

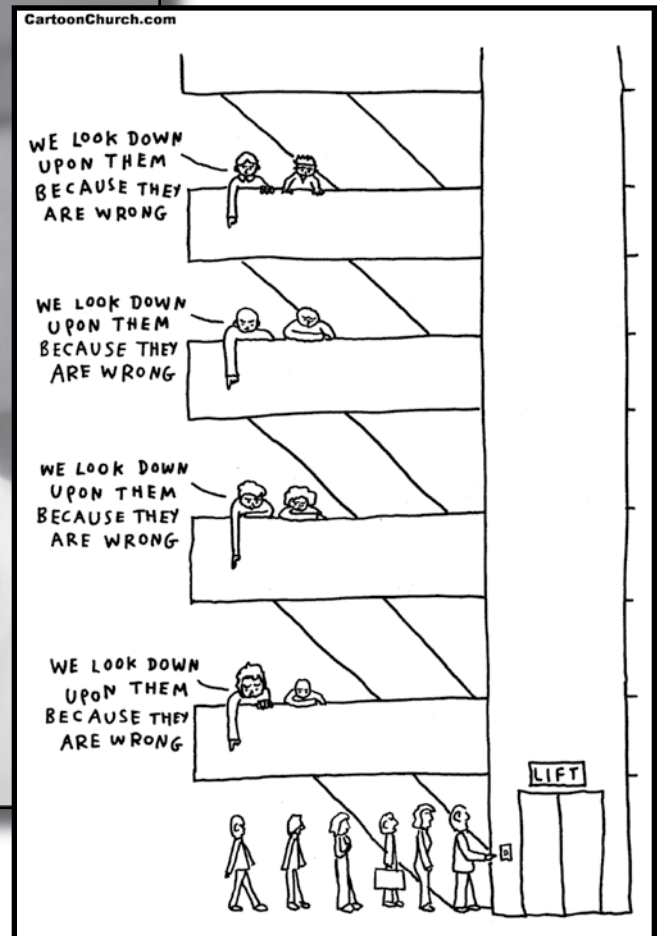
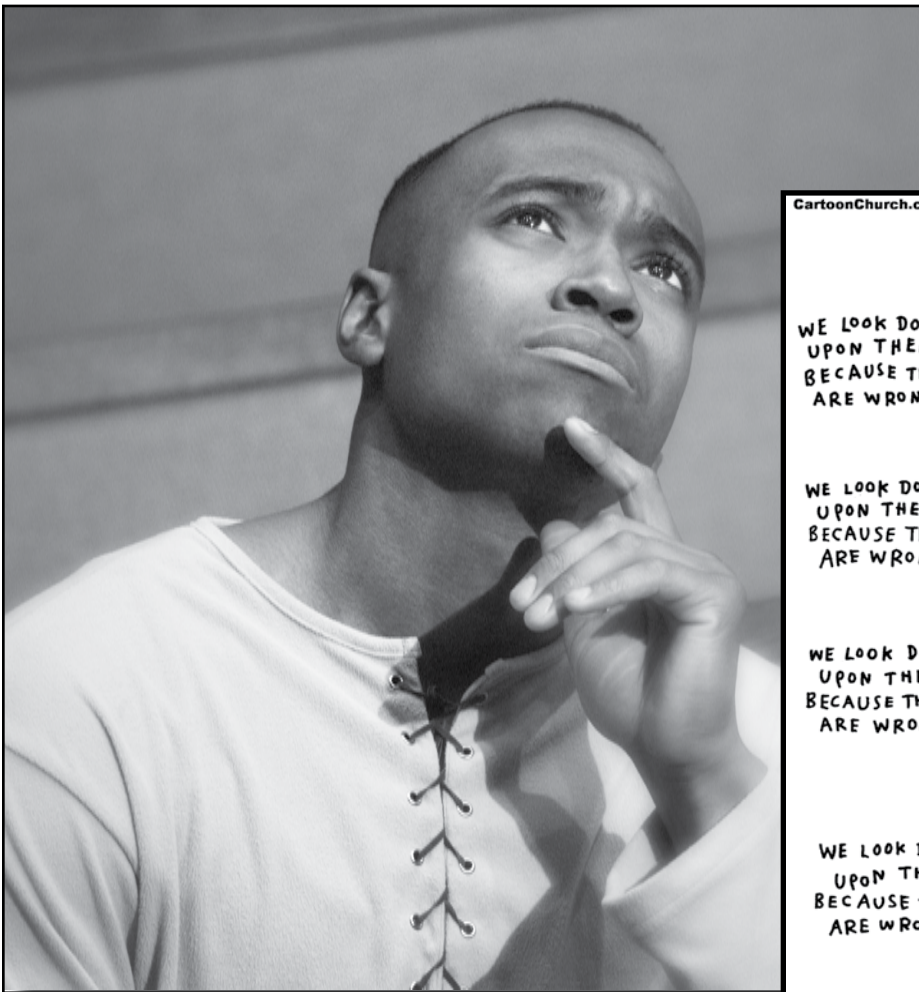
Theōdidaktos *Taught by God*

Journal for EMC theology and education

Volume 2 Number 1 June 2007

Asking hard questions

exploring our theology



We must ask hard questions

Is it not a great irony that the Historic Peace Church, the Anabaptists or Mennonites, is at war with itself over the very issue of peace itself? Both sides get hot under the collar when either view is taken to task and critiqued. Actually it seems that it is the traditional nonresistant advocates who get angry and bewildered when a fellow Anabaptist wants to ask questions about the integrity or validity of our stance. "How could you dare rock the foundations of our unique identity?" they say.

I have had my own dust-ups with friends and acquaintances over the subject of pacifism and nonresistance. In an article I wrote a few years ago I

I am not for sending our young adults into the jaws of the gods of war to be chewed up and spit back onto our laps in pieces. However, it is severe neglect to simply say that we are nonresistant without having each generation review the facts, study the Scriptures, and grasp for themselves what this peace really is.

related the story of how I staunchly preached nonresistance to a young lady who was afraid her fiancé would be called up for war in Gulf War 1. How could a person call themselves Christian, I said, and go to war at the same time? In other situations those I considered good friends found a breach between us as we discussed the pros and cons of war. In those days there were no 9/11 or Gulf Wars to worry about. It was easy to preach peace in a time of peace and find war and hostility in the conversations thereof.

In recent years I have begun to question the historic peace stance of our Church and found war there too. Please understand that I am not for sending our young adults into the jaws of the gods of war to be chewed up and spit back onto our laps in pieces. However, it is severe neglect to simply say that we are nonresistant without having each generation review the facts, study the Scriptures, and grasp for themselves what this peace really is. When the Bible speaks of peace it speaks of reconciliation with God. It speaks of a peace that passes all understanding and guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). It speaks of something deep within that through the power of Jesus Christ enables us to face death, the threat of cancer, and the other trials of life that disturb our false sense of security with a different kind of peace. Then Jesus talks about loving our enemies and praying for our persecutors. Can we speak of both of these concepts as peace when they mean two different things?

Peace is an inner assurance and tranquility that comes from God no matter the circumstances. Loving my enemy does not guarantee peace. Yes, I need to love my enemy as Jesus commanded me to, but that does not lead to political peace. Praying for my persecutors will give me an inner peace about my attitude towards my enemy, but it will not automatically mean that I will not be persecuted. What does Paul mean when he says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18)? *If it is possible...* does that mean realistically speaking that it is not always possible? Live at peace with everyone...yes, and this is our responsibility.

Can we not ask these questions without starting a war in our conference? As responsible theologians we must ask hard questions of the stance we profess. We must ask if we are being biblically accurate and affirm what is true. Are we so desperate for a unique identity on the World Evangelical stage that we profess something that is more

Theodidaktos is published occasionally and distributed freely under the authority of the Board of Church Ministries, Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 440 Main Street, Steinbach, Manitoba R5G 1Z5; emcmessenger@mts.net; 204-326-6401; www.emconf.ca. Inquiries and submissions to the editor can be sent to Editor, *Theodidaktos*, Box 129, Kleefeld, MB R0A 0V0; kemc@mts.net; 204-377-4773. Editor: Rev. Darryl G. Klassen. Layout: Rebecca Buhler. Copy editor/staff adviser: Terry M. Smith.
ISSN 1911-7272 (print)
ISSN 1911-7280 (online)

political than biblical? I'm just asking. You can tell me in your letters what you think.

Until then, read this volume and consider the first two articles in this regard. The first is a piece written by a young university student who studied the experiences of Conscientious Objectors during World War Two. It is not a theological piece, but it reflects the theological stance of our young men during that time. The second article is a piece on Balthasar Hubmaier, the "other" Anabaptist who has been largely forgotten because of his views on politics and war. Let these two pieces provoke some thought among us.

Then the third article may start another war. I hope not, but it might. The complementarian position is not the traditional position that Linda Belleville says it is. Historically it is our position as Mennonites in the last century, but it has been set aside to come to terms with our present cultural milieu. As you consider these three pieces, ask yourself what the standard is for adopting and rejecting our theological positions. I anticipate some interesting feedback. ☹

Darryl G. Klassen

The Mennonite Conscientious Objector Experience

Andrew Friesen

Andrew Friesen was raised within Kleefeld EMC.

The cultural and religious group known as the Mennonites have historically made the attempt to segregate themselves from their host country, its governing body, and their affairs. But as they settled in Canada, their traditional ideology of segregation began to diminish and soon they were in the process of discovering and interacting with Canadian society. This, of course, occurred on many sociological fronts, not the least of which included participation in military activity. World War Two marked a significant landmark for the Mennonites as they soon became called upon to serve their country as notices of conscription were sent out to young Canadian Mennonite men.

Although their philosophy of segregation had waned, many of the Mennonites still retained the traditional conviction of pacifism. Naturally, as they received their call to service in the military, many Mennonites chose to declare themselves as conscientious objectors to exempt or postpone their service relying on a past Order in Council agreed upon by the government of Canada and early Mennonite settlers.

Nevertheless, young Mennonite men still were put through the process and engagement of Canadian military practices at the bureaucratic, non-active service, and even active service levels. At all of these levels, there were positive encounters documented as well as negative ones. Some of these encounters allowed the Mennonites to grow in ways they had never envisioned, while others hoped to forget their experiences all together. As a matter of fact, Mennonites were subject to a wide variety of encounters with Canadian society during World War Two.

It is noteworthy, however, to observe

that not all Mennonites upon receiving their call to duty sought exemption as a conscientious objector. Despite their pacifist creed, there are many Mennonites documented as serving their country in active service during World War Two. Reasons for their enlistment vary. For example, Fred Toews explained that enlisting in the air force was a chance to rebel against the church.¹ Rebellion against the church could serve as a plausible reason to join the army. Mennonite churches were of course strict in the behaviour of their parishioners, which can act as an ideal breeding ground for rebellious youth. Furthermore, with pacifism and non-resistance such fundamental pillars to the Mennonite faith, enlistment in armed forces would be a logical focal point of rebellion.

Rebellion was not the only reason for young Mennonite men to serve in active duty. Perhaps the very nature of the human male contributed to the second reason, but there were reports of Mennonite men joining the army for the sheer excitement of involvement in active military service. The above mentioned Fred Toews expressed enthusiasm at the thought of joining the air force—a division that many Mennonites served in. In addition, Lawrence Klippenstein, in an interview with an anonymous Mennonite serviceman, writes,

The fact remains that the young Mennonite men who joined the Canadian Forces did not do so for any great patriotic or nationalistic reasons but with a variety of other motives: they were bored and they needed some kind of adventure; their future was obscure and after a decade of relative inactivity they were looking for a diversion...their options had been limited for so long

that they wanted action...Many of the boys were torn between their loyalty to family...and what the Forces had to offer. The Mennonite doctrine of pacifism was the furthest from their mind.²

Canada was a country that had opened its arms to the Mennonite settlers. They were offering spacious land, religious freedom, and exemption from the military. Many Mennonites were thankful to Canada for their accommodations.

Perhaps this zeal was the product of a naïve perspective of armed duty. It is hard to imagine that the typical Mennonite farm boy would be privileged to the unpleasantness inherent in active war duty.

Perhaps the most perplexing reason given for enlistment into active duty by various Mennonites was their sense of patriotism and responsibility. After all, Mennonites traditionally considered themselves to be in the world, but not of the world. They hesitated to proclaim their allegiance with any specific government or country. They wanted no part in serving their country in any way, especially in armed service. The story changed however, for Mennonites upon their settlement in Canada. "But how can you just accept all the good things about living in Canada, and then when they ask for help, you say, 'Sorry, I can't do that.'"³ In Canada during the Second World War, there were Mennonites that enlisted because they felt it was part of their duty to their country.

Canada was a country that had opened its arms to the Mennonite settlers. They were offering spacious

1 Fred Toews, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, June 6, 1987.

2 Lawrence Klippenstein, "Canadian Mennonites in World War II," *Mennonite Life* Sept. 1993, Vol. 48 (3). Pg. 6.

3 Ellie Reimer. "Some went to war, some served at home: A trustworthy soldier," *Canadian Mennonite*, Oct. 1998. Vol. 2, No. 21. Pg. 12.

land, religious freedom, and exemption from the military. Many Mennonites were thankful to Canada for their accommodations. In an interview, Peter Wiens proclaims, "There is a price to pay for good daily living, protection, and a show of appreciation... Never forget when the good Lord calls you to that task."⁴ Wiens went on to serve in a number of different areas in the military: artillery, interpreter, military police, and underground police agent. Furthermore, Wiens was comfortable with the notion of carrying a gun and the possibility that it could be used. Carrying a firearm was an act that many Mennonites opposed and were subsequently granted conscientious objector status for because of their refusal to bear arms.

Before the war began, Aaron Friesen was already on his way to becoming a pilot. He was in search of an occupation to help bring an income into his family's household. He had spent time in Chicago studying the art and science of aviation prior to the war and had enlisted before his call for conscription had been obtained. Friesen gave two reasons for joining the air force: The first was to further his piloting education—satisfying both his passion for flying and his primary source of employment. The second reason Friesen enlisted was because he thought it appropriate to serve his country. Friesen thought he "owed" his country that much. When questioned about his decision, Friesen made note that "the decision was well thought through, and not on the spur of the moment or in ignorance."⁵

Not all men who served in alternative service camps as a conscientious objector finished their service time still subscribing to the notion of non-resistance. David John Heidebrecht went through the process of declaring himself a conscientious objector and was granted status without any tribulation. He was steadfast in his desire to not kill anyone. This desire was satisfied throughout his duration at the alternate service camp. During that time, however, as he began to know his boss, he learned that the boss' sons were serving overseas. At this,

Heidebrecht admitted to feeling guilty that other men were fighting for his own freedom while he was safe at home. When the war was over, and he had had time to reflect on his experiences, Heidebrecht was satisfied that he had a positive experience in the C.O. camps and contributed to useful work.

However on the whole of the war scenario and the cost of so many lives in the war front, and he being safe away from it all, and the many of his friends who had also died in army service—he had a feeling of guilt and said, 'If war would repeat itself, he would, because of such guilt feelings, join in active service in sympathy for his friends.'⁶

If there was a middle ground between the conscientious stance of pacifism and full active service in the military, serving in the medical corps may have been it. This was the popular choice of those Mennonites that wanted to contribute to the war effort but still did not allow their convictions to be compromised. Had the military dropped the requirement for those in medical corps to carry arms,

If there was a middle ground between the conscientious stance of pacifism and full active service in the military, serving in the medical corps may have been it.

it is quite probable that many more Mennonites would have served.

Cornie Thiessen was one of those individuals who served in the medical corps. The reasoning that he gave was twofold: First, he had an inherent interest in first aid. More importantly however, was his conviction to help those suffering in war time. This interest in alleviating suffering was not foreign to the Mennonite faith. However, could it justify serving in the military? Thiessen believed so. "He did not see the medical Corps...to be part of the negative aspects

of the war machine. His calling was from God and it would remain free of the politics of the war machine."⁷ Despite the obvious negative aspects of war, it was interesting to note how Thiessen finally conceded in admitting that military action against Hitler in World War Two was necessary.

There are different perspectives from which to answer this, that of the [world] leaders, the Christian church, the Jews! Hitler had promoted good work ethic, honored the family unit among a host of other good things, but—the regime under his control and his insane mind and his anti-God, anti-Jewish disposition, he would undo the church institutions. Yes, it was absolutely justified.⁸

Excitement, patriotism, and the desire to reduce suffering have been given as reasons why some Mennonites enlisted in active service. But Menno Klassen is quick to add some other explanations.

1. Although probably no one relished the thought of killing people, they could also not contemplate the thought of a Nazi/Fascist victory in the world. It was considered too late to stop this very formidable threat by diplomatic means. 2. The pacifist community was just a small minority in Canada. In a democracy doesn't the majority decide? And isn't the majority always right? 3. Some probably believed it cowardly not to join with the thousands who were prepared to risk life and limb in war they convinced had to be fought. 4. Some may have felt they could not honestly say they had come to the stage in their life where they could confidently believe in the power of non-violence, or that they would be capable of loving an enemy for example, or able to do good to those that hate them. To make such a declaration, they may have felt, would be hypocritical and inconsistent with where they were in their thinking at that time and stage in their life. 5. Some reasons for enlisting may have been the pressure on them to conform, lack of community support for the peace position, a fear of persecution, a lack of peace education in our homes, schools, and churches, or seeing the Bible as inconsistent or ambiguous on the issue of peace and war.⁹

The second story to be told of the Mennonite encounters with World War Two, involves those individuals that had positive experiences within the alternative service camps. These positive experiences took place in many different forms. Some men discovered how much they were valued by their employers that

4 Peter Wiens, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, July 12, 1987.

5 Aaron Friesen, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, July 12, 1987.

6 David John Heidebrecht, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, unknown date.

7 Cornie Thiessen, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, July 16, 1993.

8 Ibid.

9 Menno Klassen. *Canadian Conscientious Objectors in the Second World War: The Experience of C.O.'s During the War and Our On-Going Peacemaking Task*. Unpublished document.



Mennonite conscientious objectors building the road in Jasper, Alberta, 1941.

(Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives)

appears that Neufeld's experience at the alternative service camps was a positive one.

Another positive aspect of the alternative service camps according to various conscientious objectors was the opportunity to forge new relationships with their fellow servicemen. It is logical to assume that because of the nature of the work, the closed living quarters, and the unifying characteristic these men shared—their refusal to fight in war, friendships would be formed within the camps. But a more interesting aspect of relationship building was how the conscientious objectors related to nearby active military servicemen.

Isaac Wittenberg's recollection of relationship building with fellow objectors or with military personnel may be atypical as upcoming stories will tell, but it appears that conscientious objectors in the camps did have the opportunity for creating friendships in their service.

On the whole, good relationships were built both in off work time as well as at the work place. Weekend travel on passes provide additional opportunity for leisure and relationship building. Of note was that the army boys stationed nearby would catch rides on the camp designated vehicles to and from their base as well and they were apparently to associate in a friendly way with them.¹⁴

There was another category of personnel which the conscientious objectors had the opportunity to interact with—their commanding officers. In these circumstances, one could predict that the likelihood of a conscientious objector positively interacting with a government trained military officer would be doubtful. But in actuality, commanding officers were apparently under orders to treat the conscientious objectors favourably. As taken from the transcript of C.O. John Wiebe's experiences at camp mentions,

John says he was let in on some information that the boys in the camps were to be treated 'real well.' That was certainly his experience. One of his bosses also quoted, 'I can do more with a dozen of you C.O.'s than with all the soup kitchen boys that were here in the depression.'¹⁵

Evidently the strong work ethic synonymous with the Mennonite reputation bridged the gap between the government and the conscientious objectors. The statement also demonstrates the willingness and

they worked for during the war effort. Others were treated well at the camps and took home valuable lessons. Some conscientious objectors enjoyed the fellowship that took place in the camps with other men of various religions. Still others found contentment in how they were treated at home after their service had ended.

John Siemens recalls how he had originally planned to enlist in the medical corps. He like others, was tired of the way the church was "roboting" him and directing his life. Without his consent, his church had begun negotiations on his behalf to proclaim him a conscientious objector. But this was only half of his battle. John also was working in the coal mines when he received his call. He remembers how his boss was opposed to the idea of losing a valued worker. "On being notified of the 'call,' the management immediately appealed to the Act and a section on 'employment in essential services' and began process of exemption on that basis...The mines wanted John in no small way...and the negotiations were successful."¹⁰ Even though John's original wishes were

disregarded, he had the opportunity to perceive just how important he was and how highly he was valued.

There were a number of Mennonite conscientious objectors that actually had pleasant experiences at alternate service camps. For some like Rueben Ratzlaff, alternative service camps served as one of the highlights of their entire life.¹¹ Others like Jake Neufeld, fit in so well at the alternative service camps that he became his camp's construction foreman.

"Life in the camp was good...it did not feel like a prison at all,"¹² recalls Neufeld. In fact, to pass the time, Neufeld relates how when the work of the day had been completed, it was not uncommon for the boys to engage in a game of baseball. And on especially hot days, the boys would cool down with some skinny dipping in the nearby creek. It would seem that the camps were never without recreation to balance out the hard work the men achieved during the day. When questioned about whether he noticed or perceived any hostile attitudes toward him he remarked, "There was no evidence...of discrimination or military interference."¹³ All things considered, it

10 John Siemens, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, June 10, 1987.

11 Rueben Ratzlaff, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, December 9, 1987.

12 Jake Neufeld, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, July 12, 1987.

13 Ibid.

14 Isaac Wittenberg, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, unknown date.

15 John Wiebe, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, February 10, 1988.

enthusiasm the conscientious objectors had toward serving their country. Those that wished to not participate in battle were not opposed to serving their country, as the general public may have considered them to be. Rather, they were willing to give the same effort that active military servicemen gave, but in a fashion which adhered to their beliefs.

Further evidence of the good standing conscientious objectors had with their commanding offices is illustrated in Dave Ratzlaff's chronicles.

In all the work places, Dave never noted any amount of disrespect for the C.O.'s. It appeared almost the opposite. The relationship between the boys and their superiors seemed always in good standing...Articles in the Island newspaper about these men's work were few, but those appearing spoke positively about these men's character and service.¹⁶

This excerpt further demonstrates the willingness of conscientious objectors to, in fact, serve their country.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the feelings of good will between commanding officer and conscientious objector is recorded in Claude Klassen's interview. Klassen had spoken positively of his two and one half year service at the alternative service camps. He appreciated the lessons that he learned in that environment and the strengthening of his character. Emulating the old adage, 'Leave a good front picture behind,' Klassen spoke of the final interaction with his foreman. "The working relationship of the boys with their foreman had been very congenial and when it came time to say 'farewell,' the boys had sung a farewell song to their crew boss, who was moved to tears and commended the boys for their work and their attitude in the work place." To move an official to tears certainly shows that those working alternative service camps could generate positive experiences and friendships.

The Mennonite characteristic of work ethic and character has already been introduced. But to further dissect the significance of these characteristics and on the impact of their fellow workers, consider Norman Levi Weber.

What was the reaction of our boss and

"The working relationship of the boys with their foreman had been very congenial and when it came time to say 'farewell,' the boys had sung a farewell song to their crew boss, who was moved to tears and commended the boys for their work and their attitude in the work place."

the other lumberjacks to us? I think we were a curiosity. Never even heard of a Mennonite, let alone a conscientious objector, what is that? They were not very interested in our beliefs, but accepted us and in time we earned their respect. Mr. Krause was more interested in the work ethic...Since each skidder worked by himself, I guess Mr. Krause felt he should check up on our work habits. Several times I spotted him back in the timber, trying to hide behind a tree while he watched while you worked. I guess he was impressed by what he observed, because several weeks after we were at camp, one evening he told us, 'you guys are the best crew I have ever had, usually I have trouble with bush gang in not putting out.' Needless to say, his compliment made us feel good.¹⁷

Weber continues in revealing two stories of how interaction or witnessing to a couple of the boys at camp completely changed their behaviour. So much so that Weber proclaims they acted more like conscientious objectors than like the other men at the camp. As for the suspicious Mr. Klause that Weber cited, Weber mentions that he received a letter of appreciation from Mr. Krause after the war ended as well as an invitation for future employment. The characteristic of the Mennonite work ethic certainly helped integrate Weber into the alternative service camp. Not only that but it helped Weber associate with his boss and was a beacon of character to his fellow servicemen. In summary of his

experience, Weber concludes, "The entire experience for me was positive...One thing that came through very clearly was that not all people understand or accept your beliefs, but as you seek to live them out in a consistent way, you are given their respect."¹⁸

There were many positive experiences in the alternative service camps. Many of the conscientious objectors stationed in the camps reported that their encounters were positive; some even proclaimed them to be the best time of their lives. They were able to form good relationships with their fellow servicemen, as well as their commanders. There was also opportunity for recreation time and enjoyment after putting in honest day's hard work.

However, not all recorded experiences from Mennonite conscientious objectors were so favourable. These men who were called to serve their country during World War Two encountered a variety of different experiences. Thus far, only the positive ones have been highlighted. But equally poignant are the stories that are not as uplifting. These stories feature threats, discrimination, and condemnation by their own loved ones. They serve as a stark contrast to the stories mentioned above. Many of these negative, counteracting experiences began before the conscientious objectors reached their camps—in front of the national mobilization boards.

The policy in the Prairie Provinces was for the men who were called to serve to appear before a panel of judges or one solitary judge if they chose to proclaim themselves as a conscientious objector. The judge then had the authority to grant or deny you of that status. But because these judges were working on behalf of Canada's Mobilization Board, they were inclined to generating soldiers for Canada's army. Appearing before them was seldom a welcomed experience.

All the Mennonite groups appealed to the government to avoid this procedure...however, such personal appearances before judges were required quite consistently. These experiences were not always pleasant for the men, especially since no lawyer or minister was allowed to be present to help explain the C.O.'s beliefs.¹⁹

These interrogations as will be revealed carried a variety of unpleasant interactions with the presiding judges.

But sometimes Board members and representatives of the military were decidedly unsympathetic to those

16 Dave Ratzlaff, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, March 20, 1995.

17 Norman Levi Weber, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, March 5, 1992.

18 Ibid.

19 Klippenstein.

taking a conscientious objector stance. On occasion you recruits were literally shouted down, threatened, or otherwise verbally abused. Often considerable pressure was exercised to persuade young persons to accept military or at least non-combatant service instead of entering service as a C.O.²⁰

The following are excerpts from various experiences with the Board from Mennonite conscientious objectors.

John Dyck who eventually served his country in Jasper, Alberta, recalls his experience with the judge. "Most others were processed quickly...but they kept questioning me on various aspects of my beliefs, trying me out on a number of hypothetical situations of violence against family members, and on my patriotic role to my country. 'Isn't Canada worth fighting for?'"²¹ This form of questioning was not uncommon for potential conscientious objectors. Hypothetical situations and attacks on their patriotism were attempts to "trip up" the young men. They would also attempt to persuade the conscientious objectors by offering differing perspectives. For example, they suggested to Dyck that the basic

References to war and death in the Bible often served as precedents for the judges. Dyck noticed how those Mennonites that brought Bibles with them to defend their faith were more highly scrutinized by the judges.

training could serve as potential techniques of self-protection. Perhaps for a very few Mennonites, this was a compelling enough perspective to enlist but it did not persuade John. Not all of the Board's persuasion attempts were futile semantics, however. Dyck recalls how well versed the judges were in the scriptures. References to war and death



**"WHAT MAKES YOUR HUSBAND SO CROSS THESE TIMES?"
"HE KEEPS FRETTING DREADFUL BECAUSE HE'S OVER THE AGE AND SO HE CAN'T BE A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR."**

(The Project Gutenberg Ebook of Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 152, May 2, 1917.)

in the Bible often served as precedents for the judges. Dyck noticed how those Mennonites that brought Bibles with them to defend their faith were more highly scrutinized by the judges.

Jacob Wiens recalls how knowledge of the scriptures led to a very sneaky attempt by his presiding judge. Wiens was asked why he did not want to serve his country in arms. His response was that since accepting the Lord, he could not justify taking a life. The judge offered some reconciliation and mentioned that Wiens could serve as a light in the army,²² a shining example of morality to those around. But even this opportunity to model Christ was not persuasive enough to compel Wiens to enlist in the military.

Peter Unger was also offered a proposition by the presiding judge. Unger was not fit for active service in the military. He had failed his medical examination—which all men were obliged to take upon receiving their conscription call. Upon learning of this, the judge offered Unger the possibility of enlisting in the military at which time he would be granted an honourable discharge because of his failed medical. "In terms of his faith and practice,

enlisting meant voluntary alignment with war so Peter answered, 'I could not do that—I cannot enlist.'²³ Ironically, Unger had the option of remaining free from official service to his country if only he would enlist. However, his conscience did not allow that option to be viable and Unger was sent to serve instead in an alternative service camp.

Jacob Duerksen learned that once you are granted conscientious objector status, it is wise to accept the grant and peacefully leave the courtroom. Duerksen's final response to a certain question prompted the judge to proclaim that Jacob was of no use to his country if he will not serve in the military. Duerksen, upset that he was to proceed to an alternative service camp, responded with, "If I'm no good to the country as you see it, why not let me stay on the farm where I can do some good?"²⁴ Angered by Duerksen's retort, the presiding judge threatened, "Come back young man, now! We have authority to do anything with you, we can send you to Russia, we can even shoot you."²⁵ Duerksen reveals that he was not actually fearful of the judge's comments but certainly the threat of deportation and death could not have been pleasant for him.

From an interrogation with the judges to the alternative service camps went many young Mennonite conscientious objectors. And unlike their counterparts previously mentioned, there were some men that had miserable experiences in the camp. Their superiors and fellow workmen disrespected

20 Ibid.

21 John Dyck, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, June 8, 1989.

22 Jacob Wiens, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, March 18, 1994.

23 Peter Unger, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, Unknown date.

24 Jacob Duerksen, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, October 18, 1990.

25 Ibid.

them. Their work was considered meaningless and menial. Consider Jake Willms' appraisal of the service:

Jake makes note here that the C.O. service at some places and Jasper was one of them, where work appeared to be in demotion of human dignity and demoralizing. He believed this may have well been part of the strategy of the judge or the War Dept. to firstly impress an attitude toward the C.O.'s

Some conscientious objectors serving in the alternative service camps certainly felt like they were the subjects of discrimination. Privileges that were normally taken for granted were refused.

and Mennonites and secondly, the humiliating work may bring men into army related service.²⁶

Jake further indicates that the work they spent two weeks doing could have been done in two hours with a caterpillar machine. With such a seemingly wasted effort, it is natural to feel that the government was not particularly fond of you.

This frustration from doing seemingly trivial work was shared by other conscientious objectors. Also shared was the suspicion that the type of work involved was part of a deliberate attempt to demoralize the boys. Daniel Loewen recalls his experiences in road construction.

What really struck home to the boys is that they would be asked to do this work in a most antiquated way. Rocks were prepared for blasting by hand-drilling blasting holes, debris was shovelled by hand, wheelbarrows, slips, and small graders also stood by. The work was certainly not fashioned in a way to feel honour at work. In the back of their minds the boys reasoned there was an attempt made at demanding work—and would discourage enough

boys, so they would consider going into the army...From the boys' perspective, there was always a conjecture of whether the work they were doing was of much value, especially considering how it was done.²⁷

Loewen's story further illustrates the negativity that some of the conscientious objectors experienced in the alternative service camps.

Some conscientious objectors serving in the alternative service camps certainly felt like they were the subjects of discrimination. Privileges that were normally taken for granted were refused. Dave Schmidt recalls that "sick leave was next to impossible to get."²⁸ He cites an occasion of when he had a toothache but his superiors refused a visit to the dentist. Schmidt added, "We were definitely treated as second class citizens."²⁹

Thus far, the negative experiences associated with alternative service camps revolve around minor discrimination and meaningless work. But there are stories of greater injustices to conscientious objectors. Gordon Dyck recalls the story of Les Guantz.

He talks of a Les Guantz from Didsbury who in reporting at the office...had been down graded as a case for Ponoka (Mental Institution). You must be crazy wanting to be a conscientious objector. He was imprisoned for a few days and his clothes were taken away. Army uniforms were made available. So after a few days of naked imprisonment he was shipped off to Ponoka by train.³⁰

From menial work to naked imprisonment, the discrimination against the conscientious objector becomes extreme.

For some Mennonite conscientious objectors, the alternate service camps were an opportunity for friendships and strengthening their character. But for others, these camps were nightmare of tedious work and discrimination. Added to these experiences were the harsh conditions surrounding their Mobilization Board interrogations preceding their service. These unfortunate encounters however, may be overshadowed by the final display of negative encounters.

There's a certain element of intolerance in the traditional Mennonite communities—intolerance for evil. Mennonites as a whole have very strong feelings about war, and serving the government in the military. But there is a price to pay for living in Canada, and that is paid in part by serving the country. Many Mennonite men received the call to serve their country—the price must be repaid. It was a mandatory service. Fortunately the early Canadian Mennonites had bargained for the opportunity to serve Canada in the form of non-military service. And so many Mennonites were called into such a service.

But the communities and churches from which these men came from were unsure of how to treat these individuals. Despite their refusal to serve in the armed service, they were considered by some to still be associated with the war machine. Their reaction to these men came in a variety of fashions and many of them unfortunate. The herd itself was the most harmful to the supposed wayward sheep. Coupled with the churches' disapproval was the condemnation conscientious objectors were subject to from the outside communities. For the average Canadian, conscientious objector status was not an option. Thus, the average Canadian could become very bitter to see their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers sent to fight when Mennonites have chosen not fight. Yet they still enjoy the privileges and freedom that comes from the sacrifices of other men in the military.

This excerpt came from the chronicle of the previously mentioned Jake Willms who already suffered in indignity and frustration in toiling away in meaningless work.

Jake saw himself in a community which was not very well disposed toward the Mennonites. They were often termed 'the bloody Mennonites' even before the war, and this became more aggravated as the war started and Mennonite boys chose not to participate in what was publicly considered 'important duties—a war endorsed by national government.' In communities, the Mennonite boys soon felt out of place and in particular, he notes that of his home, they were not supported—even hated for their conscience stance. Children in school came up with stories of 'Mennonites having stashed up arms in their churches.'³¹

Other conscientious objectors felt the public's sour feelings. The representation and general attitude toward C.O.'s varied. "In the home community..." says John,

26 Jake Willms, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, February 19, 1988.

27 Daniel Loewen, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, Unknown date.

28 Dave Schmidt, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, July 11, 1989.

29 Ibid.

30 Gordon Dyck, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, Unknown date.

31 Willms.

“there was a good measure of ill will and local boys made bad remarks.”³² This was taken from John Goossen’s confession of his experiences as a conscientious objector. The sentiments were echoed in other communities. In Lethbridge, Peter Unger remembers a certain article from the press. “An article in a Lethbridge paper berated the C.O.’s that they should wear a uniform like all other servicemen—only they should have a yellow streak down the back.”³³ The general public seemed to have much disdain for the men serving in non-active service. They were thought of as cowards and ungrateful to their country. Their German ancestry certainly could also not have helped their reputation.

Unfortunately, the most painful discrimination came from the conscientious objectors’ own communities and churches. Dave Derksen recalls his welcome back into his community after serving two years as a conscientious objector.

Did they [C.O.’s] get a hero’s welcome

alleviate suffering and, perhaps the most surprising, their patriotic fervour towards Canada. These Mennonites went on to have to most distinctive involvement in World War Two in comparison to their fellow Mennonites.

Some Mennonites were sent to alternative service camps for conscientious objectors. Within these camps, there were also a variety of experiences encountered with Canadian society. Some were seen as positive. Relationships were formed, and their work was valued. This often occurred in favourable living and working conditions with plenty of leisure time. For these Mennonites, service was considered a positive element of their lives. They enjoyed their time and found satisfaction in their service.

There were others, however, that did not enjoy their service in these camps. Their service began with intense discrimination from Mobilization Boards in the forms of threats and insults. Their character was called into

service in the military by Mennonite groups across the country could also lend to the ambiguity of their experiences. If Mennonites as a whole could have declared an official, unifying stance on army service, their experiences could have remained free of suspicion and confusion by the rest of Canadian society. Moreover, if the Mennonites had made more of an effort to be present in Canadian society, their views could have been more fully understood and respected.

There are a number of directions that future research could proceed along. Further documentation could be recorded as to the experiences of Mennonite conscientious objectors throughout certain service fields: For example, the experiences of those specifically in the medical corps, or in essential resources occupations. Perhaps the inconsistent findings are the result that so many different kinds of alternative services were available. There may be more consensus among the various sub-fields.

The documents recorded for this investigation were contributed solely by a male sample. Future research should investigate the experiences of Mennonites women serving in alternative service during World War Two. This would contribute to a more complete perspective of the Mennonite alternative service experience.

This topic could also be investigated from different perspectives. This research focused on the testimonies of those Mennonites in alternative service. Other research could investigate the perceptions as captioned by judges, foremen, or fellow Canadians who worked alongside the Mennonites. Their perceptions could serve as an interesting observation tool for the Mennonite community.

Finally the issue of how Mennonites encountered Canadian society during World War Two could be investigated from the perspective of the Mennonites churches, including their congregations and ministers. With church life so crucial to Mennonites during the time, it would be prudent to examine their perceptions of their involvement on behalf of the conscientious objectors, their viewpoints on the appropriateness of their service in the Canadian military, and their reaction once those in service returned home. ⊖

Unfortunately, the most painful discrimination came from the conscientious objectors’ own communities and churches: “In spite of the fact that the young men had been faithful to the church’s teaching, ‘it seemed the church had little use for us,’” says Dave Derksen.

when they got home? Derksen says an emphatic, ‘No!’ In spite of the fact that the young men had been faithful to the church’s teaching, ‘it seemed the church had little use for us,’ he said, ‘our parents complained that we were so different. After C.O. camp, most of the boys had changed completely... We had experienced a lot.’³⁴

Derksen’s last statement summarizes the Mennonite conscientious objector’s encounter with Canadian society during World War Two—they had experienced a lot. Those Mennonite conscientious objectors serving during World War Two encountered a variety of experiences with Canadian society. There were some Mennonites who chose to enlist to serve in active military service in World War Two. These individuals chose to serve for a variety of reason including for the excitement of combat, the desire to

question a number of times. From there, they were subject to discrimination at the service camps as well as discrimination from the Canadian public as well as their own churches and communities. They perceived their work to be trivial and meaningless. Truly their experiences can be considered as negative.

There is no unifying consensus as to how Mennonites serving as conscientious objectors encountered Canadian society during World War Two. Their encounters were, in fact, varied on many fronts. There are a number of reasons why this occurred. The individual personalities of key characters including judges, camp foremen, and church leaders could easily dictate whether or not a Mennonite conscientious objector encountered a positive or negative experience during their service.

The disjointed stance on violence and

32 John Goossen, interview by Henry H. Goerzen, June 9, 1989.

33 Unger.

34 Ellie Reimer. “No Hero’s Welcome,” *Canadian Mennonite*, Oct. 1998. Vol. 2, No. 21. Pg. 13.

Balthasar Hubmaier: A Bridge for Theological Discussion and Discipleship within the EMC

Terry M. Smith

Rev. Terry M. Smith is a member of Steinbach Evangelical Fellowship Church.

Balthasar Hubmaier's views are not well-known today among some, perhaps most, Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) congregations. Hubmaier is forgettable.¹ Yet Hubmaier is acknowledged as among the most educated (he held a doctorate in theology) and articulate of sixteenth century Anabaptist leaders. However, he was a controversial figure then and remains so today. He defended the Christian's use of the sword, used at least one classic creed in his teaching, and was sometimes prepared to recant under persecution. For this, to varying degrees, he has been criticized in his own time and later.²

Yet this occurs at a time when the EMC sometimes struggles to openly discuss theological differences of opinion on the Christian use of the sword, and the use of the creeds is largely, but not totally, absent.

Could Hubmaier be used as a bridge in the EMC toward more open discussion on the sword? At first thought, he could.

Further, he could help our discipleship also through the honesty of a pilgrimage that involved mental torment, physical torture, and martyrdom. His experience can be instructive today to church members who seem to sing of their willing deaths much too easily. This essay will briefly explore some of Hubmaier's theology, with special reference to his Christology, consider how he might assist current discussion in the EMC, and ponder any abiding contributions of his to a current Anabaptist theology.³

How Hubmaier is viewed

Was Hubmaier an Anabaptist? Because of his positions on the Christian's involvement in the state and use of force, Hubmaier is viewed with ambivalence by the Mennonite church. He held that Christians can and should be involved in civil authority and can forcefully defend people.⁴ He said that "a Christian government" could, by faith, wield the sword more appropriately than one that was non-Christian.⁵ "Yet, it is certain



Balthasar Hubmaier

that the more righteous they are the better and more orderly they will carry the sword according to God's will for the protection of the innocent and the fear of evildoers."⁶

At that time, some of his views displeased the Swiss leader Conrad Grebel.⁷ According to Bergsten (pp. 42–44), modern views of Balthasar range from not being a true or real Anabaptist (John Howard Yoder), of minimal influence (Harry Smith), to being "an outstanding Anabaptist leader and theological writer" (John Horsch).

Thomas N. Finger's position is that "historic Anabaptism will refer to all groups who practiced believers' baptism in the Reformation era (1525-1575)."⁸ By that definition, which fits the original meaning (rebaptizer), Hubmaier is an Anabaptist. Walter Klaassen calls Hubmaier "one of the most able Anabaptist theologians."⁹

Even Yoder, who along with H. Wayne Pipkin edited a book of his writings, calls Hubmaier a "theologian of Anabaptism." "Hubmaier was an Anabaptist in the exact meaning of the phrase," but "there was a distinct difference between him and the majority of the Anabaptists in their relation to political and public life."¹⁰

1 In the 1974 joint EMC and EMMC centennial publication *Know These People* (Steinbach/Winnipeg, eds. Dave K. Schellenberg et al), Hubmaier is not listed among the 13 people to be studied. Lesser figures are mentioned—Mary Beckum, Hans Bret, Adrian Cornelius, and Dirk Willems. It's less likely Hubmaier would have been omitted if more of his beliefs were acceptable.

2 Pipkin and Yoder describe Hubmaier as having a "well-earned reputation as the most learned and the most gifted communicator among the Anabaptists. He did not stand in the middle of the Anabaptist movement, but was without contest the most able theologian and the most visible among the leaders of those first few years" (H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier, Theologian of Anabaptism*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989), p. 15. The exact source for the statement of falling short of post-Schleitheim ideals is unknown, though John H. Yoder is likely.

3 For a capsule summary of Balthasar Hubmaier's personal history, see Walter Klaassen, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*, pp. 78–79; and Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 15–19. A longer biography is available through Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Theologian and Martyr*.

4 H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, eds., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1989, p. 499

5 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 498, 510

6 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 498

7 Torsten Bergsten, *Balthasar Hubmaier: Anabaptist Martyr and Theologian*, Valley Forge: Judson Press, p. 242

8 *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 2004, p. 101

9 *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*, rev ed., Waterloo: Conrad Press, 1981, p. 78

10 Bergsten, p. 245

Some aspects of his theology

Hubmaier was baptised on confession of faith in 1525, and he baptised about 300 people at Easter. He did not consider believers' baptism to be rebaptism, for infant baptism was invalid.¹¹ His baptismal order as followed at Nicolsburg shows a concern that people be baptised upon a tested faith in Christ.¹² He was a stout defender of believer baptism.¹³

Even after the fall, people have free will for which they are accountable, and their sins are not to be blamed on God's choice.

He held strongly to free will¹⁴ and wrote two treatises on the topic¹⁵ that challenged the common thoughts, "We can do nothing good. God works in us the desire and the doing. We have no free will."¹⁶ The fall did not result in total depravity in this sense. "Both flesh and soul are damaged and seriously wounded. Only the spirit has retained its original righteousness in which it was first created."¹⁷ He did not hold to Augustine's sense of total depravity or to double predestination.

Even after the fall, people have free will for which they are accountable, and their sins are not to be blamed on God's choice.¹⁸ God desires all people to be saved, but "Nevertheless, the choice lies with them for God wants them, unpressed, unforced, and without coercion. Whichever people do not accept, hear or follow after him, the same he turns himself away from and withdraws from and lets them remain as they themselves want to be."¹⁹

The Lord's Supper was a memorial, not, as held in the Mass, a re-sacrificing of Christ and the consuming of his real body and blood.²⁰ He opposed the intercession of the saints and purgatory. On this and much else, he held to wider Protestant views.²¹

William R. Estep says, "The use of the historic creeds of Christendom indicates that the Brethren [Anabaptists] considered themselves in the mainstream, of the Christian Faith." He points to Hubmaier's penning of *Twelve Articles of Christian Faith*, using the The Apostles' Creed with the *filioque* clause. He says that "with the exception of Hubmaier, there is little evidence that the Anabaptists made liturgical use of the historic creeds."²²

The baptismal order at Nicolsburg shows that the leader is to ask the candidate several questions that include, but are not limited to, The Apostles' Creed.²³ It's recognized, as stated in class readings, that Hubmaier and other Anabaptists used the creeds for points of discussion with Magisterial Reformers and that they brought out additional concerns within that broader framework.

There is significance in Hubmaier's use of The Apostles' Creed in a format not designed for inter-church discussion, but in a liturgical use followed at Nicolsburg. It's evidence that he saw it as a useful summary of biblical belief. His use of the creed is helpful and instructive at a time when opportunities for corporate faith confession seem sometimes bland within the liturgy (forms of worship, formal or informal) of some local churches.²⁴

His Christology and view of atonement

In a six-page exposition of *The Twelve Articles in Prayer Form*,²⁵ Hubmaier states his personal faith in Christ and, within that, his understanding of Christ's person and atoning work.

"I also believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son our Lord; that he has atoned for me for this Fall before thee, my Father, has made peace between thee and me, a poor sinner, and through his obedience has again won the inheritance for me...I hope and trust in him completely. May he not let his saving and consoling name of Jesus, of whom I believe that he is Christ, true God and Man, be lost on me miserable sinner, but may he redeem me from all my sins." Jesus was "conceived of the Holy Spirit, without any seed of man." "For that thou, Son of the living God, didst become man to that end, that we

11 John Allen Moore, *Anabaptist Portraits*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1984, pp. 196, 199

12 William Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1981, pp. 121–122

13 Such as *A Public Challenge to all Believers, On the Christian Baptism of Believers, Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book, Old and New Teachers on Believer Baptism, Dialogue with Oecolampad on Infant Baptism*—all found in Pipkin and Yoder. There is a complex indebtedness to both primary and secondary sources throughout his paper that is difficult to document. The texts and names of Hubmaier's writings, unless otherwise noted, come from the edited version of Pipkin and Yoder.

14 A. James Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology*, Kitchener: Pandora Press, 1991, p. 532

15 *Freedom of the Will, I and Freedom of the Will, II*. I am still exploring, with some uneasiness, the relationship of Anabaptist thought to that of wider Protestantism on this matter. I hold to total depravity (that every action is affected by sin) and a teaching on prevenient grace (that apart from the Holy Spirit's work, we could not respond to God's call). Hubmaier's exact relationship to semi-Pelagianism and prevenient grace is unclear to me, though he holds that the Fall has less effect on the human spirit than I see.

16 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 427

17 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 438

18 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 447

19 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 475

20 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 74–77

21 "And particularly, as I still well remember that I have said many useless things about infant baptism, vigils, anniversary masses, purgatory, masses, idols, bells, ringing, organs, piping, indulgences, pilgrimages, brotherhoods, sacrifices, and mumbling. Nevertheless, if I may be allowed to boast with Paul in the truth, I did so unknowingly" (Pipkin and Yoder, p. 83). Attention, though others, has been drawn to Hubmaier's statement of acting in ignorance.

I use *Protestant* to describe any Christians who rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and protested against some aspect of Catholic practice. Therefore, I see Anabaptists as part of the Protestant Church (and, unless qualified, reject Walter Klaassen's position that Anabaptism is neither Protestant nor Catholic). That some Protestants (Anabaptists) also protested against some Protestant (Magisterial Reformers') practices does not make them any less active in protest.

22 *The Anabaptist Story*, third ed., Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996, p. 180

23 Rollin Stely Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1966, pp. 143–144

24 James Reimer says there is truth in saying that Anabaptists were orthodox in their doctrine of God, while "more faithful than other Protestant groups in their obedience to the ethical imperatives of Scripture," though cautioning against "passing over" the tradition's "rich theological diversity." While most early documents "manifest a fidelity to the articles of the Apostles' Creed...there is in much early Anabaptism a rather sophisticated reappropriation and reinterpretation of the theological tradition" (p. 397). And when J. Denny Weaver accuses Reimer of having a two lists theology, Reimer objects, saying that most early Anabaptists "accepted the standard trinitarian creedal pattern but interpreted the Trinity with a heightened ethical consciousness, bring in ethical concerns not at the end of a list but right at the start in their interpretation of the first article of the creed" (p. 87). To my surprise and pleasure, The Apostles' Creed was used twice during services at the EMC ministerial retreat on March 19–21, 2005.

25 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 235–240

miserable men might through thee become children of God.”²⁶

Hubmaier believed that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, “and all of that for the sake of my sins, that thou mightest release and redeem me from the eternal cross, torture, suffering and death through thy cross, suffering, anxiety and distress, torture and bitter dying, and through the shedding of thy rose-red blood.”²⁷ Here, the substitutionary work of Christ is highlighted, and through it “thy greatest and highest love toward us poor humans is made known therein,”²⁸ which results in “praise and thanksgiving.” Here a moral influence emphasis can be seen.

Balthasar held that Christ “didst preach the gospel to the spirits that were in prison.” There, Christ proclaimed how he “suffered torture and death, paid and done satisfaction for the sins of all men.” And “as a strong Victor over death, hell and the devil” he rose again from the dead so that “all who believe in thee” might share the same victory “as thy brothers and fellow heirs with thee.” Both satisfaction and Christus Victor meanings can be seen in the Cross, along with what Thomas Finger calls “divinization”—that Christ

Edwin Friesen, then Conference Pastor, suggested people could be received as members if they are “open and understanding” of non-resistance, and agree to “not undermine the teaching or cause division in the church” and “commit themselves to work in harmony with the church in spite of the difference.”



became what we are so that we might become more Christlike,²⁹ in the limited sense of being perfectly human.

Seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ shares “authority, glory, and majesty equal to the Father as our sole intercessor, mediator, and advocate before the Father.”³⁰ Balthasar believed that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Christ is God and Man, born of a virgin, equal in authority, glory, and majesty to the Father. Here is a high view of Christ, without devaluing

his humanity or his genuine human experience.

Christ’s atoning death has many facets of meaning. As Finger says, “Hubmaier connected substitutionary atonement not only with moral influence language but also Christus Victor.”³¹ Similarly to what Finger says about Dirk Philips, Hubmaier could link together various meanings of Christ’s death—and, I would hasten to add, do so without a sense of them being competing or contradictory emphases.^{32,33}

Can Hubmaier assist in EMC discussion?

How, then, can Hubmaier assist in discussion? First, as stated above, Hubmaier’s continued use of The Apostles’ Creed can serve as an example. Next, it needs to be more openly acknowledged that there are likely, in a sense, many *Hubmaiers*—or people of Hubmaier’s beliefs—in matters of force and state within EMC churches. A Sunday school poll in an adult class at Steinbach EFC, when I was present, saw the majority disagree with Prime Minister Jean Chretien’s decision to stay out of the Iraq War.³⁴

In 1987 the ministerial explored the question, what to do if “potential members don’t quite fit”? Edwin Friesen, then Conference Pastor, suggested people could be received as members if they are “open and understanding” of non-resistance, and agree to “not undermine the teaching or cause division in the church” and “commit themselves to work in harmony with the

26 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 235–236

27 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 236

28 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 236

29 This reflects, in part, classroom discussion.

30 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 237

31 Finger, p. 333

32 Finger, p. 348, n. 150

33 And here I would register concern about J. Denny Weaver’s characterization of substitutionary atonement (*The Non-Violent Atonement*) and, to a lesser extent, with J. Nelson Kraybill’s minimizing of penal substitutionary atonement (*4 spiritual truths of a peacemaking God, The Mennonite*, November 4, 2003, pp. 9–11). Kraybill, has recently, however, come out with a statement, “I am not ready to abandon substitutionary understandings of Jesus’ death, and I believe God will judge” (reprinted in *The Messenger*, May 23, 2007). On my concern for an objective, penal substitutionary atonement, see *Easter: Christ died for our sins!* (*The Messenger*, March 27, 2002, pp. 5–6). Note that the article says “The Cross is a many-sided wonder, but a cover for our sins is central.” The Cross is a “revelation of love...a call to follow Christ in daily life...In Colossians 2:13–15 Christ’s death is referred to both as a cancelling of our debt and as a cosmic victory.”

A vigorous discussion with Rev. Ron Penner prompted me to read Gustav Aulen’s *Christus Victor* (Oregon: 1931 SPCK; reprinted, Wipf and Stock, 2003), with time afforded by spending two nights in my car in May 2004 stranded in a snowstorm at Brandon, Man. That, along with a response to a query about Aulen sent to a Lutheran seminary professor (Aulen was a Lutheran) and wider reading, has strengthened my recognition of the biblical basis for Christus Victor and moral influence views, while retaining penal substitutionary atonement as a necessary major biblical emphasis.

34 One has to be careful here. Levi Miller’s position is that non-resistant Christians can hesitate to influence government and that “ironies and inconsistencies abound” (*Persistence of non-resistance, Mennonite Weekly Review*, date and page number unavailable). By that view, the majority of the class could have been saying, “It’s proper for Canada to go to war” without saying “Anabaptist Christians should go to war.” The wording of the question was not, “Can Christians properly fight in the Iraq War?”

church in spite of the difference.^{35,36} This position seems to reflect the later practice of the EMC, and likely reflected its earlier practice in many circles. Pacifism (pro and con) is a hot-button issue in *The Messenger*, and I have previously suggested in print that some EMCers keep the “peace” by not talking about war.³⁷

Perhaps here, though, Hubmaier’s presence could assist us to be more open and specific in discussion. The Schleithem Confession was written in February 1527, while Hubmaier’s *On the Sword* is dated four months later.³⁸ Such differing writings within the same year by early Anabaptists can remind us that Christians, even Anabaptists, can and do disagree on whether Christians can use force or their degree of proper involvement in the state.

To pacifists, the question could be, “What do you do with Hubmaier?” To non-pacifists, it could be said, “That sounds a bit like Hubmaier” (with further exploration on the extent and limits he placed on Christian involvement in the

state and force). In short, “What do we do with Hubmaier?” becomes “What do we do with each other?” Hubmaier could be used to search for common ground between believers with “all” (Christians who fight in any war endorsed by government) or “nothing” (Christians who refuse to fight in any war) positions. Hubmaier did not say Christians should simply go to war whenever the government said so; he held that states, and Christians as part of them, could be involved in defensive wars.³⁹

It is unlikely that any position other than an endorsement of (or rejection of) non-resistance will please some people. However, there is a sizeable middle group that could be helped to explore issues by more open discussion. Some Christians could well learn that they need to be at least selective conscientious objectors.⁴⁰ Others might become more aware of moral dilemmas that they face with a non-resistant, pacifist, or defensive war position.

Within this, it could be useful to

It is unlikely that any position other than an endorsement of (or rejection of) non-resistance will please some people. However, there is a sizeable middle group that could be helped to explore issues by more open discussion.

consider how this Anabaptist leader and theologian was both dependent upon, and critical of, the state: “I have more earnestly than any preacher within twenty miles treated Scripture concerning the righteous government. However, I have also shown the tyrants their vices; therefore there comes envy, hate, and enmity.”⁴¹ And Hubmaier’s experience with the state could also illustrate the ambiguities of being involved with the state. Writers comment on the irony or paradox that while Hubmaier defended the state, the state did not defend him, but took his life.⁴²

Hubmaier held a “mediating position among the Anabaptists to the end of his life.”⁴³ He has been and can be of influence beyond his lifetime. Perhaps he can have a “mediating” role yet.

Another nudge toward Hubmaier’s assisting the EMC to examine its theological identity came on March 30, 2005, from Dr. Terry Tiessen, of Providence Theological Seminary and Kleefeld EMC, in a letter to *The Messenger*.

He wants the conference to expand its reflection to “reconsider what sort of Anabaptist one has to be as a card-carrying EMCer. Currently, we have a position which identifies us with the kind of Anabaptism that was expressed in the Schleithem Confession and later affirmed by Menno...A different understanding exists in the Anabaptist theology of Balthasar Hubmaier” who believed that “Christians who served God in State leadership were not prevented from using the sword in fulfilling the role that God has given to the State, the preservation of civil order, including the defence of citizens against attack from another State.”

Beyond “an examination of the significance of being Evangelical and Anabaptist,” he says, “perhaps a broader examination may develop and we might

35 Edwin Friesen, *When Potential Members Don't Quite "Fit,"* EMC Ministerial presentation, May 2, 1987, p. 3

36 The Ministerial Examination Committee, Board of Leadership and Outreach, interviews candidates for the diaconate and for ministerial commissioning or ordination. If a person disagrees with non-resistance, or pacifism, this might be discussed and perhaps noted in a letter sent to the local church. However, if a person is willing to learn and to not “undermine the peace position,” they are still affirmed for service. What is defined as undermining is unclear, though it would seem to, at least, include counselling going to war from the pulpit. Follow-up in both accountability of and instruction of ministers who are not non-resistant or pacifist (the two are not the same, though non-resistance can involve the latter) is weak.

37 The history and culture of the EMC’s five earliest churches is quite different than those formed out of the Western Gospel Mission (1945-1961). Within the conference, there are churches that openly identify with Anabaptism (often expressing it within an inherited merging with Low German culture—both considered *Mennonite*). Other churches, both coming from the Western Gospel Mission and official EMC efforts, often seem to function as community evangelical churches. Though ministers and members vary, generally they seem to show less of a commitment to Anabaptism (originating in a movement that was more focused on evangelism than in a fuller theological identity).

38 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 493–494

39 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 519

40 See my editorial *Selective conscientious objectors and the law* (Jan. 12, 2005, *The Messenger*, p. 2). The editorial is indebted to John H. Yoder, Lutheran scholar Reinhard Hutter (in a book edited by Yoder), and an Anglican statement obtained from the Internet. The editorial has generated no response.

41 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 495, note a

42 At the same time, it can be recognized that “separatist nonresistance” became established after the Schleithem Confession, and that it survived other views because it was the most “realistic” view for that time (James Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, second ed., Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976, xv, xxi–xxii). There can be a time and a place for non-resistance (e.g., when all one can do is flee or to stand and endure suffering). Hubmaier held that Christians can seek to escape from a poor ruler, but “if the seeking of another cannot be done lawfully and peacefully, and not also without great damage and rebellion, then one must endure it” (Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 520–521). Saying there is a time and a place for non-resistance is, though, for Hubmaier quite different than saying it is a standard for all times, places, and situations.

As for the gap between theory of justifying violence and the practice, one can look at the writings of Colin Morris, a Methodist minister who saw church union of relative unimportance compared to the “problem of the world’s starving peoples” in *Include Me Out!* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), and a year later defended the use of rebel force against the government of Zambia in *Unyoung, Uncoloured, Unpoor* (London: Epworth Press, 1969). Looking at the experience of neighbouring Zimbabwe/former Rhodesia, political independence and the overthrow of wealthier landowners does not automatically result in justice or better living conditions for most of its citizens.

43 Bergsten, p. 245

ask ourselves how much of our traditional association with a particular form of Anabaptism (Schleitheim and Menno) we wish to insist upon as essential to our identity as a company of followers of Jesus. Or, maybe not. Just wondering" (letter published in *The Messenger*, April 20, 2005).⁴⁴

Tiessen is perhaps wanting to make official what appears to be an unofficial practice. My concern, however, is elsewhere: Relative silence on the area of the Christian and the use of force does not protect or promote any peace teaching as much as is intended. Silence does not educate.

Whether the conference can helpfully hold such a discussion on a national level is unclear. It has struggled to discuss divorce/remarriage and women in church leadership in relatively recent years—and, as commonly interpreted, non-resistance is more central to post-Schleitheim Anabaptist identity than these issues. Still, to assume there is more theological unity than exists on this matter is also a problem.

The honesty of his pilgrimage

A further area that Hubmaier can assist the EMC and other churches today is in a more balanced consideration of

While Mennonite church members today might consider Anabaptist martyrs to be fearless proclaimers, stories of people who returned to the state church are barely mentioned. The implication is that such people are considered Christ deniers.

discipleship that includes suffering for Christ.

Hubmaier shuddered in the face of martyrdom. He recanted before Zurich council, then balked at repeating his recantation in a Zurich church.⁴⁵ What do we make of this? Christians have both pondered Jesus' warning that they will be persecuted by religious and political leaders and been comforted by the assurance "this will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words of wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict...But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life" (Luke 21:12-19).

44 Terry Tiessen responded to the editorial *Exploring our theology* (*The Messenger*, March 9, 2005, p. 2) on the work of the Evangelical Anabaptist Committee (letter, dated March 30, 2005).

45 Moore, pp. 206-207

46 Moore, pp. 236, 239

47 Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 151, 155

48 Moore, p. 207

49 However, the context of Jesus' promise is to witness before non-Christians, and the wisdom promised is to declare Him. Hubmaier, like other Anabaptists, was testifying before (mostly or sometimes) Christians and Christian leaders, and he was not testifying about Christ (though He was at the centre of his faith). He was defending aspects of how Christ was to be followed. Among Christians, the witness to unbelievers is through love and unity (John 13:35; 17:23) and to decide so that "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28).

50 Bergsten, p. 43

51 The issue of martyrdom, in an inter-church context, remains a question for me. Did the prosecutors recognize the people before them, or at least some of them, were Christians, though seen as flawed in theology and practice? Is Hubmaier's denying an Anabaptist conviction the same as denying his Lord? Not necessarily. One does not need to be Anabaptist to be Christian. Was Hubmaier asked to deny his brothers and sisters in the Anabaptist portion of the fold? He did not disown his brothers and sisters, though he sometimes was prepared to say that he sometimes taught in error.

How fair is it to judge whether Hubmaier is a true Anabaptist by how he stands under persecution? The central question in persecution is whether Christ is upheld, not if Anabaptist tenets are upheld. The two are not identical.

52 See Paul Marshall, *Their Blood Cries Out!* (Vancouver: Word, 1997) for confirmation of Christian persecution in the world. I have no dependable source for the statement of the extent of persecution of Christians in the 20th century compared to earlier centuries. As Michael Horowitz says in the preface to Marshall's book, "Tales of Christian martyrdom may in the comfortable worlds of Western Christians seem more suited to biblical texts and ancient Roman history than to evening newscasts, more a product of mission-board puffery than hard fact" (Marshall, xxii). Horowitz, however, is challenging this view and endorsing Marshall's book.

53 Hymn 423, *Favorite Hymns of Praise*, Illinois: Tabernacle, 1976

54 This was the hymnbook used during my days at Steinbach Bible College.

However, there appears to be little peace in Hubmaier's experience. He struggled in his writings from prison to find a theological and practical balance between saying enough to please his accusers and yet retain enough of a difference to affirm his continuing Anabaptist identity.⁴⁶ Far from his persecutors bowing to Hubmaier's wisdom, Zwingli wrote to Capito, "I met the fellow and rendered him as mute as a fish."⁴⁷ And when placed on the rack, Hubmaier said what was asked—"that the devil had inspired his statements" of rejecting his recantation.^{48,49}

While Mennonite church members today might consider Anabaptist martyrs to be fearless proclaimers, stories of people who struggled or returned to the state church (such as Obbe Philips, baptizer of Menno Simons) are barely mentioned. The implication is that such people are considered Christ deniers. Bergsten says Yoder attempts to distinguish Hubmaier from real Anabaptists by saying "under persecution...Hubmaier did not show the same courage as they did."⁵⁰ One has to seriously question this definition of who is a true Anabaptist.⁵¹

The suffering that occurred within the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation is today far removed from the experience of most European and North American Mennonite church members. Apart from tensions during two World Wars in Canada, most EMCers must look back generations to see when blood was at risk. Suffering is a relic within this mostly middle-class denomination. Yet it's said that more Christians have been martyred in the last full century than any other.⁵²

We sing Frederick W. Faber's *Faith of Our Fathers* without due caution: *Faith of our fathers! Living still/In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword:/Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy/ When-e'er we hear that glorious word!/ Faith of our fathers! Holy faith!/We will be true to thee till death.* And consider the second verse: *Our fathers chained in prisons dark,/Were still in heart and conscience free:/How sweet would be their children's fate,/If they, like them, could die for thee!* [my emphasis].^{53,54}

Hubmaier exhibits how a Christian can stumble under pressure—ironically, from fellow Christians—in following the Lord. Peter and the other disciples, who equally proclaimed their faithfulness to Christ, fell. Hubmaier challenges Christians who think it is easy to decide

to be a martyr. It's easy to answer the questions to *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* when we don't sit on the hot seat!⁵⁵

Relatedly, James Reimer takes Robert Friedmann to task for making the "astounding claim that for Anabaptists there was no such thing as post-conversion doubt and anxiety in the Lutheran sense. Anabaptism, Friedmann claims, 'does not experience an on-going *Anfechtung* (inner doubt), no feeling of despair or, worse, of perdition, but rather the exact opposite: the *certainty* of resting in God's gracious hands, of being called

and able to respond to this call.'" Reimer says that his personal experience is closer to Luther⁵⁶ and so is mine. I submit that Hubmaier is an Anabaptist that does not fit Friedmann's pattern.⁵⁷

In an exposition of *Lead us not into temptation* within The Lord's Prayer, Hubmaier writes, "Consider also our human weakness. Therefore, O sweet Father, we pray thee for the sake of thy fatherly love that thou mightest not abandon us in our pain and suffering and that we might not be overcome, nor fall away from thy holy Word. Let us not be tested harder than we are able to bear."⁵⁸

During his life and at his time of death, Hubmaier made a confession of faith in Jesus that needs to be respected. Even on the rack he did not curse Christ, and in his death he was no thief on the cross (no last minute follower) or prodigal returned to the fold of Christ.

55 I do not claim that this analogy is original with me. This might be from A. James Reimer's *The Dogmatic Imagination* somewhere.

56 Reimer, pp. 166, 325

57 For Friedmann's direct statement, see *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1973), p. 29. To be fair, Friedmann says in an earlier paragraph, "In brief, one senses their assurance of being authentic disciples of Christ. *All of this did not last indefinitely, perhaps not more than three generations (as was also the case with the early Christians)*" (p. 29, my emphasis). There are, of course, modern discussions within some Mennonite circles—the Old Colony Church, for instance—where assurance of salvation is considered presumptuous, and the best one can do is to hope one is found faithful by divine judgment. By Friedmann's interpretation, the Old Colony Church has fallen far short of early Anabaptist security in Christ, though it is not alone in this.

58 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 243. See n. 6, "Bergsten...correctly sees in this passage a parallel to the recognition of Hubmaier's possible weakness in the face of coming persecution"

59 Pipkin and Yoder, p. 494

60 Moore, pp. 207, 209

61 For additional examples, see *An Earnest Christian Appeal to Schaffhausen*, one petition and three appeals by Hubmaier to the council of Schaffhausen (Pipkin and Yoder, pp. 37-48).

62 Moore, p. 241

63 Bergsten, p. 39

64 Thomas Finger cautions us that, given early Anabaptism's diversity, one has to be careful how one uses Anabaptist history and teaching to endorse our position. "Historic Anabaptism espoused many unpalatable views (e.g. violent revolution). To simply claim Anabaptism for one's position is to obscure one's real reasons for accepting some views but not others" (Finger, p. 395). In short, it's possible to choose Hubmaier to support one's views, when one does not hold views because of him.

One can be generally against war without being non-resistant. On this, one can review the horrors of war in William Craig, *Enemy at the Gates: The Battle for Stalingrad* (USA: Konecky & Konecky, 1973).

There is a role as a bridge builder between people who reject pacifism (but haven't thought about specific cases when Christians should not go to war) and people who affirm pacifism "because this has always been the Anabaptist position." In *Is anything in between?* (*The Christian Leader*, January 2002, p. 15) John Warkentin says he strives in church membership class to say "a commitment to peace is best understood as a continuum." A pastoral goal is to help Christians along the continuum.

Further, because of my church background, indebtedness to and essential need for the wider Church, I am more comfortable with Hubmaier's use of The Apostles' Creed than the desire to set it aside. Within Evangelical and Anabaptist circles I have sometimes felt a truncated sense of church history. James Reimer speaks of people who value the apostles, dip into the 16th century, and then move into today, confirming a view I had previously (Reimer, page not located). Hubmaier does not fall into this theological and historical myopia.

Stayer, for instance, says, "The picture of a peaceful, biblicist, sectarian and separatist Anabaptism continues to be revised, because historians sympathetic to Anabaptism were in the past too often unwilling to study unedifying 'fringe phenomena'" (Stayer, xii).

He ran from his accusers, sought political protection,⁵⁹ compromised, and recanted—whether the latter was genuine or not is disputed.^{60,61} Yet despite his compromises, Hubmaier, like the Apostle Peter (according to early tradition) did eventually triumph at his martyrdom. When executioners rubbed sulphur and gunpowder into his beard, Balthasar joked, "O salt me well, salt me well." He cried out for brotherly prayer support that he might suffer patiently. When fire lapped near him, he cried out, "Oh my heavenly Father, O my gracious Lord." And when his beard began to burn, he said, "O Jesus, Jesus!"⁶² Like William Carey, he was a "plodder" in the right direction. The Lord, in the end, gave him strength.

During his life and at his time of death, Hubmaier made a confession of faith in Jesus that needs to be respected. Even on the rack he did not curse Christ, and in his death he was no thief on the cross (no last minute follower) or prodigal returned to the fold of Christ.

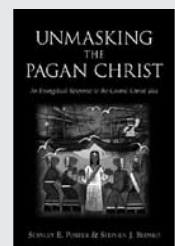
The abiding contributions of Hubmaier

Hubmaier held to many views taught and upheld in general Protestantism. He influenced early Anabaptism and the later Free Church Movement. Hubmaier is greatly respected in Baptist circles,⁶³ and in some Anabaptist circles there is a somewhat begrudging respect.

Hubmaier will perhaps remain a disturbing figure to those who hold a neat post-Schleitheim package of what is involved in *The Anabaptist Vision*, but, as James Stayer would remind us, neat packages are sometimes historically inaccurate and less useful.⁶⁴

Rather than silence Hubmaier, we can use him as a bridge to discuss an area where silence has not served us well.

In *Theodidaktos* (December 2006) was a review of *The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light*, Tom Harpur (Thomas Allen, 2004). The book was not endorsed by the reviewer. A useful response is *Unmasking the Pagan Christ: An Evangelical Response to the Cosmic Christ Idea*, Stanley E. Porter and Stephen J. Bedard (Clements, 2006), 169 pp., \$25.99. ISBN 1-894667-71-9.



Complementarianism: The Biblical Middle

Matthew F. Plett

Matthew F. Plett is a member of Prairie Rose EMC in Landmark, Man.

In recent years controversy regarding gender roles has been felt throughout the Christian Church. Especially since the 1970s, there has been pressure to abandon traditional gender roles in both the home and the church. The traditional position, which affirms male headship, has often been rejected because of real and perceived abuse. It is accused of being chauvinistic and rooted in tradition and culture.

Initially the domain of theological liberals, today Christian feminism has become a relevant issue even among evangelicals. Up until very recent history, it has simply been understood by Christians that men are to take primary leadership in the home and in the church. As a result, it was not necessary for theologians to spend much time on this issue. In fact, until the recent past, the issue has hardly been addressed at all in confessions of faith, systematic theologies, or church constitutions.

Under increasing pressure, however, evangelical denominations are being forced to clarify their position,

with a majority reaffirming the complementarian position,¹ and some accepting egalitarianism. The resultant debate has become so vigorous that it has sometimes played a key role in denominational fractures and the formation of new denominations. The topic is relevant within the EMC as our Constitution reveals a complementarian position,² and this position has been debated in recent years.

Before going further, it is important to clarify several key terms in relation to this discussion:

Chauvinism is the view that men are ontologically superior to women. While there are unfortunate examples of chauvinism in the history of the church, no serious church group or theologian holds this position. Nevertheless, egalitarians frequently label complementarians as chauvinists.³

Complementarianism is the belief that men and women are ontological equals. It recognizes a distinction between essence and function (i.e. office). It asserts that gender distinctions are primarily in-

born and regulated by Scriptural norms. Specifically, it says that men are to take primary leadership in the home and in the church (i.e. elder-type roles in the church are reserved for men).⁴

Egalitarianism is the belief that gender distinctions are primarily cultural. Egalitarianism asserts that either men or women can fill all roles in the home and in the church, including elder-type roles.⁵

The complementarian position can be succinctly summarized like this: 1) God created men and women as equals designed for different roles (Genesis 2:18–25; 1 Corinthians 11:7–12); 2) church leadership has uniformly been provided by males throughout Scripture and from the time of the apostles up until the latter part of the 20th century; 3) Jesus Christ came as a man and recognized the full equality, intelligence, and dignity of women while at the same time affirming male headship in His choosing of 12 male disciples; and 4) clear instructions are given in the New Testament affirming that men, following the example of Jesus Christ, are to provide gentle, considerate, loving, servant leadership in the home and in the church (Ephesians 5:22–33; Colossians 3:18–19; 1 Corinthians 14:33–35; 1 Timothy 2:11–14).

Additionally, where lists are given concerning qualifications of church elders, the lists are male-exclusive (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5). Contrary to criticism, the complementarian position is not built upon a few selective proof-texts. Rather, complementarianism is seemingly the only position able to satisfactorily account for the *entire* thrust of equality *and* functional difference that is found in the biblical text and in God's creative intent. Complementarians contend that when men and women celebrate their masculinity and femininity, genuine gender harmony can be enjoyed. They affirm that there are few things in life as beautiful, mystical, fulfilling, deeply satisfying, and profoundly beautiful as men and women affirming one another, loving and respecting one another, and

1 Examples of church groups that practice complementarianism include (the strong majority of these have either a) newly introduced a complementarian position where there was either no position or an egalitarian position or b) intentionally reaffirmed an existing complementarian position): Baptist General Conference; Conservative Baptist Association of America, General Association of Regular Baptists, Southern Baptist Convention, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Free Church, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Lutheran Church – Canada, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Missionary Church of America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church in America, Evangelical Reformed Presbyterian Church, Bible Presbyterian Church, Canadian Reformed Church, United Reformed Church, Sovereign Grace Ministries, and a majority of Mennonite groups, including the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations, and Conservative Mennonite Church. Of particular interest is the Southern Baptist Convention, which at over 16 million members is the largest and one of the fastest growing evangelical bodies in North America. Ordination of women was a watershed issue in the denomination (along with homosexuality and abortion) in the 1970s when the SBC reversed its course of theological liberalism. At the time the SBC adopted a complementarian position a number of local churches had been ordaining women.

2 The EMC Constitution states, "The pastor or leading minister of a local church should be a male" and further, that "Ministers may be elected from the male members" *EMC Constitution* (1994), 24.

3 Arden Thiessen goes so far as to describe the complementarian position as being "male supremicist." (Arden Thiessen, *The Biblical Case for Equality*, 2002, 12).

4 Perhaps the best and most thorough statement on complementarianism is the Danvers Statement found online at www.cbmw.org/about/danvers.php.

5 An overview of the egalitarian position can be found online at www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/who_we_are.shtml.

In the context of a perfect, sinless creation, God intended for considerate, loving male leadership.

fully celebrating their complementary differences.⁶

Rather than expounding on these points, it is the primary purpose of this paper to directly interact with claims made by egalitarians. Several common egalitarian assertions are dealt with in what follows.

1) Male “domination” is part of the curse⁷

While it is true that male leadership, in the sense of *domination* or *oppression* or *superiority* is a result of the fall, God’s plan for loving male headship was part of Creation, before the fall. This means that in the context of a perfect, sinless creation, God intended for considerate, loving male leadership. We can find at least ten examples that show this to be true:

- a) Adam was created first (Genesis 2:7, 18–23). Paul appeals to this fact in 1 Timothy 2:13 when clarifying to Timothy the appropriate roles for men and women in the church.
- b) Adam represents the entirety of humanity (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49; Romans 5:12–21).
- c) Adam named Eve, not vice-versa (Genesis 2:23).
- d) God called humans “Man” (Genesis 5:2).
- e) God held Adam accountable after the Fall, even though Eve sinned first (Genesis 3:9).
- f) Eve, while of full equality and value to God, was created for a separate purpose than Adam, namely, that of a help-mate (Genesis 2:18, 1 Corinthians 11:9).



- g) The curse *distorted* existing gender roles, it did not create new ones (Genesis 3:16).
- h) The new life, in Jesus Christ, offers a restoration of the pre-Fall gender roles of gentle, loving male headship and intelligent female submission; it does not nullify them (Colossians 3:18–19).
- i) Gender roles in marriage have symbolized the relationship of Jesus Christ and His church, affirming again, that God’s plan in creation was inherently good, not evil (Ephesians 5:32–33).
- j) The male-female dynamic is compared to the Trinity in its *equality, difference of function, and unity*, affirming again that this is something beautiful, not something that is oppressive or evil (1 Corinthians 11:3).⁸

2) Deborah was an Old Testament leader⁹

Surely Deborah was and continues to be an important character in Scripture.

The fact that she was also a woman should not in any way allow us to hold a diminished view of her. This is what the Bible tells us about Deborah:

- a) She was a “prophetess,” or a “judge” (Judges 4:4). It is important to distinguish between *prophesying* and the *teaching of Scripture*. The two are clearly separate functions; in fact they are always mentioned as separate gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:6–7, 1 Corinthians 12:28).
- b) Nowhere does Scripture say that Deborah was a priest, or that she was involved in teaching Scripture to the assembly.
- c) Deborah affirmed male leadership; in fact, she summoned a man to take authority (Judges 4:6,14), and even rebukes and ridicules Barak when he asks Deborah to join him in battle (Judges 4:9).
- d) The fact that Scripture makes so many references to Deborah’s femaleness (Judges 4:5) shows that clearly there is something abnormal about this situation. Deborah is the only judge mentioned in Judges who is not specifically mentioned as being called by God or the Holy Spirit (Judges 3:9, 15; 6:14; 11:29; 13:24–25). This does not mean that God did not use Deborah, but it does show a void of male leadership and passivity by such men as Barak. Deborah’s example should invite godly women to encourage men to take the leadership that God has called them to, just as she did.

6 Some make extreme and unhelpful allegations that complementarianism leads to abuse. This is an inflammatory accusation and is unhelpful in the discussion on gender roles. The complementarian Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood has issued a statement on abuse that is available on its website found here: www.cbmw.org/resources/articles/abuse_statement.php. It is both curious and unfortunate that Christians for Biblical Equality (the egalitarian counterpart to CBMW) would not jointly release this anti-abuse statement with CBMW (www.cbmw.com/journal/editions/1-1.pdf).

7 This view is suggested by Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church*, (2000), 99–101; and Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, (1985), 21–37.

8 Adapted from Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (2004), Ch. 1. This book is referenced at several points throughout this article.

9 Bilezikian, for example, extends this argument to say that women should function as church elders (*Beyond Sex Roles*, 70–71).

3) Junia(s) was a female apostle¹⁰

Romans 16:7 says: "*Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.*"

a) The Greek name *Iouinian* could be understood as either a man's name (Junias) or a woman's name (Junia), just as names like Pat, Kim or Chris are today. Historians are disagreed over the gender of this person, but there are notable ancient church scholars who believed Junias was a man, namely Origen,¹¹ probably the most prolific early church scholar, and Epiphaneus. Epiphaneus is the only scholar to know something about Junias in addition to what is said in Romans 16:7, namely that Junias became a bishop, a position available only to men in the early church.¹² The fact that Epiphaneus knows additional information about Junias perhaps makes his testimony the most compelling of the early church fathers.

b) "*well known to the apostles*" (ESV) sometimes translated "*of note among the apostles*" (NKJV). This either means that these "kinsmen" of Paul were 1) apostles of note, or 2) known to the apostles even though they themselves were not apostles. While the most current research on Greek grammar supports the "well known to" translation,¹³ the meaning of this verse is not necessarily different in the two translations.

c) "Apostle" can describe four categories of people. It can describe 1) the Twelve, 2) a minister specially called by Christ (e.g. Paul, James, and Barnabas), 3) a messenger, or 4) a person who had seen Christ after He had risen from the dead. So, even if Junia(s) was an apostle by one of the preceding definitions, it is not certain that he/she held an authoritative elder role, as the elder-type authority is not inherent in the latter two definitions. In fact, it is impossible to know with certainty which definition of "apostle" is intended. Since we do not know whether or not Junia(s) even was an apostle, or

which category of apostle is intended, and since the gender of this person is unknown, we can conclude nothing definitively. The text does not give us sufficient information to build upon it a theological position that contradicts other seemingly straightforward passages found elsewhere in Scripture.

d) Lastly, this argument and others like it start to expose significant weakness in the egalitarian position, as it seeks to understand plainly and clearly worded passages (Genesis 2; 1 Corinthians 14:33–36; Ephesians 5:21–33; Colossians 3:18–19; 1 Timothy 2:11–15; 1 Peter 3:1–7) through a single verse which tells us very little about the subject at hand, and which is dependent on

Since we do not know whether or not Junia(s) even was an apostle, or which category of apostle is intended, and since the gender of this person is unknown, we can conclude nothing definitively.

no less than three very significant uncertainties. It is a possibility, built upon an improbability, built upon an uncertainty. The evidence in this claim is insufficient.

4) Phoebe was a "leader" or a "ruler" in Romans 16:1

a) The word in question is *prostatis*. Generally accepted translations of this word are "servant" or "helper" (KJV, NKJV, ESV, NIV, NASB). Some suggest translating the word "to stand before or over."¹⁴

b) This translation is not found in any English translation of the Bible. Therefore, we should be hesitant to accept it. In fact, it is probably a good

rule of thumb to not accept any novel translation of a word that has not been accepted by Bible translators and has no references or source citations to support it. *Prostatis* as "stand over" or "stand before" appears to be an invention, not a translation.

c) The most recent Greek research supports the translation of "helper" or "patron."¹⁵

d) This argument would also make Phoebe a leader over Paul, and Paul is clear that he believed no leader ruled over his apostleship (Galatians 1:1, 11–14; 2:6).

e) The argument is actually a "sleight of hand." Spencer says that Paul *uses the verb form of the word* to describe the governing of elders, etc. This assumes that the noun *prostatis* and the verb *proistemi* must by necessity take the same meaning. Related words do not necessarily take on all the meanings of other related words. For example "the word *butterfly* is related to *butter* and *fly*, but that does not mean that *butterfly* means 'a pound of butter that has learned to fly.'¹⁶ The verb *proistemi* can mean: "to have interest in, care for, give aid, or show concern for."¹⁷ Even if we grant that related verbs and nouns can sometimes convey similar meanings, the context of Romans 16:2 dictates that the meaning of the noun *prostatis* has to do with serving and helping, not with "ruling of elders." To be very clear, Paul uses the noun, not the verb. Our understanding of this passage needs to reflect what Paul actually says, not what he doesn't say.

f) Some believe Phoebe was a deacon. The word *diakonos* can mean specifically a deacon, or more generally, any servant in the church. Today, just as in the early church, not *all* who serve are deacons. Either way, given the context, even if Phoebe was a deacon, and that is far from certain, there is no proof that she held an elder-type office, as deacons do not necessarily function as elders, as is evident in many church government structures. Phoebe's precise position is uncertain, and vague descriptions are an inadequate basis to formulate theological positions.

5) Nympha and Apphia were pastors¹⁸

a) Colossians 4:15 says: "*Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.*"

b) Philemon 2 says: "*and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house*"

10 This claim is made by Aida Spencer, *Beyond the Curse* (1985), 102

11 Origen, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 14, col. 1289

12 Epiphanius, *Index disciplinorum*, 125.19–20

13 M.H. Burer and D.B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Reexamination of Romans 16:7", *New Testament Studies* 47, (2001), 76–91.

14 Among those who hold this view is Aida Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 115–116.

15 BDAG lexicon, 885; Louw-Nida lexicon, 1.459

16 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 222.

17 BDAG, 870

18 See Belleville, *Women in Ministry*, 95

c) These two verses are all we hear about these women. Nothing more. It does not follow that because the church met at their homes, that they were automatically pastors. This interpretation is not based on what Scripture says, but rather on what it does not say. Perhaps the reason the assembly met at the homes of Nympha and Apphia is because they had the largest living rooms! The truth is that we do not know why the church met at their homes because the Bible does not say.

6) Priscilla is named before Aquila

- a) Some claim that because Priscilla is sometimes named before Aquila (Acts 18:18; 18:26; Romans 16:3), this means that she was the leader of their ministry team.¹⁹
- b) But, the ordering of names does not prove that Priscilla was an elder in the church, as some suggest. The ordering is not even always the same. For example, in Acts 18:2 and 1 Corinthians 16:19, Aquila is mentioned first. When Priscilla is named first, it is likely due to the fact that she came from a higher social category than her husband, or because she was converted before Aquila.²⁰
- c) We do know that Priscilla was a bright, intelligent, godly woman. In fact, she was an example to Paul. If there is any example of a woman in Scripture who had the gifts and the intelligence to teach men in an authoritative fashion, it would have surely been Priscilla. The church Priscilla belonged to was the church at Ephesus, the same church that was home to Timothy. Yet Paul's instruction for women not to teach or have authority over men was written

to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:12), in the same church where Priscilla was a member. The argument that women were uneducated and therefore not allowed to teach men is inconsistent with what we know about Priscilla.²¹ Egalitarians rarely, if ever discuss the relationship of Priscilla to 1 Timothy 2:12. In whatever way that Priscilla was a godly example to Paul (as godly women are an example to men today), there is no indication that Priscilla served as an elder over Paul or any other men, or that she was involved in a public teaching ministry. Giving private encouragement and counsel is not tantamount to exercising elder-type leadership.

7) Jesus liberated women

- a) Correct, Jesus' treatment of women was countercultural in many ways. For example, He was accompanied by women, He taught women, and women (who were not considered worthy witnesses in the days of Jesus) were first to attest to His resurrection.
- b) But, where does Jesus undermine the gender roles and distinctions established in the creation order? One would have to simply *assume*, rather than *demonstrate* that Jesus wanted to overturn gender roles in marriage or in the church, for there are no words or actions of Jesus to that effect.
- c) In fact, Jesus chose twelve men to shepherd with him. This is significant, as He could very well have chosen several, or at the very least, *one* woman, yet He did not do so. To say that this was because of a cultural restriction is to also nullify point "a" above.²² Jesus *always* broke with

Jesus' treatment of women was countercultural in many ways. But, where does Jesus undermine the gender roles and distinctions established in the creation order?

culture when necessary to demonstrate God's will and justice. In fact, Jesus asks the Pharisees, "Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?" in Matthew 15:3. One cannot simultaneously claim that Jesus turned the culture upside-down and that He made serious concessions to the culture. *Rather than reinventing Jesus as the first feminist, it would be more accurate to view Jesus as the perfect complementarian.*

d) To say that Jesus offered a concession to the culture of the day in this area is to also draw the absurd conclusion that modern day Christians must complete and perfect what Jesus Christ did not. It is then also to say that somehow *we must know more about justice and ethics than the Lord of the universe.* What other areas of Jesus' ministry are insufficient and in need of our help?

8) Paul's appeal to Creation in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 order is situational, not timeless²³

- a) Creation is the starting point of man and woman's relationship to God, and is equally relevant to all people, in all places, at all times. Creation by, and therefore, ultimate accountability to God is one thing that every man and woman, past, present, and future, has in common.
- b) It is therefore unreasonable to say that Paul's appeal to this event, which is fixed in time and is supra cultural, is crafted only for a specific situation.
- c) To illustrate, the Creation event helps Christians to understand our origin, our value, our relationship to God, our duty (Genesis 1); it helps us to understand our sinfulness (Genesis 1; Romans 5:12-21) and even atonement through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-21).
- d) So, to say that a gender-based argument rooted in Creation is situational and temporary is also to cast these concepts into serious doubt.
- e) If one were to take this position, then in Romans 5 (where Paul also appeals

19 Stanley Grenz, *Women in the Church* (1995), 82.

20 F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, (1973), 271, and C.E.B. Cranfield, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans*, (1979), 2:784.

21 Egalitarians frequently claim that the reason the Bible reserves elder-type roles for males is because females were uneducated. Yet, this argument does not fit with what we know about Priscilla and other *educated, intelligent women*, or with Jesus choosing *uneducated men* as apostles. Additionally, why would Paul not clearly restrict only the *uneducated* women from the ministry rather than *women in general*, and avoid possible confusion? If he had wanted to, he could have done this, but the fact is that he did not. Why restrict *all* women because *some*, or even *most*, were uneducated? Clearly, uneducated men were a part of the early church, but Paul does not offer a blanket restriction on *all* men from the ministry on account of *some*. There is no reason to believe that educational status is in view in any of the texts that deal with gender based roles in church ministry. To the contrary, God tells us that He shows no partiality and repeatedly shows that education level and social status are *not* of primary importance to Him in the way He works in the world (Deuteronomy 10:17; Job 34:19, 24; Psalm 8:2; Matthew 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:20, 26-31; 2:6; Galatians 2:6; James 2:5).

22 Arden Thiessen suggests that the reason for male apostles is because of Jesus' "wandering lifestyle" (*The Biblical Case for Equality*, 88). Yet, this explanation is unsatisfactory because we know that women did, in fact, travel with Jesus (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3; 23:49, 55).

23 William Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* (2001), 124-125.

to Creation to prove that his point applies to *all* humanity) wouldn't they also have to say that Paul's teaching on human sinfulness (i.e. original sin) and atonement through Christ Jesus is situational, applying only to first century Roman people? This would seem a natural and logical extension of this argument about gender distinctives.

- f) So, is Paul's appeal to Creation, on the issue of gender, timeless? A good answer would be: As long as men and women are created by, and accountable to God, and as long as men and women descend from Adam and Eve, then yes, gender roles and distinctives are timeless and universal.
- g) Finally, the fact that Paul appeals to Creation in order to argue for the continuation of gender roles makes it impossible to compare complementarianism to slavery, as some have attempted.²⁴ For, while the Bible *regulates* slavery, it nowhere *prescribes* its continuation. Also

significant is the fact that Jesus Christ practiced complementarianism while He did not practice slavery. It should also be noted that while egalitarians frequently accuse complementarians of following in the footsteps of Christians who defended slavery in the 19th century, the reverse might actually be true in at least one way. Both egalitarians and 19th century pro-slavery Christians "use verses from the Bible to justify something contrary to Scripture that is popular in their own culture."²⁵

9) The women in 1 Corinthians 14 were told to be silent because they were being disruptive²⁶

- a) This assertion about disruptive women seems to be the egalitarian consensus on 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul admonishes the women to be silent when prophecy was being judged by the assembly.²⁷
- b) However, there is nothing that suggests this either inside or outside of Scripture. It is merely assumed without

proof.²⁸

- c) Even if the Corinthian women were being disruptive, this does not explain why Paul extends his teaching to "all the churches of the saints" (vv. 33–34).
- d) Also, this theory does not fit with Paul's admonition. Why does Paul teach complete silence rather than simply encouraging "order," and why does he give his teaching to women *in general* rather than only those women who were being disorderly? Surely, if there had been disorder in the church, some men would have been guilty as well, yet Paul does not teach that *all men* were to be silent. To silence *all* women on account of the behaviour of *some* women, and to entirely exclude men from his instruction would have been most unfair, and inconsistent with what we know about Paul.
- e) Lastly, the reason Paul gives for his teaching is not "disruptive, noisy women," but "the Law" (v. 34).

10) Galatians 3:28—neither male nor female

- a) This is probably the most common egalitarian argument.
- b) The context deals with justification by faith (v. 24–26) and the application of baptism (v. 27). The text does *not* assert that the categories of male and female, Jew or Greek, or slave and free don't exist; rather, it says that these different people have equal access to justification through faith and baptism, and are to be united and viewed as equals despite their differences.
- c) This argument is misguided because, intentionally or not, it confuses function (what we do) with essence (who we are in Christ). We know from Paul's analogy of one body and many parts (1 Corinthians 12) that not all Christian equals are to fulfill the same roles.²⁹
- d) In essence, this argument says that because men and women are equals, they should be able to fulfill all the same roles, or put another way, women cannot be truly equal unless they can fill roles traditionally filled by men.³⁰ This view, again, confuses function and essence, making who we are about what we do. In other words, women *become* equals as they assume roles normally held by men. This form of "equality," though, is not legitimate equality. Nobody would say that a man who is not an elder is inferior to a man who is an elder, so why the assertion that elder-men are

24 Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (1992), 184.

25 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 344.

26 Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 123–124.

27 1 Corinthians 14 cannot be taken to speak of absolute silence at all times, for in ch. 11, Paul gives instructions for women when they prophesy in public. However, prophecy in the New Testament is not on the same authoritative level as written Scripture or apostolic teaching, and therefore instructions are given to judge prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:29–33; 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21; 1 John 4:1). It is in this context of the church exercising its authority in the judgment of prophecy that women are taught to remain silent.

28 Keener offers over 20 references when stating that the Corinthian women were being disruptive (*Paul, Women and Wives*, 89n4). However, none of these references refer to the Corinthian church or any 1st century church, but rather to Jewish and Graeco-Roman writings that speak of order and decency in public assemblies (*Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 243).

29 Arden Thiessen uses the analogy of right-handed pitchers (men) and left-handed pitchers (women) at training camp (*The Biblical Case for Equality*, 132–133). The left-handed pitchers are told that they are equally valued to the team, but that they are not permitted to pitch and must rather perform other tasks. But this analogy sets up a false dichotomy as it implies that either a) different categories of people must perform identical tasks, or b) they are not true equals. A more accurate portrayal of the complementarian position would say, "You are a left-handed person who is gifted at pitching. You should use your gifts as a *left-hander*. Just because you are gifted at pitching does not mean that you therefore must use your gift as a *right-hander*." In other words, a woman with the gift of public speaking or teaching or theological discernment should be encouraged to use those gifts, but it does not follow that she is to use those gifts as an *elder over men*. Rather, she could use those gifts in an appropriate ministry, such as teaching other women. This would both a) make use of legitimate spiritual gifts, and b) not violate scriptural instruction about women not teaching or having authority over men.

The point of complementarianism is not to deny women the use of their gifts, but rather to encourage both men and women to use their gifts *in biblically appropriate ways*. Nobody is denying that women may have all the same gifts as men. The difference between complementarians and egalitarians is over *how and where* those gifts are to be used. It should also be noted that the *vast majority* of ministry opportunities are available to both men and women. Elder-type ministries form a tiny minority of all ministries. All but a small handful out of literally hundreds or even thousands of ministry opportunities are available to both men and women.

30 Here one could object, "But what about complementarity without gender roles in the church?" However, the "complementary without gender roles" position must either a) affirm gender equality while at the same time acknowledging that legitimate gender differences exist, in which case it would also have to admit that the conventional complementarian position does not, in fact, negate meaningful equality (and this view still has difficulty with the biblical text and Jesus' example), or b) define "complementarianism" in such a way that complementary differences do not manifest themselves in a meaningful way in church and home roles.

- superior to non-elder females?³¹
- e) Confusing function and essence also makes it impossible to separate sin and sinner. In other words it forces us to also say “there is neither adulterer nor faithful spouse, liar or honest person, etc.”
- f) If we take the view that function and essence are intertwined, then grace (including salvation grace) is not possible. Romans 5:8 teaches that through grace, God declares us righteous (essence) while we are still in our sinning state (function). Function and essence are both important concepts, but they are not the same. In fact, the separation of function and essence are a key element of the gospel (i.e. we love people *in spite* of what they do, not *because of it*. God extends mercy *in spite* of what we do, not because of it). Christians should not lament, but rather be thankful that their ontological value is not dependant on tasks they perform or titles they hold, but on the grace and omnibenevolence of God.

Perhaps the most concerning trend in egalitarianism is the way in which many of the claims handle Scripture. Many egalitarian arguments rule out the possibility of everyday Christians having a clear, straightforward understanding of God’s Word, and thrive instead on complexities and linguistic ingenuity and

invention.³² The Bible is taken out of the hands of everyday Christians and put into the hands of the most innovative. Rather than assuming biblical clarity that is accessible to all Christians, some egalitarian arguments rely on importing some sort of special knowledge that is not supported by sources inside or outside of the biblical text. Some of the arguments rely on new definitions and word translations not accepted by any English Bible, reading into the text something that is not there, and building theology on what is not said rather than on what is said.

The arguments also rely on so interpreting straightforward texts that one must sometimes understand them to say the *exact opposite* of what they appear to say. Yet, we are not at liberty to play word games with Scripture when we don’t agree with what it seems to be teaching. The complexity, inconsistency, and difficulty found in many egalitarian arguments could give many Christians the impression that they are not qualified to understand God’s Word. This would be most unfortunate, especially considering the sacrifices made by the Reformers (including Anabaptists) to literally unchain the Bible from the pulpits of the Roman Catholic Church in order that *all* believers could read, understand, and obey Scripture, even without the help of the elite.

At this point, it seems more and more that this discussion is not so much one of interpretation of a Bible believed to be

in supreme authority, but of something much more fundamental, namely the nature of Scripture itself (i.e. the authority, infallibility, sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture).³³ The debate often looks like it is not so much about what the Bible *says*, but about what the Bible *is*. Jesus seemed to indicate that Scripture was clear, and could be understood. Never does He tell His listeners anything to the effect of “*Yes, I see how your disagreement came to be. Scripture is very difficult to understand on this issue.*” Rather, He indicates that everyday lay people could clearly understand Scripture when He says things like “*Have you not read...?*” “*It is written...*”, “*You are wrong because you know neither the power of the Scriptures nor the power of God*” (Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:14; 22:31; 21:42;

Many egalitarian arguments rule out the possibility of everyday Christians having a clear, straightforward understanding of God’s Word, and thrive instead on complexities and linguistic ingenuity and invention.

22:29; 9:13; 12:7; 15:3; 21:13; John 3:10 etc.), when confronted with controversial topics.

Our Mennonite forebears also seemed to promote a plain, straightforward use of Scripture. Most notable is the writing of Menno Simons where he says such things as “*build upon Christ and His Word alone*”³⁴, “*if these writers can support their teaching with the word and command of God, we will admit that they are right. If not, then it is a doctrine of men and accursed by the Scriptures.*”³⁵, “*Only show us God’s Word and the question is settled.*”³⁶, and “*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.*”³⁷ Menno Simons believed not only in the supreme authority and infallibility of Scripture, but also seems to indicate his belief that everyday believers could correctly understand the Scriptures. Surely his is an Anabaptist example that we should be encouraged to follow. While a community dynamic was active among the early Mennonites, it appears the primary concern was orthodoxy.

It seems that there is much more

31 When dealing with the question of function and essence, Arden Thiessen seems to indicate that essence is in fact *at least partially* dependant on function. He says that to restrict function is to make an implicit judgment on one’s essence. Further, he says: “It remains true, however, that *what we do identifies who we are*” (*The Biblical Case for Equality*, 131, emphasis mine). It is difficult to prevent this argument from arriving at its logical conclusion—our value as human beings can be at least *somewhat* dependant on what we do. Of course, this could make some humans more “valuable” than others, for a doctor earning a six-figure salary could be deemed to be more “valuable” than a janitor earning minimum wage, and a healthy, able-bodied person could be deemed more “valuable” than someone who is bound to a wheelchair. Yet, Christians must never say that some humans are more valuable than others or that their value is based on what they do, as even Thiessen himself concedes (*The Biblical Case for Equality*, 131). We are forced to say then, that human value (i.e. essence) is based on God’s view of people, and not on our works or actions, or on offices or titles we hold. Our objective value to God is not dependant upon our subjective works.

32 That the egalitarian hermeneutic is so recent is not an irrelevant point. The fact that egalitarianism was not practiced by Jesus or by the early church, the fact that it was missed by the early church fathers, the reformers, and went uniformly undiscovered by 19 centuries of theologians, only to be discovered in the last few decades simultaneous to the rise of secular feminism is, to say the least, curious. This alone serves to make the egalitarian case less than likely.

33 While Thiessen states that he holds to an orthodox view on the nature of Scripture, he does acknowledge that in many cases, egalitarianism is dependant upon the explicit erosion of biblical authority and upon higher criticism (*The Biblical Case for Equality*, 7).

34 From the writings of Menno Simons (II: 193b) as quoted by Harold S. Bender, *Menno Simons’ Life and Writings* (1983), 55.

35 *ibid.* p. 55.

36 *ibid.* p. 56.

37 Menno Simons, “Foundation of Christian Doctrine,” *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (1956), 160.

at stake here than this single issue. Decisions regarding this issue seem to have implications for other theological decisions. It is very telling that the egalitarian position has often served as a catalyst of liberalism and theological drift. Note the consistent progression from acceptance of egalitarianism to some form of acceptance of homosexual behaviour,³⁸ for example. While it must be recognized that many who take an egalitarian stand still maintain an orthodox belief on marriage and sexuality, they must realize that many of the pro-homosexual arguments mirror the egalitarian arguments (e.g., Galatians 3:28 speaks of function rather than essence; creation order is not binding; Scripture is difficult to understand; Jesus made serious concessions to the culture; masculinity and femininity are generally unimportant, etc.).

It should also be realized that many arguments made by complementarians need to be made by egalitarians who maintain an orthodox view of sexuality and marriage (e.g., Galatians 3:28 refers to essence, not function; creation order is binding; it is possible for everyday

38 As seen in such churches as United Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church USA, the United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Evangelical Women's Caucus, and others.

39 Here someone may object: "What if the Holy Spirit calls a woman into an elder-type ministry". If we take the Trinitarian stance that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are indeed a unity, then we should not expect the prompting of the Spirit and the revealed will of God in Scripture to be contradictory. Rather, the subjective prompting of the Spirit is best understood through a thorough and prayerful study of Scripture. If Scripture indeed teaches that elder-type roles are reserved for men, then we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to undermine this. The Spirit will indeed encourage all Christians, male and female, to exercise their gifts to the fullest and in a biblically appropriate manner. We can safely expect the Spirit to work in accordance with Scripture, not in contradiction with it.

40 Evangelical feminism has not proven to be a healthy corrective to chauvinism in the church. If it had been, then since its peak in the 1970s we would expect to see more marital and gender harmony, not less. Yet, problems of abuse, adultery, gender confusion, homosexuality, divorce, pornography addiction, rape, etc. persist, and may actually be on the increase. Could this be because many have bought into the confusing assertion that gender-based distinctions are unimportant? Perpetuating faulty teaching on gender will only lead to more frustration and confusion as men and women abandon God-intended roles, and assume roles contrary to their nature and God's sovereign plan.

praying Christians to understand Scripture; Jesus' work is complete and He did not suspend the will of God in order to make concessions to culture; masculinity and femininity are both beautiful and important, etc.).

It cannot be overemphasized that the complementarian view has nothing to do with equality, dignity, value, worth, education, ability, or giftedness. Egalitarians and complementarians agree that men and women are created equal, and that the Holy Spirit equally grants gifts to both. The disagreement is not over whether or not men and women are equal in giftedness, but rather, *how* that giftedness is to be used. The issue should

not be centred on trying to limit the role of women, but rather, about encouraging godly women and godly men to fully use their gifts in *all* biblically appropriate ways.³⁹

Complementarianism seems to be the biblical middle ground, as it avoids the unbiblical pitfalls of both chauvinism and feminism.⁴⁰ It preserves biblically prescribed gender differences *and* biblical equality in such a way that both are fully celebrated and neither one is compromised. ☉

"Male and female He created them...And behold, it was very good."

Genesis 1:27, 31

Bibliography

Baldwin, H. Scott. "A Difficult Word: *Authenteo* in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas Kostenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995)

Baugh, S.M. "The Apostle Paul among the Amazons," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994).

Belleville, Linda. *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000.

Bender, Harold S. *Menno Simons' Life and Writings*. Moundridge, KA: Gospel Publishers, 1983.

Bilezikian, Gilbert. *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985.

Bruce, F.F. *Romans*. London: Tyndale Press, 1973.

Burer, M.H. and D.B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Reexamination of Romans 16:7", *New Testament Studies* 47, 2001.

Carson, D.A. "'Silent in the Churches': On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Piper and Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991)

Cranfield, C.E.B. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Romans*, ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979.

Grenz, Stanley. *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.

Grudem, Wayne. *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004.

Keener, Craig. *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992.

Kostenberger, Andreas, Thomas Schreiner, and

H. Scott Baldwin, ed. *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995.

Kroeger, Richard and Catherine. *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992.

Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, ed. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991.

Schreiner, Thomas. "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship", *Women in the Church*, 1995.

Simons, Menno, "Foundations of Christian Doctrine", in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. John C. Wenger, trans. Leonard Verduin. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956)

Spencer, Aida Besancon. *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

Thiessen, Arden. *The Biblical Case for Equality: An Appeal for Gender Justice in the Church*. Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2002.

Webb, William. *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Wolters, Albert. "A Semantic Study of *authentēs* and Its Derivatives", *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1, (2000)

Wolters, Albert. "Review: I Suffer Not a Woman," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993).

Christians for Biblical Equality website (Egalitarian) – <http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/index.shtml>

Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood website (Complementarian) – <http://cbmw.org/index.php>

All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise indicated.

The Church: The Hope of the World

Darren Plett

Darren Plett is the Senior Pastor of Pleasant Valley EMC near Rosenort, Manitoba.

A few weeks back I listened to a young couple. They have a one-year-old-child.

They are planning to leave in a few months for a life of career missions in a restricted access country. They believe God is calling them to go and to initiate the steps so that, God willing, a church planting movement can begin in that country which for centuries has turned their back on God.

It better be God calling them, making those kinds of changes and plans which involve a complete lifestyle change and not just for a few months, but for years. God has to be a part of that or those things just aren't possible. God bless them.

Do you understand, friends, that a couple like that is so convinced about the message of Jesus Christ and his love for humanity and the consequences of rejecting him for all eternity? Do you understand that they are so convinced about the fact that Jesus instituted the idea of His Church, and that it is His intent that His Church will be the agent that will effectively communicate this hope to the world, that they are willingly changing their lives, turning their lives upside down for the sake of bringing this message to people who haven't yet accepted?

I know we can't all go like they are. But we *can* all be

When the Church is functioning right, Jesus says it himself: The gates of hell are not strong enough to hold it back.

as convinced as they are that the hope of humanity for this life and for all eternity rests in Jesus Christ. And that it was His intent that the Church would be the agent of this incredible message of hope for the world.

I don't believe God is calling us all to go, but I do believe with all my heart that God is calling everyone of us here to be completely convinced of this one thing: God is calling you, like them, to let go of everything you have, to sell out for the sake of Him, the same way that he calls our friends, whom we call missionaries, to let go and go!

I want you to know, friends, that I am passionate about the Church. I want you to know that I believe with all my heart that God intended for his Church to be the agent that would bring healing in hundreds of different ways to thousands and millions of people around the world. Let's quickly bring that closer to home, because I believe that God also intended for that world-wide picture to be lived out in the day-to-day lives of all local churches,

including small churches like ours in small rural neighbourhoods all around the world and larger city churches in urban settings around the world.

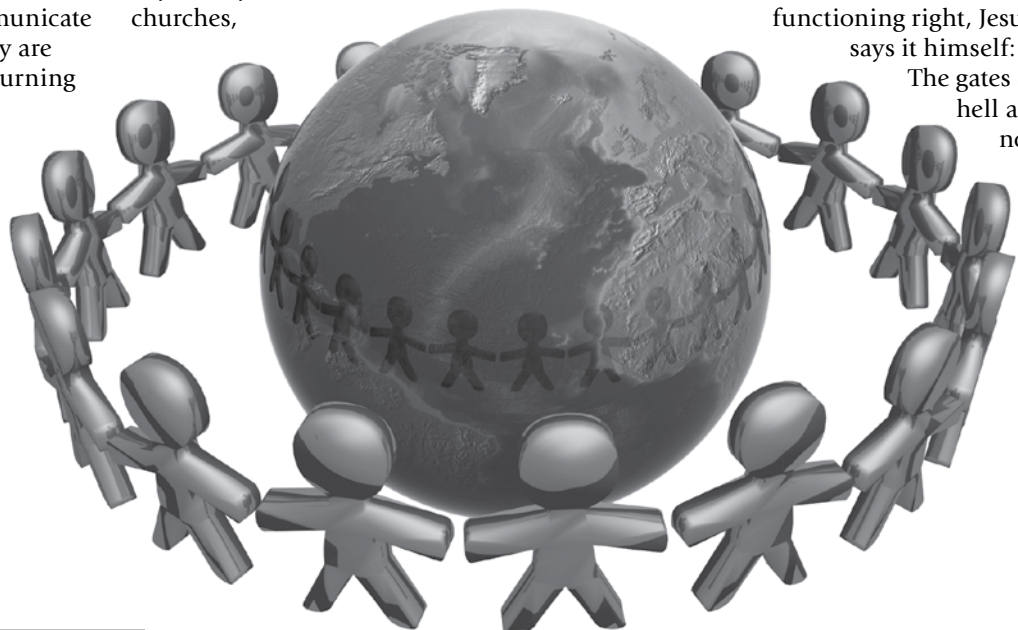
I believe that churches were intended to be the hope of the world.

I believe that if we will be the church God is calling us to be, we will be an attractive beacon of light in our small rural community; a place, a family, where people can come and feel that they belong, a family where people can come and receive nurture and care and teaching, a family where everyone needs to serve and be served. Most of all the Church can be a place where Jesus Christ is honoured and glorified and lifted up. It can be a place, an environment, a group where people will meet Jesus Christ. *The Church!* I believe in it!

Not for a minute do I think we are doing it all right. We have a great deal to learn and there is room to grow. I pray that God will continue to take us on that journey.

This is the Church, and when it is functioning right, Jesus says it himself:

The gates of hell are not



strong enough to hold it back.

As we head back into fall, and back into the life of the church, at least the more formal life of the church, programs, small groups, Sunday School, etc., as these groups and activities get going again, in many ways the life of the church is revived after many of us having traveled in different directions for holidays during the summer.

I want to just take this Sunday morning and remind us again from the book of Ephesians about the church. In this book Paul seems consumed with the idea of church. He writes this to a young church working to become all that God wanted it to be. He speaks to them about life in the church and what it takes to function together as a family of believers. Unity, speaking the truth, loving each other, growing together, different giftedness, everyone doing his part for the well-being of the whole body, are all important facets of the Church. Most of all, Paul believes in church.

We are sometimes tempted to think: Ah, there are just too many problems with the established church. Let's do away with the established church and let's just let everyone do their own thing. Church is just about politics and fights and disagreements and imperfection and hurts and pain and problems. Forget about church!

Hang on a minute! If anyone should have said, "Forget about church. There are just too many problems in the church. Let's do it some other way," that should have been Paul.

If you read his letters to the churches, every church he writes to has got problems. They are also fighting and quarrelling and there are politics and even immorality in the church. Problems galore!

Yet Paul is consumed with the idea of church. Paul is convinced that the Church as God intended it is the hope of humanity. The Church as it struggles to grow and overcome the enemies of disunity and fighting and immorality and idolatry and every other dart and arrow that Satan can shoot their way will be what it was intended to be. And although it will be far from perfect it

will be involved in doing what God intended it to do.

Paul writes in 2:19ff: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."

Paul assures them they are a part of the church and "in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

Do you see what I see? They haven't yet attained perfect status; they are still in the construction stage. This is actually very similar to what he says in

"For this reason I kneel before the Father..."

What is Paul's reason? He believes in the Church; he believes that the Church is the family of God. He believes that the Church is the body of Christ (2:16). He believes that the Church (the people) is the building where God dwells (2:21).

4:11-13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

You are in the process of being built up into that which God intended. But just because we aren't perfect and we aren't doing church perfect, doesn't mean we give up on the idea. After all, the Church has a purpose; the Church is God's idea!

We read in 3:10 and 11:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He intended that he would reveal himself and his wisdom and his plan

for humanity through the church. Paul believes in it despite all the problems and he is convinced about the church. It was God's idea and it was His plan that the hope of humanity would rest in it.

Listen to what he says in 3:14-19:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together

with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Did you notice that he begins by saying, "For this reason I kneel before the Father..."?

What is the reason?

Why does he ask that this young church be strengthened, would have power, would have Christ dwelling in them, would grasp the love of Christ, would be filled with all the fullness of God?

Because he believes in the Church; he believes that the Church is the family of God. He believes that the Church is the body of Christ (2:16). He believes that the Church (the people) is the building where God dwells (2:21). He uses each one of these three word pictures here in these verses to describe what the Church should be like.

He believes in the Church; he is consumed with the idea of church.

He believes this little group of people that he is writing to, that they are the Church of Jesus Christ. He believes that they have what it takes to be the hope of the world. And so because this is what he believes, he is down on his knees praying for this little body of believers, this little church, and asking that God would enable them, empower them to become this hope for humanity in the world where they were located.

When you read this prayer that Paul prays for this little church (14-19), two words jump out at us as we read these verses.

The first one is *power*. We all like power. The other word is *love*. As you read this you get the picture these two are in some ways combined or intertwined. In the middle of verse 17 we read, "I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power to understand the love of Christ." Let's understand that we cannot totally separate them.

For the purpose of getting a bit of a grasp what he is talking about, we will speak first for a few minutes about this concept of love. Remember, this is his prayer for the Church and because he believes in the Church, he prays this prayer:

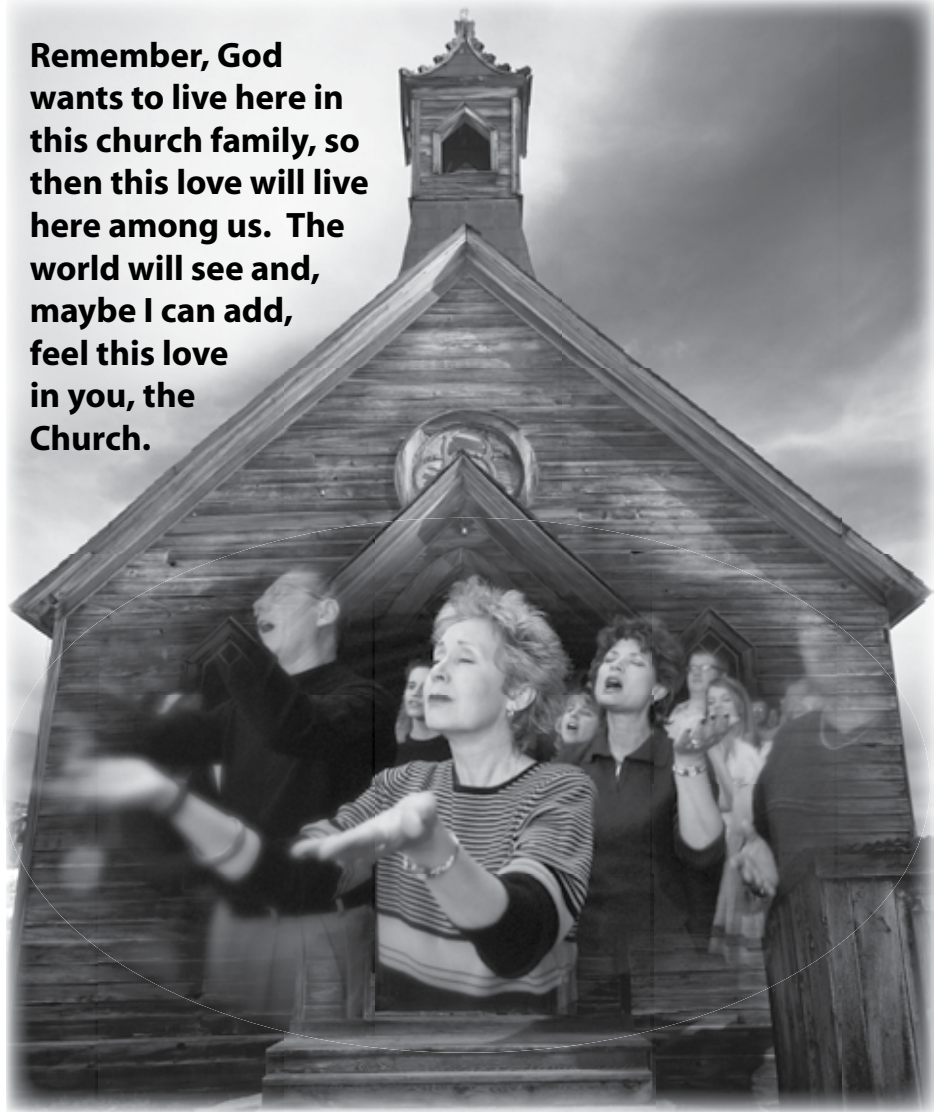
I pray that you will come to grasp the vastness of God's *love*. I pray that you will come to understand how all-inclusive the love of God is. I pray that you come to know how wide the love of God is. I don't know if Paul had something specific in mind when he uses this dimensional terminology in his prayer, but it makes sense in a way. *Wide* speaks to us of inclusiveness.

I pray that you will understand, Church, that the love of God knows no limits. It loves everyone and it loves everyone equally. It loves the people in the Philippines. It loves the wealthy people there and it loves the young people living on the street. It loves the people in all the restricted access countries of Asia. It loves the people in Africa, and it loves all the people in Africa—no one tribe any more than the others, no one colour of skin more or less than the others; and it loves the people in Europe, with their modern way of thinking. God's love just totally overflows for all of them. The Church loves the Mexicans; it loves the Mexican nationals and the Mexican Mennonites. It loves George Bush and the rest of the U.S.

The all-encompassing width of the love of God envelops the world including me and you here in our great country of Canada, here in our community of Rosenort. I pray that you will be able to grasp this and make it your very own.

This love is not only all-inclusive, but it is long and it will last. God's love for you began before the world began and it will continue through all eternity. The love of God is not something that can be turned on or shut off. God is love and he loves you.

Remember, God wants to live here in this church family, so then this love will live here among us. The world will see and, maybe I can add, feel this love in you, the Church.



That God's love is so *high* speaks of where this love is taking us. It is taking us to new heights. Of course, ultimately it longs to take us to heaven. Even now it is this intense all-inclusive love of God which longs to reach down to the depths—wherever you are—and grab hold of you there.

There is no depth to which the love of God is not willing to go to rescue you, to touch you, to hold you and to pull you up. There is no pit too deep that the love of God is not willing to go there, and find you and touch you and pull you up out of there. And not just to pull you up and set you on level ground. No, then he wants to (according to 2:6) "raise us up and seat us with Christ in the heavenly realms."

I pray that you will somehow grasp this love, this love that surpasses knowledge, this love that you will not only understand, but that it will very

literally become a part of who you are as the Church. Remember, God wants to live here in this church family, so then this love will live here among us. We won't just know about it but it will be alive here among us. The world will see and, maybe I can add, feel this love in you, the Church.

Isn't that an amazing thought? Can you see why people believe in the Church? Why they are passionate about building the Church? Why they are willing to give up their lives to see a church build and grow and flourish?

It will be a place, it will be a group of people, a family, and the body of Christ where this kind of love will be understood and expressed.

What will it take to understand and express this incredible love of God?

It will take power! Only through the awesome power of God is it possible to even come close to understanding and

living this incredible love of God.

We read these awesome words in verse 20-21:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Isn't that unbelievable? Does this man have a vision for the Church? Does he believe in the Church? Does he believe the Church is the hope of humanity? This is the power that is at work within us, which is available to be at work within us.

Sometimes I prefer the King James version. Here in the NIV it simply says "he is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." Do you know what the KJV says for this verse? "Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Not simply "all" that we ask or think. Not just "above all" that we ask or think. Not just "abundantly above all" that we ask or think, but "exceeding abundantly above all" that we ask or think.

Is it not fair to say that God desires for the vastness of his love and the vastness of his power to be evident in the Church and to all those who pause and take a good look at the Church? Is that what is happening here?

First, Paul seems to be grasping for a way to adequately describe the *love* of God, an essential in the Church, if we will really be the *Church* God intended for us to be. Now he is grasping for a way to explain how great, how vast, is the *power* of God that is at work within us through Jesus.

Who is this *us*? It is us; it is us, the Church! He has already talked about the body and the building and the family. In each case he means the Church. Now as he tries to capture in words the vastness of the power of God

that is at work within us, I believe he is referring to "us" as individuals, but more so—to "us" as the Church.

Read what Paul says next: "To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."

If we could become the Church that God desires for us to be! If we could be a church in which the power of God is evidently working. Don't get me wrong, it is not that I don't think the power of God is working here. I know it is. I know it is! But it just seems that it could be so much more. If we could be a church that would, through the power of God, understand and live the incredible love of God and be vessels so that the power of God that raised Christ from the dead, that this power could flow through us here in this church.

Don't you get goose bumps when you think of what could happen? Do you believe in the Church? Do you believe that could happen here?

Are you committed to work together with this body? Yes, we are imperfect. We don't have it all together. We are struggling to overcome the darts of Satan. We are fighting to find ways to recognize all of the gifts of the Spirit that are among us and how we can use them to build up this church. We don't always love and fellowship the way that we need to. But this church is on a mission to be the Church of Jesus Christ that it was intended by God to be.

Are you committed to working together with this body in becoming all that God wants us to be? Are you convinced that the Church is the hope of humanity? Are you convinced that we in this church are a part of that big picture where God has put us?

I will assure you that if you are convinced, and if you are committed, then you will be called on to make some sacrifices to help us become that kind of church. It is never easy to become all that God wants you to be. It is not easy in your own personal life and it is not easy in the life of the church. Nothing in life is of much value unless it came to you through hard work.

I am not standing here and asking you to sign up for something that will make life easy for you. In fact, quite the opposite, I am asking you to take a difficult path.

This young couple I mentioned in my opening is not going to another country because they think life will be easier for them over there. They are going, and they are willing to throw their lives into trying to help initiate a church planting movement, because they believe that the Church is the hope of humanity. If you are out to have an easier life, then the Church is the wrong place for you to be. The Church is not out to make your life easier. The church is here to give you an opportunity to work in a place, in a church family that needs you and your gifts. It needs you to be willing to step forward and use your gifts to help build this body into all that God intends for it to be, and that will not always be easy.

Although Sunday mornings are crucial to the life of the church, church is not about Sunday mornings. Chuck Swindoll says, "The church worship service is a huddle. We run the plays during the week. The game is not won in the huddle."

I love Sunday mornings. We want to do our absolute best in planning and leading our worship services on Sunday mornings so that you will be built up and, most importantly, that God will be glorified. But if that is it, if it is only about a huddle and then we all go home and get ready to huddle again next week, that is pretty empty and futile. I dare say that is not what God had in mind when he came up with the idea of church.

Is it not fair to say that God desires for the vastness of his love and the vastness of his power to be evident in the Church and to all those who pause and take a good look at the Church? Is that what is happening here?

I know there is a time when that is happening, but I am convinced and I firmly believe you would agree, we still have a long way to go in becoming all that God intended for us to be. Are you convinced that the Church is the hope of the world?

Do you believe in the Church?

Are you committed to the Church?

Do you long to see the vast love of God and the incredible power of God alive and working here in this church?

Are you committed to helping this church become all that God intended it to be? ☹

Book Review

***Jacob and the Prodigal: How Jesus Retold Israel's Story*, Kenneth M. Bailey (InterVarsity Press, Illinois, 2003), 225 pp., \$24.99, ISBN 0-8308-2727-7. Reviewed by Darryl G. Klassen, senior pastor, Kleefeld EMC.**

Most people familiar with the parable of *The Lost Son* will tell you that they know what Jesus was trying to say. The parable, also known as *The Prodigal Son*, is well known for its pleasure-seeking younger son, the disgruntled older brother, and the loving father who welcomes the wayward son home with open arms. It's about repentance and realizing that life is better with the father. That's what most people will tell you.

Then most people need to read *Jacob and the Prodigal* by Kenneth Bailey. This parable does not teach that repentance

is returning to the father after living a life of licentiousness, realizing that things were better back home and trotting off to see what Daddy will do. No, the thrust of the parable is much deeper than we have imagined from our pulpits and Sunday School rooms. Jesus takes the story of Israel, the story of Jacob and the Shepherd themes of the Old Testament, and tells a new version of an old story. When you read what Jesus truly intended for his hearers to understand, through Bailey's excellent analysis, you will see the Prodigal in a whole new light.

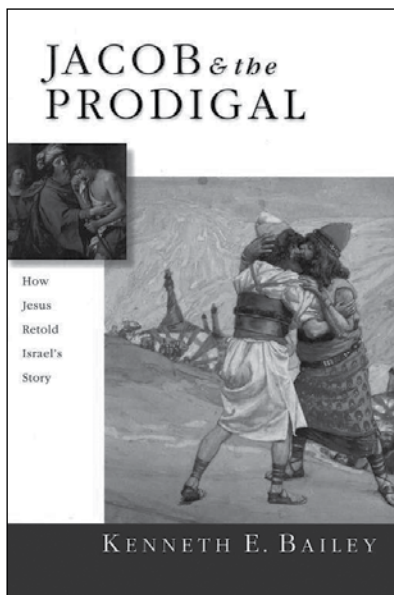
Bailey comes by his interpretation through his experience of Middle Eastern culture, having lived several years in Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Cyprus. He is a careful exegete and has strived to understand the Scriptures, particularly Luke 15, from the culture that Jesus lived in.

Before reading this book I had rarely thought of Jesus as a genius. But I could not help but praise the Lord for integrating such a fantastic lesson into this parable that speaks to us as more than a simple lesson. The parable, as Bailey describes it, is actually made up of all three stories in Luke 15. He calls this threesome one parable and goes on to show the ongoing theme of grace in the shepherd finding the lost sheep, the woman finding the lost coin, and the father finding the lost son. The father finds the lost son? Exactly!

The son is in no way repentant, but schemes to win his father's favor back by paying off his debt incurred when he spent his share of the inheritance. However, the father will not allow it and, instead, waits everyday to see if his son returns. When he does, the father runs (inappropriate for patriarchs in Middle Eastern culture) and embraces his son before the boy can make his bargain. The father lavishes grace upon the boy and restores him to sonship beyond what the son could imagine. All the parallels are amazingly and

intricately laid out in this fascinating book.

This is a must-have book for preachers and teachers of the Bible. It will change how you look at parables and much of the New Testament as you consider the Western pressure we put on Eastern texts. We want to read the Bible from our own experience, and thereby miss the truth that is staring us in the face. Give this book a try and see for yourself the genius of Jesus. ☹



The father waits everyday to see if his son returns. When he does, the father runs and embraces his son before the boy can make his bargain. The father lavishes grace upon the boy and restores him to sonship beyond what the son could imagine.



Theodidaktos requires new submissions!

Theodidaktos: Journal for EMC theology and education invites essays, book reviews, and sermons for consideration within its third issue. There is no payment.

Editor Darryl Klassen, senior pastor at Kleefeld EMC, can be contacted at 204-377-4773, kemc@mts.net, or Box 129, Kleefeld, MB R0A 0V0. Essay length is a maximum of 3,500 words.

The Journal is a way to see EMC discussion and education in print. The payment is to see EMCers listening to Scripture and to each other. *Theodidaktos* means *taught by God*.

The project is under the authority of the Board of Church Ministries.

The Final Word

Historical studies indicate that sixteenth-century Anabaptists shared many Protestant concerns, such as biblical authority and critique of ecclesiastical hierarchy. Yet their pursuit of holiness seemed so Catholic that Protestants could deride them as “new monks.” In Anabaptism, that is, these and many other emphases that divided Catholics and Protestants were intertwined in practice. Now what if this harmony were supported by a theological rationale, even if it was often unarticulated? If it were more clearly articulated, might it aid understanding among Protestants and Catholics today?

Further, Mennonites have often stressed biblical authority and mission in ways that sound “evangelical.” Yet their promotion of ethical living and social betterment seems strangely “liberal.” In these days of evangelical-liberal ecumenical tensions around the world, might Anabaptist theology suggest ways of affirming elements of both?

In short, I am proposing that in today’s culture, which prizes particularity yet where many tendencies press swiftly toward globality, an unlikely, very particular Christian communion, the Anabaptists, can aid theology in addressing both dimensions. It can help bring voices from the underside to fuller expression and also help guide conflicts among majority traditions toward understanding. My main task will be to render explicit the largely implicit theology that has guided Anabaptists in order to address issues facing today’s churches and societies.

– Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (IVP, 2004)

Send editorial inquiries and submissions to Editor, *Theodidaktos*, Box 129, Kleefeld, Manitoba R0A 0V0; kemc@mts.net; 204-377-4773.

View *Theodidaktos* online at www.emconf.ca/theodidaktos.htm.