They regard the Church as their spiritual home. They are deeply attached to the Catholic tradition. At the same time, they take the institutional church with a grain of salt. They love the Catholic teaching when it makes sense to them, when it gives them access to new life and enables them to respond to the demands that the world makes on them. But if the teaching does not make sense, they do not bother with it. The third person does not wish to argue with other Catholics about it. It would not occur to this person to argue with the bishops or the pope. If these teachings make sense to other Catholics, the third person thinks they should accept them whole-heartedly.

Similarly, the third person loves the sacramental life of the Church. They participate in the sacraments when they make sense to them, when they deepen their awareness of God's presence and strengthen them in their involvement with other people. But when they do not make sense

³³ Gregory Baum, *The Credibility of the Church Today*, 200-202.

to them, when they become barriers to worship and to the community, then they do not bother with them. Again, they do not feel like arguing about it. They make their own choice; they do not feel guilty about it. They want to leave other people free to make up their own minds.

The third person acknowledges the law of the Church. They are not rebels. They believe in law and order. At the same time, they realize that human life is complex and that there are situations in which ecclesiastical law does not promote the spiritual well-being of all persons. In those cases, they feel free to act apart from canon law and if necessary, move to the margins of the ecclesiastical institution.

The third person differs from the Christian who is losing their faith. Some people move away from the church because they find it increasingly difficult to accept that there is a redemptive mystery in life. Life is identified by them simply by what they see. They find it impossible to believe in the mystery of God present to all people.

The third person differs also from the Christian who loses their interest in the church because they have given in to their selfish desires. A Christian may become so self-centered that the community of faith and love becomes a burden to them. They may stay away from the church because they find the gospel a hard road to follow.

Again, the third person is different from the confused Christian who does not know what to believe anymore. Because of the changes in liturgy and doctrinal emphasis and because of the uncertainty in regard to much of traditional authority, some Catholics may simply be confused. They want to follow the church but they no longer know exactly what this implies. We conclude, the third person is neither the unfaithful man nor the selfish man nor the confused man. Who then, is this person?

The third person wants to be faithful to the divine presence revealed in Christ and mediated in the Catholic Church. They want to be sensitive to the Spirit who creates the Church. The third person is an inevitable phenomenon accompanying the Church's entry into a new spiritual-cultural environment and the refocusing of the gospel which this entails. We have shown that Vatican II has begun to refocus the self-identical Gospel and that the reinterpretation of the Church's teaching in the light of the new focus is a gradual process.

While we pass through this process, we are all more or less third persons. As Catholics, we accept the Church's teaching. But as we adjust to the new focus of the gospel, there are many doctrinal positions to which we are unable to assign a clear meaning. These doctrinal positions were formulated with reference to a previous focus. Because the focus has shifted, these positions no longer make sense the way they once did. Because the process of reinterpretation is a gradual one, it may happen that these positions cannot yet be related to the new focus. These new positions seem to hang in the air. What is required is more reflection, more dialogue, more theological research, and more vital engagement in Christian life. This will speed up the process of reinterpretation. In some important cases, what may be required is the endorsement of the reinterpretation by the ecclesiastical Magisterium.

Gregory Baum's reference to a third person represents his way of remaining within the Catholic Church while emphasizing its importance as a societal movement. He wants to keep a dialectic between local and universal, and between the past and the present. He wants to emphasize the redeeming aspects of an open church while being sensitive to its institutional nature. There is a freedom in being a third person that embraces the redemptive presence of God within and without the sacramental and sermons of the Word that are ever present in worship services.

Conclusion

I have written this article for two reasons. The first one is that I believe it is credible to remain within the Church despite its failings. This possibility has been shown by Gregory Baum with his illustration of the third person. This third person loves the church. In spite of its many failings, this person finds redemption, salvation, and mystery at the heart of the gospel. I continue to be enamored by the church and feel that I can truly worship God there.

The second reason I have written this article is to show how the Catholic Church embodies and subsists within the Christian Church in a richer sense than some Protestant churches. Gregory Baum's description of a dialectic between the local and the universal, between the past and the present, and between the fallen nature of the institution and the redemptive reality of social movements demonstrates that there is a middle ground in all of these things. My reading of the Catholic Catechism showed me that there is a richness to the Catholic explanation of the faith that goes beyond many confessions and theologies that I have read.

Chapter Three

Doctrines, Lectionaries, Liturgies, and Catechisms

1. The Bible as an open book

A wonderful thing about the Bible is that it is easy to read. A person can start in the New Testament with the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Gospels tell the story of the birth and life of Jesus. They include stories about his parables, his teachings, his miracles, and the calling of his disciples.

The Book of Acts follows immediately upon these Gospel writings and tells the story of the birth of the Church. Paul goes as a missionary to Asia Minor and establishes churches in Ephesus, Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi. Peter remains in Jerusalem and establishes a church in that city along with a church in Antioch.

The letters of Paul to the new Asian churches are included after the Book of Acts. Paul writes these letters to help the congregations grow more firmly in their belief in Jesus. Then come the letters of Peter to show that he was a founding apostle of the Church, and some more esoteric books like Hebrews and the Book of Revelation.

The Old Testament is similar in that it is also easy to read. After 11 chapters in Genesis about the creation of the world by God, there is a story of Abraham being called by God to go to Canaan to become a nation. We follow this family with the birth of Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 sons of Jacob who become the 12 tribes of Israel.

These tribes end up in Egypt because of a famine and are enslaved for many years before God rescues them by taking them across the Red Sea. They wander in the desert for many years and finally end up back in Canaan and establish a kingship through Saul, David, and Solomon. David establishes

Jerusalem as the capital city of the nation of Israel, and the central place of worship of God. Solomon builds a temple to the Lord.

The people of Israel are exiled again to Babylon because of their lack of belief, and then come back to rebuild the Temple. The second half of the Old Testament is devoted to the prophets who provide a critique of the political kingdom of Israel. They suggest that God is establishing a different type of kingdom.

2. Apostles' Creed

One of the ways in which scholars have tried to summarize these stories and teachings is by developing something called Biblical theology.³⁴ Biblical theology takes central concepts like justification, sanctification, and agape love, and tries to show how they are linked together in the various books of the Bible. One of the problems with using these words to provide a Biblical theology is that it is like a Cessna plane flying low over the ground. The pilot and passenger can see the ground below them, but they do not have a bird's eye view. It is difficult to summarize all the different aspects of the New Testament as well as the Old Testament in an easy manner.

The Church produced an ingenious way of summarizing God's work in the world. They developed a Trinitarian understanding of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and added details about how each of these persons of God acted in the world. It is called the *Apostles' Creed*.³⁵

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of Heaven and Earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;

³⁴ Wikipedia, *Biblical theology*, [Biblical theology - Wikipedia](#)

³⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Apostles' Creed*, [Apostles' Creed | USCCB](#), see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 117.

on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended to Heaven.
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
And life everlasting.
Amen.

The beautiful thing about this *Apostles' Creed* is that it can be used as the basis of a catechism for children or young people to understand God better. The Catholic Church uses the *Apostles' Creed* as the basis of its catechism.³⁶ There are four parts to the Catholic catechism: one that reflects on the *Apostles' Creed*, another part that has to do with the way that people worship and partake of the sacraments of baptism and Communion, a third part that has to do with life in Christ, and the last section is based on the Lord's prayer. The *Apostles' Creed* provides the basis of a contemporary understanding of how God acts in the world and how we can understand these activities better.

3. How to complicate a creed

One way of complicating a creed is to become more specific in terms of the relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The beautiful thing about the *Apostles' Creed* is that it leaves these relationships relatively undefined. It speaks about God the Father who created the world; about Jesus who came to live on Earth, was crucified and resurrected, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and it speaks about the Holy Spirit without specifying whether it is an advocating spirit or a convicting spirit. The creed ends with a few general comments about one Universal Church, the forgiveness of sins, and the fact that we will be resurrected at the end of time and have eternal life.

The Church decided in 325 of the Christian era that it needed to specify more specifically the relationship between God the Father, God the Son, and God

³⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition (libreria editrice vaticana, n.d.), 185-1065.

the Holy Spirit. This creed is called the *Nicene Creed*.³⁷ It begins generally enough:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and Earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

It then continues by specifying the fact that “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,” which is similar to the *Apostles’ Creed*. The *Nicene Creed* goes on to say that Jesus is . . .

...eternally begotten of the Father, true God from true God, eternally begotten, not made, one being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven.

This is truly a wonderful statement. It reminds us of the statement in Proverbs 8, which says that Wisdom was with God as a workman who helped create the Earth. Christians understand this statement as referring to Jesus Christ who was not created by God, but begotten of the Father, and therefore with God from the beginning of time. The Nicene Creed goes on to say that “for us and for our salvation He came down from Heaven.”

There is now a more specific reference to the Holy Spirit. It says that:

By the power of the Holy Spirit, He was born of the Virgin Mary and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

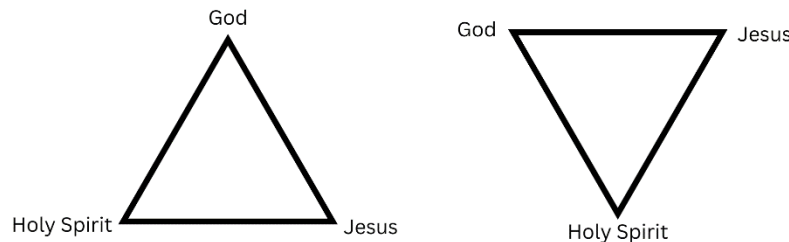
These statements are similar to what the *Apostles’ Creed* talked about. We come now to an interesting part of the Creed where it speaks about the fact that:

³⁷United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Nicene Creed*, [Nicene Creed | USCCB](#); see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600)*, 201-202.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

This is indeed an interesting statement. We can understand it by using a metaphor of a triangle. Let us imagine a triangle with the point down. There is a horizontal line with God on the left-hand side and Jesus on the right-hand side. The Holy Spirit is at the point in the bottom. This is the meaning of the *Nicene Creed*, where it says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father and Jesus Christ.

The creed says that the Holy Spirit is directly related to God the Father and God the Son. This statement represents a Christocentric understanding of the Trinity, as well as the fact that God is involved directly both in revelation through His Son on Earth and through the Holy Spirit, who convicts us, as well as comforts, and advocates for us.



This statement reminds me of the way the three-year Lectionary is organized in the mainline churches.³⁸ The Lectionary celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost and then celebrates Trinity Sunday a week later. There is only one week in which the Holy Spirit can move freely without being defined specifically as proceeding from the Father and the Son.

I realize I am being a little facetious here, but it seems to me that we are not sure exactly what to do with the Holy Spirit.

³⁸ *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 33.

Let me give an example. The Holiness and the Pentecostal movements of the 20th century have been phenomenal. They illustrate the fact that God moves in exceptional ways. We think of the impact they had in Brazil where there was a strong authoritarian and hierarchical Church as well as state. The Pentecostal movement was able to transform the people into a better understanding of themselves, not as macho men, but as good fathers to their children, faithful to their wives, and devout to Jesus Christ. Sociologist David Martin has written about the impact of Pentecostalism throughout the world.³⁹ This really shows how the Holy Spirit can move without direct reference to a monotheistic or Christocentric understanding of God.

The reason I have mentioned these two examples is that the Eastern Orthodox Church ended up disagreeing with how the *Nicene Creed* defined the Holy Spirit. The metaphor of a triangle is again instructive. In this case, the triangle is right side up with one point up, and two angles going down to the left and the right. The point at the top is God who then proceeds to influence the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ through the two angles on the left and on the right. The Orthodox Church ended up splitting from the Western Roman Church over this simple statement that “the Holy Spirit has proceeded not only from God the Father but also from the Son.” Three little words—“and the Son”—are known as the Filioque controversy.⁴⁰

The *Nicene Creed's* specification of how God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit relate to each other caused a division over remarkably simple things. It is necessary to specify the fact that Jesus was begotten, not created, that the Holy Spirit worked in Mary's conception of Jesus, and the fact that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and working through many people in the world.

We will have an opportunity in the next chapter to specify the dual nature of Jesus in the *Chalcedon Creed*. The *Chalcedon Creed* was formulated two hundred and fifty years after the Nicene Creed in 451.

³⁹ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990); David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001).

⁴⁰ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600)*. 212.

4. The Chalcedon Creed

The *Chalcedon Creed*⁴¹ is indeed a wonderful document which suggests that:

“Jesus is acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and both concurring in one person and one substance, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The idea that Jesus was fully human and fully divine is indeed a wonderful statement of how Jesus is related to us and to God. Jesus identifies with us in every way—his suffering, empathy, and compassion—while being part of the Godhead.

One way of looking at this is to talk about the way the resurrection is spoken about. On the one hand, Paul in Acts 2:32 talks about the fact that after Jesus’ death, God was the one who raised him from the dead. If a person is dead, they need another person to help them rise from the dead.

John in Chapter 10:18 looks at it a little differently. Jesus suggests that he has the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it up again. It is not so much that he is raised from the dead by God, but that he rises because he is God himself. I realize this is a little bit of a detailed point, but it makes it interesting to look at how Jesus is God through his miracles, his teachings and parables, and through his resurrection. At the same time he is fully human. Jesus prays for strength to face his death. Sometimes he goes off to the mountains to pray and be alone.

The *Chalcedon Creed* is not only a statement about Jesus, but a statement about how we live our lives. We are part of the being of God because we have been made in the image of God. There is a spark of divine within us. We naturally seek after God, and feel completely whole through him. At the same time, we are fully human. We sin. We ask for forgiveness. And we seek the will of God. Keeping these two aspects of ourselves, the divine and the human, in proper perspective helps us live our lives to the fullest extent.

⁴¹ CARM, *Chalcedon Creed*, [Chalcedonian Creed \(A.D. 451\) | Text of the Chalcedonian Creed \(carm.org\)](http://carm.org/Chalcedonian-Creed-A.D.-451-Text-of-the-Chalcedonian-Creed), Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600)*. 263-266.

It is tempting to emphasize one or the other aspect of this dual nature. We may believe that we are so weak that we need God to affect change in our lives. We believe that God is fully involved in our lives because we are unable to make good decisions as human beings. This view was underscored by Reformer Martin Luther who felt totally defeated in his life. He felt that the will of God was much more powerful than the will of human beings.⁴² Paul himself talks in Roman 7:19 about wanting to do good, but not being able to. This passage was used by Luther and others to affirm the powerful, divine will of God working in our lives.

I believe that this emphasis has led to a distortion of the Christian message. We have been born in the image of God. God calls us from within ourselves, and has placed the law within our hearts. We are able to naturally seek after God and find God, and feel completely comforted by the fact that we are part of the being of God. Paul talks about us being part of the being of God in the Book of Acts chapter 17:28. It is only after the announcement that we are part of God that we can emphasize the human side. We can then look more particularly at all the ways in which Jesus influences our lives.

The 12 steps of recovery are a good example of how the divine and human will work.⁴³ The first step has to do with denial, which is remarkably close to what human beings are all about. As soon as we are accused of something, we say “No, it is not us, it is someone else.” We find others to blame, and find it hard to take responsibility for ourselves. It is only when we look at the reality of denial in our lives that we can be open to a higher power who is God. We can surrender to that higher power, and take accountability of our lives because of what Jesus Christ is doing. Admitting denial and surrendering to God represent the first steps of the recovery process. These steps emphasize the role of the human will in giving oneself to God.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that we have a more sophisticated understanding of Mary in the *Chalcedon Creed* (see below) than we had in the *Nicene Creed*. It talks about the fact that “Jesus was born for us and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, Theotokos.” The word “theotoks” means Mother of God. Here we have an idea that the Virgin Mary is not only giving

⁴² Martin Luther, *Bondage of the Will* (Vision Press, 2017).

⁴³ Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Twelve Steps*, [The Twelve Steps | Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa.org\)](http://www.aa.org)

birth to Jesus, but that she is in some way part of the salvific process. Because Jesus is God, Mary can be called the Mother of God.⁴⁴

An example of Mary as the mother of God was illustrated for me when I visited a church in Montreal.⁴⁵ There were a variety of prophet statues in the main sanctuary, along with a frontal piece in which there was a Communion table with the disciples. A variety of prophets were standing behind them in silhouette, and the communion of saints above that. I noticed a figure being crowned at the very pinnacle of the scene. I assumed that it was Jesus. I was wrong. It was Mary who was being crowned. After all, it was her church which was called Notre Dame, our mother. It showed me the importance that Catholics give to the role of Mary in the Church.

I believe that a more feminine understanding of the Church and Mary's role within salvation is needed. We think of Jesus being the bridegroom and the Church being the bride, who is represented by Mary. In this way we can talk about Mary in a stronger way than perhaps we have in the past. Some of the Madonna and child pictures show Jesus as a little man sitting on the lap of Mary. The idea behind this is that Jesus is the Savior and Lord of our lives within the womb or warmth of Mary, who represents the Church. Jesus is Lord and Savior within the larger picture of the Church in which we feel comforted. The feminine understanding of Mary as identified with the Church helps us feel safe, and feel that we can worship within the Church. The Church should always be a safe place within which we can receive the host, who is Jesus. The next chapter delves into the role of Mary a little bit more deeply.

*Chalcedon Creed*⁴⁶

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess “that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us one and the same Son, the self-same perfect in Godhead, self-same perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, the self-same of a rational soul and body; coessential with the Father according to the Godhead, the self-same coessential with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before the ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of

⁴⁴ Scott Hahn, *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God* (New York, Image Books, 2001).

⁴⁵ *Notre Dame Basilica, Montreal, Quebec* (Les Messageries des Press Benjamin), 1.

⁴⁶ CARM, *Chalcedon Creed*, [Chalcedonian Creed \(A.D. 451\) | Text of the Chalcedonian Creed \(carm.org\)](http://www.carm.org/Chalcedonian-Creed-A.D.-451-Text-of-the-Chalcedonian-Creed), Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Christian Tradition (100-600)*, 263-266.

the Virgin Mary, Theotokos according to the Manhood; One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and both concurring in one Person and one Hypostasis; not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the self-same Son, and only begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

5. The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary

I am moving rather quickly from the 5th century in which the *Chalcedon Creed* was adopted to the 19th century when Pius the IXth adopted the two doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary.⁴⁷ I am reflecting on these last two doctrines that the Catholic Church has adopted because it demonstrates a variety of things about worship, original sin, and the notion of purity.

As you know, Adam and Eve passed on original sin which is a natural condition of human beings. We will fall into sin regardless of our attempts not to. This was different for Jesus who was born as a perfect human being, and who did not sin. The Church worried about keeping the purity of Jesus and his sinlessness intact. They felt that Mary also had to have been conceived in a way that she did not inherit original sin. That is what is called the Immaculate Conception. By keeping Mary pure, Jesus was also kept pure from human sin.

The same concern holds true for the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. Death is the result of sin, and so Mary who was born without original sin was assumed into Heaven without dying. Elijah, who went into Heaven without dying, is a precursor to this idea.

What are we to think about these two doctrines? Is it really necessary to see Mary as having been immaculately conceived, and assumed into Heaven in order to keep the purity of Jesus intact? This speaks directly to some of the

⁴⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 26, 143-145.

differences between the way that Catholics worship and a variety of Protestant Evangelical Churches. The reason that there is such concern about Mary and purity is because the host representing Jesus is the center of Catholic worship. Everything leads up to the fact that the priest consecrates the host along with the cup and distributes it to the people. The host itself is kept in a Tabernacle reminiscent of the Old Testament's use of a Tabernacle to keep the 10 commandments intact.

It is interesting to note that the only person in the Catholic Church who can consecrate the host is a celibate priest, namely one who is not involved in marriage. As you know, there are three vows for priesthood: poverty, chastity, and obedience. In this case, chastity speaks to the fact that sexuality is viewed as part of original sin. The person who consecrates the host has to be above that. There is a need for pure mystery, pure love, pure adoration, and reverence for the host in order to receive it.

It is hard to replicate this kind of reverence in the Evangelical Churches. Their tendency is to have a variety of musical expressions through bands, authoritative preaching by ministers, testimonies of conversions, and a series of prayers. Those expressions of faith dominate a Protestant service. Protestants are much more concerned about having as many people participate as possible. The Catholics want to limit that in order to focus their primary attention on the Communion service, which takes up a good part of the service.

How do we worship? To what extent is Communion, or the host, or the mystery of God important? To what extent do we feel that we need to express our testimonies or ourselves in worship? There is a sense in a Catholic worship service that the self is given over to God through the partaking of the host and the cup. In a Protestant service, the self is more prominent in giving expression to how God works in each of our lives.

This chapter concludes the series of reflections on the *Apostles' Creed*, *Nicene Creed*, *Chalcedon Creed*, and the two doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary. We move in the next chapter to the importance of lectionaries in worship.\

6. Lectionaries

At the end of the 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great selected a series of Biblical readings, collected them in a book, and sent them along with the priests who were going as missionaries to England and Europe.⁴⁸ Even though the priests could read and write, Pope Gregory was not as confident about their ability to preach, or to conduct a worship service. He reasoned that if there were at least some Biblical readings read during the service that God would be present.

Gregory chose an Epistle and a Gospel for each Sunday of the church year. As you know, the Church year is centered around the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus during Easter, as well as the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The Church reasoned that 40 days before Easter was an adequate time in which to prepare for the suffering and death of Christ. These 40 days matched the 40 days that Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted. The Church called this season Lent and had an opening service called Ash Wednesday.

The Church did the same thing for Christmas, deciding that four weeks before Christmas was an adequate time to prepare for Christmas. They called this season Advent. Right after Christmas was the season of Epiphany, which started with the coming of the Wise Men and ended with readings about the life of Jesus.

In addition, 50 days after Easter represented the Easter season, which was followed by Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday followed directly after Pentecost and proceeded to the season of Ordinary Time, in which there were readings about the birth of the Church, parables, teachings, and miracles of Jesus, and many epistles.

Pope Gregory the Great chose readings appropriate for each season, starting with the first Sunday of Advent, which is about a month before December 25th. He continued on by selecting readings from the New Testament that were suitable for the seasons of Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time. One of the fascinating things about this development is that these readings came to represent the standard readings in the Roman

⁴⁸ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Patristic Church*, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1998), 425-437.

Catholic,⁴⁹ Anglican,⁵⁰ and Lutheran churches⁵¹ up to the 1980s. One pictures an Anglican lady who takes her Book of Common Prayer out of her purse and turns to the suitable reading for that Sunday. Her common prayer book includes all the readings that Pope Gregory chose, contained in a fairly small book, in addition to some liturgies and prayers.

It is astounding to think that these lectionary readings stayed the same for almost 1,300 years from 600 – 1980. In spite of the fact that the Lutherans and Anglicans split from the Roman Catholic Church, they kept the same readings as a way of showing continuity with the liturgies which are centered around the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, including the growth of the Church.

Let me say something about the reason that the Church decided to change the lectionary in the 1980s. One of the problems with choosing only an Epistle and Gospel was that the Psalms and Old Testament were largely left out. Theologian Gregory Baum has noted that antisemitism became a fact in the Christian Church because of a lack of Old Testament readings.⁵² The New Testament readings suggested that the Jews were to blame for the death of Christ. The Holocaust made it clear that something had gone wrong in the Christian Church.

The salvation story starts with the Old Testament, with creation, the call of Abraham, the escape from Egypt, the journey of the people of Israel to Canaan, the establishment of the nation of Israel, the return from exile in Babylon, and the rebuilding of the Temple. Starting the salvation story in the Old Testament enables it to stand in continuity with the New Testament sayings and activities of God. We will have an opportunity to talk about this at a later time when we speak about the importance of covenantal theology.

7. Luke 21:25-33 and Matthew 21:1-9

I would like to highlight some of the readings that Pope Gregory chose to have included in his one-year lectionary. There is a bit of a controversy regarding

⁴⁹*Missale romanum Mediolani*, 1474, published by the Catholic Church, Volume 17 (Society of Harrison and Sons, 1899).

⁵⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1962, Canada (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962).

⁵¹ Paul W. Nesper, *Biblical Texts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1952), 207-218.

⁵² Gregory Baum, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?* (New York, 1965).

the fact that two passages were chosen as the first Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Advent.

Hughes Oliphant Old has written five volumes about the development of the lectionary starting with New Testament times. He suggests on page 436 of his second volume entitled *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Patristic Age*, that Luke 21:25 to 33 represented the first Advent Gospel reading.⁵³ This is verified by a homily that has been published.⁵⁴ Pope Gregory used Luke 21:25 to 33 as the basis of his sermon for the first Sunday of Advent.

In spite of this evidence, Hughes Oliphant Old, in his third volume of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Medieval Church*, suggests on page 182 that Matthew 21:1 to 9 represents the Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Advent.⁵⁵ The fact that two readings were chosen for the first Sunday of Advent is verified when a person consults worship missals that were in place up to and after the Reformation. The Sarum Missal, which was used in England in 1078,⁵⁶ has Matthew 21:1 to 9 as its first Advent text, as does the Lutheran missal and the Anglican missal that were adopted after the Reformation.⁵⁷ Matthew 21:1 to 9 is included as the reading for the First Sunday of Advent.

The Roman Catholic Church decided on a different path by having Luke 21:25 to 33 as the first reading for Advent. This is consistent throughout, as demonstrated by a Roman missal from 1492,⁵⁸ and as well as by recent missals up to the 1980s.⁵⁹ One of the odd things about this Lukan passage is that it has more to do with the tribulation that Christians will face in the future, as well as the second coming of the Son of Man, than with the birth of Christ. Old has suggested that Pope Gregory chose this rather apocalyptic passage because there were many soldiers and militia who were threatening to topple the Roman Empire, as it then stood.⁶⁰ Pope Gregory was suggesting we should look into the future for our hope, rather than the present.

⁵³ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Patristic Age*, Volume 2, 436.

⁵⁴ Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 15-20.

⁵⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Medieval Church*, Volume 3, 182.

⁵⁶ Wikipedia, *Use of Sarum*, [Use of Sarum - Wikipedia](#)

⁵⁷ *The Book of Common Prayer*; Paul W. Nesper, *Biblical Texts*.

⁵⁸ *Missale romanum Mediolani*, 1474, Catholic Church, Volume 17 (Society of Harrison and Sons, 1899).

⁵⁹ Dom Gasper Lefebvre, *The Saint Andrew Daily Missal*, 1958.

⁶⁰ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Patristic Age*, Volume 2, 436; Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: The Medieval Church*, Volume 3, 182.

Matthew 21:1 to 9 is a fascinating passage because it talks about Jesus entering Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. The Church used this passage to suggest that their missionary journeys to England and Europe, along with their establishment of the Church in England, could be compared to Jesus entering Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. There was a correlation between the triumphal entry of Jesus and the triumphal establishment of Christianity in the Holy Roman Empire.

The fact that a correlation could be made between a Heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom caused the Church in the late 20th century to relegate Matthew 21:1 to 9 to serve as a processional text for Palm Sunday.⁶¹ The Church changed the name of Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday and included the passion narratives as readings for that day. The Church made it clear that we should emphasize the suffering and death of Christ rather than his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.⁶²

It appears as though we go from one extreme to the other. On the one hand, the Church has been correlated with a political kingdom or with a society that has been successful in establishing Christianity within various nations, for example in the United States and Canada. On the other hand, there has been a recent shift in thinking in the Church that this political comparison smacks of triumphalism. Instead of emphasizing the fact that we are Christians, we should concentrate on the suffering and death of Christ by talking about Passion Sunday and Passion Week rather than about the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

As a result of this reticence about Matthew 21, the Church chose Luke 21:25 to 33 as the first text for Advent in its three-year cycle of Scripture readings in the 1980s.⁶³ One wonders about this Lukan passage, along with several others that talk about the second coming of Christ. We have gone from a triumphalism to emphasizing a hope and a future beyond the present.

It is as though we cannot simply celebrate Christmas as the inauguration of Jesus as the Son of Man. Christmas is a wonderful time with gifts and family and gatherings. There needs to be a balance between an assurance that we

⁶¹ *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 30.

⁶² One of the statements from this Matthean passage that has been preserved in the communion liturgy is "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," Matthew 21:9.

⁶³ *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 124.

have been saved and that we are part of the Kingdom of God that is being established in our world, and the fact that there is a future kingdom, that life here is not perfect, and that Christ will come again. I find the number of second coming Gospel passages that are used during this time of Advent interesting. Matthew 24 and 25, also millennial texts, are used as readings in November just before the start of Advent.⁶⁴

8. Scripture readings during worship

Mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Anglican Church use the lectionary readings described above. They adopted a three-year lectionary in which the Gospel of Matthew is used in the first year, the Gospel of Mark in the second year, and the Gospel of Luke in the third year, with readings from the Gospel of John scattered throughout. There are four readings for every Sunday: an Old Testament reading, a Psalm, a Gospel, and an epistle.

The Reformed Church and Evangelical Churches take a different approach to the reading of scripture during worship. The Reformed Church adopted an *electio continua* method by which the first two chapters of Matthew were read on the first Sunday of the year.⁶⁵ Matthew 3 and 4 were read on the second Sunday, Matthew 5 and 6 the third Sunday, and so on. At the end of the Passion Narrative which goes into Easter, and after the Church had celebrated Pentecost, they turned to the Gospel of Luke and continued the same method with Luke 1 and 2 being read the first Sunday after Pentecost. Luke 3 and 4 were read after that, while the reading of the next chapters continued right up to the beginning of Advent.

The Evangelical Churches took a more thematic approach, choosing a book of the Bible to preach on in a series, or a certain theme such as salvation or the Trinity.

The importance of preaching the Word is evident if you go into a Protestant sanctuary. Generally, the pulpit is situated right in the middle of the platform, indicating that the preaching of the Word is the most important part. I was made aware of this fact when I was a guest speaker at a local Protestant

⁶⁴ *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 122.

⁶⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures: Age of the Reformation*, Volume 4, 46-47.

church. I had given the worship leader the scripture readings that I was going to preach on and the title of my sermon. I asked the presider what I should do after I had preached the sermon. They told me that I could simply close in prayer.

The situation is different with most of the mainline churches. They place the Communion table front and center in the sanctuary, with a lectern on the left for scripture readings to be read and a pulpit on the right for the preaching of the Word. The preaching of the Word is the second part of the service, while Communion follows in the third part of the service. Space and time are allowed for the celebration of the host, with a variety of songs being sung while people go up to receive the host and the cup. This is a wonderful time of reflection upon the Word, and upon one's own spiritual journey.

I was reminded of the difficulty that some Evangelical Churches have with including Communion as part of their services. In the Mennonite church where I grew up, Communion was only celebrated every month or so. When it was announced that we would have a Communion service the next Sunday, the congregation groaned. They knew that the service would be longer than usual in order to take account of the Communion service. Communion was an add-on feature to the service of the Word rather than being integrated into the service.

I am not sure whether it is important to follow one or the other type of service that has been described. I do think it is important to think about how scripture is integrated into worship. I talked to several colleagues who mentioned the fact that sometimes scripture is not even read during the service in some Evangelical Churches. There is more emphasis on preaching on a theme or mentioning activities that are happening in the community or in the fellowship. At the same time, it sometimes feels that the reading of the scriptures in mainline churches goes on forever. One thinks of Passion Week where two chapters are read from the Gospel of the Passion Narrative. In this case, there is special emphasis on making sure that scriptures are an integral part of the service.

9. Order of service

Wheaton College professor Robert Webber discovered in the late 20th century that the early church adhered to a fourfold format of the worship service.⁶⁶ It began with a call to worship, proceeded with scripture readings and a sermon, went on to include responses to the sermon with a variety of prayers, offerings, and testimonies, as well as Communion, and then ended the service with a sending of the people into the community.

Robert Webber was intrigued by this order of service because he had become tired of the variety of ways in which his Evangelical Church conducted worship. He was looking for a more ordered type of service in which there was continuity and inclusion of the two parts of the service that were most important: preaching of the Word and the partaking of Communion.

I have been drawn to the writings of Robert Webber because I also have moved from an emphasis on the preaching of the Word to an understanding of the importance of Communion as an integral part of the worship service. Even though I do not include Communion for every Sunday, the responses to the sermon are a wonderful way of reflecting on and integrating the sermon into our lives.

One of the problems I had when the service of the Word was the only content presented during the service was that we as a family or as congregational members did not have a chance to digest what the preacher had said. Perhaps over a Sunday meal we could talk about it, or in small groups after the church service, but it felt as though the meditation had fallen on fresh ground that had not been tilled, and so the seed could not be planted.

Communion services allow for an integration of the Word and the sacrament. In the Lutheran Church that I attended, we would spend at least half an hour taking time to reflect on the sermon as people went up to receive the host and the cup. We would sing between five and ten songs that spoke to us, and we would have time to reflect more quietly on what God was saying to us. By the time the Communion service was over, there was a completeness to worship that I had not experienced in the same way before.

⁶⁶ Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship* (Baker Books, 2008); Robert Webber, *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982); Robert Webber and Lester Ruth, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2012).

One of the challenges of adopting an ancient form of worship is to question whether this is really something that we want to adopt. For example, the early church included a confession of repentance and assurance of forgiveness at the beginning of each service, either before the service or after the call to worship. The reason they did this was to prepare congregants for worship. They took account of the fact that original sin was real, and that we are prone to sin. A public confession of repentance each Sunday makes clear that we are in need of forgiveness. It also makes clear that it is possible for the Minister to declare an absolution of these sins on the basis of God's forgiveness.

I am partial to this way of conducting a worship service because I worked in a prison environment. Assurance of forgiveness was very important for the men that I worked with. They were very well aware of the need for forgiveness, as well as the fact that they were not sure that they could be absolved of the harm that they had done. The Catholic Church goes further by saying that congregants need to say private confession to a priest before they receive Communion. While public confession is generic, private confession to a priest allows more specific identification of sins that have been committed.

One of the difficulties in the Evangelical Church regarding this act of repentance is that it is often said only to God in a private manner. People are shy or do not feel that they need to confess their sins to others. It becomes harder to deal with this in a pro-social manner. The Book of James advises us to confess our sins to each other.⁶⁷ This is perhaps where the practice of confession and absolution came into being. Thinking about whether this part of the service needs to be included helps us think about what we believe about worship.

I should add that the passing of the peace is an integral part of the mainline churches' act of worship. After the priest has announced the fact that we will be having Communion, they invite us all to shake hands with others in order to affirm the fact that we are at peace and can take Communion with a good conscience.

⁶⁷ James 5:16, cf. Walter Koehler, *Counselling and Confession* (Saint Louis: Concordia Seminary Press, 2011).

The Evangelical Churches have a little more trouble including a handshake as part of the service. Mennonites would suggest that making peace with one's neighbor is something one does in the community. Before a person takes Communion, passing the peace in a worship service reinforces the fact that we need to make peace with our neighbors.

10. Book of Revelation as an example of worship

One of the things that surprised me about Scott Hahn's book, *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth*,⁶⁸ was the extent to which he saw the Book of Revelation as an example of worship. Although my seminary professors wrote several commentaries on the Book of Revelation, they did not emphasize this aspect of worship.⁶⁹ For them, the millennial aspects of the later chapters in which John talks about tribulation, millennial reign, rapture, and the end times were the most important parts of the book. As Mennonites, they felt that they had to dialogue with denominations like Seventh Day Adventists and other Evangelicals about the end times.

Scott Hahn's book, *The Lamb's Supper*, is different in that it emphasizes the aspects of worship that are mentioned and detailed in the first few chapters. Revelation 4:1, for example, talks about Heaven being open and Earth and Heaven being one entity. One thinks of the Lord's Prayer in which we ask God's will to be done not only in Heaven, but on Earth. Scott Hahn suggests that this is actually what happens during a worship service. We are living like Heaven on Earth with the communion of saints. Rereading the Book of Revelation with worship in mind is indeed revealing. There are a lot of saints worshipping the Lamb who was slain. In the later chapters, the Dragon and Satan are defeated by God. Scott Hahn suggests that we are called to decide whose side we are on. We are in a battle in which the Dragon has been defeated by God.

Thinking about the Book of Revelation as a resource for worship reinforces my idea that a certain order of worship is important for Christian believers to grow. I would never have seen the worship service as an example of Heaven

⁶⁸ Scott Hahn, *The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2003).

⁶⁹ J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance* (Grand Rapids: Brazon Press, 2010); John Yeats, *Revelation* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2003).

on Earth if it were not for Scott Hahn. He is a former Reformed minister who converted to Catholicism and became a major apologist for Catholicism, writing books like *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*⁷⁰ and *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism*.⁷¹ His enthusiasm is persuasive in the sense that he has rediscovered the importance of worship in one's faith. For that, he is to be commended.

11. Baptism and Communion

Baptism and Communion became more comprehensible for me when I saw baptism primarily as an initiation rite, and Communion as a celebration of fellowship among believers. This understanding, while somewhat simplistic, helps me to get over some of the hurdles that I have had regarding the two sacraments.

Even though I am a Mennonite and believe that adult baptism is the right way to go,⁷² I have come to appreciate other churches' practice of infant baptism as a way of including and welcoming infants into the body of Christ. I still believe that it is important to confess as a mature believer that one believes in Jesus Christ. And yet any initiation rite represents more than that confession. Initiation rites have to do with the fact that we are stepping over a threshold. To baptize an infant is a way of the Church including that infant in the body of Christ. The parents commit themselves to raising their child to become a believer. The rite of confirmation is a way for that child, adolescent, teenager, or adult to confess with their own lips that they believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

One of the controversies about Communion that occurred about 30 years ago was the question of whether infants could receive Communion. Anglicans felt that if infants had been baptized that they could receive Communion in spite of the fact that they may not have been confirmed. This concern is an example of how much we feel that everyone should be included in the fellowship of believers. Communion is a celebration of this fellowship and an acknowledgement that Christ is the head of this body, the Lord and Saviour of our lives through His death and resurrection.

⁷⁰ Scott Hahn, *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*

⁷¹ Scott Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* (Ignatius Press, 1993)./

⁷² For Mennonite perspectives on baptism, see Anthony Siegrist, *Participating Witness* (Eugene: Pickwick Papers, 2013); Stuart Murray, *Naked Anabaptist* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2010).

Whether one emphasizes the fellowship of believers or the importance of the host and the cup, both are a matter of declaring that God is present among us, either in a humanistic social way or in a mystical vertical sense that has more to do with reverence and adoration in silence before God than interaction on a human level. For these reasons, I have been enamored by the rites of baptism and Communion in terms of defining how the Church operates.

12. Catechisms

I have been fascinated by the difference between the way that the Lutheran Catechism⁷³ and the Catholic Catechism⁷⁴ organize their statement of beliefs. Luther chose to put the 10 commandments in the first section, followed by the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the sacraments. The Catholic Catechism chose to start with the Apostles' Creed, followed by the sacraments, life in Christ, and the Lord's Prayer.

Luther decided that the order of creation as outlined by the 10 commandments needed to be placed first. He assumed that there is a fundamental difference between the order of creation and the order of redemption. As part of the order of creation, the 10 commandments are rules to be followed as well as commandments that bring people to repentance because they cannot live up to the commandments' expectations. One could say that the whole Old Testament represents a failure of the people of Israel to honor God's commands. The fact that they were exiled into Babylon means that they were waiting for a different kind of kingdom to come. This new kingdom is represented by the New Testament.

A danger of this arrangement has to do with separating the order of creation or natural law from the story of salvation. The duality between punishment and salvation can become a dualism in which the salvation story does not impact the order of creation. We can see the results of this in something like the Holocaust in which Luther's Two Kingdom Theory did not apply adequately to the political system.⁷⁵ A catastrophe of antisemitism was allowed to develop and was acted upon during the Second World War.

⁷³ Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, editors, *Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 345-480. Note Gordon Jensen's discussion of the matter, *Shaping Piety through Catechetical Structures*, *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 10.2 (2008) 223-246.

⁷⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition (libreria editrice vaticana, n.d.).

⁷⁵ Anders Nygren, *Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms*, (*Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, 2002), [Luther's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms - ELCA](#)

The Catholic Catechism is different in that it starts with the *Apostles' Creed*.⁷⁶ There is a more Trinitarian understanding of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Catechism continues with an emphasis on the seven sacraments, and then moves on to life in Christ. The 10 commandments are included within a framework which speaks about loving one's neighbour and loving God with one's whole heart. The 10 commandments are seen in a positive light that have to do with respect for life, others, property, and authority, as well as a strict monotheism.

This way of including the 10 commandments within our life in Christ is a more holistic understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is a story of salvation along with the New Testament. We think of the exodus from Egypt, establishment of the nation of Israel, building of the Temple, and the people learning to love God in exile. These are all ways in which the salvation story begins in the Old Testament and continues in the New Testament.

13. Covenantal theology

Covenantal theology is the easiest way to integrate the two testaments in such a way that the salvation story is told from beginning to end.⁷⁷ God made a covenant with Adam and Eve to take care of the Earth, a covenant with Noah never to destroy the Earth again, a covenant with Abraham that He would make him a great nation, a covenant with Moses that He would give the Israelites the 10 commandments, and a covenant with the people of Israel so that they would follow His will as they entered the land of Canaan.

These covenants assume that there is a relationship between God and the people which shapes how the commandments are carried out. Given the fact that people will fail, God offers repentance and restoration within a loving relationship. This loving relationship defines the whole story of the Old Testament in which the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob become the 12 tribes of Israel and establish themselves as the nation of Israel. Even as they fail because of the kingship model,⁷⁸ God is with them in the exile and the rebuilding of the Temple. The Old Testament ends with a hope for a new

⁷⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edition (libreria editrice vaticana, n.d.).

⁷⁷ Wikipedia, *Covenantal Theology*, [Covenant theology - Wikipedia](#)

⁷⁸ Cf. Gregory Baum's discussion of the matter, *Essays in Critical Theology* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 58-59.

covenant in which God will reveal himself further through the sacrifice of Jesus, and the establishment of his Church.

The best way of describing this covenantal theology is to contrast it with the idea of contract. Contract is a business term referring to the fact that two people enter into an arrangement to conduct business. Terms of the agreement are satisfied when a product is delivered from one agency to another.

Covenant assumes that there is a type of relationship between these two businesses that goes beyond contractual status, that there is a give and take in which mistakes are made, friendships are renewed, and the businesses grow together while being ethical in what they do. The human element is taken into account so that there is loyalty, respect, trust, compassion, and love. These are indeed precious commodities that can influence the way in which people conduct their business and interact with each other. This is the essence of what I am speaking about in which God made a covenant with Adam and Eve, with the people of Israel, along with the establishment of His Church. The Church is a safe place where we can come and worship within the covenant of care that God represents.

Chapter Four

Tracing the Trajectory of Low-Church Practices to High-Church Religious Beliefs

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is help readers situate themselves along a trajectory that moves from the low-church religious practices of Sunday worship to the high-church beliefs in papal authority, veneration of Mary, and the use of icons.⁷⁹ I have provided a chart that graphs these religious practices and beliefs along a horizontal line from zero to twenty-four (Chart 1). The inclusion of three categories within each section names the ways in which a believer is drawn to either side of an imaginary dividing line between low-church and high-church practices. These themes are meant as sign-posts along the way rather than as exhaustive categorizations of each church type.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ I am using the categories of “low-church” and “high-church” as value-neutral terms that detail a style of worship rather than place a relative value on either type of worship, see Dennis Bratcher’s article on the subject, “Low-Church and High-Church,” The Voice: Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing Christians (Christian Resource Institute, March 25, 2013).

⁸⁰ Robert Webber has provided a helpful way for evangelical churches to incorporate liturgy into their worship services, Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008). For various introductions to ecclesiology, see Veli-Matti Karkkainen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology (Illinois: Inter-varsity Press, 2002); Abe Dueck, et.al., New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2010).

A second set of typologies (Chart 2) provides a further explanation of why believers may be drawn to one or the other side of the Christian tradition. A belief in the priesthood of all believers makes worship services prone to the subjective aspects of testimonies and sharing, while a belief in the objective

Chart 1: Trajectory of Low-Church to High-Church Religious Practices and Beliefs

Sunday	Bible	baptismal	testimony	worship	liturgy	confession	passing of weekly	tabernacle	banners/	veneration	papal												
	font			team		of forgiveness	peace	communion	icons	of Mary	authority												
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
cross		pulpit	altar		adult	lectionary	congregational	confession	infant	vestments	adoration of/		display										
					baptism		participation	of faith	baptism		the host		of saints										

Chart 2: Categories of Continuity from Low-Church to High-Church Practices and Beliefs

1. Subjective	-----	Objective
2. Egalitarian	-----	Hierarchy
3. Word	-----	Sacrament
4. Secular	-----	Sacred
5. Functional	-----	Organic
6. Eschatology	-----	Immanence

signs of grace give greater priority to the priest and the eucharist. These themes are explained in the body of the article.

These charts are intended for use by believers and non-believers alike. Believers who are a part of a church and worship on a regular basis will be able to narrow their trajectory to within a few numbers. For those who are not part of a faith tradition, this trajectory can be used in an observer-participant manner to analysis the range of worship styles and religious expressions within different Christian traditions.

No. 1-3: Sunday Worship, Crosses, and the Bible

I begin with three faith traditions outside of the normal preview of Christian orthodoxy. Seventh Day Adventists are Christians who believe that church should gather for worship on Saturday. Jehovah Witnesses call their meeting places a Kingdom Hall instead of a church and believe that Jesus was crucified on a stake instead of a cross. Mormons, in turn, have added the special revelation of Joseph Smith to the Christian Bible and thus use a sacred book different from that of Christians.

These three traditions are useful in placing Christian believers along a trajectory in which (1) worshipping on Sunday, (2) installing a cross (crucifix) in the sanctuary, and (3) regarding the Old and New Testaments as the primary sacred texts for Christians, places them at number three in terms of orthodoxy. While Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons would fall between numbers zero and one, the vast majority of Christians would go further by saying that (1) Sunday worship, (2) crosses in a church, and (3) the Holy Bible are minimum requirements of what it means to practice being a Christian.

Nos. 4 - 6: Pulpits, Altars, and Baptismal Fonts

The next three items are a pulpit (4), a communion table (altar, 5), and baptismal font (6). A raised lectern or pulpit at the front of the church is the most common feature of most churches. This is where the worship leader facilitates the service, the minister preaches, and announcements and sharing take place. A pulpit brings focus to the service being conducted.

A communion table or altar (5) is normally present. In low-church traditions, it may be placed underneath the pulpit, to the side, or may not be present except for times of communion. In high-church traditions, the altar is normally raised and placed

front and centre while the lectern and/or pulpit are placed on a lower level and to the side.

A baptismal font (6) may or may not be present on a permanent basis in the sanctuary. High-church traditions tend to place a baptismal font toward the entrance of the church to remind parishioners of their baptismal vows. Low-church traditions tend to bring out a kneeling bench and pouring container at the time of baptism, or have a tub installed at the front of the sanctuary for use during a baptismal service. In most cases, churches consider pulpits, communion tables, and baptismal fonts as necessary parts of their religious practice. This would place most Christians in the number six position.

Nos. 7 – 9: Testimonies, Adult Baptism, and Worship Teams

Inclusion of testimonies, sharing, and announcements (7), facilitated by various worship leaders, are a straightforward way to distinguish low-church and high-church traditions. Low-church traditions' belief in the priesthood of all believers fosters a worshipful atmosphere in which many believers are invited to be part of the worship service. Testimonies and opportunities to share and pray are seen as essential because they undergird the fact that a subjective expression of faith, prayer concern, affirmation of transformation, and announcement about a week-day activity are part and parcel of what it means to build up the community of believers.

While low-church traditions assume that the ordering of the service is dependent on the subjective input of its worship leaders, high-church traditions assume that member participation needs to conform -- to a greater extent -- to a worship format adopted over a longer period of time. Announcements are included either before or after the service to set it apart from worship. Prayer concerns are written down in a book or included as part of more formal prayers. Testimonies or sharing on an ad hoc level does generally not occur.

Affirmation of adult baptism (8) under girds the integral aspect of a subjective response to the divine initiative of grace within low-church traditions. Believers are integrated into the visible church as full members when they testify to the salvation Christ has wrought for them. With its concomitant confession of faith by the candidate, and confirmation of that belief by their sponsor, adult baptism is what makes this religious rite so powerful. Coming of age means being able to accept the rewards and responsibilities that comes along with religious practice (I liked to joke

with my children that they could only be baptised if they had received their driving license, normally allowed at the ages of 14, 16, or 19).

High-church traditions include the subjective aspects of salvation when the priest asks the parents of the infant to raise the child in faith, when the child is confirmed between the age of six and twelve, and when confirmation classes for these children are an integral part of the baptismal process. Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches nevertheless believe that this subjective affirmation of faith is only part of what it means to be saved. Salvation is a free gift inherent in the baptism that does not need anything on the part of human beings to complete it.

A fine theological line between grace and faith causes believers and churches to fall on one or the other side of this conundrum. While believer church traditions would agree that faith is not required to complete salvation, they would nevertheless insist that a subjective sign is an integral part of what it means to be an active believer. They regard adult baptism as the proper indicator of this sign and see it as a symbol of inclusion into a visible church. Low-church traditions regard a variety of other signs as indispensable, such as testimonies, membership, and participation. While high-church traditions would agree that a response of faith is required, baptism is not the place to make this point.

Participation in a worship team that plans and organizes services (9) is indicated as number nine because it leans toward the egalitarian and subjective aspects of an order of service. Several low-church traditions consider the performance of a band as a major part of the worship service. The fact that the band acts more like a presider over the service than as a facilitator of congregational singing makes it apropos to place its contribution here. It plays an active role in shaping the overall thrust of the service. It fits in with the subjective aspects of worship such as testimonies, sharing, and announcements.

Nos. 10 - 12: Lectionary, Liturgy, and Congregational Participation

Transition from the subjective preoccupations of low-church traditions to the objective order of services in high-churches leads to the next three categories of lectionary (10), liturgy (11), and congregational participation (12). While a pastor in a low-church tradition is encouraged to preach on topics of their own choosing, ministers in higher-church traditions follow readings from the lectionary. The lectionary consists of a set of Sunday Scripture readings that has been adopted and modified by the church over the last fifteen hundred years. Pastors in evangelical

Protestant churches see themselves as providing the primary input into the service. Priests from main-line churches see themselves as adding input to the order of service that has already been set in place over several centuries.

The same holds true for the adoption of a liturgy (11) for worship. While an unconscious rhythm to services exists in evangelical churches, it is only when this rhythm becomes conscious that one can say that the idea of liturgy comes to the fore. Recognition of a liturgical aspect to worship, and the fact that an order of service reflects a certain theology, moves the discussion from the subjective orientation of low-church traditions to the gradual adoption of worship elements such as the Lord's Prayer, confession of repentance, written prayers, recitation of the Apostolic or Nicene Creeds, and weekly communion in high-church traditions.

Differing occasions for congregational participation during a worship service (12) is a twelfth barometer for measuring the differences between low-church and high-church traditions. The priority of individual talent over group participation is indicated when its members serve as worship leaders, sing in a quartet, share and give a testimony, read Scripture, and give a children's lesson. Congregational singing is more communal. The band or choir at the front of the sanctuary facilitates singing rather than represents singing. Individual hymns or praise songs chosen by a worship committee, pastor, or song leader are not by definition liturgical if they do not take into account the overarching order of service.

Let me give an example of the difference involved. A Mennonite church in the low-church tradition would consider the hymns sung by the congregation to be indicative of worship itself. A Mennonite congregation in a high-church tradition would consider congregation singing to be apropos insofar as it was reflective of the liturgy as a whole.

This difference becomes even more revealing in high-church traditions. The number of songs that introduce the readings and the eucharist, or represent responses to the sermon and Creed, rise exponentially as one moves to a more formal order of service.

The same holds true for responsive readings for the Psalms, congregational prayers, and spoken responses to the priest's invocation and benediction. The rhythm of the service slowly shifts from individualistic participation of members and groups in a low-church tradition to an organic response of the congregation as a whole as one moves toward a high-church trajectory.

Nos. 13-15: Confession of Repentance, Affirmation of Faith,
and Passing of the Peace

Inclusion of a confession of repentance as a prelude to the service (13), affirmation of faith by the congregation after the homily (14), and passing of the peace before communion (15) represent the next steps toward high-church worship. A historical practice of the Mennonite church included believers asking forgiveness from neighbours for sins committed as part of their twice-yearly preparation for communion. They were reconciled to each other in order to have a clear conscience in taking part in the Lord's supper.

The fact that an objective act of repentance and forgiveness in relation to neighbours came to the fore only twice a year meant that the discipline of asking for and receiving forgiveness began to be directed primarily to God.

The fact that main-line churches regard these actions as necessary every Sunday reveals the seriousness with which they take 1 Corinthians 11:28. This verse says that believers are to examine themselves before partaking of the cup. The weekly practice of communion in high-church traditions has made the confession of repentance and passing of the peace an integral part of worship.

Nos. 16 – 18: Infant Baptism, Weekly Communion, and Vestments

The placement of infant baptism (16), weekly communion (17), and vestments (18) on the sixth rung of this eight-step progression to high-church practices reveals the increasing sacralization of worship. Infant baptism (16) assumes the embrace of the total congregation in its assent to raising the child in faith.

Weekly communion shifts the focus from word to sacrament. Vestments (18) indicate the need to endow the office of the priest with a special status. The service has shifted from a focus on the Word to the eucharist, which claims a mysterious effect of grace as it takes up an increasing part of worship. Its consecration, distribution, and adoration during dissemination reflect an ethereal presence that rests over the congregation.

Low-church traditions would suggest that this mystical transformation happens at the time of conversion, at the time of one's adult baptism, at once-a-month communion services, and at the places where reconciliation, peace, and virtues abide

in daily life. High-church traditions suggest that this sacralization of reality takes place on a weekly basis in church worship.

Mennonites tend to think of the community of believers when referencing the body of Christ. Believers from high-church traditions assume that the body of Christ refers to the host. Reverence for the host reinforces the importance of the individual and community according to high-church traditions. The situation is reversed in low-church traditions. Devotion to the community is what actualizes and symbolizes the celebration of communion in low-church traditions.

Vestments (18) add another dimension to the increasing sacralization of worship. The wearing of vestments suggests that there is something sacred that must be guarded and protected. The consecration and distribution of the host is infused with a holy power that emanates throughout the congregation. Christ is central at that mystical moment in a way that is harder to replicate in lower-church traditions. The wearing of vestments is a way of undergirding sacred space and time.

Nos. 19 - 21: Tabernacle, Adoration of the Host, and Banners/Icons

A further enhancement of this sacralised space occurs when a tabernacle (19) is installed in a church. A tabernacle represents continuity with the Old Testament tradition of the Ten Commandments being stored in the Ark of the Covenant. The fact that the consecrated host (20) is stored in a tabernacle demonstrates the continuity of the divine presence as it is distributed to parishioners during the week and on Sunday. Time becomes universal as the body of Christ, representing the new Covenant, becomes immanently present.

The storage of the host within a tabernacle reinforces the sense of sacred that has already been noted in the wearing of vestments. The fact that the host can be located and kept in one place affords parishioners the opportunity to pay their respects, their reverence, and their adoration of the host.

The inclusion of a monstrance on the altar so that the host can be displayed and venerated represents a further step along this journey to mystery and mysticism. There is something powerful about being grounded by the fact that one is in the presence of the divine as represented by the host. Like the cross, the host is multi-dimensional in its ability to symbolize sacrifice, death, salvation, grace, faith, submission, blood, body, and unity. A parishioner participates in all of these dimensions as they pay homage to Christ.

While banners (21) are in use in a variety of iconoclastic church traditions, icons further enhance the sacredness of images by offering a mystic passage way to and from God. The fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church surrounds the altar with a higher and higher wall of icons demonstrates the extent to which they view these images as part of sacred space and time. Unlike three-dimensional figures, the flat surface of an icon invites participants to cross the threshold of the great dividing line between heaven and earth. The Eastern Church has included icons as yet one more aid in one's worship of God.

Nos. 22 – 24: Veneration of Mary, Display of Saints, and Papal Authority

We have reached the pinnacle of this trajectory where the veneration of Mary (22), a display of saints (23), and acknowledgement of the Pope's authority (24) is regarded as part and parcel of what it means to belong to the one universal visible body of Christ. I remember the first time I visited Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal. I assumed that the person being crowned above the crucified Christ at the front of the sanctuary was Jesus. Upon closer inspection, I realised that it was Mary.⁸¹ This experience made me reconsider what it means to believe in Mary as the Mother of God. In what ways can my Christian faith encompass the Catholic belief in Mary's immaculate conception and assumption into heaven?

There are several ways in which the above three theological doctrines can be explained. The purity of Mary is safeguarded at the beginning and end of her life in the same way that the birth and resurrection of Christ are safeguarded by the mystery of miracle. They stand at the liminal edge of history. Mary's immaculate conception and assumption into heaven can be viewed as a type of secondary first fruits of the effect of Jesus' sacrifice.⁸²

Mary as the Mother of God becomes understandable when one regards her as the Mother of the Church. The body of Christ was literally within Mary during her pregnancy. This image makes it possible to view the church as the feminine counterpart to the masculine idea of Christ. God as Christ dwells within the body of the church, represented by Mary. As head of the body, Christ "loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Mary's devotion to Christ serves as a bridal metaphor for what it means for believers to love the church, the body of Christ.

⁸¹ Notre Dame Basilica (Les Messageries de Press Benjamin Enr, n.d.).

⁸² Note Jaroslav Pelikan's discussion of these two latest doctrines, The Christian Tradition, Volume 5, Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

A display of saints (23) in the sanctuary is another of way bringing heaven and earth into experience of the Eternal Now (Revelation 4:1). God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven in that brief moment of worship in which Christian believers commune with all of creation, including the ones who have preceded us. The dualistic tendencies of secularity are obviated at that moment into divine immanence.

Once one has accepted the fact that God has established a kingdom on earth, and that the Church is an imperfect representation and projection of that reality, it is not much of a stretch to believe in an earthly representative of God's elect (24). One could even suggest that the dualistic tendencies of low-church traditions are overcome when there is an acknowledgement of a human representative of the head of the Church. While belief in the Holy Spirit is laudable as a secondary alternative, it is only as the Holy Spirit is joined with the Father and Son that one can speak of the will of God being done on earth as well as in heaven. The logical outcome of believing in the inauguration of the kingdom of God is to believe that it is reflected, however

Subjective Responses and Objective Actions (Chart 2)

The following categories help explain why Christian believers tend to fall on one or the other side of low-church and high-church traditions. A belief in the necessity of a subjective response to the divine initiative of grace results in a faith in which those subjective responses are manifested in testimonies of salvation, in adult baptism, in daily discipleship, and in performance-based worship services.

A belief in the priority of the divine initiative regardless of the subjective response results in a sacramental view of life in which God acts with grace through infant baptism and the eucharist. An individualistic response of repentance and affirmation of salvation is viewed as secondary in this emphasis on the objective manifestations of salvation.

1. Egalitarian and Hierarchical Religious Structures

A belief in the priesthood of all believers reinforces an egalitarian theology in which all members of the church are viewed as contributing in a dynamic way to ministry and worship. This belief results in members presiding over worship services, ministers selecting their own portions of Scripture, bands and choirs performing for the congregation, and members sharing about their faith and daily walk with God.

A belief in ordained priesthood in which ministers consecrate the elements and preside over worship results in a hierarchical structure between lay and invested clergy. A pecking order is established that results in the establishment of bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes. The slippery slope of hierarchy is hard to avoid once one has acknowledged that there is something sacred that must be protected by called, elected, anointed, or commissioned elders of the church.

2. Word and Sacrament

The central position of a pulpit in a church indicates the fact that the Word of God trumps any other belief or practice. This is, of course, a facile way of understanding the effect of the Bible on one's belief in God. The pulpit stands at the centre of the church for a reason. God is viewed as acting on the Bible in the same way that God acted on the world, namely by creating it through a spoken act. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus act as the Word through the human voice of the preacher.

A sacramental view of faith and the church places the communion table, referred to as an altar in high-church traditions, front and centre. The Bible and the church and theologians and believers are oriented in this instance to the mystical presence of Christ as manifested through the sacred elements of host and cup. The bread and cup contain the divine in the same way that Christ is contained within us. Sacred scripture represents the finger that is pointed toward the real presence of God. The eucharist is a symbolic manifestation of the numerous ways in which God is present in the world.

3. Secular and Sacred

The secularization of society has resulted in an attitude in which the reality of the sacred is viewed as a separate privatized compartment that lodges in the heart of the believer. The duality between secular and sacred reinforces the subjective tendencies of faith to be validated over above the objective actions of God. The rise of Pentecostalism can be viewed as a direct effect of this de-theisized view of the world. The Spirit becomes paramount over the tangible effects of body, word, and deed.

A confession of the universal presence of God diffuses the duality of flesh and spirit, resulting in a more sanguine view of events and activities. The action of the divine within baptismal and eucharistic rites permeate corporately from the church to the world. The presence of the divine within each person undergirds a sacramental view of reality in which all things are sacred.

4. Functional and Organic

Another way of categorizing this difference is to view individual parts of worship as serving a particular function or relating organically to the whole. Low-church traditions tend to adopt a functionalist approach because they are less sensitive to the way in which each aspect of worship undergirds a particular belief or practice. A more conscious approach to worship results in an increasing reflection on the way that prayers, songs, Scripture readings, and blessings build up faith and reverence. The organic nature of worship in high-church traditions results in an experience that is more than the sum of its parts.

5. Eschatology and Immanence

The easiest way to explain the difference between these two theological emphases is to see how the Biblical book of Revelation is interpreted. I grew up within a low-church tradition that saw the book of Revelation as having primarily to do with the second coming of Christ.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover a different interpretation that placed priority on the worship of God in the sanctuary. The announcement in Revelation 4:1 that “there is a door open in heaven” is taken by Scott Hahn⁸³ to mean that heaven comes down to earth during Sunday morning worship services. Hahn suggests that the chapters in Revelation that speak about eschatology have to be read in lights of the chapters that have to do with worship (4, 5, 11, 14, 19-22). The eternal reign of God announced in every Christian worship service is related dialectically to the future when Christ will have put “all things under his feet.”

Conclusion

Each strand of faith and each thread of religious practices are woven into other beliefs and rites that cause the believer to be drawn to one or the other side of low-church or high-church traditions. Belief in the priesthood of all believers reinforces the need for a subjective response to divine grace, commends itself to an egalitarian view of the worship service, places priority on word and deed over sacrament and symbolism, and emphasizes the ways in which God is spiritually embodied in individuals’ testimonies and the church’s glossolalia acts of worship.

⁸³ Scott Hahn, The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

Believers in high-church traditions are drawn to the objective act of divine grace in the eucharist, the proclamation of peace in the handshake, the affirmation of faith in the confession, the act of contrition in the rite of forgiveness, and in the organic sense of worship elicited by the liturgy. Hymns of praise, incantations of blessing, infant baptisms, and corporate prayers coalesce into an organic whole.

Sociologist David Martin has suggested the Pentecostalism represents a significant competing paradigm to that of Catholicism.⁸⁴ Various commentators on Catholicism have suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the church as the People of God and on the College of Bishops as a communitarian critique of hierarchy. These latter themes are the result of Vatican II and move the trajectory of Catholic belief and practice toward a lower number along the trajectory.⁸⁵

Further study is needed to situate churches along this trajectory. I trust that the categories introduced in this essay have been useful in placing Christian worship and beliefs within a helpful frame.

⁸⁴ David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

⁸⁵ Richard McBrien's book on *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), serves as an example of this communitarian theology of the Catholic Church.

Chapter Five

Strategies of Resistance: A Comparison

of Anabaptism and Rastafarianism⁸⁶

Historical Overview

Jaroslav Pelikan makes the point in the fourth volume of his magnum opus, *The Christian Tradition*,⁸⁷ that the sixteenth century represented a radical break with the past, a time of discontinuity in which Anabaptism and other radical Christian groups questioned the very heart of Christianity. While the Trinity was a problem for Unitarians, Anabaptism rejected infant baptism, took the sayings of Jesus on pacifism at face value, and felt that they could recreate the communitarianism of the early church. Their eschatologically conceived goal of restoration instead of reformation earned them martyrs' deaths.

Why did Anabaptism pose such a threat to church and state? Why did they appear to be anarchists rather than law-abiding citizens, troublemakers rather than a group that helped further the work of the church?

Comparing the rise of Anabaptism with a contemporary religious group from a sociological perspective represents one way of answering this question. Rastafarianism is a Jamaican-based faith that arose as a twentieth-century reaction to Christianity, colonialism, racism, and the middle-class. Its Pan-Africanism was combined with a reinterpretation of the Christian Scriptures to produce a new social-cultural expression of black faith and black pride. The religious use of marijuana, exaltation of Haile Selassie as the second coming of Jesus Christ, and wearing of dreadlocks became the most overt trademarks of Rastafarianism.

⁸⁶ This article was presented at a meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion in 1998 in Ottawa, Ontario.

⁸⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. Volume 4. Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 304-331.

Similarities between these two groups can be traced to their sociological responses to the hostility of the dominant religion and culture. Both rejected collective symbols of that day in favour of radically different social and religious expressions. Anabaptists declared infant baptism invalid, a rite of passage that during the sixteenth century made one a citizen of the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. For their part, Rastafarianism took marijuana, an illegal drug, and made it the centre of their reasoning sessions.

The task of this chapter is to highlight the similarities of these strategies of resistance. Roland Littlewood has made the sociological point that Rastafarians and radical Puritans created their own expression of faith in opposition to the dominant culture.⁸⁸ While both have a historical link with Christianity, Rastafarianism has gone the furthest in subverting this history to arrive at its own, new way of being. This article extends Littlewood's insights by showing the surprising similar strategies of resistance of two faith groups.

Scriptural Reinterpretation

Christianity is a religion that arose in response to Judaism. It grounded itself in this two-thousand year-old history while extending some logical features within Judaism to arrive at its own Messianic conclusions about Jesus.

These conclusions placed Christianity on a collision course with Judaism in the sense that some reinterpretations of Scripture were necessary to regard Jesus as one with God. Christians brought the first of the ten commandments into question when they regarded Jesus as a god besides God, infringed on the second commandment when they considered Jesus to be the very likeness and image of God, and took the name of Yahweh in vain when they called on the name of Jesus in their prayers. Christians also designated Sunday instead of Saturday as the Lord's Day on the basis that Jesus had risen from the dead on the first day of the week.

This reinterpretation of Old Testament Scripture extended forward into time. Christians believed that Jesus fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures that spoke about a future king that would save Israel from its enemies (Isaiah 40-66). The Jews had to look no further than the rabbi Jesus if they wanted to see these prophecies fulfilled. While the Jews waited for the coming of the Messiah, Christians were waiting for the

⁸⁸ Roland Littlewood, Memory, and appropriation: Some problems in the analysis of origins. In Barry Chevannes, ed., *Rastafarai and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), pp. 233-252.

second coming of Christ, a time when he would “put all things under his feet” (Matthew 22:44) and rule forever over his kingdom.

This Christian reinterpretation of eschatology based on a creative reclamation of origins became a touchstone for future generations. Islam reclaimed the monotheistic roots of Judaism including a new reverence for Abraham while embracing Muhammed as their new prophet. Continuity was established by the fact that Muhammed stood in a long line of Jewish and Christian prophets, of which Jesus was the most eminent. Muhammed had nonetheless received a new revelation of what the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures meant. Thus was born a third monotheistic faith with its own sacred Scriptures, the Koran.

Envisioning a new future based on the past was also evident in the sixteenth century rise of Anabaptism. Anabaptists believed that a thoroughgoing iconoclasm was the only way the church could be restored to its pristine state. This entailed a rejection of infant baptism, an endorsement of pacifism based on the Sermon on the Mount, a radical communitarian accountability as outlined in Matthew 18, and a sharing of material possessions as mentioned in the book of Acts.

This radical critique produced a vacuum into which flowed a strong eschatology of the kingdom of God. Separating the wheat from the tares offered the possibility of equating the newly purified body with the kingdom of God on earth. While Calvin drew analogous parallels between the City of God and Geneva, Anabaptists pushed the issue of sanctification to the “nth” degree. Separation between spirit and flesh, church and world, good and evil was so great that one could belong to the body of Christ only if one had sacrificed everything in order to reach the inner sanctum.⁸⁹ One had to completely reject the ways of the world in order to live a truly “called out” existence. This resulted in some revolutionary activities, as will be discussed in the next section.

Criticizing the present based on the past reached ever new heights in subsequent generations of sectarian Protestants. Nineteenth-century Seventh Day Adventists believed that radical Christians like the Anabaptists had not gone far enough in restoring the church to its original state. While they were sympathetic to Anabaptists’ belief in pacifism, Adventists wondered why Christians worshipped Christ on Sunday instead of Saturday. Was the fourth commandment not still valid? Did not early Christians worship Jesus Christ on the Jewish Sabbath, as was their custom?

⁸⁹ *Anabaptists: the Schleithem Confession*, (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc., 1985), [Anabaptists: The Schleithem Confession](#)

As the Unitarians had recognized three hundred years earlier, it was the church that had confirmed its belief in the Trinity as well as designated Sunday rather than Saturday as the holy day of the week. These historic decisions could be questioned based on Scripture.

Adventists highlighted the increasing importance of the Old Testament as a hermeneutical starting point. While Anabaptists looked to the sayings of Jesus and the story of Acts for their model of the early church, Adventists believed that the Old Testament was still valid in many of its details, including the command to keep kosher laws (Leviticus 11).

The logical trajectory of pushing ever farther into the past to reach a pivotal starting point proved to be a strong potion for twentieth-century Rastafarianism. Rastas did not only abide by kosher laws in their eating habits. They did not only follow the Nazaritic vow which forbade one from cutting one's hair (Numbers 6). Rastas claimed that they were, in fact, the rightful black Jews from Egypt; the ones the Jews had plundered when they left Egypt (Exodus 12:35-36); the ones who worshipped God on Mount Sinai in Arabia, not Israel (Galatians 4:25); the ones who stood in a long line of descendants of Menalik II, son of King David and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10);⁹⁰ the ones who brought the ark of the covenant from Israel to Ethiopia;⁹¹ and the ones who worshipped Emperor Haile Selassie as the Christ of this royal lineage.

A conspiracy theory of history reached its zenith in this radical reinterpretation of Scripture. According to Rastafarians, the church viewed the Scriptures with such a Eurocentric bias that a new principle of hermeneutical suspicion and retrieval had to be employed in order to see the rightful place of Africa in the divine scheme of things. In the ultimate role reversal, the new black Jews had to literally escape the slavery of the white man's religion in order to reach their promised land: Egypt, Ethiopia, and more broadly Africa. Biblical references to Ethiopia had to taken more seriously⁹² while the Roman occupation of the church had to be lifted.

Demonstrating the new importance of Africa in world history was one way of making a case for this hermeneutical leap of faith. Had not many of the world's dignitaries come to the coronation of Haile Selassie as the king of Ethiopia in 1930, reportedly even bending their knees before him as a sign of obeisance? And was

⁹⁰ Clinton Chisholm, The Rasta-Selassie-Ethiopian connections. In Nathaniel Murrell, editor., *Chanting Down Babylon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp. 166-177.

⁹¹ Graham Hancock, *The Sign and the Seal* (London: Heinemann, 1992).

⁹² Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Haile Selassie not one of the national leaders who saw the dangers of Italian fascism and drove Mussolini out of Ethiopia in 1941 after the Italian leader had invaded it in 1936?⁹³ Selassie had come “like a thief in the night” in order to help save Europe from destruction.

This contemporary analysis of the growing importance of Africa was combined with references to the historic link between Ethiopia and the Bible. The various titles of the monarch of Ethiopia showed his divine credentials: “King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God and Light of the World” (Revelation 5:5, 17:14; 19:16). These credentials had been ascribed to Ethiopian kings based on their royal lineage. This lineage could be traced back to the Davidic kingdom, according to the national saga of legends, the *Kebra Nagast*.⁹⁴ These historic connections were bolstered by Haile Selassie’s exemplary monarchical rule on the national and world stage.

Revolution or Pacifism

These (re)interpretations of Scriptures would not have come to the fore were it not for the fact that Anabaptists and Rastafarians lived in revolutionary times. Their experiences of life forced them to question the status quo and to come to radically different conclusions about faith than had been expressed in other churches.

This proved to be no mean feat. The sixteenth century represented a major upheaval in medieval society. The role of the peasants and the power of the princes increased as the aging Holy Roman Empire collapsed under its own religious and political weight. The new flexing of muscles on the part of the masses resulted in the Peasant’s Revolt as well as a consolidation of power by the princes.

Anabaptists were caught in the anarchistic side of this equation. Some radical Anabaptists believed that the kingdom of God was at hand, and that God had mandated them to bring it in by force.⁹⁵ There were others who were caught up in the Peasant’s War, believing along with Saint Paul and Luther that Christ has given them a new freedom (Galatians). There were still others who participated in the destruction of monasteries and churches. New religious and political sentiments,

⁹³ Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, Introduction: The Rastafarian phenomenon. In Nathaniel Murrell, ed. *Chanting Down Babylon*. (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1998), p. 7.

⁹⁴ Clinton Chisholm, The Rasta-Selassie-Ethiopian connections, pp. 166-177.

⁹⁵ James Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (Kansas: Coronado, 1972).

combined with a radical millenarianism, made for a combustible set of circumstances.

Menno Simons, Conrad Grebel, Michael Sattler, and some other Anabaptists were taken aback by the violent actions of their compatriots. They believed that although the sword was ordained by God to keep order, Christians were to follow Jesus by turning the other cheek, loving their enemies, and going the extra mile. This pacifist stance was ratified in *The Schleithem Confession*,⁹⁶ a document drawn up by a small group of believers in 1527. This group distanced itself from fellow radicals while retaining a belief in non-resistance, adult baptism, discipleship, mutual accountability, non-swearing of oaths, sanction against magisterial duties, and radical separation of church and world. This confession of faith became the foundation of a way of life for Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites.

A similar crisis is evident in the rise of Rastafarianism. Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 prompted Afro-Americans to establish the Ethiopian World Federation, which raised funds and gave its support to Ethiopia in its fight against Mussolini. Rastafarians even appealed to Britain to let them join the army to fight against Italy.⁹⁷

Leonard Howell was one of the more controversial figures of this early movement. Besides consolidating belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie and proclaiming Ethiopia as the promised land, Howell affirmed the superiority of the black race and advocated revenge on whites "for their wickedness." These statements earned him a two-year prison term for seditious activities.⁹⁸

Claudius Henry was another controversial Rastafarian figure who earned for himself a six-year prison term in 1959 for selling false passports to Ethiopia as well as planning a military takeover of Jamaica. Notwithstanding the truth of these latter allegations, his son Ronald along with four others were subsequently sentenced to death for engaging in guerilla activities and ambushing two British soldiers.⁹⁹

These highly visible confrontations between Rastafarians and the authorities resulted in two responses: (1) a retreat into communal living in the hills, and (2) a rapprochement with the authorities in Kingston. The first initiative proved to be moderately effective. Retreat enabled the consolidation and "routinization" of the

⁹⁶ John H. Yoder, editor and translator, [1527] *The Schleithem Confession* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1973).

⁹⁷ Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, Introduction: The Rastafarian phenomenon, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Leonard Barrett, *The Rastafarians* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), pp. 85ff.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95ff.

new religious group. It also raised the suspicions of the authorities, who ended up raiding the camps and destroying one of the so-called colonies.

Rapprochement within the cities proved to be slightly more effective, partly because the Rastafarians themselves were now saying that political involvement was highly questionable for devotees. While this avenue of social engagement continued to be experimented with, Rastafarians began to see themselves more and more as a religious group with visible forms of cultural and social expression.¹⁰⁰

Pacifism and/or a mediated rapprochement became the means by which the two movements could flourish within the hostile milieu in which they found themselves. An intradisciplinary approach stemmed the charges of anarchism and treason while enabling the two groups to consolidate their identities as well as make a social impact.

Adult Baptism and Ganja

Many Anabaptists believed together with Zwingli and Calvin that the bread and cup were symbols of Christ's body and blood rather than sacraments that became transubstantiated during the Eucharistic service. They also believed together with other Protestants that a more congregational polity of leadership should be endorsed by the church. Anabaptists for the most part also affirmed the historic beliefs of the church, such as the Trinity as well as the Apostles and Nicene Creeds. What was the reason, then, for Anabaptists' insistence on adult baptism?

The best way of answering this query is to underline the sharp duality that the Anabaptists experienced between their faith and the world. Their sharp condemnation of the pope did not lead to an alternate semi-national church in alignment with the German princes (Luther). Their strict intra-mutual accountability was not intended as a complement to the newly established civil actions and laws within a reformed Geneva (Calvin).

Their separation from the world was so complete that all symbols and actions and beliefs of the church had to represent a viable alternative to that of the world. This was evident in the Anabaptist policy on pacifism. While the sword was within the order of God, it was outside the perfection of the pacifism of Christ, creating a duality within the very nature of God.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 150ff.

Baptism created a similar divide. The historic stance of the church had been to baptize infants upon their birth to demonstrate the analogous relation of church and world. Infants became citizens of a nation or empire when they were born as well as members of the body of Christ based on the faith of their parents.

Anabaptists found this unacceptable. They preferred the counsel of Saint Paul to “come out from among them and be separated from them” (1 Corinthians 6:17). Adult baptism became the voluntaristic sign by which Anabaptists separated themselves from the kingdom of the world as well as from other Christians who were more at ease with this dual citizenship.

The sectarian impact of this stance can be best understood by comparing it to the fate of other Protestant faiths. After much persecution and many religious wars, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) declared that all Christians were to settle in the region in which their views were dominant. This meant that the Lutherans could find haven in Germany, the Reformed in Switzerland, the Catholics in France, and the Anglicans in England.

This rapprochement was not much of a solution for Anabaptists, who were sectarians within these broader religious enclaves. No English nomenclature carries a religious-cultural association for Anabaptists as it does for other religious groups. One can speak of Swiss Reformed, German Lutherans, French Catholics, Russian Orthodox, and even of Indian Hindus and Arabian Muslims. It is not as easy to identify minority religious groups within these national-religious majorities.¹⁰¹

Anabaptists were viewed as anarchists and revolutionaries because of their non-registration of infants within the religious and social civil structures of their time. It would be like going to the hospital today and being told that one could only name the child, receive a birth certificate, and be entitled to benefits if one registered one's baby in the (majority) church. This would create dissonance for those who were of other faiths or who did not have any faith at all. The intertwining of religious and political structures made Anabaptists appear unpatriotic.¹⁰²

Rastafarian adoption of marijuana as the herb of choice for their religious ceremonies served a similar purpose in dividing them from the rest of society. Barrett states that the use of ganja for religious purposes probably started during the

¹⁰¹ David Martin provides a very good analysis of this historic association between nations and religions in his book on secularization, *A General Theory of Secularization*.

¹⁰² These same suspicions continue today when Mennonites refuse to join the military. There are certain civic duties that are regarded as essential in one's citizenship within a given nation.

Rastafarian exile period in the Pinnacle colony.¹⁰³ Marijuana was grown as a cash crop to sustain the commune as well as became an integral part of the ritual reasoning sessions.

The smoking of marijuana highlighted the social tensions between Rastafarians and society. Howell had made it clear that the order of the universe had to be reversed, that the blacks should rule over the whites rather than the other way around. The use of ganja symbolised this radical critique in that it pitted the “naturalistic” customs of the land against the civilized ways of Jamaican (British) society. Rastas were thumbing their noses at the law in the same way that North American First Nations peoples have raised issues by claiming that the 49th parallel between U.S.A. and Canada does not apply to them.

Rastafarians bolstered their arguments with Biblical appeals. Genesis 1:12 speaks about the “herb yielding seed after its own kind” (KJV). God commands Adam and Eve to eat of the “herb of the field” in Genesis 3:18. The mandrakes that Leah gave to Rachel in order to have the privilege to sleep with Jacob have been associated with magical powers that could be construed to refer to ganja (Genesis 30:14-24).

These interpretations are in keeping with the rise of naturalism among sectarian groups since the nineteenth century. Like Adventists, who recommend vegetarianism in addition to kosher foods, and like Mormons, who advocate a strict nutritious diet that does not include caffeine or alcohol, Rastafarians have argued for a kosher-like, naturalistic regime that includes roots and herbs. Smoking marijuana is on the continuum of this rural, romantic reaction against the negative technological effects of modernity.

The use of marijuana functioned as an initiation rite on an illegal level for Rastafarians in a similar way that rebaptism functioned as an act of civil disobedience for Anabaptists. The ritual of being rebaptized or smoking ganja meant that one had taken the risk of joining the inner circle in opposition to the civil and legal laws of the larger culture.

A more positive way of saying the same thing would be to say that one went through a sanctification process of purification as one entered more fully into the rites and practices of the sectarian faith group. For Anabaptists, this meant a discipleship and mutual accountability process much more defined than the general religious

¹⁰³Leonard Barrett. *The Rastafarians*, p. 128.

population (Matthew 5-6, 18; I Corinthians 6).¹⁰⁴ For Rastafarians, this meant communal gathering and reasoning sessions in which the genteel practices of Zion were contrasted with the destructive ways of Babylon. The communal act of legal disobedience solidified the in-house resolve to offer a viable religious and social alternative to the dominant culture. Sanctification in this case entailed “a change of consciousness” as well as “a raising of consciousness.”

Head Coverings and Dreadlocks

Missing from this overview of Anabaptism and Rastafarianism are their garments of faith, those rich, habitual forms of practice that portray belief in a visible, behavioural manner as opposed to the more abstract, voluntaristic, belief-oriented assents to faith.

Adoption of head coverings and distinct clothing on the part of conservative groups of Anabaptists, such as the Amish and Old Order Mennonites, along with the dreadlocks worn by Rastafarians, represent this visible garment of faith. Both practices go well beyond most Christian faiths in their overt stance of separateness from the dominant culture. To wear a head covering, long dark dresses, a beard, a black hat, suspenders, and dark overalls, to let one's hair grow into long, thick, tangled braids instead of neatly cut and styled hair is to make a statement about otherness which requires no doctrinal lip service. It sets one apart from the dominant culture while solidifying one's relation with all others who have adopted similar vestments.

For women to grow their hair long and wear head coverings was not only biblical and a sign of respect, according to Anabaptists (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). It also enabled groups such as the Old Order Mennonites and Amish to establish a clear internal social order. Head coverings were worn on a regular basis after a woman had been baptised. Modesty was assured with the long length of dresses. Men grew beards after they were married. Black hats, overalls, and suspenders became standard fare for the men whose lives consisted of farming.

These signs of distinctiveness developed into a broader critique of modernizing society. As cars and tractors, telephones and electricity became a way of life for the dominant culture, conservative Mennonites resisted this trend, partly because of their prioritizing of manual labour, and partly to stem the tide of consumerism that seemed to engulf their fellow citizens. The separateness that had begun with a quietistic,

¹⁰⁴ John Y. Yoder, editor and translator, [1527] *The Schleitheim Confession*.

rural communal life grew proportionately as the Mennonites offered horse and buggy as an alternative to automobiles, horse and plow as an alternative to farm machinery, lamps and battery-operated appliances in lieu of electricity, and social visits as an alternative to telephones. What had begun as religious dissent blossomed into an economic and social critique of technology and the trappings of culture that sprang up around it.¹⁰⁵

A similar development is evident in the growth of Rastafarianism. What began as a fairly innocuous insistence upon kosher foods and vegetarianism expanded into the adoption of the ganja herb as integral to religious rituals, the growth of beards and later of dreadlocks as a sign of dissonance with the larger culture, and finally the drive toward independent subsistence through the establishment of agrarian communes, small cottage industries, and a general reliance on a bricolage existence.¹⁰⁶

Rastafarians are like Old Order Mennonites and the Amish in the sense that they represent an alternative to the dominant, modernizing trend of society. To take the example of dreadlocks alone, this wild, knotty “natural” reality calls into question all attempts by blacks to straighten their curly hair in order to “fit into” white culture. Dreadlocks reinforce the widespread black pride movement in claiming the importance of asserting one’s unique, subjective identity against the standardizing effects of modern social and economic trends.

Equality versus Hierarchy

A parallel pattern is evident regarding leadership. Anabaptists as well as Rastafarians experienced a lot of persecution in their early years and so had to make major adjustments as their leaders were arrested and/or killed. Anabaptists responded to this crisis with *The Schleithem Confession of Faith*. This document enabled Anabaptists to express the tenets of their faith and defend them against their adversaries during the deaths, exiles, and martyrdoms of leaders Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, George Blaurock, Hans Hut, and Hans Denck.¹⁰⁷

The six principles advocated in the early years by Leonard Howell, the establishment of the Pinnacle commune, along with the university report in 1960, served a similar purpose of consolidating the Rastafarian movement. The divinity of Haile Selassie,

¹⁰⁵ Donald Kraybill, *Riddle of Amish Life* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁶ Homiak, John P. Dub history: Soundings on Rastafari livity and language. In Barry Chevannes, ed., *Rastafarai and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), pp. 127-181.

¹⁰⁷ Cornelius Dyck, *Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 55-60.

the superiority of the black race, the importance of Ethiopia, and the establishment of unique religious symbols became especially important as the leadership of Howell and Henry proved to be fickle as well as visionary. The arrests of these two men along with the destruction of the commune made Rastafarians more self-conscious about their own beliefs and less reliant on charismatic figures to guide them.¹⁰⁸

A more profound reason for this subjective internalization of belief had to do with the egalitarian impulse of these two movements. Anabaptists along with other Protestants emphasized a believer's individual relation to God in opposition to the historically mediated relation of priest and church. The Scriptures were self-evident and communication with God was direct. There was less need for authoritative religious leadership.

A similar sentiment is evident in Rastafarianism. Opposition to the dominant culture provided the social solidarity needed to sustain an alternative religion. Rastafarian believers used those Scriptures, symbols, and actions that were most suitable to their own (eclectic) understanding in order to assert their black "African" identity. Commonality of belief was not as critical as the need to internalize the salient features of one's religious, social, and cultural identity. For example, black males incorporated the religious titles of Haile Selassie into their own identity in order to overcome the stigmatism of racism. They were the true lion of Judah with their long, flowing hair, their head of pure wool, and their feet of bronze (Revelation 1:15, 5:2-5). They were the king and lord of their own destiny, with the sceptre of righteousness in their hand and the colours of national identity around their waist.¹⁰⁹

The irony of this individualistic, subjective, and egalitarian reaction to the dominant culture was that it did not take long for forms of hierarchy and/or patriarchy to assert themselves internally. In the case of Anabaptism, head coverings for women proved to be an obvious example of the natural division of authority and labour sanctioned by Scripture. The subjection of women issued forth in such social forms as separate entrances and separate seating arrangements for men and women in the sanctuary, domestic versus industrial roles, as well as non-voting privileges for women in religious meetings.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Leonard Barrett goes so far as to say that Rastafarians decided consciously to remain leaderless after the Howell debacle, *The Rastafarians*, pp. 91-102.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 83-84, 142-145.

¹¹⁰ John A. Hostetler, *Amish Life* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1963).

The role of patriarchy within Rastafarianism has been well documented.¹¹¹ The irony of identifying as a male with King Haile Selassie as the Christ is that one becomes one's own familial king man, asserting one's authority over house and home. Abuses associated with the historic, divinely ordered natural right of kings suddenly became very real in the intimate social context of husband and wife, parent and child.

The seemingly inevitable rise of a hierarchical structure of a protest group can be explained in two ways. First, although both groups are thoroughly modernistic in their individual internalization of faith, they appeal to the pre-modern authority of the Bible and/or monarchical structure to sustain their alternative social vision. While they appear anarchistic and radical and subjectivistic in relation to the collective unconscious of the dominant religion and/or culture, they are confirming internally the ancient dictum which comes with the routinization of all groups, namely the fact that "any society, left to itself, will form a hierarchy."¹¹² Anabaptists and Rastafarians repeat history as much as recreate it.

A contemporary analogy helps to explain this paradox. The 1960s was a time when so-called "intentional communities" and/or communes were established in reaction to parental aspirations for their children in the dominant culture. The principle of free love was the most obvious benchmark of this movement. Young people wanted to enter into common relations without the authoritarian restrictions of traditional marriages, traditional jobs, and traditional social arrangements,

The irony of this initial impetus was that the only groups that lasted more than a few years were those that set up a strict, internal social order to deal with the inevitable conflicts that arose within such tight-knit alternative communities. One of these groups, the *Bruderhof* in New York,¹¹³ took the unusual step of formally adopting the Hutterite division of labour and communistic, social structure to sustain their communal living pattern. The irony of this situation is that an even more restrictive order than the traditional, single-family marriage arrangements was necessary to maintain this highly creative intentional community.

¹¹¹ Maureen Rowe, Gender and family relations in Rastafari: A personal perspective, In Nathaniel Murrell ed., *Chanting Down Babylon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), pp. 72-88; Imani M. Tafari-Ama, Rastawoman as rebel: Case studies in Jamaica. In Nathaniel Murrell ed., *Chanting Down Babylon*, pp. 89-106; Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari: Roots and Ideology* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 256-262.

¹¹² A quote that Gregory Baum used repeatedly, cf. his *Religion and Alienation*.

¹¹³ Benjamin Zablocki, *The Joyful Community: An Account of the Bruderhof* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Challenges for the Future

The above discussion has demonstrated the similarity of responses on the part of two historically and theologically disparate groups to the dominant culture. These behavioural similarities reveal the sociological strategies that are necessary to sustain a viable religious alternative. Pacifism was adopted by Anabaptists as much to disprove anarchistic accusations as to follow the Bible. Marijuana was accepted as a major religious symbol by Rastafarians as much to thumb their noses at society as to affirm its natural, herbal qualities. Dreadlocks became a lifestyle as much to purge “fake” Rastas as to undermine the British colonial standards of civilized behaviour in Jamaica. Egalitarian religious beliefs were as much a necessity in the face of persecution as a dogmatic belief in the “priesthood of all believers” (1 Peter 2:9). The internal, hierarchical social patterns that were adopted were as much to sustain the fragile (black male) ego as the result of external, patriarchal influences.

All these beliefs were wrapped up in the only authority strong enough to quell the influence of the dominant culture and religion: the Bible. Consciously or unconsciously, Anabaptists and Rastafarians realised that the written Word of God was a strong ally in convincing people of the rightness of their position.

The cogency of this hermeneutical strategy becomes evident when one recognizes the variable and amorphous nature of these interpretations.¹¹⁴ The tell-tale sign of ever-changing Biblical references are to be found in that which is wrong with the dominant culture rather than in the cohesiveness of the faith group’s belief system. Both groups represent an ever-evolving reaction to and negotiation with the dominant society. Their behaviours, beliefs, and social patterns vary accordingly.

An example of this dynamism can be found in the ever-changing rules that the Amish bishops invoke in relation to modern machinery. The Amish have learned to negotiate with culture through their deliberately slow, thought-out, and reluctant adoption of seemingly innocuous use of rubber tires, labour-efficient augers, and telephones at the end of their driveways.¹¹⁵ A similar change is evident in Jamaica as Rastafarians have adopted Ethiopianism as much as a way of transforming life in

¹¹⁴ Roland Littlewood, *History, memory, and appropriation: Some problems in the analysis of origins*, p. 248.

¹¹⁵ Donald Kraybill, *Riddle of Amish Life*, pp. 17-23.

Jamaica as an escape to another world.¹¹⁶ There are yet more similarities that could be mentioned, such as the use of language to form a boundary.¹¹⁷

It remains to be seen whether Rastafarians and Anabaptists can make a socially significant impact based on their resistant strategies. In-group uniqueness appears at times to be the over-riding factor. There are other times when the resistant group has something to offer the broader culture, such as a serious discussion of the role of pacifism and reconciliation in an increasingly violent world, the use of drugs and the reality of racism in society, or in the case of the Amish, a serious critique of technology on the basis of how it helps to sustain (or hinder) face-to-face, social and labour-intensive, interactive activities.

¹¹⁶ Leonard Barrett, *The Rastafarians*, pp. 262-266.

¹¹⁷ The emergence of new forms of speech in Rastafarianism (I-and-I talk) parallels the Mennonite and Amish retention of Old World oral dialects, Low-German and Pennsylvania Dutch, to maintain an inner/outer dichotomy.

Chapter Six

Role of Theology Regarding the Positive Use of Coercion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show how various theologies have something to offer regarding the use of coercion. Gordon Kaufman and Gregory Baum's theologies, the Catholic Catechism's affirmation of a beatific vision, its reflection on original righteousness, its placement of the Ten Commandments within the Life in Christ, and Pierre Allard's vision of reconciliation are outlined in the first half of the chapter.

The second half considers three examples of the positive use of coercion. The chapter outlines how the above theological principles provide a rationale within and beyond the use of force.

Gordon Kaufman's Theology

Gordon Kaufman's theology represents a strong affirmation of the creative role of God and human beings. The freedom and creativity of God work within history by providing the necessary conditions for human believers to respond to God. These divine occasions and opportunities are known as prevenient grace.¹¹⁸

Prevenient grace is similar to what parents do in raising their children. They provide the framework of care so their children can exercise freedom while responding to the love shown to them. Parents adapt to the unique characteristics of their children. Their children's freedom is kept intact even as the parents provide the necessary love and care.

This personal analogy demonstrates how the freedom and love of God work within history. Kaufman outlines *four perfections of divine freedom*: unity, power, holiness,

¹¹⁸ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), 215.

and glory.¹¹⁹ Parents have a great deal of say in their children's lives as they grow up. They bring a unity of purpose in raising their children. They provide boundaries of care that keep their children from running onto the street. Parents provide positive examples and reinforcements of how their children are to act.

Children grow up within this encadrement of care by exercising their freedom. They make their own decisions vis-à-vis the influence of their parents and peers. They become adults as they make responsible decisions about their lives. The parents keep their children's freedom intact even as they anguish and despair over decisions that have negative consequences for their children. The power and control that parents have over their children slowly dissipate in the face of their children's independence and creativity. The parents pray that their children will make the right choices even as they feel helpless in not making their children's decisions for them.

This creative and redemptive dynamic between parents and children can be compared to Kaufman's *four perfections of divine love*: relativity, grace, mercy, and non-resistance of God.¹²⁰ God through Christ responds to the unique challenges of human life by being in solidarity with them. God through Christ shows grace and mercy in response to their sinful ways. Christ saves people in spite of themselves through his death on the cross.

Christ shows through his atonement how non-resistant love is an integral part of his salvation message of forgiveness. The assurance of salvific grace frees people from their bonds and empowers them to follow Christ. Christ persuades rather than coerces people to follow him. Non-resistance is an integral way through which persuasive love changes people's hearts.

Kaufman's concept of divine freedom and love is based on a positive view of human nature.¹²¹ Being created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*) means that there is a sense in which human beings create themselves. They establish their own identity through human interactions. They are shaped by their history.

Kaufman's prioritizing of human freedom is the reason that action and persuasion are integral to the salvific purposes of God. Jesus gave himself up willingly to the will of God. Believers do likewise. Harmony is possible because people engage the

¹¹⁹ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 148-165.

¹²⁰ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 210-221.

¹²¹ Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology*, 333-335.

free will of others to embark on a gospel of peace. Kaufman incorporates an idealistic view of human nature in undergirding the pacifism of God.

Kaufman's concept of free will and prevenient grace can be favourably compared to Catholic theologian Maurice Blondel's immanent view of God. Blondel suggests that God acts as a divine summons within people's lives. God calls human beings to "actualize" themselves through striving after the good. Their decision making processes through the course of growing up opens up possibilities of embracing the divine. This is how Catholic theologian Gregory Baum outlines Blondel's point of view:¹²²

Every man, by the logic of his action, is led to discover the impossibility of exhausting the deep willing at the core of his being in a finite universe. Man's unending concern leads him to wider and wider action . . . The distance between himself and himself is (still) infinite. A man is summoned to the inevitable option: either, following the drive of his limitless concern, he opens himself to the infinite; or he encloses himself in the finite order and thus violates the thrust of his own action."

Maurice Blondel helped Gregory Baum realise that "it is in the dynamics of the will seeking ever greater self-realization through continued action, that God is present to human beings. It is in their actions that they say Yes to the divine presence."¹²³

Gregory Baum safeguards the freedom of human beings while underlining the importance of God as a divine summons. Believers are called to live the best that they are called to be while understanding that the source of this drive comes from outside of themselves.¹²⁴ God as "idealistic presence" relativizes Christians' limited world by serving as an intrinsic beacon by which they live (law written in hearts).

The above description of the role of the divine can lead to the conclusion that God serves as an ideal summons rather than grounding source. Gordon Kaufman has had to answer questions about his concept of God as a "reification" of human striving. I have suggested in an article on the subject that Kaufman does not regard God as simply a projection of human beings' creative imaginations.¹²⁵ God is a real force in

¹²² Gregory Baum, *Man Becoming* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 15-17. Theologian John Cobb provides a similar perspective when he asserts God as the One Who Calls: "the Creator-Lord of history is not the all-determinate cause of the course of natural and historical events, but a lover of the world who calls it ever beyond what it has attained by affirming life, novelty, consciousness, and freedom again and again," *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 75-76.

¹²³ Gregory Baum, *The Oil Has Not Yet Run Dry* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2017), 54-56.

¹²⁴ Gregory Baum, *Man Becoming*, 63-65.

¹²⁵ For an analysis of Gordon Kaufman's realistic view of God, see Donald Stoesz, "Gordon Kaufman's Thought: A Monument to Modernity," *Mennonite Theology in the Face of Modernity*, edited by Gordon Kaufman and Alain Epp

our lives that represents the accumulation of historically salvific events. Creative and redemptive actions of God modify and sustain the ideals of harmony and peace by which Christians live.

Limitations of Idealistic Affirmations of Human Freedom, Pacifism, and God

Kaufman's and Blondel's positive view of human nature and immanent view of God do not speak directly to the issue of coercion. Coercion is sometimes necessary to bring order and meaning to people's lives. Human beings are not always convinced on the basis of the atonement or persuasion to do good. The Ten Commandments were created to provide a minimalistic moral code by which to live. The order of society is established through the enforcement of taboos against killing, stealing, coveting, bearing false witness, and disrespecting others. These taboos represent the minimum requirements for society to proceed in an orderly manner.

The children referred to above sometimes make decisions that break society's laws. They use their freedom to act out or flaunt the law. Upon conviction, the children are punished in a variety of ways for what they have done. These sentences could include jail time.

A minimalistic purpose of the law is to let people know that their unlawful behaviour is unacceptable. They have hurt or harmed other people as a result of their actions. They are more interested in their own ends than in the freedom and rights of other people. The state comes into play through its enforcement of the law.

Punishment alone is not enough to convince people to change. Enforcement of the law sometimes feels like an arbitrary force that comes down hard on people. Coercion is nevertheless necessary to show people that their actions are unacceptable. The law points to a higher good known as peaceful coexistence, harmony, unity, and righteousness. The purpose of the law is to point to the underlying good that it represents. Persuasion and nonresistant responses to aggression and violence represent the underlying purpose of human interaction. Parents along with the state show their (surrogate) children the good of human relationships on which society is based.

Weaver (Kansas: Bethel College, 1996), 42-43, 45. Cf. Gordon Kaufman, *In Face of Mystery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 57.

A Beatific Vision

Kaufman's idealistic view of human freedom, grace, and love is based on the free and loving perfections of God. His theology can be compared to a beatific vision that informs and modifies the manner in which coercion and persuasion work in the world. The Catholic Catechism includes a beatific vision as a part of its understanding of God. Images of God as light, life, peace, intimacy, bridegroom, and wedding represent ecstatic experiences which provide a means through which the actions of God can be contemplated.¹²⁶ These overarching images represent profound mystical experiences that help explain the human dynamics of coercion and persuasion.

Allow me to give a personal example of what I mean. I worked for thirty years as a chaplain in the prison system. There were times when I became depressed and despaired over my role and identity. These negative experiences had the curious effect of a powerful ecstatic experience. The intimacy of God became real precisely because of the sheer lack of it on a human level. Divine intimacy informed the manner in which I was able to carry out my duties as a prison chaplain.

This divine experience of intimacy shaped my understanding of human intimacy. I helped inmates experience the love of God. This love extended outward to fellow believers. The chapel became a fellowship in which mutual respect, love, and care were real. God was affirmed as a profound saviour and friend. Friendship represented the most immediate access point through which intimacy, divine and human, could be expressed.

This profound experience was surreal on a number of levels. Prison represents a confined atmosphere in which direct orders are given and force is readily available. The inmates along with myself lived with the knowledge that coercion kept the place intact while love and friendship made it bearable. These two realities are not in contradiction of each other. The coercive framework provides the means through which grace and respect can be learned and experienced.

Restoration to Original Righteousness

Another way of explaining the dynamic relationship between idealistic visions and realistic actions is to consider the role of original righteousness. The Catholic Catechism affirms the fact that Adam and Eve were in an original state of "holiness

¹²⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, second edition (Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2019), 268.

and justice“ before they sinned.¹²⁷ This state of original righteousness can be compared to the innocence, trust, kindness, honesty, and respect that children have before they become adolescents. Children exude a level of openness that is refreshing to those of us who have lived a few more years. Children’s vivaciousness renews hope in parents whose lived experiences have made them jaded and more sceptical of people’s motives and actions.

The Bible uses sexual awareness to illustrate the difference between original innocence and feelings of shame and guilt, along with knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve sowed fig leaves for clothing because they felt naked, literally and figuratively, before a judging God (Genesis 3:7).

Loss of innocence means that adolescents learn to act responsibly with regard to sexuality, power, control, faith, authority, and morality. Young people learn to channel ideals of trust and openness with which they grew up into realistic goals and fulfilling relationships. Their childhood experiences of honesty and respect are translated into healthy social, emotional, and spiritual expressions.

A second naivete¹²⁸ is especially important for inmates who have faced the full extent of the law as a result of their criminal offences. Many of them see only the negative consequences of their behaviours. They live in an existential reality of dread, shame, guilt, and self-loathing. Reconsideration of what love, faith, and hope meant in the past helps inmates access deep emotions and beliefs that reorient their lives toward the good. Re-evaluations of what was good about their lives starts the healing process of acceptance and repentance of wrongs committed.

Salvific acts of God reinforce affirmations of their Imago Dei. Through Jesus’ death on the cross, God recreates the original righteousness that Adam and Eve possessed before they fell away from God. Repentance of wrong done along with forgiveness through grace and absolution represent powerful ecstatic moments that restore inmates to a sense of wellbeing and faith. Offenders are empowered to become responsible adults again. This new reality obviates the original sin with which they grew up and real offences that they committed.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹²⁸ Paul Ricouer elaborates on what this second naivete entails in *Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 352.

Teleological Role of the Ten Commandments

Another way of resolving the dilemma of idealism and coercion is to include the Ten Commandments within a covenantal theology. The Acts of God are at the heart of why the Decalogue was instituted in the first place. Exodus 20:1 starts with God's declaration that God liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The people of Israel's experience of liberation represents the basis of the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments were necessary because people had no idea how to live in the desert. They had to live on "bread and water" for forty years in order to know how to become a nation.¹²⁹ The decalogue provided the framework within which freedom could be exercised responsibly.

The Roman Catholic Catechism has carried this covenantal theology forward in a progressive way. It places the Decalogue in relation to the two greatest commands of Jesus: to love God and one's neighbour.¹³⁰ The upholding of the law is possible as a result of the natural and supernatural grace that God has enacted.

The first two sections of the Catechism have to do with the Apostles Creed and the Sacraments. It is necessary for believers to have the right faith and join the church in order to know how to live a Christian life.

The Catechism starts the third section with a strong affirmation of human dignity and freedom.¹³¹ Human beings are free to choose God because they have been created in the image of God. There is no compunction in this regard. By their free will, human beings are capable of "directing themselves to the true good." They find perfection in "seeking and loving what is true and good."

This freedom is linked to the most important passion called love. "Aroused by the attraction of the good, love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of attaining it. This movement finds completion in the pleasure and joy of the good possessed."¹³²

The Catechism's affirmation of human freedom and love echoes Gordon Kaufman's Enlightenment driven philosophy. Both of them believe in natural grace and natural law. Both of them regard the reason and will of human beings as reflective of God's creation and nature.

¹²⁹ See Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2010), 26.

¹³⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 498-611.

¹³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 425.

¹³² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 436.

The Catechism places the Ten Commandments within this third section on believers' life in Christ.¹³³ The teleological good of not killing is to protect the sanctity of life. The teleological goal of not stealing is to protect private property. The teleological goal of not coveting is to be happy with the state of one's relationships, farm, and livelihood. Loving God and loving one's neighbour set the tone for how the Ten Commandments are interpreted.¹³⁴

The Atonement of Christ remains at the centre of these virtue ethics. God liberated the people of Israel through Jesus' death on the cross in the same way that God liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Freedom from slavery represents a useful analogy of knowing what it is like to live free from sin. Freedom to be responsible is the basis on which Christians are empowered through Christ to live sanctified lives.

1 Peter 2:21-24 undergirds the integral relationship between ethics and salvation. Liberated from sin through Jesus' atonement, believers live righteous lives. Non-resistance represents an integral part of how Christ saved us and liberated us. Ethics and salvation are dynamically linked.

Universal Nature of Gregory Baum's theology

John Milbank is a Christian theologian who considers there to be an incommensurability between Christianity and society. He sees the pacifism of Jesus as applicable only to the church without having a specific reference to the broader society. Gregory Baum takes issue with Milbank's stance by advocating for a more universal understanding of the gospel.¹³⁵ He suggests that the idealism of Jesus' pacifism cannot be exclusively embodied by the church without creating hostility to the larger culture. He argues that there is a way of integrating this ideal with the goal of transforming culture.

Gregory Baum starts his article by showing how Samuel in the Old Testament used a secular argument to dissuade the people of Israel from adopting a king.¹³⁶

¹³³ Martin Luther regarded the Ten Commandments primarily in terms of convicting people of sin, Gordon Jensen, "Shaping Piety through Catechetical Structures," *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 10.2 (2008), 233-234, cf. Martin Luther, "Small Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, ed. by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 345-376. People repented of their sinfulness so that they could experience the unmerited grace of Christ. Luther placed the Ten Commandments first in his catechism because of this emphasis. The law was there to lead believers to confession and repentance. Luther's distinction between law and gospel led to an unfortunate separation of the Old Testament and New Testament. The Ten Commandments had more to do with showing believers the impossibility of following the law than undergirding the purpose of the law in the first place.

¹³⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 477-480.

¹³⁵ Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 52-76.

¹³⁶ Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology*, 58-59.

According to natural law, kingship would create a hierarchy that would impose laws upon the people. The king would in some sense enslave them. The citizens would need to join the King's army, pay taxes to the king, and generally serve him.

Gregory Baum argues that this is an example of how natural law can be used as a critique of the way that the Church is run. In this case, it was a critique of how the people of Israel wanted to live. Baum sees this example as a way of showing us how natural law can help us better understand the nature of the Church.

Baum uses the same argument regarding the pacifism of Jesus. Although it can not be embodied thoroughly within the church, there is a dialectical relationship between this ideal and the churches' practices. Gregory Baum concludes his article by suggesting that Milbank is myopic in thinking that the Church's mission is confined to itself. The church transforms society through its affirmation of God's universal presence.

Pierre Allard's Idealistic Vision of Reconciliation

After serving for fifteen years as an institutional and regional federal chaplain (1972-1987), former Catholic, Baptist pastor Rev. Dr. Pierre Allard was installed in 1988 as the National Director of Chaplaincy for Correctional Service Canada.¹³⁷ Three years before his installation, Pierre enrolled in a graduate program at the North Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. He wrote a Doctor of Ministry thesis entitled *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values and a Biblical Perspective for the Role of Chaplain*.¹³⁸ He graduated from the program in May of 1986.

Pierre begins his thesis by commending Correctional Service Canada for placing the offender at the centre of their statement of values.¹³⁹ He compares this prioritizing of the individual inmate as subject¹⁴⁰ to the 1960s Vatican II report of the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican document placed a chapter on the People of God before the "one on hierarchy."¹⁴¹ Correctional Service Canada's "safe, secure and human control of offenders" is done in the context of "helping them become law-

¹³⁷ Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual* (Victoria: Friesen Press, 2020), 43-45.

¹³⁸ *Doctor of Ministry Dissertation* (North Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), unpublished, 192 pages.

¹³⁹ Pierre Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values and a Biblical Perspective for the Role of Chaplain*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Duguid has reflected on the importance of a prisoner being treated as a subject, *Can Prisons Work?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 246-247. A review of his book appears in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 207-210.

¹⁴¹ For what this shift in thinking meant for the Roman Catholic Church, see Richard McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

abiding citizens.”¹⁴² The goal of reintegration is integrally linked to the dynamic and static security of incarceration.

Allard grounds ministry on the basis of inmates being created in the image of God.¹⁴³ God has endowed them with dignity and respect in spite of what they have done. Self-love is something offenders learn as they move from self-loathing to self-appreciation.

Allard goes on to show how much antagonism and prejudice are present in prisons. He cites Paul in Ephesians 2:15 regarding a dividing wall of hostility that exists between Jews and Gentiles. This wall can be compared to the differences between inmates and law-abiding citizens.

Paul goes on to declare that God through Christ has broken down this wall through his blood and established a new humanity of peace (Ephesians 2:15-16). Allard suggests that this Christian declaration of unity is possible within a prison context. Staff can empathize with inmates and help them work at reintegration.¹⁴⁴

Allard adds to this idealistic vision by suggesting that chaplains along with other staff can act as ministers of reconciliation in their work with offenders. Paul speaks about believers becoming ambassadors as a result of God reconciling the world to the Godself (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). Unity and reconciliation are possible because of God’s work in the world.¹⁴⁵ Offenders find healing and hope along their journey from remorse and forgiveness to compassion, reconciliation, and restoration.

Three Examples of the Positive Role of Coercion

The time has come to place these idealistic theologies and teleological visions within a realistic framework of force. How are the pacifistic response of Jesus’ atonement, divine summons, beatific vision, original righteousness, teleological placement of the Ten Commandments within an ethic of love, affirmation of God’ reconciliation of the world, and goal of rehabilitation related to the use of coercion?

The first example comes from the Correctional Service Canada’s shift in policy in the 1980s.¹⁴⁶ Up to the 1960s, employable skills were regarded as the most important trade that inmates could learn while incarcerated. Construction, welding, upholstery,

¹⁴² Pierre Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values and a Biblical Perspective for the Role of Chaplain*, 18.

¹⁴³ Pierre Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values*, 82-91.

¹⁴⁴ Pierre Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values*, 92-102.

¹⁴⁵ Pierre Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada Values*, 105-124.

¹⁴⁶ The next three sections are included in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 87-90.

school upgrading, culinary techniques, and food preparation were offered within prison settings.

The problem with this approach was that it did not address factors that brought inmates to prison in the first place. The Correctional Service considered it adequate during those years to punish inmates for what they had done without considering the reasons they had committed their offences. Inmates I spoke to during those early years were in general agreement with this approach. They regarded work as the most important defining aspect of their existence. They knew that they were serving time for the offences that they had committed. They did not consider it anyone else's business whether they had addiction issues or marital affairs.

This all changed in the 1980s. The Correctional Service decided that taking programming for the offences a person had committed was part of the punishment that they received.¹⁴⁷ The inmates were withheld pay if they did not take programming for violence, domestic abuse, gang affiliation, or sexual offences. The Correctional Service saw these programs as helping to reduce recidivism and the possibility of future harm.

Inmates reacted strongly against this new policy. There was a period of five years when I as a chaplain could not call any of the Bible studies and relationship courses that I offered a "program." Inmates told their parole officers that the reasons for their offences were none of the staff's business. Offenders would decide if they wanted parole. Inmates would decide if they wanted to take a program. They reacted strongly against being forced to take a program. Everything should be done on a voluntaristic basis, like the AA and NA programs offered in the evening.

One of the surprising outcomes of these new policies was that offenders began to see the merit of these programs after five years. They saw that they could earn a high school diploma if they applied themselves. They realised that looking into the nature and causes of their offences could help them not reoffend in the future.

This example shows how coercion, applied with a clear goal in mind, is effective. The reasons for programming were made clear. Offenders had a responsibility to the state to better understand the reasons for their crimes. They had a responsibility to become law-abiding citizens.

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault has outlined the historical shift in corrections from corporal forms of punishment and work to enlightenment disciplines of reflection and reform, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). Note the discussion in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 180-181.

Integration of Inmate Populations

A second example is taken from events that occurred during the 1990s in Leclerc Institution, a federal prison in Quebec. The relationship between staff and inmates had deteriorated to a point where offenders were taking control of some aspects of the prison. Members of the Hell's Angels' gang were deciding where inmates could reside. They as a group occupied the top two ranges of one wing of the prison while relegating more undesirable inmates to the lower floors.

The Hell's Angels made decisions regarding living arrangements in the face of Correctional Service policy that stated that a prison was to have integrated populations. Integrated populations meant that a variety of different inmates had to learn to live together in units specified by the staff.

The power imbalance between inmates and staff got to a point that a new warden was installed in the prison. The warden met with each of the inmate range representatives. He told them that over the next three months, staff would decide which inmate could reside in which unit. The inmates reacted strongly against this new measure. They told the warden that there was going to be assaults against staff. They told the warden that there was going to be violence. They told the warden that there was going to be a riot.

The warden responded to each of these threats. He met again with each of the inmate unit representatives. He told them that none of his correctional staff was going to be harmed. He told the inmates that there was not going to be any violence. He told the offenders that there was not going to be a riot.

The outcome of this strategy and enforcement over three months was generally good. Inmates learned to live with other inmates with whom they felt uncomfortable. Hell's Angels' inmates mixed with other inmates who were not involved with gangs. Black and ethnic inmates were placed on the same range as Caucasians. Inmates with different types of offences learned to live in harmony on a range. The pecking order established by inmates was slowly eroded in favour of a greater integrated population.

A riot occurred on one of ranges while this new policy was being enforced. Inmates trashed their common room, destroying refrigerators, couches, and cooking stoves. They barricaded themselves in their cells, not allowing officers to come onto the range.

The warden's response to this violence was to punish the perpetrators involved while letting the rest of the inmates mingle freely in the prison. The range on which the riot had taken place was barricaded so that none of the inmates on that floor could leave. The inmates were locked in their cells. Food was delivered to the inmates. This situation stayed the same for three months. The barricaded inmates observed the other offenders being given a variety of liberties. The prison as a whole adjusted to the new reality of integrated populations.

After three months, staff moved onto the barricaded range and renovated the common area. Inmates were allowed to leave their cells for a certain amount of time every day. Life slowly returned to normal. Inmates on that range accepted the fact that life was different from what it had been before.

I learned over the course of this six month period that it is possible to set a clear direction of reform. It was possible to enforce this reform in order to show inmates that they were not ultimately the ones who were in charge. The power and control that the Hell's Angels had been able to exert over the prison was slowly eroded. Pro-social interactions replaced the intimidation that the gang had used to enforce what is known as an inmate pecking order.

This cautionary tale demonstrates how coercion can be used to establish pro-social relationships. The Hells Angels are a powerful gang precisely because they believe in using whatever means it takes to get what they want. They sell drugs in order to make a lot of money. They intimidate inmate "informants" in order to keep drugs coming into the prison. They force any inmate who has been convicted of a crime against women or children to "check into the hole" and leave the prison. They flaunt the law by using force and violence to establish their own rules of life. These rules include racketeering, prostitution, selling drugs, and money laundering. The Hells Angels have replaced society's ideals of harmony and good order with their own sense of "justice."

It takes time to right the listing ship because of a power struggle between inmate and staff. Gangs have been formed to exert political and social pressure on the situation. Staff become intimidated to a point where they feel paralyzed in acting. This is why a new seasoned warden was asked to deal with the situation. He was given the power and authority to make changes. He was wise enough to know how to undermine the Hell's Angels' power. He showed inmates at the prison that there was a better way. They could be free of the intimidating hold that the Hells Angels had over them by cooperating with the new policy of integrated populations. Making members of the

Hells Angels live on different ranges had the desired effect of decreasing their influence. The Hell's Angels' inmates had to learn to cooperate with a variety of different people. Their skewed view of the world was diffused in favour of pro-social values and policies.

Issuing Peace Bond Orders to Keep People Safe

A third example has to do with the provincial courts issuing peace bonds known as 8/10 orders to released inmates who are considered a high risk to reoffend. Some inmates refuse to take programming for their offences. Other inmates find it hard to control their sexual impulses. Still others with mental challenges or other disabilities do not know how to deal with emotional, psychological, and behavioural challenges.

Circles of Support and Accountability is a nation wide program that has been set up to help inmates become law abiding citizens.¹⁴⁸ Inmates upon release agree to meet regularly with a group of volunteers to receive support as well as be held accountable. This program has been quite successful.¹⁴⁹ The fellowship offered by this group of people helps to keep an ex-inmate on the straight and narrow.

The provincial courts issue two-year 8/10 orders to some ex-inmates because they are considered a high risk to reoffend. These peace bonds involve the ex-inmate wearing metal bracelets on their ankles so that the high risk unit of the police force can monitor their movements. These peace bonds are set in place after the inmate has completed their federal prison sentence.

Inmates reacted strongly against this peace bond order when it was first implemented over twenty-five years ago. They took the government to court on the basis of their rights. A few of these court orders were lifted. The majority of them stayed in place because of the assessed risk of the inmate to the community.

Many of the inmates I worked with accepted the imposed court order. They admitted that they were still a risk to society. They considered COSAs along with the wearing of an ankle bracelet necessary to keep them safe. They did not want to commit another offence. They were willing to abide by these conditions in order to reintegrate into society.

¹⁴⁸ Note the discussion, Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 36-38.

¹⁴⁹ Wilson, Robin, Franca Cortoni, and Andrew McWhinnie, "Circles of Support and Accountability: A Canadian National Replication of Outcome Findings," *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 2009:21, 412-430.

Several ex-inmates expressed anxiety and trepidation when these bracelets were removed two years later. They understood the nature of their crime cycle. They knew how easy it was to slip back into a negative way of thinking and acting. These ex-inmates continued to be part of the volunteer group of Circles of Support and Accountability. COSAs represented a safe place where they could process the challenges of day-to-day living. COSAs evolved as a social support network that went beyond its original mandate of a one-year covenantal relationship with the core member. The social group acted as an informal authority figure that kept its members along with society safe after the removal of the bracelets.

Ex-inmates' commitment to "do no more harm" and willingness to abide by conditions represented the heart of the program. These ex-inmates were technically free to do whatever they felt like, even with an ankle bracelet. The bracelet represented a monitoring tool reinforced by accountability to forensic units of the hospital, high risk police units, along with volunteers and friends who were willing to walk alongside these ex-inmates. Persuasion and coercion worked hand in hand to keep society safe.

Relationship between Theological Principles and Use of Coercion

How do the theological principles outlined in the first half of the paper apply to the use of coercion detailed in the second half? The role of a beatific vision represents a good starting point. Power and control issues are so prevalent in a prison setting that I experienced an ecstatic vision of divine intimacy. The latter experience was necessary to cope with the lack of love and care occurring on a human level. I could suggest to inmates that intimacy, affection, and friendship were, in fact, real. Experiencing intimacy of a deeply religious and existential level helped to show the way past the reality of power and control.

Alternatives to Violence workshops are effective within prisons for the same reasons.¹⁵⁰ Inmates are looking for ways to relate to each other in ways that are different from what they are used to. They are tired of the manipulative ways in which power is exerted by other inmates to gain advantages over them. Alternatives to Violence shines brightly in this controlled atmosphere.

Gordon Kaufman's pacifism speaks directly to this issue. Jesus responded non-violently precisely because of the violence of conviction and death that was foisted upon him. His selfless sacrifice illustrated for all to see what atonement and

¹⁵⁰ Note the discussion in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 133-140.

redemption meant. His suffering and death obviated the need for people to save themselves. This salvific event liberated people to follow another way.

Restoration to innocence, trust, faith, honesty, and kindness is possible because of the ways in which these attributes have been real in people's lives. Human beings have been created with these characteristics regardless of how these bases of peaceful interaction have been abused. Inmates' ability to trust and share with one other person represents the beginning of a long, infant-like journey that builds on itself. Restoration to original righteousness is necessary precisely because of inmates' loss of all of these things. Inmates are challenged in their cynicism, despair, arrogance, and disdain to consider another way. Christians become like children again in order to flourish.

Placing the Ten Commandments within an encadrement of care brings out the best of these laws. Covetousness outlined in the ninth and tenth commandments applies particularly well.¹⁵¹ Inmates have robbed banks and stolen from others because of material covetousness. They have sexually assaulted other people and killed their girlfriends' lovers out of sheer jealousy. The Ten Commandments suggest that believers should be content with what they have by way of material possessions and intimate friendships. The taboo emphasis of the law is undergirded by the fact that believers can love unconditionally. Mutual and selfless love are realized through divine and human relationships.

The goal oriented nature of teleological pronouncements obviates the urgency of the immediate situation. Inmates are anxious to get on with their lives because of the privations of incarceration. Their experiences of genuine trust and care within a confined setting propel them into optimistic preoccupations with reintegration and restoration. Too many promises are made. Too many expectations are invoked. The journey from power and control to persuasion and mutual love takes time.

Pierre Allard's vision of reconciliation represents an endpoint of faith. Reconciliation of believers to God, to each other, and to their victims is a long journey that involves a lot of forgiveness, forbearance, compassion, empathy, faith, and gracious redress. Paul declares that God has already reconciled the world to the Godself. Believers are simply witnesses of that reality. Christians tell others because of their experience of it within themselves.

¹⁵¹ Note the discussion in *The Catholic Catechism*, 601-613. Except for Lutherans, who follow Catholics in this regard, Protestants only have one taboo against covetousness in their ordering of the Ten Commandments. They divide the Catholic first commandment of "having no other gods before me" and "making no graven image" into two.

Chapter Seven

Usefulness of Imago Dei Theology in Prison Ministry

Introduction

Pierre Allard's emphasis on the fact that inmates have been created in the image of God represents a crucial aspect of prison chaplaincy.¹⁵² The idea that we have been created good enables us to be restored to those possibilities after we have committed grievous wrongs. The Roman Catholic Catechism refers to the fact that Adam and Eve were in state of original righteousness before they fell from grace.¹⁵³ This reality of innocence, naiveté, trust, openness, honesty, and love before the stain of original sin became inevitable enables us to have hope that sanctification is possible after our experience of divine justification.

I have chosen the Roman Catholic Catechism to reflect on this dynamic because it takes seriously the difference between the inevitability of sinning and the temptation to sin, called concupiscence. It demonstrates how our passions, emotions, conscience, and virtuous nature are connected to our will to live and love and believe in God. It also shows how the inevitability of sinning forces us to return repeatedly to confession and forgiveness in order to move on with our lives. The ethics of the Ten Commandments are placed with the framework of loving God and loving our neighbour.

I conclude the chapter by considering the possibility of having a beatific vision of the intimacy of God. Here again, the Roman Catholic Catechism is helpful. It refers to a beatific vision as a mystical experience in which God opens up divine "mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him capacity for it."¹⁵⁴

152 Allard, *The Statement of the Correctional Service*, 82-91.

153 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 375.

154 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1026-1028. "This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise. . . . God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself open up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory 'the beatific vision.'" Cf. Wikipedia, *Beatific Vision*, Beatific vision - Wikipedia Retrieved 10 July 2023.

Experience of divine intimacy enables us to belong to the infinite Being known as God (Acts 17: 28). We are enveloped within the arms of Jesus in order to offer that same kind of love and care to others. Human intimacy and sense of belonging proceed directly from God's assurance that we belong as an integral part of infinite Being. I have used the beatific vision in a prison context to assure inmates that they are loved, that they belong, and that it is possible for them to love and believe again.

Created in the Image of God

The Catholic Catechism asserts the fact that human beings have been created in the image of God.¹⁵⁵ It affirms the freedom of human beings in their search for God.¹⁵⁶ It acknowledges that human beings sometimes use their radical freedom to sin.¹⁵⁷ This sin results in the loss of grace.

The Catechism makes a distinction between a tendency to sin, called concupiscence, and sin itself.¹⁵⁸ All of us have an inclination to sin based on our selfish desires. We sin when we feed the flames of these proclivities to possess what we want. Placing one's covetous impulses within an ethic of care and respect enables a person to become whole, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. The Catechism acknowledges the inevitability of sinning while placing that original sin within the salvific perspective of the gospel. God forgives our sin, saves us from ourselves, and empowers us to live redeemed lives.

Concupiscence

The Catholic Catechism makes a distinction between original sin that Adam and Eve initiated, and concupiscence, which represents a "weakness of nature" and a "tendency to sin." God removed original sin through atonement of Christ's sacrifice. Believers confess that God has set them free from sin. Concupiscence nevertheless remains in believers.¹⁵⁹ Concupiscence refers to "the tinder to sin." It represents the kindling within human emotions that is easily incited and ignited with the slightest spark.¹⁶⁰

The ninth and tenth biblical commandments provide a better understanding about what concupiscence is all about.¹⁶¹ The Catholic Catechism considers covetousness

155 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 41, cf. 31-34. Please excuse the use throughout of the masculine pronoun in the Catechism.

156 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1730-1742.

157 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1861-1864.

158 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 28-34, 977-980, 1424-1426.

159 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 977-980, 1424-1426.

160 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1264-1266.

161 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2514-2516. Exodus 20:17 reads as follows: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house, you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." The Catholic Catechism divides these sayings into two

to be “any intense form of human desire” or “sensitive appetite” that goes contrary to the operation of human reason.¹⁶² The first aspect has to do with lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes for “one’s neighbour’s wife.” These desires can lead to (sexual) violence and injustice. “Coveting one’s neighbour’s goods,” the tenth commandment, can lead to theft, robbery, and fraud.¹⁶³

Many of the offences committed by inmates fall under the general category of covetousness. A boyfriend beats up his girlfriend because of his possessiveness. He is jealous and afraid that she will fall in love with someone else. A husband commits adultery with another person because he is dissatisfied with his marriage relationship. A man rapes a woman because he does not know how to satisfy his sexual desires in an appropriate way.

Young men join gangs and steal because they cannot imagine earning enough money in a legitimate way to afford a Mercedes Benz car. The consumer society in which we live promises us that happiness lies in the purchasing of goods, in drinking alcohol, in gambling, and in taking what one can get from someone else.

The Catholic Catechism does not consider covetousness as a sin in-and-of-itself. It “unsettles” human beings’ “moral faculties” and inclines human beings to sin “without being in itself an offence.”¹⁶⁴ This means that desiring goods and being attracted sexually to others is a natural part of human nature. That is the way that God has made us.

A problem starts when we give these feelings free rein, thinking that anything is permissible. Our insecurities tell us that we deserve more than we have, that we deserve to “interfere in other people’s lives” in an inappropriate manner. We allow our own unsettledness and lack of satisfied interiority to control our actions.

The Catholic Catechism suggests that human beings can struggle against sin and emerge victorious. In speaking about the woundedness of human beings, the Catechism states:¹⁶⁵

commandments, while the Protestant church regards the statement against covetousness as one commandment. The Protestant church divides Exodus 20:4-6 into two commandments, “You shall have no other gods before me,” and “You shall not make for yourself a graven image.” The Catholic Catechism regards these two sentences as one command, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2051-2052.

162 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2515.

163 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2534-2536, 1865-1869.

164 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2515.

165 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 404-405.

Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin and turns a man back to God, but the consequences of nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.

In another section, it states:¹⁶⁶

The new life in Christian initiation has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin that tradition calls concupiscence, which remains in the baptized such that with the help of the grace of Christ they may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life. This is the struggle of conversion directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us.

This distinction between concupiscence as “a tendency to sin” and “sin itself” is important for two reasons. First, the inmates that I worked with had not only watched pornography or thought of killing their neighbour. They did not only covet their neighbour's wife and goods. They seized and claimed both.

These actions demonstrate that human desires are powerful factors in people's lives. Feelings, emotions, and “sensitive appetites” can easily overflow into rage, revenge, violence, and injustice.

There are, indeed, differences between thinking and acting, desiring and seizing, coveting and claiming. Most people have thought, desired, and coveted many things. They have not acted on these impulses. They have been able, with the help and grace of God, to refrain from overt criminal and immoral acts while still being susceptible to sin and evil.

The second reason for making a distinction between a tendency to sin and sin itself is because some offenders find it hard to separate their sexual desires, negative feelings toward themselves and their spouses, desire for money, and hatred of their enemies -- from the criminal acts that they committed. They concluded -- based on their guilt and shame regarding their criminal acts -- that it was wrong to feel anger, express rage, or own their emotions to know what went wrong with their lives.

A person's range of feelings is normal and has been created by God. These emotions are immensely useful in understanding how other people and things make us feel. Strong desires are part of how God has created us. God has created a balance between the irrational and the rational, between heart and mind, between emotions and rationality.

To say that concupiscence is not “in-and-of-itself” a sin brings a huge sigh of relief. Separating the act from the “tinder to sin” that ignites the blaze enables us to access

166 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1426.

the many unconscious and conscious reasons that we commit sin. We have sometimes nurtured concupiscence to the point that it became an unstoppable raging fire. We all have weaknesses within ourselves: insecurity, avarice, pride, power, lust, envy, jealousy, anger, or rage. We have sometimes fed these desires to get what we want. Emotions are not necessarily sins in-and-of-themselves. They can lead to much bigger things if allowed to fester.

The Catholic Catechism's reticence to call concupiscence a direct sin allows us to own that part of ourselves that is less than good. Acknowledging weakness and sensitivity enables us to claim aspects of our lives that need work. Believers can struggle and claim victory rather than seeing faith primarily as a matter of "seeking forgiveness" for having these thoughts at all.¹⁶⁷

Passions

The Catechism continues its reflection on the emotional aspect of existence by looking at human passions. It affirms the fact that passions are "neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will."¹⁶⁸

The Catechism builds on this distinction by suggesting that love, "attracted to the good," represents the most fundamental passion.¹⁶⁹ Love causes a desire for the absent good and the hope of attaining it. This movement finds completion in the "pleasure and joy of the good" possessed.

Offenders are hemmed in on every side by accusations and convictions that they have broken many taboos. Daytime programming emphasizes the negative aspect of this fact. Offenders are given tools to stop "stinking thinking," to consider the consequences of their actions, to learn what "not to do" in a situation.

Concentrating on taboos such as not stealing, not killing, not sexually assaulting, not harming, and not coveting is limited in effectiveness because of its deontological priority (emphasis on rules). This type of programming does not provide offenders with enough positive reinforcements, teleological goals, and reachable rewards to motivate them to change.¹⁷⁰ This lacuna is why the above statement about love and

167 The limits of Reinhold Niebuhr's theology have to do with the fact that he had a tragic view of life. He believed that the love of God entered into history primarily as crucifixion and forgiveness, D. B. Robertson, editor, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1976), 269, 276. This negative view of salvation history makes it hard for inmates to affirm the possibility of change in their lives, cf. Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, 159.

168 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1767.

169 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1765.

170 I have considered the difference that deontology and teleology, myth and fairy tale, make in motivating and providing positive solutions to inmates' problems, Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 12-14, 95-100.

its rewards is so important. To speak about the “pleasure and joy of the good possessed” represents a completion of life that is hard to put into words.

To give an example, *eros* finds its fulfillment in the mutual love of marriage. At the same time, forgiveness, forbearance, acceptance, and compromise represent an integral aspect of the covenantal nature of the relationship.

The same thing applies to one’s love for God. A beatific vision of God in which divine intimacy is experienced represents the wherewithal of faith. I can attest to this fact on an experiential level. When I transferred together with my family to another province four thousand kilometers away to continue my work as a chaplain, I had a powerful mystical experience. The move had been stressful; I had already worked for over ten years in the system. My family and I had a difficult time adjusting.

At the same time, I found myself refreshed in my work. My colleagues were immensely supportive. The work was fulfilling. I found a renewed sense of calling to chaplaincy. Part of this renewal involved an intense spiritual and religious experience. I found myself reflecting on an image of Madonna and child during the Advent and Christmas season. I developed a seven-step spiritual journey in conjunction with the use of a labyrinth. I wrote a manual for the spiritual retreats that I facilitated.¹⁷¹

I referred to this experience as the intimate presence of God. Human intimacy and love are two attributes that are hard to find in a prison setting. Divine intimacy represents one means by which one can find one’s way back to the living. A beatific vision is one way of naming this experience.

Seeking good as an object is a way that passions become integrated into the life of faith. Possessiveness turned into ugly covetousness is reoriented to the goodness of Being of which I am a part. Desire and longing that want to control are turned outward to envelop others through selfless love. A sense of belonging is gained as a person lets go of self. A sense of self, in other words, is regained through God’s and other people’s affirmations.

Getting to the bottom of this dialectic between the need to be selfish and the ability to be selfless has represented the heart of my ministry. Inmates come to me because of their overriding guilt and shame about their crimes. They grasp at love instead of attaining it. They have controlled and harmed others because they thought that would in some perverse manner satisfy their needs.

171 Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, 83-84.

I have validated their need to stand up for themselves and for their wants to be fulfilled. I have affirmed the God-given role of passions and desires in their lives. At the same time, I have suggested that attraction to the good, basic to their soul, represents the means by which love can be experienced and embraced.

The fact that the ship of blame and conviction is tilted so far in one direction within the prison system is the reason why I find the Catholic Catechism's affirmation of human nature, human freedom, passions, conscience, and the beatific vision so refreshing. In the midst of guilt and shame comes an affirmation that we have been created good. We retain the freedom to act in a gracious manner. God is "with us" as Being itself. Passions find ultimate fulfillment within believers oriented toward the good.

This good can be referred to as love. Intimacy works in human and divine relationships.¹⁷² This intimacy is an existential reality along with a teleological goal by which offenders can be healed and redeemed. Motivational interviewing has everything to do with hope and faith that love will win out in the end. The actual experience of love on a divine and human level reinforces this sense of hope and wish for freedom. The idea that we experience "pleasure and joy" in the good achieved, that we "sing for joy" at this divine experience represents an immediately achieved goal that motivates us again and again to move toward the good.

Moral Conscience

The Catechism goes on to speak about the role of conscience. Conviction of conscience has always been my most obvious starting point regarding interviews with offenders. Within the first five minutes, offenders are telling me how sorry they are that they committed their offences. They tell me that even though they knew it was wrong, they did it anyway. They are at a loss to know why they were willing to go against the dictates of their conscience. They became wilful and arrogant in the face of a great deal of stress, debilitating circumstances, and sheer inability to ask for help. They found their own criminal solutions to the problem.

Offenders' recognition of the fact that what they were doing was wrong has always been the most obvious way "into" all the reasons and actions and justifications for what they did. The fact that they have a law written in their hearts -- to which Ezekiel (18:1-4), Jeremiah (31:31-34), and Romans (1:20-21, 2:14-15) attest -- showed me that inmates have been created good. They are capable of making moral judgments. They are deeply sorry for what they have done.

172 Biblically based courses such as *Experiencing God*, by Henry Blackaby (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2008), and *Purpose Driven Life*, by Rick Warren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), start the discussion by affirming the fact that God is "seeking a loving relationship," *Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 155-157.

These confessions and acknowledgements are the first step in a long road to recovery. Offenders suspended the voice of their conscience in favour of wilful actions and harmful decisions. It takes time to unravel what that means and the role that conscience plays in all of this.

Virtues

Mortal virtues are the last aspect of human emotions, human nature, and human will that the Catechism deals with before turning to the consequences of sin. Hope, faith, and love are regarded as three theological virtues that inform other ones: prudence, justice, fortitude, perseverance, and fruits of the Spirit.

Use of overriding theological virtues to guide specific principles and actions is what makes the Catechism “user friendly.” Faith, hope, and love are three aspects of spirituality and belief that inmates know very well. They are forced in prison to either hope or die. They are forced to come to terms with what they believe. And they have to reflect on whether love, actualised as part of their past life, is again possible. Whether love of God or love of others or love of self is intended is less important than the very possibility of love within dire circumstances and tragic results.

The way in which these three theological virtues inform other ones is reflective of the Catechism’s overall approach. It places the Ten Commandments within the context of the two greatest commandments: love of God and love of neighbour. Integration of the Old and New Testaments within a covenantal theology speaks volumes about how these Ten Commandments have already been written on the hearts of human beings.¹⁷³

Jesus fulfilled the Law and Ten Commandments by helping people see how this applied specifically to them. The Ten Commandments represent a big fish net that captures the worst misdemeanours. Jesus is suggesting that the webbing in this fish net is indeed much smaller, so small in fact that it fits into our hearts.

The Catechism has a wonderful way of enunciating this truth:¹⁷⁴

It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of *interiority* is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination, or introspection.

The harmful consequences of offenders’ actions make them numb and devoid of any feelings and emotions regarding their crime. They committed their crime by

173 Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 37:26-28. The Catechism outlines a covenantal theology starting with Noah and continuing through Abraham, Moses, Israel, and Jesus Christ, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 56-73; cf. Wikipedia, *Covenant Theology*, [Covenant theology - Wikipedia](#) Retrieved 29 December 2022.

174 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1779.

suspending, not only their conscience, but their empathy, humanity, morality, religiosity, spirituality, and solidarity with others as well. The sheer selfishness of their actions makes inmates particularly difficult to deal with in regard to their ability to be “present to themselves” in the form of *interiority*.

The challenge of this task is the reason that the Catechism places the Ten Commandments within the context of love of God and love of neighbour. The underlying purpose of the Ten Commandments’ taboos is to undergird the positive. Sanctity of life is the reason not to kill. Belief in God is the reason not to have idols. Understanding internal authority is the reason one honours one’s parents. Enjoyment of private property is the reason one does not steal others’ goods. Blessing and joy in other people’s relationships represent the flip side of envy and covetousness.

I have welcomed this wholistic approach because inmates are drawn so quickly into the condemnation that is front and center in regard to taboos they have broken. My goal has been to complement the importance of keeping taboos with the positive reasons that these laws have been established in the first place.

Restoration to Original Righteousness

The Catholic Catechism affirms the fact that Adam and Eve were constituted in an original “state of holiness and justice.”¹⁷⁵ This grace of original holiness was to “share in the divine life.” Children represent a good example of what it means to dwell in this state of original righteousness. We remember the naiveté, childlike trust, kindness, compassion, love, care, hope, and faith that we had as pre-adolescents.

The Catechism affirms the fact that even though human beings were created good, they fell as a result of Adam and Eve’s sin.¹⁷⁶ This inevitability of sinning is known as original sin. Eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil meant that Adam and Eve had to leave paradise. They sowed fig leaves as clothing for themselves because they had lost their innocence.

We can all remember the time when we lost our naiveté. Perhaps we threw sand into our brother’s face because they took away our toy. Perhaps this loss of innocence had to do with guilt over sexual awareness. We can remember the time when we started disobeying our parents. Perhaps we stole a candy bar from the grocery store.

Inmates are very aware of the evil and sin that they have committed. They live with the consequences of the decisions they have made. This consciousness of sin makes

¹⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 375. Cf. Wikipedia, *Original Righteousness*.

¹⁷⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 397.

them despair and become depressed. They believe that they are fundamentally evil and not worthy of love and attention.

I tell inmates to return to a second naivete¹⁷⁷ in order to find healing and hope. The innocence, love, and trust that one experienced as a child needs to be revisited and affirmed. This restoration is possible through the sacrificial love of Christ. Christ has restored us to original righteousness because of his selfless death on the cross.¹⁷⁸

Harville Hendrix is a marriage counselor who uses this restoration to original righteousness to good effect. He suggests to couples on the verge of separation that they revisit the reasons that they fell in love in the first place.¹⁷⁹ They can reignite the initial spark of attraction, affection, and love that they had for each other. Retracing the steps of commitment they made at the beginning of their relationship breaks the power struggle occurring after years of marriage. Forgiveness, forbearance, and acts of love enable couples to move past issues of power and control.

The Celebrate Recovery program is similar. CR facilitators hand out a worksheet in lessons nine, ten, and eleven that asks participants to write down good qualities about themselves. Looking at positive characteristics balances the hurt that one has experienced and harm that one has committed.¹⁸⁰ Confessing what has gone wrong in Principle 4¹⁸¹ gives way to forgiveness and absolution. Having been cleansing from the power of sin, offenders reaffirm aspects of themselves that have been left behind.

Affirming the fact that we were originally good and righteous shows us that love and faith and hope are possible. Good characteristics existed within our core being when we were young. These elements of trust, faith, hope, and love can be reclaimed.

Beatific Vision

The Catholic Catechism refers to a beatific vision as a mystical experience in which God opens up divine “mystery to man’s immediate contemplation and gives him capacity for it.”¹⁸² Images in the Scripture that point to this indescribable experience

177 Paul Ricoeur elaborates on what this second naiveté entails in *Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 352.

178 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1987-2005.

179 Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want*, 119-130.

180 John Baker, Taking an Honest and Spiritual Inventory, Participants Guide 2, *Celebrate Recovery Inside* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 29.

181 “Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust,” John Baker, *Celebrate Recovery Inside* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 11.

182 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1026-1028. “This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding

of the divine are “life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father’s house, the heavenly Jerusalem, and paradise.”

I can speak to this reality on an existential level. We as a family moved to Alberta twenty-five years ago so I could work at a prison nearby. I experienced what can be referred to as a beatific vision. Neither faith nor reason was an intricate aspect of the experience. It was a feeling, deep emotion, desire, and envelopment of my whole being within what I would describe as the intimacy of God. It was a powerful experience of affection and love. God was present within my life to such a degree that I was inspired to continue to work as a prison chaplain for the next twenty-five years.

Part of the reason I had such a powerful experience was because prison is not a place that one really wants to enter. It is a place that I never dreamed of “living in.” I had been a pastor. I wanted to become a university professor. I was an academic. I came from a good family. I had a good family. I had any number of close friends. Why would I want to diminish those fulfilling realities by working in a prison?

Against my better judgement, I fell in love with the ministry. I was able to “speak into” a variety of situations that required my assistance. I learned more about ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue in Archambault and Leclerc and Cowansville and Federal Training Center that I did in ten years studying religion and theology at McGill University.

There was a reality to prison life that I could not find in books or in pastoring. “Snap” decisions were required in innumerable situations. I had to trust my judgment to answer difficult requests. God was with me. I could not manage numerous situations in which I became involved.¹⁸³

This initial foray into prison life does not explain the need for a beatific vision. Any new job or career gives a person the energy to meet a new challenge and find work fulfilling. The same satisfaction is not as evident ten years down the road. The job has become routine, there are family and social concerns, children to raise, and new hobbies and sports to get involved in. A renewal is necessary in order for a career to continue to be meaningful.

This is especially true of prison chaplaincy. Prison life may appear infinitely boring and routine. Anyone living and working in that environment can attest to a broad

feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father’s house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise. . . . God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself open up his mystery to man’s immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory ‘the beatific vision.’”

183 Some examples are included in Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, 18-19, 21-22, 57-58, 60-61, 63.

range of pressures that slowly squeeze life out of a person. The sheer number of demands on a daily basis is exhausting.

The need for a beatific vision becomes evident. The prison is such a negative place to work that one is forced to contemplate how to survive and thrive in that environment. The beatific vision represented for me an ecstatic experience of divine intimacy because that was precisely what was missing in a place like prison.

Inmates are hungry for attention, for love, for acceptance, and for affirmation. They are hungry because all of those things have been taken away from them as a result of their offences. They invited and received vilification for what they had done.

Outside observers may say that offenders should not expect anything except judgment and punishment for what they have done. This statement is true at one level. It is another thing for a staff member to choose to work in that environment, to listen to inmates' complaints and incessant badgering, to empathize at some level, and to intervene in so many other situations. Staff cannot escape the vilification directed at inmates. They are the ones who vicariously absorb the pain of it all.¹⁸⁴

The beatific vision was a liberating experience for me because of the sheer oppressiveness of this cauldron of care. The vision had directly to do with what was missing. Knowledge of God was readily available while seeing God was not really possible. Experiencing the intimacy of God was real precisely because this sense of belonging within Being itself was missing in a prison environment.

I had been part of a loving family when I grew up. I was part of a loving family when I married and we had children. That love was not extended in the same way to the inmates with whom I worked. I could talk about the love that I had for them only in a tangential way. I was not there when they went to bed at night, when they had nightmares about their crimes and their losses, when they lived with dread and shame and guilt.

The intimacy of God was the only thing I had to offer. That affection was the only reality that could counteract the loves that they had lost. They could experience the intimacy of God in the same way that I had, through intense meditation on the sheer hell of it all. One was lifted from the oppression precisely at the point when it became the severest.¹⁸⁵ It was like Herod's killing of the children at Christ's birth and Judas' betrayal of Christ at his arrest and crucifixion. The moment of greatest evil occurred

184 The movie, *Monster's Ball*, DVD (Lionsgate Films, 2001), depicts the oppression of such an environment. I comment on the movie in Donald Stoesz, *Glimpses of Grace*, 66.

185 Cf. my discussion of mysticism and asceticism, Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 149.

when God shone most brightly. The sheer depression of the job forced me to experience real love and closeness to God.

Emotions and passions represent the roots of many crimes that offenders have committed. Emotions and feelings have to be owned and accepted and embraced in order for restoration to happen. Discovering the power of intimacy represented a way of channeling these desires. The intimacy of God was real. One owned what was lost in order to experience life in a divine way.

Courses like *Experiencing God* and *The Purpose Driven Life* are popular because they speak about a relationship with God.¹⁸⁶ They speak about the fact that God wants to have a “loving relationship” with us. God wants to be “our Friend,” “our Comforter,” and “our Lord.” These courses talk about a loving relationship with God because so few offenders know what it is like to have a loving relationship with anyone else.

This way of talking about God can be extended to images of bride and bridegroom. Mark 2:19 speaks about the disciples feasting with the bridegroom while Jesus is still with them. Matthew 25:10 talks about ten bridesmaids going to the wedding +feast of the bridegroom. Ephesians 6:29-32 speaks about Christ loving the church in the same way that husbands love their wives. John refers to the church as a bride because of the fellowship, intimacy, and care experienced there (Revelation 19:7).

The Church represents a fellowship of believers that love each other. We experience God in a very personal sense in this womb of care. This love substitutes for the lack of concern and care and love that inmates experience within a prison context. I experienced a real level of fellowship with these men as part of the body of Christ.

A beatific vision is sometimes necessary for a person to be sustained in ministry. It represents a powerful antidote to the misery, bleakness, and despair that is experienced in a prison setting.

186 Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 155-157.

Chapter Eight

Discovery of the Collective Unconscious

Introduction

Nineteenth century sociologist Emile Durkheim was surprised to find that the suicide rate in various societies stayed the same relative to other constant factors: divorce rates, religious practices, social cohesion, economic opportunities, and community activities.¹⁸⁷ He wondered: How could something so irrational as a person committing suicide be directly related to objective factors in society that contributed to more or less self-inflicted deaths?

Durkheim found that in a country such as France, which was quite religious and dedicated to common family and social values, the number of suicides was less than in Protestant countries, where there was a greater emphasis on modernity and individuality. Durkheim concluded from his study of suicide that there is something called a collective unconscious which affects the way that individuals behave. Individuals who feel part of a social and religious whole are less likely to commit suicide than people who are disconnected from life and society's values. The latter feel more alienated and so are more likely to commit suicide.

Upside Down Pecking Order in Prison

This collective consciousness is important for our discussion because it helps to further explain the reasons that inmates feel compelled to join gangs and commit crimes. In addition to the negative influence of their parents, society's unconscious preoccupation with the criminal lifestyle makes the young adults emulate men in the black hats.

In spite of the fact that society is not trying to glorify criminals, many movies make it appear as though there is something glamorous about stealing money from casinos and belonging to a Mafia.¹⁸⁸ The young adults take the movies at face value

¹⁸⁷ This section is based on Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation*, 116-117.

¹⁸⁸ *Ocean's Eleven* (DVD, Warner Brothers, 2001); *Godfather* (DVD, Paramount Pictures, 1972).

and embark on their own version of a successful robbery group. As long as they can get away with it, the movies seem to be saying, highway robbery is alright.

The collective unconscious is also important in understanding the nature of prison dynamics. Prisons represent an upside world in which bank robbers, murderers, drug dealers, and fraud artists represent the top of the prison pecking order. Reflecting society's unconscious glorification of the criminal lifestyle, prisons embody this alternate view of reality. Committing crime is acceptable according to this view as long as one can make a lot of money and get away with it.

The fact that prisons are full of people who did not get away with it makes this delusional thinking even more important for the inmates to hold on to. Having embarked on a path in which living above and beyond the law has been embraced, it is difficult for inmates to concede the errors of their ways. They hold on tightly to a negative symbol of power and status because everything will come crashing down if they let go. The high social status that they enjoy in prison makes murderers, robbers, drug dealers, and fraud artists believe that it was all worth it.

The only way that inmates can endure the harsh reality of prison is by believing that it is a temporary setback to their long term vision and goals. They have to hold on to the delusion that crime pays. The only place where these criminals receive such a high status is in prison. Coming back to prison again and again entrenches this upside down kingdom to such an extent that criminals have a harder and harder time believing that becoming a law abiding citizen is worth it. Gang life and its disastrous results are the only reality that they know. They therefore continue to play by its rules rather than becoming willing to consider more pro-social options. They have a lot to lose by letting go of this alternative communal society: status, power, money, belonging, and so-called friends.

An ironic aspect of this collective unconscious on the part of gang members and bank robbers is that they embody society's vilification of sex offenders within their pecking order. The fact that these latter offenders have harmed women and children means that the inmates at the top of the pecking order feel they have the right to punish these offenders even more when they arrive in jail to do their time. Prisoners in higher security jails beat these sex offenders up on a regular basis, force them to "show their paperwork," and to go to the "hole" (Structured Intervention Unit).

Prison staff have to work hard at keeping these more vulnerable inmates safe. Like the young offenders described above, who are sent to lower security prisons for their

own good, sex offenders tend to be sent to “protective custody” facilities so that they will not be harmed.

From Static Security to Pro-Active Projects

The social aspects of the prison dynamics described above means that the individualistic therapies outlined in the first section are not sufficient in addressing the needs of inmates regarding rehabilitation. Offenders are faced on a daily basis with gangs’ tantalizing invitation to continue and enhance their criminal associations.

An idealistic social alternative is needed to meet the delusional belief that crime pays. The symbolic status of an upside down pecking order, the need for belonging that the infrastructure of a gang provides, and the false sense of safety that a criminal organization promises need to be met head on with an alternative symbolic system of beliefs and practices.

Two of the most effective volunteer programs that I have encountered that address this need are Alternatives to Violence and the Christopher Leadership course.¹⁸⁹ AVP speaks directly to the tragedy of violence as a solution by offering transforming power as an alternative strategy. Volunteers collaborate with inmate facilitators in showing participants how many conflicts can be solved peaceably. Role playing, active participation, and egalitarian collaboration result in a group solidarity that meets the delusional rewards of gang involvement head on. Participants learn to trust each other, establish an internal net of safety where emotions and feelings of anger can be shared, and build an external social fence that excludes all those who would undermine these pro-social solutions to life.

The Christopher Leadership course is similar in that it offers communication and sharing as keys to effective problem solving. Participants learn to recite nursery rhymes in order to let go of some of their inhibitions in being part of a group. They listen to volunteers sharing personally about lessons they have learned regarding courage, openness, uniqueness, and caring. Participants begin to share personally in two minute talks about their own life experiences. Barriers are broken down as the powerfulness of the sharing out ways the fears that participants have that their stories will be used against them. A banquet and a graduation complete the bonding that has been established. Inmate guests at the banquet are invited to attend the next course.

¹⁸⁹ These programs are discussed in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 133-140.

These two volunteer programs are powerful because they offer a real social and communitarian alternative to the lifestyle with which inmates are familiar. The unhealthy bonds of mistrust and violence that are reinforced within a gang by threats have been replaced by trust in the safety of the group. AVP and Christopher Leadership foster pro-social bonds based on free will and belief in the goodness of each person.

While tentative to say the least, most participants who graduate from these two programs now understand what an intentional community is all about. External fences of enforced belonging have been replaced by internal mutual bonds of respect and trust.

The volunteer driven nature of these two courses represents a surplus value. An idealistic sense of community has been established outside of the contract driven nature of the relationship between staff and inmates. Volunteers, as representatives of the citizens of the community, engage with inmates who have harmed other citizens. Volunteers of their own free will facilitate these courses in order to find some rapprochement between the harm that has been done and the healing that can occur. They assume that there is some good within the offenders by which they can be reached. The non-violent solutions and pro-social interactions that take place within the group settings of AVP and Christopher Leadership show how this goodness can be actualized.

In summary, social and imaginative programs are needed as alternative solutions to the crimes that inmates have committed which they have regarded, up to now, as the only means at their disposal. The negative social reality that prisons represent are obviated at the point where these pro-social engagements occur.

Religious Solutions to the Problem

Are there religious solutions that can be offered to counter the negative symbolization of an ideal criminal lifestyle under which inmates live in order to minimize the pain they feel for having been caught and convicted?

A worship service in prison could be construed as offering somewhat of the same benefits as AVP and Christopher Leadership. A worship service is open to all, provides a sense of safety and belonging to the participants, and joins inmates' longings for a sense of purpose and meaning to the One who provides ultimate meaning and care, the very Godself.

Ministers announce the fact that we all belong to the Being that is God. We are part of a greater whole by which our immediate circumstances are transcended. The solidarity that an inmate faith community represents replicates on a microcosmic level the macro cosmos of meaning that God represents.

Chapel services are nevertheless transient affairs that provide momentary relief from the stresses of prison. While inmates know that they are safe while present in the chapel, they are not as sure of what lies ahead as they head back to their prison units. The negative reality of prison life continues to impinge on the sanguinity that they felt while worshipping.

A more permanent solution has to do with providing a continuity of content that speaks directly to the inmates' need for belonging, safety, and contentment. The reason that *Experiencing God*¹⁹⁰ courses and *Purpose Driven Life*,¹⁹¹ courses are so popular with inmates is because they speak about a loving relationship with God. Rick Warren starts his chapters with titles such as "Becoming Best Friends with God," "Formed for God's Family," "Restoring Broken Relationships," and "Protecting Your Church."¹⁹²

Rick Warren builds on human affections and attachments to illustrate how God can become an intimate part of one's life. Friendships, trust, affection, love, emotional bonding, commitment, loyalty, intimacy, and hope are important to offenders because these realities are exactly what they have lost. Warren enables believers to have a friendship with God that replaces the lack of friendship that they have had on a human level. Offenders devour these books because they want to believe

Henry Blackaby's approach is similar. He suggests that (1) seekers require a crisis of faith in order to "readjust their priorities," (2) God is pursuing a "love relationship" with believers, and that (3) this relationship consists of obedience, trust, and openness to hear God's voice.¹⁹³

Crises of faith and life are central to the experiences of inmates. This is a good place to start in looking at the purpose and meaning of life. Blackaby channels inmates' conviction of spirit, fervent prayers, and newfound belief into a wholesome religious

¹⁹⁰ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, Workbook (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2007), *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 2008). The first book is a larger workbook that includes questions and space for answers in the middle of each lesson while the second book comes in a smaller format, is a little more academic, while containing essentially the same material.

¹⁹¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

¹⁹² Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 85, 117, 145, 152, 160.

¹⁹³ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, Workbook, 50, 68, 132, 154.

experience. He suggests that God is real, that God can be trusted, and that God loves human beings. This is something that offenders desperately want to hear.

Both Warren and Blackaby move from the human experiences of love to the idea that something greater than themselves is at work in inmates' lives. Far from being the centre of the universe, the selfishness of which they demonstrated in their offences, offenders are called by Warren and Blackaby to view themselves from "God's point of view."¹⁹⁴ They belong in a fundamental way to the purposes of God that are being carried out in the world. They are like a piece of driftwood floating down the divine streams of life. Offenders become selfless as they identify with the larger world around them.

Warren and Blackaby move from a sense of belonging to a commitment of service that believers provide through their actions. Offenders are desperate to find love, to belong to something larger than themselves, and to give back for what they have taken. Warren and Blackaby provide clear step-by-step processes by which these three longings can be fulfilled. They refer to believers in the latter chapters as servants, as being part of a mission, of sharing their experiences, and of being part of God's work.¹⁹⁵ Offenders' kindness, empathy, friendship, and peer support of others represents ways in which they can demonstrate the love that they have experienced with God.

These books represent a beginnings to faith which is augmented by other practical guides regarding relationships, codependency, grief recovery, and addictions recovery. Some of these books have already been mentioned. *Getting the Love You Want*, by Harville Hendrix, provides multiple examples and user friendly exercises that help inmates think about the health of their own relationships. *Co-Dependent No More*, by Melodie Beattie, outlines the numerous ways in which we all get hooked into living other people's lives in order to take the focus off our own sorry existence. *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, by Russell Friedman and John James, complements the other books by delving into the grieving process. Then there is *Celebrate Recovery* that uses the twelve step process of Alcoholics Anonymous to undergird eight Christian principles of overcoming addictions.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 154, 178; Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 41, 63, 100.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, Workbook, 178, 198; Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, 227-312.

¹⁹⁶ These books and programs are discussed in Donald Stoesz with Hank Dixon, *A Prison Chaplaincy Manual*, 133-148.

Each of these books intersect with each other, becoming in the process a pro-social web of connections and inter-dynamics. Each references the other in terms of the twelve steps of addictions recovery, grief recovery, spiritual resources, and becoming independent of co-dependency.

In summary, specific programs aimed at providing a symbol system of pro-social activities, non-violent therapies, religious courses, and theological reflections represent a direct challenge to the negative influences and dark ideals that inmates have about the criminal lifestyle.

Conclusion

Embracing the lectionary and liturgy as part of a normal worship service means that I have to choose between attending a mainline church or going back to a more egalitarian type of service in a Mennonite or evangelical church.

The fact that Naomi and I have attended a Lutheran church for the last ten years and that I am currently doing pulpit supply for the Presbyterian Church means that liturgy and lectionary continue to be part of my worship routine.

It is difficult to know how my Mennonite identity and theolog can find expression through this process. I am generally quite a communitarian type of person that sees the fellowship of believers as symbolic of the body of Christ. The cup and host are reflective of this fellowship as well as in a more mystical sense an adoration and sense of reverence for Christ's sacrifice.

I have not at this point had to do any infant baptisms. I remain open to the possibility that some parents may ask me to get involved. This means that I will slowly move along that continuum of practice that I mentioned in Chapter four toward a higher church type of belief. This trajectory is helpful in understanding how one slowly moves from a low church form of faith to a higher church type of belief. It places me along that spectrum while making it clear that I continue to retain a lot that is Mennonite about me.

The discipleship model developed in the last three chapters has been particularly helpful for inmates who have committed serious harm. Remorse, confession of wrongdoing, repentance, assurance of forgiveness and surrender to God are key elements in inmates' conversion experiences.

I have added to these stages of recovery by suggesting that being born in the image of God helps us be restored to our original selves which were created good. I have helped the men with the issues of emotions, relationships, codependency, recovery, restoration, and rehabilitation. The Catholic Catechism's emphasis on original righteousness, on a beatific vision, and a teleological understanding of the ten commandments has been particularly helpful in building on this conversion model. Pacifism is an ideal in this case that speaks about the deep need to forgive our enemies and to be reconciled with each other. I cannot speak for the victims. Many

of the men I have worked with are deeply sorry for what they have done and want to seek reconciliation. In some cases, the most they can do is simply apologize and know that it is God who is the one that forgives.

On this basis, I have been fortunate to be able to work as a prison chaplain for so many years. Discipleship models that build on my own Mennonite upbringing, theology, belief, and adherence have been particularly useful..