MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1989

NOVVM
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tationem, ac citatione denuo diligentium
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ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΝ.

EVANGELIVM SECVNDVM MATTHAEVM.

Βιβλος γενεσεως ιησου χριστου υιου δαυιδ, υιου αβραάμ. Αβραὰμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαάκ. Ἰσαὰκ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰακώβ. Ἰακὼβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ. Ἰούδας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Φαρὲς καὶ τὸν Ζαρὰ ἐκ τῆς Θαμάρ. Φαρὲς δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐσρώμ. Ἐσρὼμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀράμ. Ἀρὰμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀμιναδάβ. Ἀμιναδὰβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ναασσών. Ναασσὼν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαλμών. Σαλμὼν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Βοόζ, ἐκ τῆς Ῥαχάβ. Βοὸζ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ὠβὴδ ἐκ τῆς Ῥούθ. Ὠβὴδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰεσσαί. Ἰεσσαὶ δὲ ἐγέννησε

IBER generationis Ieſu Chriſti filij Dauid, filij Abrahã. Abraham genuit Iſaac. Iſaac autem genuit Iacob. Iacob aũt genuit Iudam & fratres eius. Iudas autẽ genuit Phares & Zarã è Thamar. Phares autẽ genuit Eſrom. Eſrom aũt genuit Arã. Aram autem genuit Aminadab. Aminadab autem genuit Naaſſon. Naaſſon autẽ genuit Salmon. Salmon autẽ genuit Booz, è Rachab. Booz autem genuit Obed, è Ruth. Obed aũt genuit Ieſſe. Ieſſe aũt genuit

IO. FROB. TYPIS EXCVDEBAT. ΜΩΜΗΣΕΤΑΙ ΤΙΣ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΙΟΝ Η ΜΙΜΗΣΕΤΑΙ.

Bethel College Bible Lectures
February 26-27, 1989

Theme: **The Bible in Congregation and College**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26

4:00 p.m. *The Bible as Canon: God's Word and the Community's Book*
Patricia Shelly, Assistant Professor of Bible and Religion
Response by Rev. Heinz Janzen,
Trinity Mennonite Church, Hillsboro

8:00 p.m. *Anabaptists and the Bible: From* sola Scriptura *to* solus Christus
Dale Schrag, Director of Libraries
Response by Rev. Lois Barrett,
Mennonite Church of the Servant, Wichita

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 27

9:00 a.m. *The Daniel Explosion of 1916: Bethel's First Bible Crisis*
Dr. James Juhnke, Professor of History
Response by Rev. Richard Tschetter,
First Mennonite Church, Pretty Prairie

8:00 p.m. *Biblical Authority: The Contemporary Theological Debate*
Dr. Duane Friesen, Professor of Bible and Religion
Response by Rev. Donald Longbottom,
Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge

All lectures are in Krehbiel Auditorium of the Fine Arts Center at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. You are invited to participate.

Indexed with abstracts in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available online through BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Services), Latham, New York and DIALOG, Palo Alto, California.

In this Issue

This issue of *Mennonite Life* publishes the 1989 Bethel College Bible Lectures which were given on campus, February 26-27. The theme for the lecture series was "The Bible in Congregation and College," and it featured a dialogue between church and college representatives. Four lectures were given by Bethel College faculty and staff members; there was a response to each lecture by a pastor from a Western District Mennonite congregation.

This Lecture Series was planned to initiate further discussion with members of Mennonite congregations concerning the role of the Bible in the faith community *and* its study in the academic context of the church-related liberal arts college. The presenters focused, not on new research, but on interpreting the issues so that this interaction could take place in a helpful way.

The study of the Bible in an academic context continues to be a timely one for both church and college in our common concerns for higher education and Christian faithfulness. This Bible Lecture series represents a unique "moment" in the ongoing conversation between Bethel faculty and supporting congregations. We publish these lectures, not only to document that moment, but to stimulate further conversation.

The published articles and responses reflect the oral format of the lecture series; they have been edited, though not extensively, for clarity. Audio tapes of the lectures are available through the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College.

Patricia Shelly

MENNONITE LIFE

September 1989 Vol. 44 No. 3

Front Cover

Title page of the 1522 Froben edition of the New Testament of Erasmus with Greek and Latin in parallel columns. (One of the oldest volumes in the collection of the Mennonite Library and Archives.)

Back Cover

Gustav Doré engraving of Daniel in the Lions' Den from the Cassell Petter & Galpin edition of the Bible (187-). (Also from the collection of the Mennonite Library and Archives.)

Photo Credits

Julius Von Pflugk-Harttung, *Im Morgenerot der Reformation* (Stuttgart: Wilhelm Herget Verlag, 1924), pp. 13 and 15; and Mennonite Library and Archives, p. 21.

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The Bible as Canon: God's Word and the Community's Book

by Patricia Shelly

I. Introduction

When I showed Robert Kreider this year's Bible Lecture brochure, he read the title of this lecture and a mischievous grin flashed across his face. When I asked him about this response, he answered that as he read "The Bible as Canon," he could not repress the image of a "loose cannon on the ship deck." Many times, as I have worked on this lecture, I found that image very appropriate!

I have chosen to address this matter of canon as a way of exploring the question: Where did the Bible come from? When we say, "The Bible in Congregation and College," we assume we know what we mean by "The Bible." But our assumptions about this book *as book* and how it came to be are very complex and may not serve us well as we seek to study and to understand. To approach the Bible as canon, we must first understand its nature as book.

II. The Bible as Book

Let me illustrate: I have here a copy of one of the textbooks I use in my class, *Study and Message of the Bible.* What are my assumptions about this book and how it came to be? The title page gives the author's name; I know it was written by one person. It has had one previous publication—it is a second edition. It was written over a relatively brief period of time, even if five to ten years. The book has a copyright, which suggests the author "owns" the material; from that I can also assume that if he quotes another source, he will use quotations and footnotes, for such are the conventions. I can also assume that this book was written to be *read* and that the preface will give me clues as to the author's intention and purpose. All those are observations I make about "book" before I read a word of text!

How well do these assumptions about "book" serve us when we turn to the Bible? Is that the kind of book the Bible is? Although we are accustomed to seeing them bound together, the Bible is a collection of books; most of the books were written independently before ever being circulated together, and many of them were written anonymously. In many cases, we can identify different assumptions about authorship. It was not considered crucial to identify different editions of a work, or additions to a book, or even sources for a book that was often as much the product of a community as an individual. The Bible itself is a collection of books, by some counts 66, by others 78, written over many centuries: almost 1,000 years in the case of the Old Testament, 150 years in the case of the New Testament.

What is more, it seems clear that the originating impulses that resulted in our Bible were often not literary, but oral. As a written corpus, the Bible reflects a long oral tradition; and oral tradition has conventions of transmission that are different from written tradition. In our time and place, we tend to devalue oral tradition. But this is a prejudice that was not shared by the Biblical world. Even into the period of the early church, a high value was placed on the oral tradition and not the written word. For example, when Papias, a second-century bishop in Asia Minor decided to collect the "Sayings of our Lord," he did not consult the written gospels, but went instead to the prophetic story-tellers in the church, because, he said, "I did not suppose that the things from the books would aid me so much as the things from the living continuing voice."[1] When Polycarp passed on to Irenaeus direct knowledge about the Apostle John, Irenaeus recorded it, as he said, "not on papyrus, but in my heart."[2] Such was the esteem given to oral transmission.

From this very brief analogy of textbook and Bible, we can see that understanding the Bible as book is a complex undertaking! We could spend a great deal of time exploring this question about how the books of the Bible came to be, but we are here to discuss another dimension: how did the books of the Bible come to be *bound* together, to be authoritative as a collection? How did the Bible come to be canon: God's word and the community's book?

III. The Bible as Canon

The word *canon* comes from the Hebrew and Greek word for "reed," used as a standard for measuring. To talk about the Bible as canon is to recognize that here are the list of books acknowledged as authoritative for the church, as sacred writings, as normative for faith and practice. The word *canon* was not used in this sense, in a Christian context as a collection of authoritative books, until the fourth century. But today this is how we experience the Bible as book: as a discrete collection of sacred writings, as canon, as Word of God. But how did the Bible come to be such an authoritative collection?

Again, we need to examine our assumptions. In the beginning was *not* the canon. It is important to remember that all the books of the Old Testament were written before the idea of canon took shape; that all the books of the New Testament were written before the idea of a specifically Christian canon took shape.

The designation of these writings as canon, that is, as authoritative for the

church, was itself a long and complicated process which took centuries. Certain books proved themselves valuable within the community, "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," as the writer of II Timothy says (3.16) and so they were preserved. This didn't happen all at once; it took time. And it was a decision made, not by church councils, but by the community of faith, which used the writings to nurture a common spiritual commitment and identity. Decisions about canon reflect the preservation of Biblical books in those communities of faith.

A. *Old Testament*

As we trace this process of canonization, we become aware that the process itself and the outcomes of this process were far from rigid. To return to the image of the pun with which we began, the cannon is not bolted to the deck! For example, the Hebrew Scriptures have become authoritative for two different religious communities, Jews and Christians, through a process that has resulted in *three* different canons. (See chart I.)[3]

The Hebrew Canon reflect a tripartite division which seems to correspond to the stages by which certain books become authoritative. It is generally accepted that by 400 BCE, the five books of Torah or The Law had become supremely authoritative in Jewish communities.[4] There were other books which were read at that time, but were not considered as sacred as the Torah. By 200 BCE, a collection designated "Prophets" seems to have achieved the status of Scripture. Thus, as the first century of the Christian era dawns, we have "The Law and the Prophets," an expression used fourteen times in the New Testament to designate Scripture.

But there continued to be a wide body of literature beyond this that was used and studied in the Jewish community. The third division of the Hebrew Scriptures seems to have remained open-ended well through the first century. The community of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whose library of first-century books was lost to us until the 1940s, seemed to consider as Scripture a number of books beyond this Hebrew canon. Numerous fragments of books such as Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and Ecclesiasticus were found in this library, suggesting that, even in Palestine, the notion of holy texts was still rather fluid.[5]

Order of Books In the Old Testament (Chart I)

JEWISH (Hebrew Scriptures)	ROMAN CATHOLIC and PROTESTANT*	
The Law	Genesis	Wisdom of Solomon
Genesis	Exodus	Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sirach)
Exodus	Leviticus	Isaiah
Leviticus	Numbers	Jeremiah
Numbers	Deuteronomy	Lamentations
Deuteronomy	Joshua	Baruch
The Prophets	Judges	Ezekiel
Joshua	Ruth	Daniel (With supplements)
Judges	I-II Samuel	Hosea
Samuel	I-II Kings	Joel
Kings	I-II Chronicles	Amos
Isaiah	Ezra	Obadiah
Jeremiah	Nehemiah	Jonah
Ezekiel	Tobit	Micah
The Twelve	Judith	Nahum
The Writings	Esther (with supplements)	Habakkuk
Psalms	Job	Zephaniah
Proverbs	Psalms	Haggai
Job	Proverbs	Zechariah
Song of Songs	Ecclesiastes	Malachi
Ruth	Song of Solomon	I-II Maccabees
Lamentations		
Ecclesiastes		
Esther		
Daniel		
Ezra-Nehemiah		
Chronicles		

* The Protestant canon omits the books underlined in this list (The Apocrypha), but retains the Roman Catholic order of books.

At the end of the first century, we find some interesting discussion occurring at Jamnia or Javneh, the emerging center of Jewish learning after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. We find reflected in these discussions some debate over the status of books in the Writings: Was Ecclesiastes too pessimistic? How could Esther be Scripture when it did not mention the name of God? Song of Songs did not mention God either—and it was far too racy! When the rabbis discussed the status of these books, they didn't talk about canon, but of books that "defiled the hands" because of a contagious holiness that had to be ritually removed before one could go about more mundane tasks. The rabbis at Javneh seem to reflect an effort to solidify the number of books in the Hebrew Scripture. It is at this point, scholars assume, that the Writings were "closed" as Scripture.

But the Christian church did not benefit from these discussions at Javneh. The church continued to use a more open-ended Old Testament canon, perhaps more representative of Jewish communities like Qumran or those in the Diaspora. The Church's journey with Scripture reaches back to the Septuagint (LXX), the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, which scholars date to 250 BCE. By then, there was a sizable Jewish population in Egypt that could not read their Scriptures in Hebrew, so they had to be translated!

The Letter of Aristeas, a book from the pseudepigrapha, tells a charming story of how this happened: The director of the famous library at Alexandria petitioned the king of Egypt (Ptolemy II, 285-247 BCE) for a copy of the Jewish Torah for his collection—you know how librarians will do anything to increase their holdings!—but he wanted it translated from Hebrew into Greek, so more people could read it. The king sent to Jerusalem for competent translators—six from each of the twelve tribes—thus "Septuagint" (LXX). The seventy scholars worked to translate the text and when they finished, the scholars read it to the assembled Jewish community. Once the community pronounced it accurate, the scholars were authorized to place the Septuagint in the library! Philo tells the story too, and he elaborates the "inspired" dimensions of the translation.

Die gantze

Bibel/Das iſt alle bücher alles vnnd neüws Teſtaments/ den vrſprünglichen ſprachen nach/ auffs aller trewlichſt verteütſchet.

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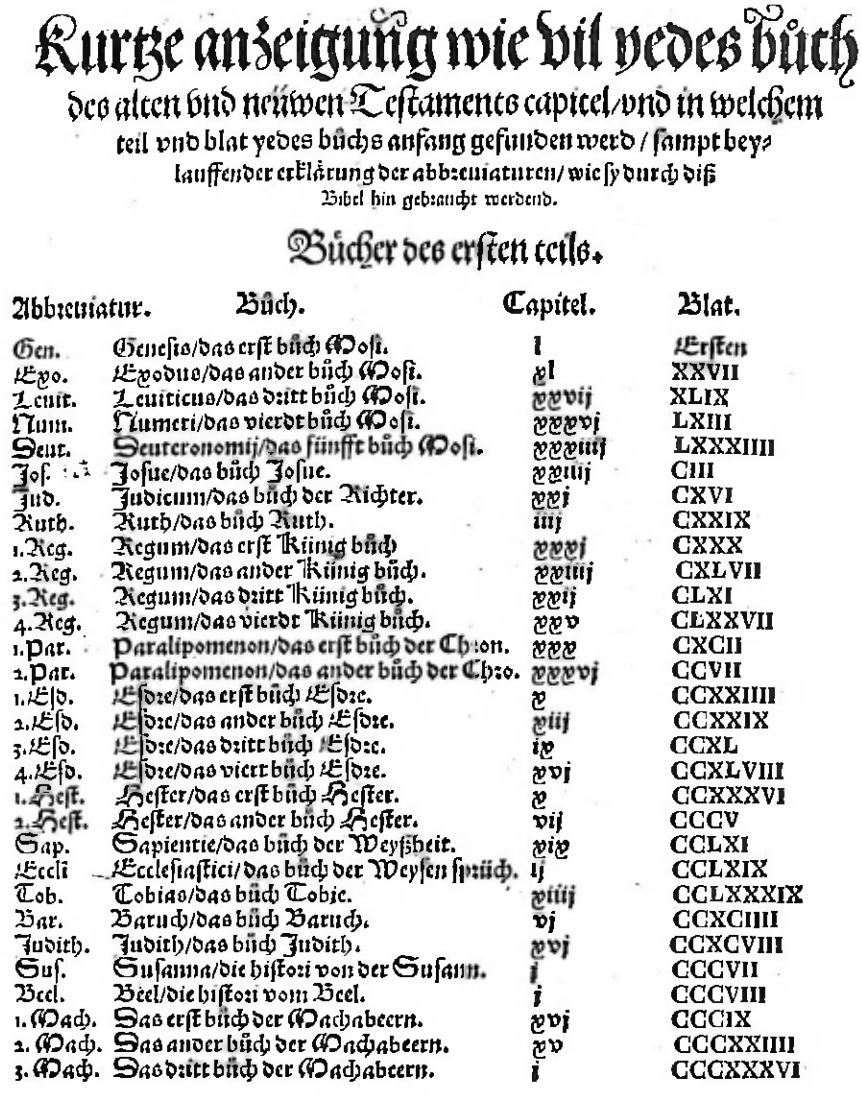

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Bibel hin gebraucht werdend.

Bücher des erſten teils.

Abbreuiatur.	Büch.	Capitel.	Blat.
Gen.	Geneſis/das erſt buch Moſi.	i	Erſten
Exo.	Exodus/das ander buch Moſi.	xl	XXVII
Leuit.	Leuiticus/das dritt buch Moſi.	xxvij	XLIX
Num.	Numeri/das vierdt buch Moſi.	xxxvj	LXIII
Deut.	Deuteronomij/das fünfft buch Moſi.	xxxiij	LXXXIIII
Joſ.	Joſue/das buch Joſue.	xxiij	CIII
Jud.	Judicum/das buch der Richter.	xxj	CXVI
Ruth.	Ruth/das buch Ruth.	iij	CXXIX
1.Reg.	Regum/das erſt Küng buch	xxxj	CXXX
2.Reg.	Regum/das ander Küng buch.	xxiiij	CXLVII
3.Reg.	Regum/das dritt Küng buch.	xxij	CLXI
4.Reg.	Regum/das vierdt Küng buch.	xxv	CLXXVII
1.Par.	Paralipomenon/das erſt buch der Chron.	xxx	CXCII
2.Par.	Paralipomenon/das ander buch der Chro.	xxxvj	CCVII
1.Eſd.	Eſdre/das erſt buch Eſdre.	x	CCXXIIII
2.Eſd.	Eſdre/das ander buch Eſdre.	viij	CCXXIX
3.Eſd.	Eſdre/das dritt buch Eſdre.	ix	CCXL
4.Eſd.	Eſdre/das vierr buch Eſdre.	xvj	CCXLVIII
1.Heſt.	Heſter/das erſt buch Heſter.	x	CCXXXVI
2.Heſt.	Heſter/das ander buch Heſter.	vij	CCCV
Sap.	Sapientie/das buch der Weyßheit.	xix	CCLXI
Eccli	Eccleſiaſtici/das buch der Weyſen ſprüch.	li	CCLXIX
Tob.	Tobias/das buch Tobie.	xiiij	CCLXXXIX
Bar.	Baruch/das buch Baruch.	vj	CCXCIIII
Judith.	Judith/das buch Judith.	xvj	CCXCVIII
Suſ.	Suſanna/die hiſtori von der Suſann.	j	CCCVII
Beel.	Beel/die hiſtori vom Beel.	j	CCCVIII
1.Mach.	Das erſt buch der Machabeern.	xvj	CCCIX
2.Mach.	Das ander buch der Machabeern.	xv	CCCXXIIII
3.Mach.	Das dritt buch der Machabeern.	i	CCCXXXVI

Left. Title page of the 1536/38 edition of the Froschauer Bible, named for its publisher Christoph Froschauer. In 1529 Froschauer printed the first German edition of the entire Bible. It altered some of the word order and vocabulary of Luther's translation and included the prophets as translated by Ludwig Haetzer and Hans Denk. This Bible was very popular among the Anabaptists, and it is one of the most rare and valuable volumes in the collection of the Mennonite Library and Archives. Above. The contents page listing the books from the Old Testament included in the Froschauer Bible.

He says the seventy scholars all worked separately, but came up with exactly the same translation! The story undoubtedly simplifies the process by which the Old Testament was translated into Greek, but it was certainly told as an apologetic for why the Greek translation was as authoritative as the Hebrew and therefore could be trustworthy![6]

We don't know much about the Bible used in the hellenistic Jewish communities of the diaspora, but many scholars would trace the Septuagint tradition which came to be used in the early church to these communities. And the list of books in the LXX was longer than in the Hebrew canon. It included the books (underlined in the chart) which we have come to call the Apocrypha, and the books were arranged in a different order.

Early Christians knew they used a different canon than their Jewish peers. Origen, a Church father of the third century, was very careful to use only books included in the Hebrew canon in debates with his Jewish counterparts.[7] Eventually, the Jewish community condemned the use of the LXX as an authoritative translation of the Old Testament, largely because of its use in Christian circles, and the Greek translation, once a necessity for Jewish communities in the diaspora, became the property of the emerging church.

But the disparity of these canons continued to generate discussion in the church! One of the debates between Jerome and Augustine in the late fourth century was over the authority of these additional books. Jerome, who knew Hebrew, Latin and Greek, wanted to adopt the more limited canon; he insisted that the apocryphal books were of secondary importance. Augustine insisted on the full authority of the Greek canon including the Apocrypha; his view carried the day in the larger church.[8] The Latin translations of the Bible, attributed to Jerome, included the books of the Apocrypha and so they were read as Scripture until the time of the Reformation, although there was some debate. The Wyclif Bible (1382), for example, did not include a translation of the Apocrypha, evidence of the continuing influence of Jerome's point of view.[9]

During the Reformation, Martin Luther renewed the debate and decided in favor of Jerome's original evaluation. Some have suggested that Luther was motivated by the fact that there seems to be Scriptural justification for purgatory in II Maccabees, and he did not want to indulge that point of view! At any rate, in his German translation of the Bible, he gathered the Apocrypha at the end of the Old Testament and described them as "books not to be held equal to the Holy Scripture, but still useful and profitable to read." This practice became common in the emerging Protestant movement and eventually the Apocrypha was dropped from Old Testament collections altogether. Interestingly, this Protestant canon, while keeping the books of the Hebrew canon, kept the arrangements of the Greek canon.

The Catholic Church reaffirmed Augustine's position in the Council of Trent (1546), by declaring the Vulgate (with the Apocrypha) inspired. An interesting side note, H. S. Bender notes that some early Anabaptists seemed to have given books of the Apocrypha almost equal authority with the other Old Testament books. They often quoted from these books.[10] Why not? The Apocrypha was part of their Bible!

B. *New Testament*

That is just the Old Testament! When we turn to the question of the New Testament canon, the question is equally complex. The early Christian community already had a Scripture, the Old

Development of the New Testament Canon (Chart II)

MARCION (c. 150)
Gospel (edited Luke)
Apostle (10 Pauline letters, edited) (rejected Old Testament)

TATIAN (c. 175 in Syria)
Diatesseron (combined 4 Gospels and other traditions into one narrative)

MURATORIAN CANON (c. 200 in Rome)
4 Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline letters (not Hebrews), I-II John, Jude, Revelation, Revelation of Peter, Wisdom of Solomon

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 220 in Egypt)
4 Gospels, Acts, 14 Pauline letters (including Hebrews), I Peter, I-II John, Jude, Revelation, Letter of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermes, Revelation of Peter, Didache, I Clement

EUSEBIUS (c. 325)
accepted—4 gospels, Acts, 14 Pauline letters, I Peter, I John, ?Revelation?
disputed—James, II Peter, II John, III John, Jude
rejected—Gospel of Hebrews, Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermes, Revelation of Peter, Letter of Barnabas, Didache, ?Revelation?

ATHANASIUS (367)
4 Gospels, Acts, 14 Pauline letters (including Hebrews), James, I-II Peter, I-II-III John, Jude, Revelation

Testament. Initially the esteem given to the Old Testament inhibited the development of another canon, though it did not prevent the Christological interpretation of that Scripture!

Most of the literature we find in the New Testament was written in the first 100 years of the Christian movement, though we know little about how it came to be used. As one scholar says, "We know as little of the organization and circulation of early Christian literature as we do of the finances of the early church."[11] What seems to have happened is that there was a gradual circulation of Paul's letters. Gospels probably were each written for the use of a community in a specific geographic area. They were not initially intended to circulate together.

What seems clear is that the canon of the New Testament grew in the face of debates about the shape of the faith *within* the church, particularly debates with Gnostic Christians. (See chart II.)

Some have suggested that the earliest effort to create a New Testament canon came from a man the church later declared a heretic—a man by the name of Marcion, who lived about 150 CE. Marcion was a gnostic, or gnostic-like church leader who was emphatically Christian. His gnostic Christianity caused him to reject the Old Testament. The true God of the universe, Marcion believed, is not the God of the Old Testament. The physical world is evil, and the highest God could not have created it! Since the God of the Old Testament had created the world, he must be an inferior god and not the God of Jesus, who, by the way, only seemed to be human himself! Since Marcion rejected the Old Testament, he needed a new canon. His new canon had two parts: the Gospel, which was an edited version of Luke with the Old Testament references expunged, and the Apostle, a collection of 10 Pauline letters, similarly edited. Marcion's canon is the first record we have of a New Testament. The Church in Rome declared Marcion a heretic, but he fled to Syria where he gathered quite a popular following and there was a strong Marcionite church in Syria until the early fifth century.

By the end of the second century, the development of a New Testament Scripture was well under way, but the process was still fluid. Although there were many Gospels available, there were four versions which had gained currency in the church and had come to be recognized as authoritative—four and not one! Originally each Gospel circulated independently; and initially only one Gospel was valued and used in any given community. We have some evidence for this in early NT Greek manuscripts which contain only one Gospel.[12]

But there were four gospels which had become valued; each had a claim in particular communities from Rome to Alexandria to Antioch. This plurality of Gospels was a problem in the early church, because even then points of divergence between the Gospels were noticed. A Syrian named Tatian tried to address this problem. About 175 CE, he began to weave the four gospel accounts we have (and some additional traditions we don't have in our Gospels) into one continuous account which he called the *Diatesseron.* I think of it as the first Readers' Digest Condensed version of the Gospels! Tatian's *Diatesseron* was very popular and continued to be used in the Syrian Church as part of their Bible until 400 CE.[13] But the Church eventually preserved four Gospels in their literary integrity. Actually, they tended to talk about *one* Gospel in a fourfold way: the Gospel *according* to Matthew, according to Luke, etc. Even then, having four gospels required some explanation.

Sometimes the authoritative status of books was dependent on geographical location—the Muratorian list of New Testament books, which probably reflects the Roman west about 200 CE, affirms four gospels; in Syria in the East, we have the *Diatesseron.* At about the same time, Clement of Alexandria, also in the East, cites four separate Gospels, but also seems to grant a measure of authority to a *Gospel of the Hebrews* and a *Gospel of the Egyptians.*[14]

Clement also seems to reflect the practice of the Eastern church in including Hebrews among the Pauline letters in his canon list, and in having a somewhat larger group of sacred writings: the Letter of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermes, Revelation of Peter, the Didache, and I Clement. The Muratorian canon, reflecting practice in the West, does not include Hebrews among Paul's letters, though it does include the Revelation of Peter and the Wisdom of Solomon.

By the early fourth century, Eusebius

can summarize the canon of the New Testament in terms of three categories: the books which are accepted, those that are disputed, and those that are rejected. About Revelation, he says, some reject it and some accept it. In fact, many Eastern Churches disputed the importance of Revelation until the tenth century, while churches in the West accepted it.[15]

Not until the Festal Easter letter of Bishop Athanasius (367 CE) do we find a list of the 27 books of the NT as we know them with the strict instructions:

> These are the sources of salvation, for the thirsty may drink deeply of the words to be found here. In these alone is the doctrine of piety recorded. Let no one add to them or take anything away from them.

Even after such an unequivocal statement, Athanesius continued to cite in his writings, with scriptural formulas, books that were not on his list of 27![16]

IV. Canonical Comments

Why have I spent so much time outlining this process? Because it is part of the family history of the Bible, the community history of how the books of the Bible came to be considered authoritative. To affirm that this process of canonization took place under the guidance of the Spirit—which I do indeed affirm—does not relieve us from the challenge of wrestling with the substance of how the process took place, of how the Spirit worked! Even in the formative period, the questions about "Bible" were not cut and dried. The Jewish community of Jesus' day and the early Christians discussed and debated the value to their faith of books we don't even read!

Further, even though the canon tended to define the contours of which books were authoritative and which were not, it did so within a range of pluralism: four Gospels, not one; Hebrews *and* the letters of Paul—remember the Eastern Church esteemed Hebrews more than the west; *and* the Book of Revelation—more highly valued in the West than the East. What this suggests is that canonization was a process of inclusion as well as exclusion.

Finally, the "closing of the canon" is not a process that can be defined with hard and fast lines. There is indeed a "loose canon" on the decks of the Christian ship, even though it does not roll wildly! Each of the books in the New Testament, it was argued, could be attributed to an apostle, and so was authoritative. Thus, the closing of the canon represents the way the early church acknowledged its accountability to the witness of the apostolic age, while seeking to be faithful to that witness in a new context.[17]

As such, the canon testifies that Biblical faith is rooted in events, and documented, as John Howard Yoder says, not in timeless poems, or propositions, or systematic texts, but in narratives and pastoral letters which *themselves* are testimonies to Christian communities trying to make sense of foundational events in an ongoing sense.[18]

We need the canon precisely because it is the way we establish our continuity and contact with the early communities, who took Jesus as their norm and articulated his significance in their ongoing experience. We participate in a dynamic of which they were a part, namely, trying to be faithful to Jesus in one's own time.

V. Canonical Criticism

The comments I have been making about canon reflect the renewed scholarly discussion of the Bible as canon and its context in the community. This interest was sparked 20 years ago and has quickened in the past decade through the work of two Biblical scholars, James Sanders and Brevard Childs.[19] This new approach to Biblical study has been called "Canonical criticism" because it takes seriously the life of the community in forming the canon *and* it values the text as it has been transmitted to us in its final form.

Canonical criticism represents a step beyond the traditional "historical-critical" study of the Bible, these scholars would say. The historical-critical study of the Bible has focused on the historical background and early "life" of a text, so that one can see the complex development of Biblical tradition. But at the same time, this method has led to a devaluing of the text in its canonical form, as if the "original" of the text, (as reconstructed by the historian), is more important to the church than the continuing use the community made of that tradition from generation to generation.

Thus, parts of the text were valued as "original" and others considered "spurious" which in effect, as Sanders describes, tended to "lock the text in the past" and turn the Bible into an "archaeological tell which only experts can dig." This approach to the Bible has severed it from the ongoing believing communities which have preserved it, adapted it as living tradition for centuries.[20]

Childs' work focuses on reading the final, canonical form of the text, not in a way that returns to a pre-critical reading of the text—one still has to do the historical-critical work—but in a way that acknowledges the integrity of the text as canonical Scripture.

Sanders defines the process of canonization more broadly than we have used it here, seeing it as a way Biblical people, from the beginning, repeated and recited old traditions, adapting them to new situations and giving them new meanings in the community of faith. This process is going on even as the Biblical books are being written and edited. Thus, to talk about the Bible as "inspired" means to see God working not through an individual writer, but through the community. Our image, says Sanders, is one of the inspired individual author at his desk; what we should envision is God at work in the community's remembering![21]

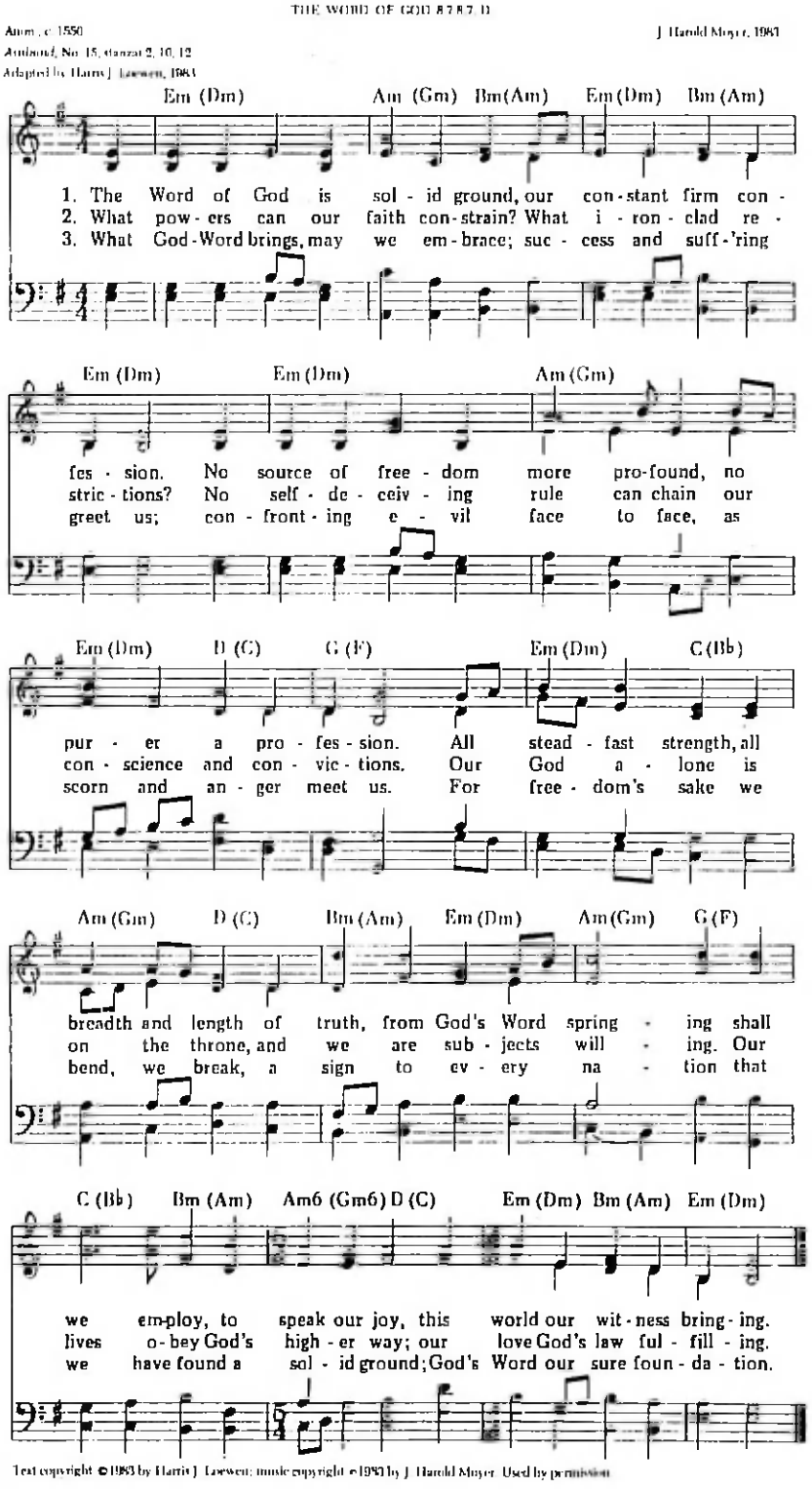
Both scholars have generated lively debate in the academy by focusing on the Bible as canon—God's word and the community's book.

VI. Conclusion

In the sixteenth century, Protestants devalued the tradition of the church, which they claimed was not inspired, and elevated the Bible under the rubric *sola scriptura*, "scripture alone." This principle, while valuable and necessary in its application, has resulted in a failure to understand and appreciate sufficiently the extent to which the Bible was a product of the community. Canonical criticism helps us acknowledge in new ways the Bible as canon, both God's word and the community's book.

What would it mean to take this understanding of the Bible as canon more seriously? John Howard Yoder suggests an image that I think is helpful. We tend to see the Bible as a "post," he says, which was firmly planted in the ground during the Apostolic Age, a post which never moved nor changed. Rather, he suggests, we should see the canon as a vine. As a vine, the Bible grew with several branches, all of which could claim connection to the true vine. So there is diversity of theology preserved in the canon: the

130 The Word of God



"The Word of God" (Assembly Songs, #130) *was sung at each session of the 1988 Menno Simons Lectures. Harris J. Loewen adapted the words from a twenty-one stanza hymn in the* Ausbund *(#15 to Hans of Amsterdam), and J. Harold Moyer of Bethel College's Music Department provided the music. (The hymn is reprinted with permission).*

four Gospels are not identical; Acts does not always sound like Paul, nor Paul like James or Hebrews.

But there was a pruning process as well, otherwise unlimited and meandering growth would have led to a thicket. In the development of the canon, the pruning process represents the "root" standing in judgement on the vine: the determination of which branches reflected most closely legitimate, though not identical, appropriations of the gospel message as reflected in the life of Jesus.[22]

This image of canon as the pruned and healthy vine is helpful, I think, in its emphasis on Scripture as a *living* tradition which developed organically, but not necessarily in a unilinear fashion; a living tradition which developed within limits, defined by the inspired community, but a tradition that acknowledged pluralism as well. To extend this metaphor to our own time, in calling ourselves Biblical people, we do not cling to a post, rather we participate in a living process, a process which we see modeled in the vine. What a powerful image of the Bible as God's word and the community's book: a living vine, which grew over time, with its several branches; pruned and dressed, and able to bear much fruit from generation to generation!

ENDNOTES

[1]Quoted in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.39.4

[2]Quoted in *Ecclesiastical History*, v.20.7

[3]Even this is simplified. In addition to the canons of the Jewish, Roman Catholic and Protestant communities, one could list a *fourth* canon—that of the Eastern Church, which includes the Apocrypha, *and* I Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees and an additional psalm. Also, in the Jewish context, the Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) have expanded their canon to include Jubilees and I Enoch, along with some other books. See *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), p. xxiii-xxi.

[4]The standard abbreviation CE (common era) is used here to designate dates that are AD *(anno domini)*. BCE means before the common era.

[5]Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 149-56.

[6]Ernst Wurtwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 50-51.

[7]M. F. Wiles, "Origen as Biblical Scholar," in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, p. 455.

[8]H. F. D. Sparks, "Jerome as Biblical Scholar," in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, p. 534.

[9]J. C. Turro, "Bible III (Canon)," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 322.

[10]H. S. Bender, "Bible," in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), p. 322.

[11]C. H. Roberts, "Books in the Graeco-Roman World and the New Testament" in *Cambridge History of the Bible,* p. 65.

[12]Harry Y. Gamble, *The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 27.

[13]Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982), p. 444.

[14]Gamble, p. 34.

[15]Again, the status of the New Testament is even more complex. Part of the Syrian Church still excludes 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation from their canon, while the Copts and Ethiopians have added other books. Again, see Charlesworth, p. xxiii.

[16]Athanasius makes this statement in the *Paschal Epistle* (367). See also James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 59.

[17]Oscar Cullmann as cited by John Howard Yoder, "Authority of the Canon," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist Mennonite Perspectives,* ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), p. 274-75.

[18]Yoder, p. 275. In this discussion, I am indebted to Yoder's article, "Authority of the Canon."

[19]James Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (1972), *Canon and Community* (1984), *From Sacred Text to Sacred Story* (1987). Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979) and *Introduction to the New Testament as Scripture* (1984).

[20]Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 5.

[21]Ibid., p. xvi.

[22]Yoder, p. 289-90.

Response to "The Bible as Canon: God's Word and the Community's Book"
by Heinz Janzen

We pastors have often felt like marginal people. We are not scholarly enough to be accepted by the academic community; and we are too scholarly to be appreciated by the lay community. Therefore we welcome this opportunity to be partners with the academics in the vital task of Bible study.

Patty has used the image of the "loose cannon." Rather, I have chosen the paradigm of Kansas City. Last Sunday evening about this time I was in the Crown Uptown Dinner Theatre and heard Will, the cowboy, sing, "Everything's up to date in Kansas City. They've gone about as far as they can go." Canonical criticism is telling us that historical-grammatical exegesis has gone about as far as it can go. If we are to be up to date in Biblical studies, and go beyond the horseless carriages of turn-of-the-century Biblical studies, we have to get into the computer age. In Biblical studies, this is called canonical criticism. We country preachers cannot rest on what we learned at Biola, at Bethel College, or at the Biblical Seminary in New York.

I began studies about the canon in Sunday school where I learned the names of the sixty-six books of the Bible. I continued this at Biola College forty years ago, taking a course in Biblical introduction that presented the issues of canon, textual criticism, and historical criticism in a helpful way for me at that stage of development. I continued a few years later here at Bethel College under Erland Waltner and later on at seminary.

In my first thirteen years of pastoring, I did little with canon, except assume the present sixty-six books. I was working in church administration during the 70's, while Brevard Childs and James A. Sanders were inventing canonical criticism. More recently I have been catching up with current Biblical scholarship, with a great deal of help from Dotty who had been teaching college courses in Bible while I was out of the teaching ministry.

Canonical criticism tells us some reassuring things and some disturbing things. Reassuring are the following:

1) Bible study in the community of faith is legitimate. It has a long distinguished history, going deep into Old Testament times. In fact, out of it came much of the Old and New Testament writings. Academia does not have a monopoly on insights into Biblical truth. The Spirit and Word are living and active in congregational life.

2) Some of the methods used by pastors and congregations are legitimate, such as typology. Typology once was suspect. We laughed at those who found a type of Christ in every nail of the Tabernacle. But the prophets and the New Testament are saturated with ancient Biblical images which we ignore at our peril.

3) Applying Biblical truth and images to modern life is legitimate, in fact mandatory. A month ago, I heard Eugene Peterson use the Jonah story as a paradigm of pastoral life and work in ways that would have seemed outrageous thirty years ago. But his message was well-accepted by pastors and professors at AMBS.

4) Use of the whole of our canonical Bible books is legitimate, over against the earlier passion to find the original words of Jesus. When I was here at Bethel College, in one course we were given a red-letter New Testament as a text, implying that the surrounding comments and the letters of Paul were less authentic. The extreme of this stance was illustrated fifteen years later when Howard Habegger took a course in Christology at Claremont School of Theology; there, Dr. Eric Titus assured his students that only a dozen words of the Gospels were original with Jesus himself. James Sanders, also of Claremont, comes back to assure us that the whole of the Gospels, and the letters of Paul are God's book, given to us by God's community. We can then, with confidence preach and teach from the entire canon, drawing theology and life applications from these books.

5) The church's sense of the inspiration of Scripture determined canonization more than some elite group imposing this from the top on congregations and pastors. I continue to value the Scriptures and my vocation as a pastor/teacher, not so much because some authority figure pounds me with a doctrine of inspiration. Rather, because I sense the inspiration and genius of these writings from the very core of my being.

6) Many of us have felt for a long time that the critical methods of enlightenment humanism were not adequate of themselves to judge an inspired book. Canonical criticism gives credit where it is due to older tools of literary criticism, but gives long overdue credit to the believing community under the Lordship of Christ as the final interpreter of its own book.

Canonical criticism also raises some disturbing issues:

1) Patty has well-told the story of the development of the canon, but that story is being rewritten with new slants and the abandonment of some old assumptions. The telling we have heard for forty years may not be exactly the same ten years hence.

2) We are comfortable with the narrow Old Testament canon of the Pharisees, set at Jamnia around 100 A.D. But our Christian brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church have a wider canon, and the orthodox a still wider. While I feel good about the choices of Jamnia, Jerome, Luther, and my Sunday school teachers, I must be charitable with those who differ. After all, my mother studied Apocrypha in the Mennonite girl's high school in Gnadenfeld, Russia, and this was given a high value.

In fact, we already add to the canon with our hymns and creeds. The *de facto* canon of pastors and people in-

cludes the Schleitheim and Dordrecht confessions. For another, it may be Scofield's notes. We have our favorite hymns that likely mold our faith as much as John 3.16 or Luke 4.18-19. The anxiety about the new hymnbook is not just learning new tunes. It is a matter of our faith being shaken with new words and imagery.

3) Canonical criticism sees the canon as not quite closed. Will we see one of the current books omitted? A new one or more added? How will that be decided? Who will decide?

So what does all this mean beyond a thought-provoking afternoon here? If one follows James Sanders, the application is quite significant. In his book, *Canon and Community*, used by Patty Shelly today, Sanders uses the central section of Luke as an illustration. This so-called "travel document," Luke 9.51-18.4, has close parallels with Deuteronomy 1-26. It illustrates the way the believing community recited old traditions, but adapted them to new situations. Now our February Uniform Sunday school lessons have come out of this part of Luke. If we, with Howard Charles, expand the "travel document" to include the Zaccheus story of Luke 19.1-10, then we can see parallels between the Jericho of Luke 19 and the Jericho of Deuteronomy 32 and 34 with the early chapters of Judges.

Moses could not cross the Jordan because of his sin, but both old Joshua and new Jesus did in fact cross the Jordan through Jericho and enter the Promised Land. Old Rahab and new Zaccheus are examples of faith in the true God and his mighty works in the midst of unbelieving Jericho. So we who live in the Jerichos of our time are invited to become people of faith, following our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. And as we, like Zaccheus, find ourselves up a tree from time to time, we can look to Jesus to invite us down to join him and his kingdom ways.

P.S. Everything's up to date in Canonicity, but we still have a long way to go!

Anabaptists and the Bible: From *Sola Scriptura* to *Solus Christus*

by Dale R. Schrag

On Sunday morning, January second, 1519, the day after his thirty-fifth birthday, and his second day on the job, Ulrich Zwingli, the newly-appointed people's priest at the Grossmünster Cathedral in Zurich, Switzerland, stepped into the pulpit, opened his Bible to the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and began to read:

> Liber generationis Iesu Christi, filii David, filii Abraham. Abraham genuit Isaac. Isaac autem genuit Iacob. Iacob autem genuit Iudam, et fratres eius . . . .

Sitting in the congregation that morning was one Thomas Platter. Platter recalled later that, upon hearing these words from the Gospel of Matthew, he felt as though he had been lifted up out of his seat by his hair. He had never before heard the actual text of the Bible read aloud in church.[1] Platter, incidentally, was no illiterate peasant. Rather, he was a budding young humanist scholar, who spent his evenings faithfully reading the Greek and Latin classics, keeping himself awake by putting sand in his mouth!

I have chosen to begin this lecture with this rather striking example because we often naively assume that the Bible has always been available to Christians in much the same way that it is available today—in a multitude of translations, with at least one copy in every home, library, and hotel room. This afternoon Patty Shelly explained that the "book" itself assumed its present form over the course of centuries. This evening we want to consider its position during that fascinating phase of history we call the Protestant Reformation.

I. The Bible on the Eve of the Reformation

At the outset of the Reformation in 1517, anyone seeking access to the Biblical "text," in the modern sense of that term, had very few options. There were literally scores of editions of "versified Bibles" available in almost all the vernacular tongues of Europe, but these were a kind of medieval equivalent of *McGuffey's Readers*—used as teaching tools in grammar schools, and based closely on the Biblical text, but *not* the Biblical text.[2] While there were other vernacular editions of the Bible (the first in German was printed in 1483), they were sometimes openly declared heretical (e.g., the Wycliff Bible of 1382), and appear, perhaps as a result, not to have been widely utilized. Therefore, for the authorized Biblical text, one's best (only?) option was the Latin Vulgate edition attributed to the fourth-century church father, St. Jerome.

A second option issued in 1516 from the press of Johann Froben in Basel, Switzerland. It was the *Novum Instrumentum*, a completely new Latin ver-

Erasmus of Rotterdam (A. Dürer).

Martin Luther in 1520 (L. Cranach).

sion of the New Testament, translated directly from Greek manuscripts by one Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536) of Rotterdam. Except for even smaller portions of the Bible (e.g., Lefevre d'Etaples' translation of the Pauline letters in 1512), these two editions represented the Biblical exegete's only easily-accessible options for studying the Biblical text on the eve of the Reformation, and one of those options didn't even include the Old Testament.

A moment's reflection should make obvious the fact that the Bible on the eve of the Reformation was *not* a book intended for lay men and women. As noted above, on several occasions the Roman Catholic Church had declared certain vernacular versions heretical. The official church pronouncements invariably specified that the heresy inhered in the orthodoxy of the translator, not in the mere fact that the versions were in the common tongue, but the net effect was to ensure that precious few lay persons would have direct, legal access to the Biblical text. Few enough lay men and women could read their native German or English; fewer still could read Latin; and virtually none could read Greek (hence the fact that Erasmus had made the New Testament widely available in two languages provided little help for the lay reader).

So whose Bible was it? The Bible was clearly *intended* for use by the priests. They had access to it; they could read Latin. There is some question, however, as to how frequently they took the time to read it. They did not truly *need* to do it in the performance of their priestly functions. The order of the mass was, of course, prescribed for them. Sermons were often delivered from "sermon books." Indeed, if we can believe Menno Simons, the Bible may have been one of the last places a priest would go for spiritual counsel. Menno wrote that after he became a priest in 1524, he was troubled almost immediately by the doctrine of transubstantiation. But he turned to his fellow priests for counsel rather than the Scriptures. In fact, he wrote, "I had never touched [the Scriptures], for I feared if I should read them I would be misled. Behold such an ignorant preacher was I for nearly two years."[3]

So whose Bible was it? It was a Bible for scholars, for theologians. *They* could read and understand Latin and Greek; *they* could understand the standard fourfold exegesis of the text (i.e., literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical). Yet even here there are questions. Balthasar Hubmaier (the only Anabaptist educated *as* a theologian) insisted that he received his Ph.D. in theology from the University of Ingolstadt without having read through all of the Gospels or the Pauline epistles.[4] So what did he read? He read what other scholars had to say about the Bible. He read glosses (commentaries) of medieval theologians, which themselves often consisted of glosses on the glosses of others.

How could the church justify this apparent lack of attention to the sole source of authority for the Christian? Simply put, it wasn't. For the medieval Catholic church, authority was *shared* between the Bible and the Church, with its popes and councils and church

fathers and traditions. Indeed, it was the church's job to interpret the Bible for all Christians. Why bother to rush to read the few vernacular editions that were available? The church would tell you all you needed to understand about the Bible.

II. The Impact of the Reformers

Of all the "revolutionary" principles of that most "revolutionary" of times, the Protestant Reformation, *sola scriptura* was one of the most decisive in its impact. "When the Pope acts contrary to the Scriptures, it is our duty to stand by the Scriptures," wrote Martin Luther in 1520.[5] The next year, before the Imperial Diet at Worms, he elucidated that principle in the very presence of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V:

> Unless I am convinced by Scripture or plain reason—I do not accept the authority of Popes or councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.[6]

A second "revolutionary" concept of the Protestant Reformation involved the "priesthood of believers," an idea also contained in Luther's 1520 "Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation." This combination of principles, *sola scriptura* and the "priesthood of believers," virtually demanded that the Bible be made more accessible to all persons, not just scholars and theologians. And there was, indeed, a veritable flood of vernacular editions, beginning with Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament into German in 1522. This was soon followed by numerous others: the Froschauer Bible of 1524/25; Tyndale's English New Testament in 1525/26; an Anabaptist translation of the Old Testament prophets into German by Hans Denck and Ludwig Hätzer in 1527; Luther's Old Testament (based, in part, on the Denck/Hätzer translation) in 1534; etc., etc. And, in contrast to the "pre-Reformation" vernacular editions, these were "devoured" by a whole generation of believers who now saw themselves as their own "priests."

As the Roman Catholic Church had predicted, the Protestants soon discovered that solving the question of authority does *not* solve the question of interpretation. This was demonstrated most dramatically at the Colloquy at Marburg in 1529. Phillip of Hesse, a devotedly Lutheran prince, proposed that all Protestants meet at Marburg, iron out any differences, and present a united front against the Catholics. Fifteen issues were to be discussed. The Lutheran and Zwinglian camps reached rather quick agreement on fourteen of the fifteen. But the fifteenth involved the question of the "real presence" in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Ulrich Zwingli argued that the "is" in Jesus' statement "this is my body," must be read as "signifies" (i.e., "This *signifies* my body."). Luther would not bend, insisting that the body of Christ is really present in the bread of communion. Thus, the exegetical understanding of a single word of Scripture helped ensure that today we have Reformed and Presbyterian churches in addition to Lutheran churches. And, of course, the exegetical understanding of many other words of Scripture helped ensure, as well, that we have Mennonite churches today.

III. Anabaptists and the Bible

Trial and disputation transcripts make very clear that the Anabaptists had an uncommon knowledge of the Bible. Roland Bainton, in fact, once commented that "Of all the parties of the Reformation, the Anabaptists were the most scriptural."[7] But what, precisely, does such a statement mean? And, more to the point, was there, in fact, an "Anabaptist view" of the Bible? The focus of most of the recent historiography of Anabaptism has been to demonstrate diversity in the origins and theology of the Anabaptists rather than unity. At least in certain respects, that diversity is also apparent when one examines Anabaptist views of the Bible. Certainly the Reformers charged them with various—and often contradictory—errors of interpretation.

One of the earliest interpretive errors attributed to the Anabaptists was the charge of excessive legalism or literalism in their approach to Scripture. (Note: We are not speaking here of the misguided literalism of the first Anabaptists of St. Gall, who are reported to have worn swaddling clothes and babbled like babies in order to "become as little children," thereby ensuring entry "into the kingdom." Or the unfortunate action of the Anabaptist who reputedly put a burning coal to his mouth in imitation of Isaiah. It only purified his speech in this sense, he was unable to talk clearly for weeks.[8] These unfortunate incidents seem to have been handled by the more sober Anabaptists themselves. The stories, however, if true, do make the Roman church's suspicion of vernacular versions seem like a remarkably reasonable position. We are speaking here of a more sober legalism.)

One of the earliest examples of this legalism comes from the October disputation on the mass, held in Zurich in 1523. In the course of that discussion, Conrad Grebel argued vigorously that only ordinary (i.e., not unleavened) bread and wine should be used to celebrate the Lord's Supper. AND, furthermore, that it should only be celebrated in the evening. After all, that was precisely how Christ and the disciples had celebrated it.[9]

A year later, in his 5 September letter to Thomas Müntzer, Grebel wrote: "Whatever we are not taught in definite statements and examples, we are to consider forbidden, as if it were written, 'Do not do this, do not chant.' "[10] Here is Biblicism extraordinaire. In the absence of explicit, Scriptural instructions to sing in church, one could not sing. This same position, incidentally, can be found in Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons.[11] Hubmaier did qualify the principle by noting that it applied only "in those matters that concern the honor of God and the salvation of our souls."[12] What's at stake here? I think this is, at least in part, an example of "theology by rebuttal." For the Anabaptists to grant the opposite position was, in one sense, to open the door to transubstantiation and infant baptism.

In any event, the Reformers viewed these positions as prime examples of a deadly, wooden, literalistic legalism. Non-swearing of oaths, non-resistance, etc., were simply examples of Anabaptists being inappropriately, blindly wedded to the letter of Scripture. But lest we dismiss these charges too easily, be advised that other *Anabaptists* also charged some Anabaptists with excessive legalism. Pilgram Marpeck, that stalwart leader of South German and Swiss Anabaptists from 1528 to 1556, frequently chided the Swiss for their blind legalism—a legalism, he argued, which too often denied the reality of love as the central characteristic of the Gospel.[13]

But Anabaptists were also charged with the opposite error in their Scriptural hermeneutic—excessive spiritualism. Martin Luther saw among all the

Left. Ulrich Zwingli. Above. Luther and Zwingli debating the nature of the Eucharist.

radicals a frightening tendency to subjectivize Scripture through excessive reliance on the "Spirit." After all, these radicals refused to believe the very word of Christ, "This *is* my body." (Incidentally, to the best of my knowledge, that goes for virtually every Anabaptist—however legalistic—in the sixteenth century!) South German Anabaptists, especially, were prone to a more spiritualistic interpretation of Scripture. They saw in exaggerated literalism the seeds of bibliolatry.

The most articulate and winsome spokesman for this position was undoubtedly Hans Denck. Denck insisted that one needed an "inner Word" (the spirit) to give meaning to the "outer Word" (the letter). In 1526 he published a small pamphlet entitled, "He Who Truly Loves the Truth." It consisted of a list of internal contradictions in the Bible (e.g., Matt. 26:11, "I am not always with you"; Matt. 28:20, "I am with you always.") Reliance on the letter alone, argued Denck, cannot accommodate such contradictions. The spirit must be present to interpret what is being said. Moreover, if the letter alone is sufficient to transmit the Bible's truth and grace, then all who read will be saved; all illiterates will be damned. Denck even went so far as to suggest that the Bible is not the "Word of God." The revealed Word of God, for Denck, was Jesus Christ. It was Denck who provided that most descriptive motto of Anabaptist theology, "No one can truly know Christ except one who follows Him in life." The Bible is, therefore, an immensely important book because it *testifies* to the revealed Word, but it is not that Word. That which testifies to the Word cannot itself be the Word. Denck sometimes used the metaphor of a letter to describe the Bible. We cherish a letter from a dear friend because we love the friend, but we do not love the letter, we cherish it. Similarly, we respect and cherish and study the Bible, because we love/worship the God behind it; but we should not worship the Bible.[14]

It may be helpful, at this point, to consider Walter Klaassen's 1963 article on "Spiritualization in the Reformation."[15] In it, Klaassen argued that Biblicism and spiritualism are not absolute positions, but points held in tension by virtually all Biblical exegetes. Even Martin Luther, after all, used the analogy of the "shell and the nut"—the shell of the letter had to be cracked by the spirit to get at the nut of truth. One can, therefore, place all players in the Reformation drama on a continuum, with some giving greater stress to Biblicism and some greater stress to spiritualism, but both elements are present in all Reformation Christians.

A third recurring charge levelled against the Anabaptists involved their view of the Old Testament. On 3 June 1532, Berchtold Haller (the reformer of Berne) wrote Heinrich Bullinger (Ulrich Zwingli's successor at Zurich), asking for assistance in preparing for a scheduled disputation with Bernese Anabaptists on 1 July 1532. Among other things, Haller noted that he "had learned that the main article of faith of the Anabaptists was to reject the Old Testament."[16] Haller's analysis was clearly incorrect (the Anabaptists were not Marcionites), but it points to a major difference between the Anabaptists and the Reformers. The Anabaptists took a much more historical view of the Bible than did the Reformers, arguing that instead of one covenant

with two dispensations, there were two covenants, and the New Covenant (NT) supersedes the Old Covenant (OT).[17] The Old Testament, for the Anabaptists, stands under the judgment of the New Testament.

We are moving, then, from *sola scriptura* to *solus Christus.* Christ alone is the measure of truth of any passage of Scripture, in the Old or New Testament. In fairness to the Reformers, we should acknowledge that Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli also viewed the Bible Christocentrically. But in their case it was the *divine* Christ, the preexistent Logos, who stood at the center of Scripture, not the life and example of the historical Jesus. Similarly, while it is not quite true that the Reformers endorsed an absolutely "flat Bible," equally important from Genesis to Revelation (e.g., Luther disliked James, Jude, and Revelation, among other books. He preferred John, Hebrews, and the Pauline letters.[18] These gave a clearer view of *his* Christ than did the synoptic Gospels. The Anabaptists found *their* Christ precisely in those synoptic Gospels.), they clearly placed greater reliance on the Old Testament than did the Anabaptists. And in one sense, they *had* to. Where else were they to find Scriptural proof for warfare, *corpus christianum,* circumcision as equivalent to infant baptism, etc.? They had to do theology by rebuttal as well. The Anabaptists, in contrast, were willing to reject all of that because it did not square with their understanding of *nachfolge Christi.* Christ alone was the standard of truth.

One can almost argue that the position of the New Testament can serve as a kind of litmus test for the legitimacy of any Anabaptist position. It was clearly ignored, for example, among the Anabaptists of Muenster. There the Old Testament took precedence with disastrous results.

Finally, however, in the search for unifying principles, in the search for an "Anabaptist view of the Bible," there are factors more fundamental than the preference for the New Testament over the Old Testament. The first of these is discipleship/*Nachfolge*/obedience to Jesus Christ and his example—what Ben Ollenburger calls the "hermeneutics of obedience."[19] This is *the* criterion, *the* standard, *the* test. This is what drives one to the New Testament over the Old Testament. This is what placed the Anabaptists on a collision course with the magisterial reformation. (Note: Bullinger's response to Haller, in part, was to get the Anabaptists to agree that "faith and love" were the two essentials of Scripture. Having secured such agreement, Haller was instructed to demonstrate through the use of logic that, to quote John Howard Yoder, "Love is whatever serves the interest of social order and peace in the Christian society of the sixteenth century."[20] The Anabaptists, in contrast, insisted that the social order could not stand in the way of obedience. And I suspect, though I do not know, that this may be what Roland Bainton had in mind when he said the Anabaptists were the "most scriptural" party of the Reformation. They refused to compromise their understanding of the Bible's testimony to the life of Jesus, irrespective of the demands of the social order.) This is what contributes to the charges of legalism. This is, in fact, the test of the "spirit." Menno Simons argued that the Holy Spirit had to be consistent. Therefore, it would have to bear the same fruits in the sixteenth century that it bore in the first century—fruits consistent with the life and example of Jesus Christ.[21] Obedience, then, unifies to some extent the apparent disparity between letter and spirit. If the resulting behavior is not Christlike, the interpretation is wrong, irrespective of whether it arises from spiritualism or legalism.

A second unifying principle among the Anabaptists involved the discerning congregation. The Anabaptists, I believe, were not so naive as to assume that a commitment to obedience would lead all Christians down the same path. Therefore, they insisted that any Biblical interpretation be submitted to the discerning congregation. In this sense, Anabaptism was no wooden attempt to restore the first century. There was no concerted effort to rely on first-century clothes or foods, for example. They assumed that *nachfolge* would look different in some of its particulars in the sixteenth century. *How* it looked would be in the hands of a discerning congregation committed to radical obedience to the life and example of Jesus Christ.

But if this explains what the Anabaptists might have had to say about the "Bible in the congregation," what might they have said about "the Bible in the college"? For that question is at least part of the reason we are here discussing this topic during these two days.

At least at first glance, the evidence appears rather negative. Menno Simons, for example, argued that one must interpret Scripture with the heart, not with the intellect.[22] For Balthasar Hubmaier, the Scriptures were "clear and transparent and pure and luminous and simple."[23] Hubmaier complained openly that now "instead of the infallible pope and councils to interpret the Scriptures we must . . . wait for the learned experts who know three or four languages."[24] Anabaptists were repeatedly castigating the "learned doctors" who twisted their words in debates. Indeed, the "Anabaptists appear[ed] to take pride in ignorance and simplemindedness."[25]

But despite this seemingly negative evidence, I would argue that the case is not quite closed. And I think it is imperative that we try to understand comments such as these in the context of higher education in the early sixteenth century.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, two intellectual paradigms competed for the loyalties of young scholars. The first of these was scholasticism. Scholasticism was the prevailing intellectual system in western Europe from the sixth through the fifteenth centuries. It was an elaborate attempt to reconcile faith and reason; it was heavily based on logic and dialectic; it gave us some of the finest minds in the history of civilization with men like Anselm, Abelard, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas; and it provided the intellectual and philosophical foundation for the medieval Roman Catholic church. By 1500, however, scholasticism was in decline. It had simply become too esoteric, too abstruse, too "irrelevant." A marvelous example of this involves the wonderful—and probably apocryphal—story told by one Giraldus Cambrensis. It is the story of a young man who returned home after spending five years studying at the University of Paris, one of the last bastions of scholasticism. The morning after his arrival he and his father sat down at the breakfast table. On the table was a bowl containing six hard-boiled eggs. Much to the father's dismay, the son proceeded to demonstrate with remorseless logic that there were actually twelve eggs in the bowl instead of six. When the father had heard all he could tolerate, he proceeded to eat the

six eggs he could see. He left the other six for his son.[26]

In a recent book entitled *Education's Great Amnesia*, Robert Proctor contends, perhaps unfairly, that for the medieval scholastics, the purpose of education was to make people *learned*, to ensure that in the exercise of their minds they could display their erudition, irrespective of the content of the exercise.[27] If Proctor is correct, the story told by Giraldus Cambrensis is a marvelously apt description of scholastic goals.

I am convinced that *much* of the Anabaptists' negative evaluation of scholarship must be seen in this context. Here was scholarship that, from their perspective, obfuscated (with its literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical analyses; with its interminable glosses upon glosses upon glosses) the true meaning of Scripture. They must have seen logic as a tool designed to entrap and ensnare the pious believer, because in disputation after disputation it was used against them relentlessly. The Reformers frequently utilized syllogisms in an attempt to destroy Anabaptist arguments (e.g., All Scripture which is confirmed by Christ and the Apostles is perfect; The Old Testament is confirmed by Christ and the Apostles; Therefore, the teachings of the Old Testament are perfect.).[28] Little wonder that Anabaptists spoke disparagingly of education and the educated.

There was, however, a second educational paradigm challenging scholasticism—humanism. In contrast to the contemporary meaning of the term, Renaissance humanists were unanimously Christian, in many cases *profoundly* Christian. The term is derived from the *studia humanitatis*, the study of the humanities—grammar, literature, history, moral philosophy. While not a consistent philosophical system in the sense of scholasticism, humanists did tend to have common agendas. They were interested in the recovery, the rediscovery of the original classical (and Christian) sources of western civilization. *Ad fontes* was their rallying cry. They would have been mortified at the thought of reading glosses of scholars on some original text (whether Plato or the New Testament) rather than reading the original text itself. Their favorite tools were rhetoric and philology rather than logic and dialectic; they were fascinated with language, with its power and its beauty, in both its classical and vernacular forms; and they were especially concerned with behavior, with ethics, with morality. They were much more interested in seeing how a man behaved than in hearing what he believed. Indeed, Robert Proctor argues that in contrast to the scholastics, the humanists believed that the fundamental purpose of education was to make people *good*.[29]

Walter Klaassen, among others, has suggested that the Anabaptist view of Scriptural authority has more in common with the humanists than it does with the Lutherans.[30] Henning Graf Reventlow, in his recent book on *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* is much more explicit: "In their use of the scriptures the Anabaptists are in fact very close to Erasmus . . . ."[31] This "Erasmus" to whom Reventlow refers is of course the man known in his own time as the "Prince of the Humanists." It is this same Erasmus who translated the *Novum Instrumentum* which was published in 1516. It would behoove us, I suspect, as twentieth-century spiritual descendants of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, to know a bit more about this man's approach to Scripture, which was, according to Reventlow, apparently very similar to their own. This is neither the time nor the place for an extensive examination of the hermeneutics of Erasmus, but knowing the broad outlines of Erasmus' attitude to Scripture may help us discern how the Anabaptists might have felt about Biblical scholarship.

All modern scholars of Erasmus concur that Erasmus' purpose in providing a new translation of the New Testament was *not* to *weaken* the authority of the Bible, but rather to strengthen it, to *rediscover the original text* as accurately as possible. Such a task required textual criticism; it required a knowledge of the three "sacred" languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and an understanding of the idioms, metaphors, similes, parables, hyperboles, and synedoches used in Sacred Scripture; it required literary and historical criticism, so that in any given passage one considers "not only what is said but also by whom, to whom, with what words, at what time, on what occasion, what precedes and what follows;"[32] it also required, for Erasmus, knowledge of the secular disciplines (dialectic, arithmetic, music, the natural sciences, grammar, and rhetoric) in order better to understand the *matter* of Scripture. But Erasmus acknowledged that even after all this, certain passages of Scripture would remain unclear. For the interpretation of such passages, Erasmus suggested the following "hermeneutical rule":

> . . . that the sense of an obscure passage should correspond to the circle of Christian doctrine, the life of Christ, and natural equity. First, Erasmus insists that Christ is the center of Scripture. He is the one who permeates all Scripture and through whom all Scripture is to be interpreted. Of course, for Erasmus the Christ who is the center of Scripture is primarily the one who as teacher and example is principally revealed in the Gospels, not as with Luther the one who as gracious redeemer is chiefly revealed in the Pauline letters. Whereas Luther virtually equates Christ with the article of justification, Erasmus, while not entirely neglecting the reconciling activity of Christ, places the emphasis upon his teaching and exemplifying work.[33]

That sounds remarkably Anabaptist, doesn't it? But surely the Anabaptists would have asked an additional question! What would be the results of such an "educated" approach to Scripture? To what would it lead? Would it lead to using Biblical scholarship—as did the scholastics (and the Reformers)—to *soften* the demands of Jesus? Would it lead to what the Anabaptists decried as the "sinful, sweet Christ" of the Reformers?

In a fascinating article entitled "The Origins of Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism: Another Look," Hans Hillerbrand discussed in some detail Erasmus' *Paraphrase of the Gospel of Matthew* (1522). In it, says Hillerbrand, Erasmus refused to qualify in any way Jesus' commands in the Sermon on the Mount. Christ's disciples are not to swear at all because he wants them to be perfect; His disciples are never to resist evil, but should willingly suffer injustice. Hillerbrand then concludes:

> What makes Erasmus' statements significant for our study is the fact that they are presented without any qualification so that the thrust is an absolute one; the Sermon on the Mount, without exception or qualification is the *nova lex Christi*. One only need compare the expositions of either Luther or Calvin to become aware of the uniqueness of what Erasmus is saying here.[34]

In fact, then, rather than attenuating or weakening in any way the hardness of Christ's commands, Erasmus regularly took the hardest possible reading of these Scripture passages. Jerry H. Bentley suggests, in fact, that he was

the "first scholar to develop the principle of the harder reading and to employ it regularly in his criticism of the Greek New Testament."[35]

Here, one strongly suspects, is a kind of Biblical scholarship the Anabaptists could well have endorsed. However learned its approach to Scripture, it satisfied the test of obedience. Is there any evidence that they did endorse it? The evidence is largely circumstantial, but it is impressive. Balthasar Hubmaier may have met Erasmus; both he and Hans Denck were clearly influenced by him; Conrad Grebel and Felix Mantz obviously were educated in humanist circles, often by very close personal friends of Erasmus; Cornelis Augustijn has recently demonstrated the strong possibility of Erasmian influence on Menno Simons.[36] Indeed, it is almost certain that Erasmus would have been assiduously read and studied by virtually every educated Anabaptist in the early sixteenth century. In fact, we know that Conrad Grebel owned a copy of Erasmus' *Annotations on the New Testament.*[37] This was a separately-published book consisting of the scholarly apparatus (i.e., the footnotes) of Erasmus' New Testament. This is hardly the kind of book (all 600 pages of it) that one who had no interest in Biblical scholarship would buy! We do not know if Grebel owned a copy of Erasmus' *Paraphrase of the Gospel of Matthew* (the work Hillerbrand was discussing above), but it seems very likely given the fact that Grebel was teaching the Gospel of Matthew (in Greek) to some students in September of 1524.[38]

In light of the evidence, therefore, it is very difficult to argue that the Anabaptists would have rejected out of hand all Biblical scholarship. In fact, there are clear indications that they practiced it themselves. What is perfectly obvious, however (indisputable, I think), is that they would not have acknowledged any "priesthood of scholars." For the Anabaptists, the scholar, however learned, would surely have been bound—as all Christians were bound—to a life of obedience to the example of Jesus Christ, and to the discerning hermeneutic of the congregation. May it ever be thus!

ENDNOTES

[1]I came across this story some years ago in a now unremembered article. At the time, I strongly suspected it might be apocryphal, but it was a great story, and I continued to repeat it. In preparing this manuscript for publication, I thought it appropriate to cite a source. My search for the source in which I originally discovered the tale proved unsuccessful. I was able, however, to locate an English translation of *The Autobiography of Thomas Platter,* trans. Mrs. Finn, 2nd ed. (London: B. Wertheim, 1847). My early suspicions were confirmed. Thomas Platter indeed reported (p. 39) that he felt as though he had been "pulled up into the air by the hair of [his] head" while listening to Ulrich Zwingli. However, the experience did not occur in the Grossmünster Cathedral in Zurich, nor did it occur on 2 January 1519, nor does it appear to have been precipitated by the hearing of the actual text of Scripture. Rather, Platter implied that it was the power of Zwingli's reformation preaching that caused the sensation. *Mea maxima culpa!* Since this issue of *Mennonite Life* is devoted to presenting the Bible Lectures *as delivered,* I have not changed the story in the text. Incidentally, the report of Platter putting sand in his mouth late at night so that the grating of his teeth would keep him awake *is* accurate! (p. 43)

[2]The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Dr. Joseph Goering, professor of medieval history at the University of Toronto, for insights into the place of the Bible in medieval Europe.

[3]*The Complete Writings of Menno Simons,* ed. J. C. Wenger (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1956), 668.

[4]Walter Klaassen, "Speaking in Simplicity: Balthasar Hubmaier," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 40 (April 1966): 142.

[5]"To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," in *Luther: Selected Political Writings,* ed. J. M. Porter (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 46.

[6]Quoted in Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand; A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), 185.

[7]Roland H. Bainton, "The Bible in the Reformation," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible,* 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963-1970), 3: 5.

[8]See, for example, George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 133-134.

[9]*The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism; the Grebel Letters and Related Documents,* ed. Leland Harder (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985), 247-248.

[10]Ibid., 287.

[11]Klaassen, "Speaking in Simplicity," 145-146; Henry Poettcker, "Menno Simons' Encounter with the Bible," *MQR* 40 (April 1966): 125.

[12]Klaassen, "Speaking in Simplicity," 146.

[13]See William Klassen, "Anabaptist Hermeneutics: The Letter and the Spirit," *MQR* 40 (April 1966): 95-96.

[14]For a thorough review of Denck's approach to Scripture, see Alvin J. Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1977), 132-136.

[15]*MQR* 37 (April 1963): 67-77.

[16]Heinold Fast and John H. Yoder, eds., "How to Deal with the Anabaptists; An Unpublished Letter of Heinrich Bullinger," *MQR* 33 (April 1959): 84.

[17]See, for example, George Huntston Williams, "The Radical Reformation Revisited," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39 (1984): 3.

[18]Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Mid-Career, 1521-1536,* ed. Karin Bornkamm, trans. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 80-83.

[19]"The Hermeneutics of Obedience," in *Essays in Biblical Interpretation,* ed. Willard Swartley (Elkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 45-61.

[20]"How to Deal with the Anabaptists," 95.

[21]Henry Poetticker, "Biblical Controversy on Several Fronts," *MQR* 40 (April 1966): 137-138.

[22]Ibid., 129.

[23]Quoted in Klassen, "Speaking in Simplicity," 143.

[24]Ibid., 142.

[25]Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant* (Waterloo, Ont.: Conrad Press, 1973), 38. Klaassen's entire chapter, "Radical Theology: Anabaptism and Idealism," (pp. 37-47 in ibid.) should be consulted for a careful and helpful treatment of the Anabaptist attitude toward Biblical scholarship.

[26]Will Durant, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), 982.

[27]Robert E. Proctor, *Education's Great Amnesia; Reconsidering the Humanities from Petrarch to Freud with a Curriculum for Today's Students* (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 1988), 146-147.

[28]Jesse Yoder, "The Frankenthal Disputation: Part II, Outcome, Issues, Debating Methods," *MQR* 36 (April 1962): 120.

[29]Proctor, 147.

[30]Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline; Selected Primary Sources* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1981), 140.

[31](Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 54.

[32]The words are those of Erasmus, quoted by J. B. Payne, "Toward the Hermeneutics of Erasmus," in *Scrinium Erasmianum,* ed. J. Coppens, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 2: 27.

[33]Ibid., 28-29.

[35]*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 53 (1962): 159-160.

[35]Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ; New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 154.

[36]"Erasmus and Menno Simons," *MQR* 60 (October 1986): 497-508.

[37]*The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism,* 358.

[38]Ibid., 283.

Response to "Anabaptists and the Bible: From *Sola Scriptura* to *Solus Christus*"
by Lois Barrett

I do not want to critique Dale's fine paper, but to project the issues of the Anabaptists and the Bible into the twentieth-century church. I think that the issues with which they dealt are also our issues and also issues in congregations with which we are familiar. In our culture, we still have the variety of views of the Bible that were also present, although in a different sense, in the sixteenth century. Although today many of us take the Bible for granted, as they did not in the sixteenth century, we still have churches which want to interpret the Bible in a literalistic way, without the Spirit. We have churches who want to use the Spirit alone for deciding what it is that God wants them to do. And we also have churches who want to use reason alone to determine what it is that God wants them to do. So we are still challenged with the Anabaptist view of taking both the words of the Bible and the guidance of the Spirit together and interpreting what God wants for us.

The same Spirit that inspired the Bible can inspire us as well. It can guide us and lead us into truth and into relationship with God. I also believe that the Spirit is present in a special way in the gathered community. Often Protestant circles in North America have emphasized the private reading of the Bible, the private inspiration of the Spirit in interpreting the Bible. One of the things that we in the Anabaptist tradition have to offer is the importance of the gathered community in Biblical interpretation, in the discernment of what direction it is that God wants us to go and that can be the word of the Spirit that has been tested by the Bible. We, as congregations, need to structure ourselves in ways that this can happen.

Secondly, I would like to comment on the *solus Christus*, Christ as the center of interpretation. We sometimes get into difficulty, in the same way as many of the Anabaptists did, in terms of the Old Testament. Because we are against participation in war, we also have tended to lop off the Old Testament or, if you simply ignore it, to claim that it is superseded. I think we are still in the middle of a process of reclaiming the proper use of the Old Testament. Millard Lind has done us a great service by his scholarship in reclaiming the God-as-Warrior language of the Old Testament and understanding that in a way which does not require God's people to fight, but lets God fight for them. We need to understand the ways in which that kind of warfare, if you want to call it that, is then projected into the New Testament, where our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and the spiritual forces of evil.

We also get into a similar problem with the Pauline Epistles when they have been interpreted outside of the contexts of the Synoptic Gospels and the Old Testament. For many Protestant churches there is, then, a repetition of Martin Luther's error of understanding which contrasts faith and works, so that you can end up with a kind of faith that does not require any works, a faith that is separate from obedience. But through interpretation of the whole Bible, in the light of Christ, we can understand the way in which faith and works are not separate, but both exist in the context of covenant, of justification, of being in right relationship with God and humanity. This is what the law is about and what Christ's reconciliation brings to us as well. Justification does have to do with ethics and when we bring together the gospels and the Pauline Epistles we can see that.

Thirdly, I want to comment on obedience as the test of interpretation. It has been said that the Devil can quote scripture, as the Devil did in the account of the temptations of Jesus. It is also true, as Dale has said, that the test of right interpretation is obedience. That is still a challenge for us in our churches: in understanding what it means to love enemies, or even just to love those who are different from us. Are we moving toward covenant love, toward making ourselves accountable to each other in the church, toward taking the risk of loving and forgiving the antagonist? Many of our modern debates over Biblical interpretation could be resolved in a much better way if we looked at the ways in which the fruits of the spirit are exemplified in those that are carrying on the debate and then we can use this in a way to encourage each other to greater obedience.

The Daniel Explosion: Bethel's First Bible Crisis

by James C. Juhnke

In October of 1916, Bethel College's first Bible crisis, the "Daniel explosion," shook this institution from its prairie grass roots to the administration building rafters.[1]

Bethel's Bible teacher in 1916 was Jacob F. Balzer, a young man who, like Daniel of the Old Testament, was something of a radical insurgent.[2] He had learned some modern ideas at the University of Chicago Divinity School. In October Balzer addressed the gathered Bethel community in the daily required chapel service. His text was the book of Daniel. He shared some of the latest thoughts and findings of Bible scholars. He suggested that not everything in this book was to be understood literally as it appeared on the surface. Scholars were now saying that the book of Daniel probably was not written during the Babylonian captivity (ca. 500 B.C.), but much later, perhaps during the Maccabean period (ca. 168 B.C.). Recent literary and historical analysis of the text showed some inconsistencies which the traditional interpretations could not account for.

The very next day, Gustav Enss, Bethel's conservative German language teacher, was in charge of chapel. He shocked the Bethel community by doing something that no faculty member had ever done before. He attacked his colleague in public. Enss said that Balzer's ideas were dangerous and unacceptable. "Modernism" and "higher criticism" had invaded Bethel College. Something had to be done about it. Enss implied that Balzer should resign his position in Bethel's Bible and Religion Department.[3]

The Enss-Balzer confrontation caused a firestorm both on the Bethel campus and in the relations between the college and its church constituency. Students returned to their home congregations and informed parents and pastors about the controversy. College board members began to investigate the truth of the charges and counter-charges which mounted on both sides. As a result, both Enss and Balzer left Bethel—Enss to the Hopefield Mennonite Church and Balzer to the University of Chicago. From 1916 to 1919, Bethel's Board of Directors conducted a controversial investigation of the religious orthodoxy of faculty members. A strong corps of young faculty members were convinced to leave. In 1919, when Bethel's president, J. W. Kliewer, resigned, people said it was due in part to the effects of the Daniel explosion.[4]

Bethel's first Bible crisis was not unique. Many Christian colleges in America in the years around World War I were troubled with dissension between factions labeled "Modernist" and "Fundamentalist." The wider national controversy climaxed in 1925 with the so-called "Scopes monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, where Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan faced each other in legal and theological combat.[5]

The divisive issues were both ideological and cultural. In an ideological sense, the question was what to make of new scientific findings and approaches —the theory of evolution and modern literary and historical techniques for studying Bible texts. Could the Christian faith accommodate the new scientific methods and conclusions? Was science autonomous, beyond theological challenge?

But social and cultural issues were also at stake. What was the role of the churches and of Christian faith in American society? Would the churches accept the rapid secularization of American urban and industrial civilization? What about the gradual exclusion of religion from public schools and the increasing disregard for the sacredness of the Sabbath. What could be done about the rise of divorce, the popularity of Hollywood movies, and other vices of modernity? Protestant America, once believed to hold the lamp to light all mankind, now seemed to be losing its way, at least so it seemed to traditionalists and fundamentalists.

To get a feel for the people and issues at the heart of Bethel's mission in those years, we may look briefly at two of the early presidents of the college, Cornelius H. Wedel and John W. Kliewer. Wedel and Kliewer were both ordained pastors and active church workers. Both served as chairman of the mission board, the most important denominational committee. Both were called upon to represent Mennonite interests before the world. Kliewer served as president of the Western District Conference, as well as chairman of the "Committee of Seven" which dealt with problems related to the World War, 1917-18. Educated and articulate Mennonite leaders were few in number in those years. The college leaders in their use of Scripture set a standard for the denomination.

Cornelius H. Wedel

Cornelius H. Wedel, Bethel's president until his untimely death in 1910, had the ability to bring Christian faith and modern learning together without losing the confidence of a conservative constituency. Wedel attended a German language Presbyterian Seminary in Bloomfield, New Jersey. There he encountered the modern methods of historical and literary criticism of the Bible first introduced by Bible scholars in Germany. In 1889 he wrote to a close friend, "I myself fumbled around a bit

Gustav Enss.

Jacob Balzer.

with this burst of knowledge, especially about the Old Testament. Now everything seems to become shaky.''[6] Wedel expressed distress about official Presbyterian Church action against Professor Charles A. Briggs, a progressive Bible scholar from Union Theological Seminary in New York. Wedel became well aware that mutual hostilities between a denomination and its college teachers could be painfully disruptive. But Wedel's Bible teacher at Bloomfield, Dr. Karl Seibert, was a mentor of intellectual and spiritual strength. Wedel came out of seminary with his Christian faith and his Mennonite identity intact.[7]

As a Bible teacher at Bethel College and in the churches, Wedel generally took a balanced conservative position. He opposed what he called ''negative criticism'' of the Bible, but he also said there was much to learn from the scholars who used the modern historical and literary methods. His ability to communicate effectively in the churches was enhanced both by his personal modesty and by his prodigious Bible knowledge. Someone remembered how he responded to a pastor in Berne, Indiana, who tested him on an obscure Bible passage (Christ's post-resurrection preaching to the dead).

> President Wedel at once cited a number of authorities who held the one view; then he cited a number who held the other; then he cited the third number who held the middle view . . . . The preacher (later) said, ''What a store of knowledge that man must have to discuss at a moment's notice such a subject!''[8]

Wedel's balanced approach is evident in the last of his books, a commentary on the standard ''Elbing Catechism.'' On one hand Wedel affirmed the orthodox traditional view of Scriptures as ''inspired by God,'' as ''the infallible truth,'' and as the means for instruction ''to lead us to salvation.''[9] But Wedel's commentary also endeavored to show how the Scriptures could be attractive to educated people such as Bethel College students aspired to be. He avoided Fundamentalist code language which insisted upon an ''inerrant'' Bible ''in the original autographs.'' He emphasized the ''diversity of authors, circumstances, locales, and subjects'' confronted in the Bible, as well as the variety of literary genres found in Scripture—history, biography, religious philosophy, epic poetry, lyric poetry, and dramatic poetry. To study Scriptures we must not read the text in a vacuum but rather learn the historical context. Wedel wrote,

> For example, when we study Jeremiah extensively we have to research the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian Kingdoms as they were then. We should learn how the Jewish kings came to terms with those empires. As has been said, ''Who would the poet understand, must enter in the poet's land.''[10]

Wedel wrote that the authority of the Bible is not diminished by evidences of human error, inaccurate dates, or minor conflicting incidents that may be found in the text. For example, we should not be dismayed if two gospel accounts of the same healing miracle disagree over how many people were healed. The Bible, Wedel wrote, ''is like a pilgrim who has wandered for centuries and whose clothes have become dilapidated and ragged in places.'' The difficult passages and unfulfilled prophecies do not detract from the power and truth of Scriptures. We should emulate Socrates who said of some deep but obscure writings in his own time, ''What I do understand is so profound that I make no issue of what I do not understand.''[11]

When President Wedel quoted Socrates in a defense of Scriptural authority, he was endeavoring to bring together the classical and the Hebrew traditions which are the foundation of

Christian liberal arts education. Wedel was committed to both Christ and culture. As long as he remained at Bethel's helm, the tensions inherent in this stance remained manageable. But Wedel died in 1910, before his fiftieth birthday. The next generation of leadership found it increasingly difficult to define a center that would hold.

John W. Kliewer

John W. Kliewer accepted the call to Bethel's presidency in 1912 and served two terms (1912-1919 and 1925-1932). Like Wedel before him, Kliewer was committed to a kind of progressive orthodoxy, to a Christian faith both deeply-held and rational. Like Wedel, Kliewer was a German-speaking immigrant from eastern Europe. But Kliewer was more thoroughly Americanized. He was attuned to the idiom of American evangelicalism whereas Wedel had drawn from the wells of German Pietism. Kliewer attended a Methodist seminary, Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois. He turned down an option to attend Moody Bible Institute because, as he said, "the Moody School method fettered independent thinking."[12]

As Kliewer encountered modern historical and literary criticism at Garrett, he endeavored to learn from the new methods while rejecting their extreme conclusions. He argued against one of his teachers who strongly insisted that Moses had not written the Pentateuch. Kliewer was impressed when this teacher commended him for the quality of his critique, rather than putting him down for disagreeing with the teacher.[13] Kliewer also maintained a sense of independence by claiming his Mennonite identity. At one social occasion he explained to the Garrett president that Mennonites were similar to Methodists in doctrine, to Congregationalists in polity, and to Baptists in adult baptism. The president called to his wife and jokingly said, "Let me introduce you to this brother. He isn't quite a Methodist; he isn't quite a Congregationalist; and he isn't quite a Baptist."[14]

Kliewer was committed to what he called "a reasonable faith in the Bible." He wrote that the Bible was "God's Word in human experiences," as Jesus was "God's son in human experiences." The Bible was a unity, not a uniformity. Not all parts of the Scriptures reached the same spiritual heights. It was an inspired book, Kliewer wrote, but the inspiration was "not mechanical, not verbal."[15]

In 1911, shortly after Kliewer had accepted the Bethel presidency, the General Conference Mennonite Church asked him to address their triennial meeting in Bluffton, Ohio, on the topic, "Is the Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry Biblical?"[16] The issue of women's ordination was forced upon the church by a gifted and intrepid Mennonite woman, Ann Allebach, of Pennsylvania, and by the leaders of the First Mennonite Church of Philadelphia who ordained Allebach to the full gospel ministry on January 15, 1911. Mennonites had ordained deaconesses before this, but Allebach was the first fully ordained woman minister. Was this the wave of the future? The president of Bethel College was to give some guidance.

Kliewer attempted a balanced and impartial approach, taking account of Biblical arguments on both sides of the question. First he reviewed the case *for* women's ordination, stating that woman's "religious equality with the man seems a safe conclusion from many a passage."[17] The Old Testament has numerous examples of female leadership: Deborah, a judge; Huldah, a prophetess; Miriam, a poetess and prophetess. The New Testament revealed "even a greater freedom of activity for the female sex, and a greater susceptibility for spiritual truths."[18] Paul's restrictions upon women in Corinthians might be explained by conditions peculiar to that community. It is possible, Kliewer stated, for some people to think the office of minister is for women, "without consciously straining the teaching of the Bible."[19]

But Kliewer saw the arguments on the other side as even more persuasive. The Genesis story of creation, referred to in the New Testament, "demands the leading place for the man, though not to rule arbitrarily."[20] The Jews had no priestesses. The Corinthian restrictions were probably not for Corinth alone. As the duties of motherhood made the priesthood impossible for women in the old covenant, so the quest for office was out of place for women in modern times. The sum of the matter was, "According to the example and teaching of the Bible public activity in the religious sphere is permitted and under certain circumstances even bidden woman, but occupying a religious office by which she would in certain matters become the ruler over man, is, according to biblical example and teaching, forbidden her.... The ordination of women to the ministry is not biblical."[21]

Kliewer's conclusion surely must have been a disappointment to Ann Allebach, to the pastors who had promoted her ordination, and to other Mennonite women who aspired to ordained church ministry. It is notable, however, that Kliewer accorded great respect to the advocates of women's ordination and that he took their point of view seriously. His analysis of Scripture allowed for multiple interpretations. He was neither a Fundamentalist nor a Modernist. Hard-line opponents of women's ordination and fundamentalist advocates of a monolithic Bible might well have considered Kliewer an untrustworthy ally.

The Insurgents

President Kliewer recruited a group of young intellectuals for the Bethel College faculty, the first generation who had gotten degrees at American universities. These new progressives (including Jacob Balzer, Samuel Burkhard, Andrew Schmidt, Emil Riesen, and Cornelius Regier) had embraced the American democratic ideals of Woodrow Wilson's "New Freedom" and John Dewey's "Progressive Education."[22] They keenly sensed the gap between their own presumed enlightenment and the narrowness of their rural background. They brought new teaching methods to Bethel—more relevant, more student-centered, and more keyed to the main currents of American life. Their forefathers, who had such a dim view of the prospects for worldly progress, seemed quite benighted to this generation. Jacob Balzer and his group were brash, impatient, and sometimes arrogant.

It is hard to know how these youthful insurgents would have developed if they would have had opportunity to come to maturity in normal times. It may be that some of their impetousness, their rough edges, and their testing of the boundaries of orthodoxy, would have moderated in time. They needed time to test their idealism in the world. They needed opportunities to win the confidence of the churches. They needed patient elder statesmen who could encourage, admonish, and nurture them along in love. But events moved too

fast. The insurgents were blindsided with attacks from two directions.

From one side came the Great World War, America's crusade in 1917-18 to make the world safe for democracy. Filled with the spirit of progressive idealism, the insurgents were inclined to support President Wilson's militant world vision. The nonresistant doctrine of their forefathers seemed negative and restrictive. Balzer claimed to be "one of the first ones in Harvey County to see the inevitable need of America's entrance into the war."[23] Samuel Burkhard delivered a jingoist anti-German wartime speech at a Red Cross rally which surely satisfied the most patriotic citizens of Harvey County.[24] When Balzer and Enss clashed over the book of Daniel, one issue in the background was that Enss, who had attended the University of Berlin, was sympathetic to Germany while Balzer identified with the Allies in the European War. The insurgents had not thought through the contradictions between Anabaptist nonresistance and militant crusading nationalism. They had uncritically bought into a crusading Christian America.[25]

From another side came the attacks from the anti-modernists that the insurgents were religiously unorthodox. Their accusers borrowed doctrinal lists from American fundamentalism to accuse them of disbelieving the seven-day creation, the virgin birth, the bodily resurrection, and the literal inerrancy of the Scriptures. Whether the insurgents were in fact unsound on main points of Protestant doctrine is more difficult to demonstrate than is their abandonment of Mennonite nonresistance. They were Christian believers who put their emphasis in different areas, and who used somewhat different language, than that of the conservatives. Many years later Samuel Burkhard reflected their attitude in an oral interview on his encounter with the board:

> Then they wanted to know about the Virgin Birth, and I said, "Well, I take the same position Mark, John, and Paul do." And the preacher said, "Now what's that?" "Well, they make no issue of it. That's my position."[26]

Jacob Balzer revealed some of his thinking as well as his frustration in a letter to a board member in January 1917:

> You ask about my position on the divinity of Christ. I believe on this because I see that his power saves. You ask about my position in the reconciliation *(Versoehnung)* through his death. I believe on this, because the souls who experience Christ experience this reconciliation and do not doubt God's love. I believe on the trustworthiness of Scriptures as the guide *(Richtschnur)* of our life. If I have taught or preached otherwise, then tell me when and where . . . . I don't know what more you want from me."[27]

Bethel's insurgents tended to respond to attacks on their orthodoxy with brief statements of their positions. None of them published doctrinal statements clarifying just where their viewpoints differed from that of the conservatives and traditionalists. In one fascinating private exchange, David Richert of the mathematics department attempted to clarify his position with his older brother who was on the board of directors. David Richert affirmed that the Bible was "the Word of God," "divinely inspired," "the history of the discovery of God," and "the guide and inspiration of the church." But he thought the insistence upon inerrancy was neither wise nor supportable. Richert wrote, ". . . those men that wrote the Bible were sometimes in error, and if we are honest we might just as well admit it." An example of a mathematical error is in I Kings 7:23, where the circumference of a sphere is said to be three times the diameter. David Richert also described his position on the virgin birth, the resurrection, and other issues in terms that would not fully satisfy a fundamentalist. His elder brother wrote a detailed response which ended with an anguished cry, "O Lord, help us!"[28]

David Richert did not lose his job at Bethel. He taught mathematics and astronomy, less controversial subjects than Bible and religion. He was forty-one years old in 1916, more mature and settled in his identity and viewpoints than were the younger insurgents. He was a mild-mannered person, unlikely to become involved in public confrontation. Perhaps it helped him to have a brother on the board of directors.

Denominational Conservatives and Traditionalists

Peter H. Richert, David's older brother, was the primary spokesman for the denominational conservatives and traditionalists. Conservative church leaders on the right who put pressure on him and on other board members included Gustav Enss at the Hopefield Church; Henry Peter Krehbiel, newspaper editor in Newton; and Jacob B. Epp, teacher and principal of Meno Bible Academy in Oklahoma. While the insurgents saw P. H. Richert as hopelessly repressive, he saw himself as a mediator between Bethel and her critics in the constituency. He had taught at the Bethel Academy from 1898 to 1912. He was elder of the Tabor Mennonite Church near Goessel, and secretary for the General Conference Mennonite Mission Board.[29] He helped draft lists of doctrinal questions to weed out unorthodox Mennonite missionaries in much the same manner as was done for Bethel faculty.[30] While he borrowed from Fundamentalist literature, Richert held onto Mennonite nonresistance and criticized schools such as Moody and Wheaton for not following the Bible on this point.[31] Richert was troubled by apparent contradictions and "difficult passages" in the Bible. He compiled numerous lists of such passages and wrote out explanations, which he later published under the title, *A Brief Catechism on Difficult Scripture Passages and Involved Questions on the Use of the Sword.*[32]

Richert wanted faculty members for Bethel who would promote the values of Mennonite peoplehood. He wrote to history teacher C. C. Regier without accusing Regier of militarism, but making his point quite clear:

> If (history) should be taught by a man with military tendencies, he could instill into our youth something so contrary to our principles that it would be hard to hold it in our church, because history is so full of war, and it is possible to inspire young people with the heroism of the soldier, instead of the heroism of meekness and lowliness of heart, as exemplified by Christ.[33]

Richert was an authoritative church elder who was accustomed to having his authority respected. But the ways of making decisions in American academia were different from the traditional procedures in Mennonite congregations. The insurgents were Americanized proponents of academic freedom and of democratic due process. They compared the board's action to the Spanish Inquisition, or identified the board with the spirit of "Prussianism." In the midst of the 1919 investigation and purge, one of the insurgents condemned the board's "intolerance, narrowmindedness, and medieval dogmatism . . . ."[34] Another accused the board of an effort to make Bethel into "a Jesuit college of the 16th century . . . or to a school of the Pharisees of

the days of Christ."[35] The insurgents did not accept that Bethel faculty needed full agreement on religious doctrine. As one of them said later, "My notion is that Jesus never taught anybody . . . what to think, but to commit ourselves to service. And you don't have to agree to serve together."[36] Thus this intergenerational impasse owed as much to different ideas about the validity of variety as to actual doctrinal differences among the participants.

The purge of the insurgents took place over several years and in different ways. C. C. Regier was fired outright. Jacob Balzer failed to return from a leave of absence. Samuel Burkhard resigned after the board insisted he must teach only pedagogy and woodworking —no Bible courses. Andrew Schmidt and Emil Riesen resigned with vigorous protests. When President Kliewer himself resigned in 1919, to go on a year-long trip around the world for the mission board, his youthful faculty had been decimated and the remaining teachers were demoralized. Samuel Burkhard remembered Kliewer saying, "In the last two years we've lost eight heads of departments, and there wasn't a stick [i.e., incompetent] among them."[37] It would take Bethel many years to recover from this setback. From P. H. Richert's conservative point of view, however, the board fufilled its duty by saving the college from even more dangerous forces. No one on either side celebrated.

Conclusions

The Bethel College Catalogue in the year of the Daniel Explosion said, "An intimate acquaintance with Biblical history and literature is today recognized as a necessary equipment for a college graduate, especially for one who plans to teach the young."[38] Everyone at Bethel would have agreed with that statement. They all believed in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and in the authority of the Bible. They all agreed that the purpose of Bethel College was to foster the Christian faith and to build Christian community. In view of their common Christian commitments and Mennonite identity, the participants in this controversy should not be labeled either "Modernist" or "Fundamentalist." It is more accurate to speak of "youthful insurgents" on one side and "denominational traditionalists or conservatives" on the other side. Both sides had been influenced by different strands in American culture and society, and both would have to face the fact that too much borrowing leads to loss of separate identity. Gustav Enss and Jacob Balzer both eventually moved out of the Mennonite and pacifist traditions.

Differences of doctrine did divide these people from each other. But social and cultural matters may have been even more important. This was an intergenerational conflict, with youthful insurgents facing conservative elders. It was also an ethnic conflict, marked by opposing understandings of the proper path for an immigrant group to accommodate to American society. And it was a political conflict which took shape against the backdrop of a wider world at war. The struggles at Bethel from 1916 to 1919 were a testimony to the difficulties of holding the tensions between faith and learning in a proper and fruitful balance, especially in a time of rapid cultural and political change. Those tensions have continued to exist until this day.

It is probably inevitable that any institution which is truly committed to Mennonite identity, to the Christian faith, and to liberal training, will live in tension among these commitments. The liberal positive view of humanity is in tension with the Christian-Mennonite view of human sinfulness and need of regeneration. The Mennonite commitment to the church as a body of believers runs counter to much liberal Christian thought which focuses on individual freedom. Such tensions are best embraced and wrestled with, rather than denied.[39] A healthy church constituency which really cares about its colleges will be concerned about the Christian faithfulness of teachers and the quality of their teaching. And the college needs to be in touch with the churches. A special measure of God's grace is essential to keep the faith-and-learning dialogue vital and congenial both within the college community and between the college and the churches.

ENDNOTES

[1]The phrase "Daniel explosion" comes from Edmund G. Kaufman, "Crises in Bethel's History," *Mennonite Life* (April 1963), 54.

[2]Delores Reimer, "Jacob Frank Balzer and the Experience at Bethel College," Bethel College, Social Science Seminar Paper, 1974.

[3]See James C. Juhnke, "Gustav H. Enss, Mennonite Alien (1885-1965)," *Mennonite Life* (December, 1981).

[4]Peter J. Wedel, *The Story of Bethel College* (North Newton: Bethel College, 1954), 243. Mark Stucky, "Bethel Meets the Modernist Challenge," Bethel College, Social Science Seminar Paper, 1969.

[5]George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 6.

[6]Letter from C. H. Wedel to H. R. Voth, April 19, 1889. H. R. Voth Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives. Trans. by Hilda Voth.

[7]See James C. Juhnke, *Dialogue with a Heritage: Cornelius H. Wedel and the Beginnings of Bethel College* (North Newton: Bethel College, 1987).

[8]J. W. Kliewer, *Memoirs of J. W. Kliewer* (North Newton: Bethel College, 1943), 101.

[9]C. H. Wedel, *Meditationen zu den Fragen und Antworten unseres Katechismus* (Published by the author, 1910), 23-31. Trans. by Hilda Voth.

[10]Wedel, *Meditationen*, 26. Trans. by Hilda Voth and James Juhnke.

[11]Wedel, *Meditationen*, 26, 28. Trans. by Hilda Voth.

[12]Kliewer, *Memoirs*, 36-7.

[13]Ibid., 39.

[14]Ibid., 37-8.

[15]Undated notes in J. W. Kliewer Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 6, folder 37, Addresses and Sermons.

[16]J. W. Kliewer, "Is the Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry Biblical." Paper read to the 19th Session of the General Conference, Bluffton, Ohio, August 31-September 6, 1911. Printed in the *Supplement to The Mennonite*, 27 (April 11, 1912), 41-51.

[17]Ibid., 41.

[18]Ibid., 43.

[19]Ibid., 45.

[20]Ibid., 46.

[21]Ibid., 50.

[22]Keith Sprunger, "C. C. Regier: Progressive Mennonite Historian," *Mennonite Life* (March, 1984), 11-15.

[23]Balzer, letter to the editor of the *Kansan*, November 2, 1918. Balzer Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 2, folder 29.

[24]Samuel Burkhard, "Bethel College is not Pro-German." *Newton Evening Kansan Republican*, September 20, 1918.

[25]James C. Juhnke, "Mennonite Progressives and World War I," *Mennonite Life* (December 1986), 14-16.

[26]James C. Juhnke interview with Samuel Burkhard, Newton, Kansas, June 28, 1975. Transcript p. 13.

[27]Letter from J. F. Balzer to P. H. Richert, Jan. 6, 1917. P. H. Richert Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 21, folder 154.

[28]David H. Richert letter to Peter H. Richert, April 12, 1917. Peter H. Richert to David H. Richert, April 13, 1917. P. H. Richert Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 21, folder 154.

[29]See James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1979), 91-4.

[30]Ibid., 93.

[31]James C. Juhnke, *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1975), 134.

[32]P. H. Richert, *A Brief Catechism on Difficult Scripture Passages and Involved Questions on the Use of the Sword* (Newton: n.p., 1942). See his manuscripts on this topic in the P. H. Richert Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, folder 67.

[33]P. H. Richert letter to C. C. Regier, Feb. 1, 1919. P. H. Richert collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 21, folder 154.

[34]Letter from A. B. Schmidt to the Bethel College Board of Directors, April 2, 1949. H. P. Krehbiel Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives.

[35]C. C. Regier comment on the "Rules and Regulations for the Directors and Faculty of

Bethel College," Jan. 25, 1919. P. H. Richert Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Box 21, folder 154.

[36]Burkhard interview, transcript p. 16.

[37]Ibid., 15.

[38]*24th Annual Catalogue, 1916-1917, Bethel College*, 29.

[39]See James C. Juhnke, "Bethel College as a Community of Shared Values: A Faculty Perspective," Unpublished paper for Bethel Faculty Retreat, August 1981.

Response to "The Daniel Explosion: Bethel's First Bible Crisis" by Richard Tschetter

One of the tragedies of history must be that the Bible, which carries the message of love and peace, has caused so much hate and strife within the church. That fact should cause us within the Christian tradition of our Anabaptist faith to be more humble in the expression of our convictions. Professor Juhnke has shared with us the pain, struggle, and impact of "the Daniel explosion."

It would be helpful if all of us could have read the original chapel presentations of Jacob F. Balzer and Gustav Enss. I do not know if these manuscripts even exist. Since we have not been exposed to the chapel talks of these two men, I wish that the presentation of the explosion would have gone into more detail regarding the doctrinal differences between Mr. Balzer and Mr. Enss. Having said that, I hasten to say that there is a limit to what one can accomplish in forty-five minutes.

My task, as I see it, is to highlight some aspects of the original discussion, which need more clarification and understanding to produce a meaningful dialogue between the college and the churches of the conference.

1. We need to begin with the realization that our own cultural, social, political, educational, and spiritual background have had a profound influence in our attitudes toward life and Scripture. We ought, therefore, to examine our own experience critically to test the forces that have molded our life and attitude toward the Bible.

2. There seems to be in most people an inner revulsion to being labeled theologically. At the same time, we all find it so easy to honour others with our theological labels of their position. As the college and the churches found themselves forced into the waters of theological debate after the original splash of "the Daniel explosion," we see the labeling in the way the two sides are identified (some expressed, some implied): historical or contemporary, traditional or progressive, conservative or liberal, fundamentalist or modernist, orthodox or unorthodox, intellectual or non-intellectual, submissive or insurgent, and youth or elder. Is it possible to engage in theological dialogue without the use of labels?

3. An honest confession is necessary. We may insist that no theological label adequately describes our position, but the truth is that we are all more comfortable under one side or the other of these two basic theological divisions.

4. We need to admit our own biases in our approach to Scripture. I would really like to know what John W. Kliewer meant when he refused to attend Moody Bible Institute, because "the Moody School method fettered independent thinking."

5. Let us honestly admit that one of the places of deep division with our household of faith is our attitude toward the inspiration of the Scriptures. Is the Bible a revelation from God, and therefore speaks with the full authority of God, and when rightly understood is the only foundation for faith and life, or is the Bible a defective document, because man is at best a struggler seeking after truth?

6. I sometimes wonder what the psychological forces operating within us are which cause one person to insist that we must accept the fact that the Bible contains errors, and another person to insist that we must believe the Bible is inerrant.

7. Why is it that Scripture, which claims to come from God, so often has to prove itself correct before its message can be accepted?

8. In our discussion of our differences we come across as loyal devotees to a theological position rather than obedient disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We totally miss the guidance of our Lord in Matthew 5:16, which I paraphrase, "Let your light so shine before men in your theological discussions that men may see your devotion and loyalty to Jesus Christ, and thus glorify your Father who is in heaven." What we do is permit the arguments for our theological position to so dominate our being that men see only our theological bias.

9. Can it be that at the heart of "the Daniel explosion" and the struggle which has continued since then is our theology and our anthropology? What do we really believe about God? What do we really believe about man?

Is God the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, creator, controller, sustainer, righteous, holy, just, living, loving sovereign judge of all as historical Christianity claims? If He is, what impact should that have on our study of Scripture and theological dialogue?

What is the situation with mankind? Are all human beings lost sinners in desperate need of a divine Savior, who alone can deliver them from the slavery and consequences of sin, or is man, as philosopher Plato would have us believe, just lost in ignorance and in need of education?

10. Finally, if profitable dialogue is to take place between the college and the churches, we will all have to give ourselves to an honest openness in the sharing of our convictions, and a loving acceptance of those with whom we may disagree. To get that quality of dialogue started, I close by confessing to you that what you have just heard comes from a theologically conservative bias.

Biblical Authority: The Contemporary Theological Debate

by Duane K. Friesen

I. The Issue.

In Rodney Sawatsky's book, *Authority and Identity*, the first volume in the C. H. Wedel Series and the Menno Simons Lectures of 1985, Sawatsky says:

> The . . . basic motive for and motif of these lectures is the crisis of authority facing all of Christianity. This crisis in its broadest sense is a product of modernity. Modernity challenges all traditional authorities upon which the church seeks to establish its truth claims. In turn, modernity challenges the identity of all churches for the identity of any community is premised upon a common authority accepted by all in that community. Questions of identity, accordingly, can only be answered when questions of authority are answered.[1]

I believe that the Christian faith is apprehended in the form of a narrative or story, for the very way we come to know God is how God has interacted with a people over time. Stanley Hauerwas says:

> The fact that we come to know God through the recounting of the story of Israel and the life of Jesus is decisive for our truthful understanding of the kind of God we worship as well as the world in which we exist.[2]

For Hauerwas, then, scripture is central to a Christian identity.

> The authority of scripture derives its intelligibility from the existence of a community that knows its life depends on faithful remembering of God's care of his creation through the calling of Israel and the life of Jesus.[3]

Having said how important the authority of scripture is to Christian identity, however, does not answer the question how that authority should be conceived. That is the issue we turn to in the remainder of this lecture.

The traditional Protestant answer to the question of authority has been to claim the Bible as the primary norm in matters of faith and practice. The principle of *sola scriptura* was accepted by all the major actors in the Protestant Reformation, the Anabaptists in the Radical Reformation and the magisterial reformers, Luther and Calvin. Ted VanderEnde, Mennonite pastor and contemporary spokesperson for a conservative view of scripture in the General Conference Mennonite Church, in a presentation to the Dialogue on Faith in 1984, calls for a return to that Protestant principle, what he labels the "Apostolic/Evangelical Mennonite view, (which) perceives the scripture as absolute and constant." VanderEnde argues that the only way we can deal authentically and truthfully with the issues that confront us (abortion, homosexuality, the ordination of women, etc.), is if we seek to live out faithfully "the propositional principles of God's Word."

VanderEnde contrasts his view with a second position in the Mennonite church, a position he labels the "Process/Existential Mennonite view of scripture."[4] He quotes J. Denny Weaver of Bluffton College as representative of this viewpoint.

> The Bible is a composite book, reflecting continuing and perpetual attempts to interpret current events and to restructure world views in light of the ongoing experiences of Yahweh's people . . . . The locus of authority resides more with the people of God as a whole than in a particular institution or law code or absolutized biblical proposition . . . . [The] location of authority in the people of God in a dynamic, living way along with the sense of being part of the ongoing biblical tradition gives Mennonites a better theoretical foundation for incorporating historical methodology and its results than does Evangelical Protestantism, with its emphasis on a correctly preached word and commitments to narrowly defined doctrines.[5]

For Weaver the scriptures are authoritative, but in the context of the interpreting community, a community seeking to understand and apply the scriptures to their own lives. The truth does not inhere as such in the text of scripture, but is determined by the community in the reading of the Biblical story in continually changing contexts. Weaver would also claim to be in continuity in his approach to scripture with the Anabaptist tradition of the Reformation.

While both VanderEnde and Weaver elaborate emphases present in the Protestant Reformation, Sawatsky points out that the issue in the Protestant Reformation is still more complicated. While Sawatsky acknowledges that the Anabaptists in theory placed authority in *sola scriptura*, and that "interpretation and incarnation of this Word rested with the entire community of believers . . . through their mutual discernment, exhortation and disciplined life, practically, however, authority was exercised by charismatic persons."[6] He argues that it was the leaders of congregations, leaders such as Grebel, Mantz, Hubmaier, Hut, Marpeck, Denck and Menno that were in fact decisive for the different directions taken by the Anabaptist movement. I would argue that this was the case in the entire Protestant Reformation, where the appeal to *sola scriptura* did not prevent a plurality of views which grew out of fundamentally different interpretations of scripture by the different leaders of the Reformation. In other words, the appeal to scriptural authority did not solve the problem of identity even in the Reformation.

Sawatsky then goes on to argue that another shift in authority occurred in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition after the first century of charismatic leadership. As the early Anabaptist leaders passed from the scene, authority changed from charismatic leadership to traditional

authorities. A defined leadership structure, the elders in a community or pastors chosen by lot, gave shape to the ethos and belief system of the community. Such a leadership structure worked well within relatively stable, homogeneous rural communities, but in a modern, pluralistic, changing, technological society such patterns of authority have broken down. The ethos and ethic of contemporary Mennonites are shaped as much or perhaps more by the powerful forces of the culture around them than by a believing community discerning the Word together. Thus the crisis of authority and identity described by Sawatsky.

While VanderEnde would have us return to a conservative doctrine about the Bible as a way to reestablish authority (a position which even in the 16th century did not prevent a pluralism of views), and Weaver would have us revitalize the discerning community, at the complete opposite end of the spectrum is Gordon Kaufman, a Mennonite theologian, who argues that we should abandon our appeal to Biblical authority altogether as a basis for making truth claims. It is important to note that he says this as one who continues to define himself as a Mennonite, Christian theologian, not as one who has rejected the tradition. Kaufman argues that theological discourse involves an ongoing imaginative construction. The Bible itself is the product of such human imagination. Thus, while the Bible and the communities that have interpreted the Bible over time are useful in providing us with insights for our own task (Kaufman continues to affirm his commitment to an Anabaptist-Mennonite interpretation of the Christian faith), we should not look to the Bible as if it contained an eternal truth content that we can apply to our situation. In an interesting essay entitled, "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," in a collection of essays entitled, *Why I am a Mennonite*, Kaufman says:

> The principle criterion for testing theological assertions (is) not their putative claims to truth, but rather their pragmatic fruitfulness for ordering human life in a humane way—a central Mennonite theme which (has) been of importance to me for many years . . . . I developed my understanding of all truth-claims and moral claims as imaginative constructs with the aid of which we humans find orientation in life and in the world.[7]

He goes on to discuss this theme in his most recent book, *Theology for a Nuclear Age:*

> This book . . . makes clear . . . the extent to which I have found it necessary to depart from the more traditional Christian—and thus traditional Mennonite—ways of speaking about God, the world, and Christ. For the highly personalistic and political metaphors and images, which have been so central in most Christian thinking and faith, seem now to be seriously misleading in their import. Indeed in my view they contribute directly to our inability to come fully to terms with the religious dimensions of the problems that today confront us. Instead of the old hierarchical and authoritarian patterns of order and of religious thinking, reinforced by an uncritical reliance on the Bible, we need to move to quite different ways of thinking about God and humanity and the world.[8]

So far all my quotations are from Mennonite theologians, but as one can see, these statements show us that the Mennonite world is simply a microcosm of the larger theological world. We do have a fundamental crisis of authority. We are not at all clear on what basis theology should be done, particularly on the role of the authority of the Bible in our thinking.

II. Analysis of the Dimensions of the Issue.

It would be presumptious of me to try to "solve" this problem in this short lecture. At the most, what I will attempt to do is to sort out or analyze the problem so as to help clarify what issues are at stake. Perhaps then we will be better prepared to address the issue with more clarity in the future.

My method in approaching the problem of authority will be to seek to clarify various possible meanings of the word, authority, and in the process reflect critically from a theological perspective on those different understandings of authority. We can distinguish at least three different meanings of the term "authority" which are relevant to our thinking about the authority of the Bible: authority as the capacity to exercise power or control, authority as social authorization, and authority as respect or esteem.

A. *Authority as the Capacity to Exercise Power or Control*

When we use the term "authority" to mean the capacity of an individual or an institution to exercise power or control over someone, even against their will, the word "authority" is equivalent to "authoritarian." In ordinary discourse we sometimes use the term in this way. We can say that a boss has authority to order employees what to do, or determine whether they are hired or fired. A military officer commands his soldiers what to do, irrespective of their personal wishes or judgments. A parent has authority over her children. A church, by virtue of the authority of its creed, can judge a view held by an individual or group to be heretical, and may discipline a member by expelling it from the group. In this view authority is that which an individual is called to submit to, or be obedient to, irrespective of one's own personal views or choices. According to this understanding of authority, reason and authority are opposites. They stand in contradiction to one another. In so far, then, as autonomous human reason stands as the central theme of modernity, Biblical authority is a symbol of tradition and contrary to everything modern. I think it is this view of authority that Gordon Kaufman reacts against (He in fact uses the word "authoritarian" to refer to traditional Mennonite views and attitudes to the Bible.). Over against such a heteronomous view of authority, Kant thus declared the theme of the Enlightenment as autonomy.

> Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another . . . . *Sapere aude!* ('Dare to know.') 'Have courage to use your own reason!'—that is the motto of the enlightenment.[9]

The fundamentalist and conservative evangelical tradition have given priority to this view of authority. Stated succinctly, this view is that the Bible is true simply because it is the Bible. In this view one is called to submit one's reason and one's will to the Bible, because by definition the Bible contains the absolute truth. It is the Word of God, with a capital "W". There are, of course, a number of subtle variations within this position, ranging from the most extreme fundamentalist view that every single word of scripture is the full and direct revealed Word of God, to the view that in all basic essentials (though not necessarily in every detail) the Bible is God's Word. However, whatever the variation, in this view the Bible does not simply "contain" God's Word, or witness to it, but it *is* the Word of God. Thus for VanderEnde the Bible consists of the propositional principles of eternal truth. The scripture is "fully in-

spired in every detail, including seemingly what does not fit in man's eye."[10] We are called, therefore, to submit our reason to the viewpoint of scripture. In the words of David Kelsey, in this view "authority is an intrinsic property of the canonical writings."[11] As in the case of a child's view of their parents who have authority over them simply by virtue of the fact that they are the child's parents, so the Bible has authority over us by virtue of the fact it is the Bible.

Much could be said by way of criticism of this view of authority. We have time only to mention several problems:

1. The view of scripture as consisting of unified propositional truth leads to the distortion of the interpretation of scripture as the diversity within scripture must be repressed so that all scripture can be made to be consistent with itself.

2. "The primary model of the authority of scripture in this view is one of domination-subordination, i.e., of one's intellect to the biblical word," as Gayle Gerber Koontz points out. "If scripture teaches something, it is to be believed. Even the most paradoxical belief counts as highly probable, provided that it finds support in the Bible. As Jeffrey Stout puts it, 'Mystery compels the intellect to bow down in humility.' "[12]

3. The claim that the Bible has authority by virtue of its inherent qualities is subjective and arbitrary. Muslims, for example, make the same claims for the Koran, Mormons for the Book of Mormon. I think it is significant to note that the word "Islam" itself means to submit, a religion which makes the strongest theological claims for its holy book, the Koran, so strong that it believes that the Koran cannot really be translated from Arabic into other languages if it is to remain Allah's Word. But how does anyone claim that a particular collection of writings is the Word of God, in a direct literal sense, i.e., by virtue of the inherent qualities of the text itself? What is it that makes the Bible rather than the Koran or the Book of Mormon the Word of God? Some quote scripture itself (i.e., II Tim. 3:16) as if that could prove the Bible is the Word of God. But such reasoning is circular. Such a text only proves that the Bible is the Word of God, if one already holds that II Tim. 3:16 is the Word of God. Thus while the authoritarian view of scripture seeks to solve the problem of authority by the claims it makes for the Bible, it in fact undermines the Bible's authority because the foundational claim itself is subjective and thus appears arbitrary.

4. The authoritarian position also misunderstands the nature of religious symbols. Comparative religious studies can help us to understand better the conflict between various views of the Bible. The language of religion serves as a vehicle for linking the ordinary, profane or finite world with that which is regarded as sacred or ultimate. Religious symbols are drawn from ordinary human discourse, and at the same time point beyond themselves to that which is beyond the finite. Paul Tillich points out that symbols participate in that to which they point. In that sense the Bible participates in the holy or ultimate, because through the Bible the nature of God is disclosed. But symbols are not identical to the holy. It is precisely the character of religious symbols that they point beyond themselves. The Bible then points to God and can be said to participate in God, but it cannot be identified directly with God. In other words, we have a dialectical tension here that needs to be preserved. The extreme authoritarian view of the Bible practically identifies the Bible with God. God is literally "present" in the words of scripture. While such an extreme position is partly true, if we recognize the presence of the ultimate within the symbol, it also has an idolatrous view of the Bible because it identifies the symbol with the reality to which it points. On the other hand, to view the Bible as only human words, as a great book, or as strictly a "representation" of God is not adequate either, for that view fails to take seriously the way in which symbols participate in the reality to which they point. (Incidentally, such an analysis of symbols would also help us to understand conflicts over such rituals as baptism and the Lord's Supper.)

5. Finally, the authoritarian position frequently confuses the question of authority with the issue of interpretation. Often persons who disagree sharply about what scripture is saying or how it should be applied to our lives (particularly when considering such controversial issues as abortion, male-female roles, homosexuality, or war and peace) accuse each other of rejecting the authority of scripture, when in fact they do not agree about how to interpret scripture. For example, David Bloesch accuses liberals in mainline denominations of rejecting Biblical authority when some of these theologians approve the ordination of homosexuals. He argues that scripture clearly condemns homosexuality as moral perversion.[13] But what scripture says about homosexuality is precisely what is in question. Scholars do not in fact agree whether scripture condemns all forms of homosexuality. One of the reasons for this disagreement is a difference in how one is to weigh contextual considerations, both in interpreting the texts on homosexuality in their own cultural setting, and in the application of the texts to our setting. Bloesch's position begs the question. He assumes there is *a* right way to *interpret* the scriptures on homosexuality, and therefore, persons who do not hold *that* view of scripture must thereby be rejecting the authority of scripture. Such a conclusion does not, of course, follow.

Despite serious problems with this authoritarian view, nevertheless we can learn from it. In an important sense, the person who is an interpreter of scripture, like one who reads any text truthfully, is required to enter into the world of the text so as to let the text speak for itself without distortion by the reader. Thus Willard Swartley states as one of the central principles of interpretation the following:

> As human beings we are subject to particular influences from our culture and history. We tend to use the Bible to reinforce what we believe. While none of us can fully overcome this problem, it is possible to correct wrong notions by serious and sustained study of the biblical text and by following a method which helps us hear the text on its own terms.[14]

However, we can best be freed to read the text authentically if we do not bring to it a presupposition about the text that causes us to read it in a particular way. Paradoxically, the authoritarian view of scripture as propositional truth actually undermines an authentic reading of scripture, since the interpreter of scripture is in advance required to emerge from the reading of scripture with a unified propositional truth.

But our criticism of the authoritarian position cuts both ways, as it also applies to "modernist" interpretations of scripture. For example, Rudolf Bultmann's project of demythologizing absolutizes the modern scientific view, and in his reinterpretation of scripture for modern humans makes scripture captive to the existentialist categories of Martin Heidegger. In both fundamentalist and modernist interpretations the exegete of scripture fails to submit their understanding first to the world of the

text, because they have in advance decided what they must find there.

B. *Authority as Social Authorization*

The term "authority" can connote *social authorization,* the authority someone or some document has by virtue of the role granted to it by a group of people. Constitutions, college manuals of operation, rule books in sports, government officials, church boards, college presidents, govern the interaction between people authoritatively by virtue of what they have been authorized to do by a certain specified group of people for a certain specified function. In more formal organizations authority is structured through a self-conscious rational decision-making process defined explicitly in a constitution and code of law. In less high bureaucratized institutions authorization is more informal, having been established by custom or tradition. In my twenty years of living in North Newton, I have seen the three institutions I have been most closely associated with, Bethel College, Bethel College Mennonite Church, and the City of North Newton, move gradually from more informal systems of authority to much more rationalized and codified structures. Informal systems of authority are possible in more homogenous, and less complex institutions, and where there is significant continuity in the membership of these institutions over time. The more heterogeneous, mobile the membership, and complex the organization, the more one moves in a more formal direction.

We can also think of the Bible's authority for the church in this second sense of the meaning of the term "authority," as social authorization. As the book of the church, it plays a regulative function in the community, somewhat like the authority of a constitution, although unlike a constitution, because of its diversity in content and because of the variety of literature in the Bible, it is subject to varied interpretations. Also it tends to serve much more as an informal authority, than as a document to which one can go for precise guidance on doctrine or practice. As a regulative authority, however, the scriptures have served and continue to serve as a kind of touchstone in terms of which the church can test its theology and practice. The establishment of the canon—a word which means "rule," has served as a norm or standard in terms of which the church constantly tests its own theology and practice. Throughout the history of the church, the church has more or less been in harmony with or strayed from that touchstone. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the fundamentalist reaction against modernism, and the neo-orthodox reaction to liberalism at the beginning of this century, as well as the more recent writings of social ethicists like John H. Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, are examples of four moments in the history of the church where in very different ways the church has or is being called to take seriously the authority of the Biblical story, as given in and through the Biblical text.

The claim to be a Christian means to take as authoritative in one's life a master story or paradigm that provides the basic framework, orientation, or way of viewing the world. The ongoing existence of the church is thus dependent upon remembering that story and incorporating the meaning of that story into its present life. To remember that story in such a way that it continues to be a living reality is what it means to take the Bible as canon, a norm or standard for the church. To forget the story is thus tantamount to abandoning the faith.

Why is this remembering so crucial? It is through the story of God's people from Abraham through Moses, the prophets, Jesus Christ and the church that we come to know God as a gracious being, one who restores humanity to wholeness through the gift of love. Harry Huebner describes the significance of this notion:

> To be defined by one's relationship to a giver-God makes us gifted people. Gifted people are people who reflect the character of the giver. They are the kind of people who themselves hold out the gift of life to others. The nature of such people is determined first of all not by what they do or by how they define themselves, but rather by what God has done for them; how the relationship to giver-God molds them.
>
> The biggest threat to gifted people is forgetfulness. In their forgetting they act unjustly. When people forget the primary relationship to the giver-God they will cease seeing themselves as gifted people and will become concerned about their security.
>
> The tendency to forget is directly related to the people's sense of their own autonomy. The more self-sufficient people become, the more they rely upon something other than an open relationship with the giver of life, and hence, the easier it is to forget. Forgetting and injustice go hand in hand in the Biblical narrative.[15]

The Christian ethic of peacemaking, the radical call to love even our enemies, is thus deeply rooted in remembering who God is, one who makes it rain on the just and the unjust, who is indiscriminate in love, and therefore calls on us to be like that God, indiscriminate in our love. Such a radical ethic is easily forgotten, or not easily sustained in contexts where love does not appear to bring success but instead leads to suffering. For that reason it is crucial that we, nevertheless, take seriously the claims of the Biblical story for our lives. Just as we need the United States Constitution most when human rights are threatened, so we need to take as authoritative the Biblical story just when it seems most inconvenient and impractical.

It is peculiar that evangelical Christians who often insist most upon an authoritarian view of scripture (our first sense of the term) often fail actually to take scripture seriously in the second sense, as a story to be remembered in giving shape to one's life. Much of American evangelicalism has become so acculturated to an American system of capitalism and nationalism, that it has literally forgotten what the Biblical story might have to say about politics or economics. A non-Biblical secular humanism is so dominant that it is difficult to see how those who are believers of the Biblical story in fact hold views any different than the prevailing culture. The 48-page National Association of Evangelicals Guidelines, "Peace, Freedom and Security," has a Biblical section of just three pages, most of it given to a refutation of pacifism, whereas it is full of terms like "values," "responsibility," "complexity," "democracy," and "human rights,"—"terms that seem to be more appropriate for the vocabulary of 'secular humanism' than of Biblical theology."[16]

To be a Christian, then, means in a minimal sense, to agree to a conversation with each other—within congregations, within a denomination, across denominational lines, and also across the span of time—to hear and discern together the Biblical story. It does not mean to agree to a particular interpretation of the text, nor to a particular theory about the Bible, but it does mean that we agree to take seriously the story that has been passed through that document. We can learn a great deal from

the Jewish tradition. The Talmud represents the conversation and argument Jews have had with each other for nearly 1000 years about the meaning of the Torah and how it applies to their lives. The Talmud is filled with controversy and argument. The Jews did not survive because they agreed with each other. But they survived because they took seriously the task of discernment wherever they went. What is most disturbing to me is not that Christians disagree about the interpretation of the Bible. It is that large numbers of contemporary Christians and Mennonites have become so secularized that they no longer care even to "remember." Forgetfulness is the greatest threat to the church.

In summary we can say that the second understanding of the word authority, authority as social authorization, can be helpful. In this sense to be a Christian means to take the Bible seriously as a point of departure or orientation for our conversation together as Christians. However, this view of authority does not go deep enough, for we still must ask the question: why take that book seriously? And so we turn to a third understanding of authority.

C. *Authority as Respect or Esteem*

In ordinary discourse the term "authority" can connote the respect or esteem one holds for a person, book, or point of view. We refer to persons or books as having authority by virtue of their knowledge or expertise. We refer to someone or a book as an authority on a subject. In this respect, authority is based on an earned respect, a respect acknowledged by a community. Authority in this sense is of two types, somewhat similar to the distinction we made earlier between more formal and informal forms of social authorization. Esteem or respect can be based on a more explicit, self-conscious consent, a consent which stems from the careful empirical or rational examination of something. Or the esteem may grow out of a more informal association we have with someone, as for example the esteem with which we hold someone by virtue of the positive role they have played in our lives. We can think of the authority of parents, friends, a church tradition. We may not have self-consciously or rationally assessed why such persons or entities have authority in our lives, but that does not mean we could not describe the reasons, nor does it mean that the authority they have in our lives is any less valid. With respect to the Bible, persons ascribe authority to the Bible because it makes their lives intelligible in a deeply felt sense, though such persons would not be able to give a rational account of those reasons. Giving a rational account is the special gift and role of the theologian in the church.

According to this view of authority, the Bible is authoritative by virtue of the insight it conveys, because of the way the Bible functions authoritatively in our lives as a trustworthy guide in matters of faith and life. In this sense the Bible is authoritative by virtue of its function. The Bible enables us or empowers us to "make sense" out of life. Gayle Gerber Koontz describes well this view of authority:

> The Bible is authoritative because it freely evokes consent, offers insight which can be seen to be "of God." A functional view of authority asks less for "a submission of will than for an opening of the imagination, the mind and heart." It recognizes that on an important level the Bible cannot be believed unless it rings true to our deepest capacity for truth and goodness.[17]

She goes on to say that "this functional view of authority better fits with my theological understanding of the persuasive rather than coercive character and love of God as revealed through Jesus Christ."[18] What Koontz means by this is that the God of Jesus Christ seeks to persuade persons toward the way which leads to life, even to the point of giving his life on the cross. The cross as the ultimate declaration of the character of God points to a God who abandons coercive force as the way in which to transform a sinful world.

I like H. R. Niebuhr's phrase, "reasons of the heart," by which he means the way in which the appropriation of revelation in our lives is not something contrary to reason, but the way in which the story of God's action in history can make our lives intelligible.

> Revelation means for us that part of our inner history which illuminates the rest of it and which is itself intelligible . . . .
>
> The special occasion to which we appeal in the Christian church is called Jesus Christ, in whom we see the righteousness of God, his power and wisdom. But from that special occasion we also derive the concepts which make possible the elucidation of all the events in our history. Revelation means this intelligible event which makes all other events intelligible. Such a revelation, rather than being contrary to reason in our life, is the discovery of rational pattern in it. Revelation means the point at which we can begin to think and act as members of an intelligible and intelligent world of persons.[19]

The point I want to make here is that the Bible takes on authority insofar as the Biblical view of life can help us make sense of our lives. Whereas in the authoritarian view, reason tends to be seen as the enemy of authority or at least in severe tension with authority, in this view reason is the handmaiden of authority. It is because the Biblical view of life can bear scrutiny and serve as a paradigm through which we can make sense of the world and our lives that it takes on authority for us. Our lives are involved in a constant dialectic of living in the memory of the story that has been handed down to us and testing that against our knowledge and experience of the world in which we live.

Therefore, the Christian college is above all an appropriate place for the study of the Bible. It is here in the context of the community of Christian scholars that the Bible can be studied and scrutinized in the context of everything else we are learning about the world—the discoveries of the natural and social sciences, the methods of literary analysis, the critical skills of the historian. The Bible will become authoritative in the lives of students not by guarding it or protecting it from reason, but because it can bear the test of reason, a testing through which the Biblical story can help us make intelligible sense of life.

Permit me to share a personal story from my days as a college student at Bethel College. The Bible lecturer in my junior year was Marcus Barth, son of the great theologian, Karl Barth. I found his lectures most intriguing and stimulating. I can still remember his topic. In the mornings he exegeted the texts on Jesus' baptism in the Gospels. In the evenings he explored the theme of Biblical authority. His evening lectures created quite a furor in some of the Mennonite congregations in the area. I remember discussions in the lounge in Goering Hall about the authority of the Bible. One person in particular, who held to the authoritarian view of the Bible I described earlier, attacked Barth because he did not have a proper doctrine of the authority of the Bible. He argued that Barth's view would undermine the authority of the Bible, and thus corrupt the youth of Bethel College. Barth had the opposite impact on me. He made me want to

study the Bible. I was so excited about the way in which Barth approached the Bible, the way in which he used the power of intellect to understand the Bible, that for the first time in my life I became excited about Biblical studies. Barth's lectures were crucial in my decision to attend Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries where Biblical study was central, and led me to change direction from my primary interest in philosophical theology.

The point of my story is that the Bible is authoritative for us because it can bear scrutiny by the intellect, because it can empower us to make intelligible sense of the world in which we live. The meaning of a community of reason is that we give consent to the truth, not because of the coercive power of authority, but because the truth itself is compelling. But this is also the basis of the community of faith—that we have responded to a God who has not compelled us out of fear but has called us through grace and love to respond freely. Thus faith and reason are really one. We need not fear the life of the mind. We can affirm with the medieval theologian, St. Anselm, *credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order that I may know, and *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith in search of intelligence.

The Christian liberal arts college then is a friend and ally of the church, for the only really solid basis for the authority of the Bible is the esteem held by a community who has employed God's gift of reason in the study of the Bible. By exercising reason in the study of the Bible we can become captivated by the joy of discovery that is the root of all knowledge, and the Bible will become authoritative in our lives because it can evoke our consent. And then we will find that such a view of truth is also consistent with the heart of the Christian faith—the God we have come to know in Jesus Christ, the one who calls us to follow freely because we have been persuaded by love. The joining together of the persuasive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ with human consent to that love growing out of the free inquiry of reason is the genius of the Anabaptist heritage, and also "the reason for being" of a Christian liberal arts college in that heritage.

ENDNOTES

[1]Rodney J. Sawatsky, *Authority and Identity: The Dynamics of the General Conference Mennonite Church* (North Newton, Ks.: Bethel College, 1987), 1.

[2]Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 25.

[3]Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 54.

[4]Ted VanderEnde, Paper presented at the Dialogue on Faith, Oct. 26-28, 1984, Camp Wonderland, Camp Lake, Wisconsin. Sponsored by the General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

[5]J. Denny Weaver, "Perspectives on Theology," in *Explorations of Systematic Theology from Mennonite Perspectives*, Institute of Mennonite Studies Occasional papers no. 7 (Elkhart, Ind.: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 18, 19, 20.

[6]Sawatsky, 8.

[7]Gordon D. Kaufman, "Apologia Pro Vita Sua," in *Why I am A Mennonite*, ed. by Harry Loewen (Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1988), 135.

[8]Ibid., 137.

[9]Quoted by James C. Livingston, in *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 1.

[10]VanderEnde, 6.

[11]David Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 29, quoted in Gayle Gerber Koontz, "The Trajectory of Scripture and Feminist Conviction," *Conrad Grebel Review* 5 (Fall 1987), 214.

[12]Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight From Authority* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 9, quoted in Koontz, 215.

[13]Donald Bloesch, "Crisis in Biblical Authority," *Theology Today*, 35 (April 1978), 455.

[14]Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1983), 203.

[15]Harry Huebner, "Contemporary Christian Ethics and the Biblical Structure of Justice," The Herman Enns Memorial Lecture delivered at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, April 22, 1987.

[16]John Richard Burkholder, *Mennonites in Ecumenical Dialogue on Peace and Justice*, MCC Occasional Paper, No. 7 (Akron, Pa.: MCC, 1988), 15-16.

[17]Koontz, 215.

[18]Ibid.

[19]H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 68-69.

Response to "Biblical Authority: The Contemporary Theological Debate" by Donald Longbottom

The title of this lecture series is "The Bible in College and Congregation." My perspective this evening is that of the people in the pew and perhaps some of those behind the pulpit. I come to you as a persuaded Mennonite, as one who has come from another tradition because he believes in many of the social and ethical issues which are a part of your tradition. It is now mine. I agree with much of what Duane has said, but, Duane, it is much more fun to disagree. So I will disagree at a few points—hopefully, productively. Let me add, by the way, that I speak out of respect; I have read many of the things that Duane has written and I appreciate them very much. I want to begin with an observation, then ask a question, and conclude with a brief comparison.

My observation is this: Church people believe in the authentic authority of scripture and furthermore, they believe this evokes and ought to evoke, rightfully, a submission of the will. Let me share with you something written by Menno Simons in 1539:

> We certainly hope that no one of rational mind will be so foolish a man as to deny that the whole scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, were written for our instruction, admonition and correction; and that they are the true scepter and the rule by which the Lord's kingdom, house, church and congregation must be ruled and governed. Everything contrary to scripture, therefore, whether it be in doctrines, beliefs, sacraments, worship or life should be measured by this infallible rule and demolished by this just and divine scepter and destroyed without any respect of persons (from "Foundation" cited in *Anabaptism in Outline*, ed. Walter Klaassen, Herald Press: 1981, p. 151).

I submit to you that though we may disagree in particulars, by and large the people in our churches today still believe in the authority of scripture, and that, when properly understood, there is and should be an evocation of the submission of our will to that.

The question, then, is this: Why are reason and authority in this lecture held to be opposites, and in this case, the first use of authority deemed coercive or authoritarian? I think I know what Professor Friesen is talking about. I remember those who treat the Bible as very flat and very literal, those who say, "if the Bible says it, I believe it, that settles it." But I believe there are many who hold a conservative view of scripture and the authority of scripture who would not hold with the above proposition. I think I speak for many in the Mennonite church when I say that the Bible is probably a unique document and that it records the life of Jesus Christ and the implications of that life as they work themselves out in the early church. I think the people in our churches, by and large, would hold that the Bible is indeed the (capital "W") Word of God. And that the Bible possesses a prescriptive authority which, when properly understood, rightfully requires of us submission. Or, as Menno said, "We are a people who live within the fenced territory of the scripture."

If one believes in the prescriptive authority of scripture, is one then *ipso facto* unreasoning? When I teach the book of Mark to congregations or students, we discuss various forms of

higher criticism, in the case of Mark especially, redaction criticism, which is the idea that Mark took the individual stories and placed them in a particular order, not chronologically, in order to make his point, to make his case. I believe that we dialogue with the text, employing solid scholarship and valid reasoning and I hope that hermeneutical conversation includes the community of faith, both past, traditional and present. But once we fully understand God's word for us, we are prepared to submit. We call it *Nachfolge,* we call it obedience. I think this lies at the essence of Anabaptism. I also think one can treat scripture as story or narrative and still arrive at a like conclusion. What then is the proper relationship between reason and scripture? Reason is a God-given tool by which to understand scripture, not to rewrite it. Reason ought properly to be "not equal with, but in service to faith."

Now to the contrast. I would like to turn to the reference that Professor Friesen made to Gordon Kaufman. Duane sees him, I think, as one end of the spectrum. Kaufman would have us abandon Biblical authority as a basis for making truth claims. Rather he would argue that theological assertions are to be based, not in scripture, but in "pragmatic fruitfulness." In another part of his paper, Friesen states the view that

> . . . the Bible is authoritative by virtue of the insight it conveys, because of the way the Bible functions authoritatively in our lives as a trustworthy guide in matters of faith and life. In this sense, the Bible is authoritative by virtue of its function. The Bible enables us or empowers us to "make sense" out of life.

I wonder what the logical distinction is between Friesen's statement that the Bible is authoritative because it helps us to make sense out of life and Kaufman's claim that the authorization for theological constructs comes from "pragmatic fruitfulness"?

Then Professor Friesen cites Gayle Gerber Koontz:

> The Bible is authoritative because it freely evokes consent, offers insight which can be seen to be "of God." A functional view of authority asks less for "a submission of will than for an opening of the imagination, the mind, the heart." It recognizes that on an important level the Bible "cannot be believed unless it rings true to our deepest capacity for truth and goodness."

The Bible, then, at least as I read it, is true only to the extent that it matches our existing individual or communitarian convictions. I see no logical distinction between the position of Koontz and the position of Kaufman. Both hold our human capacities in judgment of scripture. Koontz finds "pragmatic fruitfulness" in scripture, while Kaufman does not.

(THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED VERSION OF THE QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE LECTURE AND RESPONSE)

Friesen:

Don, you missed the whole middle part of the paper and that is crucial. It seems to me that you have the Biblical story and the test of reason. You frame it in terms of the first and third position entirely. What I am saying is that there is a place for remembering the Biblical story and then the testing of reason and the constant movement back and forth, so this is an ongoing dialectic back and forth: You do take seriously the Biblical story; you are in conversation with other people in the church; you test that over against the world, over against other knowledge that you have from the sciences and so forth. That gives shape then to the way you read the story. You read the story then again and it goes back and forth. I really have problems with the concept of submission in that sense. I don't think it is an appropriate metaphor. I did say that it is crucial to take seriously that story and I used an example in the area of love and peacemaking, that we do not simply allow ourselves to "cook up" our own agenda for that. That acts as an authority on us, but it is also something that we make sense of in life.

Audience:

What kind of discipline are people under?

Friesen:

I would say that it is a discipline for an ongoing serious conversation about the meaning of that text for our lives. And I would be unwilling to read out of the community anyone who is willing to continue to carry on the conversation seriously. There comes a point when some people say, "No, I quit, I leave. I am unwilling to submit myself to the ongoing interpretation and debate." At that point, the person cuts themself off from the conversation. I am not willing to end the conversation as long as that is done seriously and that story is taken seriously.

The basis for your commitment is not simply because externally an authority says to submit but because, I think, commitment has to be based upon inward persuasion—conversion. Isn't that what conversion is? That I have been moved in such a way as to see my life reshaped in this way, therefore, I commit myself to it.

Audience:

What do you believe about inspiration and inerrancy?

Friesen:

I would believe the writers of the scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But the notion of inerrancy, the concept of an inerrant word of God, seems to me to fall into the first category where I have some real problems. The purpose of that language, of inerrancy, is meant to exalt the Bible to a position of Word of God, with a capital "W". I think it goes too far and I would not hold to that.

Longbottom:

I see basically a dynamic inspiration of the writers of the Bible. I think the Bible is authoritative for the life and practice of the people in the church. I don't hold with the fundamentalists' view of inerrancy. If you look at the languages you will see what a tremendous dynamism there is even simply in translating from one language to another. In that fundamentalist sense of a flat Bible inerrancy, I don't hold with that. But I do hold that once you have dug yourself down to your best understanding of the scripture—and I believe this is the position of most of the people in our churches—that then it is appropriate to submit. Duane and I disagree affectionately in that area.

Audience:

What is the highest task or duty that we have in these matters? Do you make a distinction between trying to understand Scripture and trying to understand God?

Friesen:

If you remember the section on symbols, I was trying to say that symbols point beyond themselves. Insofar as the Bible is a symbol, it points to that reality beyond itself. Or to use Hans Denck's analogy of the Bible as a letter: You don't fall in love with the letter but you fall in love with the person from whom

you get the letter. And so the letter refers beyond itself. Now the reason why the scriptures are so central is because the way in which we come to know God in Christianity is through a historical revelation, through historical reality, and thus the Bible becomes a crucial vehicle by which we come to know that God. So the Scriptures are extremely important because of the incarnational nature of the Christian faith. But indeed, they point beyond themselves to the God that the scriptures are trying to talk about.

Audience:

Is there a vehicle other than Scripture?

Friesen:

Traditionally, in Christian theology, there is that which we can know of God through reason in terms of the natural environment or the universe, independent of scripture. I, myself, believe much more that the historical paradigms that we get through the community of interpretation give shape to the way we understand the world of nature. I am not sure in what sense, it is only in a very vague sense, that one could say that one knows God through nature, independent of these historical paradigms.

Longbottom:

I share Duane's viewpoint. Language is basically metaphorical and God language is the language that the creation uses to talk about the Creator, so by its nature it is limited. I agree that these earthly symbols point beyond themselves and do not objectively capture God for us. But the problem is, we live on the finite level and I think in our language we stretch as far as we can and the Bible does that for us. But as we practice the lived experience of community, as a community of faith, we take that furthest reaching out that the scripture gives us, and with general revelation or that which we understand in terms of natural revelation, and then we live on the basis of that. I just happen to believe that Duane's second view, a kind of social contract theory of how we buy into the authority of scripture, also assumes that at some point we submit ourselves to somebody's community of character; and that also is an act of submission. There are also various communities of character, the Anabaptist community is one. When I became an Anabaptist, I said, "I buy into those convictions that your community holds," such that if your convictions were different your community would be different.

Friesen:

Let me ask you a bit more about that, Don. This would be a good thing to pursue. You "bought into that"—what do you mean "you *bought* into that"? You, at some point, became persuaded that this was a sensible way to view things. I go back to my original argument of the dynamic involved: You were testing things out; you said, "O.K., I buy into that," and you submit yourself—I will use your language —to the authority of that community. But then you continue to test it. Isn't it a movement, a constant movement back and forth? I don't like the language where you seem to have a hierarchical relationship between these two. I want to keep them in constant tension with each other. When I hear you describe your own pilgrimage, it sounds more like that.

Longbottom:

I don't think we are going to solve this tonight! As I read your lecture, it seems to me that there are two different issues. One is how we come to recognize authority and I just described how I did, and we are very consistent on that. But then another question is, where resides the locus of authority? There we disagree. I see it as residing uniquely in the scripture. I can be in dialogue with the scripture in a hermeneutical circle, which we agree on. But finally when I understand, when the conversation becomes clear to me, then I submit to the authority of that scripture.

Book Reviews

Harry Loewen, ed. *Why I Am a Mennonite: Essays on Mennonite Identity.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 352. ($14.95—paperback)

Why I Am a Mennonite is a collection of thirty essays by as many persons. Most of the authors write personal narratives; confessions of converts and prodigals, apologias of unorthodox thinkers, differing perspectives on familiar persons, places, and events of the past, all make this book significant.

Considered individually, each essay is unique and interesting. I personally enjoyed all of them. Some essays are deeply moving; some are courageously and compassionately critical; others are panegyrics; most tell one person's story; many try to express the essence of what it means to be Mennonite.

Considered as a whole, the work is in some ways vulnerable to criticism. The selection of authors is far less representative than the preface and the description on the cover imply. The work hardly includes "men and women from all walks of life" as the editor proposes. More than two-thirds of the writers are in each of the following categories: male, college or university professor, Mennonite Brethren, Canadian. Ironically, there is more diversity of age, profession, and background represented by the six women than by the twenty-four men. Furthermore, while many of the men are professors of religion or Mennonite studies, no female ministers or theologians are included. Why?

Perhaps the success of the work is that it opens rather than brings closure to the question of Mennonite identity. There is no one characteristic that all thirty authors have in common, and the meaning of the term "Mennonite" changes almost as often as the "I" in the title. The characteristic most commonly shared by the writers is having been "born Mennonite." But most of the writers who were born Mennonites have become Mennonites by personal choice and deep conviction, just as most of their essays begin as narrative and become hortatory. It is curious how easily these writers from small, rural, homogeneous communities take on a prophetic role, offering solutions to political, spiritual, economic problems of national and international scope.

In the final essay, John Howard Yoder, speaking in an impersonal voice of high-priestly authority that is uncharacteristic of the rest of the work, attempts to express the " 'salvation' vision intrinsic to the 'Anabaptist' movement's sense of its mission." "We are called to proclaim *liberation from the dominion of Mars . . . of Mammon . . . of myself . . . of the mass . . . of the milieu . . . the mold . . . the moment.*" I can not help but wonder how the other twenty-nine writers in this collection would respond to this creed. Certainly some would wish to deconstruct Yoder's statement by adding "*Mennonite ethnicity and culture*" to the list of dominating forces from which the Anabaptist salvation vision liberates us. Other writers would not see this as a salvation vision at all. Does not salvation involve grace, Christ, faith, and Scripture? Does not salvation involve commitment to something that one willingly obeys as well as liberation from the dominion of unworthy goals?

Finally, the candor, courage, and sincerity of the writers, not the clarification of a label or of Mennonite orthodoxy, make the book worthwhile and interesting reading for everyone, especially for Mennonites.

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John B. Toews, ed. and trans. *Letters from Susan: A Woman's View of the Russian Mennonite Experience (1928-1941).* North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 1988. Pp. 151 ($8.00—paperback)

The book stands almost alone in its class, i.e., with respect to its contents: letters by a woman from the Soviet Union in the period when communication with the West was minimal. That alone makes it a most interesting and an important document. There is very little primary source material at all for the story of Mennonites under Stalin.

That Susan was such a regular writer, and able somehow to get so many letters through to her brother in Canada, adds to the value of the collection. One can trace the changes of this period, almost from month to month from the beginning of the first Five Year Plan to the beginning of World War II, as they impacted local communities. For the Soviets, and the Mennonites in their midst, it was perhaps the most trying period of the entire post-Revolution period.

All the major broad themes of the Mennonite experience are reflected in these letters: the urge to emigrate during the late twenties, the strictures of collectivization, the gradual destruction of organized church life, the struggle for survival, the terrors of the middle and late thirties, etc. They are all familiar themes, but here we become better acquainted with them from the inside, as it were, through an eyewitness report. One marvels at the strength of Susan and her family, those who find they cannot leave the country as Gerhard Toews, the recipient of the letters, was able to do. As a believing family they were put to a test of faith literally almost every hour of the day, and not infrequently of the night.

There is a breadth in the range of observations which will reward those who might think at first that a woman's observation would not include comments on politics, or the recruitment of young men for military service (including a number who remained conscientious objectors), on community developments. In these letters all these topics find a place.

The editor has arranged all the letters in clusters of annual groups, with a brief introduction for each section to provide the context and setting. That context is enriched by references to other letters found in the original Gerhard Toews collection, which unfortunately no longer exists except in transcript form. Perhaps someone will find it worthwhile to give the reading public access to these as well some day.

Letters from Susan is given a place in the newly founded C. H. Wedel Historical Series inaugurated at Bethel College in 1987. One hopes that this series may bring other such items. The inexpensive format and quick publishing format will make it possible to put into print what might otherwise languish for lack of resources or priority in regular publishing schedules. We wait for more.

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Charles DeBenedetti, ed. *Peace Heroes in Twentieth-Century America.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986. Pp. 278.

Peace Heroes is a collection of essays about nine persons who gave leadership to the peace movement in the twentieth century. The purpose of the book, according to the introduction by Charles DeBenedetti, is "to rescue these people from any premature erasure from our public memory. It aims to recall the lives and work of these people . . . recalling their peace leadership and showing, in the process, how they gave lasting shape and purpose to the modern American tradition of citizen peace activism" (p. 2).

The nine people chosen for their leadership in "citizen peace activism" are: Jane Addams (1860-1935), Eugene V. Debs (1855-1926), Norman Thomas (1884-1968), Albert Einstein (1879-1955), A. J. Muste (1885-1967), Norman Cousins (1915-), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968), and the Berrigans, Dan (1921-) and Philip (1923-). Some more traditional pacifists would question whether all these persons are "peace" heroes. Some, such as Einstein and Cousins, would appear to be more anti-war than "peace" heroes. Einstein supported the American war effort and was the key figure convincing President Roosevelt to develop the atomic bomb in World War II.

DeBenedetti quite explicitly acknowledges that the choice for inclusion covers both those who are religiously motivated and those who take the position from a more humanistic point of view. Five of the nine were (are) ministers or priests: Norman Thomas, A. J. Muste, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Berrigans. Along with Jane Addams, they are also the most consistently pacifist in their orientation. Those from a humanistic conviction tend to make their judgments more on the basis of pragmatic and prudential political choices, while the others tend to take their position from religious conviction. The latter follow their convictions regardless of the particular external circumstance.

Charles DeBenedetti provides an introductory essay which traces the history of the citizen peace movement in the twentieth century. It is a very helpful succinct summary. It does not, however, give much attention to the religious peace movement. For example, no acknowledgement is given to the roles of conscientious objectors in World Wars I and II. Early Quaker activities are noted and without naming it he draws attention to the New Call to Peacemaking on the part of Quakers, Mennonites, and Church of the Brethren. His comment is that they "issued their first joint call for citizen peace action . . . ."

Merle Curti wrote "An Afterword: Peace Leaders and the American Heroic Tradition." He devotes most of the article to a general review of the heroic tradition in American history. He then tries to justify placing these nine persons in that tradition.

One thinks immediately of the people who are omitted. DeBenedetti acknowledges that many others could be included. He specifically mentions Dorothy Day but says she was omitted for lack of space and overlapping considerations. Others who spring to mind include Kirby Page, Frederick Libby, Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, E. Raymond Wilson, John Haynes Holmes, Dorothy Detzer, John Nevin Sayre. A book such as *The Power of the People* (edited by Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski from original text by Marty Jezer; Culver City, CA: Peace Press, 1977) covers a much broader range of peace heroes. Even it leaves yet to be written the story of many peace heroes who have not received national attention and may not have offered much leadership to organizational and institutional expressions of the peace movement.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Charles DeBenedetti who did the editing but died of a brain tumor before it was published. It is a fitting tribute to his dedication to peace research, particularly to the political peace movement. *Peace Heroes* makes an important contribution in preserving the memory of the nine people who worked so hard against war and for peace. All of them did so at considerable cost and personal sacrifice. The book is also valuable for the introductory essay which puts the lives of the nine so well into the context of the political movements for peace in America during this century.

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Peter Hildebrand. *Odyssee Wider Willen: Das Schicksal eines Auslandsdeutschen.* [Unwilling Odyssey: The Fate of a Foreign German]. Oldenburg, West Germany: Heinz Holzberg Verlag, 1984. (DM 34.00 —hardback)

This is another addition to the already lengthy shelf of Russian Mennonite memoirs and autobiographies. Hildebrand's book, however, has some distinct virtues over others of this genre. For one, he is uninhibited by the taboos of traditional piety that confine other similar accounts. In addition, Hildebrand's vocation as a teacher is evident in the higher literary level of his writing and in his greater awareness of the context in which his experiences took place. With a sometimes sardonic sense of humor, Hildebrand recounts his adventures from Ignatievka (Ukraine) to Harbin (China) to Paraguay to Ignatievka again (on the Russian front in World War II) to retirement in Wilhemshaven (West Germany).

This story has much to say (sometimes between the lines) about Russian Mennonite identity, about Mennonites and Nazism, and about Mennonite nonresistance. One flaw of the book is its impersonality. For example, Hildebrand's close friend "Paul" is present for about a third of the book, but nowhere do we learn his last name. History-minded readers will be frustrated by the many other incompletely identified characters that appear.

John D. Thiesen